

Collective memory as an identity basis: Looking into religious bonding beyond nations

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Abstract

How does collective memory sustain bonds between societies separated by national borders? This study examines the relationship between Indonesia and Palestine through the lens of collective memory, with particular attention to its material, social, and mental dimensions. Using a qualitative case-study approach that combines historical inquiry, systematic literature review, and interviews with selected informants involved in solidarity practices for Palestine, the study explores how memory is formed, transmitted, and reproduced across time. The findings show that the material dimension is reflected in sacred architecture, scriptural references, and symbolic media that preserve Palestine in Indonesian Muslim memory. The social dimension is manifested in sermons, religious gatherings, fundraising initiatives, and solidarity movements that continually reproduce remembrance in collective life. The mental dimension appears in religiosity, empathy, and shared moral identification, through which Palestine is experienced not merely as a distant political issue but as a meaningful religious and humanitarian concern. These interrelated dimensions indicate that Indonesian support for Palestine is sustained not only by diplomatic or political considerations, but also by a religiously mediated structure of memory that transcends territorial distance. The study contributes to international relations by showing that transnational solidarity may be maintained through shared memory and moral narratives alongside state interests. It also contributes to cultural studies by showing how religion, symbolism, and collective remembrance interact to shape enduring cross-border attachment.

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Introduction

The Indonesian government has played many roles in helping Palestine to be free from the shackles of colonialism, including fighting for the protection and guarantee of the rights of



the Palestinian people through the world peace agency, namely the United Nations, initiating the Declaration on Palestine through the Asian-African Conference, hosting the International Conference on the Questions of Jerusalem jointly organised with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and so on (Mudore, 2019; Saragih, 2018). Beyond state-level diplomacy, public support for Palestine has also been strongly expressed by Indonesian society, particularly among Muslim communities, through Friday sermons, solidarity demonstrations, humanitarian fundraising, and other forms of collective action (Hannase, 2018; Mudore, 2019). What is particularly noteworthy is that such support has been expressed continuously and consistently over time, even in contemporary contexts and on a broad social scale.

This enduring support raises an important question. If Palestine was one of the earliest parties to recognise Indonesia's independence *de jure*, can Indonesia's ongoing support for Palestine be understood merely as historical reciprocity? Or does a deeper bond continue to sustain this relationship across generations? These questions suggest that the relationship between Indonesia and Palestine may not be explained solely through diplomatic or political considerations. Instead, it may also be rooted in collective memory, through which past events, shared symbols, and religious meanings are preserved and reproduced across time.

The results of a review of scientific articles from reputable journals show that studies related to Indonesia and Palestine have predominantly focused on political issues, such as comparative analyses of Indonesian foreign policy, Indonesia's diplomatic role in advocating for Palestinian rights, and the direction of Indonesian foreign policy in promoting world order (Djuyandi et al., 2021; Marzuki & Tiola, 2021). Meanwhile, studies on collective memory have more often examined the memory of communities within national settings (Aguilar-Forero, 2022; Cittati et al., 2022; Hernández Castillo, 2022; Himawan et al., 2022). This tendency indicates a research gap: limited attention has been paid to how collective memory may operate as a transnational bond, especially in the context of Indonesia–Palestine relations.

This study introduces a collective memory perspective to explain the relationship between Indonesia and Palestine by focusing on three interrelated dimensions proposed by Erll (2011): material, mental, and social. The material dimension refers to symbols, artefacts, texts, and physical sites that preserve and transmit memory. The mental dimension concerns the meanings, emotions, and cognitive attachments through which memory is internalised by individuals and groups. The social dimension highlights the role of communication, ritual, and collective practices in sustaining shared remembrance. By using these three dimensions, this study seeks to move beyond a purely political reading of Indonesia–Palestine relations and to show how religiously mediated collective memory may connect the two societies beyond national boundaries. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the collective memory between Indonesians and Palestinians as a form of religious bonding that transcends the boundaries of the nation-state.

Method

The study uses a qualitative approach to explore the basis of religious ties beyond the boundaries of the Indonesian state and Palestine. The study adopts a case study with historical and intrinsic research designs (Sobari, 2022). The historical research design was chosen to trace the history of Indonesia's relationship with Palestine. The intrinsic research design is used to examine the collective memory between Indonesia and Palestine in a focused manner.

Data types

This study used two main data types. First, documentary data included scholarly journal articles, books, historical references, and digital publications relevant to Indonesia–Palestine relations, collective memory, and religious solidarity. The inclusion criteria covered scholarly publications, historical references, and academic books directly relevant to at least one of the following aspects: (1) historical relations between Indonesia and Palestine or the broader

Middle East, (2) theories of collective or cultural memory, and (3) social and religious expressions of solidarity towards Palestine. We excluded sources that were not directly related to the study's focus, lacked sufficient scholarly credibility, or substantially duplicated arguments already presented in stronger references. A summary of the screening criteria is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Summary of screening criteria

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Purpose in the Study	Examples of Included Sources
Scholarly journal articles	Peer-reviewed articles relevant to Indonesia–Palestine relations, collective memory, religious solidarity, or transnational Muslim networks	Articles not directly related to the study focus, lacking academic relevance, or duplicating stronger sources	To provide conceptual, empirical, and comparative academic support	Aguilar-Forero (2022); Assmann and Czaplicka (1995); Hirst et al. (2018); Marzuki and Tiola (2021)
Historical books and monographs	Books and monographs relevant to Indonesian history, Middle Eastern networks, colonialism, and Palestine	Books lacking direct relevance to the historical formation of the Indonesia–Palestine bond	To trace long-term historical relations and memory formation	Azra (1994); Hassan (1980); Hatta (1976); Ricklefs (2005)
Theoretical and methodological books	Works that provide conceptual grounding for collective memory and research design	General works without direct contribution to the analytical or methodological framework	To support the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study	Erlil (2011); Gough et al. (2012); Sobari (2022)
Religious and textual references	Religious texts or supporting interpretive sources relevant to Al-Aqsa, Sham, and Islamic memory of Palestine	Sources without relevance to the symbolic and religious dimension of Palestine	To explain the material and mental dimensions of collective memory	Asy-Syaqawi (2014); 'Keberkahan Bumi Syam' (2006)
News and digital publications	Publicly accessible digital sources used only to support contemporary contextual references	Non-academic sources used as core evidence or sources lacking contextual relevance	To provide limited contemporary contextual support	Ramzi (2022)

