



# The Japanese Defense Heritage as a Dark Tourism in Banyuwangi Indonesia: A Qualitative Study

Chairy Chairy, Felix Goenadhi<sup>†</sup>, Filda Rahmiati, Tasya Zahwa Prayoga

*President University, Indonesia*

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This article investigates the development of dark tourism as a form of educational engagement, using several potential defense heritage sites as case studies.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study was conducted in the Banyuwangi area, focusing on defensive structures built during the Japanese occupation, which were utilized to deter attacks by superior forces during World War II. Primary data were collected through field observations, informal interviews, and documentation. This approach allowed key participants to share their narratives and provide in-depth perspectives.

**Findings:** The empirical analysis revealed that integrating history and education can foster the development of a new form of tourism, transforming heritage sites into distinctive tourist destinations. Involving a broader demographic in this process can create a sustainable tourism model, promoting dynamic and engaging educational heritage tourism experiences.

**Research limitations/implications:** This research highlights the significance of integrating educational tourism and provides detailed insights into dark tourism from theoretical and practical perspectives. Additionally, the study offers recommendations for specific regions suitable for developing dark tourism.

**Originality/value:** This study examines stakeholders' positive approaches to developing this emerging form of tourism and outlines relevant strategies and initiatives undertaken by these stakeholders.

*Keywords: Dark tourism, Japanese defense heritage, Educational tourism*

## I. Introduction

Over the last 25 years, 'dark tourism,' which entails visiting sites connected with death and tragedy, has grown in popularity and become an integral historical component (Kerr et al., 2021). The term "dark tourism," coined by researchers Lennon and Foley, refers to the activity of visiting areas linked with

death and disaster or sites where such events are interpreted for purposes of entertainment, education, or remembering (J. Lennon, 2017; J. J. Lennon & Foley, 1999). Dark tourism sites allow visitors to connect with history in a meaningful way by providing emotionally engaging and educational experiences that align with their interests and knowledge (Kavanagh, 2005; Lewis et al., 2022; Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Wyatt et al., 2022).

Previous research has mainly focused on the educational components of dark tourism, which include visiting sites linked with death, tragedy, and

Received: Dec. 19, 2024; Revised: Apr. 4, 2025; Accepted: Aug. 7, 2025

<sup>†</sup> Corresponding author: Felix Goenadhi

E-mail: [felix.goenadhi@president.ac.id](mailto:felix.goenadhi@president.ac.id)

horror. This type of tourism is directly related to sustainable development since it promotes responsible travel and recognizes the delicate character of these sites. Exploring these locations allows visitors to interact with historically significant events and cultural narratives that are frequently missed, building a better understanding of the past (J. J. Lennon & Foley, 1999; Qian et al., 2022; Sharpley & Stone, 2009). This sort of cultural tourism is strongly tied to sustainable development since it encourages responsible travel and acknowledges the fragile nature of these locations. Exploring these locations allows visitors to engage with historically significant events and cultural narratives that are frequently missed and develop a better understanding of the past (Sharpley & Stone, 2009).

When done responsibly, dark tourism might assist conservation efforts and local populations. This approach emphasizes responsible travel, considering the ethical implications of visiting sensitive sites, and encourages a deeper understanding of the historical context. A careful assessment of sustainable tourism practices within this sector is crucial to realizing these benefits (Jureniene & Radzevicius, 2022). Furthermore, it underlines the significant educational benefits for future generations (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Sharpley and Stone (2009) also highlighted that younger generations visit dark tourist sites like battlefields to understand their country's history better and bring it to life.

Due to two key elements, Radzevicius's (2022) study emphasizes dark tourism as a separate cultural tourism subgenre. First, economic developments have made travel more accessible and inexpensive for the general population, allowing individuals to visit a wider selection of sites, even those linked with death and misery. Second, the pervasive influence of media in modern culture has resulted in increasing exposure to pictures of death and calamity, fostering widespread interest in and participation in dark tourism.

Modern economic concerns and increased public exposure to such images increase popularity. However, tourism in locations with a tragic history frequently presents problems, including sociocultural

and sociological issues, political and operational difficulties, propaganda, and moral concerns (Jang et al., 2021; Stone, 2011). As striking extremes prevail with a strong ideological and political direction, it could focus on entertainment, a tourist attraction with obvious irony, and sarcasm with political-ideological implications (Jureniene & Radzevicius, 2022). Although Indonesia has significant potential for dark tourism, it is less well-known than other countries with prominent dark tourism spots (Masanti, 2016). Several examples of dark tourism destinations that commemorate wartime events in different regions are the German Coastal Battery in Normandy, France, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan, and Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. The locations have numerous international demand and reputations (Silva, 2024).

In Francoise's (2022) study, she emphasizes educating people and repairing the historical sites in Kuto Besak, Palembang. The study contends this is critical for engaging young people and instilling national pride. In the meantime, the Indonesian government confronts difficulties in protecting its cultural legacy due to a lack of information and clear legislation. This emphasizes the urgent need for a more significant commitment to cultural preservation activities.

