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Research Paper

Reconceptualizing Bedulang as Living Heritage: Cultural Governance and Community-Based Tourism in Terong, Belitung

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the cultural meanings, customary knowledge, and preservation concerns associated with Bedulang and considers their implications for tourism adaptation in Desa Wisata Terong, Belitung. It employs an interpretive qualitative case-study approach centred on documentary analysis of two sources: the 2022 institutional study Hasil Kajian Makan Bedulang published by Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (LAMB), and the Universitas Pelita Harapan (UPH) Internal Research Final Report on Bedulang and tourism in Terong. The analysis follows four stages adapted from the READ approach: preparing materials, extracting relevant content, analysing the documents, and synthesising findings. The documents describe Bedulang as a four-person shared meal supported by customary roles, serving procedures, etiquette, and values including togetherness, equality, harmony, tolerance, and gratitude. Tourism presentation may retain the visible arrangement while overlooking the philosophy and procedural knowledge that give the practice meaning. On this basis, the article proposes cultural governance as a cultural filter through which tourism adaptations can be considered in relation to community-recognised meanings and customary practices. This is an interpretive proposition, not an empirically validated governance mechanism. The study is limited by the unavailability of underlying interview transcripts and complete dated observation records for independent audit. The article contributes an evidence-bounded framework for considering cultural continuity in CBT and identifies priorities for further field-based research.

Keywords: Bedulang; living cultural heritage; community-based tourism; cultural governance; culinary heritage

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based tourism (CBT) is frequently promoted as an approach through which residents can participate in tourism development, exercise influence over local resources, and obtain benefits from tourism activity. However, the presence of a community organisation or a locally managed attraction does not, by itself, demonstrate that decision-making power is widely shared or that benefits are distributed equitably. Participation may involve providing labour, delivering services, hosting visitors, contributing to planning, or exercising influence over how local culture is represented. These forms of participation are not equivalent and should not be treated as evidence of community control without further examination (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Mayaka et al., 2018, 2019). This distinction is consistent with empowerment scholarship, which treats local control and equitable benefit-sharing as substantive conditions rather than automatic outcomes of tourism participation (Scheyvens, 1999; Jordan et al., 2013).

This distinction is especially important when tourism draws on intangible cultural heritage (ICH). ICH is sustained through practices, knowledge, skills, expressions, and social relationships that communities recognise as part of their heritage. Its continuity depends not only on the visibility of cultural objects or performances but also on the transmission and enactment of the knowledge that makes those practices meaningful. Tourism can provide opportunities for cultural learning, recognition, and livelihood development. At the same time, visitor-oriented presentation may simplify, standardise, or commodify a practice when market expectations take precedence over the meanings and procedures recognised by its practitioners (Kim et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2022; Shakya & Vagnarelli, 2024; Su & Deakin, 2019). The definition also accords with the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which emphasises community recognition, intergenerational transmission, and the continuing recreation of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

Bedulang is a communal dining tradition associated with the Malay community of Belitung. Its cultural significance is expressed through a shared dulang, the arrangement of food and dining equipment, customary responsibilities, serving procedures, and etiquette. Previous studies have discussed Bedulang as a communal culinary tradition, a potential gastronomic attraction, and a practice associated with social capital (Levyta & Hendra, 2022; Pratiwi & Syahrul, 2023; Wulandah et al., 2023). These studies indicate that Bedulang should not be approached simply as a menu or food product. It is also a social practice through which relationships and cultural meanings are enacted. Research on food heritage similarly shows that culinary practices can operate as markers of place identity and as resources for rural tourism, rather than merely as consumable products (Bessière, 1998; Sims, 2009; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Lin et al., 2021).

The present study focuses on the relationship between this living cultural practice and the tourism context of Desa Wisata Terong. The UPH Internal Research Final Report describes the development of the Aik Rusa Berehun tourism area as originating in community initiatives and identifies the Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) as an organisation involved in tourism coordination. The report also identifies Bedulang as part of the village's cultural tourism potential. These descriptions provide case context, but they should be understood as information reported in the research team's final report rather than independently verified measures of community participation, decision-making authority, or benefit distribution.

