

## Cultural Resilience in a Globalizing World: Centripetal Fortification and Centrifugal Innovation in Bali and Beishan

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how Bali, Indonesia, and Beishan, China, strategically sustain their cultural identities amid globalizing pressures. It addresses a gap in comparative resilience research by moving beyond sector-specific analyses to uncover the underlying principles of cultural adaptation. Using qualitative oral history, the research captures grassroots perspectives to reveal two contrasting paradigms: Bali enacts centripetal resilience, defending a sacred cultural core through ritual and social cohesion, whereas Beishan pursues centrifugal innovation, treating heritage as assets for entrepreneurial fusion with global culture. The findings demonstrate that the nature of perceived threats shapes whether communities adopt defensive fortification or proactive reinvention. The study argues that cultural resilience is not a universal strategy but a contextually coherent alignment of ontology, threat perception, and adaptive action. By proposing a comparative framework of centripetal and centrifugal resilience, it advances resilience theory and provides a transferable analytical lens for understanding how communities negotiate continuity and change across diverse cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Bali; Beishan; centripetal resilience; centrifugal innovation; globalisation

### 1. Introduction

In an age characterised by accelerating globalisation, digital interconnectivity, and homogenising market forces, preserving cultural distinctiveness has emerged as a crucial concern for communities worldwide. The relentless tide of modernisation, while offering economic opportunities and technological

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advancement, simultaneously exerts profound pressures on local traditions, identities, and social fabrics, a dynamic reflected in the standardising force of “McDonaldization” (Ritzer, 2015) and the subsequent, uneven processes of cultural hybridisation (Pieterse, 2015).

This dynamic sets the stage for a critical inquiry: how do communities actively maintain, adapt, and perpetuate their unique cultural identities amidst such powerful, often disruptive, external forces? This study posits that the answers are not found in isolation but through comparative examination, where seemingly disparate contexts can reveal universal principles of cultural resilience. To this end, this research undertakes a focused comparison between two distinctive locations: the island of Bali, Indonesia, and the urban village of Beishan within Zhuhai, China.

At first glance, pairing a world-renowned island with a Hindu heritage against a small, relatively recent Chinese urban village seems like a “strange undertaking.” Yet, it is precisely within their stark contrasts that a potent analytical synergy emerges. This comparison is analytically productive because these pressures originate from very distinct historical paths and socio-political frameworks—exemplifying global market-driven tourism versus state-led creative urban regeneration (O’Connor & Gu, 2020). Crucially, despite these different frameworks, both Bali and Beishan share a core similarity: they are both profoundly shaped by the dilemmas of tourism development.

In Bali, tourism has functioned as the dominant economic engine and primary external pressure since the early 20th century, a trajectory initiated by Dutch colonial promotion and cemented through national developmentalist policies, which has led to profound economic reliance on foreign exchange but also generated significant external pressures—including environmental degradation, overdevelopment, and neoliberal market forces—that challenge the island’s social and ecological carrying capacity (Anom et al., 2017; Demolingo et al., 2024; Picard, 1996; Putra, 2013).

In Beishan, Zhuhai, cultural resilience is strategically orchestrated as part of China’s state-led creative city agenda, which employs a creative industries model for urban and economic development (Keane, 2013; O’Connor & Gu, 2020). This policy framework drives the village’s transformation, where preservation focuses on the adaptive reuse of its Ming and Qing dynasty architecture into creative spaces, art studios, and cultural hubs, successfully revitalising the local ecosystem (CNBayArea, 2025; Mallard, 2017). However, this model demands a critical balance between tourism commercialisation and the preservation of authentic cultural value to avoid reducing its original historical narratives (Lam et al., 2026; Zhang, 2026). Consequently, the long-term sustainability of the area is contingent on a harmonious integration between its physical spatial

morphology and the maintenance of local socio-cultural identity (Li et al., 2026). Thus, Beishan serves as a compelling microcosm of cultural negotiation, standing at the intersection of deep-rooted heritage and the intense, state-facilitated pressures of the contemporary creative economy.

This comparative study is motivated by a notable gap in the current literature on cultural preservation. While substantial scholarly work exists on the impacts of tourism on heritage sites (Cole, 2007; Hampton, 2005; Su & Teo, 2008; Wise & Jimura, 2020) and on state-led urban cultural regeneration (O'Connor & Gu, 2020; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010), these discourses often proceed within parallel, non-intersecting discourses. What remains underexplored is a systematic, grassroots-driven comparison that illuminates how cultural resilience is enacted and experienced by communities themselves, across these divergent models of tourism-led development. This study addresses the gap by investigating the processes and levels of agency through which local communities manage the “duress” imposed by global tourism markets or state-led developmentalism to preserve their cultural identity. By placing these two models in dialogue, this research seeks to move beyond sector-specific analysis towards a more integrated understanding of cultural resilience as a universal, yet context-dependent, human endeavour.

The urgency of this investigation is underscored by the complex nature of contemporary threats. The forces of globalisation, tourism, and state-led development do not pose a uniform threat of erosion to intangible heritage; rather, they present divergent pressures that challenge its authenticity, context, and meaning in distinct ways.

In Bali, the primary challenge is the commodification and performative adaptation of ritual within a global tourism economy, a phenomenon well-documented in studies noting the re-choreography of traditional arts like the *kecak* dance to suit tourist tastes, the resultant cultural hybridity, and the dual-edged nature of this transformation, while economically beneficial, risks diluting the rituals’ original meaning and wresting control over cultural development from local communities (Demolingo et al., 2024; Picard, 1996, 2008; Putra, 2013). This is illustrated by the transformation of sacred ceremonies, such as the *ngaben* (cremation) ritual and *kecak* dance (Figure 1), which have been adapted into staged performances for tourist audiences, raising critical questions about the dilution of spiritual meaning for commercial gain, which ultimately highlights the double-edged nature of tourism as both a preserver and a disruptor of cultural identity (Demolingo et al., 2024; Howe, 2006; Putra, 2013). Similarly, the daily ritual of *canang sari* (offerings) — a small, beautifully arranged offering of colourful flowers atop a shallow, basket-like square palm leaf, with incense — is a core gesture of Balinese Hindu devotion (*bakti*) to express gratitude to the

divine, which has become a ubiquitous symbol for tourists. As Vickers (2012) argues, this creates a tension between maintaining authentic sacred practices and aestheticising spaces to meet the visual demands of global tourism.



Figure 1. A royal cremation ceremony in Ubud (2018) illustrating the preservation of Balinese traditions and culture while simultaneously serving as a tourist attraction (Photo: I Nyoman Darma Putra, 2018).

In Beishan, the pressure stems from the state's instrumental repurposing of local heritage within top-down urban regeneration schemes (O'Connor & Gu, 2020). For instance, the state-led "Beishan Music Festival" and the conversion of traditional village houses into chic art galleries and cafes represent a strategic rebranding of local culture to fit a "creative city" template, often sidelining the organic social practices and historical narratives of long-term residents (He, 2019). Thus, the "risk" is not a simple disappearance, but a transformative negotiation in which the very logic and value of cultural practices are redefined by external forces. The strategies developed by communities under these distinct forms of tourism pressure are thus not merely of local interest but constitute a vital repository of knowledge for global cultural sustainability.

