

# CULTURAL CAPITAL BETWEEN BOURDIEU AND THROSBY: TOWARD AN INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK OF COLLECTIVE EXPERT APPRAISAL

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## ABSTRACT

Research on cultural capital has been shaped by influential sociological and economic traditions, most notably the work of Pierre Bourdieu and David Throsby. In Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, however, cultural value is often produced and recognized through socially embedded practices that extend beyond formal market mechanisms. This study adopts a sociologically informed, interpretive approach to examine how cultural value is constructed, negotiated, and legitimized within specific social fields. Rather than reconciling Bourdieu and Throsby theoretically, the article introduces Collective Expert Appraisal as an interpretive analytical framework for understanding how socially recognized experts shape cultural evaluation processes. Drawing primarily on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and symbolic power, and engaging selectively with economic perspectives on cultural value, the study conceptualizes experts as cultural intermediaries whose judgments reflect shared norms, aesthetic conventions, and embodied cultural knowledge. The framework is explored through a qualitative case study of the Yemeni Jambiya industry, based on semi-structured interviews with twelve experts involved in production, trade, and cultural authentication. Findings show that cultural value emerges not only from material attributes but from historically situated meanings, collective memory, symbolic associations, and affective attachments articulated through expert consensus and contestation. Collective Expert Appraisal is proposed as a context-sensitive lens for analysing cultural evaluation as a social process in non-Western settings.

## KEY WORDS

cultural value, cultural capital, collective expert appraisal, Bourdieu-Throsby framework, Yemeni jambiya

## CLASSIFICATION

JEL: I23, M19, O31

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## INTRODUCTION

It is essential to begin by defining culture, as this definition directly shapes the concept of cultural capital. It allows for a clear distinction between what is cultural and what is not, between material and non-material elements, and between inherited and acquired dimensions, including both tangible and symbolic forms. Early anthropological formulations, such as definition of culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society” [1; p.1], laid the groundwork for recognizing culture as a comprehensive social system. More recent institutional definitions, such as that of [2], further emphasize culture as an integrated set of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that shape social life, extending beyond artistic production to include values, traditions, and modes of living. Together, these perspectives highlight the multidimensional nature of culture and provide the conceptual foundation for understanding the emergence and significance of cultural value.

Within this broader understanding, cultural capital, as developed by Bourdieu, foregrounds the ways in which cultural resources are embodied in social practices and experiences and subsequently converted into social and symbolic power. Subsequent analytical work has reinforced this view by emphasizing the cumulative, embodied, and often non-measurable dimensions of cultural capital, as well as its role in shaping legitimacy and distinction within social fields [3]. Further studies have also suggested that cultural capital has evolved into new forms, such as cosmopolitan cultural capital, shaped by transnational cultural engagement and emerging social fields [4]. In contrast, Throsby’s approach situates culture within an economic framework, focusing on cultural assets, value creation, and the potential translation of cultural significance into economic terms. Recent studies suggest that scholarship has tended to privilege one of these perspectives over the other, while increasingly acknowledging the need for integrative interpretive frameworks capable of bridging social and economic conceptions of cultural value [5, 6].

The assessment of cultural value thus emerges as a central concern across both sociological and economic studies of culture. Scholars increasingly argue that cultural value cannot be reduced to the physical characteristics of objects or artworks alone, but must account for symbolic meaning, social recognition, and historically situated expertise [7, 8]. Despite the growing body of economically oriented valuation studies, much of this literature continues to prioritize market-based metrics, often underestimating the role of social interaction, expert judgment, and symbolic legitimacy in shaping cultural appraisal processes. This limitation points to the absence of sufficiently nuanced interpretive frameworks capable of explaining how cultural value is constructed and translated into appraisal practices that influence cultural markets and economic decision-making.