The research gap addressed here is not the absence of studies on Bedulang. Rather, it concerns how documented cultural meanings and customary procedures can inform decisions about adapting the tradition for tourism. CBT scholarship addresses participation and power, while ICH

tourism scholarship examines authenticity, continuity, innovation, and commodification. Bringing these discussions together makes it possible to ask not only whether a heritage practice is included in tourism, but also which cultural conditions should guide its representation and adaptation.

To address this issue, the article develops cultural governance as a "cultural filter": an interpretive and normative way of assessing proposed tourism adaptations against documented cultural meanings, customary roles, procedures, and etiquette. The term does not imply that a formal veto or enforcement mechanism has been established in Terong. Instead, it directs attention to the cultural criteria that may be relevant when tourism actors negotiate how Bedulang is presented.

The study addresses two research questions: (1) How are the cultural meanings, customary practices, and preservation concerns of Bedulang represented in the available institutional and research documents? (2) What do these documentary accounts suggest about the role of cultural governance in considering the adaptation of Bedulang for CBT in Desa Wisata Terong? The article contributes an evidence-bounded conceptual perspective. It does not claim to validate a causal model or to establish the effectiveness of a particular governance arrangement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Community-based tourism: participation, power, and benefit

CBT is commonly associated with local involvement in tourism planning and management. Nevertheless, participation is multidimensional. Residents may participate as employees, suppliers, performers, hosts, volunteers, or decision-makers, and each position offers a different degree of influence. Mayaka et al. (2018, 2019) emphasise the importance of examining the form and context of participation rather than assuming that participation is uniform. Dolezal and Novelli (2022) similarly demonstrate the relevance of power and partnership when considering empowerment in CBT. Earlier empowerment research likewise argues that tourism initiatives should be assessed in terms of community control and the distribution of benefits, not simply the presence of local participation (Scheyvens, 1999).

For heritage-based tourism, participation also concerns the authority to interpret and represent cultural practices. A community may contribute to the delivery of a tourism product without necessarily controlling the narrative, the conditions of cultural presentation, or the distribution of resulting benefits. Accordingly, the existence of Pokdarwis or a customary institution is relevant contextual information, but it is not sufficient evidence of inclusive governance or equitable outcomes. These matters require direct evidence about decision-making processes, institutional mandates, and benefit arrangements. Research on tourism planning further shows that governance arrangements shape whether residents can influence decisions or remain in consultative roles (Jordan et al., 2013).

2.2. Living heritage, authenticity, and tourism adaptation

Living heritage is not necessarily preserved through the unchanging repetition of a single form. Cultural practices may be reinterpreted as social conditions, resources, and contexts change. The key issue is how change is negotiated and whether the knowledge and meanings recognised by pra

ctitioners remain intelligible and transmissible. Research on ICH and tourism identifies opportunities for cultural visibility and sustainable tourism development, while also drawing attention to risks of commodification and the displacement of cultural context by visitor-oriented

performance (Kim et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2022; Su & Deakin, 2019). This understanding is compatible with UNESCO's view that living heritage is continually recreated by communities rather than preserved only through an unchanged form (UNESCO, 2003).

Authenticity in this context should not be reduced to visual resemblance to an assumed original form. It is more appropriately considered in relation to continuity of meaning, knowledge, social relationships, and community-recognised procedures. Innovation may be compatible with living heritage when it is negotiated with relevant practitioners and does not obscure the cultural logic of the practice. Shakya and Vagnarelli (2024) highlight the potential role of innovation in creating value from ICH, while the wider literature cautions that tourism markets can reshape the way heritage is selected and presented. Studies of heritage tourism also show that authenticity is negotiated among practitioners, institutions, visitors, and tourism actors, and may be contested when external representations override local meanings (Cole, 2007; Quang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024).

2.3. Bedulang as culinary and social heritage

Bedulang brings together food, material objects, spatial arrangement, social roles, and etiquette. The shared dulang is therefore one element of a broader practice. The arrangement of dishes and utensils, the sequence of serving, and the responsibilities assigned to participants contribute to the organisation of the meal. Previous research has examined Bedulang's communal culinary character and its potential as a gastronomic attraction (Levyta & Hendra, 2022; Pratiwi & Syahrul, 2023). Research in Cerucuk Village has also considered social capital associated with the tradition (Wulandah et al., 2023). Food-heritage scholarship supports this broader interpretation by linking traditional cuisine with local identity, place-making, heritage construction, and visitor experience (Bessière, 1998; Sims, 2009; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Lin et al., 2021).

