



From conflict to reconciliation: The role of memorialization in shaping collective memory at conflict heritage sites

Aulia Rahman^{a,*}, Mufti Riyani^b, Wasino^c, Bachtiar Akob^a, Okhaifi Prasetyo^a

^a Department of History Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Samudra, Langsa 24416, Indonesia

^b Department of Elementary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Samudra, Langsa 24416, Indonesia

^c Department of History, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang 50229, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received 26 July 2024

Revised 10 October 2024

Accepted 30 October 2024

Available online 05 February 2026

Keywords:

Aceh conflict,
collective memory,
conflict monuments,
memorialization,
peace education

Abstract

This study explores memorialization's role in shaping collective memory and supporting the reconciliation process at conflict sites. The focus is on the Tugu Perlawanan Rakyat conflict monument in Sedie Jadi Village, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. The research methods used include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of historical documents. The study found that the Tugu Perlawanan Rakyat conflict monument in Sedie Jadi is a visual reminder of past events and a centre for ongoing social activities and peace education. The conflict monument in Sedie Jadi plays a significant role in preserving collective memory and supporting reconciliation by involving all community layers, including the younger generation. These findings differ from previous research that viewed monuments as static structures, emphasizing instead that these monuments serve as educational tools and instruments to avoid cycles of revenge. The implications of this study are crucial for developing future policies and practices in memorialization. Governments and other stakeholders should encourage community participation in the memorialization process and ensure that monuments serve as static symbols and dynamic media for education and reconciliation. Additionally, further research is needed to examine the long-term impacts of memorialization on collective memory and reconciliation, as well as to develop more effective strategies in various local contexts.

© 2025 Kasetsart University.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: aulia.rahman@unsam.ac.id (Rahman, A.).

<https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2025.46.4.02>

2452–3151/© 2025 Kasetsart University.

Introduction

The historical journey of Indonesia is often marked by prolonged conflicts that have had significant social impacts. One of the most prominent conflicts is the armed conflict in Aceh, which lasted for over three decades. The Aceh conflict with the Indonesian government occurred from 1976 to 2005 (Rafiie et al., 2017). This conflict left deep scars on all parties involved, including the local community. The Aceh conflict not only caused physical destruction but also resulted in profound psychological trauma for the local population (Grayman et al., 2009; Rahman et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). After the conflict ended, efforts emerged to rebuild Acehnese society and address past wounds through various activities and programs, one of which is memorialization at conflict heritage sites. Memorialization was conducted by erecting conflict memorials to commemorate past conflicts' tragedies.

Numerous conflict memorials were built in Aceh post-conflict. At least 15 memorials were constructed based on events from different periods of the conflict. These memorials are spread across various regions of Aceh, including East Aceh, Bener Meriah, Lhokseumawe, Pidie, Pidie Jaya, Aceh Besar, Aceh Jaya, Nagan Raya, and South Aceh. These memorials signify efforts to preserve collective memory and honor the victims of the conflict.

The memorialization of the Aceh conflict in Bener Meriah began with a historical event that occurred in Kresiek Village, now known as Sedie Jadi Village. The event had a profound impact on the communal memory of the local community. On June 5, 2001, a tragedy occurred in Kresiek Village, where five residents were killed, and houses were burned. The event left deep wounds in the community. The tragedy was not only an important point in the formation of the collective memory of the villagers. The monument was erected in the village to commemorate the tragedy and as a symbol of sacrifice and the courage of the residents in facing threats.

Memorialization through the construction of conflict memorials plays a crucial role in shaping the community's collective memory. One example is the conflict memorial in Bener Meriah Regency. The memorials and conflict sites in Bener Meriah have become essential symbols representing shared experiences, suffering, and hopes for reconciliation (Zaninovi, 2023). Through the memorialization process, communities involved in and affected by the conflict remember the past and build a shared narrative that can support the healing process

and reconciliation. Thus, memorialization can be an effective tool for creating mutual understanding, building collective identity (Bar-tal, 2009; Sumartojo, 2016; Zaninovi, 2023), and strengthening social bonds that were disrupted by the conflict (Sabila et al., 2024).

The collective memory formed through memorialization can be a powerful tool for overcoming social divisions and strengthening community identity (Rahman, 2020; Takševa, 2018). On the other hand, memorialization can also present challenges, such as differences in historical interpretation and the potential to reignite old tensions. Therefore, understanding how memorialization practices influence collective memory and social dynamics at heritage sites becomes important in the post-conflict context (Marschall, 2013).

Memorializing heritage post-conflict aims to ensure that these events are not forgotten and serve as an educational tool and reminder for future generations. In recent decades, many countries have utilized cultural heritage sites to promote reconciliation, peace, and social recovery.

For example, in Germany, the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin serves as a powerful reminder of the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust, as well as a symbol of Germany's commitment to preventing such events from happening again (Dolgoy & Elżanowski, 2018). In Rwanda, the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre was built to commemorate the victims of the 1994 genocide and promote reconciliation among divided communities (Sinalo & Irakoze, 2022). Similarly, in Cambodia, there is the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Originally a high school, it was converted into a high-security prison by the Khmer Rouge regime and became a site of torture and execution for thousands of prisoners. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the site was transformed into a museum to remember the victims of the Cambodian genocide and to educate future generations about the horrors that occurred (Brown & Millington, 2015; Williams, 2022).

However, previous studies on memorial monuments tend to focus on the general aspects of memorialization without considering specific local dynamics. Examples from Germany, Rwanda, and Cambodia demonstrate the importance of understanding local contexts to delve deeper into the meanings of such memorialization. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the local context in Desa Sedie Jadi, providing deeper insights into how the local community interacts with their monuments and heritage sites.