This study addresses this gap through a field-based case study of Yemeni traditional jambiya, a cultural asset that embodies aesthetic, historical, and social value and functions as a carrier of collective memory and cultural distinction. As a culturally embedded artifact, the jambiya offers a rich empirical context for examining how cultural value is formed, negotiated, and activated in practice, beyond purely economic evaluation, while foregrounding the role of actors endowed with recognized cultural legitimacy and contextual knowledge.

Within this context, the study employs an interpretive analytical framework, Collective Expert Appraisal (CEA) intended as a conceptual and analytical tool rather than a statistically validated model. It integrates Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural capital with Throsby’s economic perspective on cultural value. Drawing on recent scholarship that emphasizes the collective, community-based, and expert-driven dimensions of cultural capital [9, 10], the CEA

provides an analytical lens for understanding how cultural value is constituted through expert knowledge, social interaction, and the material properties of cultural assets, thereby linking theory more directly to appraisal practices.

To achieve this aim, the study employs a qualitative interpretive methodology, combining semi-structured, in-depth interviews with experts selected on the basis of their cultural expertise and accumulated cultural capital, with a systematic analysis of the data guided by the CEA framework. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how cultural value is translated into appraisal within specific cultural markets and social contexts.

The article is organized into four main sections. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of Bourdieu's and Throsby's theories of cultural capital, identifying common ground between the two approaches to present the CEA as a practical interpretive framework for evaluating cultural heritage assets. Second, it outlines the research methodology. Third, it presents the results and discussion, and finally, it offers the conclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of cultural capital is highly complex and multifaceted, evolving from Bourdieu's initial formulation as an individual resource to a dynamic structure shaped by interactions among individuals, institutions, and society. According to [11], its definition remains elusive and difficult to pin down precisely. Building on Bourdieu, [12] conceptualize cultural capital as a system of attributes, inclinations, and tastes through which elite dispositions are reproduced via cultural goods and the knowledge they embody. [13, p.155] define cultural capital as "cultural resources that have a concealed exchange value and that enable or foster social and educational advancement". [13] argues that most research treats cultural capital as a static concept, but they suggest that cultural capital may instead be dynamic, changing across time and context. Similarly, [14] defines it as an accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that enables individuals to demonstrate cultural competence and consolidate social standing.

Paper [4; p.335] stresses its role as a generator of the deepest values that give meaning to social life. This perspective aligns with [3] who views cultural capital as dynamic and fluid, transmitted across generations and enriching cultural heritage over time. [9; p.19] provides a community-centred definition, positioning society as the primary agent in its production, transmission, and transformation, emphasizing inherited and adaptive cultural skills and values. [15] argues that cultural capital represents the accumulated values, traditions, knowledge, and cultural diversity that form the foundation of the creative economy and generate significant economic and social value when effectively managed and developed. According to Sandoval-Lucero, as cited in [16; p.57], cultural capital, in its broad sense, can include social, inspirational, family, and navigational capital as resources that support individuals' ability to navigate social institutions.

Chronologically, cultural capital theory has evolved through three generations. The first, pioneered by [17-19] laid foundations within class struggle and social reproduction, focusing on taste, habitus, social status, and intergenerational transmission. The second generation, extending from the late 1980s to early 2000s, included Bourdieu's later works [18, 19] and shifted toward quantitative and empirical studies operationalizing and measuring cultural capital, exemplified by [20, 21].

The third generation situates cultural capital within broader fields such as the knowledge economy, sustainable development, creativity, and entrepreneurship. [4; p.335] highlights Bourdieu's critique of human capital theory, noting that individuals enter education with unequal family-invested cultural capital. [22] emphasizes institutionalized cultural capital, especially educational credentials, as highly influential. Recently, [23] indicated that social

capital at work mediates the translation of cultural capital into professional success: cultural, educational, and literary networks foster prestigious cultural status, while economic networks correlate with direct economic success.

## **PIERRE BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Cultural capital is a concept closely associated with the theories of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). First introduced with Jean-Claude Passeron in *Reproduction* [24], and further developed in *Distinction* [18] and *The Forms of Capital* [19], it refers to the education, knowledge, skills, dispositions, and cultural experiences individuals acquire and mobilize to gain advantage within social structures. Importantly, cultural capital is not merely individual property but a socially embedded resource transmitted across generations and valued differently across fields.