Building on this work, the present article gives particular attention to the documentary record of customary knowledge and preservation concerns. This focus makes it possible to consider what should be taken into account when Bedulang is translated into a visitor experience, while avoiding the assumption that every documented procedure is necessarily practised in the same way in current tourism activities.

2.4. Cultural governance as a cultural filter

In this article, cultural governance refers to the way cultural knowledge, customary legitimacy, institutional responsibilities, and community interests may inform the representation and adaptation of heritage. The proposed cultural filter is an analytical concept rather than a claim that a formal regulatory instrument already operates in Terong. It describes a process of evaluating proposed adaptations in relation to the cultural meanings, roles, procedures, and etiquette associated with Bedulang.

The concept brings four considerations into a single interpretive frame: (1) cultural meaning, which explains why the practice is recognised as heritage; (2) customary knowledge, which identifies the roles and procedures through which the practice is enacted; (3) participation and governance, which raise questions about who is involved in interpreting and adapting the practice; and (4) tourism adaptation, which concerns how the practice is made accessible to visitors while maintaining cultural continuity (see table 1). The framework is reciprocal and context-sensitive rather than linear or causal. It does not assume that institutional presence guarantees cultural authority, nor that tourism use necessarily causes cultural loss.

Table 1. Analytical Framework for Examining Bedulang as Living Cultural Heritage in Community-Based Tourism

Analytical dimension	Guiding question	Relevance to Bedulang
Cultural meaning	Which social and philosophical meanings are documented or recognised?	Togetherness, equality, harmony, tolerance, gratitude, and communal dining.
Customary knowledge	Which roles, procedures, objects, and etiquette constitute the practice?	Preparation, checking the dulang, serving, equipment, and dining etiquette.
Participation and governance	Who participates in practice and interpretation, and who has influence over decisions?	Requires evidence about practitioners, Pokdarwis, LAMB, government, and other residents.
Tourism adaptation and continuity	Which elements may be adapted, and which meanings or procedures need safeguarding?	Visitor accessibility should be considered alongside cultural continuity.

Source: Authors own elaboration

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and case boundary

This study adopts an interpretive qualitative case-study design centred on documentary analysis. The case is Bedulang in relation to the cultural-tourism context of Desa Wisata Terong, Belitung. Documentary analysis is appropriate for examining how institutions describe a cultural practice, the meanings attached to it, and the concerns recorded in formal documents (Bowen, 2009). The study is deliberately bounded by the documentary materials available for this manuscript revision; it is not presented as a new analysis of independently accessible interview transcripts or a complete set of field observations. The use of documentary material also requires a transparent account of source selection, analytical procedures, and evidentiary limits (Mackieson et al., 2019).

3.2. Documentary corpus and source status

The principal corpus comprises two documents. The first is Hasil Kajian Makan Bedulang, published by Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (LAMB) in 2022 (D1). It documents the definition, social functions, customary roles, serving procedures, etiquette, philosophical values, and preservation concerns associated with Bedulang. The second is the UPH Internal Research Final Report, Bedulang: Melestarikan Tradisi Kuliner Komunal Belitung sebagai Warisan Budaya Takbenda Indonesia (D2). It records the research project's objectives, describes its reported fieldwork approach, and summarises findings relating to the tourism context of Desa Wisata Terong.

The two documents serve different evidentiary purposes. D1 is an institutional cultural account and is used as the principal source for descriptions of Bedulang's meanings and customary procedures. D2 is a researcher-produced project report and is used to describe the project's reported methods and case context. D2 is not treated as independent corroboration of the research team's own interpretations. Published academic studies are used to situate the analysis in existing scholarship, rather than as substitutes for missing primary field records.