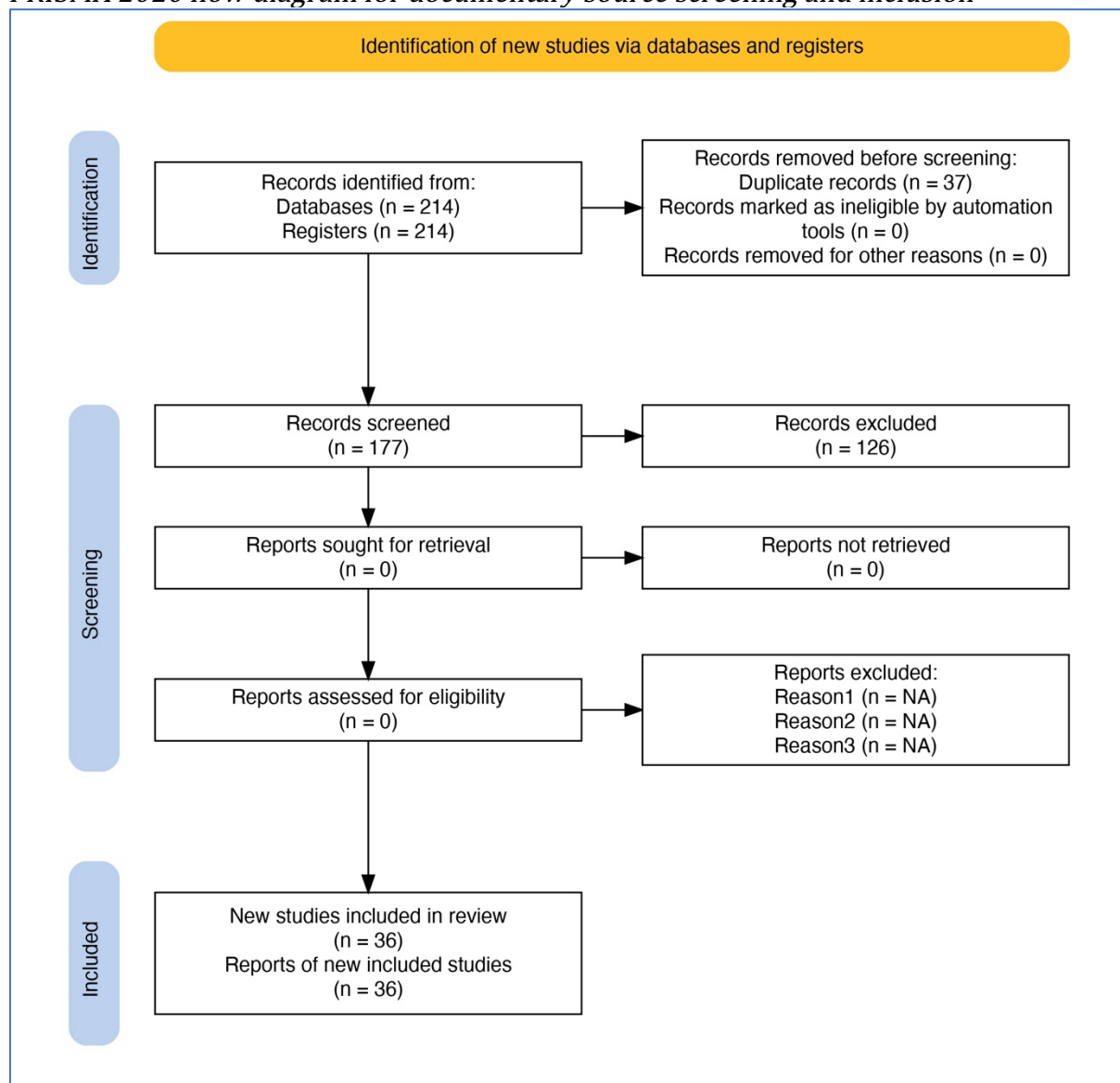
Second, empirical data consisted of interview transcripts obtained from informants who actively used Palestinian attributes or were involved in social assistance activities for Palestine. This combination of documentary and interview data was intended to capture both the historical formation and the contemporary reproduction of collective memory.

Data collection method

Data collection was carried out by conducting a literature search using the systematic literature review (SLR) technique through seven stages, namely initiating review activities; formulating questions, frameworks, and approaches; defining literature search criteria; coding to match or construct thinking concepts; apply a quality assessment according to the criteria; perform synthesis; and the seventh is interpreting the findings (Gough et al., 2012). To strengthen methodological transparency, the documentary screening process followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework (Page et al., 2021). Figure 1 presents the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. The literature search was conducted through Scopus, JSTOR accessed via institutional subscriptions, Google Scholar, printed books from the National Library of Indonesia (Perpusnas), and other relevant digital academic sources. The search focused on publications discussing Indonesia–Palestine relations, collective memory, cultural memory, religious solidarity, and transnational Muslim networks. The main search strings included combinations such as ‘history’ AND ‘Palestine’ AND ‘Indonesia’, ‘collective memory’ AND ‘Indonesia’ AND ‘Palestine’, ‘religious solidarity’ AND ‘Palestine’, and related keyword variations. Because this study also addresses long-term historical relations, it did not apply a strict publication-year limitation; it retained earlier historical and theoretical works when they were foundational to the analysis.