Bourdieu argues that social structures cannot be explained through economic capital alone: “It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory” [19; p.15]. Within this framework, he identifies three interrelated forms of cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital is incorporated through socialization, education, and sustained investment of time, shaping habitus, taste, and aesthetic judgment. As [19; p.18] notes, it “cannot be transmitted instantaneously ... by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange.” Objectified cultural capital refers to cultural goods such as books, artworks, and artifacts, whose value depends on embodied competencies required for interpretation [19; p.20]. Institutionalized cultural capital consists of formal qualifications and credentials that confer legitimacy and enable conversion into symbolic or material advantage, as they are “academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications” [19; p.20]. Together, these forms position cultural capital within a relational social field structured by power, distinction, and symbolic legitimacy.

## **THROSBY'S THEORY OF CULTURAL CAPITAL**

David Throsby approaches cultural capital from the perspective of cultural economics, defining it as “an asset which embodies, stores or gives rise to cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess” [25; p.167]. He distinguishes between tangible cultural capital – such as paintings, artifacts, and historic buildings – and intangible forms, including artistic expressions, traditions, beliefs, and symbolic meanings. While these broadly correspond to Bourdieu’s objectified and embodied forms, Throsby’s framework places greater emphasis on economic context, investment, and sustainability, with less focus on institutionalized cultural recognition.

Central to Throsby’s contribution is the concept of cultural value as distinct from market value. Cultural value is multidimensional, encompassing aesthetic, symbolic, historical, social, and spiritual dimensions that cannot be fully captured through pricing mechanisms [25-27]. He also notes that defining cultural commodities depends on social and contextual interpretation rather than material characteristics, though cultural economics still struggles to explain how such values are operationalized beyond classification. Across sociological and economic perspectives, cultural value is shaped by taste, competence, and social position. Bourdieu links aesthetic judgment to habitus and cultural capital within cultural fields, while Throsby recognizes the limits of economic metrics but leaves valuation analytically fragmented.

Despite this theoretical development, a gap remains in explaining how cultural value is translated into practical evaluative judgments in cultural markets or heritage contexts. In particular, the mechanisms through which cultural competence, symbolic recognition, and collective agreement converge in real appraisal situations remain underexplored, indicating the need for interpretive approaches that connect theory to empirical valuation practices.

## **Toward an Interpretive Reading of Cultural Value**

Regarding to cultural value, recent scholarship suggests that it may not be adequately understood through market-based metrics alone, but is instead shaped by socially embedded practices and shared interpretive processes. [6] reflects on limitations within dominant economic approaches that tend to underrepresent sociological perspectives, pointing to the importance of conceptually engaging with cultural value prior to its application in policy or evaluation contexts. From this view, dimensions such as symbolic and historical meaning appear to be collectively constituted and less amenable to strictly individualistic economic methodologies. [28] similarly approaches cultural value as emerging within complex social settings, where recognition, narrative, and context influence how cultural assets are perceived and sustained over time. [29] further describe cultural value as multidimensional, encompassing aesthetic, symbolic, social, and historical elements that extend beyond price-based measurement. Within discussions of cultural sustainability, [30] draws attention to intergenerational transmission and cultural diversity as relevant considerations in the maintenance of cultural capital. Taken together, these perspectives offer a contextual basis for considering how expert assessment practices might interpret cultural value in ways that attend to social meaning and contextual legitimacy.

A close reading of Bourdieu's and Throsby's work allows for the identification of a set of recurring analytical sensitivities that shape how cultural value is discussed and recognized in the literature. These sensitivities do not constitute empirical findings, nor do they represent a fixed evaluative model. Rather, they function as conceptual reference points that inform the interpretation of expert judgments and appreciation practices within specific cultural fields.

