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**DOI**

[10.1177/17506980231204176](https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231204176)

**Publication date**

2023

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Memory Studies

**License**

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**Citation for published version (APA):**

Arps, A. (2023). *Memori melompat* ('jumping memory'): The mnemonic motion of Indonesian popular culture and the need for a local reframing. *Memory Studies*, 16(6), 1423-1435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231204176>

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# **Memori melompat ('jumping memory'): The mnemonic motion of Indonesian popular culture and the need for a local reframing**

Memory Studies

2023, Vol. 16(6) 1423–1435

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DOI: 10.1177/17506980231204176

[journals.sagepub.com/home/mss](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/mss)**Arnoud Arps**

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## **Abstract**

The third phase of memory studies is considered to have taken memory into 'the global age', yet this article illustrates that in many ways, the nation has since been reinstated within a global context. This article critically scrutinises the idea that memory travels freely and shows that a straightforward mobility of cultural memory does not apply to every local context. In Indonesia, memory travels temporarily, briefly and not far. It therefore suggests more of a jump rather than a journey. As a demonstrative semantic device, the Indonesian term *memori melompat* (jumping memory) signifies cultural memory formation beyond the West. Nevertheless, the choice of an Indonesian term does not denote a uniqueness to Indonesia, but emphasises instead that Indonesian popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence is indicative of the need for a local reframing of existing memory concepts to better understand contemporary engagements with the (colonial) past.

## **Keywords**

Indonesia, jumping memory, locality, *memori melompat*, popular culture, reframing

## **Introduction**

The 1950 Indonesian war film *Darah dan Doa* (The Long March) tells the story of the Siliwangi Division and its leader Captain Sudarto during the Indonesian War of Independence (1945–1949). It is considered to be the first ever Indonesian film as it was released just a year after the Indonesian War of Independence ended. The film was culturally influential and the first day of shooting, 30 March, is up to now celebrated in Indonesia as National Film Day. The film has a vibrant afterlife in contemporary fan-made posters, but more significantly, it kicked off waves of films about the independence struggle called *film perjuangan* (struggle films) (Heider, 1991). These films do not exist as an isolated form of memory, but exist within a broader and highly active memory culture

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about the war. Within this contemporary Indonesian memory culture, popular culture takes centre stage in the construction and negotiation of the past.

Indonesian popular culture has been structurally and continuously referring to its colonial past, focusing particularly on the Indonesian War of Independence. Performances of key battles of the war can be watched in city streets across the archipelago, as historical re-enactment groups have stepped up their activities in the past decade. Indonesian war films have attracted widespread attention by releases in cinemas, school screenings, and through critical acclaim at national and international film festivals. As in many other genres, Indonesian nationalist songs that 'glorify the Indonesian Revolution and the struggle for independence from the Dutch' have been released in Indonesian electronic dance music and are growing in popularity (Van Dijk, 2003: 31). With a population of more than 270 million people, consisting of more than 18,000 islands and having more than 800 languages, the Indonesian archipelagic state is fertile ground for plural memory-making. In its imagination and remembrance of the Independence war, Indonesian popular culture shows a tendency to jump.

What can be said about memory culture in Indonesia about the war is that it is explicitly nationalistic, even though it simultaneously jumps away from the nation. The nation is therefore the point of departure, but it is not the definitive endpoint. Memory concepts related to either the nation or those that describe transnational movements such as national memory, multidirectional memory, transnational memory and travelling memory are therefore insufficient to encompass the cultural memories displayed in Indonesia (c.f. Erll, 2011b; Halbwachs, 1952; Nora, 1989; Rothberg, 2009). A memory concept that prioritises and encompasses the local, national and global is thus required and will be proposed in the following sections. As such, this study is situated within the section of memory studies that deal with the mobility of memories.

Popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence shows how this Indonesian memory culture is constructed, but a rigorous study of such memory texts is currently still absent. This mnemonic motion raises the question of how to understand the locality of such memories on the basis of existing memory concepts. How then, must these concepts be locally reframed in order to better understand contemporary engagements with the past and, particularly, outside of the West?

This article draws on years of research in which case studies of contemporary Indonesian historical re-enactment, film and music have been analysed. The foundational observation of this study is that contemporary memory culture about the war in Indonesia is inherently temporal (as it inevitably relates to the colonial past) and increasingly prosthetic (as it comprises mediated cultural memories of the war rather than personally experienced memories), yet simultaneously spatial (as it relates to the local, national and beyond).