History of Japan's invasion of Banyuwangi started in February 1942; Japanese forces executed an air raid on Banyuwangi, dropping 13 bombs that resulted in 39 civilian fatalities and 15 injuries. Subsequently, they attempted to land in the area from Bali, leading to a confrontation with Dutch troops in early March. By March 6, Japanese forces had successfully seized control of Banyuwangi, as reported by a Tokyo broadcast. They advanced into the region via land and sea on March 15 and 17, respectively. Initially welcomed by the local population, who pledged to provide essential goods, the Japanese occupation soon transitioned into a regime of strict military control and resource exploitation (Budiartha et al., 2021). He also mentioned that Banyuwangi's Japanese historical heritage presents considerable potential for dark tourism, primarily through locations connected to the

Japanese occupation during World War II. The Japanese 16th Army strategically established a network of bunkers and fortifications along Banyuwangi's eastern and southern coasts to defend against potential Allied assaults from Australia. Notable sites include Watu Dodol, which held significant military importance, and Gumuk Kantong, Sembulungan, Grajagan, and Kalipait, all situated within Alas Purwo National Park. Additional defense locations include Lampon (currently a military base for the Indonesian Marine Corps), Rowoputih, Poncomoyo, Pulau Merah, Sukamade, and Sarongan/Rajegwesi.

These remnants of Japanese fortifications, which remain visible today, could be part of a war history trail. Conservation of the historical sites and guided tours could provide valuable historical context as an educational form and insights from Japan's military past story, which promotes sustainable practices. By incorporating these sites into a broader dark tourism initiative, Banyuwangi can attract visitors interested in wartime history while honoring the memory of those affected by the occupation Miskawi (2023), with the practical interpretation of educational experience as a significant element for visitors' experience (Iliev, 2021).

In addition to the dark tourism initiative, Labadi et al. (2021) pointed out that historical stories can be served by adequately managing cultural heritage, as it could enhance a stronger community among the different groups by directly employing sustainable methods. This study will expand on previous scholarly work by looking into how concepts about education and dark tourism evolved and spread throughout Indonesia. Qualitative methods (field observations, casual interviews, and an in-depth examination), are expected to better understand the potential dark tourism in Banyuwangi as an educational value. Furthermore, this paper will provide practical suggestions for maintaining and developing Banyuwangi's Japanese-era defense buildings, particularly by combining dark tourism with educational activities. The study underscores the potential for these places as important destinations for historical information acquisition, academic enrichment, cultural engagement,

and diplomatic discussion, particularly those commemorating past battlefields.

## II. Literature Review

### A. Dark Tourism for Educational Purposes

Grinfelde and Veliverronena (2021) notice that visitors frequently mention gaining professional advantages from site visits. These advantages include a deeper comprehension of the topic, a more robust link between theoretical ideas and their real-world uses, and a broader awareness of the various tourism experiences offered at dark tourism locations.

Israfilova and Khoo-Lattimore (2019) emphasize the educational value of dark tourism as a significant experience for young visitors, particularly after they are exposed to the site's history. It is argued that students who visit these sites gain knowledge and are inspired to learn more about history and develop a stronger sense of patriotism.

Patriotism about the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1942-1945) was a period of profound hardship that also catalyzed a growing national consciousness, making Banyuwangi a significant site for dark tourism. The preservation and development of historical sites, such as former Japanese military camps, could provide educational insights into Indonesian resistance. At the same time, Romusha's forced labor sites could highlight the suffering endured by Javanese laborers and their role in fostering the spirit of independence. Additionally, memorials at mass graves and execution sites could serve to honor local fighters who opposed Japanese rule, drawing parallels to Auschwitz's role in Holocaust remembrance (Oren et al., 2021).

Through these narratives, Banyuwangi could commemorate local heroes and reinforce national identity, much like how Auschwitz strengthened Jewish and Polish historical consciousness. By framing the occupation as a pivotal moment in Indonesia's path to independence in 1945, dark tourism in Banyuwangi

could instill a deeper appreciation for the nation's resilience. Moreover, integrating these sites into educational programs and school visits would ensure that future generations recognize and honor the sacrifices made during this critical period in Indonesian history.

In this context, educational tourism encompasses any form of travel that integrates educational components, offering intellectual and emotional engagement (Dresler, 2023; Jang et al., 2021). Martini and Buda (2020) examine the emotional aspects of dark tourism, asserting that while most young travelers experience sadness at these locations, others find the experience captivating. For some, visiting such sites offers a unique opportunity to engage their senses and gain a deeper understanding of history through direct observation.

To engage younger visitors, interactive exhibits, augmented reality (AR) experiences, and storytelling tours can make history more accessible (Spadoni et al., 2022). Schools should also include historical site visits in their curricula to promote understanding of the impact of World War II (WWII) on Indonesia (Raedts, 2021). These strategies can help create a sustainable dark tourism model that educates, preserves history, and supports local economic growth. Collaboration with historians, researchers, and local communities is essential for verifying information and presenting a balanced account of the Japanese occupation. Additionally, the sensitive nature of dark tourism, which often involves themes of suffering, necessitates a respectful, educational approach. Sites should incorporate memorials, museums, and guided tours that honor victims while fostering awareness.