This research explores memorialization's role in shaping collective memory at conflict heritage sites in Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh. It employs a qualitative

approach to examine how the local community understands, interprets, and interacts with conflict memorial sites. The study will also examine how the memorialization process can support or hinder reconciliation and community building post-conflict. In Aceh, memorialization has begun at several conflict heritage sites. Monuments, commemorative ceremonies, and history museums have been established as efforts to remember the past and educate the younger generation about the importance of peace.

This study starts from the argument that memorialization also presents challenges. There is debate over how historical events should be remembered and presented, who has the right to determine these narratives, and how to ensure that memorialization efforts do not perpetuate resentment or exclude certain perspectives. Additionally, the constantly changing political and social dynamics can affect how a community views its past and chooses to remember it.

Therefore, the effectiveness of memorialization in shaping collective memory and promoting grassroots reconciliation still requires further research. How can memorialization facilitate the reconciliation process? Are local communities actively involved in this process? Moreover, what are the long-term impacts of memorialization on the social life and collective identity of the Aceh community?

Literature Review

The Concept of Memorialization at Conflict Heritage Sites

Monuments are tributes to famous figures (Savage, 2009) or significant events (Bellentani & Panico, 2016), and the construction of memorial monuments influences various dimensions of urban space. Collective or social memory is co-constructed by monuments (Cudny & Appelblad, 2019; O'Connor, 2022; Sadowski, 2021) thus, public spaces are affected by the presence of monuments. Furthermore, monuments are closely related to social memory (Antonova et al., 2017). Social memory is a key element in creating such relationships, and monuments are an important component. Monuments create images of specific urban spaces and represent the famous figures and history associated with those areas. Because monuments create the image of the area, they also influence the sense of place (Cudny & Appelblad, 2019).

Memorialization is a social and cultural process in which communities and societies build monuments,

memorials, or other sites to commemorate significant historical events, especially those related to conflict or tragedy. Memorialization at conflict heritage sites serves to remember the past, honor the victims, and educate future generations. It can strengthen collective identity and provide space for social reflection (Beckstead et al., 2011).

The Theory of Collective Memory

Collective memory is a concept that refers to the way a group of people remembers, interprets, and celebrates their past together. According to Maurice Halbwachs, who first introduced this concept, collective memory results from social and cultural interactions that enable a group to form identity and solidarity through shared memories (Kwon, 2022). Collective memory encompasses significant events, traditions, and symbols that hold special meaning for a community.

Collective memory and memorialization are interrelated. Memorialization is the process by which communities build monuments, memorials, or other sites to commemorate significant historical events, especially those related to conflict or tragedy. Memorialization can strengthen collective identity and provide space for social reflection (Harju, 2015). Monuments and memorial sites serve as physical tools for remembering the past, honouring victims, and educating future generations about significant historical events.

Monuments and memorial sites have an important role in shaping the social identity of a community. They commemorate past events and articulate the values and beliefs the community wants to preserve. The collective memory shaped by monuments can influence how a community views itself and its relationships with others (Moliner & Bovina, 2023). In this context, monuments become symbols of collective identity that help strengthen solidarity and a sense of togetherness.

The process of memorialization also has important implications for post-conflict reconciliation. Memorialization can provide a space for reflection and dialogue, which is crucial for the collective healing process. Memorial sites are focal points for collective memory that allow communities to reflect on and understand their past (Dittmer & Waterton, 2016). In reconciliation, memorialization can help address past trauma by providing a shared narrative acknowledged by all parties involved. In the context of memorialization at conflict heritage sites, collective memory helps preserve the memory of traumatic events and guides the healing and reconciliation process.

Grassroots Reconciliation Strategies

Grassroots reconciliation refers to efforts undertaken by local communities to resolve conflicts and build peace independently, without significant external intervention (Kamatsiko, 2015). Effective reconciliation should involve the direct participation of the communities affected by the conflict (Lahai & Ware, 2013). This approach includes inter-community dialogue, cultural ceremonies, and community development projects that strengthen social relationships. In Bener Meriah, culturally based conflict reconciliation demonstrates the community's efforts to build peace and reconciliation at the local level, recognizing the importance of community participation in a sustainable reconciliation process.

This study will focus on the application of the above concepts in Bener Meriah. In Bener Meriah, the People's Resistance Monument becomes the focus in studying how memorialization can strengthen collective memory and support the reconciliation process at the local level. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of memorialization in shaping collective memory and supporting grassroots reconciliation strategies. The existence of the Conflict Monument in Sedie Jadi Village also plays a significant role in fostering the collective identity of the local community. The monument not only serves as a physical symbol of the traumatic events that once occurred, but it also functions as a bond that ties together shared emotions and memories, strengthening the sense of solidarity among the residents. The process of memorialization embodied by this monument allows the community to reflect on their shared history and experiences while also building a collective narrative that forms the foundation of the community's identity in Sedie Jadi.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Sedie Jadi Village, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Sedie Jadi has a significant history of conflict, mainly related to the attack in Kampung Kresek (now known as Sedie Jadi Village). The research employs a qualitative approach to examine memorialization practices at conflict memorial sites in Sedie Jadi Village. The focus is on understanding how the memorialization process affects the local community's collective memory and social identity.

Participants

This study's participants include members of the Sedie Jadi community, local leaders, and individuals involved in creating and maintaining the conflict memorial sites. Participants were selected based on their involvement in the memorialization process and their knowledge of local history.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the residents of Sedie Jadi, local leaders, and those involved in creating and maintaining the conflict memorial sites. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to explore topics that emerged during the interviews. The questions were designed to understand the participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding the memorialization sites.

Observations were conducted to understand the social and cultural context of the conflict memorial sites and how the community interacts with these sites. During the observations, the researcher made field notes that included descriptions of the physical environment, social interactions, and activities related to the memorialization sites. The documents analyzed include local archives, related publications, and official documents regarding the conflict and the memorialization process in Sedie Jadi Village.

