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PLACE-BASED INTERPRETATION OF ORANG ASLI LIFE-COURSE HERITAGE

**Aisyah Abu Bakar¹, Nur Kaseh Wildany Mohd Hamzy²,
Siti Husna Awalluddin³, Mariana Mohamed Osman⁴**

*^{1,2,3}Department of Environmental Management,
Faculty of Forestry and Environment,
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA*

*⁴Department of Urban and Regional Planning,
Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design,
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA*

Abstract

This study reframes Orang Asli (OA) cultural practices as a life-course and spatial system within Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Domain 3. It connects them to care settings, households, Adat institutions, burial boundaries and ancestral sites. Studies emphasise festive events, weakening recognition of continuity across life phases. The research combined interviews with OA knowledge holders and representatives with ethnographic, academic and heritage sources. Content analysis coded manifestations by social role, ritual purpose, symbolic meaning, participation pattern and community context. Inductive-deductive thematic analysis organised them into codes, facets and themes. Six experts assessed the framework using the Content Validity Index, informing four themes and sixteen facets. These cover early development, marital institutions, maternal care, adulthood, elderhood and ancestry. Spatial analysis produced four planning categories and eight cultural spaces for protection, learning, household formation, maternal care, subsistence, governance, burial and ancestry. The framework supports documentation, planning, assessment and community-led mapping of life-course heritage.

Keywords: Orang Asli, Cultural Practices, Life-Course Transitions, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Landscape

¹ Corresponding author. Email: aisyah.ab@upm.edu.my

INTRODUCTION

This paper forms part of continuing work to document and classify Orang Asli [OA] Intangible Cultural Heritage [ICH] across five ICH domains, with this paper focusing on Domain 3, Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events.

Across OA communities, social practices unfold through life phases, social relations and ancestral continuity. Distinct from related papers on oral traditions, performing arts and ecological knowledge, this paper organizes social practices into a life-course framework. The study develops an expert-informed classification linking manifestations to social settings, learning environments, household spaces, maternal zones, livelihood areas, burial boundaries and ancestral sites for heritage documentation, planning and safeguarding.

LITERATURE REVIEW

OA cultural practices form a lived system through which relationships, responsibilities and life transitions are regulated. Within ICH Domain 3, customs and ceremonies sustain collective identity while linking communal life with ecological settings and inherited knowledge (Abu Bakar et al., 2025a, 2025b; Shaari et al., 2024). Early life is shaped by protection, caregiving and experiential learning, while adolescence introduces behavioural expectations and bodily regulation (Chew et al., 2022; Syed Abdullah et al., 2022). Marriage involves readiness, negotiation, engagement, ceremonial validation and changes in residence and household roles (Abu Bakar et al., 2025a; Endicott, 2016; Yew et al., 2023). Pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum recovery are governed through taboos, informal support, confinement and dietary practices (Syed Abdullah et al., 2022; Ambak et al., 2026; Adnan et al., 2025). In later life, elders assume custodial responsibilities, while death and ancestral ceremonies maintain relations between the living and the deceased (Shaari et al., 2024; Zamzuri et al., 2024; Linggang et al., 2024).

These practices depend on the settings in which they occur. Caregiving and social learning unfold within household and communal environments. Marriage reorganizes residential and kinship space. Reproductive practices require protected maternal settings; and mourning or ancestral observance gives ritual meaning to communal places. In essence, spatial context shapes participation, privacy, authority and continuity. Heritage mapping can connect OA cultural practices with households, ceremonial grounds, ecological settings and ancestral sites rather than record them as isolated practices. Yet research remains focussed on single community and ceremonial practices, while digital materials are scattered and static (Zuhairi et al., 2020; Kamaruddin & Said, 2021; Sylaiou et al., 2020). A Domain 3 framework is needed to thematically analyze OA cultural practices while recognizing the cultural spaces that sustain them. The outcome supports stronger digital documentation, heritage planning, and community-led safeguarding.

METHODOLOGY

This paper belongs to a wider effort of documenting and classifying OA ICH across five ICH domains. Although the companion OA ICH papers follow parallel phases of data extraction, coding, thematic organization and expert validation, this study applies the process to Domain 3: Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events, focusing on communal order, life-cycle practices, ritual obligations and customary continuity.

The corpus consisted of interview transcripts with OA knowledge holders and community representatives, supported by ethnographic writings, academic studies and heritage reports. Content analysis identified manifestations related to birth, childhood, marriage, pregnancy, healing, taboos, ancestral observances, festive events, household roles and *Adat* responsibilities. In this paper, social practices are translated as recurring communal actions that organize roles, relationships, obligations, transitions and culturally significant spaces. Each manifestation was examined according to social role, ritual purpose, symbolic meaning, participation pattern, life-stage relevance and community setting. The coded data were then organized through inductive-deductive thematic analysis into manifestation codes, facets and broader themes. The framework was evaluated using the Content Validation Index [CVI] to assess clarity, relevance, coherence and cultural appropriateness for Domain 3 practice-based heritage.

Table 1: Framework Development Stages

Phase	Description of Process	Output
Stage 1: Data Extraction and Coding	Interview transcripts and documents were analyzed using content analysis in ATLAS.ti to identify OA ICH Domain 3 manifestations. Symbolic meaning, ritual form and social function were recorded.	Dataset of identified ICH manifestations, segmented corpus of data excerpts
Stage 2: Coding of ICH Manifestations under Domain 3	Identified manifestations were assigned manifestation codes to organize recurring social practices, rituals, taboos, ceremonies and life-cycle practices.	Coded dataset of OA Cultural Practices under Life Phases
Stage 3: Categorization of Themes and Facets	Coded manifestations were grouped into facets and organized into themes using thematic analysis to refine conceptual groupings within each theme and facet.	Structured set of themes and corresponding facets
Stage 4: Framework Drafting	Themes and facets were structured into a conceptual framework, mapping relationships into a coherent visual matrix guided by theoretical reasoning.	Initial framework showing classification hierarchy
Stage 5: Iterative Refinement	The framework was reviewed against coded data using thematic analysis to improve clarity, consistency and reduce overlap between codes, facets and themes.	Refined ICH Domain 3 framework ready for validation
Stage 6: Validation Preparation	The framework was converted into a validation tool with definitions of themes and facets and manifestation codes as well as guidance for expert evaluation.	Validation package with framework and scoring sheets
Stage 7: Validation Study Execution	Experts evaluated the framework, and I-CVI and S-CVI were calculated to assess content validity.	Expert feedback and CVI scores
Stage 8: Framework Refinement	Validation results were used to revise labels, structure, and grouping for improved coherence.	Revised Framework of OA ICH Domain 3

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were arranged using an interview guide to cover key themes across communities while allowing participants to describe their social practices in a natural narrative flow. The guide covered settlement background, household and social relations, socio-demographic and socio-economic conditions, governance, environmental context and heritage continuity. The questions then explored social practices, rituals, festive events, life-cycle customs, taboos, healing practices, marriage arrangements, pregnancy care, birth practices, elder roles, communal duties and Adat obligations. Participants included *Tok Batin*, elders, committee representatives and village members from various OA subgroups. Personal names were coded, while role, subgroup and village location were retained.

