

THE ROLE OF MYTH IN ESCALATING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL-PALESTINE

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Abstrak

Mitos sebagai informasi dasar atau pondasi sebelum melakukan tindakan dalam suatu masyarakat dapat meningkatkan / menambah berbagai macam perspektif, dan bahkan membuat konflik seperti di Israel-Palestina. Mereka mempertahankan serta melestarikan mitos-mitosnya. Seperti pada mitos David dan Goliath yang mana batu (kerikil) digunakan sebagai alat untuk mengalahkan monster yang bernama Goliath, dan sampai sekarang mitos ini masih dipraktikkan oleh pemuda Palestina untuk mengalahkan lawannya yaitu Israel. Meskipun demikian, menurut Abu Nimer, alasan orang-orang Palestina menggunakan batu sebagai simbol bahwa mereka ingin menunjukkan (penyelesaian konflik) tanpa kekerasan. Bagaimanapun, dengan penggunaan batu, Israel merasa takut karena cerita David dan Goliath akan terjadi pada mereka, meskipun cerita ini adalah berkebalikannya, dimana sekarang ini Israel menjadi monster Goliath dan pemuda Palestina menjadi David yang melempar batu kepada monster Goliath. Dengan menggunakan teori dari Kepferer tentang kekuatan mitos, tulisan ini ingin menganalisis seberapa besar kekuatan mitos dalam konflik dan Israel-Palestina pada sudut pandang pelemparan batu.

Kata Kunci: Mitos, Konflik, Israel, Palestina

Abstract

Myth as the basic of information before conducting life in society can escalate the sight toward other perspective, and make conflicting between Israel-Palestine. They are defending their myth. The myth of David and Goliath which stone as a tool in conquering the monster Goliath, it is been trying for youth Palestinian to beat Israel. Whereas, according to Abu Nimer, the reason for Palestinian using stone is like symbol that they want to show non-violent. However, by using stone, Israel fears that the story of David and Goliath will happen to them, yet the story is opposite. Now, the Israel becomes Goliath, and youth Palestinian becomes David who is throwing stone to the monster. By using Kepferer's theory about power of myth, this article wants to analyze how strong the power of myth in the conflict of Israel-Palestine on the perspective of throwing stones.

Keywords: Myth, Conflict, Israel, Palestine

INTRODUCTION

A Story always has a character to persuade a society. It can be a foundation and establishment of society. Many things can happen caused by story, including a conflict. The background of stories makes people do as fit as the story-telling. Therefore, if the reality does not match with story, in many times it causes conflict.

There are many factors that cause conflict. One of them is caused by myth. It happens in Israel and Palestine war, where myth has significant influence to bring conflict. The famous one is that Israeli is afraid when they (and their home) are thrown up by stone. There

is myth which so-called David and Goliath. Goliath as the monster can be conquered by David as a little man only by using stone. Unfortunately, this situation is still always remembered by Israel. There is still debating in this paper about who Israel is and who Jews is. However, that one story is created for Jews which is majority in Israel. Another myth is from holy book which tells Jews (or Israel) will not be died because they have been written.

There is root of conflict between Israel and Palestine. Besides claiming Holy-land, there is myth which still always Israel fear about the history of David-Goliath. Stone, a tool when David conquered Goliath, is in recent moments it is used by youth Palestinian to attack Israel.

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Thus, Israel worries and it is like revenge of myth which only by using stone, Palestinian will conquer Israel by imitating the myth of David-Goliath. However, in some literatures, throwing-stones is started from intifada. Intifada is the movement in Palestinian to protest Israel action in border area.

In this article, I propose two questions: What is the conflict between Israel and Palestine?; How far can myth influence the conflict between Israel and Palestine?; This paper use material from Kepferer to see how the myth can influence the conflict between ethnic. This theory will work to see (such as) why the conflict of Holy Land / Promise Land which used by Israel to attack Palestine, and on the other side, why Palestine still defend their area, is there any narrative also (especially from Quran). And also it uses Jurgensmayer about cosmic war to see where the demon in that myth is. This paper will also use literature and set it as descriptively. Therefore, myth in this article, it will be contested between other, to know the intersection of myth and how religious myth have a role to escalate the conflict.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MYTH IN CONFLICT

Myth has a significant power in some events. "Myth is defined as a complex of stories-some no doubt fact, and some fancy-which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations for the inner meaning of the universe and of human life".¹ Myth can become like fact. Eliade describes that there is no limitation between myth and reality. She said "myth teaches (human kind) the primordial 'stories' that have constituted (human) extentially".² Myth becomes bridge of the ideally and reality, it is showed from the primordial, in where it has been set by the older. So, if myth can emerge conflict, it is normal. It also sometimes controls emotional of people. For the myth of David and Goliath, stone become sacred tools which can beat the

¹ James C. Livingstone, *Anatomy of the Sacred: an Introduction to Religion*, (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc, 2009), p. 63.