Data Analysis

Data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

Results

Kampung Kresek in the Context of the Aceh Conflict

The conflict in Aceh lasted for over three decades, starting in the mid-1970s until the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2005. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was one of the main actors in this conflict, fighting for Aceh's independence from Indonesia. This conflict resulted in many casualties, mass displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure and the economy in Aceh. The Indonesian government

and GAM were involved in a series of armed clashes that had a wide-ranging impact on the civilian population.

In the early 2000s, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) announced its willingness to negotiate a ceasefire if military operations, including checkpoints, house-to-house searches, and other actions to find GAM members, were halted. In May 2000, GAM and the Indonesian authorities agreed on a humanitarian pause (Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009; Schulze, 2003; Schulze, 2004). However, this peace did not last long. In April 2001, a massive military offensive was launched by Indonesia to end the GAM separatist rebellion. The people's hopes were dashed when this ceasefire quickly collapsed due to violations by both sides—GAM and the Indonesian National Army (TNI)—inadequate monitoring mechanisms, and the absence of sanctions. In response to the subsequent increase in violence, Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 4 was issued, which included the Security Restoration Operation (Opslihkam). The Indonesian government also continued the implementation of the special autonomy package, which came into effect in January 2002. Since GAM did not budge from its position for independence, Jakarta issued an ultimatum in August 2002 for the movement to accept autonomy, followed by a siege of one of the rebel strongholds in November 2002. Shortly after, on December 9, 2002, GAM and the Indonesian government finalized a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, which Jakarta initially hailed as a peace agreement but was viewed by GAM as merely another ceasefire. Unsurprisingly, violations by both sides quickly began to undermine this agreement as well, leading to Aceh once again plunging into war in May 2003 (Schulze, 2003).

Central Aceh Regency, including Kampung Kresek, was one of the areas most severely affected during this period. GAM, the military, or local militias killed hundreds of people. Around 32,000 people fled Central Aceh and sought refuge in surrounding areas (Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009). There are several reasons why some people did not leave their homes to seek refuge. First, the violence was not randomly targeted, so certain individuals or groups within the population were more vulnerable to being targeted by armed groups, making them more likely to flee than others. Second, when deciding whether to stay or leave, individuals or families considered security and other traditional (socio-economic) factors (Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009). In this context, Kampung Kresek (now known as Sedie Jadi Village) experienced one of the tragic events in the history of the Aceh conflict.

The Tragedy of the Attack on Kampung Kresek

Kampung Kresek, now known as Sedie Jadi Village, is a village located in Bukit District, Bener Meriah Regency. It is the last village in the district and is surrounded by coffee plantations. The topography of the Kampung Kresek area is typical of hilly regions, with winding roads surrounding the hills. Sedie Jadi Village covers an area of 350 hectares and is divided into three hamlets: Kresek Hamlet, Sidorejo Hamlet, and Sejahtera Hamlet. The majority of the residents of Sedie Jadi Village are farmers. The village borders Timang Gajah Village to the north, Pondok Gajah Village to the south, Batin Baru Village to the east, and Uwak Pondok Sayur Village to the west.

On Tuesday night, June 5, 2001, Kampung Kresek experienced a brutal attack. Armed groups stormed the village, driving out the residents and burning their homes. This attack resulted in the deaths of five people, including a two-year-old child (Abonita, 2022). Additionally, the attack included the burning of residents' houses, with a total of 15 homes and the village hall destroyed (Wijaya, 2021). The battle in the village lasted for more than six hours, and at midnight, dozens of attacking troops left the village (Warsidi, 2019).

Some of the victims who died in the attack were Pirin (60 years old), whose body was partially burned, and Edy Suyono, who was shot and died while being evacuated to a bunker. Zen Kaharuddin (50 years old) died in the bunker from a heart attack, and Marnak (60 years old) died, with his body only discovered after residents extinguished the fire in one of the houses. Finally, Yuni Prastiana (2 years old) died on the way to the hospital after being shot.

This tragedy prompted the residents of Kampung Kresek to form an anti-GAM front. Following the incident, residents remained vigilant and sought to strengthen themselves, even by creating homemade weapons. From Kampung Kresek, various anti-GAM organizations later emerged throughout Bener Meriah and Central Aceh. These resistance movements were established independently by groups of people to protect themselves from GAM. Examples include Gabungan Putra Daerah (GARUDA), Puja Kesuma Tanah Gayo, and several other organizations. These movements continued to strengthen themselves by making weapons, which ultimately added to the chaos in the region.

Conflict Monument in Sedie Jadi Village

The Conflict Monument in Sedie Jadi Village stands as a symbol of the struggle and memory of the local community, built purely by the initiative of the village residents. Currently, the monument is located opposite the village maternity clinic (Polindes) in Sedie Jadi Village. It stands on a site with a long history for the community. Before becoming a Polindes, this location was the village hall office, which served as the centre of activities and events for the residents of Kresak Village. The village hall was once the hub of activity for the Sedie Jadi community, including religious activities and where residents sold their harvests. This place even became the precursor to the village cooperative because the villagers did not know where to sell their agricultural produce at that time, making the village hall the heart of village life.

The village hall also bore silent witness to the tragic events of June 5, known as the June 5 Tragedy. This event added to the historical and emotional significance of the location, giving the construction of the monument here a profound meaning. The memorial monument to the conflict victims, located in front of the Polindes, is depicted in Figure 1 as a tribute to those who fought and fell victim during the conflict.

The construction immortalized in the conflict monument in Sedie Jadi Village depicts the village community's struggle to defend their homes from attacks by unknown people who tried to evict them. The monument symbolizes the community's determination and courage in facing threats and reminds them of the importance of maintaining sovereignty and peace in their area.