Table 2: Profile of Orang Asli Interview Participants

Code	Roles in Village	Subgroup	Village Name and Location
PO01	Director, Cultural Institution	Mah Meri	Kampung OA Sungai Bumbun, Pulau Carey
PO02	OA Youth Representative	Mah Meri	Kampung OA Sungai Bumbun, Pulau Carey
PO03	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Jakun	Kampung OA Sungai Bot, Karak, Bentong
PO04	Village Chairperson	Temuan	Kampung OA Cinta Manis, Karak, Bentong
PO05	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Temuan	Kampung OA, Ulu Pareh, Karak, Bentong
PO06	OA Representative	Temuan	Kampung OA, Ulu Pareh, Karak, Bentong
PO07	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Jah Hut	Kampung OA Pian, Kuala Krau, Temerloh
PO08	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Jah Hut	Kampung OA Pian, Kuala Krau, Temerloh
PO09	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Che Wong	Kampung Kuala Enggang, Temerloh
PO10	Village Elder	Che Wong	Kampung Kuala Enggang, Temerloh
PO11	OA Representative	Che Wong	Kampung Kuala Enggang, Temerloh
PO12	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Semelai	Kampung OA Pelawan, Pos Iskandar, Bera
PO13	OA Representative 1	Semelai	Kampung OA Pelawan, Pos Iskandar, Bera
PO14	OA Representative 2	Semelai	Kampung OA Pelawan, Pos Iskandar, Bera
PO15	OA Representative 3	Semelai	Kampung OA Pelawan, Pos Iskandar, Bera
PO16	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Bateq	Kampung OA Kuala Atok, Jerantut
PO17	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Semoq Beri	Kampung OA Sungai Tiang, Jerantut
PO18	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Semai	Kampung OA Rening, Cameron Highlands
PO19	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Semai	Kampung OA Kuala Boh, Cameron Highlands
PO20	Leader / <i>Tok Batin</i>	Jakun	Kampung OA Gumum, Tasik Chini, Pekan

Table 3: Coding Trail from Content Analysis to Theme Development

Coding Stage	Coding Output
1 Verbatim Transcription	PO14: ...zaman dulu, lubuk besar bawah jambatan jadi tempat orang menuba ikan. Orang lama percaya bila muncul Ikan Sebarau semasa menuba tandanya hujan dan kilat akan datang. Jadi kena balik, berteduh ka selamatkan diri...
2 Transcript Excerpt	The participant explained that the river pool beneath the bridge was once used for poisoning fish, and that the appearance of <i>Ikan Sebarau</i> was believed to signal approaching rain and lightning, prompting people to leave for safety.
3 Condensed Meaning	The appearance of Hampala Barb during river fish-poisoning activity is interpreted as a warning sign of approaching rain and lightning.
4 Initial Codes	Animal Omen, Animal-based Environmental Warning
5 Final Code	Animal Interaction Folktales
6 Facet	Animal Folktales
7 Theme	Folktales, Legends, and Narrative Forms

Document Analysis

Document analysis extended the interview corpus by examining 403 academic, institutional, community and media sources on OA social practices. Sources were screened for subgroup context, practice-based evidence and Domain 3, life-course social practices relevance. Pertinent materials were condensed into meaning units, then coded into manifestation codes, facets and themes to support the classification of practice-based heritage (refer to Table 4).

Table 4: Document Sources and Screening Criteria

No	Types	Sources	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1	Peer Reviewed Articles	Mainly retrieved from MyCite, followed by Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, DOAJ SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online	Evidence on OA social practices, life-cycle customs, rituals, family roles, birth, death, <i>Adat</i> , communal relations, and subgroup context.	No ICH or social practices evidence; focused only on development, education, health or socio-economy.
2	Conference Papers	Academic conference proceedings, seminar papers and heritage-related conference publications.	Relevant findings on OA social customs, communal events, life-stage practices, cultural change or heritage continuity.	Too brief, duplicated published articles, or did not provide usable evidence for coding.
3	Book Chapters	Edited academic books on Orang Asli, indigenous studies, anthropology, heritage and culture.	Subgroup-specific evidence on birth, childhood, and marriage customs, or <i>Adat</i> .	General discussion without sufficient detail for coding.
4	Books and Monographs	Ethnographic books, cultural monographs, Orang Asli studies and indigenous community publications.	Detailed descriptions of OA social norms and practices, ritual conduct, household roles, or community governance.	Outdated claims without cultural relevance, unclear source basis or no link to social practices.
5	Theses and Dissertations	University repositories, institutional libraries and postgraduate research databases.	Empirical or ethnographic findings on OA embodied expression or heritage transmission.	Unavailable full text, unrelated focus or no extractable cultural evidence.
6	Government Reports	Mainly JAKOA, with related government and agency reports.	Official information on OA subgroups, village context, and cultural activities	Administrative data only, irrelevant to ICH documentation.
7	UNESCO documents	UNESCO ICH documents, safeguarding guidelines and conceptual references.	Definitions, safeguarding principles and conceptual guidance relevant to ICH and social practices.	Unrelated to ICH concepts or documentation.
8	Museum Archives	Museum records, exhibition notes, archive descriptions and heritage documentation.	Descriptions of OA ritual objects, ceremony records, community customs or intangible meanings.	Records with unclear provenance and no identification of subgroups.
9	Community Publications	NGO materials, local publications, blogs, community websites and informal documentation.	Community accounts of OA birth, childhood, adolescent, marriage, and household customs or <i>Adat</i> .	Unverifiable claims, or unidentifiable community context.
10	Media Recordings	Audio and video documentaries, online news articles, and media features related to Orang Asli communities.	Recorded or reported rituals, ceremonies, life-cycle customs, communal events, social norms or heritage transmission.	Sensationalized reporting, unclear informant source or insufficient detail for coding.