Recent discussions in cultural value research have reinforced the importance of such integrative readings. [6], director of the Cultural Value Project and co-founder of the Cultural Value Centre in the United Kingdom, argues that Bourdieu's sociological approach and Throsby's economic framework should be understood as mutually illuminating rather than competing perspectives. From this viewpoint, Bourdieu's theory is essential for explaining how cultural value acquires meaning within social contexts, while Throsby's work highlights the challenges of activating that value within decision-making and policy environments.

This perspective supports the need for interpretive frameworks capable of mediating between social meaning and valuation practices. It is from this theoretical ground that the present study develops the CEA framework, not as a comparative test of existing theories, but as an interpretive lens through which expert valuation practices can be examined through expert interview data.

## **Policy Perspectives and the Blind Spots in Economics**

Paper [6] critiques policy and economic approaches for marginalizing sociological perspectives on cultural capital, highlighting a broader blind spot in economics: its limited capacity to account for the social origins of cultural value. She argues that cultural value must first be conceptually understood, as economic methods alone are insufficient. While [31] identifies aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, historical, and social dimensions of cultural value, [6] emphasizes that these are products of collective social processes, resisting individualistic explanations. In contrast, Bourdieu's field theory situates value within structured social arenas, where actors compete for symbolic and material resources and recognition.

Rather than treating Bourdieu's and Throsby's contributions as objects of direct comparison, this study draws on insights from both traditions as a shared theoretical backdrop for interpreting how cultural value is articulated in practice. Their intersecting concerns – value, recognition, context, and legitimacy – inform the analytical sensitivity of the study and shape

the interpretive reading of expert judgments. It is through this theoretical engagement that a set of recurring interpretive criteria emerged during the analysis, reflecting how cultural value is collectively recognized and stabilized within a specific cultural field. These criteria do not originate from a predefined comparative framework but arise from the dialogue between theory and empirical material, providing the conceptual foundation for the subsequent analysis of the Jambiya as a cultural asset.

### **Accumulation and Sustainability**

Bourdieu and Throsby converge on the idea that cultural capital is cumulative, gaining value through context-specific accumulation and intergenerational transmission. This is evident in cultural sustainability, where Throsby [25; p.4] likens cultural capital to natural capital—“inherited from past generations through human creativity” and requiring stewardship for future transfer. He stresses intergenerational equity, preserving both tangible and intangible assets such as heritage, language, and artistic traditions. Cultural diversity, he argues, sustains dynamism and feeds into the creative economy, while the precautionary principle helps protect heritage from loss. Bourdieu’s practice theory complements this by explaining how intangible heritage accumulates identity and stabilizes social structures [32]. Cultural practices both preserve heritage and shape power relations, contributing to social cohesion and sustainable development. Throsby [25; pp.4-5] further compares cultural systems to ecosystems that enhance productivity when functioning effectively. He emphasizes intragenerational equity – ensuring fair cultural access across social groups. This aligns with Bourdieu’s concept of social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network ... providing each member with the backing of the collectively owned capital” [19; p. 21]. Together, this highlights that cultural sustainability depends on the combined accumulation of cultural and social capital.

### **Forms of Cultural Capital and Transformations**

Throsby’s distinction between tangible and intangible cultural capital parallels Bourdieu’s objectified and embodied forms. Bourdieu emphasizes that embodied capital (skills, taste, aesthetic sense) is necessary to realize the value of objectified capital (books, artworks), since possession alone is insufficient without cultural competence. As [19] notes, objectified commodities carry both material and symbolic dimensions: economic capital enables ownership, but symbolic value depends on embodied cultural capital. Value is thus co-constructed between the owner and the owned, making economic worth inseparable from the knowledge and legitimacy embedded in use. Bourdieu extends this to educational tools, whose significance depends on embodied and institutional cultural capital. This process converts symbolic and cognitive capacities into economic advantage, showing how social and cultural capital underpin economic outcomes. Accordingly, Throsby’s separation of economic and sociological perspectives is incomplete; tangible assets derive meaning from embodied competencies.