Theories in memory studies of the past decades suggest that memory travels freely across political, cultural and national borders (Assmann, 2014; Bond et al., 2017; Erll, 2011b; Erll and Rigney, 2018; Landsberg, 2004; Rothberg, 2009). However, Indonesian popular culture shows that this straightforward mobility of cultural memory does not apply to every local context, as frictions do occur when memory travels. The central research question here is how Indonesian memory of the Indonesian War of Independence fits in the third phase of memory studies. In Indonesia, memory travels temporarily, briefly and not far. Its mobility therefore suggests more of a jump rather than a journey.

Building on this observation, and in order to understand them, I propose to see these cultural memories as a form of *memori melompat*. Composed of the Indonesian *memori* (meaning 'memory') and *melompat* (meaning 'jumping or to jump'), it is translated into English as 'jumping memory'. Together, the term encapsulates both time (through *memori*) and space (through *melompat*). *Memori melompat* is not a theoretical concept, but like Astrid Erll's (2011b) travelling memory, must be seen as a metaphorical shorthand (p. 12). *Memori melompat* is an abbreviation for

cultural memories that jump rather than travel between forms of popular culture, intra- and international borders and people. It exhibits a narrower and more precise mnemonic motion than flows or scapes (Appadurai, 1996: 33). In the context of the Indonesian War of Independence, these memories create meaning about how colonial oppression informs post-colonial nationalism. This article argues that Indonesia's jumping memory remains consistently close to its point of departure as there is always a sense of nationalism involved. In other words, *memori melompat* is always about the nation and, even though it jumps away from it, like stretched elastic, it inevitably snaps back to it. This begs the question of how contemporary Indonesian cultural memories of the Indonesian War of Independence do not travel beyond but rather jump from and return to the nation. The first point in answering this is how Indonesian memory fits within the so-called 'third phase of memory studies' (Erll, 2011a: 172) and how existing memory concepts are useful as a starting point for this enquiry.

### **Indonesian memory cultures in the third phase of memory**

In 2011, Astrid Erll (2011a) proposed that a new, third phase in memory studies had begun, one that has taken memory into 'the global age' (pp. 172–173). With its emphasis on the mediality, scales and mobility of memory, this article contributes to this third phase of memory studies that engages with earlier concepts in the field, while studying the increasing mediatedness of memory and moving beyond the nation-state as its sole object of focus (Erll, 2011a: 173–174). At the same time, the topic of the Indonesian War of Independence might seem to signal memory practices more in line with the second phase of memory studies from the 1990s, with its basis in national remembrance and traumatic events. However, this would be too restricted a view on how the war is remembered, as the nation is not the only scale addressed and traumatic events are circumvented by the simple expedient of not representing them. Therefore, instead this article is positioned in-between or in overlapping phases.

In regard to 'difficult pasts', Mikyoung Kim and Barry Schwartz (2010) argue that Northeast Asia has a 'Memory Problem' which is that 'unforgettable traumas prevent nations from coming to terms with the problems of the present' (p. 2). This so-called memory problem does not occur in relation to the Indonesian War of Independence, as there is no room for victimhood narratives in popular representations of the war. Indonesian memory studies is increasingly interested in the national trauma of the 1965–1966 killings (i.a. Larasati, 2013; Leksana, 2023; Leong, 2023; Marching, 2017), but Indonesian popular culture underscores that independence war representations are hardly that of a 'difficult past'. The need to articulate other or under-represented narratives is present nonetheless, and explains why there is still a desire to cope with past and present issues.

In many ways, the nation has been reinstated within a global context in Indonesia. This counters the idea that in the third phase of memory studies, the nation 'appears less and less as the key arbiter of cultural memory' because of globalisation and diaspora (Erll, 2011b: 8). Moreover, Astrid Erll (2011b) argues that the overall aim of transcultural memory studies must consist in complicating the notion of 'single memory cultures' as the territorial, social and temporal must be questioned (p. 8). I complicate these notions through Indonesia. These phases should therefore not be seen as temporal, but as phases that theoretically focus on different scales ('the national' in the first two phases, 'the global' in the third). This article shows that the phases are not fixed, but that in different local contexts, such as in Indonesia, there are jumps between these scales.

