

Sacred Stones and Social Identity in Biringala Village: Cultural Persistence and Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the enduring symbolic and cultural roles of precious stones in Biringala Village, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where jade and agate serve as ritual tools, social markers, and spiritual artifacts. Within a broader anthropological inquiry into material culture and cultural resilience, it investigates how these traditions persist, transform, or decline under modernization and commodification pressures. Using a symbolic ethnographic approach, the research applies qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation with ritual leaders, elders, and community members. Thematic analysis reveals that sacred stones remain vital in rituals such as Panrita, Assuro Maca, and Appassili, yet their meanings are increasingly contested by younger generations who view them more as aesthetic objects or commodities. The study identifies cultural resilience strategies through intergenerational knowledge transfer, local education, and selective engagement with cultural tourism. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative framework linking symbolic anthropology with heritage resilience studies, offering fresh insights into how tangible objects mediate intangible values across generations. Practically, the findings provide a culturally grounded model for heritage preservation that can inform local policy, community-based tourism, and education in similar indigenous contexts. Despite commodification and gradual desacralization, local actors in Biringala actively reshape the significance of these stones, underscoring a dynamic rather than static understanding of heritage. This study contributes to the anthropology of ritual and identity by demonstrating the role of tangible cultural objects in bridging ancestral values and contemporary challenges, and by highlighting the agency of local communities in sustaining intangible traditions through material expression.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Precious stones have long held cultural and spiritual values in societies across the globe, extending beyond their aesthetic and material worth. In many ancient civilizations, such as those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, stones such as jade, sapphire, and garnet were revered for their perceived metaphysical properties and used as symbols of power, purity, and divine protection (Mahmudulhassan, 2024; Reiche, 2004). These stones played central roles in rituals, adornments, and religious artifacts, reflecting the deeply rooted belief in their symbolic resonance. In material culture, stones were not merely decorative objects but active agents of meaning and social identity (Brocx & Semeniuk, 2017). This symbolic heritage persists in various regions, including Indonesia, where traditional communities attribute sacred meaning to stones in cultural ceremonies.

In Indonesia, precious stones, such as jade and agate, are significant in traditional rituals, particularly in rural communities where spiritual practices are closely linked to natural elements. The cultural role of these stones is not limited to their function as ornaments but encompasses symbolic, protective, and social dimensions. For instance, specific stones are believed to ward off misfortune, ensure spiritual purity, and convey social status, particularly in communities with strong ancestral traditions (Ibrahim, 2021; Prasetyo, 2023). Despite their presence in national cultural narratives, detailed anthropological studies of how these stones function within localized rituals and how these practices are preserved or transformed remain limited. This gap highlights the need for a deeper ethnographic inquiry into how material culture, particularly in the form of precious stones, is embedded in the everyday life and identity of traditional Indonesian communities.

This study is situated within the field of cultural anthropology, focusing on intangible heritage and symbolic practices. While past research has often centered on heritage architecture, performance arts, and linguistic traditions, the use of precious stones in ritual contexts has received relatively little attention. Previous works have cataloged the geological presence and medicinal myths of rocks, but rarely have they explored their cultural meanings within lived traditions. (Arianto, 2018; Febrianti, 2009) This study seeks to fill that scholarly gap by positioning precious stones not merely as objects of folklore or economic value, but as agents of cultural continuity and transformation. It contributes a novel lens to anthropological discourse by examining stones as dynamic cultural symbols within a localized context. This approach aligns with but extends beyond earlier work on sacred objects in Southeast Asia.

However, the continuity of these traditions is challenged by modernization and shifting value systems. With the increasing influence of global trends, the commodification of culture has redefined how communities perceive objects once held sacred (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). In many cases, stones that were once integral to rites of passage, healing ceremonies, or spiritual mediation are now being marketed as fashion accessories or investment assets (Lobarinhas, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). This commodification often dilutes their symbolic meaning and undermines their role within traditional belief systems. The younger generation, influenced by digital culture and consumerist ideologies, tends to disengage from ancestral practices, leading to a rupture in the transmission of cultural knowledge (Denzin, 2017).