Table 2. Documentary Sources and Their Analytical Contributions to the Study of Bedulang

ID	Document	Source status	Analytical use
D1	Hasil Kajian Makan Bedulang (2022)	LAMB institutional cultural document; available for page-level checking	Cultural meanings, customary roles, procedures, values, and preservation concerns.
D2	UPH Internal Research Final Report	Researcher-produced report; available, but underlying raw records were not attached for this revision	Reported project methods and summary of tourism context in Terong.
D3	Published Bedulang, CBT, and ICH studies	Published literature cited in the manuscript	Conceptual and contextual comparison.

Source: Authors own elaboration

3.3. Original fieldwork context and availability of primary records

The UPH Internal Research Final Report describes the original project as involving purposive informant selection, interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The authors have previously confirmed that fieldwork took place in Desa Terong on 14–16 April 2026 and involved nine participants across customary leadership, Pokdarwis, the Belitung tourism office, and local residents. However, the original interview recordings, completed transcripts, recruitment log, and full dated observation notes are no longer available to the authors for this manuscript revision. The reported dates and sample composition are therefore contextual information supplied by the authors, not an independently auditable primary dataset.

Because the primary records cannot be recovered, this article does not analyse the original interviews or observations and does not present participant quotations, reconstructed answers, informant-level findings, or comparisons among stakeholder groups. The UPH report is used only as a researcher-produced document to describe the project as reported and the tourism context recorded in that report. The findings of this article are derived from the documentary corpus described in Section 3.2. The hypothetical interview-response examples prepared during manuscript development were excluded from the dataset and were not coded or treated as empirical evidence.

3.4. Documentary analysis

The analysis followed four stages adapted from the READ approach, which are: (1) preparing the materials; (2) extracting relevant content; (3) analysing the documents; and (4) synthesising the findings (Dalglish et al., 2020). First, the two documents were identified and separated according to their institutional origin and evidentiary purpose. Second, relevant passages were extracted from D1 on communal dining, customary roles, equipment, procedures, etiquette, philosophical values, and preservation concerns. D2 was examined for descriptions of the research project and the reported tourism context in Terong. Third, the extracted material was organised using concept-informed and data-led analytical categories. Fourth, the categories were synthesised to identify the relationship between cultural meaning, customary knowledge, tourism organisation, and adaptation concerns. The emphasis on traceable extraction and synthesis is consistent with qualitative guidance that recommends an auditable decision trail and systematic documentation of interpretive choices (Mackieson et al., 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

The initial analytical categories were living heritage, communal meaning, customary knowledge, participation, institutional governance, tourism adaptation, and cultural continuity. For this

manuscript, the available documents were examined through a structured manual thematic document-analysis procedure. Relevant passages were organised in an evidence matrix and linked to their source and page number where available. Categories were retained only when they could be linked to an identifiable passage in the documentary corpus. The analysis distinguished (a) what a source explicitly states, (b) the interpretation developed by the researchers, and (c) questions that the available documents cannot resolve.

3.5. Trustworthiness, reflexivity, and research ethics

Trustworthiness was addressed by identifying the documentary sources, recording page references for key claims, distinguishing the LAMB institutional account from the UPH researcher-produced report, and disclosing the limits of the available corpus. Transparency, dependability, and a visible account of interpretive decisions remain central to qualitative trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017). These measures provide an audit trail for the documentary interpretation but do not substitute for the missing primary field records. The present manuscript is a secondary analysis of existing documents and does not conduct new interviews, observations, or focus-group discussions.

4. RESULT

This section presents and critically discusses the findings concerning Bedulang as living cultural heritage within the community-based tourism context of Desa Wisata Terong, Belitung. Drawing on documentary evidence, the analysis explores the tradition's cultural meanings, customary practices, institutional roles, and implications for tourism adaptation. The findings are interpreted in relation to existing scholarship on intangible cultural heritage, community participation, and cultural governance, with particular attention to the proposed role of cultural governance as a cultural filter in balancing heritage preservation and tourism development.

4.1. Bedulang as a communal cultural practice

Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (2022) defines Makan Bedulang as a communal meal in which four people share food arranged on one dulang. The document associates the practice with family settings and customary ceremonies. This description indicates that Bedulang is more than a collection of dishes or a serving format. The shared tray and the arrangement of participants create a social setting in which food is consumed collectively and interaction is organised through shared practices.