To ground this comparative analysis, it is essential to establish the logical framework that makes their juxtaposition analytically powerful. This study is a strategic contrast designed to illuminate the spectrum of cultural resilience by examining its operation under two fundamentally different models of modern

pressure. To enable this, the comparison focuses on a shared contemporary period from the late 20th century to the present, during which both locations became acutely engaged with globalizing forces through divergent pathways.

Bali's negotiated modernity is the product of a long history of strategic synthesis. For this study, however, the critical period begins in the early 1970s, marked by the opening of Ngurah Rai International Airport in 1969 and the Indonesian government's subsequent launch of the 'Bali Tourism Project' in 1971, events widely recognised as initiating the era of mass cultural tourism on the island (Picard, 1996; Wardana, 2019). These events catalysed the island's rapid transformation from a regional destination into a mass tourism archetype (Picard, 1996; Vickers, 2012). Following Indonesia's post-colonial consolidation, the primary pressure shifted decisively to the logic of the global market.

The Indonesian state and Balinese institutions actively engaged in this project, most notably by formalising and promoting cultural events such as the annual Bali Arts Festival, established in 1979. Thus, contemporary Balinese communities navigate a market-driven duress, in which the imperative is to sustain a sacred, holistic cultural core of the *Tri Hita Karana*, which serves as a framework for sustainable development and cultural preservation, that emphasises harmony between humans and God (*Parahyangan*), humans and others (*Pawongan*), and humans and the environment (*Palemahan*) amid its commodification for tourist consumption (Runa, 2012). The central tension is between cultural authenticity and economic performance within a decentralised, yet globally connected, tourism economy, where community-based institutions like the *banjar* – a highly organised, traditional neighbourhood council that manages both the daily civic life and religious ceremonies of a specific village area – play a critical role in managing this interface.

On the other hand, in stark chronological and structural contrast, Beishan's engineered transformation makes its modern identity a direct product of China's post-1978 Reform and Opening-Up era. Its narrative is one of compressed, state-orchestrated transformation catalysed by Zhuhai's designation as a Special Economic Zone in 1980 (Yeung & Shen, 2008). Rapid urbanisation engulfed former agricultural villages, creating the *chengzhongcun* (urban village) phenomenon (Zhang, 2010). From the 2000s onward, Beishan transitioned from an industrial zone to a state-prescribed "creative cultural hub" under national culture-led urban regeneration policies, with key redevelopment plans solidified around 2009 (O'Connor & Gu, 2020). With a small core of permanent residents amidst a larger transient population, Beishan embodies the core tension of this model. The community negotiates a policy-driven duress, in which top-down plans seek to valorise local culture through a lens of creativity and economic productivity, while residual community life strives to maintain organic social practices.

A strategic comparative profile that shows the analytical value of pairing Bali and Beishan lies precisely in their asymmetrical profiles, summarised in Table 1. This contrast isolates key variables, such as the source, logic, and temporal pace of pressure, allowing for a clearer examination of how these variables shape distinct community-level strategies of resilience.

Table 1. Strategic Comparative Profile of Bali and Beishan

| No. | Comparative Dimension       | Bali (Indonesia)                                                                          | Beishan, Zhuhai (China)                                                                   |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Primary Period of Analysis  | Early 1970s – Present (post-mass tourism launch)                                          | Post-1978 – Present (focus on post-2000 creative regeneration)                            |
| 2   | Historical Legacy           | Millennial synthesis of indigenous, Hindu, and colonial influences.                       | Recent transformation from agricultural village to urban/industrial zone.                 |
| 3   | Core "Duress" Model         | Market-Driven Tourism Globalization.                                                      | Policy-Driven Development & Tourism.                                                      |
| 4   | Primary Institutional Actor | Hybrid: Government and Local/Religious institutions, cultural councils, tourism industry. | State: Municipal government, planning bureaus, state-linked developers.                   |
| 5   | Key Tension                 | Maintaining sacred authenticity vs. commodification for tourist consumption.              | Preserving organic community life vs. fulfilling state-prescribed creative-city branding. |
| 6   | Tourism's Role              | Dominant, direct economic driver and primary agent of change.                             | Strategic tool within a state-led urban regeneration and economic diversification agenda. |
| 7   | Approx. Resident Population | ~4.3 million (2020)                                                                       | ~2,000 permanent residents (with fluid commuting population)                              |
| 8   | Governance Scale            | Provincial/Island-wide, with strong local institution ( <i>banjar</i> )                   | Local/Village-scale, embedded within municipal/national policy frameworks.                |

Source: Authors (2026)

Thus, while both sites leverage culture within development paradigms, the source and nature of the constraining framework diverge fundamentally. Bali's path is shaped by a decentralised negotiation with the global tourism market, while Beishan's trajectory is shaped by a centralised negotiation with the state, using tourism as a policy tool. This deliberate contrast brings us to

the central question of this study: How do local communities, operating within these distinct institutional and market frameworks, actively strive to sustain their unique cultural identities? How do they navigate, adapt, and reinterpret their traditions to forge viable futures in the face of these powerful, yet different, external forces?

## 2. Literature Review

The accelerating forces of globalization and modernity present a universal, yet varied, challenge to cultural distinctiveness. Scholarly discourse on cultural preservation has consequently multiplied, yet it often remains confined to particular disciplinary or geographical contexts, creating parallel conversations that seldom intersect. A dominant strand of literature examines cultural preservation through the lens of global tourism, a primary vector of globalization's homogenising and commodifying tendencies. This body of work, deeply concerned with the tension between authenticity and economic imperatives, finds a paradigmatic case in Bali.

Classic studies have established foundational frameworks, tracing how Balinese culture became a “touristic culture” and how its externally crafted “earthly paradise” image took shape. The works provide a crucial historical baseline, revealing the agency of Balinese locals in rebuilding the industry post-independence, the role of cultural exchange, and the socio-political context of the mid-20th century—including the ambivalence toward foreigners, the emergence of artshops, and tourism's symbolic role in modernisation (Picard, 1996; Vickers, 2011, 2012, 2013). However, the contemporary landscape of Balinese studies has evolved significantly beyond these seminal works. More recent scholarship critically engages with the intensification and diversification of pressures in the 21st century.

A central contemporary theme is the governance of space and community agency amid complex, overlapping interests. Wardana (2019) provides a critical update by analysing how the island's space—physical, cultural, and political—is contested among the state, capital (including large-scale tourism developers), and customary (*adat*) institutions like the *banjar*. His analysis moves beyond the classic authenticity-commodification binary to examine the concrete political struggles over land, water, and cultural meaning, highlighting how governance structures shape resilience outcomes. This is complemented by research on “over-tourism” and its discontents, which examines community resistance to unchecked development and the search for more sustainable models. Furthermore, studies now explore the digital mediation of Balinese culture, investigating how social media platforms like Instagram create new forms of cultural performance and commodification, extending the tourist gaze

into the everyday lives of residents, while preserving cultural heritage and the challenges faced by indigenous communities worldwide (Maraña et al., 2023). The central question in this evolved discourse remains one of agency, but it is now framed within a more complex ecosystem of actors: to what degree can local communities, leveraging both traditional governance and modern digital tools, navigate the intertwined pressures of global capital, state policy, and digital visibility to steer cultural preservation?