² Livingstone, *Anatomy of the Sacred.*, p. 68.

monster Goliath and David is a little man (41-44).³ However, myth about this is story still defended by Israelite and Palestinian.

To strengthen the power of myth, Kepferer in his article said that "What I stress, however, is that this ideological rationalism is an important factor in reproducing the relevance of the myths and legends in the modern political situation".⁴ It shows that myth cannot disappear. Myth always be dynamic and develop as contextualization. He emphasizes, in some extent, myth can be used as symbol to fear the enemy as well as (for example) government takes beneficial in using political situation.

The foundation of the myth of David and Goliath is in Bible 1 Samuel 17:1-54 and QS. al-Baqarah: 246-251. In 1 Samuel 17:1-54, it is clearly stated the story-telling of David. It is explained who is David and how David beat Goliath using stones. This is some excerpts from Bible:⁵

⁴⁵ Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

⁴⁶ This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

⁴⁷ And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle [is] the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.

⁴⁸ And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet

³ http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1-Samuel-17-1_17-58/ accessed on Jan 02, 2016 at 22.00 wib

⁴ Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State, Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. (Smithsonian Institution, 1988), p. 42.

⁵ http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1-Samuel-17-1_17-58/ accessed on 02 Jan 2016 at 22.00 wib

David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang [it], and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but [there was] no sword in the hand of David.

Meanwhile, QS al-Baqarah 246-251, the story says:⁶

“And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, “Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand.” But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, “There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers.” But those who were certain that they would meet Allah said, “How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah . And Allah is with the patient.” (2: 249) And when they went forth to [face] Goliath and his soldiers, they said, “Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people.” (2:250). So they defeated them by permission of Allah , and David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him the kingship and prophethood and taught him from that which He willed. And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds. (2:251)

By viewing myth in both of holy books, there are many scholars who emphasize that stone becomes an effective stone to attack Israel, and make them frightened. Shulman

⁶ <http://quran.com/2/246-251> accessed in 02 Jan 2016 at 22.30 wib

(2007) said “They are hurling rocks at us— they have learned something, these young settlers, from the Intifada — and one of them has perfected a sling, again resonantly biblical”.⁷ Biblical is used as the foundation to frighten Israel based on the story. However, in responding of the logic to argue about myth, Hallward (2011) states that “although for some Palestinians stone throwing was not considered violence (and was even seen by some as a symbol of restraint from lethal force in the face of a much stronger opponent) from the Israeli perspective stones could kill”.⁸

By viewing on the two arguments, it appears that Israeli scare with stones. Whereas, from Abu Nimer views, Palestinian want to show that they are non-violent.⁹ However, Israeli uses weapon to respond of throwing-stones. What is story behind stone? Aforementioned, Israeli has memorial collective in myth of David-Goliath.

Regarding to the myth, Bard said that “Israel uses excessive force to respond to children who are just throwing stones”.¹⁰ I agree with his argument that Israeli is excessive respond that showed by using weapon. Even, a recent moment, there is a news that Israel’s government prevails shooting-dead for the throwing stones. However, Bard tries to clarify the actual news that “Palestinians, young and old, attack Israeli civilians and soldiers with a variety of weapons. When they throw stones, they are not pebbles, but large rocks that can and do cause serious injuries”.¹¹ To respond between myth and fact from Bard, he points out the action (throwing stones) is different which is separating from news. I criticize him that though using little or large stones, but

⁷ David Shulman, *Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 31-32.

⁸ Maia Carter Hallward, *Struggling for a just peace : Israeli and Palestinian activism in the second Intifada*, (University Press of Florida. 2011), p. 41.

⁹ Mohammed Abu Nimer, *Nirkekerasan Dan Bina Damai Dalam Islam (Non-Violence and Peace Building in Islam)*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet. 2010), p. 187-192.

¹⁰ Mitchel G. Bard, *Myth and Fact: A Guide to The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (United States of America: AICE, 2006), p. 187.

¹¹ Bard, *Myth and Fac.*, p. 187.

when Israeli replies using weapon, I suppose that it is unfair action.