Figure 1.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for documentary source screening and inclusion



In addition to the documentary review, the study also conducted interviews with two informants. The informants were selected through purposive sampling because the study required participants who were directly involved in solidarity practices related to Palestine and therefore able to provide information-rich insights relevant to the research focus. Both informants were actively engaged in fundraising and humanitarian support activities for Palestine within a community concerned with Palestinian solidarity. Their involvement made them particularly relevant for examining how collective memory is expressed in social practice and internalised in personal meaning. The informants were not intended to represent Indonesian society statistically, but to provide focused insight into the social and mental dimensions of collective memory explored in this study. Interviews were conducted for approximately 25 minutes with each informant. The research instrument was constructed from three-dimensional concepts initiated by Erll (2011), the material, mental, and social dimensions.

In the interview stage, the three-dimensional framework proposed by Erll (2011) was used not only as a general conceptual reference but also as an analytical guide for formulating interview prompts and coding categories. The material dimension was used to identify references to objects, symbols, texts, architecture, and media associated with Palestine. The social dimension was used to identify collective practices such as sermons, fundraising, community activities, and organisational participation. The mental dimension was used to capture feelings, meanings, empathy, religiosity, and personal attachment expressed by the informants when discussing Palestine.

After the data is collected, data analysis is carried out using interpretive analysis techniques to reveal the meaning of the data that has been collected. Following the transcription of interview data, we engaged in a rigorous process of interpretation, wherein initial codes were systematically analysed and refined to uncover deeper meanings and insights embedded within the data. This interpretive process involved iterative review and comparison of codes and themes, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the underlying narratives and perspectives expressed by participants. Concerning historical research, interpretation is carried out through analysis and synthesis, in which the decomposition and synthesis of the facts found are then compiled in historical writing.

For documentary sources, interpretive analysis was conducted by identifying recurring historical narratives, symbolic references, and religious meanings that reflected the formation of collective memory between Indonesia and Palestine. For interview data, the transcripts were read repeatedly, coded according to the three analytical dimensions, and then interpreted to identify how memory was expressed, transmitted, and connected to acts of solidarity. The analysis therefore combined historical interpretation with thematic interpretation in order to explain both the continuity and the contemporary relevance of collective memory.

Data visualisation

To enhance the clarity of the findings, the results are presented not only in narrative form but also through a conceptual figure that maps the relationship among the material, social, and mental dimensions of Indonesian–Palestinian collective memory. Historical evidence is used as supporting material to explain how these dimensions developed and became socially meaningful across time.

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

Trustworthiness was strengthened through data triangulation between documentary sources and interview findings. The use of different data types enabled the study to compare historical accounts, conceptual interpretations, and contemporary expressions of solidarity. Ethical consideration was applied by using interview data only for research purposes and by presenting the informants' views in an interpretive and non-harmful manner.

Results and Discussion

The dimensions of collective memory in Indonesian–Palestinian bonding

The findings of this study show that the relationship between Indonesia and Palestine can be understood through three interrelated dimensions of collective memory proposed by Erll (2011), namely the material, social, and mental dimensions (see Figure 2). Based on documentary data drawn from historical references, scholarly literature, religious texts, and supported by interview findings, these three dimensions reveal that the bond between the two is not maintained merely through diplomatic relations, but also through sacred symbols, collective practices, and internalised religious meanings that continue to be reproduced across time. In this sense, collective memory becomes a transnational bond because it connects past events with present forms of solidarity and gives enduring meaning to Indonesia's support for Palestine.

As communal beings, humans cannot remember without social events/context and background; this is called collective memory (*kollektives Gedächtnis*) (Wattimena, 2009, 2016). Three areas become the main topic of collective memory from the point of view of cultural memory: first, Halbwachs's theory depends on individual memory in social structures; secondly, his study of intergenerational forms of memory; and third, the expansion of the term collective memory to involve the social transmission and the formation of traditions (Erll, 2011).

Social background allows people to see their memory. With their communication skills, members of an organisation can remember the past by organising, transferring, and understanding ideas and values (Minarova-Banjac, 2018). Preserving memories for a long time requires a medium to mediate between memories and the future desired by certain groups or communities. In Indonesia's review, many things underlie collective memory, including the nation's traumatic memory. Indonesia experienced a long journey in its struggle for independence, where blood and material shed became a condition for liberation from colonialism.

One form of collective memory is memory belonging to religious groups and kinship ties; this memory bond can bind generations through communication and social interaction (Erll, 2011; Velicu, 2011). Memory studies aim to find anchor links between the past and the present in a socio-cultural context and explore humans' dynamics and creative processes in remembering (Erll, 2011).

Material dimension

Memories can be awakened from various things. The media can become a place to develop and maintain people's memories of 'things' in the past and become lasting knowledge to this day. The media in question can be in the form of architecture or written media. It can mediate memories and become a sign that transcends time so that the current generation can interpret the signs conveyed. Preserving this memory is a form of identity, especially for Indonesian Muslims in maintaining their religious memory. Arguments of Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) related to memory require media to store memory.

In this study, documentary sources and religious references indicate that the material dimension of collective memory is particularly visible in the way Palestine is remembered through sacred architecture, scriptural texts, and contemporary symbolic representations. These material forms function as carriers of memory because they preserve meanings that can be repeatedly recalled by people who may have no direct experience of Palestine itself. Thus, the material dimension is not limited to physical objects alone, but also includes texts and media that stabilise remembrance and make it transmissible across generations.