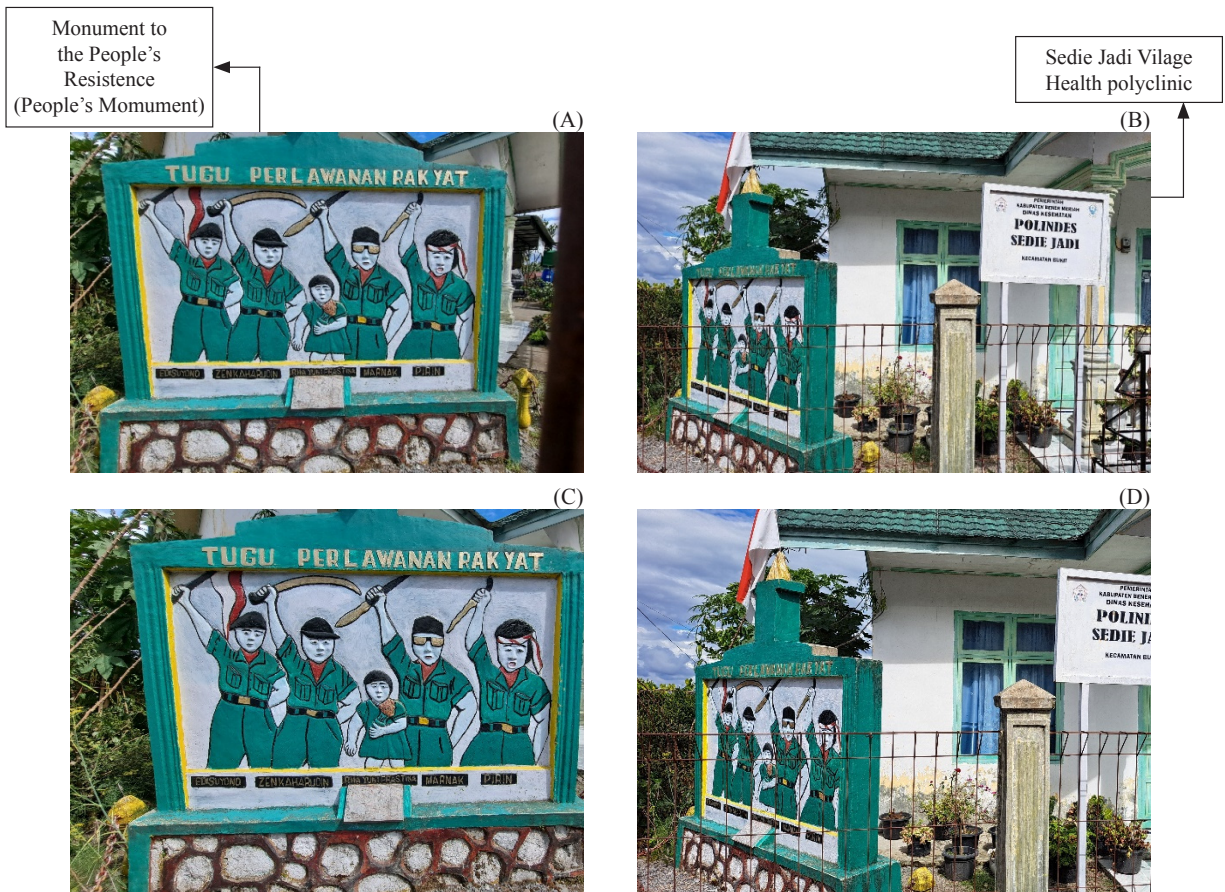


Figure 1 Memorial monument for conflict victims in Sedie Jadi Village, Bukit subdistrict, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh. (A, B, C, D are the same figure, taken from different angles.)

Source: Research team documentation, June 2024.

The conflict memorial monument in Sedie Jadi Village was built by Mr. Sahidi, a community leader and a direct witness to the June 5 tragedy, who has no formal art education. The monument was created manually and purely from the residents' initiative. Despite having only an elementary education, which he did not complete, Mr. Sahidi produced an artwork that beautifully reflects the victims with his remarkable strokes on the wall. The construction of the conflict monument was the result of an agreement between the village elders, village heads, and the community involved in the tragedy of June 5, 2001. Mr. Sahidi was the village elder who acted as the main implementer.

The green military uniform on the monument refers to the military uniform of the Republic of Indonesia, which signifies that the victims were part of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, the color green also symbolizes the close relationship between society and nature and its struggle to defend its land and life. In the context of the monument, the color green represents the spirit of the people's struggle that remains alive and the hope for a more peaceful and prosperous future after going through difficult times of conflict. According to residents, Mr. Sahidi's artistic work on the June 5 tragedy memorial monument shows a striking resemblance to the victims, even though it was created without any technical knowledge or skills. This monument's beauty and emotional depth reflect the dedication and spirit of the Sedie Jadi Village community in remembering and honouring their history and struggles. This monument stands as concrete evidence that the spirit and initiative of the community can create something meaningful and valuable.

The monument serves as a tribute and a learning tool for the younger generation, children, and grandchildren of Sedie Jadi Village residents. Currently, the community of Sedie Jadi views the events that led to the establishment of this monument as a tragedy that must be a lesson to prevent similar occurrences in the future (interview with J).

Memorialization Practices at the Conflict Monument in Sedie Jadi Village

Information about the memorialization practices was obtained from in-depth interviews with the residents of Sedie Jadi. Every June 5th, the community of Sedie Jadi Village commemorates the tragic event that occurred on this day. This annual commemoration is a consensus agreed upon by all villagers to remember the tragedy and teach it to future generations. The decision to hold

the annual commemoration was declared by Mr. Teguh Hardi, a highly respected elder and community leader of Sedie Jadi Village, and agreed upon by the villagers. Mr. Teguh Hardi was instrumental in the development and establishment of the village, thus holding an important and respected position among all residents. Whatever Teguh Hardi conveyed was always adhered to and obeyed.

