

## STUDY ON THE UTILIZATION OF LOCAL HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF JAPANESE FORTS IN BADEAN VILLAGE AS AN EFFORT TO INCREASE THE INTEREST IN LEARNING HISTORY OF MTS NURUL IMAN STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Interest in learning history among students, especially in rural areas of Indonesia, has decreased significantly, so that only about 35% of students show high interest in the subject. This condition has the potential to threaten their understanding of culture and national identity. This study aims to examine the use of the Japanese Fortress located in Badean Village as a source of history learning to increase the learning interest of MTs Nurul Iman students. A qualitative approach with an exploratory design is applied to explore the experiences and perceptions of students, teachers, and the community through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and focused group discussions. The results of the study revealed that visits and hands-on learning at the Japanese Fort site were able to increase students' interest and understanding of history. Interactive and contextual learning experiences encourage deeper emotional engagement of students. In addition, the use of these local historical sites helps students identify and live the cultural values inherent in their communities. These findings show the effectiveness of the Japanese Fortress as a historical educational medium in strengthening the cultural identity and learning motivation of MTs Nurul Iman students. The research recommends the need for adequate education policy support, special training for teachers, and improvements to the physical facilities of the site to optimize the use of local historical heritage. The integration of historical sites into the formal curriculum is also suggested as a strategic step in improving the quality of history learning in Indonesia as a whole.

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### INTRODUCTIONS

History education has an important role in shaping students' character and awareness of time. The Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) reported that only 35% of junior high and high school students have a high interest in history lessons. This percentage shows a decrease compared to 2018 data which reached 42%. This decline in

interest reflects a serious problem in the history learning process. The government must respond to this phenomenon with policies that encourage innovation in history teaching methods. History education requires a new approach in order for students to understand the meaning of history in their lives.

Low interest in learning history lessons is becoming more concerning in rural areas. BPS (2021) states that 60% of students in rural areas find history lessons uninteresting and irrelevant. This perception has the potential to hinder students' understanding of the nation's cultural roots and identity. This low interest can threaten the sustainability of the transfer of historical values to the younger generation. Governments and educators must look for contextual solutions that are able to connect history with students' lives. History lessons need to be directly linked to the social and cultural environment in which students live.

One of the strategies that can be taken is the use of local historical heritage as a medium for learning history. The Japanese Fortress in Badean Village is a historical site that has great potential to be used as a source of contextual learning. The site reflects Japan's colonial period which has national and local historical value. The physical existence of these buildings can help students understand history in real terms. Local sites like Fort Japan are able to provide a learning experience that is not obtained from textbooks. Japanese forts can be a means of learning history that brings students closer to historical reality.

Constructivist learning theory provides a solid foundation for the use of local historical heritage in learning. Piaget (1952) stated that knowledge is built through direct experience that is concrete. In this context, a visit to the Japanese Fortress allows students to develop an understanding based on sensory experience. Vygotsky (1978) added that social and environmental interactions are very influential in the learning process. Learning in historical locations can encourage collaboration between students and strengthen understanding. These theories support the idea that the use of local historical sites is relevant for meaningful learning.

Despite this, some still doubt the effectiveness of local sites as the main source of history learning. The limited context and scope of information are often the main reasons for rejection. Local historical sites are considered incapable of describing national history in its entirety. Bruner (1966) reminded that learning needs to be arranged in a spiral so that students can build understanding from concrete to abstract. Therefore, local historical sites should not be used as the only source of learning. These concerns point to the need for the integration of local sites as a complement in history learning.

Critical views on the use of local heritage in history learning can be answered argumentatively. Local history can serve as an entrance to understanding the more complex national history. Smith (2001) states that collective identity can be built through meaningful local experiences. The use of local historical sites such as Fort Japan is able to foster students' pride and emotional closeness to history. This relationship is a bridge that strengthens student involvement in learning national history. Local history serves as an initial foundation that supports sustainable learning of history.