Multi-Phase Framework Development and Validation Workflow

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the two-stage framework process, showing initial source coding and thematic structuring, followed by expert validation, refinement, restructuring and final framework confirmation.

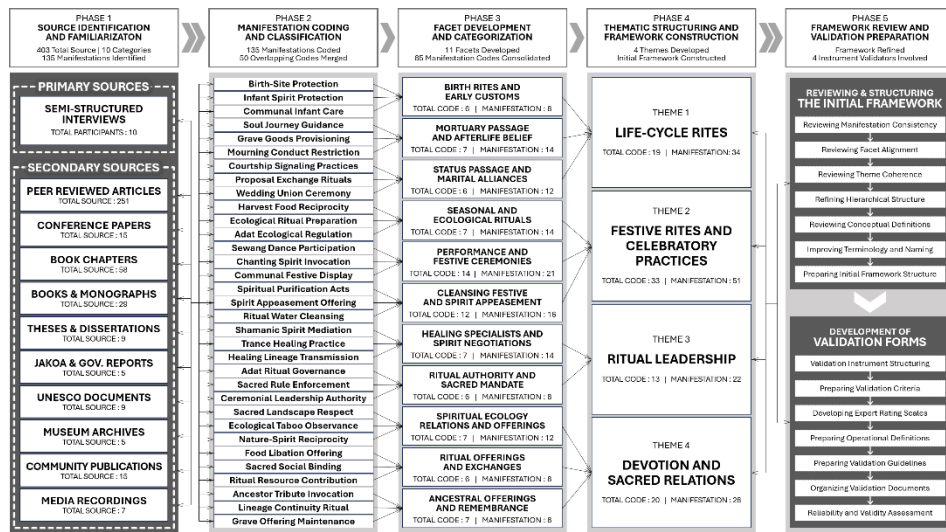


Figure 1: Initial Development and Construction of the ICH Domain 3 Framework

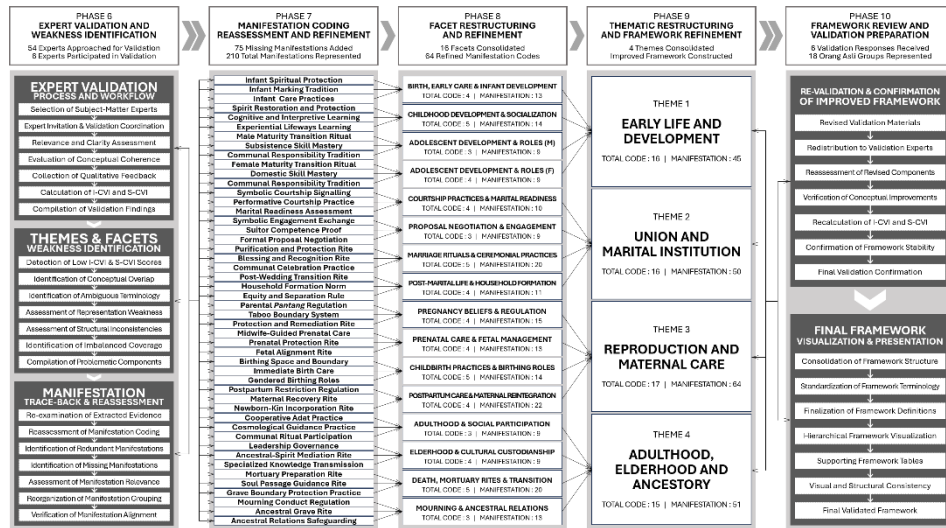


Figure 2: Expert Validation and Refinement of the ICH Domain 3 Framework

RESULTS

The expert validation process involved six experts. To ensure confidentiality, validators were anonymized using coded identifiers (Expert 1 to Expert 6). Table 5 presents each expert's background, field of expertise, and feedback.

Table 5: Validators' Feedback and Corresponding Revisions

Validator	Feedback	Corresponding Revision
Expert 1 Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) Expert in Indigenous welfare management and community support services	Suggested that Domain 3 manifestations should include culturally meaningful places, routes, landmarks, and spatial practices, as these shape the meaning of OA rituals, transitions, and ancestral relations.	Place-based elements were strengthened through manifestations such as river initiation, birth spaces, burial orientation, grave boundaries, and ancestral sites. Oral or performative elements were retained only when functioning as social practice, ritual conduct, or life-transition practice.
Expert 2 Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) Expert in Indigenous welfare management and community support services	Recommended that terms used better reflect lived OA practices rather than performative categories. Suggested that manifestations show actual modes of practice, regulation, narration, and transmission.	Generic performative framing was reduced. The framework now emphasizes practices, roles, restrictions, responsibility, transmission, and custodianship through examples such as infant care, pregnancy taboos, childbirth roles, marital duties, and mourning conduct.
Expert 3 GERIMIS Art Project (Cultural Organization) Expert in Indigenous Knowledge, Cosmologies, and Eco-Critical Cultural Studies	Recommended that manifestations specify the relevant OA group, cultural context, ritual occasion, belief meaning, and indigenous terminology.	The revised tables include a Groups column and retain indigenous terms such as <i>Sewang</i> , <i>Kejak Mengejak</i> , <i>Melenggang Perut</i> , <i>Mandi Tepung</i> , <i>Buka Pantang</i> , <i>Tok Batin</i> , <i>Pawang</i> , and <i>Badi</i> at manifestation level.
Expert 4 Institute of Environment and Development, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Expert in Sustainable Livelihoods of Indigenous Communities, Heritage Conservation	Recommended that the framework be reorganized to better reflect Domain 3 cultural practices as either life-phase practices or cyclical/yearly events. Suggested including coming-of-age as a key life transition.	The framework was reorganized into four life-course themes: <i>Early Life Development</i> , <i>Union and Marital Institution</i> , <i>Reproduction and Maternal Care</i> , and <i>Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry</i> . Coming-of-age was incorporated under male and female adolescent development facets.
Expert 5 Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Expert in Indigenous people studies, Social Anthropology	Suggested that customary rituals and taboos related to nature be organized under relevant life phases, as they reflect OA belief systems, social regulation, and respectful conduct toward the environment.	The framework was reorganized into life-phase themes so taboo-based and customary rituals are distributed according to their cultural function. Pregnancy and birth taboos were placed under <i>Reproduction and Maternal Care</i> , while ecological and ancestral rituals were placed under <i>Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry</i> .
Expert 6 Kulliyyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia Expert in Humanities, Linguistic and Literature, Malay Language and Literature	Recommended clarifying overlapping terms such as ritual, healing, customary regulation, and ceremonial practice, so Domain 3 manifestations are classified according to their role in OA social life.	The framework was reorganized by life phases and social functions. Healing practices were positioned as care, protection, or communal responsibility, while rituals and taboos were placed according to their role in birth, marriage, reproduction, mourning, and ancestral relations.