Running in parallel yet operating in a largely separate analytical universe is a vital body of literature focused on state-led cultural preservation and urban regeneration, particularly amid rapid development in Asia. Here, the primary force is not a diffuse global market, but the deliberate policies of the nation-state. Research on China's urban transformation, exemplified by studies of urban villages (*chengzhongcun*) like Beishan, focuses on the political economy of space, displacement, and gentrification. A key contemporary theme is the state's deployment of culture as an instrument for urban policy within the "creative city" paradigm. As O'Connor and Gu (2020) argue, this top-down approach seeks to valorise culture primarily for economic growth and social management, re-engineering historic spaces into hubs for aesthetic consumption and creative enterprise.

Recent analyses have further nuanced this picture, exploring the "soft" cultural governance that accompanies physical redevelopment, such as the curation of arts festivals and the branding of local heritage to attract a creative class (He, 2019; Zhang, 2010). The pressure on communities in this model, therefore, is categorically different; it is not primarily to perform authenticity for a global tourist market, but to align their lived culture, social practices, and use of space with state-defined visions of modernity, civic order, and economic productivity. This literature critically questions whether such state-led regeneration fosters genuine cultural vitality or leads to a form of "gentrification by culture," where organic community life is instrumentalised, sanitised, or erased in favour of a state-sanctioned aesthetic.

This disciplinary and contextual divergence has led to a significant and consequential gap in our understanding of cultural resilience. While both scholarly traditions offer profound insights, they proceed along largely non-intersecting tracks. Studies of sites like Bali, informed by classic and contemporary works, are embedded in discourses of authenticity, commodification, post-colonial identity, and the politics of local governance, often presuming a market-driven but politically complex context. Conversely, analyses of places like Beishan are grounded in theories of state power, political economy, spatial governance, and creative-city policy (He, 2019; O'Connor & Gu, 2020). The result is a lack of systematic, comparative research that examines

how cultural resilience is enacted and experienced by communities themselves across these fundamentally divergent ecosystems of pressure. We possess deep, context-specific answers but lack a framework for cross-contextual learning. Consequently, while principles such as social capital, adaptive innovation, and institutional interplay are central to cultural resilience, they are often examined within isolated disciplinary frameworks.

This fragmented approach limits their utility because it fails to capture the integrated social-ecological dynamics through which communities navigate complex, hybrid threats. A resilience-thinking perspective, which emphasises the interdependence of these capacities within complex adaptive systems, is therefore essential (Folke et al., 2010). However, applying this perspective requires a literature base that actively bridges the market-tourism and state-policy divides, which currently remains underdeveloped.

The urgency of bridging this gap is not merely academic but profoundly practical. We are living through a period in which intangible heritage, such as rituals, oral histories, and communal practices, is eroding on multiple fronts. The strategies developed by communities under pressure, whether from market commodification or state planning, constitute a vital repository of knowledge for global cultural sustainability. Understanding these processes has tangible socio-economic and political implications, as cultural identity is inseparably linked to social cohesion, community well-being, and equitable development. A full understanding of contemporary Balinese resilience requires recognising its multi-layered foundations: its philosophical basis in concepts like *Tri Hita Karana* (Runa, 2012), its historical pattern of selective cultural absorption, where external influences are strategically embraced without dissolving local autonomy (Nordholt, 1996, 2010), and its modern, contested navigation of tourism and spatial governance (Wardana, 2019). In direct dialogue, the policy-navigating, spatially contested resilience of Beishan is forged through compressed, state-orchestrated transformation (Yeung & Shen, 2008) and its recent reframing within creative city agendas (O'Connor & Gu, 2020). The existing models remain partial. We risk prescribing solutions based on a single type of pressure, unaware of the full spectrum of adaptive mechanisms—from community-led tourism management in Bali to subtle forms of everyday resistance and negotiation in Beishan—that communities employ in different institutional environments.

Therefore, this study is urgently positioned to move beyond sector-specific analysis towards a more integrated understanding. It seeks to fill the identified gap by asking not just whether culture is preserved under duress, but how the mechanisms and lived experiences of preservation differ when the source of duress shifts from the complex governance of a global tourism

hotspot (Bali) to the top-down cultural engineering of a state-led creative city project (Beishan). By prioritising grassroots, emic perspectives, the research will illuminate the nuanced strategies of negotiation, adaptation, resistance, and innovation that define cultural resilience in two starkly contrasting yet equally pressured environments. In doing so, the experiences of Bali and Beishan, informed by both classic foundations and contemporary scholarly debates, cease to be merely isolated case studies and become complementary chapters in a global story of cultural endurance. They offer nuanced, transferable lessons for stakeholders worldwide who seek to foster cultural vitality that respects embedded authenticity while engaging constructively with the relentless currents of change.

### 3. Method and Theory

#### 3.1 *Method and Material*

This research is fundamentally an inquiry into the human dimension of cultural survival, demanding a methodology capable of capturing the lived experience, subjective meaning, and grassroots agency at its heart. This study is grounded in a qualitative, interpretative paradigm and is designed as an oral history project. This approach is chosen because oral history provides unique access to the agent-driven narratives that constitute the very process of resilience (Thompson, 2009). It moves beyond official policy to understand how local actors interpret their cultural core, perceive external forces, and strategically navigate between them (Portelli, 2010). Specifically, the method will document the lived reasoning behind strategic actions—such as a Balinese elder’s curation of ritual for tourism or a Beishan entrepreneur’s fusion of heritage with global design—thereby illuminating the informal processes of alignment that are central to the study’s theoretical framework (Yow, 2005). In doing so, oral history directly investigates the “coherent, agent-driven alignment” that is the cornerstone of this comparative analysis. Furthermore, it provides an essential tool for rectifying this, shifting the analytical focus from overarching structures to the personal and collective narratives through which cultural resilience is ultimately enacted, understood, and perpetuated (Abrams, 2016).

The philosophical commitment to privileging the emic, or insider, perspective guided every stage of the research design. We contend that oral history is not merely a technique for gathering anecdotes but an epistemological stance that validates memory and personal testimony as legitimate, vital forms of knowledge. This is particularly crucial for communities whose lived realities and historical agency may be marginalised in official records or dominated by external narratives of commodification or creative-city branding. This approach aligns with demonstrated work showing how oral methods can reveal how

local identity is forged and reformed through both historical continuity and trauma (Briel, 2017).