They do this within the context of "emotion and affect." Kerr et al. (2021) discuss the importance of understanding how children behave and experience dark tourism sites. Younger visitors are often influenced by adults' perceptions, knowledge, and interpretations, affecting their understanding and emotional responses to these sites.

Dabamona and Cater (2019) suggest that, in the context of less developed nations, the lack of opportunities for children to participate in school

tours in the past played a crucial role in maximizing their experience when visiting dark tourism sites. This gap highlights the importance of providing educational travel opportunities to enhance their learning and engagement with historical narratives.

## B. Dark Tourism and School Trips in Indonesia

In Indonesia, school trips are a fundamental component of the educational experience, providing students with opportunities to learn beyond the traditional classroom setting. These visits often serve to achieve multiple learning objectives and essential educational outcomes. During the trip, students can engage directly with their surroundings, reinforcing and deepening the theoretical knowledge they have acquired in class (Dabamona & Cater, 2019). For example, school trips in Indonesia often involve visits to significant historical and cultural sites, such as the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Borobudur Temple in Central Java and Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII). It is proven in v an attitude of preserving ancient heritage and culture, creativity, innovation, cooperation, and persistence. Nevertheless, there is limited research on visitors to defense heritage sites in Indonesia, particularly in dark tourism and its role in educational tourism in Indonesia. Moreover, in Dresler's (2023) findings, students treasure the field trips to Auschwitz Death Camp as their chance to include tourist elements in their education. This tourism site allowed them to further enhance their interest in history with the detailed guided tours provided.

By seeing the previous findings and perspective, the potential for such heritage sites is substantial, and the longstanding tradition of school trips presents an opportunity to incorporate defense heritage as an educational resource for future generations (Dabamona & Cater, 2019; Kerr et al., 2021). This idea can be described as a form of special interest tourism focused on education. It builds on the traditional practice of school trips and serves as a means to encourage inbound tourism by integrating educational travel with

other types, including dark tourism. This integrative approach enhances the educational experience and cultivates a deeper understanding of cultural and historical contexts through immersive visits to significant heritage sites (Jang et al., 2021).

Dark tourism and education are intricately connected, as these sites provide a unique opportunity for visitors to engage with history, particularly tragic events such as wars, genocides, and natural disasters. These locations serve as educational platforms where individuals can learn about the past, offering more profound insights into the human condition and the consequences of historical events (Wyatt et al., 2022).

This educational experience encourages reflection on moral, cultural, and ethical issues, fostering intellectual and emotional engagement. As dark tourism evolves, the integration of edutainment—a blend of education and entertainment—has transformed these experiences into interactive learning journeys. By incorporating storytelling, immersive technologies, and dramatic presentations, edutainment attractions help visitors connect with history meaningfully, often enhancing emotional and intellectual understanding of complex topics. Moreover, dark tourism encourages empathy, allowing visitors to reflect on the human cost of war or the impacts of atrocities (Dresler, 2023).

This emotional engagement promotes social awareness and examines societal values and collective actions. However, the balance between education and entertainment in dark tourism raises challenges, with some critics arguing that entertainment aspects can overshadow educational content, potentially trivializing serious historical events (Kerr et al., 2021). Dark tourism attractions must maintain educational integrity while ensuring that the emotional experiences do not detract from the historical significance. As dark tourism grows, there is a growing need for innovative educational methods, such as interactive exhibits, virtual reality, and augmented reality, to create more impactful learning experiences. This expansion also opens new avenues for research in educational methodologies and how people engage with complex historical topics emotionally and intellectually.

### III. Methodology

This research study was conducted in Banyuwangi in August 2024, which serves as the focal area for the investigation, with a particular emphasis on the Pillboxes. These fortifications were erected during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia to protect against assaults from more powerful military forces during World War II. In modern times, they are acknowledged as significant tourist destinations.

The primary data for this research was gathered through a qualitative approach that involved field observations, casual interviews, and an in-depth examination of pertinent documents. This methodological strategy enables participants to express their viewpoints and stories in detail.

The qualitative methods were chosen better to understand the potential of dark tourism in education, gathering nuanced perspectives on historical value. The analysis will employ an inductive and exploratory framework to uncover new and emerging theories. We will strive to derive meaningful insights from the collected data through targeted interviews and rigorous analytical techniques.

The authors have identified promising opportunities for developing dark heritage tourism in Banyuwangi. This initiative is expected to enhance the understanding of the region's historical context and facilitate systematic data collection regarding the current status of its heritage sites. In accordance with the recommendations provided by local stakeholders, we conducted a comprehensive examination of several significant historic sites, namely the Pillbox Gumuk Kantong, Pillbox Grajagan, and the Police Officer Siliragung. Our analysis indicates that these structures authentically represent Japanese defensive military architecture, highlighting their significance in the context of historical and cultural heritage.

Field observations were systematically conducted to elucidate the nuanced responses of sources about the research questions, with selections based on their substantive relevance to the study. Comprehensive literature reviews were performed to contextualize

the case study within the broader discourse on defense heritage sites and identify and address existing knowledge gaps in the conceptualization of defense heritage tourism—especially in the Indonesian context. These reviews encompassed a comprehensive analysis of government documents, archival materials, and existing scholarly research to establish a robust framework for the subsequent analysis.