A contextual approach to history learning can increase student engagement and participation. John Dewey (1938) explained that learning must be rooted in direct experiences that are meaningful to learners. A visit to a local historical site can bring the experience to life. When students are directly involved in the historical environment, they will better understand and appreciate the content of the lessons. This experiential learning fosters curiosity and a critical attitude toward the past. Local contexts such as Fort Japan are an effective medium in this learning approach.

The role of teachers is very important in managing learning based on local historical sites. Freire (1970) emphasizes that teachers should be facilitators who guide students in the process of critical and reflective thinking. Teachers must be able to relate historical facts found on local sites to national curriculum materials. This integration requires creativity and pedagogical competence from educators. Teachers also need to build historical narratives that are inclusive and contain national values. Therefore, teacher training is the main key to the success of the local history-based approach.

In addition to the pedagogical aspect, education policy support is also needed so that local historical sites can be used optimally. UNESCO (2015) states that education policies must support the preservation and utilization of cultural heritage in learning. Local governments need to play an active role in providing supporting facilities, budgets,

and regulations. This policy will strengthen the position of local historical heritage in educational curricula and activities. The existence of structural support will expand access to and sustainability of historical site-based learning programs. The implementation of appropriate policies is a determining factor for the effectiveness of the use of local sites in education.

The use of the Japanese Fortress as a source of history learning has high relevance to increase the interest in learning of MTs Nurul Iman students. This study needs to further examine how the strategy is implemented and the challenges faced in the learning process. This approach is in line with the demands of the times that emphasize active, contextual, and experiential learning. It is not enough to be text-based, but it is also necessary to bring historical reality to the classroom. This research is expected to contribute to history learning innovations in Indonesia. The study aims to develop a more relevant, engaging, and meaningful model of history learning for students.

### Problem Formulation

1. How can the use of the Japanese Fort in Badean Village as a source of history learning can increase the interest in learning history of MTs Nurul Iman students?
2. What are the challenges and difficulties faced in the use of the Japanese Fort in Badean Village as a history learning medium for MTs Nurul Iman students?
3. How does the use of the Japanese Fort in Badean Village affect MTs Nurul Iman's students' understanding of local history and cultural identity?

### RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand in depth the use of the Japanese Fortress as a source of historical learning. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meaning and direct experiences of participants in a natural context. Robert K. Yin (2014) states that this approach is very relevant for studying complex social phenomena. This study aims to describe in detail how students' interaction with historical sites can shape interest in learning history. The researcher chose this approach because the main focus was on the participants' subjective interpretation of the history learning experience. Therefore, a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate to uncover the educational potential of local historical sites.



Figure 1. Data Collection Methods in Qualitative Research

This study uses an exploratory design to comprehensively explore how the Japanese Fortress is used in history learning. This design was chosen because it is suitable for answering research questions that are open and dynamic. Yin (2014) explains that exploratory design is effective for understanding the context and social dynamics

that occur directly in the field. Researchers focus attention on the interactions between students, teachers, and the environment of historical sites. This is done so that the use of historical sites as a learning medium can be thoroughly explored. This design supports the researcher's efforts in formulating findings that are contextual and reflective.

The research location is centered in Badean Village, the site of the Japanese Fortress which has high historical value. The selection of this location considers aspects of relevance and feasibility as an in-depth research object. Yin (2014) stated that the selection of meaningful cases is important in qualitative studies. Researchers identified that these locations provide an authentic context to observe students' interactions with local historical sources. The researcher hopes that this location will provide an opportunity for students to experience real-life experience-based learning. Therefore, the research location was chosen based on its educational potential and rich historical value.

The data in this study was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and focus group discussions. Interviews were conducted to explore students, teachers, and residents' views on site-based history learning. Patton (2002) emphasized that in-depth interviews help researchers understand the participants' personal perspectives. Participatory observation is carried out during learning activities around the Japanese Fortress. Spradley (1980) states that the direct involvement of researchers allows for authentic and contextual behavioral observations. Group discussions are used to get students' collective views on the learning experiences they have experienced.