To ensure both profound depth and systematic comparability, the study was operationalised through two parallel, locally embedded oral history projects, treating Bali and Beishan as two distinct yet analytically synergistic cases of cultural negotiation. The study utilised in-depth interviews and documentary film analysis as its primary data collection methods. This qualitative approach was chosen for its capacity to capture the lived experience, subjective meanings, and nuanced strategies of grassroots agency, which are essential for answering the research question. A shared, detailed protocol guaranteed methodological consistency across these diverse fields. Data were collected through two parallel streams, each tailored to the specific context and resource availability.

Data for the Balinese case were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted by a local research team from Udayana University in May – June 2025. To ensure a representative and diverse range of perspectives, respondents were selected using a purposive random sampling strategy based on key societal criteria. This method combines intentional selection of relevant social categories with a random selection of individuals within those categories to mitigate bias and capture varied community voices (Robinson, 2014). The selection criteria included: profession/role in society (e.g., business owners, educators, students, civil servants, cultural practitioners, or tourism staff), length of residency to understand cultural shock/adaptation, and religious/ethnic background to reflect the island's demographic composition.

This approach yielded a final sample of 14 respondents from diverse backgrounds. For instance, the sample includes business owners such as Ketut Ambara, who provide insights into the economic dimensions of cultural interaction; educators such as Ida Bagus Ariana, who offer historical and pedagogical perspectives; and students such as Evania Andjani and Putri, who represent the experiences of younger generations and cultural adaptation. This diverse composition ensures the data reflects a comprehensive cross-section of Balinese society, making the respondents suitable representatives for studying island-wide cultural dynamics.

For the Beishan case, primary data were sourced from the publicly available documentary film *“Beishan – The Jazzy Side of Life”* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NLqnv1wWaU>) produced by Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University - United International College (Briel, 2025). Acknowledging the methodological complexity of using a pre-produced film as a primary data source, the analytical strategy was adapted accordingly. The documentary is treated not as a transparent record but as a curated cultural artefact and a qualitative data repository, an approach well-established in

visual anthropology and media studies for analysing the values, priorities, and narrative constructions embedded in mediated texts (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Rose, 2006).

The film was produced specifically as a scholarly oral history project by Holger Briel (2025), a co-author of this study. The core aims of the documentary are to document the village's transformation from a secluded settlement to a cultural hub, explore preservation through artistic activism, and showcase the synthesis of tradition and modernity that aligns directly with this study's research objectives. Its inclusion provides a purposefully curated, narrative-based dataset that serves as a direct methodological counterpart to the primary interview data collected in Bali.

The filmmaker's integral role in the research team guarantees that the documentary was conceived and executed as a structured qualitative repository, creating a transparent and reflexive scholarly link between data collection, curation, and thematic analysis. Consequently, there are no details of interview data for Beishan, as the individuals featured constitute a sample of 10 selected participants representing key stakeholder groups in urban regeneration, including long-term residents, creative entrepreneurs, and local officials, such as Mr Ban, Director of the Ban Art Museum, who champions calligraphy preservation. Nie Xin, Vice Director of the Cultural Hall, promotes the "Beishan Spirit" to elevate community literacy. Xue Wen, Founder of the Beishan Music Festival, credits his event with saving the village and driving its growth. The Golden Jazz Club Representative highlights international artistic fusion, while the French-style Parlour Owner brings a curated boutique experience. Foreign visitors praise the village's authentic energy and environment. Local residents recall the area's impoverished past and desired development, but one offers a critical note, observing that despite global fame, villagers have become "passive" as government management has increased. This provides grounded, polyphonic testimony that might otherwise be difficult for an external researcher to obtain (Ritchie, 2015). This narrative-based dataset offers a parallel, rich source for thematic analysis, fitting the study's comparative framework while itself embodying the accessible, democratising tools of modern oral history practice.

The analytical process engages this material through a two-stage, inductive approach. First, a detailed thematic analysis is conducted on each corpus independently to identify emergent patterns, tensions, and localised strategies of adaptation arising within each community's narrative world. Subsequently, a focused cross-case comparative analysis places these identified core categories in deliberate discussion. This stage contrasts, for instance, Balinese narratives of religious devotion and ritual precision as a conscious

buffer against commercial weakening with Beishan accounts of navigating and personalising state-prescribed “creativity” and aesthetic branding.

To strengthen the validity of the analysis derived from oral narratives, a strategy of methodological triangulation was employed wherever possible. While the primary evidence is subjective testimony, key claims about material changes referenced by participants were cross-checked against any available empirical documentation. This process does not seek to “prove” the oral history “right”, but to contextualise personal memory within broader socio-material processes, enhancing the interpretive depth and credibility of the analysis (Denzin, 2017).

The objective is to distinguish context-specific adaptations, born of unique historical and political circumstances, from deeper, potentially universal tactics of cultural endurance, thereby building an integrated theory from the ground up. The validity and scholarly merit of this methodology are anchored in its commitment to triangulation, which captures a multiplicity of community voices, and in its firm grounding in the established, reflective tradition of oral history scholarship. The deliberate use of local student-researchers, a defining feature of this project’s design, provided invaluable cultural and linguistic insight, facilitating a depth of access and a nuance of understanding often unattainable for external scholars. This participatory model finds a powerful and successful precedent in community-based projects like the Aparaja Revitalisation initiative in Flores, Indonesia, which has effectively harnessed oral traditions to sustain local language and culture (Age, 2023).

In full acknowledgement of its situated nature, the study does not claim statistical generalizability but rather pursues analytical or theoretical generalizability (R. K. Yin, 2018), aiming to offer a nuanced, transferable framework for understanding the mechanisms of cultural resilience that can be applied and tested in other settings. The subjective nature of memory and the specific dynamics of student-conducted research are carefully considered inherent aspects of the method, and the comprehensive training protocol and ethical framework are designed to mitigate potential constraints and uphold scholarly integrity. Ultimately, this methodology is cohesively designed to be inseparable from the research’s humanistic core argument. By systematically listening to, analysing, and contextualising the stories from Bali and Beishan, it posits that the very mechanisms of cultural resilience are encoded in personal and collective narratives. In doing so, the method itself becomes a part of the preservative and interpretive act it studies, providing a profound, coherent, and academically strong pathway to uncovering how identity is persistently woven, defended, and transformed in the face of unstoppable change.

### 3.2 Theory

Cultural resilience is best understood not as a fixed condition but as a dynamic process through which communities negotiate continuity and change. Building on this premise, the study employs a conceptual model of cultural resilience that distinguishes two complementary orientations: centripetal and centrifugal. This framework is grounded in the foundational sociological literature on globalization, which conceptualizes cultural change as a dynamic interplay between opposing yet coherent forces. On the one hand, centripetal dynamics—akin to fortification—describe the inward-oriented effort to protect, consolidate, and strengthen a perceived cultural core against external pressures of homogenization or dilution (Appadurai, 1996). On the other hand, centrifugal dynamics—aligned with innovation—describe the outward-oriented process through which communities selectively adapt, translate, and hybridize external influences to renew and revitalize their cultural expressions, thereby sustaining their relevance in changing contexts (Pieterse, 2015). Rather than reducing globalization to a binary of resistance versus assimilation, this framework conceptualizes local communities as strategic agents that actively shape the trajectory of their cultural identities through deliberate choices about preservation, adaptation, and transformation.