The urgency of documenting and analyzing such cultural transitions is the core rationale for this research. Focusing on Biringala Village in Barombong District, Gowa Regency, this study explores how the community interprets and maintains using precious stones in traditional rituals. The region is known for its rich ethnocultural practices, including ceremonies such as Panrita (Antama Balla), Assuro Maca, and Appassili, where stones play essential roles in invoking protection and spiritual balance (Flick, 2018). The study investigates not only the symbolic use of stones in these contexts but also how the meanings ascribed to them are being negotiated amidst changing socio-economic conditions. This approach provides insights into how traditional knowledge systems interact with modernity, offering a nuanced understanding of cultural resilience.

The novelty of this study lies in its ethnographic emphasis on material-symbolic culture, specifically precious stones, as a lens to examine broader questions of identity, continuity, and transformation. While many existing studies on intangible cultural heritage focus on language, music, or crafts, the role of ritual stones remains understudied. By integrating direct field observations and interviews with cultural bearers

in Biringala, this research adds an empirical foundation to the theoretical discussion of cultural adaptation and symbolic heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991). It also offers methodological innovation by treating stones as static artifacts and narrative devices that reveal evolving community values and intergenerational tensions.

Therefore, the central objective of this study is to analyze the traditions and symbolic meanings associated with the use of precious stones in Biringala Village and examine how these traditions are maintained, reshaped, or gradually diminished under the influence of modernization. This study focuses on identifying the traditional applications and symbolic functions of precious stones within local cultural practices, examining their role in shaping social identity and intergenerational knowledge transfer, and assessing the impact of contemporary socioeconomic transformations on the endurance of these cultural forms. By exploring these dimensions, this study contributes to anthropological discourse on material culture by illuminating how sacred symbols such as precious stones mediate between ancestral values and present-day realities, offering a lens into the dynamic interplay of tradition and change.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the cultural practices surrounding using precious stones in the traditional rituals of Biringala Village, Barombong District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The qualitative approach was selected because of its strength in uncovering the meanings, values, and processes embedded within social and cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It emphasizes naturalistic observation and the interpretation of lived experiences, essential when studying symbolic systems and intangible heritage within local communities.

The research adopted a symbolic ethnographic approach, allowing an in-depth understanding of how individuals and communities construct meaning through symbols, such as ritual objects, including precious stones (Geertz, 1973). Symbolic ethnography focuses not only on actions and artifacts, but also on the interpretations and cultural logic that inform them. This method is particularly suitable for investigating how stones acquire spiritual and social significance in rituals, such as Panrita, Assuro Maca, and Appassili, as practiced in Biringala.

Data were collected in Biringala Village, a rural community with a strong cultural tradition where precious stones are integrated into everyday spiritual and ceremonial life. The village was purposively selected because of its rich historical continuity in ritual practice and the observable tension between tradition and modernity. Fieldwork was conducted through direct engagement with local inhabitants over a sustained period, enabling the researcher to observe natural settings and authentic expressions of cultural practices (O'Reilly, 2012).

Three primary data collection techniques were employed: (1) semi-structured interviews with cultural informants, such as traditional elders, ritual practitioners, and community members; (2) participant observation during cultural rituals and daily life activities, where the researcher interacted directly with participants to capture embodied practices and symbolic gestures; and (3) document analysis of local records, photographs, family held artifacts, and other archival materials relevant to the use of precious stones (Flick, 2018). Combining these methods allowed for a comprehensive, triangulated understanding of the subject matter.

The selection of informants was purposive, prioritizing individuals recognized within the community as cultural knowledge holders. These included elder men and women with ritual responsibilities, traditional healers, family members who inherited stone-related practices, and youth with varying engagement with local traditions. The diversity of informants enriched the data and provided generational insights into how cultural meanings are preserved or transformed (Patton, 2015).

Thematic qualitative analysis was employed to interpret the collected data. After transcription and organization, the data were coded and categorized into thematic clusters based on recurring patterns, symbols, and narratives associated with the stones and rituals. This process was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, which involves familiarization, coding, theme

generation, theme review, definition, and final reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, source triangulation was applied to validate findings by comparing information across interviews, observations, and documents, ensuring analytical rigor and credibility (Denzin, 2017)

By integrating ethnographic immersion, symbolic interpretation, and rigorous analytical techniques, the research methodology provided a robust framework for understanding the sociocultural dimensions of precious stones in Biringala’s ritual life.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from Biringala Village reveal interconnected dimensions of the role of precious stones, emphasizing their ritual, social, and adaptive significance. While the detailed ethnographic accounts provide depth, these can be distilled into four thematic insights:

- a. **Ritual Centrality**, Jade and agate function as sacred mediators in core rituals (Panrita, Assuro Maca, Appassili), embodying spiritual purity, protection, and healing functions deeply tied to local cosmology.
- b. **Social Identity & Symbolic Capital**, Ownership and inheritance of stones reinforce lineage, authority, and cultural prestige, serving as markers of social status and spiritual legitimacy.
- c. **Cultural Transmission Challenges**, Traditional knowledge transfer is weakening among younger generations due to modernization, migration, and consumerist values, though some adaptive teaching methods are emerging.
- d. **Modernization & Resilience**, while commodification risks eroding symbolic meanings, selective engagement with education and cultural tourism shows potential for sustaining heritage without losing spiritual integrity.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings on Precious Stones in Biringala Village

Theme	Description	Cultural Implication	Parallel Cases
Ritual Centrality	Use of jade/agate in key rituals for healing, protection, balance	Maintains spiritual link between community and ancestors	Tibetan Buddhism, Afro-Brazilian Candomblé
Social Identity	Stones as lineage heirlooms and status markers	Reinforces symbolic hierarchy and community cohesion	Indigenous Andean huacas
Transmission Gap	Declining youth participation in rituals	Threatens continuity of symbolic knowledge	Southeast Asian spirit-medium practices
Resilient Adaptation	Integration into education & tourism	Balances tradition with modern opportunities	Bali, Toraja tourism heritage

Source: Field data, 2024

3.1. Traditional Uses of Precious Stones in Ritual Contexts

In the cultural landscape of Biringala Village, precious stones—particularly jade (*batu giok*) and agate (*batu akik*) play essential roles in ceremonial and ritual practices. These stones are not merely decorative or aesthetic items but are embedded with deep spiritual, symbolic, and functional meanings. Ethnographic observations revealed that these stones are central to three key rituals in the community:

Panrita (also known as Antama Balla), Assuro Maca, and Appassili. Each ceremony reflects a different cultural function, yet all utilize stones as mediating tools between the physical and spiritual realms.

In the Panrita ritual, which is performed to seek protection or healing, the ritual leader places jade stones at the center of prayer offerings and symbolic movements. Informants explained that the green hue of jade symbolizes spiritual purity, ancestral strength, and emotional balance. During Panrita, the stone is often bathed in herbal water and encircled by chants, signifying its activation as a spiritual channel. This finding resonates with Geertz's (1973) symbolic action theory, in which objects used in rituals serve as both representations and catalysts of cultural belief systems (Geertz, 1973). Comparable traditions are documented in Tibetan Buddhist contexts, where jade and turquoise are similarly believed to possess healing vibrations and act as conduits for blessings (Graburn, 2001a; Harrison, 2013).

The Assuro Maca ritual, associated with community cleansing and natural harmony, employs agate stones as tools of energetic alignment. Local participants reported that agate stones are placed at the four cardinal points during the ritual to establish spiritual balance and to communicate with the elemental spirits of the land and water. Each stone is infused with intention through incantations, functioning as anchors for the ritual's energy. This symbolic spatial placement mirrors practices in other Southeast Asian traditions, where sacred objects delineate ritual boundaries and spiritual territories (Endres, 2011). The use of stones as ritual boundary markers also appears in Vietnamese spirit-medium ceremonies, underscoring the cross-cultural resonance of this symbolic logic (Ngo, 2015).

In the third practice, *Appassili*, which involves personal or familial healing, precious stones are pressed onto specific body parts believed to be spiritually afflicted. The stones are then rotated or tapped rhythmically, accompanied by whispered mantras. The belief is that the stone absorbs or dislodges negative spiritual energy, effectively acting as a metaphysical sponge. This use reflects what Turner (1967) describes as the "instrumentality of symbols" in ritual—a dynamic function where objects are not static icons but agents that mediate transformation. Similarly, research on Afro-Brazilian Candomblé has shown that stones (*okutá*) are central to healing rituals, considered to contain the essence of deities and energies (Capone, 2004).

The symbolic dimensions of jade and agate extend beyond ritual functions into social representation. Jade is often associated with ancestral lineage and is passed down through generations as a family heirloom, reinforcing kinship continuity and respect for lineage. Conversely, agate is frequently tied to individual protection and identity, often carried as a talisman or embedded in wearable amulets. This dual significance—as both ritual instruments and carriers of cultural memory—aligns with Hoskins' (1998) notion of "biographical objects," where material culture preserves and transmits personal and collective histories. Unlike mass-produced spiritual commodities found in globalized spiritual markets, the stones in Biringala are deeply embedded in local cosmology, sourced from specific sacred sites, and ritually consecrated before use.