Table 6 presents the content validation summary for the initial framework, while Table 7 outlines the revised themes and facets.

Table 6: Content Validation Summary of the Initial Framework

Themes	I-CVI	Facets	I-CVI	S-CVI
Life Transition Rites	0.83	Birth and Early Life Customs	0.83	0.72
		Mortuary Passage and Afterlife Belief	0.67	
		Status Passage and Marital Alliances	0.67	
Festive Rites and Celebratory Practices	0.83	Seasonal and Ecological Rituals	0.67	0.78
		Performance and Festive Ceremonies	0.83	
		Cleansing Festive and Spirit Appeasement	0.83	
Ritual Leadership	0.83	Healing Specialists and Spirit Negotiations	0.83	0.75
		Ritual Authority and Sacred Mandate	0.67	
		Spiritual Ecology Relations and Offerings	0.83	
Devotion and Sacred Relations	0.83	Ritual Offerings and Exchanges	0.83	0.83
		Ancestral Offerings and Remembrance	0.83	

Table 7: Revised Theme and Facets

Themes	Facets
Early Life Development	Birth, Early Care and Infant Development
	Childhood Development and Socialization
	Adolescent Development and Roles (Male)
	Adolescent Development and Roles (Female)
	Courtship Practices and Marital Readiness
Union and Marital Institution	Proposal Negotiation and Engagement
	Marriage Rituals and Ceremonial Practices
	Post-Marital Life and Household Formation
Reproduction and Maternal Care	Pregnancy Beliefs and Regulation
	Prenatal Care and Fetal Management
	Childbirth Practices and Birthing Roles
	Postpartum Care and Maternal Reintegration
Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry	Adulthood and Social Participation
	Elderhood and Cultural Custodianship
	Death, Mortuary Rites and Transition
	Mourning and Ancestral Relations

The earlier framework placed OA cultural practices under broad ritual categories, which made some life-course processes difficult to distinguish. The revised version reorganizes the framework around social progression: early life development, union and marital institution, reproduction and maternal care, and adulthood, elderhood and ancestry. This arrangement separates birth and infant care, childhood learning, adolescent roles, courtship, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, elder custodianship, mortuary rites, and ancestral relations into clearer process-based groupings. The result is a stronger life-course structure that reflects how OA cultural practices are shaped by roles, responsibilities, transitions, and continuing relations between the living, the community, and ancestors.

Table 8: Revised Themes and Facets Definitions

Themes & Definitions	Facets & Definitions
Early Life Development <i>A socio-cultural system shaping early growth, protection, and role formation through embodied practices, caregiving, and experiential learning.</i>	Birth, Early Care and Infant Development <i>Infant care practices that protect, imprint identity, and regulate wellbeing through bathing, herbal treatments, naming, and symbolic protection.</i>
	Childhood Development and Socialization <i>Experiential learning through exploration, participation, and guidance to develop autonomy, social responsibility, and adaptive skills.</i>
	Adolescent Development and Roles (Male) <i>Progressive acquisition of skills, responsibilities, and social expectations marking transition into recognized male roles.</i>
	Adolescent Development and Roles (Female) <i>Embodied transition through social expectations, skill development, and role preparation marking entry into recognized female roles.</i>
Union and Marital Institution <i>A relational system governing attraction, negotiation, union formalisation, and the formation of household and kinship responsibilities.</i>	Courtship Practices and Marital Readiness <i>Expressive and symbolic practices of attraction, including performance, adornment, and non-verbal communication, signalling readiness for union.</i>
	Proposal Negotiation and Engagement <i>Structured family-mediated processes involving assessment, exchanges, and demonstrations of responsibility to formalise marital intent.</i>
	Marriage Rituals and Ceremonial Practices <i>Ritual enactments, cleansing, and symbolic acts that legitimise union, integrate families, and establish social recognition.</i>
	Post-Marital Life and Household Formation <i>The organization of domestic roles, shared labour, residence patterns, and obligations that sustain marital and kinship structures.</i>
Reproduction and Maternal Care <i>A biocultural system regulating pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum recovery through taboos, care practices, and ritual protection.</i>	Pregnancy Beliefs and Regulation <i>Taboos, behavioural restrictions, and symbolic practices governing parental actions to safeguard maternal and fetal wellbeing.</i>
	Prenatal Care and Fetal Management <i>Monitoring, massage, ritual intervention, and midwifery guidance to position, protect, and prepare the fetus for birth.</i>
	Childbirth Practices and Birthing Roles <i>Techniques, spatial arrangements, and gendered roles managing delivery, ensuring safety, and maintaining ritual and environmental control.</i>
	Postpartum Care and Maternal Reintegration <i>Dietary control, bodily treatment, seclusion, and ritual acts supporting recovery, purification, and reintegration into daily life.</i>
Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry <i>A continuity system linking adult participation, cultural custodianship, death transition, and enduring ancestral relations.</i>	Adulthood and Social Participation <i>Active engagement in communal labour, ritual enactment, ecological interaction, and social regulation sustaining collective life.</i>
	Elderhood and Cultural Custodianship <i>Transmission, regulation, and enactment of cultural knowledge, ritual practice, healing systems, and material traditions across generations.</i>
	Death, Mortuary Rites and Transition <i>Body preparation, burial practices, spatial organization, and ritual processes guiding transition from life to the spiritual realm.</i>
	Mourning and Ancestral Relations <i>Practices of mourning, remembrance, restriction, and offering that regulate relations between the living and ancestral spirits.</i>

Tables 9–12 present the thematic classification of ICH manifestations. The examples are partly representative, with each theme comprising four facets, each facet three to five codes, and each code covering multiple ICH manifestations.