It is now generally accepted that visual images today take centre stage in how we represent, identify and make memories of the world (Erll, 2011a; Landsberg, 2004). In the Indonesian context, this is particularly apposite as media and popular culture have a legacy of utilisation by the

state. Since the inception of the state of Indonesia, the role of media and popular culture for ideological purposes cannot be underestimated. After the end of the authoritarian New Order Era (1966–1998) of Suharto, an era of reform was set in which a plurality of ideas on nation, gender, class and ethnicity was produced and contested (Paramaditha, 2007: 42). Although this era of reform might have already ended, what remains is uncertainty and tension over the direction of Indonesia's democracy, which is 'one of the key characteristics of post-*reformasi* Indonesia, and the source of much confusion and anxiety among ordinary Indonesians' (Lindsey, 2018). Given this context, popular culture gains a particular sense of importance in Indonesia as it is 'a field marked by the struggle to articulate and disarticulate specific meanings, ideologies and politics', not in the least about the past (Schmidt, 2017: 4). In Indonesia, media and other popular practices about the war can be considered as popular culture through the context that surrounds and mnemonically primes them (e.g. marketing strategies, merchandise, political speeches and so forth). Consequently, the 'pluri-media networks', or constellations, of memory' that surround media of remembrance about the Indonesian War of Independence are per definition popularised versions (Erll and Wodianka, 2008).

For many generations of Indonesians, the past has been made accessible through media and popular culture, creating a vicarious form of memory; one that fills in the gaps about the past and substitutes them for mediated memories. Here, media are understood as constitutors of prosthetic memory, artificial memories (as opposed to memories based on lived experiences) that are sensuous and based on the experience of mass-mediated representations (Landsberg, 2004: 20). To understand what kind of memories are produced, it is not only important to analyse what kind of memory discourses are produced, but also how they are mediated. The role of authenticity on the representation level is crucial to *how* a prosthetic memory is constructed. Here, it is not the question of *if* an inauthentic experience can become memory – when referring to memory based on a non-lived experience, I follow Landsberg that it can – but rather *how* the idea of authenticity becomes the driving force that moulds memory into a certain shape. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the result of consuming representations of the past through popular culture is a strong and repeated belief in the self-righteousness of one's own memory about that adopted past. The artificiality of one's own memory, by which I mean its constructive nature, frequently avoids discussion as personal memories are often taken to be true. However, the consumption of artificial memories should not be understood as intrinsically negative, moving in a one-way direction, or as fixed. Individual and communal memory provide strong resistance to 'even the most brutal state attempts to choreograph and collectivize the past' and it is the 'thick inscription of memory's traces across time and space' that enables this resistance (Edwards, 2016). It is what Penny Edwards (2016) calls 'memory thickness'. This particularly resonates in the context of Indonesia's history of state-sponsored attempts to choreograph memories of the past.

In addition to prosthetic memory, this article builds on the concept of *travelling memory*, that is concerned with 'the "travels" of memory' from ancient times to contemporary global media cultures (Erll, 2011b: 11). Coined by Astrid Erll (2011b) as a 'metaphorical shorthand', she discerns five dimensions of mnemonic movement and sees travelling memory as a process and it does help to understand how memories of the Indonesian War of Independence are constructed today (pp. 12–14).

Astrid Erll (2011b) argues that '*all* cultural memory *must* "travel", be kept in motion, in order to "stay alive", to have an impact both on the individual minds and social formations' (p. 12). The travel Erll (2011b) writes about 'consists only partly in movement across and beyond territorial and social boundaries' (p. 12). I understand Erll to propose that memory does not cease to have a life back home when it crosses oceans, but the question then is: is memory alive when it does not travel to cross the ocean at all? The answer is obviously yes. Thus, what happens when memories hardly

travel, such as in the case of Indonesian popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence? My article is in essence a response to the call made by Astrid Erll (2011b) that ‘memory studies should develop an interest in mnemonic itineraries, follow the non-isomorphic trajectories of media, contents, and carriers, the paths, and path-dependencies, of remembering and forgetting’ while close reading the ‘localizing aspect of travelling memory’ (pp. 14, 15). To do so, I pay ‘close attention to the various ways in which traveling memory is localized’ and media and popular culture play a central role in the complex processes in which past, present, and future are bound together in Indonesian sociocultural contexts (Erll, 2011b: 14). Carriers, media, contents, practices and forms of memory establish the routes Indonesian memory takes, but it is the caveat of ‘the local’ that makes Indonesian memories ‘jump’ more than they actually travel.