In addition to field observations, the authors conducted a Focus Group Discussion to enrich the research findings. Table 1 delineates the research participants, comprising seven individuals with professional backgrounds. The first participant is Bayu Ari Wibowo (Bayu), affiliated with the Culture and Tourism Office; he has worked for almost 10 years. Following him is Dewa Made Alit Budi (Alit), along with Gema Budiarto (Gema), both of whom are researchers studying for their PhD in Japanese history at Diponegoro University. Furthermore, Juari represents the local tourism community that specializes in social media content at Museumblambangan on Instagram, while Yusron is identified as a researcher specializing in this field; he knows most Japanese sites in Banyuwangi. Lastly, Lita and Ros are acknowledged as academicians actively involved in youth organizations for almost 3 years. The diverse composition of this participant group dramatically enhances our understanding of the research topic under investigation.

## IV. Findings

The qualitative data presented originates from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) featuring key participants with varied expertise in historical and cultural topics. Contributors included Bayu Ari Wibowo, and Dewa Made Alit Budi Siswanto from the Culture and Tourism Office, who shared valuable insights on cultural heritage management policies. Gema Budiarto, a historical researcher from Diponegoro University, provided scholarly perspectives on historical matters. Juari served as a representative of the local tourism community, offering valuable grassroots insights. Concurrently, Yusron and scholars Lita and Ros underscored the critical role of youth engagement in preserving cultural heritage. This dialogue facilitated a thorough understanding of the pertinent issues being addressed.

### A. History of Colonialism in Indonesia

In examining Indonesia's colonial history, Gema and Bayu analyzed the complex and prolonged period of Dutch colonization, which spanned approximately 350 years. Gema contends that the prevailing narrative perpetuated in educational frameworks acts as propaganda, contributing to a pervasive sense of inferiority among the Indonesian populace. Drawing on Resink's research, Gema contends that the extent of Dutch control in Indonesia was notably more constrained than traditionally perceived. This colonial

**Table 1.** Research source person

No	Name	Position
1.	Bayu Ari Wibowo	Staff from the Culture and Tourism Office ( <i>Disbudpar</i> )
2.	Dewa Made Alit Budi Siswanto	Head of Field from Culture and Tourism Office ( <i>Disbudpar</i> )
3.	Gema Budiarto	Researcher from Diponegoro University, Academic Historian
4.	Juari	Tourism Local Community
5.	Yusron	Researcher
6.	Lita	Academician (Youth Organization)
7.	Ros	Academician (Youth Organization)

dominance lasted less than two decades and was predominantly concentrated in particular regions of Java. Such an interpretation invites a critical reassessment of historical narratives related to the impact and authority of colonialism in Indonesia.

In the collective memory, elementary school history books often state 350 years of colonization, but this is inaccurate. The actual duration was less than 20 years, significantly shorter. The figure of 350 years serves as propaganda designed to portray the people as weak as if to say, 'You cannot defeat me; you have been colonized for 350 years.' This narrative aims to undermine mindsets and diminish spirits. G.J. Resink's research indicates that the claim of being colonized for 350 years is an exaggeration and a myth. (Gema).

Bayu reinforces this perspective by referencing the research conducted by G.J. Resink, which focuses on analyzing legal documents. The articles illustrate that Dutch administrative authority was geographically and temporally restricted, underscoring the need to reevaluate historical narratives shaped by colonial ideologies. Such scholarly inquiry can foster a more nuanced understanding of Indonesia's colonial history, ultimately enhancing national identity and collective memory.

G.J. Resink's analysis relied on legal documents and lawyers' insights. According to these legal records, the actual period of colonization was less than 20 years when traced accurately. Additionally, it is important to note that Dutch control extended not over all of Indonesia but was primarily confined to Java Island, and even within Java, it was restricted to specific regions. (Bayu)

## B. Defense heritage sites in Banyuwangi, East Java

The collective memories documented by Juari offer vital insights into the practices associated with the construction of heritage sites, particularly concerning the strategies implemented to uphold confidentiality. Reports indicate that laborers were blindfolded during the construction process to prevent them from being cognizant of the precise locations of these sites.

Constructing a military installation is classified, so, understandably, the community's view is restricted. Concrete is poured after their work is completed, and structures are built for storage and living purposes. Once the construction is finished, the workers' view will again be obscured and promptly escorted to the exit area. (Juari)

Upon completing their assignments, these workers reportedly heard gunfire — a total of four shots — which Gema interpreted as indicative of the execution of individuals who had discreetly known the locations of the sites. This shared recollection underscores the notion that such drastic measures were taken to reduce any potential risks to the confidentiality of the installations.

Gema suggests that a more thorough investigation could uncover these concealed facilities, pointing out that the travel time to these locations is approximately one hour. "If you dig a little deeper, you may discover a site like this, as the travel estimate is only about one hour, roughly speaking," says Gema.