Table 9: Theme 1 – Early Life Development

Facets	Codes	Examples of Manifestation	Groups
Birth, Early Care and Infant Development	Infant Spiritual Protection	Protection Bath: Sixth-day infant bath sprinkled with forest herbs toughens immunity and protects against predatory spirits.	ALL
		Black Soot Application: Hearth charcoal/soot on infant to conceals scent, protecting against malevolent forest spirits.	Che/Bat/Jai/Ter
	Infant Marking Tradition	Role Imprinting: Placenta hung in a tree-suspended miniature house; a pandanus leaf (girl)/ a wood stick (boy) placed in hand.	Sel/Mah
		Spiritual Identity Recasting: Renaming the infant with lighter forest terms to reduce spiritual burden and unseen attraction.	ALL
	Infant Care Practices	The Duk Immersion: Infants carried in a <i>Duk</i> sling, learning forest rhythms and social interaction through constant contact.	ALL
Urut and Barut: Daily herbal oil massage hardens limbs, while abdominal wrapping expels wind and gives womb-like security.		Tem/Jak/Sel/Mah	
Childhood Development and Socialization	Spirit Restoration and Protection	Memanggil Semangat: Elders strike the ground at the fright site and call the child's name to restore the soul.	ALL
		River Initiation: Introducing a child to major river spirits through offerings for protection from drowning and illness.	Tem/Jak/Sel/Mah
	Cognitive and Interpretive Learning	Solved Puzzles: Solved traditional puzzles by a child signifies mental acuity needed for advanced tracking skills later in life.	Jak/Tem/Sel/Mah
		Dream Circle: Morning dream-sharing tradition treats children's dreams as spiritual messages interpreted by elders.	Ter/Sem/Che/Seq
	Experiential Lifeways Learning	Forest Exploration: Children are granted autonomy to learn forest limits through experience, with minimal risk restriction.	Bat/Jai/Ter/Sem
		Alloparenting: Children carry infants (relatives) in slings as natural social bonding to foster empathy and responsibility.	Bat/Jai/Ter/Sem
Adolescent Development and Roles (Male)	Male Maturity Transition Ritual	Kejak Mengejak: Communal circumcision ritual with traditional dress, music, and symbolic bestowing of the <i>keris</i> .	Jat/Tem/Jak/Sel
		Role in Sewang Dance: Inner-circle participation, mastering <i>genrang</i> and lead vocals to drive the spiritual engine.	Ter/Sem/Jat/Che
	Subsistence Skill Mastery	Honey Harvesting (Panjat): Climbing <i>Tualang</i> trees at night for wild honey marks bravery and ability of resource provision.	Bat/Jai/Ter/Sem
		Sumpit Mastery: Mastery of blowpipe use and <i>Ipoh</i> poison preparation signifies maturity and skilled hunting capability.	Bat/Jai/Ter/Sem
	Communal Responsibility Tradition	First Kill Sharing: Young hunter shares his entire first major kill with the community, signifying survival skill and maturity.	Bat/Jai/Ter/Sem
Ancestral Custodianship: Assuming care of ancestral graves or <i>Moyang</i> mask carving marking the youth's custodial roles.		Mah/Jat/Tem/Jak	
Adolescent Development and Roles (Female)	Female Maturity Transition Ritual	Menarche Isolation: First-menstruation seclusion in a cooling designated house area marks safe transition into womanhood.	Ter/Sem/Che/Seq
		Role in Sewang Dance: <i>Telug</i> -chorus participation and <i>centong</i> stamping to create interlocking rhythms as the rhythmic anchor.	Ter/Sem/Jat/Che
	Domestic Skill Mastery	Intricate Weaving: Weaving mastery in <i>tempok</i> , <i>mengkuang</i> mats and <i>Sanggar</i> marks maturity and marriage readiness.	Mah/Tem/Jak/Ter
		Wild Yam Detoxification: Precise <i>Ubi Gadong</i> slicing, soaking, and squeezing leaches toxins, marks trustworthiness.	Ter/Sem/Bat/Jai
	Communal Responsibility Tradition	Semangat Padi: Spiritual agriculturalists harvest, wrap, and store Mother Rice to entice nature spirits and abundance.	Tem/Jak/Sem/Sel
Bidan Initiation: Midwife shadowing and locating female plants for bleeding and childbirth mark caregiving roles.		ALL	

Note. ALL = All or almost all ethnic groups practiced the manifestation; Abbreviations refer to Orang Asli subgroups: Kensiu (Ken), Kintaq (Kiq), Jahai (Jai), Mendriq (Men), Bateq (Bat), Temiar (Ter), Semai (Sem), Jah Hut (Jat), Che Wong (Che), Semoq Beri (Seq), Mah Meri (Mah), Temuan (Tem), Jakun (Jak), Semelai (Sel), Orang Kuala (Orl), Orang Seletar (Ors), and Orang Kanaq (Ork).

Table 10: Theme 2 – Union and Marital Institution

Facets	Codes	Examples of Manifestation	Groups
Courtship Practices and Marital Readiness	Symbolic Courtship Signalling	Pensol Serenade: Young men play the nose flute to signal presence and romantic interest without direct confrontation.	Ter/Sem/Jat/Che
		Fragrant Adornment: Tucking fragrant flowers/leaves behind ears or into hair to enhance charm and attract potential partner.	ALL
	Performative Courtship Practice	Main Jo-oh: Masked dance to invite ancestral spirits while allowing the young people to observe potential partners.	Mah/Jak/Sel
		Sewang Social Space: All-night <i>Sewang</i> sparks attraction as youths displays stamina and grace through song and dance.	ALL
	Marital Readiness Assessment	Kerchang: Separating the Kerchang bamboo puzzle string symbolizes marital complexity, patience, and readiness.	Jak/Sel/Tem
		Compatibility Audition: The man stays at the woman's house for 3 days to undergo a form of audition by the woman's father.	Sem/Ter/Jat/Jak
Proposal Negotiation and Engagement	Symbolic Engagement Exchange	Needle and Thread Proposal: Needle and thread sent in a <i>mengkuang</i> container; returned pierced signals acceptance.	Tem/Jak/Sel
		Modest Hantaran: Marriage intent is signalled through practical forest-based items, with a silver ring rather than gold.	ALL
	Suitor Competence Proof	Adat Menunggu: Suitor proves responsibility to future in-laws by managing daily tasks and providing financial support.	Sem/Ter/Jat/Jak
		Gift Exchange Proposal: A custom handcrafted wooden comb (<i>sisir</i>) presented by suitor to signify domestic technical worth.	ALL
	Formal Proposal Negotiation	Merisik: A structured family-led poetic inquiry to assesses compatibility and confirm eligibility before formal proposal.	Jak/Tem/Sel/Mah
		Minang: Elder-led visit to the woman's family presents <i>hantaran</i> , sets engagement period, and marks her as promised.	Jak/Tem/Sel/Mah
Marriage Rituals and Ceremonial Practices	Purification and Protection Rite	Circling a Mound: Bride circles a mound 7 times, followed by groom, seeking nature-spirit protection and household blessing.	Sel/Jak/Tem
		Kenduri Hum: Couple cleansed with rice scrubbing and three jars of flower-scented limewater poured over their heads.	Jat/Sel/Jak/Tem
	Blessing and Recognition Rite	Mohon Sembah: The bride and groom pay respect to the parents and the elders to signify continued devotion to their kin.	Tem/Jak/Mah/Sel
		Bersanding: Couple in traditional clothes sit on a <i>mengkuang</i> mat in <i>Rumah Adat</i> as Tok Batin officiates wedding.	Jak/Tem/Mah/Sel
	Communal Celebration Practice	Gotong-Royong: Villagers divide ceremonial tasks and share meals to strengthen social bonds and kinship.	ALL
		Wedding Sewang: Circle chant and rhythmic stomping dance to celebrate and seek longevity and ancestral-spirit protection.	ALL
Post-Marital Life and Household Formation	Post-Wedding Transition Rite	3-Day Curfew: 3-day post-ceremony curfew, spirit banishment and money-tossing protects newlyweds from harmful spirit.	ALL
		Wall Completion: Couple completes pre-built house walls after officiation, symbolizing shared marital responsibility.	Jat/Che
	Household Formation Norm	Uxorilocal Residence: Long-standing norms that newlyweds initially reside with the bride's family to strengthen bonds.	ALL
		Household Roles: Husbands lead hunting and heavy labour; wives lead gathering and basket fishing, with shared duties.	ALL
	Equity and Separation Rule	Matrimonial Equity (Egalitarian): Spouses share equal decision-making and freedom to separate if incompatible.	ALL
		Post-Marital Compensation: Divorce and remarriage entail fault-based financial obligations and spouse-house entry fees.	Sem/Ter/Jak/Tem