In-depth interviews were conducted with history teachers, MTs Nurul Iman students, and community leaders around the Japanese Fort site. The interview aims to understand the role of historical sites in shaping students' motivation to learn. Patton (2002) states that interviews provide access to information that cannot be directly observed. The researcher compiles the interview guide based on the theme and objectives of the research. The interview process is conducted openly so that participants can freely express their experiences and opinions. Therefore, interviews are the main instrument to explore the subjective meaning of participants.

Participatory observation is carried out when students participate in learning activities in the Japanese Fortress area. The researcher observed students' interaction with historical sites and teachers in the learning process. Spradley (1980) mentioned that the direct presence of researchers allows for a deeper understanding of social phenomena. The researcher recorded relevant behaviors, responses, and activities during the learning activities. This observation provides a visual and contextual picture of the implementation of experiential history learning. Therefore, observations serve as a complement to the data obtained from interviews and discussions.

A targeted group discussion was conducted to obtain students' collective views on history learning at the Japanese Fort site. This discussion focused on students' reflections on the benefits and challenges of learning at historical sites. Morgan (1997) explains that group discussions are effective in capturing the dynamics of opinions that arise in social interactions. Researchers divided students into small groups to encourage active and open participation. The results of the discussion were analyzed to identify patterns of students' understanding and experience in the history learning process. Therefore, the group discussion complements the triangulation approach in this study.

Data analysis was carried out through a thematic approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher conducts an analysis process ranging from rereading the data, coding, to finding the main theme. This analysis aims to uncover the meaning contained in the history learning experience at the Japanese Fortress site. The findings were analyzed based on the relationship between students' experiences and the use of historical sites in the context of learning. This process resulted in a thematic interpretation that demonstrated the effectiveness of the site-based approach in increasing interest in learning history. Therefore, thematic analysis is the main foundation in drawing conclusions from this research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. The Utilization of the Japanese Fortress in Badean Village as a History Learning Resource Can Increase the Interest in Learning History of MTs Nurul Iman Students

The use of the Japanese Fort in Badean Village as a source of history learning has been proven to increase the learning interest of MTs Nurul Iman students in history subjects. This research shows that students gain a more interactive learning experience through direct visits to historical sites. These results show that students' direct



interaction with historical relics gives concrete meaning to the subject matter. John Dewey (1938) emphasized that an effective learning process occurs through hands-on experiences that are meaningful to students. Dewey stated that education must integrate concrete experiences in order for students to be actively involved in learning. This finding confirms the importance of an experiential approach in local site-based history education.

Historical learning activities outside the classroom through visits to Fort Japan strengthen students' understanding of past events. Students are better able to relate the information obtained from textbooks to historical facts that they see firsthand. Jean Piaget (1969) stated that children at the concrete operational stage need real experience to build more complex cognitive structures. Piaget emphasizes that direct interaction with the physical environment helps students develop a more stable schema of understanding. The results of this study show that historical site-based learning is able to encourage students' cognitive development through the process of observation and reflection. This activity proves that real context strengthens the construction of students' understanding of history.

Students' participation in educational visits to historical sites increases their emotional and affective involvement in the learning process. Students feel the atmosphere and historical value inherent in the site, which makes the historical material more vivid and meaningful. John Dewey (1938) explained that emotional engagement is part of an authentic learning experience. Dewey believes that students will be more motivated if learning touches on aspects of their personal feelings and experiences. This can be seen from the enthusiasm of students during activities at the Japanese Fortress site, which shows the internalization process of historical values. This process forms a student's emotional connection to history learning that was previously considered boring.



