

## Preservation Efforts of Riau Malay Dance through Persembahan Dance Game

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### ABSTRACT

*Persembahan Dance is a traditional Malay dance of Riau, possessing high cultural significance as a dance to welcome honored guests and is an integral component of Riau Malay cultural heritage. However, with the progression of time and globalization, there is a risk if the preservation of Persembahan Dance is not undertaken. This research aims to analyze the preservation efforts of Persembahan Dance through the development of an engaging game application for young generations. The research methodology employed is descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach, encompassing observation, interviews, and documentation. This study also identifies the preservation efforts made by the government, educational institutions, artists, and art studios. The government supports preservation by patenting Persembahan Dance as part of the regional cultural heritage and incorporating it into official events. Educational institutions integrate Persembahan Dance into the Cultural Arts curriculum and extracurricular activities for young generations. Artists and art studios contribute through education and cultural promotion both nationally and internationally. Conversely, the development of Persembahan Dance through educational games using the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) method creates an innovation that can attract young people's interest in learning and appreciating traditional dance while preserving cultural values. This study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the preservation of Riau Malay art and promote public awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural heritage.*

### KEYWORDS

Persembahan Dance  
Riau Malay Dance  
Cultural Preservation  
Malay Culture  
Educational Games

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### INTRODUCTION

The city of Pekanbaru in Riau Province is composed of diverse cultures, arts, traditions, and ethnic groups that coexist and thrive within its community. This diversity lives side by side to form a unified whole. The arts in Pekanbaru, Riau, consist of music, literature, theater, visual arts, and dance. The dances in Riau are also highly diverse, comprising traditional, creative, and contemporary dances. One of the traditional dance arts in Riau is the Persembahan dance, a welcoming dance performed to greet honored guests or those considered important.

Dance is an expression of the human soul conveyed through beautiful rhythmic movements (Soedarsono, 1977) Joan Keali'ihomoku, an expert in traditional dance from Samoa Island, believes that "dance is culture and culture is dance" (Sutrisno & Putranto, 2005). The existence of dance in community life is crucial because it is a branch of art that determines the progress and development of a nation. Dance has existed since the beginning of human civilization, becoming a necessary form of entertainment. The presence of dance

in society serves as a means of entertainment, spectacle, and custom (Syefriani & Muharraman, 2021). Similarly, the Persembahan dance, performed as a welcoming dance, continues to exist and is presented to the public without any change in its performance meaning (Syefriani & Kurniati, 2022).

The Persembahan dance is a well-known traditional dance among the people of Pekanbaru, Riau, and is featured in almost every event. It is typically performed for various occasions, including welcoming important guests such as opening ceremonies attended by the President, Ministers, or other significant figures. Currently, the Persembahan dance is also often performed to welcome newlyweds at wedding receptions (Syefriani & Kurniati, 2022).

The Persembahan dance is inseparable from the customs and traditions of the Malay community, particularly the tepak sirih (betel nut box). The tepak sirih is the main and only prop in the Persembahan dance, which will be presented or given to the honored guest at the end of the dance. According to O.K. Nizami Jamil (2009) : the contents of the tepak sirih include: A sufficient amount of betel leaves neatly arranged face down with their stems pointing upwards, five or three packets of lime-prepared betel leaves ready to be consumed, a container of lime, a container of gambier, a container of areca nut, a container of tobacco, and a betel nut cutter (Kurniati & Kuswarsantyo, 2018).

As we observe the ever-progressing development of our times, there is a possibility that the Persembahan dance, as a traditional Malay dance of Riau, may one day be forgotten by its community if efforts are not made to preserve it. Cultural globalization is a process of world homogenization that carries the packaging of American popular culture (Budiasa, 2014). It would be regrettable if the ancestral heritage of a region were to become extinct. Although the Persembahan dance has found a place in the hearts of the people and is very popular among the Riau community, this does not mean that preservation efforts are unnecessary.

The importance of maintaining local wisdom can also create and maintain harmonious living, guiding people to always be wise and behave judiciously towards their environment (Setyaningrum, 2018). The challenges in preserving culture, especially traditional arts, are becoming increasingly difficult due to the changing times and the current flow of globalization (Irhandayaningsih, 2018).