The LAMB document also describes different forms of dulang and associated dining equipment (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022). These material elements are relevant not merely as visual features for tourism presentation but as components of an integrated dining arrangement. The documentary account therefore supports an interpretation of Bedulang as a practice in which objects, spatial organisation, and social interaction contribute jointly to cultural meaning. This interpretation is consistent with research that treats culinary heritage as a cultural resource whose value depends on links among food, place, identity, and local knowledge (Bessière, 1998; Sims, 2009; Lin et al., 2021).

4.2. Customary roles and procedural knowledge

The LAMB document identifies customary responsibilities involved in preparing and presenting Bedulang, including Mak Panggong, Tukang Berage, Tukang Perikse Dulang, Tukang Ngisi Aik, and Tukang Ngangkat Dulang (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022). It describes activities such as arranging dishes, checking the completeness of the dulang, preparing drinking water, and carrying the completed meal to participants (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022). It also records etiquette before, during, and after the meal.

These descriptions indicate that Bedulang relies on distributed procedural knowledge. The tradition is enacted through coordinated responsibilities rather than through the dulang alone. The documentary evidence establishes that these roles and procedures are part of the institutional account of Bedulang; it does not establish which individuals currently perform each role or whether all procedures are consistently incorporated into tourism activities in Terong.

4.3. Philosophical and social values

Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (2022) associates Bedulang with togetherness, harmony, communication, social education, equality, tolerance, unity, and gratitude. The document interprets the shared dining arrangement as an expression of equality and togetherness. It also assigns symbolic meanings to shared items, including the washing bowl and napkin, in relation to harmony, unity, and mutual consideration (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022).

These values should be understood as interpretations recorded in the LAMB institutional document. They should not be represented as verbatim statements by individual residents or as evidence that every community member interprets the tradition identically. Nevertheless, the document provides a traceable institutional account of the values through which Bedulang is explained and preserved. UNESCO's safeguarding framework similarly identifies documentation, research, transmission, education, and revitalisation as measures that support the viability of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

4.4. Preservation concerns and tourism adaptation

The concluding section of the LAMB document expresses concern that some members of the Malay Belitung community have moved away from Bedulang in favour of practices regarded as more practical (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022). It also warns that the tradition may be understood merely as communal eating if its philosophical values, serving procedures, and dining etiquette are not maintained in its presentation. This is an institutional preservation concern recorded in 2022. It is not a quantitative measure of decline and does not demonstrate that all tourism presentations in Terong neglect customary practice.

The concern nevertheless identifies a specific risk relevant to tourism adaptation: the visible form of Bedulang may remain recognisable while the knowledge and values that give it cultural significance become less visible. This distinction provides a basis for considering how tourism interpretation can communicate not only what visitors see, but also why the arrangement, roles, and etiquette matter.

4.5. Reported tourism context in Desa Wisata Terong

The UPH Final Research Report describes the development of the Aik Rusa Berehun tourism area as originating in community initiatives in 2013 and reports that the area was developed through community contributions. It identifies Pokdarwis as an organisation involved in coordinating

tourism management and records the inclusion of Bedulang among the village's cultural tourism potential. The report also refers to the destination's recognition among the top 75 in the 2023 Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) programme.

These descriptions connect Bedulang to the reported tourism development context of Terong. However, because the underlying field transcripts, complete observation records, and supporting administrative documents were not available for independent examination during this revision, the statements are attributed to the UPH Final Report. They do not establish the extent of residents' decision-making authority, the distribution of tourism revenue, or the measurable contribution of Bedulang to household income.

Table 3. Synthesis of Documentary Evidence on Bedulang's Cultural Meaning, Customary Knowledge, Preservation Concerns, and Tourism Context