Figure 2. Japanese Fort Site in Badean Village

The use of historical sites as a learning medium expands the pedagogical approach of teachers in delivering historical material. Teachers have the opportunity to develop contextual teaching methods that adapt to the local environment. Mahfud (2024) said that local archaeological sites in Banyuwangi such as ancient caves and colonial forts can be used as a source of history learning. Mahfud's research shows that integrating historical sites in the curriculum creates a more relevant and comprehensive learning experience. Teachers are not only the presenters of

the material, but also facilitators in bridging students' experiences with historical relics. This approach provides a space for innovation in learning based on local potential.

The integration of the Japanese Fortress in history learning reflects the importance of cultural heritage-based learning resources. Learning resources come not only from textbooks, but also from the surrounding environment and cultural sites. Miskawi et al. (2021) revealed that the development of cultural tourism in Banyuwangi is directed at strengthening the educational function of historical sites. The study emphasizes that historical sites have educational potential that can be optimized as a source of knowledge and cultural value. The use of the Japanese Fort as a means of learning proves that education and cultural heritage preservation can go hand in hand. This utilization supports efforts to preserve historical sites as part of local identity.

The learning experience at Fort Japan also builds collaboration between schools and communities in the preservation of historical heritage. The involvement of villagers in supporting visit activities provides a wider social meaning for students. Yudiana and Mahfud (2023) noted that a participatory approach between schools and the community is very effective in historical site-based learning. According to them, the involvement of local communities strengthens the educational value as well as the social value of learning activities. This collaboration creates a sense of belonging to historical sites and fosters a shared awareness to preserve them. These activities show the synergy between education, cultural preservation, and community participation.

The effectiveness of the Japanese Fort as a learning resource shows that students gain increased historical literacy through observation methods and hands-on discussions. Students not only receive passive information, but actively explore meaning from the context of the sites they visit. Arrazaq (2023) exemplifies a similar approach in Pringapus Village which uses Hindu-Buddhist relics as historical teaching materials. The research shows that direct experience improves students' analytical and synthesis skills towards historical facts. Learning activities at the Japanese Fortress site enrich students' critical thinking and interpretive skills towards past events. This approach emphasizes the importance of learning based on historical environments.

The results of the study showed that students more easily understood the concepts of time, change, and continuity in history after a visit to the Japanese Fortress site. This activity strengthens the chronological framework of students in understanding history as a continuous process. According to Piaget (1969), the understanding of the concept of time develops gradually through concrete experiences that can be observed and analyzed. Piaget asserted that a complex understanding of time requires visual media and actual context as the basis for the formation of cognitive schemas. A visit to a historical site provides a real context that facilitates the development of that chronological logic. This kind of understanding is important to shape a systematic and scientific way of thinking about history.

Learning history through the Japanese Fort also contributes to strengthening students' cultural and national identities. Students begin to understand that local history is an integral part of the national history that shapes the character of the nation. Giddens (1984) explained that understanding local social structures and history is key in forming a collective identity. This understanding is important so that the younger generation is not uprooted from its own cultural and historical roots. Sites like Fort Japan help students cultivate a sense of pride in their nation's historical heritage. This activity emphasized the urgency of local culture-based education in strengthening nationalism.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the use of local historical sites such as the Japanese Fortress is effective in improving the quality of history learning at MTs Nurul Iman. These findings show a transformation of pedagogical approaches that focus not only on cognitive, but also affective and social aspects of students. Learning theories from Dewey (1938), Piaget (1969), and Giddens (1984) have proven relevant in explaining the positive impact of historical site-based learning experiences. This utilization is also in accordance with the results of studies by Mahfud (2024), Miskawi et al. (2021), and Yudiana & Mahfud (2023) regarding the educational potential of archaeological sites in Banyuwangi. This research provides recommendations for schools to make local cultural heritage part of contextual learning strategies. This conclusion emphasizes that learning history will be more meaningful if students experience firsthand the traces of history they learn.