Indonesian memory moves with effect, avoiding memory’s ‘idle running’ (Erll, 2011b: 15), and helps to sharpen Erll’s concept of travelling memory just as it does with prosthetic memory by utilising it outside of Landberg’s initial American context. As I shall explain in the following section, *memori melompat* remains close to the nation. Contrary to other forms of transnational memory in popular culture that travel in East and Southeast Asia, the Indonesian War of Independence does not travel as far as the global flows of Bruce Lee and the Korean Wave (Liew, 2016). Furthermore, the pervasiveness of Indonesian War of Independence-imagery underscores its potential for prosthetic memory-making. Indonesian popular culture can be analysed on the basis of the mediality of memory, the scales of remembrance and the mobility of memories. Each medium of popular culture translates memory-making differently. This considers how representations become memory and the ways in which the thickness of memory works as an agent of resistance and a cause of entanglements.

Although prosthetic memory and travelling memory do capture the mediatedness and mobility of Indonesian memory about the war, these approaches to memory need to be locally refined to really understand how the memory concepts that we have do not necessarily equal the memory concepts that we need.

### ***Memori melompat* (jumping memory)**

Despite the fact that the topic of this article is a traumatic and violent war that resulted in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, Indonesian popular culture to do with the war jumps away from the traumatic and elaborates instead on what can be considered as ‘the cultural transmission of positivity’ through popular culture (Rigney, 2018). The focus lies on victory, heroism and *merdeka* (‘freedom’). This reveals an underlying paradox: even though this Indonesian popular culture remembers a violent independence struggle, violence is of understated importance to the remembrance of the struggle. The reason for this is the jumping motion of the memories of the Indonesian War of Independence. Indonesian popular culture does not dwell on Dutch colonial violence in relation to victimhood and perpetratorship, but utilises it as a productive framework in its production of social and political meaning (Rastegar, 2015). Sometimes, as in the case with popular music, violence is hardly explicitly represented. Violence is the point of departure for this mnemonic inquiry, but the conclusion lies elsewhere.

The origin of this form of memory is not clearly demarcated, but is the result of years of struggles over power in combination with the contemporary situation in which memory is becoming more prosthetic with the demise of people who have lived experiences of the war. The latter development can similarly be recognised in memory studies focusing on the Holocaust, through challenges of digital media and Holocaust culture (Kansteiner, 2017: 311); how digital memory can bridge personal and mediated memory through interactive testimonies of deceased survivors (Creet and Arnold-de Simine, 2023: 341); and by using digital technologies to map out the geography of

the Holocaust (Oster, 2023). These examples of memory studies show how ‘memorialization can happen, what shapes it takes, and what it means’ when memory relies less and less on personal experience a time goes by (Ashley Kaplan 2023: 7). The bridge between memories of Indonesians who lived and did not live through the events of the Indonesian War of Independence are found predominantly in popular culture.

As Brett Ashley Kaplan (2023) summarises, ‘memory studies grapples with how memory collides with history, with repressive structures meant to keep it down, with revisionism’ (p. 7). In Indonesia, the successive political and violent upheavals, including centuries of colonialism, have prevented the formation of a national cultural archive (c.f. Said, 1993). Whereas colonial rule forms a cultural archive, fertile ground from which racial discrimination and xenophobia can sprout in the post-colonial societies of the former coloniser (Wekker, 2016), the absence of a coherent cultural archive from which the former colonised can draw, results in the absence of grounded dominant narratives about a people’s national identity and culture. The result is an unrooted stance towards the formation of the nation. It is this post-colonial legacy of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and the subsequent authoritarian rule of the country that steers Indonesian memory-making about the Indonesian War of Independence. Memory culture in Indonesia reflects this in the way in which it harks back to the war both constantly and randomly. At the same time, popular culture can function as a cultural archive in the sense of a ‘repository of memory’ (Stoler, 2009: 49). This is best illustrated by the idea that the Indonesian War of Independence is a discursive canvas on which everyone paints their needs and aspirations. Much like the nation is ‘coming into being’ through narration (Bhabha, 2005: 16), the Indonesian nation comes into being through the narration of its birth myth. This applies to political actors, cultural producers and society at large. Each of them participates in a narrativising project that helps to define the Indonesian War of Independence and the meaning of freedom (*merdeka*) after Indonesia’s Independence.