Note. ALL = All or almost all ethnic groups practiced the manifestation; Abbreviations refer to Orang Asli subgroups: Kensiu (Ken), Kintaq (Kiq), Jahai (Jai), Mendriq (Men), Bateq (Bat), Temiar (Ter), Semai (Sem), Jah Hut (Jat), Che Wong (Che), Semoq Beri (Seq), Mah Meri (Mah), Temuan (Tem), Jakun (Jak), Semelai (Sel), Orang Kuala (Orl), Orang Seletar (Ors), and Orang Kanaq (Ork).

Table 11: Theme 3 – Reproduction and Maternal Care

Facets	Codes	Examples of Manifestation	Groups
Pregnancy Beliefs and Regulation	Parental <i>Pantang</i> Regulation	Paternal <i>Pantang</i>: Father's restrictions (wood cutting, animal injuring, etc) during the 3 rd trimester to ensure infant's safety.	Ork/Ter/Jak
		Maternal <i>Pantang</i>: Mother's restrictions and dietary taboos (watch other births, carving, eariting hot or sharp foods, etc).	Mah/Ter/Ork/Jak
	Taboo Boundary System	Liminal Boundary: Liminal-time and place taboos protect vulnerable maternal-fetal spirits from disturbance.	Mah/Jak/Ork/Ter
		Mimetic Taboo System: Pregnancy taboos link parental actions to fetal outcomes, restricting behaviour to prevent harm.	Mah/Ork/Ter/Jak
	Protection and Remediation Rite	Ancestral Protection Rite: Prayers to ancestors and nature spirits protect mother and unborn child from spiritual harm.	Mah/Ter/Sem/Ork
		Fishing Line Remediation: Corrective rite uses fishing line and straightened hook to ease childbirth after taboo breach.	Ter
Prenatal Care and Fetal Management	Midwife-Guided Prenatal Care	Early Engagement: Midwife engagement from 3 rd month guides due-date calculation, diet, and delivery preparation.	Jak/Mah/Ter/Ork
	Prenatal Protection Rite	Monitoring Care: Midwife-led care monitors maternal health, nutrition, and spiritual balance to protect the fetus.	Mah/Jak/Sem/Ter
		Mandi Tepung: Flour bath and talismans applied during pregnancy to guard the mother and fetus from spirit disturbance.	Jak
		Thermal Wellbeing System: Cooling-shading using <i>pancuur</i> , plants, and silver coin to avoid heat and agony for safe birth.	Sem/Jak/Mah/Ter
	Fetal Alignment Rite	Melenggang Perut: 7-month rite uses coloured cloths to realign belly, position fetus, welcome soul, and mark nearing birth.	Mah
		Abdominal Urut: Periodic gentle massage to position the baby correctly and prepares the path for the soul's eventual exit.	Jak/Mah/Ter/Bat
Childbirth Practices and Birthing Roles	Birthing Space and Boundary	Blood-Ground Barrier: Home birth on woven pandanus mat with wood beneath, preventing blood seepage into ground.	Jak
		Birth Hut Seclusion: Birth occurs in a secluded forest hut away from camp, specifically constructed for women-assisted labour.	Bat
	Immediate Birth Care	Bamboo Cord Cutting: Sharp bamboo splinter reflecting forest purity cuts the umbilical cord immediately after delivery.	Bat/Mah/Jak
		Thermal Recovery Bathing: Immediate cool mother bath and warm baby bath prevent fever and support recovery.	Bat/Mah/Jak
	Gendered Birthing Roles	Women-Led Childbirth: Midwives and female assistants manage birth, maintaining women's authority in childbirth care.	Bat/Sem/Jak
		Paternal Birth Support: Fathers manage environmental-symbolic conditions without direct obstetric role.	Jak/Sel/Ork/Ter
Post-partum Care and Maternal Reintegration	Postpartum Restriction Regulation	Dietary Restriction: Days 7–30 require household cooking and maternal diet restrictions on oil, salt, MSG, sugar, and meat.	Ter/Jak/Ork
		Behavioural Restriction: Mother eats alone (impurity), avoids river washing, heavy work, bathing (3 days), and praising baby.	Ter/Ork/Jak/Mah
	Maternal Recovery Rite	Post-partum Herbal Bath: <i>Durian Belanda</i> and <i>Jambu Batu</i> leaves used in bath to treat flatulence and refresh the body.	Tem/Jak/Sem/Mah
		Buka Pantang: Post-confinement feast ends restrictions, with mother and midwife eating to mark societal reintegration.	Ter
	Newborn-Kin Incorporation Rite	Placenta as Kin: Placenta is washed and buried nearby house, with a 7-day lamp or guarded birth-site fire for several days.	Mah/Bat/Sel/Jak
		Naming Rites: Nature-based naming and baby sale-retrieval to correct unsuitable pre-name followed by feast and purification.	Mah

Note. ALL = All or almost all ethnic groups practiced the manifestation; Abbreviations refer to Orang Asli subgroups: Kensiu (Ken), Kintaq (Kiq), Jahai (Jai), Mendriq (Men), Bateq (Bat), Temiar (Ter), Semai (Sem), Jah Hut (Jat), Che Wong (Che), Semoq Beri (Seq), Mah Meri (Mah), Temuan (Tem), Jakun (Jak), Semelai (Sel), Orang Kuala (Orl), Orang Seletar (Ors), and Orang Kanaq (Ork).