## 2. Challenges and Difficulties Faced in the Utilization of the Japanese Fortress in Badean Village as a History Learning Media for MTs Nurul Iman Students

The use of the historical site of the Japanese Fort as a learning medium faces various significant challenges. Limited access to the site location makes it difficult for students and teachers to make in-person visits. This limited access has an impact on the effectiveness of the history learning process that relies on real experience (Dewey, 1938). In addition, supporting resources in the form of trained tour guides are also inadequate to provide contextual and interesting explanations. The physical condition of the site that is poorly maintained decreases the interest and comfort of students during learning (Piaget, 1969). All of these barriers reduce the optimization of the site's potential as an authentic and contextual source of historical learning.

The challenge of limited resources in the use of the Japanese Fort can be analyzed through the theory of educational resources from Lawrence Cremin (1976). Cremin emphasized that educational resources include teaching materials, learning environments, and supportive communities. The lack of integration of historical sites into the school curriculum shows the weak use of the environment as a source of formal learning (Cremin, 1976). Inadequate infrastructure, such as access facilities and supporting facilities, worsens learning conditions in the field. Therefore, the ideal history learning must pay attention to the aspect of resources holistically so that the learning process is effective and enjoyable (Dewey, 1938). This underscores the importance of increasing support resources at Fort Japan.

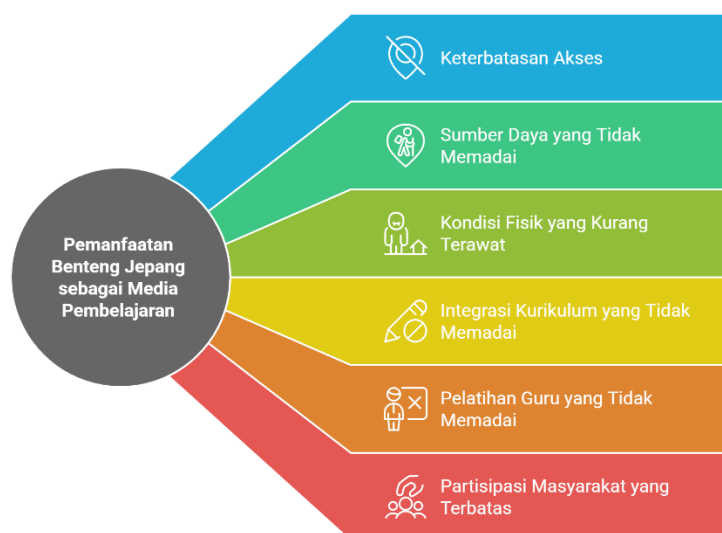


Figure 3. Challenges and Solutions for the Utilization of Japanese Forts

The institutional theory of education from Max Weber (1922) emphasizes the role of structure and authority in supporting learning innovation. The lack of integration of learning activities at historical sites in the school curriculum reflects the weaknesses of institutional structures that are not responsive to local potential. Rigid educational structures often limit innovation in the use of learning resources outside the conventional classroom (Weber, 1922). Therefore, it is important for schools and local governments to reform institutional structures in order to accommodate more varied and experience-based learning methods. Adaptive educational institutions encourage the creation of an inclusive and creative learning environment (Weber, 1922). This kind of integration also facilitates mentoring and monitoring in the history learning process.

An inclusive education approach that integrates religious values is one of the solutions for the development of history learning media. According to Pradana et al. (2023), inclusive education can promote equality and respect for diversity in a multicultural society. Universal religious values such as compassion and justice can create a

harmonious learning environment that is open to differences (Kasturi et al., 2024). The implementation of this inclusive education can optimize the potential of Fort Japan as a learning medium that not only teaches history, but also shapes students' character. Siswantara et al. (2023) added that Christian religious education can adopt inclusive values through theological reflection and interfaith dialogue. Thus, this approach can enrich the experience of learning history at the site.

