



The Utilization Of The Wonorejo Site As A History Learning Resource: A Descriptive Study On Local Wisdom Based Education

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Abstract

This study discusses the Wonorejo Site as a resource for student history learning and its contribution to instilling local wisdom values. This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The primary data were obtained from the site caretaker, while additional data were collected from books, journals, and online sources. The data analysis technique employed an interactive model with three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, which involved comparing data obtained from multiple sources, as well as through researcher's diligence. The results show that the Wonorejo Site is used as a social studies learning laboratory through observation activities, video documentation, and report preparation. This study aims to examine the use of the Wonorejo Site as a history learning resource and its contribution to instilling local wisdom values in students. The results show that the Wonorejo Site is used as a social studies learning laboratory through observation activities, video documentation, and report preparation. Through direct learning activities at the site, students can gain a concrete understanding of history. It develops a sense of curiosity and they help them learn to appreciate their cultural heritage.

Keywords: Wonorejo Site; learning resources; utilization.

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Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in historical and cultural heritage, spread across various regions. These remains play a crucial role in strengthening national identity and also serve as valuable learning resources for the younger generation. Among the regions in Indonesia, East Java is one area that preserves many historical sites from the period of the Nusantara kingdoms. However, data on the exact number of these remains is still limited and have not been fully documented. One cultural heritage site with historical and educational value is the Wonorejo Site, located in Santan Hamlet, Wonorejo Village, Mejayan District, Madiun Regency. This site is believed to date back to the Hindu-Buddhist period, as evidenced by the discovery of Lingga and Yoni structures that symbolize fertility and the worship of Lord Shiva. Additionally, the local community continues to preserve traditional and religious values in the vicinity of the site. This condition makes the site not only an archaeological remnant but also an integral part of the community's social and cultural life (Interview, 6 October 2024).

Although Indonesia boasts numerous historical sites, their use as learning resources in school remains suboptimal. History learning often focuses on textbooks and classroom teacher explanations, thereby underutilizing the surrounding environment as a tangible learning resource. As a result, students lack direct historical learning experiences through interaction with the historical relics around them. However, local historical sites have significant potential to be utilized as learning resources that support a more concrete and meaningful understanding of historical material.

Making historical sites a learning resource is essential. This importance is also shown in various previous studies. First, a study by Wahayuningtiyas (2023) demonstrates that learning activities at historical sites can enhance student learning interest in learning and help students understand the cultural and historical values contained in these remains. Second, a study by Yulianti and Seprina (2022) reports positive results, as students find it easier to understand the material, show greater enthusiasm for learning history, and develop stronger historical awareness. Third, Fikri (2019) found that learning activities at historical sites can increase student's engagement, motivation, awareness of the importance of studying history. Although these studies discuss the use of historical sites as learning resources, this research focuses on the Wonorejo Site in Madiun. This study offers novelty by integrating history learning with elements of local wisdom from the surrounding environment.

As previously explained, historical remains play a significant role in education by serving as real and meaningful learning resources for students through experiential learning (Kusumawati, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to examine the extent to which the Wonorejo Site is utilized as a history learning resource and its contribution to instilling local wisdom values in students, enabling them to understand history better and appreciate their regional cultural heritage.

Literature Review and Research Focus

Historical sites play an important role in learning because they provide real and contextual learning experiences for students. The concept of experiential learning emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when students interact directly with the objects being studied, rather than only receiving verbal information in the classroom. Kusumawati (2021) explains that learning based on direct experience can improve conceptual understanding and active student involvement in the learning process. Siregar & Nara in Lestari (2022) viewed from the perspective of usefulness, learning resources can function 1) to provide a more concrete or direct learning experience, 2) to present something impossible to hold, 3) to be visited or seen directly, and 4) to increase and expand knowledge. In the context of history education, historical sites function as authentic learning resources that connect theory with the social and cultural reality of society.

Learning resources are not limited to textbooks but also include the environment, objects, and situations that can support the learning process (Seels and Richey, as cited in Muhammad, (2018); Kholiq, (2022). Historical sites, as part of the learning environment, provide opportunities for students to directly observe remains from the past, understand symbolic values, and develop historical awareness. Studies by Fikri (2019) and Wahayuningtiyas (2023) show that the use of historical sites as learning resources can increase learning interest, student participation, and understanding of historical material.

In addition to serving as history learning resources, historical sites also play an important role in local wisdom based education. Local wisdom based education emphasizes the importance of local cultural values as a foundation for character development in students (Wagiran, 2012). Through learning that is rooted in the surrounding social and cultural environment, students can understand regional identity and develop a sense of responsibility to preserve cultural heritage. Studies by Yulianti and Seprina (2022) and Mardiani (2022) confirm that history learning based on local sites can instill character values such as mutual cooperation, religiosity, and patriotism.