Mr. Teguh Hardi has now passed away, but his mandate to commemorate the June 5th tragedy every year continues to be carried out with reverence. The tragic event on June 5th, which occurred at 10 pm, is always remembered by the residents as an important moment that must not be forgotten. The commemoration begins on the evening of June 4th with communal prayer and Yasin recitation after Maghrib prayers. On the morning of June 5th, villagers visit the graves of the victims who were buried close together as a sign of respect and solidarity.

The commemoration event involves almost the entire community of Sedie Jadi Village, both young and old. They gather at the village mosque for a communal prayer led by Mr. Sutrisno, a former village head who played a crucial role during the incident. Before the communal prayer, Mr. Sutrisno delivers messages of wisdom to the residents as a reminder and lesson. After the prayer, the event continues with a communal meal, similar to a *kenduri* or *pulutan*, symbolizing togetherness and solidarity. The message conveyed by Sutrisno and the existence of the monument in Sedie Jadi Village has an important role in supporting the process of reconciliation and peace education. His message invites the community to remember the past as a lesson passed on to the next generation while focusing on strengthening harmony and peace. The monument itself not only functions as a visual symbol of a dark history but also as a reflection space for the community to gather, commemorate the victims and strengthen the commitment to maintaining peace in the future. In addition, the conflict monument in Sedie Jadi is an educational tool for the younger generation, who are invited to understand history without perpetuating hatred.

This commemoration event not only aims to remember the victims and pray for their safety but also to seek protection and pray that such a tragic event does not recur. These memorialization practices demonstrate the importance of the conflict monument and the annual commemoration in preserving the community's collective memory and passing on the values of wisdom to future generations.

The Role of Memorialization in Forming Collective Memory in Sedie Jadi Village

The monument in Sedie Jadi Village is not merely a physical structure; it holds the stories and memories of past tragic events. The effort to pass on these memories, particularly the positive ones aimed at maintaining peace, is an integral part of the community's life. Although the monument's ceremonial commemoration occurs every June 5th, the residents of Sedie Jadi Village also routinely maintain the monument and the victims' graves in their daily lives. Additionally, the monument is maintained on national holidays, reflecting its significant importance to the community.

The active participation of all community members, including the youth who help clean and monitor the monument, demonstrates the collective involvement in preserving this heritage. For outsiders, the monument might appear as just an ordinary structure, but it holds a deeper meaning for the local community. The hidden stories within the monument create a strong emotional connection with their history.

The annual commemoration, which is never missed, reinforces the community's collective memory. By continuously remembering and commemorating this event, the people of Sedie Jadi Village honour the past and preserve and pass on the values of peace to future generations. This monument, with all the stories and memories enshrined within it, plays a crucial role in forming and maintaining the collective memory of Sedie Jadi Village.

Continued peace efforts were carried out by involving a broader range of stakeholders with authority in the post-conflict reintegration process in Aceh. On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, the people of Sedie Jadi Village, Bukit District, Bener Meriah Regency, along with the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (KontraS) Aceh, held a national reconciliation event that brought together various parties affected by the Aceh conflict 20 years ago. The event took place in the courtyard of the local village office and was inaugurated by the Bener Meriah Regency Government (interview with inf).

In this activity, reconciliation occurred between former combatants, represented by Fauzan Azima and Sutrisno, Sedie Jadi Village community representatives. The awareness of the importance of restoring good relationships encouraged the parties to agree to sit together and rebuild relations post-conflict. In addition to revealing the truth about what happened in the past, it is necessary to foster reconciliation between

the parties involved in the conflict. This effort was carried out purely as a learning experience to emphasize the importance of sustaining peace, restoring the community's social fabric to its previous harmonious state, and preventing similar incidents from happening again.

Broader findings on the role of conflict monuments in Aceh can be seen through observations of various monuments spread across conflict-affected areas. Like the monument in Sedie Jadi Village, which was actively involved in efforts to build collective memory through the involvement of the local community, other monuments in Aceh can also function similarly if the construction process involves residents more directly.

Conflict monuments can be essential in supporting post-conflict reconciliation processes and peace education. However, to maximize their impact, active community participation is essential. The example of Sedie Jadi Village shows that direct community involvement in building and maintaining monuments results in a strong emotional attachment to the symbol. This impacts the use of monuments not only as places of commemoration but also as educational facilities for the younger generation to understand the importance of peace.

On the other hand, as seen in the case of the monument in Idi Cut, without solid involvement from the local community, monuments can lose their function as guardians of collective memory and become merely symbolic structures without deep meaning for residents. Therefore, it is essential for every conflict monument in Aceh, or other areas that have experienced conflict, to become an integral part of the social life of the community so that it can play its role in sustainably forming collective memory.

The Impact of Memorialization on Grassroots Reconciliation

The Conflict Monument in Sedie Jadi Village has become one of the village's most valuable assets and must be preserved. This monument is a symbol of history and an irreplaceable identity for the people of Sedie Jadi. Most of the villagers, 90 percent of whom are of Javanese descent, deeply understand the meaning and story behind this monument because it is commemorated every June 5th. The monument has become the foundation and existence of the Sedie Jadi community and the basis for the harmony that has been maintained to this day.

The residents of Sedie Jadi Village, 90 percent of whom are of Javanese descent, understand the meaning and story behind the monument deeply through their collective heritage and direct experience of past events.

In addition, the active involvement of the community in the construction and maintenance of the monument reflects a strong emotional connection to the story it immortalizes. The conflict monument in Sedie Jadi serves as an annual memorial to remember the victims of the conflict and as a means to pass on the values of struggle and peace to the younger generation. For the Javanese community in Sedie Jadi Village, this monument is a symbol of pride and an important reminder of the meaning of maintaining peace and building a better life post-conflict.