The development of site-based history learning media also requires teacher training to be able to manage innovative learning. Pradana et al. (2023) stated that teacher training and the development of appropriate teaching materials are key factors for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Teachers must be equipped with the ability to relate historical material with social and religious values so that learning is more meaningful. The lack of competence of educators in this case is the main obstacle that often occurs in the field (Na'imah et al., 2017). Therefore, increasing the capacity of teachers through training and workshops is a strategic step in optimizing the use of the Japanese Fortress site. This will help teachers deliver material in an interactive and contextual manner.

The physical condition of the Japanese Fortress that is poorly maintained can cause a negative perception of the value of the historical site. According to the theory of cultural heritage conservation by Feilden (2003), the physical maintenance of the site has a direct effect on the educational value that can be conveyed to the community. Physical damage can diminish authentic experiences that are essential in history learning (Feilden, 2003). Therefore, restoration and maintenance efforts are a priority so that the site can be used optimally as a learning medium. The government and the community need to collaborate in maintaining the preservation of the site so that its educational benefits are maintained. Good physical condition will increase the attractiveness and comfort of students.

The implementation of integrating site visit activities into the formal curriculum still requires systematic policy development. According to Posner (2004), a responsive curriculum must include field experience as part of the learning process. Currently, the integration is still sporadic and uneven in various schools. This causes disparities in the quality of history learning that uses the Japanese Fort site (Posner, 2004). The formulation of policies that regulate the participation of historical sites in formal learning can encourage more optimal utilization. This policy must pay attention to technical, curriculum, and human resource aspects.

Institutional systems that support site management as a learning medium also need to be developed collaboratively. Weber (1922) emphasized the importance of coordination between institutions in building effective authority. Coordination between the education office, tourism office, and site managers is the key to the success of the development of cultural heritage-based learning media. Collaborative management can increase resource capacity and expand student access (Weber, 1922). This synergy requires intense communication and mutual agreement on site governance. Thus, history learning media will be more sustainable and have a wide impact.

The role of the local community is also very important in maintaining and developing Fort Japan as a learning medium. Cremin (1976) stated that the community as an educational resource plays a role in creating a conducive learning environment. Community participation in the maintenance and assistance of visits can add educational and cultural value to the site. The active involvement of the community can foster a sense of belonging and responsibility for cultural heritage (Cremin, 1976). Community empowerment programs around the site need to be encouraged so that the benefits of education can be felt directly. This condition will support the continued use of the site as a medium for learning history.

Overall, this study shows that the use of the Japanese Fort as a history learning medium requires an integrated approach that includes aspects of resources, institutions, and community participation. The theories of Cremin (1976), Weber (1922), and Dewey (1938) provide a conceptual framework for analyzing existing obstacles and solutions. Improving access, teacher training, improving the physical condition of the site, and integrating it into the curriculum are top priorities. An inclusive educational approach that contains religious values can also enrich the history learning experience. Thus, the Japanese Fortress can function optimally as an effective, contextual, and sustainable historical learning medium.



### 3. The Utilization of Japanese Forts in Badean Village Affects MTs Nurul Iman's Students' Understanding of Local History and Cultural Identity

The use of the Japanese Fort site in Badean Village has a significant impact on students' understanding of local history related to the Japanese colonial period. The students who participated in the learning at this location experienced an increase in their understanding of the strategic role of Badean Village during the Japanese colonial period. Anderson (1983) states that cultural identity is formed from a shared awareness of the history and cultural heritage of a community. Therefore, the introduction of such historical sites helps strengthen students' cultural identities as part of a society that has a valuable heritage. Fort Japan is a concrete learning medium that connects historical theory with students' real experiences. Thus, the site is effective in fostering pride and a sense of belonging to local history.

The increase in pride and cultural identity experienced by students is rooted in Benedict Anderson's (1983) theory of cultural identity which emphasizes the concept of "imagined communities." In this context, students learn to understand that they are part of a community that shares a common history and culture. This is in line with the opinion of Gardner (1999) who emphasizes the importance of contextual learning so that students can relate the subject matter to the real environment. The Japanese Fortress site serves as a bridge that connects the abstract knowledge of history with the historical reality that exists around them. Students who learn through real context show higher motivation to learn and deeper understanding. Therefore, the use of local historical sites is an effective strategy in history education.