Moreover, while similar ritualistic uses of stones are found in other Indonesian cultures—such as the *keris* ceremony in Javanese tradition, where stones are embedded in hilts for spiritual energy—the practices in Biringala are distinct in their continuous, community-based transmission and the integration of stones as active ritual participants rather than mere accessories (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). The consistency of these practices despite modern encroachment reflects a cultural resilience that is both adaptive and rooted in symbolic heritage.

The traditional uses of jade and agate in Biringala's rituals reveal a nuanced cosmology where objects are more than material—symbolic actors within a broader belief system and social cohesion. By comparing these practices to regional and transnational parallels, this study affirms that precious stones are vital symbolic instruments mediating between tradition and transformation. The results obtained from the research have to be supported by sufficient data. The research results and the discovery must answer the research hypothesis in the introduction.

3.2. Social Identity and Symbolic Power of Stones

In Biringala Village, precious stones such as jade and agate are central to ritual practice and deeply tied to the construction and expression of social identity. The possession and use of these stones function as markers of status, lineage, and spiritual authority. Elders and ritual practitioners are often recognized and respected based on their long-standing custodianship of sacred stones, which are believed to carry ancestral energies and confer legitimacy in ritual contexts. This cultural practice aligns with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of symbolic capital, in which cultural objects reinforce power dynamics and social hierarchy within traditional communities (Bourdieu, 1984).

Stones inherited rather than purchased are remarkably esteemed, as they are believed to carry spiritual residue from past generations. Informants frequently cite these heirloom stones as "tangible traces of lineage," linking present family members with ancestral figures and conferring a sense of belonging and continuity. Thus, passing down stones becomes an act of transmitting identity itself. This phenomenon resonates with Hoskins' (1998) argument on biographical objects, which suggests that heirlooms function as vessels of personal and familial narratives. In Biringala, transferring such stones during coming-of-age rituals or wedding ceremonies reinforces generational identity and community cohesion.

The social symbolism attached to specific types of stones also varies. With its translucent green appearance, Jade is typically associated with wisdom, calmness, and leadership, and is often carried or worn by village elders and ritual specialists. In contrast, agate is more commonly used among younger individuals or those seeking protection daily, symbolizing strength, resilience, and personal agency. These associations suggest that stones are not neutral artifacts but socially coded markers communicating one's role, maturity, and spiritual orientation within the community. Appadurai (1986) argues that the "social life of things" reveals how objects like stones accumulate meaning through their circulation and contextual use.

Moreover, the performative aspect of stone ownership is essential in reinforcing social identity. During public rituals, the visibility of stone artifacts—necklaces, rings, or handheld talismans—declares spiritual connection and ancestral authority. Individuals who bear stones during rituals are often perceived as more legitimate or spiritually grounded, a perception that further reinforces social stratification based on symbolic possession. This performativity echoes Turner's (1969) insights on ritual symbols as both expressive and constitutive of social order.

The symbolic power of stones is not only internal to the village community but also affects how individuals position themselves about outsiders. Informants noted that people from neighboring villages often recognize the uniqueness of Biringala's ritual stones and their users. This has contributed to a form of cultural prestige that extends beyond the village boundaries. Similar dynamics have been observed in indigenous Andean societies, where sacred stones (*huacas*) serve religious and political functions in asserting territorial and cultural identity (Allen, 2002). In both cases, stones are deployed to affirm belonging and distinction, shaping both internal social dynamics and external cultural representations.

However, modernization and increased exposure to market-oriented values are slowly altering the symbolic power of these stones. Some younger villagers now wear imitation or commercially available gemstones as fashion accessories, diluting the meaning once attached to these objects. While the symbolic function of heirloom stones persists among elders, their social salience among youth appears to be declining. This reflects a generational shift in value systems, echoing the concerns raised by Zhang et al. (2023), who observed similar displacements of meaning in urban Chinese contexts where sacred objects were increasingly commodified and detached from ritual purpose.