The media in the form of architecture is the existence of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This mosque is located in the old city of Jerusalem, with an area of about 35 hectares. Because of its

high historical value, the Al-Aqsa Mosque was designated by UNESCO as a world heritage reserve. The importance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims because of its position builds a very long memory. This mosque was the first Qibla for Muslims before the Prophet Muhammad SAW received a revelation to move the Qibla to the Kaaba in Mecca. In addition, this mosque is a mosque that has virtues such as the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

The significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque illustrates the material dimension in Erll's framework because the site serves as a durable mnemonic object. For Indonesian Muslims, Al-Aqsa is not merely a distant religious monument, but a sacred place that is continuously remembered through teaching, preaching, and visual representation. Its religious significance allows Palestine to remain present in collective consciousness despite geographical distance. In this case, architecture functions not only as a physical structure, but also as a symbolic medium through which memory is stored and repeatedly reactivated.

Memories stored in other media are memories in verses of Islamic teachings. The attachment of memory with the Aqsa Mosque is often mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an. Surah Al-Isra' (17:1) reads, "Glory be to the One Who took His servant Muḥammad by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed, so that We may show him some of Our signs. Indeed, He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (Qur'an 17:1; Khattab, n.d.; see also 'Keberkahan Bumi Syam', 2006). This verse reminds Muslims of the events of the Isra' Mi'raj. Well known to Muslims is the spiritual journey in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW travelled from the Grand Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque and then ascended to Sidratul Muntaha, passing through the seven layers of the sky.

Islamic teachings that also give rise to a shared memory of the land of Palestine are a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad narrated by Abu Dawud, which reads, 'It will turn out that you will be armed troops, one is Sham, one in Yemen and one in Iraq. Ibn Hawalah said: Choose for me, Messenger of Allah, if I reach that time. He replied: Go to Sham, for it is Allah's chosen land, to which his best servants will be gathered, but if you are unwilling, go to your Yemen, and draw water from your tanks, for Allah has on my account taken special charge of Sham and its people' [HR Abu Dawud No: 2483] (Asy-Syaqawi, 2014). This hadith shows that Palestine, as part of the land of Sham, is a blessed land.

These religious texts also demonstrate how the material dimension operates. The Qur'an and hadith serve as mnemonic media that preserve Palestine within Islamic sacred history. Because these texts are repeatedly read, taught, and interpreted in religious life, they make remembrance of Palestine durable and socially reproducible. In other words, scriptural references materially mediate the bond with Palestine by giving the land spiritual significance for Indonesian Muslims. This helps explain why Palestine occupies a meaningful place in collective memory even among those who have never encountered it directly.

Beyond sacred architecture and religious texts, documentary evidence and interview findings suggest that contemporary media representations also reinforce this material dimension. News reports, digital images, Palestinian symbols, and attributes used in public spaces or solidarity events function as modern mnemonic artefacts. These mediated forms do not create memory from nothing; rather, they reactivate previously established religious and historical meanings. As a result, the material dimension links sacred memory with present-day public visibility and helps sustain emotional and symbolic attachment to Palestine in Indonesian society.

The various media above, which include buildings and verses in Islamic teachings, have proven to build shared memory among Muslims worldwide. This shared memory ultimately creates bonds between Islamic countries, especially Indonesia and Palestine.

Social dimension

Memory can also last forever with rituals or social groups that are formed. The lasting memory of Palestine is one which is cared for through religious and social community groups. There are many religious group niches in Indonesia. The two largest organisations are Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. For example, Muhammadiyah, through Lazizmu, has a Peduli Palestina programme that focuses on raising funds for Palestine. Examples of social organisations that specifically show concern for Palestine include the Gerakan Indonesia Senang and the Komite Nasional untuk Rakyat Palestina (KNRP). In the little niche, there are also assemblies or study groups. In each of these study groups, the memory of Palestine is perpetuated. The recitation is led by a cleric or religious leader, who often presents a study and discussion of the inner bond with Palestine in each of his lectures.

The documentary data and interview results show that the memory of Palestine in Indonesia is not only stored in symbols and texts, but also reproduced through social interaction. This is the essence of the social dimension in Erll's framework: memory remains alive because it is repeated, communicated, and institutionalised within communities. In the Indonesian context, religious gatherings, sermons, study circles, fundraising events, and organisational activism become important arenas through which Palestine is remembered as part of a shared religious and moral concern.

Oralism is one of the essential aspects of the formation of collective memory (Lattu, 2019). Oral culture can shape people's habits to remember the past. Indonesia, whose primary culture is speech culture, is very involved in forming memories. Oral lectures dominate the spread of religion in Indonesia. It is in line with Halbwachs's opinion that memory functions as a binder of togetherness in this social group. Memories must be repeated and disseminated to perpetuate the group's memory (Lattu, 2019). This study is a social dimension that plays a significant role in building memories about the similarity of religiosity.

The repeated mention of Palestine in oral religious settings is analytically important because it transforms a distant issue into a collectively shared memory. When preachers, religious teachers, and community leaders repeatedly frame Palestine in sermons and recitations, they do more than convey information. They reproduce an interpretive framework through which Palestine is understood as relevant to Indonesian Muslim identity. In this way, social repetition strengthens memory by embedding it in routine forms of communication and communal life.