Analytical theme	Traceable documentary evidence	Interpretation supported	What the evidence does not establish
Communal cultural practice	Four people share one dulang; family and customary settings (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022, p. 6).	Bedulang is a communal practice extending beyond food consumption.	That all current participants interpret the practice identically.
Customary knowledge	Named roles, preparation activities, serving procedures, and etiquette (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022, pp. 4, 7–8).	The practice incorporates distributed procedural knowledge.	Which role holders are currently active or how frequently each role is performed in Terong.
Philosophical values	Togetherness, equality, harmony, tolerance, unity, and gratitude (Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong, 2022, pp. 6, 9–10).	The institutional account links Bedulang to social and philosophical values.	That all residents or visitors share these interpretations.
Preservation concern	Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong warns against neglect of philosophy and procedure in tourism presentation (2022, p. 10).	There is an institutional concern about simplification and cultural continuity.	The prevalence or measured extent of decline or inauthentic tourism performances.
Tourism context	UPH Final Report describes Aik Rusa Berehun, Pokdarwis coordination, and Bedulang's tourism potential.	Bedulang is reported as part of the tourism context in Terong.	Community-wide control, equitable benefit distribution, or economic impact.

Source: Authors own elaboration

4.7. Integrated interpretation of preservation challenges

The documentary findings point to three connected dimensions of preservation concern (Table 3). The first is the weakening of cultural understanding when Bedulang is treated primarily as a communal meal rather than as a practice supported by philosophical values and customary etiquette. Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (2022) explicitly cautions that the tradition may be reduced to communal eating if its underlying meanings and procedures are not maintained. This is an institutional warning about cultural continuity, rather than a measured estimate of the prevalence or rate of decline.

The second-dimension concerns procedural knowledge. Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (2022) records differentiated responsibilities in preparing, checking, and presenting the dulang. These

roles show that the tradition depends on knowledge distributed among participants. If such knowledge is not transmitted and practised, the visible arrangement may remain while the social organisation that gives it meaning becomes less familiar. The available documents support this as a preservation risk; they do not establish which roles are currently absent or how frequently procedural errors occur.

The third-dimension concerns tourism adaptation. The UPH Final Report places Bedulang within the cultural tourism context of Desa Wisata Terong, while the LAMB study identifies the risk of overlooking philosophical and procedural elements in its presentation. Read together, these sources suggest that tourism visibility and cultural continuity should be assessed separately. The inclusion of Bedulang in a tourism programme may increase its visibility, but it cannot alone demonstrate that customary knowledge is understood, accurately represented, or transmitted to younger generations.

These three dimensions provide the basis for the article's central interpretation: the erosion of Bedulang should be understood as a potential weakening of meaning, procedural knowledge, and intergenerational transmission, rather than assumed disappearance of the practice itself. This interpretation is bounded by the documentary evidence. The author-confirmed fieldwork dates and sample composition establish that interviews were part of the original study, but the unavailable transcripts prevent the present revision from assigning these themes to particular informants or presenting them as verbatim interview results. This concern resonates with research showing that heritage tourism can generate tensions when cultural practices are repackaged for visitors without adequate community influence over representation (Quang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024).

5. DISCUSSION

The documentary thematic analysis indicates that Bedulang constitutes more than a traditional communal eating practice. Four interconnected dimensions which are: cultural identity, community-based tourism, cultural governance, and sustainability challenges organise the interpretation of how the tradition is maintained, negotiated, and incorporated into tourism development. These dimensions were developed through the structured analysis of the available institutional documents, not through NVivo coding of interview transcripts. This interpretation is consistent with the literature on intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which recognises that heritage practices can function as cultural resources, identity markers, and tourism resources while remaining embedded in the communities that sustain them (Kim et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2022). Qiu et al. (2022), in their review of ICH tourism research, identify sustainability, traditional management systems, culinary tourism, and the relationship between heritage and tourism development as important areas of scholarly attention.

The findings of the present study extend this literature by showing that the tourism value of Bedulang does not primarily derive from its function as a cultural performance for visitors. Rather, its tourism value is closely connected to the social meanings, collective identity, community participation, and customary governance embedded within the practice. Bedulang can therefore be understood as a living heritage system, in which cultural meaning is maintained through continued community practice while simultaneously becoming a resource for community-based tourism (CBT).

5.1. Beyond culinary display: Bedulang as enacted heritage

The documentary evidence supports an interpretation of Bedulang as an enacted cultural practice rather than a culinary product alone. The shared dulang, four-person arrangement, assigned preparation responsibilities, and dining etiquette form an interconnected set of material and social elements. This interpretation complements previous studies that discuss Bedulang's communal culinary character and gastronomic potential (Levyta & Hendra, 2022; Pratiwi & Syahrul, 2023), while drawing attention to the procedural knowledge that enables the practice to be reproduced.