This estimate is an important resource for tracing and documenting the historical significance of military sites, ultimately enriching the field of defense heritage research. It offers contextual and locational details that enhance the author's comprehension of the implications surrounding military history and operations.

This discussion illustrates the interplay between local knowledge and academic research, showcasing how Juari's narratives and Gema's scholarly work

collaboratively enhance our comprehension of the intricate legacy of wartime information. The narrative underscores the human toll of safeguarding classified information and prompts significant ethical inquiries. This topic encourages deeper investigation in defense heritage studies, particularly regarding the moral dimensions of military secrecy and its wider social repercussions.

### C. The Heritage Sites as Dark Tourism Potential

The discourse surrounding the revitalization and expansion of heritage tourism in Banyuwangi critically underscores the region's distinctive historical landmarks, particularly those depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. delineates several sites that could develop into prominent dark tourism destinations. Among these sites are the Pillbox in Gumuk Kanton, the Pillbox in Grajagan, and the historical police office in Siliragung, which remains operational today.

These locations provide unique historical and cultural narratives capable of attracting tourists

particularly drawn to death, tragedy, and macabre themes. Figure 1 illustrates significant sites from the era of Japanese occupation, including Pillbox Grajagan, an observation post positioned strategically along the coastline, and Pillbox Gumuk Kantong, which fulfilled critical military functions during this tumultuous period.

Collectively, these heritage sites embody narratives of conflict and resilience, offering a profound context for exploring a range of historical interpretations. This exploration fosters a deeper understanding of the region's historical significance and enhances its relevance to contemporary discussions on heritage tourism.

Additionally, these sites promote an engagement with the past that encourages critical reflection on the socio-political dynamics that influenced historical outcomes. By examining the varied interpretations of these narratives, researchers and scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between memory, identity, and history. This exploration highlights the significance of heritage sites as tourist attractions and vital instruments for education and dialogue, cultivating a greater awareness of the collective memory and historical narratives of the communities they embody.

Heritage sites function as dynamic classrooms, offering learning experiences that transcend conventional educational environments. They promote exploration and dialogue about history, inspiring conversations on social justice, cultural diversity, and the effects of historical events on present-day society. When communities and visitors gather at these sites, they might share stories and perspectives, enhancing understanding and respect for various cultures and histories.

Despite the inherent significance of these sites, efforts to enhance their appeal and draw substantial visitor interest have, to date, proven insufficient. For instance, commendable initiatives aimed at revitalizing the Japanese cave Alas Purwo have struggled to attract a considerable number of visitors. To better understand this stagnation, it is essential to investigate the underlying reasons for potential tourists' lack of

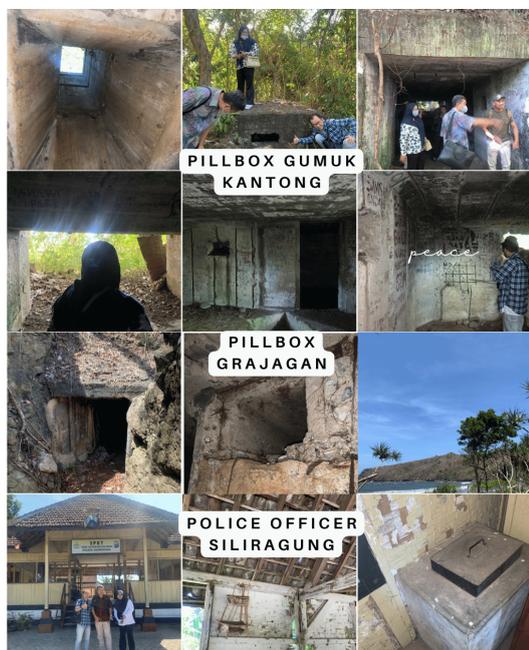


Figure 1. Defense Heritage sites in Banyuwangi

enthusiasm. Key challenges, including ineffective marketing strategies, limited accessibility due to geographical constraints, and an absence of thorough historical interpretation, significantly impede these sites' ability to engage a broader audience.

The dual heritage of these sites underscores their historical significance. Some structures were explicitly constructed during the Japanese occupation, while others, despite their origins in earlier periods, were adapted to fulfill the strategic requirements of the Japanese military. This extensive historical narrative presents a compelling opportunity to promote these sites as significant representations of the past and unique cultural and educational resources that encapsulate local experiences alongside global perspectives. Furthermore, the adjacent heritage sites feature a remarkable coastline that visitors can appreciate.

Made Alit Budi Siswanto, the head of the Culture and Tourism Office's field division, underscored the critical necessity of conducting a comprehensive study specifically designed to advance the development of significant historical sites. Nonetheless, the endeavor faces substantial challenges, including financial constraints and a deficiency in research personnel, which predominantly relies on the expertise of a single archaeologist, Bayu. These limitations present considerable obstacles to devising an effective revitalization strategy. To fully harness the potential of heritage tourism, it is imperative to implement systematic strategies that enhance the infrastructure facilitating regional research activities.

We seek input to develop a new approach to tourism. Although Blambangan is still in the early stages of its nature tourism development, we should consider focusing on heritage tourism in the future. The Japanese heritage cave at Alas Purwo, located along the coast, is a remnant from the Japanese era and was originally used for surveillance. In comparison, the Stinggul area in Muncar does not date back to the Japanese period, although it was utilized during that time.