This agent-centric perspective is further informed by critical heritage studies and strategic management theory. From heritage studies, the model engages with the debate between heritage as a fixed, authentic product to be preserved (a centripetal impulse) and heritage as a dynamic, living process that is continually made and remade through practice and negotiation (a centrifugal impulse) (Harrison, 2013; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995). To understand the mechanism by which a community aligns itself toward one of these poles, we draw on strategic management concepts that view coherence not as an accident but as the result of deliberate, purposive action (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Thus, the centripetal/centrifugal framework provides the analytical lens to categorize and compare the “intentional coherence” observed in community narratives and actions, revealing how diametrically opposed strategies can both serve as viable mechanisms for sustaining cultural continuity under pressure.

## 4. Finding and Discussion

### 4.1 Finding

To comprehend how communities articulate their resilience, one must first define their mental environment. This section presents the core category that emerged from the systematic analysis of interviews conducted in Bali and

Beishan. Rather than offering a simplified comparison, these findings reveal the unique structures of resilience that each community has developed. By extracting complex lived experiences into core analytical categories, we move beyond anecdote to identify the dominant pressures, preservation mechanisms, and adaptive strategies that define each locale's struggle for cultural continuity.

#### *4.1.1 Bali's Cultural Adaptation*

The empirical foundation for the core findings is drawn from the textured, firsthand accounts of Balinese community members whose social positions place them at the forefront of cultural negotiation. This includes individuals such as community elder and business owner Ketut Ambara (60 years old), whose leadership requires daily mediation in interfaith dynamics, and educator Ida Bagus Ariana (60 years old), who consciously instils principles of harmony and cultural identity in young students. The perspectives of youth and newer residents, such as Evania Andjani (20 years old) and Ni Putu Rahayu Primayani (23 years old), provide critical insight into how Balinese values are adapted and internalised by the generation that will steward them forward.

Simultaneously, the narratives of individuals embedded in the domestic and communal fabric—such as homemaker Nyoman Suwini (49 years old) and office worker Bintang (25 years old)—illuminate the often-unspoken daily rituals and cooperative ethics that sustain social cohesion at the neighbourhood level. Crucially, this portrait of active cultural maintenance is framed against a defining counter-narrative from Putu Asmini (53), a professional in the private tourism sector. Her testimony provides a ground-level indictment of the sector's physical impacts, explicitly linking rampant land conversion to ecological degradation and compromised resident safety, thereby giving tangible form to the “dark side” of commodification that the community perceives as a primary threat. Synthesising these diverse voices reveals a unified theme: cultural preservation in contemporary Bali is not a static curation of the past but a dynamic, strategic, and community-driven process of adaptation. Table 2 crystallises the resulting framework of this adaptive process, detailing the specific mechanisms, conscious strategies, and lived practices through which this living system of resilience is continuously enacted in response to external pressures.

Table 2. Balinese Core Category

| No. | Core Category                                | Finding                                                 | Keynotes/Quotes                                                     |
|-----|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Challenges and "Dark Side"                   | Land Conversion and Environmental Impact                | "Many rice fields have been converted..."                           |
|     |                                              | Shift in Values ( <i>Tri Hita Karana</i> to Commercial) | "deep concern over subtle forms of faith conversion..."             |
|     |                                              | Generational Rifts and Tourism Pressure                 | "Younger Balinese are increasingly pressured to work in tourism..." |
| 2   | Cultural Preservation Mechanisms             | Daily Rituals (Offerings/ <i>Banten</i> )               | "I was taught to make daily offerings..."                           |
|     |                                              | Major Ceremonies ( <i>Nyepi</i> , <i>Panca Yadnya</i> ) | "During Nyepi... the Muslim community is very respectful..."        |
|     |                                              | Role of Formal Education                                | "In school... we were taught how to respect one another..."         |
| 3   | Cultural Differentiation/ Interfaith Dynamic | Experienced Harmony and Mutual Respect                  | "We live peacefully side by side."                                  |
|     |                                              | Challenges/ Misunderstandings                           | "What caused tension was mostly Twitter debates..."                 |
|     |                                              | Adaptation by Newcomers/ Migrants                       | "At first, there was a lot of culture shock..."                     |
| 4   | Resilience and Adaptation                    | Grassroots/ Community Education                         | "Communities are adapting through grassroots efforts..."            |
|     |                                              | Role of Community Leaders                               | "Our religious leaders play a big role..."                          |
|     |                                              | Shared Community Events                                 | "We often hold joint activities together..."                        |

Source: Author (Interview Record, 2025)

Table 2 reveals engagement in the active defence of Bali's cultural integrity, striving to protect the holistic core from significant, often existential, pressures. This defensive action is organised around four interconnected core categories, beginning with its most urgent front: the confrontation with the "dark side" of development. Here, interviewees like Putu Asmini, aged 53, who have worked in the private tourism sector for more than 20 years, directly link the relentless conversion of rice fields into villas to tangible ecological consequences, such as recent severe floods, which are framed not as natural disasters but as the result of lost wetlands and deforestation (Guardian, 2025). This physical transformation signifies a deeper cultural shift away from the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy of harmony (Runa, 2012) toward individualistic and commercial values (Warren & McCarthy, 2012), a process that echoes the classic critique of cultural commodification (Greenwood, 1989), in which meaningful practice

risks being hollowed out for external consumption. The consequence of this multifaceted pressure is a profound generational rift, as youth are increasingly channelled into the tourism economy, often at the expense of ancestral trades and ritual knowledge.

In response, Balinese society demonstrates resilience through deeply rooted cultural preservation mechanisms. The primary safeguard is found in daily practice. For Hindus, as noted by Cahyani (23 years old) and Ayu Aristha (23 years old), rituals such as preparing morning offerings like *banten saiban* (a daily ritual of offering a portion of freshly cooked food to God as gratitude) and *canang sari* are understood not merely as religious duties but as essential acts of cultural continuity that reinforce identity and community bonds. Major religious ceremonies such as *Nyepi* (the Day of Silence) and *Panca Yadnya* – the five holy offerings in Balinese Hinduism to maintain cosmic balance: *Dewa Yadnya* (to God), *Rsi Yadnya* (to the Priest), *Pitra Yadnya* (to ancestors), *Manusa Yadnya* (for human life cycles), and *Bhuta Yadnya* (to nature and spirits) – serve as powerful, periodic reinforcements of this Hindu identity, as highlighted by the senior citizens Ketut Ambara (60 years old) and Ida Bagus Ariana (60 years old).

Crucially, these events—such as *Nyepi* coinciding with Muslim holy days, as happened in 2026, with the two just a day apart—do not exist in isolation but are actively framed as moments of interfaith negotiation and respect that require mutual understanding. It is through this ongoing, deliberate negotiation that the community's resilience is most clearly expressed as interfaith harmony. Overwhelming testimony from interviews with both Hindu and Muslim interviewees, like Nyoman Suwini (49 years old) and Safira (24 years old), describes peaceful and respectful coexistence. They describe relationships characterised by routine mutual respect, where major Hindu holidays such as *Nyepi* are observed by the wider community.