For tourism, this distinction matters because a visitor experience can reproduce the visible arrangement without communicating the relationships and knowledge embedded in it. A presentation that focuses only on dishes, decoration, or photographic appeal may provide exposure to the form of Bedulang but offer limited insight into its cultural logic. Interpretation, demonstration, and visitor orientation can therefore be designed to explain the shared arrangement, customary responsibilities, and etiquette, provided that the content is reviewed with relevant cultural practitioners.

5.2. Participation is not equivalent to control

The UPH Final Report's account of community initiatives and Pokdarwis coordination indicates that community organisation is relevant to the tourism context of Terong. However, this evidence does not establish who participates in decisions about cultural representation, how authority is distributed among institutions and practitioners, or how tourism benefits are allocated. The distinction is consistent with CBT scholarship, which cautions against treating participation as a single or self-evident condition (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Mayaka et al., 2018, 2019).

In the Bedulang context, the question of participation should therefore extend beyond whether residents help deliver a tourism activity. It should include whether practitioners can explain customary meanings, whether relevant cultural knowledge holders are involved in designing visitor interpretation, and whether local actors have a meaningful role in decisions about acceptable adaptation. These are analytical questions for future field investigation, not findings established by the documentary corpus.

5.3. Cultural governance as a proposed cultural filter

The LAMB document offers a normative account of Bedulang's meanings, roles, procedures, and preservation concerns. It can therefore serve as a documentary reference for considering tourism adaptations. The proposed cultural filter translates this insight into an evaluative question: does a proposed change make the practice more accessible to visitors while remaining intelligibly connected to the meanings and customary knowledge recognised in the cultural account?

The filter can be understood through four practical tests. First, a meaning test asks whether the presentation explains the social and philosophical significance of sharing a dulang. Second, a procedural test asks whether customary roles and etiquette are represented accurately and respectfully. Third, a participation test asks whether relevant practitioners and community actors have been involved in shaping the presentation. Fourth, a continuity test asks whether the tourism activity supports the transmission of knowledge rather than merely staging a one-off spectacle. These tests are proposed analytical criteria derived from the documentary findings; they have not been evaluated as an operational tool in Terong.

This formulation also avoids overstating institutional authority. The available evidence does not establish LAMB's formal jurisdiction, enforcement capacity, or a legal veto over tourism decisions. Cultural governance should therefore be investigated as a relationship among cultural knowledge holders, tourism organisations, government actors, and residents, rather than presumed from the existence of an institution.

5.4. Negotiating authenticity, adaptation, and commodification

The LAMB document does not provide a basis for concluding that Bedulang should be excluded from tourism. Its concern is more specific: the practice may be reduced to communal eating if the philosophical values, procedures, and etiquette are overlooked. This suggests that adaptation and continuity need not be treated as mutually exclusive. Changes in timing, visitor numbers, interpretation, or service arrangements may be considered, but their acceptability should be discussed in relation to the cultural meanings and procedures identified by practitioners.

This argument is consistent with ICH tourism scholarship that recognises both the opportunities of innovation and the risks of commodification (Kim et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2022; Shakya & Vagnarelli, 2024; Su & Deakin, 2019). The contribution of the present case is to specify the kinds of cultural content that should be considered in that negotiation: communal meaning, customary roles, procedural knowledge, and etiquette. Authenticity is thus approached as a question of meaningful continuity and culturally informed adaptation, not as a demand that every presentation remains visually unchanged.

5.5. Theoretical contribution: an integrated CBT–ICH perspective

The article's theoretical contribution is an integrated, non-causal perspective that places cultural continuity within the analysis of CBT. The framework connects four dimensions: living heritage provides the cultural meanings and customary knowledge that make Bedulang recognisable; participation raises the question of who practises, hosts, interprets, and influences decisions; cultural governance provides a potential normative filter for considering adaptation; and tourism adaptation concerns how visitor access and destination objectives are negotiated alongside continuity.