Similarly, the Pillbox in Gumuk Kantong served a related historical purpose. By understanding these contexts, we can uncover why significant sites, such as the Japanese heritage cave at Alas Purwo, have not been attracting visitors despite their historical importance. (Alit)

In addition, Alit articulated a comprehensive vision for the preservation of historical sites, asserting that their value extends beyond the mere conservation of antiquities. He emphasized the potential to engage diverse audiences, encompassing local communities and international visitors. By framing these artifacts as emblematic of collective historical experiences, it is possible to transform the prevailing narrative from loss or defeat to one that fosters mutual respect and encourages historical reflection. This reframing is essential for cultivating a more positive public perception and enhanced valuation of these heritage sites and the histories they embody.

In the future, we will formally request the research results, as a shortage of researchers and budgetary constraints hindered the process. The primary field investigator is Mas Bayu, our sole archaeologist, who has thoroughly examined the available data in Banyuwangi. (Alit)

As a youth generation, Lita and Ros have a multidimensional approach that integrates local historical narratives with broader global historical contexts to accomplish this objective. This presents an advantageous opportunity for developing Banyuwangi as a distinct heritage tourism destination. By prioritizing the creation and dissemination of narratives that emphasize resilience and collaboration, Banyuwangi has the potential to emerge as a central hub for significant cultural discourse. It was also reflected in the finding from Saikim et al. (2024) that It is essential to address these restrictions in order to develop tourist policies that are equitable and sustainable, with a focus on giving environmental

protection and community engagement the highest priority.

This methodology educates visitors about the intricate complexities of the region's history and promotes opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and engagement.

In conclusion, the documentation and inventorying of historical data are critical components in establishing a robust framework for future revitalization initiatives. Such initiatives will enhance both visibility and accessibility while simultaneously empowering local communities by actively involving them in heritage conservation efforts and tourism development. Engaging a diverse array of stakeholders in this process can facilitate the creation of a sustainable tourism model that respects Banyuwangi's historical context and aspires to its future as a prominent destination for educational heritage tourism.

## V. Discussion

The qualitative insights articulated in this study are derived from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) comprising experts in history, culture, and tourism. This discussion included representatives from the Culture and Tourism Office and several academic researchers facilitating a comprehensive examination of the topic.

In our study area, the central theme revolves around a critical reevaluation of Indonesia's colonial history, particularly concerning the narrative surrounding 350 years of Dutch colonization. Participants in the study, notably Gema and Bayu, referenced the research of G.J. Resink, which posits that the duration of Dutch control in Indonesia was significantly less than 20 years and was geographically limited in scope.

Furthermore, the authors gained insights into the dynamics of the Japanese occupation during their field visits to Banyuwangi, where they investigated the unique characteristics of the construction of defense fortifications and the propaganda strategies

employed to influence the local populace. Bayu and Gema mention, "Cooperation from the stakeholder is a great benefit; for example, in Grajagan beach, investors build a cottage near the beach and hope that the pillbox near it becomes a tourism destination." Bayu also knows about it and supports the investor. By articulating this objective, the visit is intended to serve as a valuable resource for visitors, enhancing their comprehension of historical events and literature contexts while fostering a sense of historical empathy.

It adds to Qian et al. (2022) findings related to visitors' educational experiences focusing on patriotic education and cultivating a sense of collectivism. These experiences emphasize the importance of self-reflection concerning existential themes such as death. In addition, the Auschwitz guided tour narrative gives students an enhanced educational experience and increases their understanding of the location's history, allowing them to create moral frameworks that connect historical events to the current social and political landscape (Dresler, 2023). They underscore the enlightenment gained through these reflections, which enhance an element of historical empathy in exploring concrete evidence and a deeper appreciation for the value of life.

Sharma and Nayak (2019) indicate that travelers' satisfaction with dark tourism experiences is significantly enhanced when they perceive their trips as valuable. This perceived value affects their overall enjoyment and is crucial in shaping their loyalty to this niche form of tourism. Furthermore, engaging with historical sites and authentic locales can contribute to a more profound, more enriching experience, providing opportunities for immersive simulations that facilitate a meaningful connection to the past (Sharpley & Stone, 2009).

The discourse also examined the defense heritage of Banyuwangi, with particular emphasis on military sites from the Japanese occupation, such as Pillbox Grajagan and Gumuk Kantong. Juari offered insights into wartime secrecy and the execution of alleged informants, which illuminated the grave historical practices of that era. Gema advocated for a more comprehensive investigation of these sites to elucidate

their significance while addressing the ethical implications of military confidentiality. Furthermore, the region's approach to tourism is multifaceted, encompassing various packages that include natural and cultural attractions and gastronomy. This diversity of offerings enhances the appeal of Banyuwangi as a travel destination.