The active role of students during learning at historical sites reinforces the concept of contextual learning developed by John W. Gardner (1999). Gardner emphasized that learning will be more meaningful if students can directly experience the social and cultural context related to the material. The Japanese fortress as a learning resource facilitates the hands-on experience so that students can feel the atmosphere of past history. Exploratory learning activities also stimulate students' emotional and intellectual involvement. The results of this study support the opinion of Suherman (2016) who stated that experiential learning significantly increases students' understanding and interest. History sites as a means of education enrich the history learning process at the MTs Nurul Iman level.

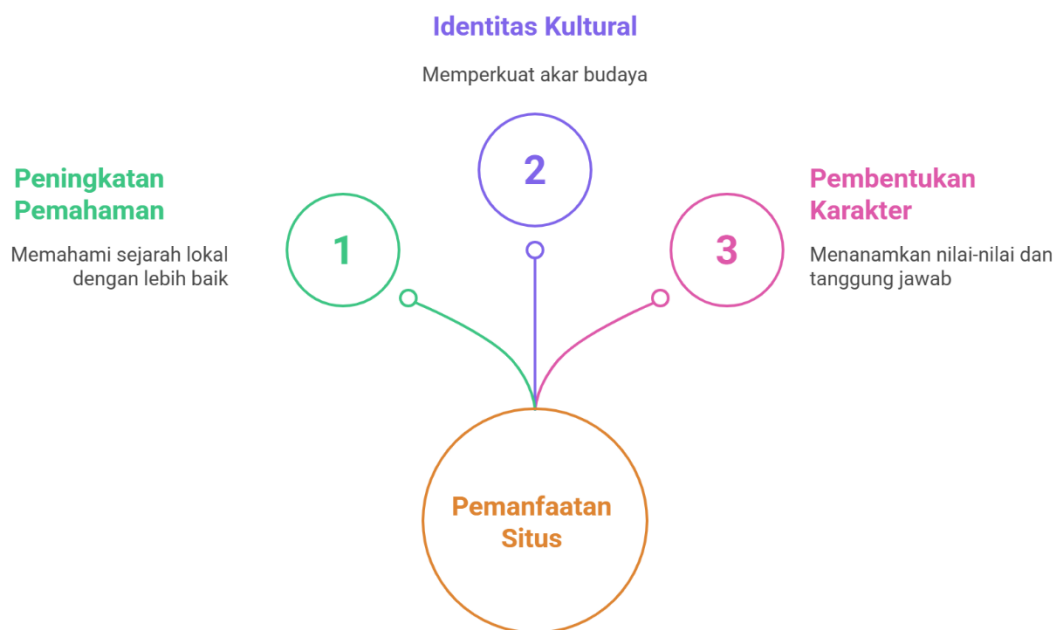


Figure 4. The Japanese Fortress site enhances students' understanding of history

The Japanese Fortress site has educational value that not only enhances cognitive understanding, but also develops students' affective aspects of history. Howard Gardner's (1999) theory of multiple intelligences states that learning that involves real experience can develop students' kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence. Hands-on experience at historic sites allows students to understand social and cultural contexts that are not easily obtained from textbooks alone. Mahfud et al. (2023) added that contextual learning experiences can stimulate self-control and critical thinking skills in students. Thus, the use of the Japanese Fortress contributes to the holistic development of students. This proves that history learning needs to be designed comprehensively.

The application of learning through historical sites also creates opportunities for students to develop social and communication skills. According to Suherman (2016), social interaction during the learning process in the field can improve students' ability to speak, cooperation, and empathy. A visit to the Japanese Fort allows students to discuss and exchange ideas about local history. This activity strengthens collective understanding and strengthens relationships between students in study groups. In addition, this approach is in line with Piaget's (1969) theory of constructivism which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. Students learn not only individually, but also as part of a learning community.