Furthermore, based on literature searches and interviews that have been conducted, these religious groups develop altruistic souls. This altruistic act is shown by their willingness to raise and distribute humanitarian aid to Palestine. The humanitarian conflict between Israel and Palestine has caused many victims, mainly civilians, ranging from toddlers to old adults. The presence of the media in presenting news on the plight of Palestinians is one of the triggers to call out memories so that a sense of humanity rises to assist. The teachings of humanity conveyed at sacred moments are realised by helping materially or immaterially in the form of prayers for the Palestinians. The group or individual actions of Indonesians can be studied psychologically using social representation theory (Hirst et al., 2018), which seeks to understand how groups 'describe' their history in memory and how these descriptions or representations influence the group's collective attitudes and behaviours.

Interview findings support this interpretation by showing that participation in solidarity activities is often understood by informants not merely as charity, but as an expression of togetherness with fellow Muslims in Palestine. This demonstrates that the social dimension of memory is not passive. It moves from remembrance to organised action. Fundraising, public campaigns, and prayer assemblies become mechanisms through which memory is enacted and made visible. The social dimension therefore helps explain why collective memory about

Palestine continues to circulate across generations and why it is capable of producing concrete forms of solidarity in Indonesian society.

Mental dimension

In this dimension, memory is based on how individual memories are called up. Religiosity is the most influential memory in one's attachment to memory. A person's memory moves because there is the same feeling. This same feeling arises from understanding the various existing media, both buildings in the form of mosques and the verses described above. The appreciation of the media above is proven to generate religious values. These values can mediate individual feelings and behaviour to be bound to Palestine.

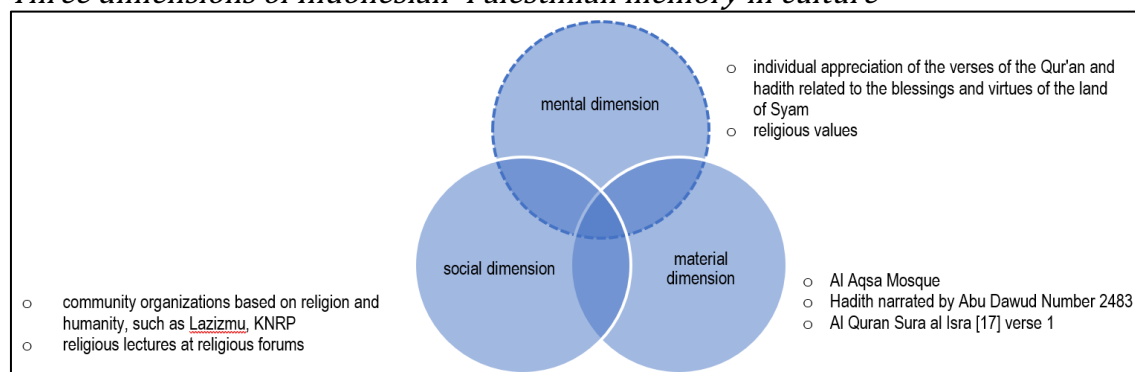
Supported by the interview data, the findings indicate that the mental dimension is central in explaining why the Indonesian public, especially Muslims, can feel emotionally close to Palestine despite the absence of territorial proximity. In Erll's framework, the mental dimension refers to the internal processes through which memory becomes meaningful at the level of feeling, perception, and cognition. In this study, such processes are strongly shaped by religiosity, empathy, and the perception of shared identity.

The interview results suggest that attachment to Palestine is often expressed through a sense of sameness grounded in religious belief. Informants' responses indicate that Palestine is remembered not only because it appears in public discourse, but because it is inwardly interpreted as part of a sacred and moral universe shared by Muslims. This shows that memory becomes socially powerful only when it is also mentally internalised. The existence of Al-Aqsa, the presence of Qur'anic and hadith references, and the repetition of solidarity narratives in communal life acquire force because individuals perceive them as personally and spiritually meaningful.

The mental dimension also explains how collective memory can motivate action. Feelings of compassion, grief, and moral responsibility emerge when individuals interpret Palestinian suffering through the lens of shared faith and sacred history. In this sense, religious identity acts as an interpretive frame that gives emotional depth to memory. Collective memory is therefore not simply about recalling the past; it is about how the past is inwardly felt, valued, and transformed into contemporary commitment. This is why religiosity becomes a crucial factor in sustaining the Indonesia–Palestine bond beyond formal diplomatic relations.

Figure 2.

Three dimensions of Indonesian–Palestinian memory in culture



Source: Adapted from Erll (2011).

Historical review as supporting evidence of memory formation

Indonesia and Palestine have similarities in terms of destiny as Western colonies and religion. These commonalities make these two countries have a fairly close relationship. The historical findings in this study function as supporting evidence that strengthens the three thematic dimensions discussed above. Rather than standing as a separate descriptive narrative,

the historical review helps explain how collective memory between Indonesia and Palestine was formed, transmitted, and sustained over time.

While direct evidence of contact between Indonesia and Palestine remains scarce in the existing literature, the broader historical context of economic, political, and transregional networks between the Indonesian archipelago and the Middle East suggests the possibility of such interactions. The Palestinian territories were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, which, during that period, had long established relations with Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago, including Aceh, dating back to the 16th century. The relationship between Ottoman and Aceh was due to trade, politics, and religion. Aceh needed the Ottoman's protection from the Portuguese, so the kingdom was willing to become a vassal of the Ottoman in 1566. Relations between the two continued to develop, and in the 19th century, during the Aceh War, the Ottoman publicly affirmed its long-standing friendship with Aceh through an announcement in its official newspaper (Hamka, 2006; Madjid, 2013; Said, 2007).