The presence of this monument has helped the Sedie Jadi community to blend with people from various backgrounds without limiting interactions to certain ethnic groups. The awareness that harbouring grudges will never solve problems has encouraged the community to improve relationships and foster harmony. Sedie Jadi Village is known as a cohesive community, with daily activities involving various groups, including women, men, and youth. This creates a conducive atmosphere and reduces the likelihood of negative activities among residents.

Previously, the village was known as Kampung Kresek, which is now the name of one of the hamlets under Sedie Jadi Village. Collectively, the memory of the tragedy that once occurred in this village has shaped a shared awareness to maintain peace. This sense of unity has been fostered and maintained by both the older and younger generations, although future challenges with advanced technology may erode the younger generation's attention to history and these values of wisdom.

This monument reminds the community of the past and provides valuable lessons on the importance of reconciliation and maintaining peace. The impact of this memorialization has strengthened social bonds at the grassroots level, creating a closer and more harmonious community. The effort to preserve this collective memory is a shared responsibility, ensuring that the wisdom formed from past experiences continues to be passed on to future generations.

A different situation occurs in the Idi Cut area, East Aceh Regency. In Idi Cut, East Aceh, a conflict monument was built to commemorate the Arakundo incident, part of the Aceh conflict, on February 3, 1999. This tragedy claimed the lives of 28 people, 8 of whom were found in the Arakundo River. The construction of this monument was initiated by the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA) of East Aceh, and every year, a commemorative ceremony is held normatively and organized by provincial council members. However, according to interviews with local

informants, the monument does not fully represent the feelings or experiences of the local community, resulting in no active involvement of residents in utilizing or maintaining the monument.

This is in stark contrast to the conflict monument in Sedie Jadi Village, Bener Meriah, which was built through the initiative and active participation of the village community. The monument in Sedie Jadi is not only a symbol, but also serves as the center of annual activities involving all residents, commemorating the tragedy of June 5, 2001, and passing on the values of peace to younger generations. The main difference between these two monuments lies in the level of local community involvement, with the monument in Sedie Jadi functioning more as a tool for building collective memory and maintaining strong social bonds among residents. In contrast, the monument in Idi Cut is more formal and tends to involve less direct community participation.

Discussion

Memorialization through the monument in Sedie Jadi Village significantly impacts the formation of collective memory and the process of reconciliation at the grassroots level. So, why is this important? Memorialization is crucial in preserving the collective memory of past tragic events and using them as educational tools for future generations. By commemorating the event annually, the people of Sedie Jadi remember the victims and learn from history to build a more peaceful and harmonious future.

Memorialization also helps the village community avoid unproductive cycles of revenge by shifting the focus to learning from the past and strengthening social harmony. The community's current orientation is to build a better future in all aspects, both physically and mentally. The monument serves as a symbol of identity, reminding the community of the shared values built from their historical experiences. This shows that memorialization is about remembering the past and using that memory to shape future behaviour and policies.

Efforts in memorialization also involve the younger generation as part of the community's future to ensure that important values such as peace, solidarity, and harmony continue to be passed down. A younger generation that understands the monument's importance and history is more likely to become wise and empathetic policymakers. This is essential for building a more robust and more sustainable community.

Memorialization through the monument in Sedie Jadi Village significantly impacts the formation of collective memory and the process of reconciliation at the grassroots level. At least four aspects can be analyzed.

First, memorialization helps preserve the memory of tragic events. This collective memory provides an important historical context for the community, helping them understand the origins of the conflict and the suffering experienced. The monument serves as a powerful visual reminder of the past, ensuring that these events are not forgotten and remain part of the community's shared narrative.

Second, memorialization plays an important role in educating the younger generation. By understanding the history and values embedded in the monument, the younger generation can learn from past mistakes and work to avoid similar conflicts in the future. This education is not just about knowing historical facts but also about understanding the emotional and social impacts of these events and the importance of maintaining peace and harmony.

Third, memorialization helps shift the focus from revenge and hatred toward reconciliation and peace. By collectively commemorating tragic events, the community can process their pain together and find ways to move forward. The monument symbolizes hope and renewal, reminding the community that they can learn from the past to build a better future.

Lastly, memorialization provides a strong foundation for community identity. With the monument serving as the center of collective memory, the people of Sedie Jadi Village can build and strengthen their identity based on the values of togetherness, solidarity, and peace. This identity is essential for maintaining social harmony and ensuring that past experiences are used as valuable lessons for the future.

Memorialization through the monument can serve as an effective mechanism for preserving collective memory and promoting peace. The monument's existence is a physical structure and a symbol filled with historical and emotional significance. By commemorating tragic events every year, the people of Sedie Jadi Village succeed in maintaining awareness of the importance of learning from history. This monument helps the community not forget their painful past while using it as a valuable lesson to build a more peaceful and harmonious future.

Moreover, the monument serves as an educational tool for the younger generation. The youth involved in commemorating and maintaining this monument will better understand the importance of values such as peace and harmony. They can draw lessons from

history and apply them in their daily lives and future policymaking. Thus, memorialization not only connects the community to its past but also prepares it for a better future. The monument also strengthens community identity. By having a focal point that reminds them of their shared history, the people of Sedie Jadi Village can build stronger solidarity and a sense of togetherness. This collective identity is crucial for maintaining social harmony and ensuring that the community remains united despite future challenges.

In the context of Sedie Jadi Village, this finding can be linked to the Collective Memory Theory developed by Maurice Halbwachs. According to this theory, collective memory is the result of social construction resulting from the interaction of groups and institutions. Memorialization through monuments in Sedie Jadi Village functions as a physical and symbolic device to remember traumatic events that have occurred, thus creating a space for the community to align their memories of the past. Monuments not only act as reminders of events but also as narrative containers where the community collectively formulates and maintains their memories. Through collective memory, it allows the Sedie Jadi Village community to stay connected to the tragic events of the past while also making it a foundation for formulating a vision of a more peaceful and harmonious future.