The problem faced is the difficulty in transferring cultural knowledge from generation to generation. The nation's cultural wealth needs to be introduced to the younger generation from an early age. By utilizing the advancement of multimedia technology, which has now become a reflection of knowledge, including video games (Rindyana, 2019). Currently, most people enjoy using smartphones because many activities can be viewed and performed using just a smartphone (Hidayatullah et al., 2018). Most people like to use their free time to play games on their smartphones.

In the last 10 years, electronic games or what we call online games have mushroomed everywhere, supported by increasingly sophisticated smartphone technology. Online game players are usually dominated by students, ranging from elementary, junior high, high school, college students, and even adults (Wahid & Fauzan, 2021). Therefore, the researcher intends to collaborate with researchers from the field of Information Technology to create a Persembahan dance game application, which will present the history and variety of movements of the Persembahan dance.

The researcher is doing this so that smartphone users, especially the people of Riau, can play games with the theme of traditional Malay dance from Riau, namely the Persembahan dance. Thus, games with traditional dance themes can be used, the Persembahan dance will

become better known to the public and can be preserved in the form of a game application. This game is expected to generate interest among the Riau community and make them appreciate Riau's traditional dance more as it is presented through the latest technology.

Several previous studies have conducted research on this topic: In 2020, a study titled "Educational Game of Indonesian Traditional Dance for Deaf Students in Grade VI Elementary School" (Septiani & Al Irsyadi, 2020), presented an application featuring dance images, dance names, and dance origins. With an attractive interface, this application assisted teachers in the learning process and parents in their children's home learning. A 2022 study titled "Android-Based Educational Game of East Sumba Regional Traditional Dances" (Mburu & Talakua, 2023), used Java programming language and Android Studio to create an application aimed at helping the community, especially school children, learn about and recognize East Sumba regional dances.

A 2023 study, "Android-Based Educational Game for Learning Dance Art for 1st Grade Junior High School Students" (Ardiansyah & Sugiyanto, n.d.), found that 79.8% of students agreed with using the Dance Art Educational Game as a learning medium, and 89.5% of media experts strongly agreed that this educational game could be an attractive and enjoyable alternative for learning.

Another study titled "Development of Folk Games as an Introduction to Riau Malay Culture Based on Android" (Setiawan et al., 2024), introduced four folk games: *adu biji para*, *statak*, *gasing*, and *congklak*. These four folk games can be found in Riau province. The game was developed using the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) method, consisting of six stages, with each stage producing output for subsequent stages.

Based on these previous studies, the researcher is interested in conducting research related to the *Persembahan* dance game. There are similarities in the applications used and the material presented in the game applications, which concern dances or traditions in Indonesia. However, no researcher has studied the *Persembahan* dance game as dance material in their research, as the *Persembahan* dance is unique to Riau Province and has not yet been made into a game. There are several welcoming dances from various regions in Sumatra, but they differ in dance names, movements, and costumes. Therefore, this research focuses on the *Persembahan* dance game as a preservation effort to ensure that the *Persembahan* dance, as a traditional Malay dance of Riau, continues to exist among Indonesian society in general and the people of Riau Province in particular.

## METHOD

Research methodology is a way or path to obtain solutions to all problems. In the process, several theories are known to apply one method relevant to a particular problem, considering that not every problem related to the researcher's ability, cost, and location can be solved with any research method. With this consideration, the author will discuss this specifically in the next section (Subagyo, 1991). To obtain accurate and correct data, the author uses a descriptive analysis method using qualitative data, which is research conducted by approaching the object under study to obtain accurate data.

In this study, the information obtained is analyzed qualitatively. Information can be in the form of interview transcripts, field notes, documents, and/or visual materials such as photos, videos, internet materials, and other documents about human life individually or in groups (Sugiyono, 2021). Descriptive research is research that attempts to describe a symptom, event, or occurrence that is happening now. Descriptive research focuses on actual problems as they are when the research takes place. Through descriptive research,

researchers try to describe events and occurrences that are the center of attention without giving special treatment to these events (Salim, 2019).