The Wonorejo Site, as a heritage from the Hindu Buddhist period, holds not only archaeological value but also educational and cultural value that is relevant to history learning and character education. The presence of local traditions such as village cleansing or Sedekah Bumi around the site strengthens the function of the Wonorejo Site as a local wisdom based

educational medium that integrates historical knowledge with the social and cultural values of the local community. However, studies that specifically discuss the use of the Wonorejo Site as a history learning resource and its contribution to local wisdom based education remain limited. Therefore, this study is important to address this research gap.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is a research strategy that emphasizes words over quantification in data collection and analysis (Rahma 2023). Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation (Harahap, 2020). This study comprises both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through interviews with the caretaker of the Wonorejo Site, Mr Sampiro. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, and websites related to the Wonorejo Site. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) state that qualitative data analysis is conducted in an interactively through three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data in this study was ensured through source triangulation, which involved checking data obtained from multiple sources, as well as through researcher's diligence (Haryoko 2020). The focus of this study is the Wonorejo Site, situated in Santan Hamlet, Wonorejo Village, Mejayan District, Madiun Regency, East Java Province.

Result and Discussion

The Origin of the Wonorejo Site in Madiun

The Wonorejo Site is located in Santan Hamlet, Wonorejo Village, Mejayan District, Madiun Regency. The site was first discovered on the night of Friday Wage, June 30, 1989, when a resident of Santan Hamlet, Sukarto Simun, received a dream or spiritual message from an elderly figure known as Mbah Buyut Bejo, also called Resi Santanu Murti (Rizki, 2019). In the dream, the elderly figure asked for his house to be rebuilt. The next morning, Sukarto went to the village shrine and felt guided to a mound of soil beneath a jackfruit tree and a banyan tree. He began to digging and found stones that formed part of a site structure. The village head of Wonorejo and residents then assisted in excavating and arranging to from the Wonorejo Site. News of the discovery spread quickly and attracted public attention, including that of journalists. Following an investigation by the East Java Archaeology Office in 1996, the site was designated as a state-owned cultural heritage site. Further research and restoration were carried out in 1997 and 1998, including the construction of a protective roof and a fence. The site was later named the Lingga Site or the Wonorejo Site, in accordance with the name of the village where it was discovered (*Interview*, 6 October 2024).

The Wonorejo Site is constructed from red bricks and has a square plan measuring 14 by 14 meters (Redaksi Madu TV, 2023). The brick arrangement uses a close-fitting system, which bricks placed without gaps. The site consists of three levels or terraces, and at the highest level are a Lingga and a Yoni carved from andesite that symbolize Lord Shiva and Goddess Durga. The combined weight of both objects is estimated to exceed two tons (Selingkarwilis, 2025). The site faces west, and around the Yoni were likely statues of Durga, Ganesha, and Shiva Mahaguru, although these are no longer extant. At the four corners of the site are stone bases that likely served as supports for wooden pillars, which in turn supported a roof. The site's form resembles an open platform rather than a permanent, roofed structure.

The Lingga represents Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma, and Lord Vishnu as male symbols, while the Yoni represents Goddess Durga or Uma, the wife of Lord Shiva, as a female symbol. Together, they symbolize fertility and the balance of life. The site's simple form, along with its use of red brick, indicates an architectural style from the late Majapahit period. According to local accounts, Mbah Buyut Bejo explained that the Lingga and Yoni Site represents the cycle of human life, which includes birth, life, and death. He also taught the meaning of life, which emphasizes that humans should control their desires, act correctly in speech, actions, and intentions, and always perform worship to achieve inner peace (*Interview*, 6, October 2024).

Initially, the Wonorejo Site functioned as a place of worship for Hindus during the Majapahit Kingdom period. It may also have served as a repository for the ashes of essential

figures. Today, in addition to serving as a historical and educational tourism site, the site is also used by the local community for annual village cleansing ceremonies known as Sedekah Bumi (Zulhen, 2021). Some community members still believe that this place has spiritual value and often visit it often visit it for pilgrimage. Regardless of these beliefs, the Wonorejo Site holds high historical and cultural value and serves as clear evidence of past civilization in Madiun Regency that must be preserved (*Interview*, 6 October 2024).

The Utilization of the Wonorejo Site as a History Learning Resource

Seels and Richey, as cited in Muhammad (2018), state that learning resources encompass all supporting sources for learning activities, including support systems, materials, and learning environments. In other words, learning resources encompass all material provided to facilitate and support students in enhancing their understanding and achieving better learning outcomes (Kholiq, 2022). Based on this explanation, learning resources are all sources outside the individual that can be used for learning.

Based on interviews with the caretaker of the Wonorejo Site, Mr Sampiro, the site is frequently visited by various groups, including junior and university students from different institutions. In general, visitors come to learn history, conducting research, or create educational media, such as documentary videos. This condition suggests that the Wonorejo Site has been actively utilized as a historical learning resource relevant to current educational needs (*Interview*, 12 October 2025).