Meanwhile, the development of Islam in Indonesia in the 17th–18th centuries could not be separated from the network of scholars who studied in the Middle East (Azra, 1994). They travelled to Hijaz (which includes Makkah and Medina) not only for pilgrimage, but were also to pursue their studies. Living in a central hub for learning during this period, they were influenced by Islamic scholars from various regions, including Palestine, who were also studying and teaching in Hijaz. When they return home, they become transmitters. Nur Al-Din Al-Raniri, Abd Al-Ra'uf Al-Sinkili, and Muhammad Yusuf Al-Maqqassari became three influential scholars who spread the idea of renewal in the Malay region of Indonesia, which can be said to have been heavily influenced by developments in the Middle East which were patterned Sunni, maintaining harmony between sharia and *tasawuf* (Muhammad, 2012).

These historical networks are especially relevant to the mental and social dimensions of collective memory. They show that the Indonesia–Palestine bond did not arise only from contemporary political sympathy, but from older transregional circuits of Islamic learning and interaction. Through ulama mobility, religious authority, and intellectual exchange, memories associated with the Middle East – including Palestine – could circulate and later be integrated into Indonesian religious consciousness.

The above network of Indonesian scholars who studied in the Middle East in the 17th–18th centuries has the potential to be part of the mental dimension of the collective memory of Indonesia and Palestine. This can also resonate with the broader history of colonisation Indonesian region was the best producer of spices whose products were distributed to the West. Western trading companies were competing with each other to establish cooperation with local authorities in Indonesia after seeing the very promising economic potential. Unfortunately, this cooperation culminated in the domination of Indonesian territory, where the VOC was the strongest and succeeded in getting its feet and starting a new hegemony in this region's economic, political and social fields. However, since the VOC went bankrupt in 1799, all of its territory in the East Indies was taken over by the Dutch kingdom and was named the Dutch East Indies. This change of power is called the formation of a colonial state (Ricklefs, 2005).

The history of Palestine is deeply complex. Initially, the region was part of the Ottoman Empire. However, in the late 19th century, Jewish groups formed the World Zionist Organization in 1897, aiming to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The British supported the plan through the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917 (Nor, 2010). Nevertheless, following the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I, the Palestinian territories fell into British control in 1917. This loss had a significant impact on Palestine, leading to the League of Nations granting Britain the mandate to administer the region. However, this decision was rejected by the Palestinian clerical leaders. The Grand Mufti of Palestine, Syeikh Amin Husseini, for example, has always tried to break away from British colonialism (Muchsin, 2015).

The parallel experiences of colonial domination in Indonesia and Palestine provided an interpretive basis through which Indonesian society could view the Palestinian struggle as morally familiar. This historical convergence supports the mental dimension because memory often becomes powerful when it is linked to perceived similarity in suffering, struggle, and dignity. It also reinforces the social dimension, since anti-colonial narratives can be collectively circulated as part of a broader discourse of solidarity.

Efforts to gain independence from Western colonialism have historically intersected in the cases of both Indonesia and Palestine. It happened because Muslim networks in the Middle East were strong, especially during the 19th–20th centuries. In his book *Diplomacy of the Indonesian Revolution Abroad*, Hassan (1980) explained a lot about how Indonesian youth networks in the Middle East were formed and synergised with Muslim youth who opposed colonialism. In the 19th century, many Indonesian youths pursued their studies in the Middle East, particularly in Mecca and other regions of present-day Saudi Arabia. Their overseas education was not limited to religious studies, but also encompassed broader fields of general knowledge. This trend shifted in the 20th century, as cities such as Cairo and Baghdad emerged as new centres of higher education.

In these countries, they received education and had the spirit of struggle against colonialism. It is motivated by the similarity in which most young people embrace Islam so that they hold fast to a struggle against colonialism affiliated with infidels. It is also taboo for them to cooperate with the colonialists. The youths are also aware of the cognate identity between Indonesia and Malaya, reflected in the names of the organisations they form, namely Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia-Malaya (Perpindom) (Indonesian-Malaysian Youth Association) in Egypt, Persatuan Talabah Indonesia-Malaya in Saudi Arabia (Indonesian-Malaya Talabah Association), and Ceylon Keris (Indonesian-Peninsula People's Unity) in Ceylon. The movements they carried out in the Middle East were also connected with the struggles carried out by Muslims in the Dutch East Indies (Hassan, 1980). In this case, the resistance before World War I was carried out openly.

Relations between Indonesian ulama and youth in the Middle East and with Islamic leaders there continued to be established from World War I to II. Indonesian youths in the Middle East have even forged relationships with Indonesian youths in Europe. In 1926, Janan Thaib, representing Al-Jamiyatul Khairiyatul Jawiyah, was sent to the Netherlands to meet Muhammad Hatta, who was chairman of the Indonesian Association at that time. The meeting was the first step in coordinating Indonesia's struggle abroad. This network is significant and contributes to supporting Indonesian independence.

Figure 3.

Janan Thaib (seated) with the leadership of Perhimpunan Indonesia in the Netherlands; from left: Mr Sunaryo, Mr Sartono, Dr Mohammad Hatta and Mr Wiryono



Source: Hassan (1980, p. 29).

This historical evidence indicates that the social basis of solidarity was already present in earlier Muslim networks that linked Indonesia with the broader Middle East. Such networks mattered not only politically, but also mnemonically, because they created channels through which ideas of brotherhood, anti-colonialism, and shared Islamic destiny were transmitted and preserved.