Data collection techniques in this study are observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Interviews are qualitative data collection techniques using interview guide instruments. The interview used in this study is a semi-structured interview. "Semi-structured interviews, interviews that start from research issues. Each question is not the same for each informant according to the answers from that informant" (Sahir, 2021). Initially, the researcher will ask a series of structured questions, then one by one will be deepened to extract further information. Thus, the answers obtained can cover all variables, with complete and in-depth information. No less important than other methods is the documentation method, which is to search for data on things or variables in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, agendas, and so on. The documentation method observes inanimate objects rather than living things.

In this study, the researcher only focuses on efforts to preserve Riau Malay dance, namely the Persembahan dance. Before this, of course, there have been preservation efforts carried out by the Government, artists, and Riau cultural experts to maintain the traditional dances of Riau. However, to maintain and preserve the existence of the Persembahan dance, new efforts and steps are needed that can present the Persembahan dance in a different and more attractive display for the general public, namely in the form of a game. The method for developing the game is by using the GDLC (Game Development Life Cycle) method.

The researcher collaborates with researchers in the field of Informatics Engineering so that the Persembahan dance can be displayed in a game, as currently many Indonesians, especially the people of Riau, like to play games. So that the game played can provide refreshment for those who play it, and indirectly the community has already preserved the Persembahan dance by knowing its history and variety of movements. For the creation of this Persembahan dance game, the game will be developed by Informatics Engineering researchers using data obtained from Dance Arts researchers.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The preservation of traditional performing arts, in this context the Tari Persembahan from the Riau Malay culture, can be studied from two main approaches: maintaining and developing. According to Couto and Indrayuda (2013), maintaining means continuing to use and function an art form as it should be, while developing refers to efforts to reconstruct, change, and modify the art form to answer the challenges of the times. This dual approach is the foundation for maintaining the existence of Tari Persembahan amidst the onslaught of global culture and the rapid digital flow.

Efforts to preserve Tari Persembahan as one of Riau's traditional dances have been carried out systematically by various stakeholders, ranging from educational institutions, artists, art studios, to local governments. One of the main strategies in preserving this dance is to make it part of formal learning at various levels of education. In line with the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2023), the introduction of local cultural heritage must be carried out comprehensively to all students, from kindergarten to high school and vocational schools. The Persembahan Dance is included in the Arts and Culture subject, where students are invited to learn the history, movement techniques, philosophical values, and symbolic meanings contained in the dance.





**Figure 1.** The Learning Process of Persembahan Dance in Class

Moreover, extracurricular dance activities also become an important space in the transfer of Persembahan dance values and skills. Through this activity, students not only learn theory, but are also actively involved in dance practices and cultural performances. This activity is an event for internalizing culture as well as strengthening the cultural identity of the younger generation. In many schools in Riau Province, the Persembahan dance has become part of the annual routine that is trained and performed in various celebrations of big days or welcoming official school guests.