The study finds that this harmony is actively constructed and maintained through deliberate social practices. Interviewees like Luh Miniasih (64 years old), for instance, highlighted how shared communal spaces and organised joint activities are fundamental to building the routine, everyday togetherness that underpins resilient interfaith relations. This lived reality of interfaith cooperation is further evidenced during the 2024 *Nyepi*, when Muslims in Bali performed *Taraweeh* prayers in silence (BBC Indonesia, 2024). Furthermore, religious tolerance in Bali is exemplified by events like the annual *Gema Perdamaian* (Echo of Peace), which began in 2003 and promotes harmony among diverse communities through joint prayers and cultural performances, emphasising the importance of living in peace through tolerance (Punia et al., 2018; Yamashita, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings identify formal and community education as a critical, proactive mechanism for fostering interfaith harmony. This is substantiated by the experiences of interviewees such as Rahayu Primayani (23 years old), who highlighted the systematic role of schooling in this process. She noted on the interview on May 2025, *“Maybe religious teachers in school. From elementary to university, they have always emphasised religious tolerance in formal education.”* This direct testimony aligns with the structural framework of Indonesia’s national education system, which, as mandated by the National Education System Law (UU No. 20/2003) and detailed in Government Regulation No. 55/2007 on Religious Education, requires religious education as a compulsory subject at all levels—from elementary school through university. The national curriculum, guided by the principle of fostering faith and piety (*iman dan taqwa*), requires students to receive instruction in their respective religions, with the pedagogical goal of deepening personal faith while simultaneously promoting mutual respect and understanding among different religious communities. This institutional design ensures that the values of tolerance and interreligious dialogue are deliberately instilled from an early age, preparing younger generations to engage constructively with a diverse world while upholding their own traditions.

However, this harmony is not automatic. Interviewees like Andie Prasetyo (23 years old), a Muslim student from Java, reported experiencing “culture shock” upon encountering Bali’s pervasive Hindu temples and rituals, underscoring the ongoing, active effort required to build mutual understanding in a diverse setting. Others note that potential tensions more often flare in the abstract realm of social media debates than in face-to-face community life, raising a gap between online discourse and offline practice, as noted in digital anthropology (Postill, 2018). When obstacles arise in the relationship between Muslims and Hindus in Bali, they are often managed through clear communication, the mediating role of respected community leaders, and a shared commitment to living side by side peacefully. For instance, Ketut Ambara recounted a situation in his village, Banjar Tengah, Blahbatuh, where the construction of a prayer room (*mushola*) caused some tension within the community. As a former *Kelian Dinas* (Head of the local community), he advised halting the construction temporarily to maintain peace and comfort in the area. This suggestion was accepted, and the involvement of a respected community leader further ensured that the decision was well-received by all parties. Moreover, a notable example of religious harmony in Bali is the Puja Mandala

worship complex in Nusa Dua, which houses five places of worship—a Mosque, a Catholic Church, a Protestant Church, a Buddhist Vihara, and a Hindu Pura—side by side. This close arrangement fosters mutual assistance during religious holidays, active collaboration, and social capital among the groups (Putra, 2014; Waruwu & Pramono, 2019). This example highlights how mutual respect, open communication, and the guidance of trusted leaders can effectively resolve potential conflicts and foster peaceful coexistence within a diverse community.

#### 4.1.2 Baishan's Cultural Curation

The findings for Beishan, as synthesised in Table 3, reveal a distinct, strategic model of cultural resilience. Unlike Bali's holistic defence of a spiritual and ecological core, Beishan's approach is curatorial and modular, treating its heritage as a dynamic portfolio of assets to be selectively preserved, adapted, and recombined (Ashworth, 2005). This strategic logic is articulated through the four interconnected categories of the framework: cultural preservation mechanisms, resilience and adaptation strategies, agents of change and leadership, and emerging challenges and tensions.

Derived from the community's own self-presentation in the documentary "*Beishan— The Jazzy Side of Life*," these categories capture a deliberate blueprint for relevance (Table 3). The analysis identifies a core ethos of orchestrated fusion, where cultural elements are not merely protected but are actively remixed—most emblematically through jazz—to engage new audiences and markets. Consequently, resilience is framed not as the preservation of a static tradition, but as the agile, strategic management of heritage within a competitive creative economy. The tensions documented in the final category are therefore not signs of failure but inherent dynamics within this entrepreneurial model of cultural continuity.

Table 3. Beishan Core Category

| No. | Core Category                    | Finding                               | Keynotes                                                                                                  |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Cultural Preservation Mechanisms | Architectural Heritage and Continuity | Preservation of ancestral halls (e.g., Yang's Hall), traditional village facades.                         |
|     |                                  | Culinary Intangible Heritage          | Use of hyper-local ingredients (Cishun Paste, deep-sea sand). "One of the bestselling items in her shop." |
|     |                                  | Religious/Ancestral Practice          | Daily household altars, incense in lanes, well-attended temples. "Typical of all southern China."         |

| No. | Core Category                      | Finding                                        | Keynotes                                                                                                  |
|-----|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2   | Resilience and Adaptation Strategy | Concept of 'Innovative Fusion'                 | Core motto of music festivals, fusion of jazz/Yue opera/lion dance, crystal energy with Chinese medicine. |
|     |                                    | Culinary Fusion and Adaptation                 | Modified recipes (sesame for salt); tailoring Italian/French food to local or authentic tastes.           |
|     |                                    | Spatial and Architectural Fusion               | "Gentle gentrification": modern interiors within traditional exterior shells.                             |
|     |                                    | Grassroots Cultural Programming                | Hosting alternative art shows and small concerts to fill a cultural gap.                                  |
| 3   | Agents of Change and Leadership    | Cultural Entrepreneurs and Artists             | Individuals initiating festivals, arts centres, fusion concepts, and architectural redesigns.             |
|     |                                    | Local Business Proprietors                     | Adapting traditional and foreign offerings to market demands, acting as cultural conduits.                |
|     |                                    | International Residents                        | Introducing international standards/events and fostering cross-cultural exchange.                         |
| 4   | Emerging Challenges and Tensions   | Overtourism and Congestion                     | Noise, crowded streets, kitchen fumes, traffic from Hong Kong/Shenzhen. "Sometimes, it is deafening."     |
|     |                                    | Governmental Shift and Disempowerment          | Transition from community-led to government-led decision-making. "We no longer have as much to say."      |
|     |                                    | Commercialisation and Gentrification Pressures | Rising rents, changing demographics ("younger generation entering"), loss of quiet village character.     |

Source: Author (*"Beishan – The Jazzy Side of Life"*, 2025)

The Beishan's foundation, as detailed under cultural preservation mechanisms, is deliberately selective and modular. Beishan maintains tangible pillars of its past, such as well-preserved ancestral halls and traditional village facades, which act as an authentic scenic backdrop (Figure 2). Simultaneously, it sustains living, market-ready traditions, particularly in its culinary intangible heritage. Here, preservation is pragmatic: bestselling items and secret, hyper-local ingredients (like Cishun Paste) demonstrate that cultural value is reinforced through commercial success. This treats heritage not as a sacred whole but as a

set of strategically curated assets, in which elements are preserved in a modular fashion based on their “exhibition value” (MacCannell, 1973) or their viability within a “touristic culture”.