Precious stones in Biringala are not merely ritual instruments but are integral to the community's social fabric. They articulate identity, structure relationships, and reinforce symbolic hierarchies. Their continued relevance, however, is challenged by cultural transitions that risk dislocating their meaning from the traditional systems that have long sustained them. The results obtained from the research have

to be supported by sufficient data. The research results and the discovery must answer the research hypothesis in the introduction.

3.3. Cultural Transmission and Intergenerational Shift

The transmission of knowledge and practices surrounding precious stones in Biringala has traditionally occurred through oral instruction, observation, and ritual participation within family and community structures. Elders are pivotal in educating the younger generation about the symbolic meanings, spiritual uses, and care for sacred stones. Rituals such as Panrita and Appassili serve as cultural arenas where younger individuals observe and actively participate, thereby internalizing values and behaviors embedded in these practices. This transmission pattern aligns with Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation, where cultural competence is gained through immersion rather than formal instruction (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In Biringala, cultural knowledge about stones is not static; it evolves through dialogical interactions across generations, sustained by deeply relational pedagogies.

However, ethnographic data indicate a weakening of these transmission pathways, especially among the youth. Many younger villagers express limited understanding of the traditional uses of jade and agate, viewing them instead as aesthetic or commercial items. This shift is influenced by broader forces such as digital media, secular education, and economic migration, which reorient youth identities toward globalized values and consumerist orientations. The loss of ritual context in which stones were once imbued with meaning diminishes the relevance of these symbols in the eyes of younger generations. As Hobsbawm (1983) argued in his discussion of "invented traditions," symbolic practices risk becoming detached from their cultural logic when the structures that sustain tradition are eroded. In Biringala, this disconnection is visible in the declining attendance at rituals and the decreasing number of apprentices trained by ritual leaders.

Despite this generational gap, some efforts toward cultural preservation and adaptation are emerging. A few community leaders and educators are integrating local cultural knowledge, including the role of stones, into informal educational settings and youth discussions. Some ritual specialists consciously narrate the meanings of stone practices during ceremonies to ensure their continuity. These strategies reflect what Graburn (2001) terms "cultural regeneration," where communities selectively reinforce aspects of tradition in response to threats of cultural erosion (Graburn, 2001b). While these efforts are still fragmented and challenged by modern lifestyles, they illustrate a form of cultural resilience that seeks to re-anchor traditional knowledge within contemporary frameworks. Therefore, the continued intergenerational relevance of precious stones depends on inheritance and active adaptation within evolving cultural ecologies.

3.4. Modernization, Commodification, and the Loss of Meaning

The increasing penetration of modern economic systems and global consumer culture into rural communities like Biringala has profoundly reshaped how precious stones are perceived and utilized. Traditionally regarded as sacred objects imbued with ancestral and spiritual significance, jade and agate stones are frequently commodified, traded in local markets, and displayed as fashion accessories or status symbols without their ritual context. This shift is emblematic of what Marx (1867/1976) called commodity fetishism, where the social and spiritual relations once embodied in an object are displaced by its exchange value. Informants in Biringala acknowledged that younger residents are more likely to acquire stones from urban vendors or online platforms, rather than inheriting them through ritual or familial transfer. This trend further detaches these objects from their cultural roots.

Commodification has also diluted the performative and symbolic power once associated with stone usage in ritual settings. While ritual specialists and elders still preserve the traditional meanings of stones, the broader community increasingly regards them through the lens of aesthetic value or

monetary worth. This erosion of symbolic depth reflects broader anthropological concerns about the effects of globalization on intangible cultural heritage (Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Similar patterns have been observed in other regions of Indonesia, such as in the commodification of wayang puppetry and batik textiles, where sacred or culturally embedded objects are recontextualized as tourist products or commodities for export (Suryani & Sardjono, 2021). In Biringala, the proliferation of synthetic and mass-produced stones further amplifies this phenomenon, contributing to what Baudrillard (1994) termed the “simulacrum”—a copy of a cultural symbol that lacks its original substance or context.

Despite the expanding influence of commercialization, some community members view modernization as a potential avenue for visibility and preservation rather than erasure. For example, the increased demand for precious stones has encouraged certain local artisans to reassert traditional crafting methods and ritual preparation techniques, distinguishing authentic stones from mass-market imitations (Yasir et al., 2024). This paradox reflects what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) describes as the “heritage paradox,” wherein the commodification of culture can simultaneously endanger and promote its survival (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Nevertheless, the challenge lies in maintaining the integrity of symbolic meanings while engaging with contemporary economic realities. In the case of Biringala, the long-term risk remains that the spiritual and communal dimensions of precious stones may be overshadowed by market logic unless deliberate cultural stewardship is implemented.