Paper [19] further stresses that all forms of capital interact with economic capital. While some goods are purchasable, others require social or cultural capital, and conversion between forms demands time and investment. Even symbolic recognition ultimately yields economic benefits, linking Bourdieu’s framework with Throsby’s emphasis on economic and symbolic value.

### **Taste as a Socially Structured Practice**

Taste is central in Bourdieu’s analysis, particularly in [18], where aesthetic preferences are socially conditioned and shaped by class and position. Upper- and lower-class tastes reflect broader social structures. [33] converge with Bourdieu in linking aesthetic judgment to social

position, while [34] shows that tastes evolve cumulatively through exposure, echoing Marshall's notion of acquired taste. Thus, taste is socially embedded and cumulative, reinforcing that aesthetic competence is inseparable from cultural and social capital [33, 34]. Cultural value does not arise solely from intrinsic properties but through social convention—collective recognition, interaction, and shared judgment. Economic value follows cultural value, as assets derive significance from norms, narratives, and legitimacy. Whether locally bounded or globally recognized, symbolic value precedes market valuation, especially where material composition cannot explain price.

Bourdieu and Throsby converge but differ in emphasis: Throsby highlights accumulated attributes (aesthetics, history), while Bourdieu emphasizes social agents and symbolic power. Cultural objects derive value from what they represent within a social order, through an exchange between signifier and signified. This underscores that cultural value is inseparable from its social context and requires analytical frameworks beyond price-based evaluation.

For illustration, consider two swords: the first is a one-kilogram gold sword manufactured in 2025, the second an iron sword that once belonged to a historically renowned leader. Materially, the gold sword is more valuable; culturally and historically, the iron sword commands far greater value, embodying symbolic capital derived from social significance. Real-world cases, such as the sword of Sultan Tipu sold for \$17,5 million – equivalent to the value of approximately 186 gold swords of similar weight – demonstrate that economic valuation alone cannot account for cultural worth [35]. In such examples, Throsby emphasizes accumulated cultural attributes – aesthetics and antiquity – while Bourdieu stresses social position and symbolic power embodied in the object. The sword's value derives from Tipu himself, and ultimately from society, reflecting the interplay of signifier, signified, and social context. This interconnection aligns with what [19; p.24] describes as the exchange between signifier and signified, where symbolic power emerges through recognition and social legitimation, producing cultural capital that transcends history and geography.

**Table 1.** Comparative dimensions of cultural capital in Bourdieu and Throsby, informing the CEA framework.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Bourdieu</b>	<b>Throsby</b>
<b>Disciplinary Perspective</b>	Sociological	Economic
<b>Concept of Cultural Capital</b>	Accumulated knowledge, skills, and dispositions shaping social status	An asset generating both cultural and economic value
<b>Cultural Value</b>	The cultural and symbolic value of objectified cultural capital depends on the embodied cultural capital required to appropriate it	Cultural value derives from the artistic, aesthetic, historical, or religious dimensions of a cultural commodity
<b>Forms of Cultural Capital</b>	Objectified, embodied, and institutionalized forms	Tangible and intangible forms
<b>Transference</b>	Convertible into economic and social capital	Convertible into economic value and returns
<b>Accumulation</b>	Socially inherited and historically accumulated	Accumulated as a stock of cultural capital, generating cumulative cultural value over time
<b>Taste</b>	Inherited through habitus	Acquired and developed over time
<b>Sustainability</b>	Reproduced through habitus and social transmission	Sustained as an intergenerational cultural stock

A close reading of Bourdieu's and Throsby's contributions does not reveal a theoretical opposition; rather, it highlights recurring analytical concerns – cultural value, accumulation over time, tangible and intangible capital, sustainability, and taste. These concerns do not impose a comparative framework but instead serve as interpretive touchpoints for understanding cultural assets in practice. When cultural value is constituted through cumulative social recognition and symbolic legitimacy, its economic expression cannot be fully understood without examining the collective mechanisms through which expert actors acknowledge, negotiate, and affirm that value. This process is formalized in the present study as the CEA framework. Against this conceptual backdrop, the Yemeni jambiya provides a concrete empirical case through which these theoretical dimensions of cultural value and symbolic capital can be observed and examined over time.