Table 12: Theme 4 – Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry

Facets	Codes	Examples of Manifestation	Groups
Adulthood and Social Participation	Cooperative <i>Adat</i> Practice	Behaviour Regulation: Taboos, norms, and moral expectations regulate social order and acceptable conduct. Harvest Procession: Collective food preparation and sharing reinforce cooperation, reciprocity and social responsibility.	Sem/Sel Sem/Sel/ Ter
	Cosmo-logical Guidance Practice	Ritual Setup: Constructing natural-material spirit spaces and wearing plant-based attire to embody ecological identity. Dream Awareness: Dreams are attended and recalled to guide rituals and songs, grounding practice in cosmological authority.	Sem/Ter/ Mah/Bat Sem/Ter/ Bat/Che
	Communal Ritual	Healing Rituals: Participants rhythmically strike Kelundang wood/bamboo while Bomoh heals and chants to restore health.	Sem/Ter/ Jak/Mah
	Participation	Sea Appeasement: Participants perform sea-themed dance to seek sea-spirit protection and reflect marine dependence.	Ors/Orl/ Mah
Elderhood and Cultural Custodianship	Leadership Governance	Tok Batin Authority: Tok Batin mediates disputes, liaises with authorities, and guides adat to ensure cultural continuity. Ritual Governance: <i>Tok Halak</i> , <i>Tok Sidang</i> and <i>Pawang</i> lead, sanction, and enact rituals through trance and spirit invocation.	Tem Ter/Sem
	Ancestral-Spirit Mediation Rite	Ancestral Rites: <i>Pawang</i> and <i>Adat</i> council lead coastal offerings, music, and invocations to honour ancestors. Spirit Mediation: <i>Putao</i> (shamans) lead 6-night séance singing <i>Nopoh Bukau</i> in to ask supernatural beings for abundance.	Mah Che
	Specialized Knowledge Transmission	Healing Lineage: <i>Bomoh</i> transmit ritual and ethnomedicine through apprenticeship and inheritance to preserve knowledge. Mask Craftsmen: Elder artisans craft ceremonial wooden masks, sustaining spiritual meaning and material-cultural links.	Sel/Jak/ Che Mah/Jat
	Mortuary Preparation Rite	Funerary Rites: Body washing and shrouding ensure safe transition; status-based burial reflects spiritual hierarchy. Burial Provisioning: Body is positioned and interred with grave goods to support afterlife journey and spiritual beliefs.	Sem/Ter/ Bat Sem/Ter/ Bat
	Soul Passage Guidance Rite	Soul Guidance by Spirit Invocation: <i>Sewang</i> dance and offerings invoke spirits to guide souls and protect the living. Afterlife Orientation: Sun or spirit-path burial orientation guides the soul's journey and ensures spiritual passage.	Sem/Ter Sem/Ter
Death, Mortuary Rites and Transition	Grave Boundary Protection Practice	Grave Marking: Natural burial markers blend with the environment, supported by protective grave structures. Across River Burial: Burial across rivers creates a natural boundary that prevents the spirit from returning to the living.	Ors Sem/Ter
	Mourning Conduct Regulation	7-Day Rite: Communal meal, prayers, and ritual acts formally mark the closure of mourning and transition back to normal life. Mourning Restrictions: Dance, music, adornment, and deceased naming are restricted for respect and non-disturbance.	Sem/Ter Sem/Ter/ Bat
Mourning and Ancestral Relations	Ancestral Grave Rite	Grave Offering: Grave-visiting with offerings, libations, and ritual acts to guide spirits and sustain ancestral ties. Grave Care: Grave maintenance practice involving cleaning, care, and libations to guide, protect, and remember the spirit.	Mah/Jat Mah/Sem
	Ancestral Relations Safe-guarding	Badi Belief: Taboos are observed to avoid <i>Badi</i> , a spiritual danger from tragic deaths causing illness and disturbance. Ancestral Continuity: Annual ancestral festivals and offerings sustain reciprocal ties and guide conduct via ancestral presence.	Sem/Ter/ Bat Mah/Sem

Note. ALL = All or almost all ethnic groups practiced the manifestation; Abbreviations refer to Orang Asli subgroups: Kensiu (Ken), Kintaq (Kiq), Jahai (Jai), Mendriq (Men), Bateq (Bat), Temiar (Ter), Semai (Sem), Jah Hut (Jat), Che Wong (Che), Semoq Beri (Seq), Mah Meri (Mah), Temuan (Tem), Jakun (Jak), Semelai (Sel), Orang Kuala (Orl), Orang Seletar (Ors), and Orang Kanaq (Ork).

The transition from the ICH manifestation classification (Tables 9-12) to the cultural spaces (Tables 10-11) was made by reading each life-phase code as a practice tied to setting, boundary or social use of space. Tables 9–12 show a progression from birth and childhood to marriage, reproduction, elderhood, death and ancestral relations. Within this progression, spatial cues appear throughout the examples. Infant baths, soot marking and placental care require protected care settings. River initiation, forest exploration, honey harvesting, weaving and midwife shadowing locate learning in domestic, forest and communal environments. Courtship, engagement, bersanding, uxorial residence and household roles identify spaces of union and household formation. Pregnancy pantang, birthing huts, postpartum restrictions and newborn-kin incorporation mark maternal and newborn spaces. Later codes such as *Tok Batin* authority, ritual governance, healing lineage, mortuary preparation, burial orientation, grave care and *Badi* belief extend the framework into *Adat*, custodial, burial and ancestral spaces.

Table 13 was developed from these recurring spatial cues. Instead of treating cultural practices only as life-cycle events, the table reorganizes them into planning-oriented spaces: early protection care, youth role learning, marriage-household formation, maternal-newborn care, subsistence-domestic practice, *Adat* governance, mortuary boundary and ancestral mourning. Table 14 then returns these spaces to the manifestation codes, showing which practices depend on which cultural settings. This conversion helps planning interpretation by identifying spaces that may require protection, access control, community use, ritual continuity or sensitivity during settlement planning and development decisions.