The framework differs from a generic account of community participation because it identifies cultural content as a criterion for evaluating tourism decisions. It also differs from an approach that treats ICH primarily as a tourism resource because it does not begin with the attraction value of heritage; it begins with the meanings and procedures through which the practice is sustained. The framework is conditional and context-sensitive. It is most relevant where a living practice has identifiable customary procedures and cultural practitioners or institutions able to articulate standards. Its application may require modification where cultural authority is decentralised, contested, or not represented by a single institution.

The framework is not a causal model and the present study does not empirically demonstrate reciprocal effects among its dimensions. Rather, it offers a structured set of questions for subsequent empirical work. Future research can examine how cultural criteria are negotiated in actual tourism operations and whether the proposed filter is recognised by practitioners, tourism managers, and government stakeholders.

5.6 Practical implications

For Pokdarwis and tourism managers, the findings suggest documenting the elements of the Bedulang experience that are presented to visitors and explaining the cultural significance of the shared arrangement, customary roles, and etiquette. Visitor interpretation should be developed

with relevant cultural practitioners rather than relying exclusively on tourism marketing narratives.

For customary institutions and cultural practitioners, the Lembaga Adat Melayu Belitong (LAMB) document can serve as a starting point for accessible interpretive materials, role descriptions, and training resources. Such materials should be reviewed periodically to reflect current practice and any variation recognised by practitioners. For local government, support may include cultural documentation, intergenerational learning, and capacity-building. Administrative tourism standards can support management, but they should not be treated as substitutes for customary knowledge.

These implications are recommendations derived from the documentary analysis. Their feasibility and effectiveness have not been evaluated in this study. Implementation should therefore begin with consultation and verification involving practitioners and the relevant local institutions.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined Bedulang as living cultural heritage in relation to community-based tourism in Desa Wisata Terong through documentary analysis of the LAMB institutional study published in 2022 and the UPH Internal Research Final Report. The available documents describe Bedulang as a communal meal in which four people share one dulang, supported by customary roles, serving procedures, dining etiquette, and social values including togetherness, equality, harmony, tolerance, and gratitude. The LAMB document also records a preservation concern that tourism presentation may retain the visible form of the tradition while neglecting the philosophy and procedures that give it meaning.

The article proposes cultural governance as a cultural filter for considering tourism adaptation. The filter directs attention to four questions: whether cultural meanings are communicated, whether customary knowledge and etiquette are represented respectfully, whether relevant practitioners participate in interpretation and decision-making, and whether tourism activities support cultural continuity. This is an interpretive contribution to the CBT–ICH discussion, not a validated governance mechanism or causal model.

The study is limited by the absence, in the materials available for this revision, of underlying interview transcripts or recordings, complete dated observation notes, participant-level information, and the full NVivo project. Consequently, the analysis cannot substantiate direct participant quotations, stakeholder-group comparisons, thematic saturation, member checking, exact coding frequencies, current visitor perceptions, institutional enforcement powers, or the distribution of tourism benefits. The UPH Final Report is treated as a researcher-produced summary rather than raw field evidence.

Future research should retrieve and audit the original field records, include direct Bedulang practitioners and ordinary residents alongside institutional stakeholders, and examine how cultural standards are negotiated during actual tourism operations. Such research would allow the proposed cultural filter to be assessed empirically and would provide a stronger basis for understanding the relationship between cultural authority, community participation, and sustainable tourism adaptation.

The principal limitation is the documentary boundary of the evidence available for this revision. Although the UPH Final Report describes interviews, direct observation, and field documentation

conducted during the original project, the underlying transcripts, complete dated observation records, and full media documentation were not available for independent verification. The documentary corpus consequently provides institutional and researcher-reported perspectives rather than a complete representation of the experiences of all community stakeholders.

The study therefore cannot establish the extent of community participation, decision-making authority, or economic benefit distribution associated with Bedulang tourism activities. In addition, the cultural-filter framework remains an interpretive proposition. Future studies should incorporate verified interviews with cultural practitioners, Pokdarwis representatives, local government officials, tourism operators, and residents, supported by systematic observation and documentary triangulation. They should also examine variation in customary practice and how cultural standards are negotiated over time.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS (CRediT)

Vasco Adato H. Goeltom: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing Draft, Writing – Review & Editing, Supervision, Project Administration.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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