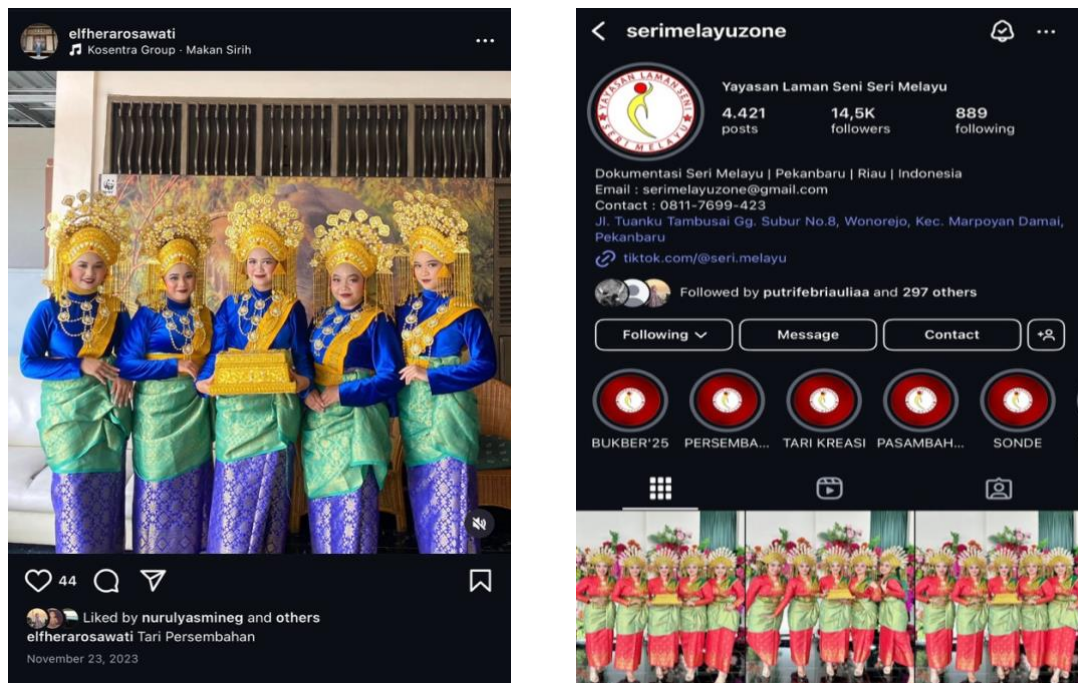
At the higher education level, especially at the Islamic University of Riau, the Performing Arts Education study program also plays a significant role in the conservation of this dance. In this faculty, the Persembahan dance is made a mandatory material for students majoring in dance and music. In addition to being a form of preservation, this learning process also aims to equip prospective art educators to be able to transfer this cultural heritage to their students in the future. Thus, a regeneration process occurs that not only targets artists but also art educators.



**Figure 2.** The learning process of Persembahan dance in the Department Performing Arts Education Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Universitas Islam Riau

Outside formal institutions, dance artists act as cultural agents who maintain the continuity of tradition in a more flexible and creative way. One example of an important figure is Elfhera Rosawati, a dance artist in Riau who consistently teaches the Persembahan Dance to the younger generation through training in communities and studios. The role of artists like Rosawati not only includes learning the technicalities of dance movements, but also becomes a bridge between the traditional meaning contained in the dance and its contemporary relevance.

Traditional art studios, such as the Seri Melayu Art Group, are a means of strengthening the community as well as a cultural laboratory space. In this studio, the Persembahan Dance is taught regularly to members and is actively promoted on national and international stages. Uniquely, this promotion is not only done conventionally but also through social media, expanding the audience reach to the digital native generation who are more familiar with the screen than the stage. Social media is used as an alternative medium to arouse public interest in traditional dance.



**Figure 3.** Preservation of Offering Dance through training in communities and studios

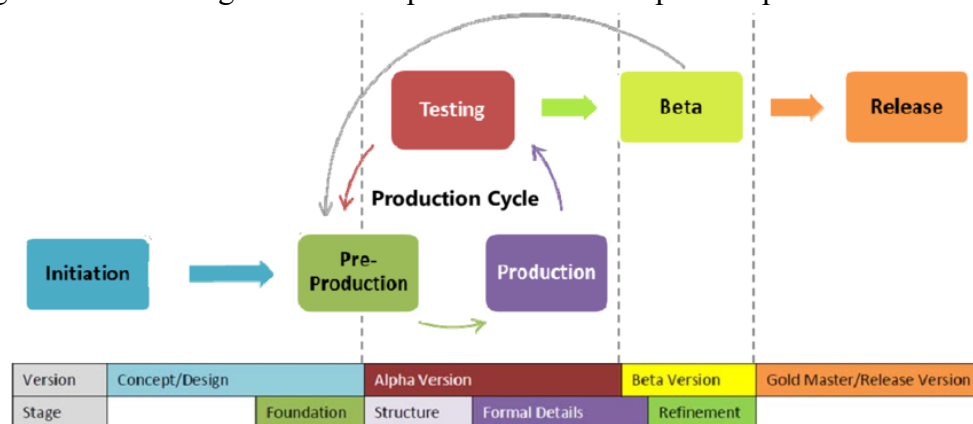
The Riau Provincial Government, through the Department of Culture and the Malay Customary Institution, also made a concrete contribution by patenting the Tari Persembahan as a form of regional standard art. However, until now this dance has not been registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (WBTH) with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Submission of WBTH status is very important to guarantee legal protection, funding, and official recognition of the position of Tari Persembahan as a national heritage.