According to the caretaker's explanation, educational institutions that often organize visits include schools and universities from various areas around the site. Students usually come in groups to conduct direct observation of the site structures, collect documentation, and explore information about the historical and cultural values contained within the site. Learning activities at the Wonorejo Site are typically conducted through field observation, interviews, and the creation of scientific papers or educational videos. Through these activities, students not only gain factual knowledge about history but also develop critical thinking skills, cooperation, and concern for the preservation of local cultural heritage. Therefore, the Wonorejo Site plays a crucial role as a learning medium that bridges historical theory in the classroom with social and cultural realities in society.

Mr Sampiro explained that one group of visitors to the Wonorejo Site came from MTsN 5 Madiun. The students visited the site not only for observation but also to create video projects with a local history theme. They took photos and videos in several parts of the site, especially in areas that display the remaining site structures and the surrounding environment, and conducted interviews with the site caretaker. This history assigned this activity to help students learn outside classroom. This activity demonstrates the direct use of the also explore realhistorical objects firsthand. Through this activity, students gain more meaningful learning experiences and develop curiosity and concern for the preservation of local cultural heritage (Mardiani, 2022).

However, the caretaker also stated, and the researcher's experience supported this, that the use of the Wonorejo Site as a learning resource still faces several challenges, including limited supporting facilities, such as information boards, observation areas, and educational guides. Therefore, cooperation among schools, universities, and local government is needed to develop site-based educational programs, so that the educational and cultural preservation benefits of the Wonorejo Site can continue to improve sustainably.

The Contribution of the Wonorejo Site to Local Wisdom Based Education

The Wonorejo Site plays a crucial role in local wisdom-based education, offering authentic, relevant learning experiences closely tied to the daily lives of local students. Through learning activities at this site, students not only study historical events but also learn about noble values passed down by their ancestors, such as cooperation, religiosity, harmony with nature, and responsibility for cultural heritage. According to Paulo Freire, as cited in Wagiran (2012), local wisdom-based education teaches students to remain closely connected to real life in their surrounding environment. This form of education helps shape student's character, enabling them to develop a cultural identity and moral values in line with national values. The learning process at historical sites, such as Wonorejo, provides students with opportunities to understand these values firsthand through activities such as observation, interviews with local community

members, and field practice. These activities can strengthen historical awareness and a sense of pride in regional culture (Ardi, 2024).

Additionally, learning at historical sites can help students internalize cultural values and understand national character. Students become more appreciative of their ancestors work, understand the meaning of symbols found in historical remains, and develop a sense of responsibility to preserve the surrounding environment (Mardiana, 2022). Character education should integrate knowledge, attitudes, and real actions. At the Wonorejo Site, local wisdom values are reflected in the village cleansing tradition, known as Sedekah Bumi, which is still regularly carried out by the community. Through this tradition, students learn about togetherness, gratitude to God, and respect for ancestors. This tradition reflects the philosophy of balance among humans, nature, and God, known as Tri Hita Karana in local cultural education in East Java. Learning activities at this site also foster a sense of patriotism and social responsibility.

Site-based learning helps students understand regional identity and increases the wider community's awareness of the need to preserve and promote cultural heritage (Mardiani, 2022). For example, students from MTsN 5 Madiun visited the site and learned about the Wonorejo Site. During this visit, students not only studied history but also preserve and introducing local cultural values to a broader audience. Therefore, learning at the Wonorejo Site reflects the principles of local wisdom-based education, which is rooted in students culture and social environment. The Wonorejo Site serves as a concrete learning medium that integrates historical knowledge, cultural values, and national character formation into a single, comprehensive and meaningful learning experience.

Conclusion

The Wonorejo Site is a historical heritage from the Hindu-Buddhist period that serves not only as evidence of past civilization but also as a learning facility for the present generation. The site holds high historical, cultural, and educational value. Through on-side direct learning activities, students can observe historical remains in a real context, making the learning process more engaging, active, and meaningful, rather than limited to classroom theory. The use of the Wonorejo Site as a learning resource includes activities such as observation, interviews with the site caretaker, video documentation, and the preparation of visit reports. These activities help students develop critical thinking, cooperation, and respect for local culture. Therefore, the Wonorejo Site functions as a history-learning laboratory that connects theory with the lives of the surrounding community.

In addition to academic benefits, learning activities at the Wonorejo Site also instill local wisdom values such as cooperation, religiosity, responsibility, and patriotism. These values are reflected in community traditions such as village cleansing or Sedekah Bumi, which teach togetherness and gratitude to God. More broadly, the Wonorejo Site contributes to cultural preservation and strengthens public awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage. Cooperation among schools, government, and the community is essential so that the Wonorejo Site continues to be used as a learning resource that not only enriches knowledge but also shapes the character of younger generations who appreciate their national history and culture.

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