Meanwhile, in relation to the Theory of Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution, memorialization in Sedie Jadi Village can be seen as part of a conflict transformation strategy, as outlined by John Paul Lederach. Memorialization not only invites the community to remember traumatic events but also facilitates the reconciliation process by strengthening shared reflection on the pain experienced and commitment to building a more peaceful future. The monument as a memorialization center serves to shift the focus from revenge against the perpetrators to learning from history that emphasizes peace and reconciliation as a way out of the cycle of violence. In this process, the people of Sedie Jadi Village are involved in a collective healing process that allows them to strengthen social cohesion and improve relationships between community members, both vertically (intergenerationally) and horizontally (between individuals and social groups).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This article examines the role of memorialization in shaping collective memory at conflict heritage sites, focusing on Sedie Jadi Village, Bener Meriah Regency,

Aceh, Indonesia. The main issue addressed is how monuments and memorial sites can influence collective memory and contribute to post-conflict reconciliation processes.

Memorialization in Sedie Jadi Village, through the monument built to commemorate the tragic events of June 5, 2001, plays a key role in preserving collective memory. This monument not only serves as a visual reminder but also as an educational tool for the younger generation about the importance of peace and harmony. The annual commemoration and routine maintenance of the monument demonstrate the community's commitment to not forget the past and to use this collective memory as a foundation for building a better future.

This monument holds deep and multifaceted meaning for the local community. First, it serves as a historical reminder of the conflict experienced by the Javanese ethnic group in Central Aceh. The monument stands as a tangible testament to the tragic events that affected the community, reminding everyone of the hardships and suffering they endured. Second, it serves as a tribute to the five victims who lost their lives in the incident. The presence of the monument ensures that their sacrifices are not forgotten and provides a place for the community to gather and remember them each year. Third, it acts as an educational tool for the youth. Through the monument, the younger generation is taught the importance of understanding history and learning from the past. The monument symbolizes the hope that similar conflicts will never recur in the future.

Memorialization monuments serve a dual role as historical symbols and reconciliation instruments. The conflict memorial in Sedie Jadi Village helps shift the focus from revenge and hatred towards learning and peace. By commemorating the events annually, the community strengthens their collective identity and builds stronger solidarity. This discussion also highlights the importance of involving the younger generation in memorialization efforts to ensure that the values of peace and harmony are continuously passed down.

The findings of this study indicate that the practice of memorialization in Sedie Jadi Village has a significant impact on strengthening collective identity and promoting peace. These findings differ from previous studies that have focused more on the short-term impacts of memorialization. This research reveals that through the active involvement of the community in maintaining the monument and annual commemoration, the collective memory of the conflict events and the values of peace can be sustained and passed on to future generations.

In comparison with previous studies, such as those conducted in Germany, Rwanda, and various other places, this research emphasizes the importance of the local context in understanding the dynamics of memorialization. While the Holocaust monuments in Berlin and the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre serve as powerful national symbols, the monument in Sedie Jadi Village shows how memorialization can effectively function at the community level by involving active participation from local residents.

The implications of this research are crucial for the development of future memorialization policies and practices. Governments and other stakeholders need to consider encouraging community participation in the memorialization process and ensuring that monuments do not only serve as static symbols but also as dynamic tools for education and reconciliation. Furthermore, further research is needed to examine the long-term impacts of memorialization on collective memory and reconciliation, as well as to develop more effective strategies in different local contexts.

This study underscores the importance of understanding how memorialization can transform conflict into reconciliation through the formation of collective memory at heritage sites. This research is significant and urgently needed to explore the crucial role of monuments and memorial sites in supporting reconciliation processes and maintaining peace in communities that have experienced conflict.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Fundings

This research would not have been possible without the support and assistance from various parties. We would like to express our gratitude to the Lembaga Penelitian, Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat dan Penjaminan Mutu (LPPM-PM) of Universitas Samudra for providing the Lecturer Research Grant Number 19/UN54.6/PG/2024. This grant not only provided financial support but also motivation and moral encouragement to carry out this research to completion. We greatly appreciate the trust and support given, and we hope that the results of this research will make a positive contribution to the community and the academic world.