During World War II, the spirit of nationalism among the youth in the Middle East intensified. Through the underground movement, they devised a strategy to gain support from the Indonesian people in the Middle East and the attention of Muslim leaders in the Middle East to achieve Indonesian independence. A total of six people (later called the Committee of Six) were gathered to carry out the mission against the Dutch. They consisted of Ismail Banda (East Sumatra), Ahmad Hasyim Amak (South Sumatra), Abdulrahman Ismail (Kalimantan), Abduljalii Hasan (Malaya), Muhammad Dawam (South Sumatra), and M. Zein Hassan (Minangkabau). They attempted to dispel Queen Wilhelmina's intention in her speech, which was published in the daily *Le Journal d'Égypte*, together with the Indonesian people, to liberate Indonesia from Japanese occupation. They garnered support from the Arab world for Indonesian independence. Various methods were taken to achieve this goal, such as the Indonesian-Malayan people taking the stand not to ally with the Dutch and their allies, approaching those who were influenced by the Dutch, approaching Indonesian-Malaysian classists and services working on allied ships that anchored in the Middle East, carrying out propaganda through broadcasts, brochures and stencil magazines against Dutch magazines in the Indonesian language such as *Bintang Timur* and *Penyuluh*, as well as dispelling hoaxes from the Netherlands (Hassan, 1980).

The peak support from the Middle East happened when the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Syeikh Amin Hussein, on 6 September 1944, via Radio Berlin, expressed congratulations on Indonesian independence, which at that time coincided with Japan's recognition of Indonesian independence. Furthermore, he conveyed a special telegram to the Japanese Prime Minister, expressing his support for Indonesia's independence. Syeikh Amin's role in this context was notably significant, as he was a prominent figure in the Palestinian nationalist movement who had previously engaged in collaboration with Germany and the Axis powers during World War II in pursuit of Palestinian independence. His expression of support was met with enthusiasm by Indonesian Islamic scholars. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, serving as the chairman of Masyumi, an Indonesian Islamic organisation initiated by Japan during the occupation, issued a formal response acknowledging and appreciating this support:

With regard to your attention and that of the entire Islamic world concerning the promise of Indonesian independence, the Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, on behalf of the Muslims throughout Indonesia, expresses its gratitude ... May your struggle for the independence of Palestine and other Arab nations be successful. (Aboebakar, 1957, p. 342)

Support was also manifested at the Pan Arabian conference (which later became the Arab League) in Alexandria. Ismail Banda became Perpindom's representative at the event. He delivered a note to the prime ministers and foreign ministers of these countries to be able to recognise Indonesia's independence, guarantee Indonesia's unity as before colonialism occurred, and join Indonesian representatives to support peace after the war. The request was submitted on behalf of the 'Great Indonesia Association'. It was authorised by the Prime Minister of Iraq, JM Hamdi Al Bahjahji Pasya, to broadcast a statement that was later published in the magazine *Suara Perpindom* in April 1945:

Indonesia must be independent. Therefore it is a religious nation and has rights for them according to the Atlantic Charter and may not be returned to the Netherlands. It is great hope that the Allied countries will help the Indonesian people realise their aspirations. As for the Arab countries, their obligation is to support Indonesia to achieve its independence. (Hassan, 1980, p. 41)

These episodes are historically significant because they provided memorable reference points that later generations could recall as evidence of closeness between Indonesia and Palestine. In terms of collective memory, such events become powerful not only because they occurred, but because they are narrated as moments of mutual recognition and solidarity. This historical romanticism helps explain why support for Palestine in Indonesia is often framed not only as a political position but also as the continuation of a morally meaningful historical relationship.

The actions taken by Middle Eastern countries in support of Indonesia's independence subsequently influenced the political decisions of the Indonesian government. In the Preamble of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution, the first sentence stated, 'That in fact Independence is the right of all nations and because of that, colonialism over the world must be abolished, because it is not in accordance with humanity and justice'. It shows that Indonesia is committed to supporting the abolition of colonialism in the world and is reflected in the constitutional basis of its foreign policy. Meanwhile, on the operational basis of Indonesia's foreign policy, the government applies the 'free and active' principle (Windiani, 2013). The term 'free and active' reflects Indonesia's position after World War II. Indonesia, in the international community, is not in the two blocks (West and East), chooses its way to overcome global problems, and strives to maintain peace and ease tensions between the two blocks (Hatta, 1976).

At a time when Indonesia was defending its independence and forming its government, Palestine's position was increasingly pressured with the declaration of the birth of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948. Arabs then fought against Israel, which led to the country's defeat in July 1949. Israel's victory made part of the British territory in Palestine taken over by the country while at the same time displacing Arab-Palestinian citizens. In addition to this victory, Israel became a member of the United Nations in 1949. In response, Palestinian leaders sustained their efforts by organising grassroots initiatives and political movements, such as the Palestinian Students' Union and the Arab National Movement (ANM), to liberate Palestine (Dhanani, 1982).

As a country with longstanding relations with Palestine, Indonesia continues to support and strive for this country to gain independence. Not only does its foreign policy reflect support for peace, but Indonesia is also an active member of various international organisations that support the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) (Satris, 2019). When Israel declared its independence, Indonesia did not recognise it as a form of support for Palestine. Instead, the Indonesian government preferred to recognise the existence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat in 1974. Through this organisation, Yasser Arafat declared Palestinian independence on 15 November 1988, and was immediately recognised by Indonesia the next day. The Indonesian government had also established diplomatic relations with Palestine. The Palestinian Embassy office was officially opened in Jakarta in 1991, and in 1993, President Yasser Arafat visited Indonesia to meet President Suharto (Aslamiah & Jamaan, 2015).

Relations between Indonesia and Palestine continued after the two countries became independent. In 2006, for instance, when Hamas won the general election in Palestine, the Indonesian government respected this result and acknowledged that the Palestinian government had succeeded in holding a democratic government in their country. In 2007 and 2010, President Mahmoud Abbas also visited Indonesia to revive the peace process and internal Palestinian reconciliation in the Fatah and Hamas cases and continued to be committed to achieving absolute Palestinian independence. In 2016, for example, in the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Indonesia encouraged its leaders to support Palestine in international forums. Indonesia also pushes for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah in the OIC (Aslamiah & Jamaan, 2015).