The historical significance of sites such as the Japanese heritage cave at Alas Purwo is widely acknowledged; however, revitalization initiatives have encountered several challenges. These challenges include inadequate marketing strategies, limited accessibility for visitors, and a lack of comprehensive historical interpretation. Alit emphasized the necessity for further research to develop these sites fully. Nonetheless, financial constraints and the over-reliance on a single archaeologist have impeded progress. A strategic reframing of the narratives surrounding these sites could potentially engage a wider audience, including international tourists, by positioning them within an educational tourism framework. This approach could simultaneously foster increased local community involvement in conservation efforts and develop the tourism sector associated with these historical sites.

## VI. Recommendation

To augment the potential of heritage tourism and ensure the preservation of historical sites in Banyuwangi, local authorities must prioritize the systematic research and documentation of significant locations, such as Pillbox Grajagan and Gumuk Kantong. This might be accomplished by allocating resources towards comprehensive investigative studies and fostering collaborations with historians, archaeologists, and academic institutions. Such collaborative efforts will facilitate the development of more nuanced and accurate historical narratives, ultimately contributing to the sustainable management and enhancement of heritage tourism in the region.

Moreover, enhancing accessibility to these sites through improvements in infrastructure and transportation options will foster a more visitor-friendly environment, thereby attracting a broader demographic. Marketing strategies must be designed to recontextualize the historical narratives associated with these locations, ensuring they resonate with diverse audiences and promote inclusive engagement (Chen & Lee, 2021). The proposed approach emphasizes the themes of resilience, collaboration, and mutual understanding beyond focusing solely on the wartime experiences associated with the Japanese occupation. This perspective is expected to attract local and international tourists, mainly from Japan, who may be interested in these historical landmarks. By framing the narrative this way, the initiative seeks to foster a more inclusive understanding of history that highlights shared human experiences and promotes intercultural dialogue.

Engaging the local community in tourism-related initiatives is essential for fostering sustainable tourism practices. Managers of dark tourism destinations should implement diverse tours and service packages tailored to the interests and sensitivities of visitors.

Policy recommendations could include guidelines to maintain the educational integrity of dark tourism sites while balancing entertainment. Governments or tourism bodies might require attractions to consult historians, cultural experts, or survivors to ensure accurate and respectful historical narratives. Ethical site design and operation guidelines could prevent trivializing sensitive topics and encourage collaboration between educational institutions, local communities, and tourism stakeholders.

These managers must be acutely aware of how information is presented and deliver it with the utmost sensitivity. This approach is fundamental when addressing tourists who may have personal connections to the destination or who have experienced emotional trauma associated with the site. By prioritizing sensitivity and inclusivity, dark tourism providers can create more respectful and meaningful experiences for all visitors (Lewis et al., 2022). This initiative may encompass developing comprehensive training

programs focused on heritage management, tour guiding, and hospitality. Such programs empower community members economically while fostering a profound sense of stewardship over these culturally significant sites (Musil, 2018).

For heritage tourism to be booming, the local government must implement strategies that promote sustainable development, thereby safeguarding both the environment and the interests of the local population. Collaborating with international tourism organizations, particularly those focused on World War II history, can significantly enhance Banyuwangi's standing as a prominent destination for heritage tourism. By integrating educational programs into local school curricula and developing enriched experiences for visitors, Banyuwangi can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of its cultural heritage.

International case studies provide valuable insights into diverse approaches to dark tourism. For example, Germany's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe collaborated with the media to capture selfie culture (Bareither, 2021). Another case study is from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial in Poland. The site collaborated with the government and local tourism organizations and made a continuity tourism destination (Dresler, 2023; Popescu, 2024).

This approach not only benefits local communities but also contributes to the establishment of a robust and sustainable tourism industry.

## Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## References

- Bareither, C. (2021). Capture the feeling: Memory practices between the emotional affordances of heritage sites and digital media. *Memory Studies*, 14(3), 578-591.
- Budiarto, G., Yuliati, D., & Respati Puguh, D. (2021). Rising Sun in the Eastern Horizon of Java: The Occupation of Japanese 16th Army in Banyuwangi, East Java 1942-1945. In *E3S Web of Conferences*, 317. doi:10.1051/e3sconf/202131704013
- Chen, X., & Lee, G. (2021). How brand legitimacy shapes brand authenticity and destination loyalty: Focus on cultural heritage tourism. *Global Business and Finance Review*, 26(1), 53-67. doi:10.17549/gbfr.2021.26.1.53
- Dabamona, S. A., & Cater, C. (2019). Understanding students' learning experience on a cultural school trip: findings from Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 19(3), 216-233.
- Dresler, E. (2023). The multiplicity of moral emotions in educational dark tourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 46, 101094.
- Francoise, J. (2022). Revitalization of the Kuto Besak Fort in Palembang as an Indonesian Defense Heritage Asset. *KnE Social Sciences*, 2022(1), 120-133. doi:10.18502/kss.v7i4.10520
- Grinfelde, I., & Veliverronena, L. (2021). Uncomfortable and worthy: the role of students' field trips to dark tourism sites in higher education. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 16(4), 469-480. doi:10.1080/1743873X.2020.1867560
- Iliev, D. (2021). Consumption, motivation and experience in dark tourism: A conceptual and critical analysis. *Tourism Geographies*, 23(5-6), 963-984. doi:10.1080/14616688.2020.1722215
- Israfilova, F., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2019). Sad and violent but I enjoy it: Children's engagement with dark tourism as an educational tool. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(4), 478-487. doi:10.1177/1467358418782736
- Jang, K., Sakamoto, K., & Funck, C. (2021). Dark tourism as educational tourism: the case of 'hope tourism' in Fukushima, Japan. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 16(4), 481-492. doi:10.1080/1743873X.2020.1858088
- Jureniene, V., & Radzevicius, M. (2022). Peculiarities of Sustainable Cultural Development: A Case of Dark Tourism in Lithuania. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 15(6). doi:10.3390/jrfm15060264
- Kavanagh, G. (2005). *Making histories in museums* (pp. 1-304). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Kerr, M. M., Stone, P. R., & Price, R. H. (2021). Young tourists' experiences at dark tourism sites: Towards a conceptual framework. *Tourist Studies*, 21(2), 198-218. doi:10.1177/1468797620959048
- Khalimah, E., & Prasetyo, I. (2022). Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Karakter Anak Usia Dini di Wilayah Sekitar Candi Borobudur. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia*