References

- Abonita, R. (2022). *Rekonsiliasi Bener Meriah Aceh untuk redam konflik* [Bener Meriah Aceh reconciliation to reduce conflict]. BBC Indonesia. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-60939548> [in Indonesian]
- Antonova, N., Grunt, E., & Merenkov, A. (2017). Monuments in the structure of an urban environment: The source of social memory and the marker of the urban space. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 245(6), 062029. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/245/6/062029>
- Bar-tal, D. (2009). Reconciliation as a foundation of culture of peace. In J. de Rivera (Ed.), *Handbook on Building Cultures of Peace* (1 st ed.). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09575-2>
- Beckstead, Z., Twose, G., Levesque-Gottlieb, E., & Rizzo, J. (2011). Collective remembering through the materiality and organization of war memorials. *Journal of Material Culture*, 16(2), 193–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183511401494>
- Bellentani, F., & Panico, M. (2016). The meanings of monuments and memorials: Toward a semiotic approach. *Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics*, 2(1), 28–46. [https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/96405/1/Bellentani_Panico_The meanings of monuments.pdf](https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/96405/1/Bellentani_Panico_The%20meanings%20of%20monuments.pdf)
- Brown, C., & Millington, C. (2015). The memory of the Cambodian genocide: The Tuol Sleng genocide museum. *History Compass*, 13(2), 31–39. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/hic3.12214>
- Cudny, W., & Appelblad, H. (2019). Monuments and their functions in urban public space. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 73(5), 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2019.1694976>
- Czaika, M., & Kis-Katos, K. (2009). Civil conflict and displacement: Village-level determinants of forced migration in Aceh. *Journal of Peace Research*, 46(3), 399–418. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309102659>
- Dittmer, J., & Waterton, E. (2016). Embodied memory at the Australian war memorial. In D. Drozdowski, S. De Nardi, & E. Waterton (Eds.), *Memory, Place and Identity* (pp. 169–188). Routledge. <https://researchers.westernsydney.edu.au/en/publications/embodied-memory-at-the-australian-war-memorial>
- Dolgoy, R. C., & Elżanowski, J. (2018). Working through the limits of multidirectional memory: Ottawa's memorial to the victims of communism and national holocaust monument. *Citizenship Studies*, 22(4), 433–451. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13621025.2018.1462507>
- Grayman, J. H., Good, M. J. D., & Good, B. J. (2009). Conflict nightmares and trauma in Aceh. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 33(2), 290–312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-009-9132-8>
- Harju, A. (2015). Socially shared mourning: construction and consumption of collective memory. *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*, 21(1–2), 123–145. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13614568.2014.983562>
- Kamatsiko, V. V. (2015). Grassroots peacebuilding and vertical integration: A case study of the peace-rings approach. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 10(1), 56–71. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2015.1011552>
- Kwon, V. S. -Y. (2022). Contested memories, precarious apology: The Vietnam war in contemporary Korean art. *Asian Studies Review*, 46(3), 415–436. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2020.1852176>
- Lahai, J. I., & Ware, H. (2013). Educating for peace: The sociocultural dimensions of grassroots peace education as a tool for national reconciliation and social forgetting in Sierra Leone. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 3(2), 69–90. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2979/africanpeacerevi.3.2.69>
- Marschall, S. (2013). Collective memory and cultural difference: Official vs. vernacular forms of commemorating the past. *Safundi*, 14(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2012.760832>
- Moliner, P., & Bovina, I. (2023). Public spaces and circumscribed spaces of the collective memory: A research on the location of commemorative monuments. *Memory Studies*, 17(4), 17506980231170352. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231170351>
- O'Connor, P. (2022). The unanchored past: Three modes of collective memory. *Memory Studies*, 15(4), 634–649. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698019894694>
- Rafiie, S. A. K., Husni, A., & Atah, S. (2017). Acehnese wars and learning from 12 years of peace in Aceh. *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 2(2), 161. <https://journal.blasemarang.id/index.php/analisa/article/view/565>
- Rahman, A. (2020). Cagar budaya dan memori kolektif: Membangun kesadaran sejarah masyarakat lokal berbasis peninggalan cagar budaya di Aceh bagian timur [Cultural heritage and collective memory: Building historical awareness of local communities based on cultural heritage]. *Mozaik Humaniora*, 20(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.20473/mozaik.v20i1.15346> [in Indonesian]
- Rahman, A., Arsal, T., & Shintasiwi, F. A. (2022). Local wisdom and strengthening social integration in multiethnic society post-aceh conflict. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 43(3), 575–582. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2022.43.3.06>
- Rahman, A., Wasino, W., Riyani, M., Sahudra, T. M., & Akob, B. (2023). Inheritance of the value of peace in post-conflict areas based on indigenous knowledge. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15, 6402–6415. <https://journal.staihubbulwathan.id/index.php/alishlah/article/view/4260>
- Sabila, F., Arafat, P., Agustina, S., & Yusuf, M. A. (2024). Memorialization at conflict heritage sites in Aceh based on major events. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 1301(1), 012016. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1301/1/012016>
- Sadowski, M. M. (2021). City as a locus of collective memory. Streets, monuments and human rights. *Zeitschrift Für Rechtssoziologie*, 40(1–2), 209–240. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfrs-2020-0008>
- Savage, K. (2009). *Monument wars: Washington, DC, the national mall, and the transformation of the memorial landscape*. Univ of California Press.
- Schulze, K. (2004). *The free Aceh movement (GAM): anatomy of a separatist organization*. East-West Center Washington. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/26058/PS002.pdf
- Schulze, K. E. (2003). The struggle for an independent Aceh: The ideology, capacity, and strategy of GAM. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 26(4), 241–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100390209304>
- Sinalo, C. W., & Irakoze, C. (2022). The genocide archive of Rwanda. In V. G. Walden (Ed.), *Memorial museums in the Digital Age*. School of Media, Arts and Humanities, University of Sussex. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Memorial_Museum_in_Digital_Age_Hi_res.pdf
- Sumartojo, S. (2016). Commemorative atmospheres: memorial sites, collective events and the experience of national identity. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41(4), 541–553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12144>
- Takševa, T. (2018). Building a culture of peace and collective memory in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: Sarajevo's museum of war childhood. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 18(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12265>
- Warsidi, A. (2019). *Perlawanan di Kampung Kresek, Aceh: Cikal bakal front anti-GAM* ["Resistance in Kampung Kresek, Aceh: The future of the anti-GAM front."]. Acehkini. <https://kumparan.com/acehkini/perlawanan-di-kampung-kresek-aceh-cikal-bakal-front-anti-gam-1rjilSuxLyp> [in Indonesian]
- Wijaya, I. (2021). *Usai perang di Kampung Kresek* [After the war in Kresek Village]. AJNN. <https://www.ajnn.net/news/usai-perang-di-kampung-kresek/index.html> [in Indonesian]
- Williams, T. (2022). Remembering and silencing complexity in post-genocide memorialisation: Cambodia's Tuol Sleng genocide museum. *Memory Studies*, 15(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211037288>
- Zaninovi, T. (2023). (De) Linking with the past through memorials. *Architecture*, 3(4), 627–657. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/architecture3040034>