Figure 2. Yang Family Ancestral Hall after revitalisation (Photo: cnbayarea.org.cn Source: [https://www.cnbayarea.org.cn/english/News/content/post\\_1304140.html](https://www.cnbayarea.org.cn/english/News/content/post_1304140.html))

The dominant and defining concept captured within the resilience and adaptation strategy is ‘innovative fusion.’ This is not passive blending, but an active, creative ethos applied systematically. It is spectacularly manifested in the music scene, pioneered by agents like Xue Wen, where “East-West fusion” drives jazz festivals in century-old theatres and experimental blends of Yue opera with contemporary composition. This fusion logic extends culinarily, in restaurants that adapt French baking, and spatially, through “gentle gentrification” that installs modern interiors within historical shells. This pervasive operational principle across artistic, culinary, and architectural realms positions Beishan as a “creative field” (Scott, 2010), a laboratory for cultural synthesis where value is generated through novel recombinations.

The driving force behind this is a distinct cohort of cultural entrepreneurs and artists who act as visionary architects and curators. Unlike traditional guardians, these agents of change derive their authority from expertise and market appeal, operating with considerable bottom-up autonomy. Xue Wen, the founder of the Beishan Music Festival, explicitly framed his mission as cultural

protection, on video in 2025 stating, *“If we didn’t protect this old village... it would face the fate of being demolished.”* He credits the festival—which grew from 150 to 15,000 attendees—with upgrading the village into a cultural “hot spot.” Nie Xin, a heritage expert and Vice Director of the local Cultural Hall, grounds his authority in 18 years of professional work, describing his role as “continuously digging out” heritage projects to elevate public cultural literacy. The aesthetic transformation of the village’s physical space, moving away from a “backward rural” feel to a curated environment of independent shops, reflects the vision of designers like Ron Rocco, creating what foreign visitors describe as a place with “very good energy.” This entrepreneurial spirit is further embodied by figures like the French Parlour owner, who was drawn to Beishan’s car-free quiet to establish an authentic, quality-focused business, attracting both local and international patrons.

However, the very success of this model has created major new challenges. The village now faces overtourism, straining its infrastructure through flooding and congestion, while rapid commercialisation has fragmented the business environment, inflating prices in renewed areas and diluting local culture through external businesses (Yin et al., 2024). This highlights a lack of unified management and raises serious questions about long-term sustainability. More critically, residents report a shift in government from oversight to direct control. This reflects a classic paradox: the grassroots creativity that makes a place desirable often leads to gentrification and increased regulatory control, a cycle extensively documented in urban sociology (Zukin, 2003). The centralisation of decision-making now risks disempowering the very community and entrepreneurs who built Beishan’s unique character.

#### 4.2 Discussion

Based on the findings above, the core categories of Bali and Beishan reveal that cultural resilience is not a uniform process but a deeply contextual, strategic response. This response is fundamentally shaped by how a community defines its cultural core and perceives its primary threats, leading to a coherent, agent-driven alignment toward one of two strategic poles. The critical insight, therefore, lies in demonstrating how these diametrically opposed approaches of centripetal (fortification) and centrifugal (innovation) can both serve as viable mechanisms for cultural identity continuity. This framework engages with the established sociological dialectic between cultural preservation and adaptive hybridisation (Appadurai, 1996; Pieterse, 2015) and critical heritage debates on authenticity versus process (Harrison, 2013; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995), viewing local actors as strategic agents capable of such intentional alignment (Mintzberg et al., 1998). While both cases develop mechanisms to sustain culture

amid tourism pressures, their fundamental strategies diverge precisely along this axis, informed by their distinct cultural assets and perceptions of threat.

This divergence between Bali's centripetal resilience and Beishan's centrifugal innovation can be conceptually mapped onto Putnam's fundamental distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bali exemplifies a profound manifestation of bonding social capital, where communities draw inward (*centripetal*) to protect a sacred core and reinforce tight-knit, localised networks, thereby fostering high social cohesion and cultural preservation. Conversely, Beishan operates by leveraging social capital through centrifugal innovation, strategically projecting its modular heritage outward to form broader, more heterogeneous connections and to link local assets directly into global economic circuits. While Bali leverages internal solidarity to achieve structural stability and resilience against external disruptions, Beishan utilises external bridging mechanisms to drive cross-boundary innovation, demonstrating that both inward cohesion and outward expansion are distinct, vital expressions of community-based social capital (Putnam, 2000).

The foundational divergence lies in the ontology of the cultural core. In Bali, the core is holistic and sacred, embodied in the integrative philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, to have sustainable development as explained by Runa (2012). This core is treated as a fragile, inherited totality, threatened primarily by the commodifying forces of tourism, which serves as a defensive counter-strategy, as described by Greenwood (1989), who warns that commercial tourism risks stripping sacred rituals of their intrinsic meaning. Bridging these perspectives, it becomes clear that the community's perception of threat is not merely economic but rather one of systemic erosion and spiritual dilution. In stark contrast, Beishan's core is modular and secular, shown in a curated portfolio of tangible heritage assets (ancestral halls) and intangible culinary knowledge, valued for their aesthetic and market potential. Here, the perceived threat is not erosion but cultural invisibility and irrelevance within the context of China's rapid modernisation.

The comparison reveals two archetypal models of cultural resilience. Bali's strategy represents a form of managed openness—it engages with global tourism and external influences, but channels this engagement through a defensive, centripetal framework oriented around protecting its holistic socio-spiritual core (*Tri Hita Karana*). This aligns with the concept of Bali: an open fortress, where openness exists alongside a conscious fortification of identity (Nordholt, 2007). Beishan's strategy, conversely, is entrepreneurial and centrifugal; it treats cultural heritage as a dynamic portfolio to be actively curated, remixed, and projected outward to secure economic and cultural relevance. Thus, both communities are "open," but their strategic logics for managing that openness

are fundamentally opposed: one filters engagement through a defensive core, while the other leverages engagement as a primary adaptive tool.

This ontological divergence manifests in distinct mechanisms of action. Bali's centripetal resilience is anchored in ritual-centric, community-based practices characterised by continuity-in-change. Daily offerings and ceremonies like *Nyepi* function as a living social immune system, where the form and context of rituals may adapt to modern pressures—such as tourism schedules or environmental concerns—while their core spiritual purpose and communal function persist. This dynamic process reinforces an “authorised heritage discourse” (Graham & Howard, 2008), one that is community-sanctioned yet historically malleable. These mechanisms generate thick bonding social capital, fortifying group identity through adaptive repetition (Putnam, 2000). Interfaith harmony, therefore, is not a static condition but a managed outcome continuously reproduced through local institutions and face-to-face negotiation within this evolving ritual framework (Bräuchler, 2015).