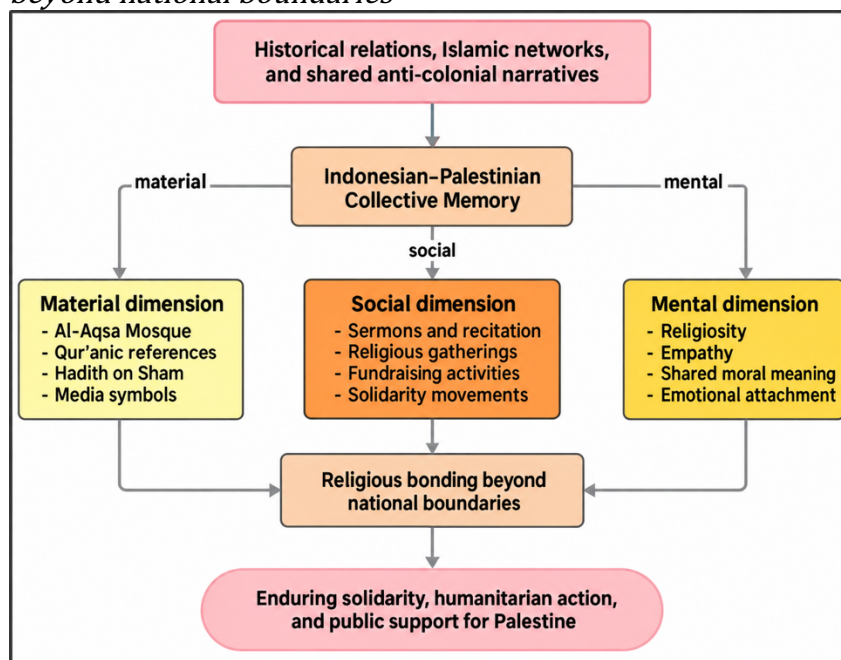
This historical review shows that there has been a long process of maintaining ties between Indonesia and Palestine. This lengthy process requires three interrelated dimensions, namely the individual, social, and material so that collective memory remains firmly rooted (Erll, 2011) to form unity within a community group. Memory can also bind various people who have different backgrounds to preserve collective identity in a society (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Collective memory can span across generations. This historical review also reinforces the relationship between the state of Indonesia and Palestine so that the Government of Indonesia is intensely fighting for Palestinian rights. Conversely, the Palestinian authorities have frequently expressed their gratitude towards Indonesia (Ramzi, 2022).

These post-independence developments show that the relationship between Indonesia and Palestine has continued to be reaffirmed not only at the level of state diplomacy, but also through broader social and religious meanings attached to Palestine in Indonesian society. In this regard, historical relations function as an important foundation that reinforces the material, social, and mental dimensions of collective memory discussed above. The historical record shows that support for Palestine is not merely a contemporary political response, but part of a longer process through which shared memories of religion, anti-colonial struggle, and moral solidarity have been preserved and reproduced.

Taken together, the findings of this study show that collective memory connects Indonesia and Palestine through the interaction of material symbols, social practices, and mental attachment, all of which are reinforced by historical relations and shared anti-colonial narratives. The material dimension is reflected in sacred sites, scriptural references, and symbolic media that preserve Palestine in religious memory. The social dimension is reflected in sermons, religious gatherings, solidarity movements, and humanitarian activities that repeatedly reproduce remembrance in collective life. The mental dimension is reflected in religiosity, empathy, and shared moral identification that make Palestine emotionally meaningful for Indonesian Muslims. In this way, religious identity plays a crucial role because it provides the interpretive frame through which memory becomes enduring, socially relevant, and capable of mobilising support beyond national boundaries. Figure 4 below summarises this overall relationship.

Figure 4.

A conceptual model of Indonesian–Palestinian collective memory: the interaction of historical relations and the material, social and mental dimensions in sustaining religious bonding beyond national boundaries



Source: Adapted from Erll (2011).

As illustrated in Figure 4, collective memory between Indonesia and Palestine is sustained through the continuous interaction of symbolic references, communal practices, and internalised meanings, all of which are grounded in historical relations and shared anti-colonial experiences. This confirms that the bond between Indonesia and Palestine is maintained not only through formal diplomatic relations, but also through a religiously mediated structure of memory that continues to shape solidarity in the present.

Conclusion

Collective memory serves as a transnational bond between Indonesia and Palestine, sustained through the interaction of material, social, and mental dimensions that make Palestine meaningful in Indonesian Muslim society not only as a political issue, but also as a religious and moral concern. Religious identity plays a central role in this process by providing the interpretive framework through which historical narratives, sacred symbols, and collective practices become emotionally meaningful and socially actionable. Viewed from this perspective, Indonesia–Palestine relations extend beyond political and diplomatic considerations, as solidarity is also maintained through a shared structure of memory that transcends national boundaries. Future research may develop a more systematic instrument to examine transnational collective memory, compare its operation across different religious or national identities, and explore related concepts such as social representation, affective solidarity, and transnational identity.

Authors' contributions

Nisa A'rafiyah Tri Wulandari: Conceptualisation, methodology, and writing – original draft. Siti Utami Dewi Ningrum: Investigation (interviews) and formal analysis. Mitra Mustaricha: Historical data collection and writing – review and editing. Mutia Kamala Mukhtar: Literature review and data curation. Erna Risnawati: Validation and writing – review and editing. Wildan: Visualisation and writing – review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and confirm that no conflicts of interest exist.

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Ethics Approval

This study combined a documentary review with semi-structured interviews with two adult informants. LPPM UT confirmed that formal ethical approval was not required. We obtained informed consent from both informants and anonymised their identities.

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