## **THE YEMENI JAMBIYA AS CULTURAL CAPITAL: HISTORICAL AND SYMBOLIC FOUNDATIONS**

Studies indicate that the Yemeni jambiya has deep historical roots extending to pre-Islamic times. [36] cites a bronze statuette from Marib (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE), now in the National Museum in Sana'a, depicting a man wearing a dagger – evidence of the jambiya's antiquity and continuity. Wendell Phillips, as cited in [36], supports this by noting similarities between ancient and contemporary jambiya. Linguistic evidence from Alfred Beeston, also cited in [36], further confirms its long-standing cultural integration.

Materially, jambiya hilts were originally crafted from various substances prior to the introduction of rhinoceros horn, which marked a significant shift in aesthetic and symbolic value due to its rarity. While the exact date of this transition remains unclear, [36] links the development to early trade networks. Anthropologist Daniel Varesco, as cited in [36], suggests that rhinoceros horn hilts may have been introduced by Ethiopians during their 4<sup>th</sup>-century AD invasion of Yemen. The industry expanded substantially in the twentieth century – particularly during the 1970s – as rhinoceros horn imports rose sharply in tandem with national economic growth. The primary value of the jambiya lies in its hilt, particularly the “*Saifani*” type made from the core of rhinoceros horn, considered the highest in quality and prestige. [37] notes its desirability due to durability, aesthetic aging, and symbolic meaning, with older pieces holding greater value. Other types include “Zuraf” -made from the edges of rhino horn, and lower-cost materials such as buffalo horn, wood, and modern synthetics. The jambiya's artistic composition – blade, scabbard, and belt – reflects a refined artisanal tradition. Production follows a structured craft system with specialized roles, where blacksmiths forge blades and artisans shape and decorate other components using inherited knowledge. These crafts remain concentrated in traditional markets, particularly Old Sana'a, reflecting the continuity of this cultural heritage.

Socially, the jambiya functions within a symbolic system as a non-verbal marker of tribal identity, social status, and adherence to customary law. [38] describes it as part of a broader semiotic system of dress that communicates belonging within non-state social structures, extending its role beyond a physical object into a medium of representation.

On a symbolic level, the jambiya represents honour and identity and functions as a form of social guarantee in customary dispute resolution. It is also closely associated with cultural practices such as the “Baraa' ” dance. Moreover, certain jambiyas acquire additional value through their history of ownership. A well-known example is Sayyidat al-Janai (“Lady of the Jambiyas”). According to this narrative, the jambiya originally belonged to a tribal leader who opposed Ottoman authority in Yemen and was subsequently exiled to Akka (Acre), Palestine. It was later presented to Imam Yahya, King of Yemen, who conferred upon it the title “Lady of the Jambiyas” and passed it on to his son Ahmad, the crown prince and later Imam. After the Yemeni Revolution of 1962, the jambiya was sold at auction for approximately one million US dollars to Sheikh Naji al-Shayif, one of the most prominent tribal leaders in Yemen.

This case illustrates the interplay between political history, symbolic capital, and material value. From a theoretical perspective, the jambiya can thus be understood as a dynamic form of cultural capital in the Bourdieusian sense, embodying symbolic and cultural meanings, while also aligning with Throsby's conception of cultural capital as a value-bearing asset that integrates both tangible and intangible dimensions and evolves over time. It is precisely this complex, multi-layered intersection of tacit knowledge, material evolution, and historical provenance that the proposed CEA framework seeks to explore, providing a structured qualitative mechanism to observe how these diverse dimensions of cultural value are negotiated and articulated by expert cohorts.