Furthermore, the government's commitment is demonstrated through various official state events or protocol activities that always begin with a Tari Persembahan performance. The use of this dance as a form of welcoming state guests or high officials is a symbol of regional identity and at the same time a strong means of cultural communication. It is not just a performance, but a form of representation of the values of respect, the refinement of

Malay culture, and an attitude of welcoming with great gentleness. Thus, it can be concluded that efforts to maintain Tari Persembahan include aspects of education, regeneration, documentation, and public policy that are synergistic with each other. Tradition is not only maintained on stage, but also in the classroom, community, and bureaucratic system.

### Game Innovation as a Technology-Based Preservation Medium

Starting from the challenges of the times that erode the interest of the younger generation in traditional arts, digital innovation is a potential answer in the strategy for developing Tari Persembahan. One of the creative approaches raised in this study is the development of an educational-based game application by making Tari Persembahan the main content. This approach uses the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) method, a systematic framework that regulates the entire game creation process from conception to post-launch.



**Figure 4.** Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC)

The initial stage of GDLC is conceptualization or initiation. In this stage, the developer and research team compile the basic idea of the game, determine the genre (educational), the theme of Riau Malay culture, and conduct a feasibility study related to technical and financial aspects. The main targets of this game are children, teenagers, and young people who are interested in local arts and culture. The content of the game includes the history of Tari Persembahan, various movements, costumes, and musical elements used in the performance.

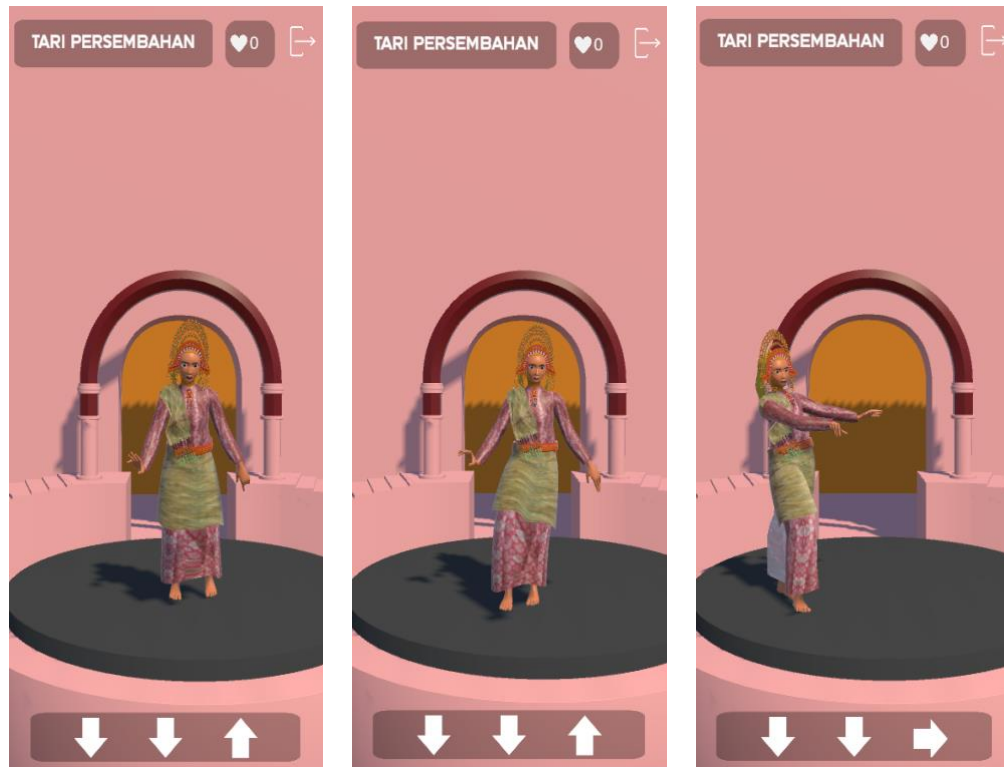
The next step is design or planning, which produces the Game Design Document (GDD). This document details the narrative aspects (game storyline), game mechanics, characters featured, visual layout, and sound design. The design is made in line with Malay aesthetic values. At this stage, a storyboard is also developed as a visual representation of the game flow, including how players can virtually “dance” following the movements of Tari Persembahan.