Table 13: Planning-Oriented Cultural Space Framework

Layers	Code	Cultural Spaces	Definition
Early Life and Role Formation	A	Early Protection Care Space	Spaces safeguarding fetal-newborn, infant, and child wellbeing, identity, and protection.
	B	Youth Role Learning Space	Spaces for childhood learning, adolescent transition, skill formation, and responsibility.
Union and Maternal Care	C	Marriage Household Formation Space	Spaces for courtship, engagement, marriage rituals, residence, and household formation.
	D	Maternal Newborn Care Space	Spaces for pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum recovery, protection, and reintegration.
Domestic, Communal and Custodial	E	Subsistence Domestic Practice Space	Spaces for domestic skills, subsistence work, food sharing, and livelihood practice.
	F	Adat Governance Custodianship Space	Spaces for <i>adat</i> regulation, leadership, ritual authority, and knowledge transmission.
Mortuary and Ancestral Continuity	G	Mortuary Burial Boundary Space	Spaces for body preparation, burial orientation, grave marking, and spirit boundaries.
	H	Ancestral Mourning Relation Space	Spaces for mourning conduct, offerings, grave care, and ancestral continuity.

Table 14: Spatial Interpretation of ICH Manifestation Codes

Themes	Facets	Manifestation Codes	Cultural Spaces (Coded)							
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Early Life Development	Birth, Early Care & Infant Development	Infant Spiritual Protection	/			/				
		Infant Marking Tradition	/			/				
		Infant Care Practices	/							
	Childhood Dev. & Socialization	Spirit Restoration and Protection	/	/				/		
		Cognitive & Interpretive Learning		/				/		
		Experiential Lifeways Learning		/			/			
	Adolescent Development & Roles (M)	Male Maturity Transition Ritual		/				/		
		Subsistence Skill Mastery		/			/			
		Communal Responsibility Trad.		/			/	/	/	/
	Adolescent Development & Roles (F)	Female Maturity Transition Ritual		/				/		
Domestic Skill Mastery			/			/				
Communal Responsibility Trad.			/		/	/	/			
Union and Marital Institution	Courtship & Marital Readiness	Symbolic Courtship Signalling			/					
		Performative Courtship Practice			/			/		
		Marital Readiness Assessment			/			/		
	Proposal–Engagement Negotiation	Symbolic Engagement Exchange			/			/		
		Suitor Competence Proof			/		/	/		
		Formal Proposal Negotiation			/			/		
	Marriage Rituals & Ceremonies	Purification and Protection Rite			/			/		
		Blessing and Recognition Rite			/			/		
		Communal Celebration Practice			/		/	/		
	Post-Marital Household Formation	Post-Wedding Transition Rite			/		/	/		
Household Formation Norm				/		/				
Equity and Separation Rule				/			/			
Reproduction and Maternal Care	Pregnancy Beliefs & Regulation	Parental <i>Pantang</i> Regulation	/			/		/		
		Taboo Boundary System	/			/		/		
		Protection and Remediation Rite	/			/		/		
	Prenatal Care & Fetal Management	Midwife-Guided Prenatal Care	/			/		/		
		Prenatal Protection Rite	/			/		/		
		Fetal Alignment Rite	/			/		/		
	Childbirth & Birthing Roles	Birthing Space and Boundary	/			/		/		
		Immediate Birth Care	/			/		/		
		Gendered Birthing Roles				/		/		
	Postpartum Care & Mat. Reintegration	Postpartum Restriction Regulation	/			/		/		
Maternal Recovery Rite					/		/			
Newborn-Kin Incorporation Rite		/			/		/			
Adulthood, Elderhood and Ancestry	Adulthood & Social Participation	Cooperative Adat Practice				/	/			
		Cosmological Guidance Practice				/		/		
		Communal Ritual Participation				/	/	/		
	Elderhood & Cultural Custodianship	Leadership Governance					/	/		
		Ancestral-Spirit Mediation Rite					/	/		/
		Specialized Knowledge Transm.					/	/		
	Mortuary Rites & Transition	Mortuary Preparation Rite							/	
		Soul Passage Guidance Rite							/	/
		Grave Boundary Protection Prac.							/	
	Mourning & Ancestral Relations	Mourning Conduct Regulation					/	/	/	
Ancestral Grave Rite						/	/	/		
Ancestral Relations Safeguarding						/	/	/		

DISCUSSION

A life-course reading shifts the analysis of OA cultural practices from separate rituals to an ordered sequence of birth, adolescent, union, reproduction, adulthood, death and ancestral continuity. This reorganization responds to expert concerns about overlap among the original ritual, authority and festive categories. Although the initial themes received I-CVI values of 0.83 and S-CVI values between 0.72 and 0.83, the revised four-theme structure provides clearer distinctions among practices while preserving their continuity across life phases.

Place is central to OA cultural practices continuity. Infant care and childhood socialization occupy protected domestic, riverine, forest and communal settings. Courtship, marriage and household formation involve gathering areas, ceremonial spaces and residential arrangements. Pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum recovery depend on maternal-care settings, seclusion boundaries and controlled access. In later life, *Adat* governance, knowledge transmission, mortuary rites and ancestral relations extend cultural practice into communal institutions, burial grounds and remembrance sites.

Tables 13 and 14 consolidate the spatial relationships into eight heritage-mapping spaces. Care settings, learning environments, household spaces, maternal zones, livelihood areas, *Adat* institutions, burial boundaries and ancestral sites are thereby recognised as interconnected cultural infrastructure. This interpretation supports settlement planning, heritage inventories, development screening and community-led mapping by identifying where continuity, access, protection and spatial sensitivity must be considered.

CONCLUSION

OA cultural practices are most coherently understood as a life-course system linking personal transition with family, community and ancestral responsibility. The four-theme, sixteen-facet framework captures this progression from early care and socialization to marriage, reproduction, custodianship, mortuary transition and continuing ancestral relations. Its principal planning value lies in making the spatial settings of the cultural practices visible. Domestic areas, rivers, forests, ceremonial grounds, household environments, maternal-care spaces, *Adat* institutions, burial areas and ancestral sites together form a culturally structured landscape. Recognizing these settings can strengthen heritage inventories, settlement planning, and community-based documentation.

The framework provides a basis for future site-level mapping through a long-term and sustainable collaboration with OA communities, covering the identification of practice locations, movement routes, customary boundaries and culturally sensitive areas. Local access conditions, seasonal use, custodianship responsibilities and levels of information disclosure should be documented under community guidance, with appropriate precautions for sacred or restricted community knowledge.

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