3.5. Preservation Strategies and Cultural Resilience

In response to the declining ritual significance of precious stones and the broader erosion of traditional practices, the community of Biringala has initiated several efforts to preserve its cultural heritage. Elders and ritual practitioners have become increasingly intentional in sharing their knowledge with younger generations, often using storytelling and direct involvement in ceremonies to transmit meanings. Ritual events such as Panrita and Appassili are sometimes preceded by explanations of their symbolic functions, ensuring that participants—particularly the youth—grasp the spiritual logic behind each element, including the stones used. This intentional preservation strategy aligns with efforts observed in other indigenous communities, where ritual contextualization and narrative reinforcement are critical to sustaining intangible heritage (Lenzerini, 2011).

In addition to oral transmission, community leaders in Biringala have started exploring educational pathways to embed cultural knowledge into the local curriculum. While formal education in the village is aligned with national standards, several teachers and cultural advocates have begun integrating lessons about local customs, including the symbolic use of jade and agate, into extracurricular activities and village discussions. These initiatives reflect a broader trend in cultural revitalization through education, similar to the efforts in the Philippines and Vietnam, where ethnic minority traditions are introduced through school-based heritage education (King & Schmidt, 2015). By positioning precious stones as cultural texts, these programs help foster pride and awareness among youth, who might otherwise perceive traditional symbols as irrelevant.

Another emerging area of resilience is the growing interest in cultural tourism. Some residents and village leaders expressed willingness to showcase Biringala’s unique ritual practices and stone traditions to visitors to sustain cultural relevance and generate income. This idea follows models from Bali and Toraja, where ritual performances and material symbols are recontextualized as cultural assets in tourism narratives (Picard, 1996; Adams, 2006). However, such efforts in Biringala remain early, and community members are cautious about commodifying sacred rituals for entertainment. Informants emphasized the need for cultural boundaries and ethical guidelines to ensure that the spiritual essence of their traditions is not compromised in pursuing economic opportunities.

Ultimately, preserving symbolic stone traditions in Biringala depends on the community’s ability to balance continuity and adaptation. While modernity presents undeniable challenges, it also offers platforms for reinterpreting and reinforcing traditional knowledge. The resilience shown by elders, educators, and cultural actors in maintaining the sacred meanings of stones illustrates a living heritage system that is dynamic, reflexive, and capable of evolving without losing core values. As Harrison

(2013) argues, heritage is not simply about conserving the past, but about negotiating identity and meaning in the present. The Biringala case exemplifies how cultural resilience can emerge from strategic engagement, not resistance to change.

Beyond the immediate ethnographic context, the findings from Biringala carry broader implications for both cultural sustainability and socio-economic development. Integrating the symbolic traditions of precious stones into local curricula could serve as a means of formalizing cultural transmission, ensuring that younger generations not only recognize the aesthetic value of jade and agate but also understand their historical, spiritual, and communal significance. Furthermore, cultural tourism presents an opportunity to showcase these traditions to a wider audience, potentially generating economic benefits while fostering cross-cultural appreciation. However, such initiatives must be carefully managed to avoid over-commercialization, which risks diluting the sacred meanings embedded in these practices. A participatory approach that involves community elders, educators, and tourism stakeholders can create a balanced model that preserves authenticity while embracing sustainable engagement with the modern world.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that precious stones in Biringala Village hold profound ritual and symbolic significance, functioning as tools of spiritual practice, social identity, and cultural continuity. While modernization has shifted their perception and use, community-led efforts continue to preserve their meanings through education, intergenerational transfer, and selective adaptation. The research contributes to anthropological discourse by highlighting material culture as an essential medium for transmitting intangible heritage and by demonstrating how cultural resilience emerges through adaptive practices and strategic community engagement. In practical terms, the findings suggest that integrating heritage education into local school curricula, fostering partnerships between community leaders and local government for safeguarding sacred sites, and developing ethically guided cultural tourism initiatives could strengthen the preservation and economic sustainability of Biringala's traditions. Future research should explore the role of digital media in shaping heritage transmission and compare similar practices across different regions to identify scalable preservation strategies. A key limitation of this study is its geographic specificity, which may not capture broader regional variations.

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