Important to note, here are three common threads that recur throughout the article: the *mediality* of memory, *scales* of remembering and the *mobility* of memory. These are the three pillars that make up *memori melompat*. Concerning mediality, versions of the past that are represented in popular culture are dependent on the medium’s possibilities and limitations, framed by their production processes, external influences and genres. Building on Marshall McLuhan’s dictum ‘the medium is the message’, Astrid Erll (2011a) posits that media of memory such as historical films ‘bring about consequences in that they shape cultural remembrance in accordance to their specific means and measures’ (p. 115). Consequently, as she describes, ‘the medium is the memory’ (Erll, 2011a: 115). Indonesian re-enactors that are sponsored by the military to re-enact a proud battle celebrating victory will operate in a different mode to a director whose aim is to complicate the black-and-white story that is often made of the war in his forthcoming film. Going a step farther, this also applies to the genres within a medium itself. Cinematic memories differ from sonic memories, but an action thriller differs just as much from a romantic comedy. Each genre within a medium shapes cultural remembrance differently. In their turn, the discourses shaped by the genre patterns also vary. The Indonesian War of Independence is remembered widely in contemporary Indonesian popular culture through different media – such as historical re-enactment, cinema, music and fashion – and genres – ranging from action and drama in film and nationalistic punk and electronic songs in music. This shows the ‘jumping nature’ of *memori melompat* on the level of the medium itself, its mediality.

A similar ‘jumping nature’ can be found in the scales of remembering through these different media. Because of the global reach of memory today, scales of memory have become significant in the field of memory studies (Kennedy and Nugent, 2016: 63). Rosanne Kennedy and Nugent (2016) echo a consensus in the field that calls for a step away from ‘methodological nationalism’ as ‘the national. . . ceased to be the inevitable or preeminent scale for the study of collective

remembrance' (p. 63; De Cesari and Rigney, 2014: 2). Challenging this consensus, Indonesian war-themed popular culture illustrates that the nation is not defunct in memory studies. The nation has a role to play as a narrative springboard from which memories jump to different scales: the entanglements of the local, national and global. Negating the national would not do justice to how the Indonesian War of Independence is remembered as well as leave out the tensions between the local, national and beyond.

In many ways, this has to do with the mobility of memories as contemporary memory culture in Indonesia about the Indonesian War of Independence concerns notions of temporality as well as spatiality. This comes as no surprise, since remembering 'the history' of Indonesia has always been imbued with temporality and spatiality. Through travel, trade and colonisation, historically the Indonesian archipelago has been connected to the world at large. Rather than a single history, Indonesia is composed of many histories. Because of its interactions with various 'others', Indonesia can be understood as 'a socially discursive construct and imagined community' (Downes, 2019: 151). In a country that has seen so many political and violent upheavals – in which popular culture has expanded in the past decades (Heryanto, 2008) – prosthetic memory has intertwined with lived memories. Simultaneously, *memori melompat* is spatial in the way it travels from person, media, genre, location and time. Building on Astrid Erll's (2011b) concept of travelling memory, I therefore propose a form of mobility that is more reminiscent of a jump than that of a journey. Whereas mnemonic boundary crossing on a global scale gains interest in the field, I argue that Indonesia's jumping memory invariably remains close to its point of departure. There is always a sense of nationalism involved. Because Indonesian popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence centres on nationalism and because the nation of Indonesia is culturally hyper-diverse, Indonesia inherently problematises both methodological nationalism and border-crossing approaches to memory. Consequently, the cultural memories of the Indonesian War of Independence show movements that are sudden, quick and always at a short distance of from where they came. It is to this extent that *memori melompat* as a mode of remembering is more suitable to comprehending what is at stake in Indonesia. In the rest of the article, I briefly map out this popular memory culture in Indonesia, on one hand jumping from the local, national to the global level and, on the other hand, jumping from medium to medium and from genre to genre.

There are contemporary Indonesian memories, rather than one isolated memory about the Indonesian War of Independence. They are linked to different forms of popular culture, different socio-political situations and different histories. Although it is not feasible here (if ever) to define one singular way in which the Indonesian War of Independence is remembered, I do want to propose a framework for understanding it. I am basing this on four premises that have been drawn from the patterns in the broader memory culture that encompasses these memories. This Indonesian memory culture (1) is gradually relying less on the memories of those who lived the events; (2) is heavily, but not exclusively, formed by popular culture; (3) is generationally different and (4) places a particular importance on space and location. Taking the Indonesian context into account and drawing on earlier memory theories, I propose to understand *memori melompat* as both (1) a form of travelling memory in the sense that it jumps geographically and per medium and being a form of (2) transcultural memory in how the memory layers different cultural legacies. *Memori melompat* shows (3) how one generation can remember another generation's memories, but unlike post-memory (Hirsch, 2012), these bonds are not familial and affiliative, but have been imaginatively constructed through extensive media and popular culture practices. Consequently, these memories are (4) largely a form of prosthetic memory in the sense that they are based not only on lived experiences, but also on mediated memories.