Furthermore, Kepferer also gives statement "The logic of the myths is deeply ingrained in the practices of everyday life and is part of a more embracing cosmology".¹² Although the replying from Israel is using weapon and it is not fair, yet they are fear because of in cosmology. The cosmology is in myth of David-Goliath which is Goliath can be beaten by throwing-stones. And of course, Israel does not want it (myth) happens to them (again).

For the cosmic war view, Goliath becomes the demon. Jurgensmayer (2000) defines cosmic war like "it calls such images "cosmic" because they are larger than life. They evoke great battles of the legendary past, and they relate to metaphysical conflicts between good and evil".¹³ David as a good, surely, it has to be owned by Israel because they are the ethnic-choice. However, in 'cosmic war' the myth David and Goliath apparently is still felt by Israel till today. They conduct any ways to battle that Israel become Goliath. So it makes sense when Israel's army uses weapon for throwing-stones conducted by youth-Palestinian. Evil in cosmic war becomes the battle with the good one, and both of Palestine-Israel stays in this circle of war or I can call it likes re-myth.

IDEOLOGY AND THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: THE INTIFADA EMERGENCE

The background of throwing stones is started form intifada. The intifada happened because of Palestinian revolted with the United States secretary who always gives promise. So that Palestinian demonstrated to their government. In some extent, youth Palestinian initiated to attack Israel's army because of disappointed. Sherbok and El-Alami stated that because of discriminated by Israel "Like the first Intifada, this uprising of the Palestinian people was a spontaneous reaction. In small acts of defiance, ordinary Palestinians expressed their

¹²Kapferer, *Legends of People.*, p. 34.

¹³Mark Jurgensmayer, *Terror In The Mind Of God: The Global Rise Of Religious Violence.*, (California: University of California Press, 2000), p. 146.

frustration in the form of demonstrations, strikes and episodes of the now symbolic stone-throwing by gangs of youths facing one of the most highly funded and sophisticated armies in the world".¹⁴ It responded from youth because of unfair action, actually not only from Israel but also from Palestine's government. At that time, President Yasser Arafat was too slow to respond the promising. However, he struggled about the intifada movement into UN.¹⁵

Regarding to the myth of David-Goliath and intifada, Baroud describes that:

"True, the Intifada was a continuation of the Palestinian people's decades-long revolt against Israel's occupation of their land, which was carried out in several stages, most prominently in 1948 and 1967. But one can hardly ignore the fact that the second Intifada was uniquely different from the largely symbolic protests of 1987, or the armed resistance in Lebanon during the Israeli invasion of 1982. The second Intifada stands somewhere in-between, and the struggle, which for the most part was a popular resistance, employed new methods, going beyond the traditional stone-throwing of the past".¹⁶

Throwing-stones are intentionally conducted by youth Palestinian to remind Israel that there is myth David beat Goliath using stones. By rising memorize, they success to show to the social-world that by throwing-stones showed to non-violent movement.¹⁷

Furthermore, Sherbok and El-Alami continue that "This was an uprising of the people, armed only with stones and crude petrol bombs, against one of the most sophisticated and well-resourced armies in the world. Young boys with stones confronted Israeli soldiers with automatic weapons, like David standing

¹⁴Dan Cohn Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict A Beginner's Guide.* (Oxford: One world, 2008), p. 233.

¹⁵Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict.*, pp. 162-164.

¹⁶Ramzy Baroud, *The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of A People's Struggle.* (London, Pluto Press, 2006), p. 59.

¹⁷Abu Nimer, *Nirkekerasan.*, pp. 186-187.

in the face of Goliath.”¹⁸ It shows that myth, David will always be the winner, whatever weapon does he uses.

I suppose that youth Palestinian successes to attract the collective memory of Israel myth about David-Goliath. Bard (2006) emphasizes in his statement that “There is no question that photographers and television camera crews seek the most dramatic pictures they can find, most often showing brutal Israeli Goliaths mistreating the suffering Palestinian Davids, but the context is often missing”.¹⁹ This myth is not just merely story. It has become the ideology which embedded in Israel. Therefore, the war (not only physically but also ideology) will always develop to escalate the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

With regard to the contestation of ideology, I suppose it is proper when we see using cosmic war. Jurgensmayer said that cosmic war, in simple word it is about demonization.²⁰ The relation between myth David-Goliath and demon, it is clear that David as prophet, he is sent by God to kill the demon. However, in the past time, David was from Israel. But now, the David’s way, that is using throwing stones, is used by youth Palestinian to attack Israel, here probably as Goliath.²¹ However, the war of ideology, it still have relation with the history of myth. It cannot be separated only for seeing today situation which as like violent and non-violent.