The pre-production stage is a critical stage for forming a multidisciplinary team, consisting of game developers, visual illustrators, story writers, and traditional dance experts. This collaboration ensures that the accuracy of the dance movements, symbolic meanings, and displays of Malay culture are maintained in the game's visualization. An early prototype was created to test basic mechanics and initial responses from internal users.

The production process is the heart of development, where all elements that have been designed are programmed, drawn, recorded, and integrated. Graphic and audio assets such



as traditional music, sound effects, and narrator voices are inserted to build an authentic and immersive game atmosphere. At this stage, the game also begins to implement tutorial features so that users can learn dance movements through a fun interactive interface.



**Figure 7.** Persembahan Dance Game

The testing phase consists of two phases: alpha and beta. Alpha testing is conducted in the developer environment to ensure there are no major bugs and all mechanics work well. Meanwhile, beta testing involves third-party testers to get feedback on the gaming experience, ease of navigation, and the level of effectiveness in delivering cultural content. After that, the game enters the launch stage. In this stage, marketing strategies are carried out through social media, teasers, and involvement of local cultural communities. The launch is carried out through digital distribution platforms such as the Google Play Store or App Store to reach a wider range of users. However, the launch is not the end. The post-launch stage involves a continuous evaluation process, bug fixes, content updates, and development of feature expansions (DLC) so that users do not get bored and continue to engage with the cultural content provided.

With the GDLC approach, the development of the Tari Persembahan game becomes more than just an entertainment tool. It has become an interactive, easily accessible cultural education instrument that is able to build emotional closeness between the younger generation and their cultural heritage. Users not only play, but indirectly absorb symbolic meanings, understand traditional values, and recognize the richness of the art of Riau Malay cultural movement.

The combination of conservative (maintaining) and progressive (developing) strategies shows that preserving Tari Persembahan does not have to be oriented towards the past, but can also move forward into the future. The game development project described in this study



is a concrete and applicable step to fill the empty space between ancestral culture and the digital world which is now the main habitat of the younger generation. The presence of the Tari Persembahan educational game has great potential to become a blueprint for technology-based cultural preservation in the future. With the GDLC method, this game not only answers the challenge of cultural education, but also presents great opportunities for digital cultural diplomacy at the national and global levels. Through the mobile phone screen, Tari Persembahan is no longer limited to the ceremonial stage — it dances in the collective memory of the digital generation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Persembahan Dance is one of the intangible cultural heritages that has high aesthetic and symbolic value in the Riau Malay community. Its function as a form of respect in a welcoming ceremony makes it not only an art performance, but also an expression of noble values such as politeness, friendliness, and respect for guests. As part of the regional cultural identity, this dance has an urgency to be preserved so that it remains relevant amidst the increasingly strong currents of globalization and modernization.

Various preservation efforts have been made by many parties, including the government, educational institutions, artists, and art communities. The Riau Provincial Government has contributed by patenting this dance as part of the region's cultural wealth, as well as presenting it routinely at official state events. Meanwhile, educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities, make the Persembahan Dance a learning material in the arts and culture curriculum and extracurricular activities, so that it can be studied systematically by the younger generation. The role of artists and art studios is also important, because they are the main actors in the inheritance of dance values and techniques through training and live performances.

However, to answer the challenges of the times, preservation cannot only rely on traditional approaches. There needs to be innovation that is relevant to technological developments and the preferences of the younger generation. Therefore, the development of digital media, especially in the form of educational games based on Tari Persembahan, is a strategic and visionary step. By using the Game Development Life Cycle (GDLC) method, this game is systematically developed as an interactive learning tool that can arouse the interest of the younger generation in traditional arts. Through this approach, Tari Persembahan is not only maintained in its original form, but also developed in a new medium that is more accessible and attractive. To achieve a broader and more sustainable impact, cross-sector collaboration between the government, academics, technology developers, and cultural communities must continue to be strengthened. Thus, the preservation of Tari Persembahan will be a dynamic process that not only maintains the sustainability of cultural heritage, but also takes it into a more adaptive and inclusive future.

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