*Memori melompat* is temporal (the past), prosthetic (media) and spatial (travelling memory) and formed by the mediality, scale and mobility of the object under discussion, which are intertwined



and difficult to pull apart in Indonesian cultural memories of the independence war. An example of this is how Indonesian historical re-enactment centres on *teatrikals* (street performances of key battles of the Indonesian War of Independence) and the subsequent circulation of images of these performances on Instagram. Both construct a memory that critically imagines, negotiates and contests the past through the mediality and mobility of a local scale of memory that also jumps to national identity formation. Here, the difference in cultural, prosthetic, personal and collective memory is not clearly divided. Since the re-enactments are personally embodied memories and the images afterwards a mediation for a broader audience, different prosthetic memories are folded into each other (Arps, 2022). Consider the jumping memory example in which one re-enactor channels memories of his grandfather – who was a freedom fighter – into the way he dresses and acts during a re-enactment of a local battle in Yogyakarta. This shapes how the battle – which is part of a national narrative of how the war developed – is remembered at a school since it is one of the secondary activities of the re-enactors to perform *teatrikals* to educate schoolchildren. Images of the re-enactment are subsequently posted on Instagram beside images of conversations the re-enactors had with representatives of the Indonesian Air Force, thus signifying military approval. One can see how memory jumps from the re-enactors themselves, to street audiences and online audiences, as well as from offline activities to online representations. As such, ‘doing’ Indonesian re-enactment in its full extent means committing oneself to various forms of media to jump from the local to the national scale. Another example of the entanglement of these three threads of *memori melompat* is how the kinds of cultural memories of the Indonesian War of Independence that are constructed through Indonesian cinema centre on several memory tropes. These memory tropes interact with memory outside of the nation, yet are highly national. Global tropes such as the soldier figure, the figure of the perpetrator and the hero figure are given new meanings within the context of the Indonesian War of Independence. One illustration is how the personality of Dutch perpetrator Robert in Garin Nugroho’s drama film *Soegija* (2012) is connected to the German occupation of the Netherlands, thus not only linking two historical periods to each other – and by doing so framing the Dutch character as first victim then perpetrator of occupation – but also humanising the antagonist of the film. Another example is how discordant dedication of the Indonesian War of Independence is presented in archetypical war films as, for instance, even the pious hero Amir in the *Merdeka* trilogy (*Freedom* trilogy) questions how the revolution is executed. As such, the use of (post)-colonial stereotypes in representing the soldier, the incorporation of European history narratives that influence the representation of perpetrators as purely evil and the critical stance towards Indonesian heroism show different memory discourses related to a broader motif of violence. Through distinct genres, this dissimilarity in mediality reveals how *memori melompat* is constructed differently in Indonesian cinema to that in historical re-enactment. Yet in the mobility of this memory one can recognise the centrality of the nation.

Some memories are more portable and transportable than others, opening up the possibility to transcend race, class and gender (Landsberg, 2004: 21, 27). Whereas Remco Raben (2012) argues that most stories that run counter to national or state interpretations of the Indonesian War of Independence are confined to specific communities and lead fairly marginal lives in the broader debate, popular culture and the memories it produces has the potential to travel beyond these boundaries (p. 495). The medium through which memory travels is relevant as ‘mass cultural technologies have the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs’ (Landsberg, 2004: 8). Nowhere is this more clearly apparent than in the possibilities of online video platforms such as YouTube. YouTube provides the potential for global affiliations with Indonesian sonic memory culture as, for instance, English subtitles cater to an international audience. YouTube’s affordances suggest the ultimate mobility to cross oceans and is the pre-eminent example of the appearance of the

‘virtually frictionless, near-global reach of major digital content delivery platforms’, yet Indonesian nationalistic music videos rather construct something similar to a ‘national demarked YouTube space’ (Cunningham, 2015). Exploring how narrative shapes our understanding of Indonesia’s colonial past through online music videos reveals how spatial and temporal elements are included in Indonesian popular music and ‘remake’ the nation. Although memories constructed through a global platform as YouTube jump towards a world beyond Indonesia, gesturing elsewhere (Baulch, 2003), the distance of the jump is again not far from the nation. Imagined boundaries of the homeland, modern-day patriotism, masculine memories of the motherland, all these themes reflect a tension between past and present, but also the spatial imagination of belonging between the patriotic space and a world beyond. A specific locality is emphasised and focused on in music videos, revealing a particular jump in an age of global media culture. In Indonesia, nationalism has always been a powerful political tool. In the 1990s, essentialist nationalism occupied a significant space in Indonesia (Allen, 2001: 306). Within Indonesia’s contemporary nationalistic society, Indonesian popular music convincingly navigates between patriotism and cosmopolitanism to express the desires of young Indonesians to belong to a world of images, narratives and commodities beyond the national borders. DJ Alffy Rev exemplifies this in the music video of his song *Tanah Air (Homeland)* where he reiterates old tropes about the role of youth during the Indonesian War of Independence in a global context. Just as during the Indonesian War of Independence, Indonesian youngsters are summoned by nationalism to push Indonesia further. Rev imagines this next level as combining both traditional and modern elements. The transitions from colour to black and white and vice versa in the music video continuously play with both tradition and modernity to establish this discourse. In all the above, the mediality, scales and mobility of Indonesian popular culture comes to the fore and the localising aspect of it requests a reframed close reading.