The role of teachers in facilitating learning at the Japanese Fortress site greatly determines the success of the learning process. The teacher acts as a facilitator who directs students to observe, ask questions, and reflect on the historical experiences they encounter. Gardner (1999) stated that the role of teachers as mediators of contextual learning must be able to relate students' experiences with the concept of historical theory. This process improves students' critical thinking and analytical skills. This is in accordance with Dewey's (1938) theory of learning which emphasizes the importance of reflection in learning experiences. With the right guidance, students can internalize historical and cultural values more deeply.

Learning activities at Fort Japan also show a positive contribution to strengthening students' cultural values and character. Anderson (1983) emphasized that awareness of local history can foster an attitude of pride and responsibility towards cultural heritage. Learning at historical sites strengthens students' emotional connection to their community and fosters respect for ancestors. This supports the results of research by Mahfud et al. (2023) who stated that strengthening character through contextual learning effectively increases students' positive attitudes. These values are essential for the formation of a strong cultural identity and personal integrity. Therefore, historical sites play a strategic role in character education.

The use of the Japanese Fort has a wide impact on the development of history education at the Nurul Iman MTs level. Gardner (1999) stated that innovative and contextual learning methods improve the quality of education. These historical sites provide authentic learning resources and are rich in local historical information that is difficult to find in conventional learning media. Suherman (2016) emphasized the importance of authentic learning media in improving student motivation and learning outcomes. The existence of the Japanese Fortress as a learning resource enriches the educational experience while maintaining the sustainability of the local historical heritage. Thus, this method can be a learning model that is worth developing.

In addition to the learning aspect, the use of the Japanese Fortress also has implications for the preservation of the historical site itself. Dewey (1938) emphasized the reciprocal relationship between learning experience and cultural preservation awareness. Students who study at historical sites tend to have a higher awareness of preserving and preserving their cultural heritage. This is in line with Anderson's (1983) finding that understanding history reinforces a commitment to local identity and culture. The preservation of historical sites can be maintained through the active role of the young generation as cultural heirs. Therefore, the use of this site is not only an educational activity, but also part of cultural conservation efforts.

The use of the Japanese Fort site as a source of history learning is very effective in improving students' understanding, cultural identity, and character. Gardner (1999) and Anderson (1983) provide a strong theoretical foundation for the success of such contextual learning. The existence of Fort Japan as an authentic learning resource

strengthens students' emotional connection to local history and cultural heritage. Therefore, the use of historical sites as a learning medium needs to be developed and supported by all related parties. This research proves that learning that integrates real experiences is able to produce meaningful and sustainable history education.

## CONCLUSION

The use of the Japanese Fort as a medium for learning history shows significant effectiveness in increasing the learning interest of MTs Nurul Iman students and strengthening their cultural identity. The learning activities that take place at the historical site are able to encourage students to understand history in a more in-depth and contextual way. Students' emotional engagement is also stronger because of the interactive learning experiences that are relevant to their surroundings. The study revealed that the use of local historical sites facilitates the introduction of cultural values as well as strengthens students' emotional attachment to their communities. This condition is an important basis in efforts to strengthen cultural understanding and foster a sense of pride in its historical heritage. Therefore, the utilization of historical sites such as the Japanese Fortress has a strategic role in history education at the junior high school level.

Adequate education policy support is the main requirement in optimizing the use of local historical heritage as a learning medium. Teacher training specifically needs to be organized so that educators are able to manage historical site-based learning effectively and interestingly. Improving the physical condition of historical sites is also very necessary to maintain sustainability and comfort during the learning process. The integration of historical sites into the formal curriculum is a strategic step to improve the quality of comprehensive history education in Indonesia. Public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage must be increased so that community participation in history education is also growing. Thus, collaboration between the government, educators, and the community is the key to realizing meaningful and sustainable history learning.

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