Beishan, in contrast, operates through project-centric, entrepreneur-led initiatives. Its primary mechanism is “Innovative Fusion,” a deliberate and often rapid synthesis enacted through events like music festivals, fusion cuisine, and adaptive reuse of spaces. This occurs within a dynamic “creative field” (Scott, 2010), where value is generated by attracting new audiences and meeting market demand, thereby generating bridging social capital. Where Bali's resilience is measured by the depth and adaptive fidelity of communal practice, Beishan gauges success by audience engagement, commercial viability, and cultural buzz.

The agents legitimising and driving these mechanisms further crystallise the contrast. Bali's resilience is stewarded by traditional authorities whose legitimacy is derived from inherited roles within a stable social hierarchy. Their role is that of guardians of a sacred order. Critically, this traditional stewardship is often formally partnered with, and at times co-opted by, provincial government authority. This synergy is epitomised by the annual Bali Arts Festival (*Pesta Kesenian Bali*), which has been held without interruption since 1979, with an ever-growing number of participants and spectators, a strong sign of the success of its preservation strategy and of pride in its cultural identity (Figure 3). Officially inaugurated and managed by the provincial government, the festival's content and legitimacy are deeply dependent on the active participation of traditional villages (*desa adat*). Thus, authority in Bali operates through a dual structure: bottom-up stewardship by customary institutions and top-down orchestration by the state, which seeks to harness cultural capital for regional identity and economic policy.



Figure 3. The Bali Arts Festival, held annually since 1979 is a major initiative to preserve and promote Balinese arts while refuting the unfounded claim that Balinese culture has deteriorated as a result of the tourism industry (Photo: I Nyoman Darma Putra, 2026).

Beishan's transformation, conversely, is orchestrated by a distinct agent: the cultural entrepreneur. Its initiators are figures like festival founders, fusion chefs, and foreign designers, individuals whose authority stems from perceived vision, professional expertise, and demonstrable success in the marketplace. They are initiators and curators, often operating from positions outside traditional structures. While local government in Beishan provides enabling infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, the creative vision and operational drive remain decisively entrepreneurial. This reflects a fundamental shift from integrated heritage guardianship (as seen in Bali's dual system) to a model of project-based, entrepreneurial curation, where cultural value is validated through audience engagement and market logic rather than sacred lineage or state sanction.

Inevitably, the paradoxes and challenges each face are mirror opposites, stemming directly from their core strategies. Bali's tensions arise from the constant friction between maintaining its sacred, bounded integrity and navigating a pluralistic, commercialised environment. Its resilience is a

perpetual exercise in boundary maintenance and managed coexistence. Beishan's difficulties, however, are ironic consequences of its own success. The vibrant cultural economy it created has led to overtourism, commercial saturation, and, most critically, increased top-down governmental control. This trajectory follows a well-documented urban cycle in which artistic pioneering makes a locale desirable, only to invite capital influx and regulatory capture that risk displacing the original creative spirit (Zukin, 2003). Thus, the central dynamic for Bali involves maintaining the integrity of its core through a productive tension with external forces, whereas for Beishan, the imperative is to preserve the grassroots autonomy that defines its core appeal against the very forces of institutionalisation and market co-option that its success invites.

Both models confirm that resilience resides not in resisting change, but in a community's coherent, agent-driven alignment of its cultural core with its strategic engagement of global forces. For instance, Bali's centripetal model is exemplified by the Bali World Culture Celebration. Integrated into the annual *Pesta Kesenian Bali* and organised by the provincial government, this platform strategically deploys international collaboration. By curating performances where global troupes share the stage with local masters, it harnesses the global gaze to validate, finance, and reinforce the island's sacred *adat* system, thus aligning external engagement with the core mandate of cultural preservation. Conversely, Beishan's centrifugal model operates through the Beishan International Tea Culture Festival (Xiangzhou District Government, 2024) (Figure 4). Hosted within a restored ancestral hall, this event strategically fuses the traditional Chaozhou Kongfu Tea ceremony with global beverage trends and international trade forums. This alignment actively repurposes global trends and capital to redefine the village's historic commercial identity, transforming its architectural heritage into a dynamic, market-facing cultural ecosystem. In both cases, global forces are not merely external pressures but become essential resources, strategically engaged by local agents to achieve a coherent vision of resilience—whether to perpetuate a deep tradition or to continuously reinvent a historic one.



Figure 4. The Beishan International Tea Culture Festival takes place on May 19, 2024 at the Yang Great Ancestral Hall in Beishan village (PhotoWeChat account zhxiangzhou, Source: [https://xiangzhou.guangdong.com.cn/2024-05/24/c\\_990057.htm](https://xiangzhou.guangdong.com.cn/2024-05/24/c_990057.htm) ).

Ultimately, these two cases demonstrate that cultural resilience is not a single strategy but a contextual logic of survival. Bali enacts a centripetal logic of fortification, defending its sacred, integrated lifeworld from perceived erosion. Beishan pursues a centrifugal logic of innovation, curating fusion to ensure its cultural relevance in a competitive creative economy. While one guards against the erosion of meaning and the other against cultural obsolescence, both demonstrate that true resilience lies not in resisting global forces, but in the agent-driven art of turning them into a strategic resource.

## 5. Conclusion

This comparative study demonstrates that cultural resilience is not a universal strategy but a context-specific logic of survival. Bali and Beishan represent two divergent, yet coherent, models shaped by how each community defines its cultural core and perceives external threats.

Bali exemplifies centripetal resilience. Its holistic, sacred identity is defended through inwardly focused rituals and strong social bonding capital, guarding against the threat of commodification and spiritual erosion, which is consistently adaptive to external cultural influences to strengthen Balinese

culture. Beishan embodies centrifugal resilience. Its modular, secular heritage is proactively adapted through entrepreneurial fusion and bridging social capital, innovating to avoid cultural irrelevance in a competitive creative economy.

The key insight is that successful resilience lies not in choosing between preservation and change, but in a community's strategic alignment of its cultural ontology with its mode of engaging global forces. Whether through fortification or innovation, cultural continuity depends on this conscious, intentional coherence

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The corresponding author, on behalf of all authors, declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

The corresponding author, on behalf of all authors, declares that popai.pro was utilised in the writing process of this manuscript. These tools were employed for data analysis and language editing, and their contributions are acknowledged accordingly.

### **Author Contributions**

All authors are part of a single research team that conducted the research and drafted the manuscript.

### **Ethics approval**

This study did not involve any ethical procedures, as it utilised narrative and qualitative data collection and was conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines that do not require ethical review for this type of research. Therefore, no formal ethics approval was necessary.

## Data availability

The authors maintain the data that support the findings of this study and are available upon reasonable request. Please contact the corresponding author for access to the data.

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