- Dini*, 6(6), 5722-5733. doi:10.31004/obsesi.v6i6.3280
- Labadi, S., Giliberto, F., Rosetti, I., Shetabi, L., & Yildirim, E. (2021). *Heritage and the sustainable development goals: Policy guidance for heritage and development actors*. The Sustainable Development Goals Working Group.
- Lennon, J. (2017). *Dark tourism*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice.
- Lennon, J. J., & Foley, M. (1999). Interpretation of the unimaginable: The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, and "dark tourism." *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(1), 46-50.
- Lewis, H., Schrier, T., & Xu, S. (2022). Dark tourism: motivations and visit intentions of tourists. *International Hospitality Review*, 36(1), 107-123. doi:10.1108/ihr-01-2021-0004
- Martini, A., & Buda, D. M. (2020). Dark tourism and affect: Framing places of death and disaster. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(6), 679-692.
- Masanti, M. (2016). Understanding dark tourism acceptance in Southeast Asia: The case of WWII Sandakan-Ranau death march, Sabah, Malaysia. In *Development of Tourism and the Hospitality Industry in Southeast Asia* (pp. 113-125). Springer.
- Miskawi, M. (2023). Japanese Bunker Banyuwangi Left As A Laboratory For Learning History. *Journal Historica*, 6(2), 131-142.
- Musil, M. (2018). Overview of management approaches in the regional tourism development. *Global Business and Finance Review*, 23(1), 75-84. doi:10.17549/gbfr.2018.23.1.75
- Oren, G., Shani, A., & Poria, Y. (2021). Dialectical emotions in a dark heritage site: A study at the Auschwitz Death Camp. *Tourism Management*, 82(July 2020), 104194. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104194
- Popescu, D. I. (2024). Introduction: Public Engagement with Holocaust Memory Sites in Poland. In *Public Engagement with Holocaust Memory Sites in Poland* (pp. 1-17). Springer.
- Qian, L., Zheng, C., Wang, J., Pérez Sánchez, M. de los Á., Parra López, E., & Li, H. (2022). Dark tourism destinations: the relationships between tourists' on-site experience, destination image and behavioural intention. *Tourism Review*, 77(2), 607-621. doi:10.1108/TR-08-2020-0360
- Raets, J. (2021). *Blinded by Memory; An analysis of collective memories concerning dark pages in Dutch history, how they are taught at school and how they have influence on contemporary debates*. Research master thesis, Master Research Master Theologie en Religiewetenschappen.
- Resink, G. J. B. (2012). *350 Tahun Dijajah*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.
- Saikim, F. H., Phang, G., Marry, T. P., & Prideaux, B. (2024). Developing River Tourism on the Petagas River, Sabah: Understanding Community Perceptions and Potential Level of Engagement. *Global Business & Finance Review*, 29(9), 43-57.
- Sharma, P., & Nayak, J. K. (2019). Dark tourism: tourist value and loyalty intentions. *Tourism Review*, 74(4), 915-929. doi:10.1108/TR-11-2018-0156
- Sharpley, R., & Stone, P. R. (2009). *The darker side of travel: The theory and practice of dark tourism*. Multilingual Matters.
- Spadoni, E., Porro, S., Bordegoni, M., Arosio, I., Barbalini, L., & Carulli, M. (2022). Augmented Reality to Engage Visitors of Science Museums through Interactive Experiences. *Heritage*, 5(3), 1370-1394. doi:10.3390/heritage5030071
- Stone, P. R. (2011). Dark tourism: Towards a new post-disciplinary research agenda. *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology*, 1(3-4), 318-332.
- Wyatt, B., Leask, A., & Barron, P. (2022). Designing dark tourism experiences: An exploration of edutainment interpretation at lighter dark visitor attractions. In *Dark Tourism Studies* (pp. 75-91). Routledge.

© 2025. This work is licensed under  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> (the “License”).  
Notwithstanding the ProQuest Terms and Conditions, you may use  
this content in accordance with the terms of the License.