ESCALATING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT THROUGH THE MYTH

Myth can also escalate the conflict when it becomes the collective memory of identity. The escalating causes revenge each other. For the Israel-Palestine conflict, myth becomes significant screaming for Israel, when Israel reminds story about David and Goliath. Obviously, this story is written on their Holy-book (Bible) in 1 Samuel 17 1-58.

¹⁸Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli*, p. 214.

¹⁹Bard, *Myth and Fact*, p. 315.

²⁰Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror*, p. 146.

²¹ <https://www.truthtellers.org/alerts/newgoliathcrushesstonethrowingkids.html>

Aforementioned, the story is Goliath as the monster is beaten by David as little human only used stone.

Regarding to this story when youth Palestinian throw stone to Israel army, they are fear. They frighten that now they have many power (it can be seen by Israel army’s weapon), and it does not make sense if Israel army will be lose only because of throwing-stone. However, the story about David-Goliath has been embedded to them, so they still fear with stone. Although, Palestinian who throw stones, some of them their motivation is to show that they are non-violence.²²

However, according to Kepferer (1988) that myth is relevance with political modern situation, yet Israel still scare with stone. Even, their government prevails to shoot-dead for youth Palestinian who throw stones to them. However, there is no explanation about the reason why they constitutes that rule.²³ Furthermore, for Jurgensmayer’s theory about cosmic war, probably, it can explain why Israel is not brave with throwing stones. Cosmic war is about truth and evil.²⁴ Stone as symbol to conquer evil is trying for youth Palestine for beating Israel. Thus, why Israel is angry and prevails to kill who are throwing-stones.

The relation between religion and violent, Hasenclever divides religious conflict consists of three kinds: primordial, instrument and constructivist.²⁵ Myth as the source of Israel frightened is in primordial’s perspective. Actually, story of David-Goliath or Jalut-Talut has been in Bible (Old Testament) and Al-Qur’an. Both of holy-books agreed that prophet David can beat the monster. However, by remembering that story, Israel dislikes to repeat the story. Although David is from Israel, meanwhile Goliath is a Palestinian. Yet, when it is seen from the power, Israel, now, has complete tools of war. On the other hand, Palestine does not have it. So, probably, that is

²² Abu Nimer, *Nirkekerasan*, pp. 186-187.

²³ Kapferer, *Legends of People*, p. 42.

²⁴ Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in...*, p. 146.

²⁵ Andreas Hasenclever and Rittberger, *Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict*, (Sage, 2000), pp. 641-642.

why youth Palestinian only use stones to beat the Goliath-Israel. However, Israel always still replies the attack to Palestinian, though with military way.²⁶

The escalation of conflict which is caused by myth, it is full of memories. And, absolutely, there are many people or civilizations who scare that myth will repeat again. Myth has great power under awareness of people and ethnic or nation-state which has similarity of story. Myth can also be permanent memorizing when it has told to the next generation; moreover, the myth is in holy book. It will control people who believe, and become the escalating of conflict if it encounter with the different's one, such as the story about David-Goliath that really understood by Israelis will become true anytime.

I would like to explore the policy from Israel's government about shooting-died for youth Palestinian who throw-stones. At glance, it is not balance that weapon versus stone. However, they scare with stone because of David-Goliath story. It is like revenge for Israel, in where they have all of things (in ancient era is army with complete weapon), meanwhile David, probably as Palestinian today, only have stone. Finally, if it is revenge, Israel will protect and prevail any ways to prevent the action like as the story.

CONCLUSION

Myth can become a collective memory which persuades people attitude today. It is the foundation from Israel why they scare to stone. The history of stone is not usual story, but it has relation with the myth of David and Goliath in where only by stone David could beat monster Goliath. However, today, it is done by Palestinian to come back the memorizing of myth.

Myth has powerful action to call up collective memory which has been constructed for many years. Israel is always aware with the Palestinian attack, although it is caused

by stone. However, Israel replies their attack by weapon. It is absolutely unfair because of the story telling or myth, Israel's government applies to kill Palestinians who throw stone by weapon.

Myth is also able to be the source of the escalating conflict. How Israel's army be panic when youth Palestinians throw stones to them. Myth has significant power to remind Israel about the story about David-Goliath, where Goliath is beaten only by stone. Although, Abu Nimer said that using stone is for showing that Palestine is non-violent, or to show that the conflict between Israel-Palestine is unfair (stone versus weapon). Overall, myth has been in own area to support or even escalate the conflict as physically and ideologically.

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