## A local reframing

Understanding Indonesian memory culture about the Indonesian War of Independence as a form of *memori melompat* offers a new theoretical framework for comprehending how Indonesia remembers its past at this current moment and within the framework of the third phase of memory studies. Since Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, the continuing violent and political struggles have kept the country in constant flux. It is therefore no surprise that its memory culture reflects this by jumping unpredictably both temporally and spatially, sometimes connecting seemingly unrelated memories and underrepresented areas. The different cultural histories and legacies that pertain to many spaces and locations in Indonesia are emphasised in this memory. From its inception, Indonesia has been a transcultural project. With its thousands of islands and hundreds of languages, cultural memory in Indonesia has always been formed paradoxically and held together by the nation, that in turn irrevocably emphasises that it is a construction. Popular culture has without exception played a significant role in this. The earliest films after the Independence, such as *Darah dan Doa* by film-making patriot Usmar Ismail and which was mentioned in the opening of this article, not only set an example of what Indonesia’s national cinema should be, but also of who were the Indonesian ‘us’ who fought against the imperialist and separatist ‘them’ (Pasaribu, 2020). Recent forms of popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence continue to draw on these structures, while adapting them to the situation of today.

These observations lead to the conclusion that Indonesia provides a prime example of what I have called here *memori melompat* – hence the Indonesian name, although it is not unique to it. Particularly in other countries that have borne the brunt of a colonial occupation, popular culture about the war of independence showcases similar forms of *memori melompat*. Amir Muhammad’s 2006 Malaysian

film *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir* (The Last Communist), for example, deals with the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960) – the Malaysian struggle for independence – as it is portrayed through interviews with people who lived with Malayan communist politician and anti-colonialist Chin Peng. By its choice of structure, it not only shows the jumping quality of memory in a temporal sense as it is about a past made visible through representations from the present, but also its prosthetic quality as the memories of the war have been constructed through the lived experiences of others. Simultaneously the jumping quality of *memori melompat* in a spatial sense, that is, from person to person (Ching Peng and those who lived around him) and genre to genre (the film is described as a ‘semi-musical documentary’) is displayed through the film’s narrative structure that combines interviews with faux propagandistic songs. *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir* is just one example of a film outside of the Indonesian context that represents the past through a structure of *memori melompat*.

My argument that popular cultural memories of the Indonesian War of Independence should be understood as an example of *memori melompat*, raises many questions and opens new avenues of research. What follows are some avenues for follow-up research into which *memori melompat* might be heading. I have begun to explore in this article some of these issues, but have not given them the scrutiny they deserve. Others require new projects entirely. One form of contemporary popular culture that has only been fleetingly mentioned is fashion. A brand like *Damn! I Love Indonesia* shows how memories can be worn on the body. Taking the Indonesian War of Independence as a reference in its clothing line, the brand creates patriotic textile memories that, like the music of Alffy Rev, link the past to the present and envision a prominent role for the youth in the future of Indonesia. Another medium of cultural memory that needs more exploration lies in the realm of the digital. Although the Indonesian gaming industry is a precarious one, it is nonetheless a fast developing one. A variety of games, of which some depict the long struggle for Indonesia’s independence, are distributed annually. Besides games set in the more obvious Indonesian War of Independence (such as in *Bambu Runcing*, *Soldier 1945* and *Undaunted*), others, such as *Diponegoro-Tower Defense*, portray the struggle against Dutch control over Java by Prince Diponegoro (1785–1855). These games offer a promise to broaden the insights in this article as observations from game studies and cultural memory studies can lay bare the memory-making potentials of video games (Pötzsch and Šisler, 2019) in relation to the mediality, scales and mobility of *memori melompat*.

In addition to these examples that relate to the medium in which *memori melompat* is constructed and through which it is mediated, there are also avenues of research in the structure of remembering. One of those goes deeper into films such as the earlier mentioned *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir* that connects to other films about independence wars in Asia and, in that way, contributes to the understanding of inter-Asian or trans-Asian cultural memories. An approach that takes a particular historical event like an independence war as a point of departure in differing countries could reveal differences and similarities in the stakes and dimensions involved in memory-making. A similar project was begun by Roxana Waterson and Kwok Kian-Woon (2012), but their focus was on social memory. A focus on cultural memory would do justice to the widespread use of Asian popular culture in remembering the past. Films about independence wars in Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Korea, for instance, showcase a more broadly construed *memori melompat*. They build on the same patterns as those elaborated on in this article, but internalise national specificities. Shin-yeon Won’s 2019 Korean war film *Bongdong Jeontoo* (The Battle: Roar to Victory) includes social commentary on comfort women – a topic that has a particular history in Korea, but also in other Asian countries like Indonesia – and a scene in which Korean independence fighters from all over the country speak to each other in their own dialects. Scenes in which the differences between the independence fighters are highlighted in order to come to a central greater good are common in war-themed films about independence wars. The Indonesian *Merdeka* trilogy

(2009–2011) is a case in point. Returning more specifically to Indonesia, there is another structure of remembering that is ripe for more scrutiny: comparative memories.

Current movements in Dutch society have shown a demand to engage more critically with the nation's colonial past that ended in the East with the Indonesian War of Independence. An often-heard term to describe this past is that of a 'shared history' between the Netherlands and Indonesia. The end of the Indonesian War of Independence was not only the moment at which both countries parted, but also at which memories of the past began to travel in different directions. Despite societal and academic interest in this historical period from a historiographical perspective, the politics of remembering and forgetting have received much less attention. The recent outcry over the presence of not-convicted war criminal Raymond Westerling's daughter at a commemorative event in Amsterdam emphasises it as being a pressing matter. Those studies that do examine how the colonial period is remembered focus predominantly on a single nation. The result is a lack of understanding of how people look back on this period and what its material, cultural, socio-political and ideological effects are in an age of increased globalisation. What is needed is a comparative examination of the politics of forgetting and remembering, because although these memories seem to stem from a singular historical era, they evolve into diverging memory trajectories of the colonial era. Colonialism has left the Netherlands and Indonesia with a complex relationship in which they are intrinsically linked together by media and culture that continuously return to the colonial past. A comparative analysis can show how the past is remembered in and through these forms of media and culture, providing a model for further research on how 'shared colonial history' between countries is remembered transculturally and transnationally. *Memori melompat* is one perspective in search of comparative understanding.

The search for an answer to these lines of inquiry can build on the conclusions in this article that have argued that popular cultural memories of the Indonesian War of Independence jump between various temporalities and spatialities. They are edging away from the historical events of the Indonesian War of Independence, becoming fragmentary and conflicting as they take form in transit and, in an instant, arrive at a location from which it is unclear when they will jump next. But jump they will, because the remembrance of the Indonesian War of Independence is a project of *memori melompat*.

## Conclusion

This article has presented a twofold argument. First, that memory does not always travel everywhere effortlessly, sometimes it jumps. Second, that this approach to non-Western memory shows how the phases in memory studies are not to be considered in a temporal sense, but rather as moving scales. Indonesian popular culture about the Indonesian War of Independence constitutes a vast memory culture that encompasses different forms of media, different scales and different kinds of mobility. In essence, to understand how the independence war is remembered in Indonesia and for further studying memory-making in similar post-colonial contexts, existing memory concepts need to be reframed based on local needs, affordances and aspirations. As I have proposed here, the metaphorical shorthand of *memori melompat* is such a reframing and offers an example tool that closes the gap between the mnemonic reality in Indonesia (and other post-colonial nations) and the literature provided by the West on these pasts.

## Acknowledgements

As this article developed from my doctoral dissertation, I want to acknowledge here everyone who contributed to the latter as I more elaborately could in my dissertation's acknowledgements. In addition, I expressly want to thank Jeroen de Kloet, Leonie Schmidt and Jilly Vlekke in these acknowledgements. Finally, I want to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers of *Memory Studies* for offering the opportunity to develop the arguments presented here.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research on which this article is based was made possible by a ‘PhD in the Humanities’ grant from the Dutch Research Council (NWO). The article was completed during a postdoctoral affiliation at the University of Oxford funded by the Niels Stensen Fellowship, for which I want to express my gratitude.

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