### **Analytical Framework: Collective Expert Appraisal**

Building on the theoretical intersections between Bourdieu and Throsby, this study proposes an original analytical framework, CEA, designed to assess the value of cultural assets. CEA seeks to capture the symbolic and cultural value of an asset, grounded in practical expertise and the accumulation of cultural capital, without reducing this value to a fixed market price. CEA is a structured and interactive process in which a group of qualified cultural experts jointly evaluates a cultural asset within a specific temporal and spatial context. The core principle of CEA is that the value of a cultural asset emerges from the convergence of multiple expert judgments, rather than being determined by individual opinion or market forces. Through discussion, comparison, and reflection, experts negotiate the relative importance of material, symbolic, and contextual criteria, producing a collective appraisal that reflects consensus, deliberation, and mutual validation. The outcome is a valuation that is shared, negotiated, and socially grounded, rather than purely individual.

### **Essential Conditions for Experts**

Participation in CEA requires that experts meet four key criteria. First, they must demonstrate fairness, providing impartial and transparent judgments free from personal or financial bias. Second, they must possess substantial experience, particularly regarding internationally recognized cultural and monetary standards. Third, they must demonstrate high cultural capital in all three forms identified by Bourdieu, especially embodied capital, including cultural awareness, aesthetic sensitivity, critical judgment, understanding of societal and cultural narratives, and the ability to contextualize these narratives within broader historical and social frameworks. Fourth, they should belong to or be closely familiar with the cultural environment from which the asset originates, ensuring contextual validity in their assessments. In addition to these individual qualifications, the CEA framework explicitly emphasizes the interactive and collective mechanisms through which expert opinions are aggregated, discussed, and reconciled, thereby producing a more robust and socially validated evaluation.

While the CEA shares surface commonalities with "expert consensus" and "collective valuation", it fundamentally extends them through procedural and theoretical distinction, Table 2. Expert consensus (e.g., Delphi techniques) typically aggregates specialist opinions to reduce uncertainty. Conversely, the CEA treats consensus not as a mere outcome, but as a structured, theory-driven process of value construction, explicitly mapping how experts interact and negotiate multidimensional value. Similarly, while collective valuation remains a broad, abstract sociological concept without a formal implementation mechanism, the CEA operationalizes it through a controlled, expert-led process restricted to individuals possessing defined cultural capital and contextual expertise.

**Table 2.** Key features of CEA.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Core Principle</b>	Cultural value is generated through collective expert judgment, not individual opinion or market price.
<b>Nature of Appraisal</b>	Interactive, deliberative, and consensus-oriented evaluation process.
<b>Basis of Value</b>	Integration of symbolic, cultural, and contextual values rather than monetary valuation.
<b>Evaluation Process</b>	Experts engage in discussion, comparison, and reflection to negotiate value judgments.
<b>Outcome of Appraisal</b>	A shared, socially grounded, and negotiated valuation of cultural assets.
<b>Role of Expertise</b>	Experts provide informed judgment based on accumulated cultural capital and field experience.
<b>Epistemological Basis</b>	Combines sociological (Pierre Bourdieu) and economic-cultural (David Throsby) perspectives.
<b>Decision Mechanism</b>	Convergence of multiple expert opinions through structured deliberation and mutual validation.
<b>Context Sensitivity</b>	Strong dependence on temporal, spatial, and cultural context of the asset.
<b>Value Orientation</b>	Non-reductionist valuation that resists pure market pricing logic.
<b>Expected Expertise Criteria</b>	Fairness, experience, high cultural capital (embodied, objectified, institutionalized), and contextual familiarity.

Accordingly, the novelty of the CEA lies in three distinct contributions:

- 1) Theoretical Integration – It systematically synthesizes Bourdieu’s cultural capital with Throsby’s cultural value, bridging sociological and economic dimensions within a single evaluative model;
- 2) Process Formalization – It operationalizes abstract consensus into a phased, interactive, and deliberative appraisal process, tracking how value is socio-culturally negotiated rather than just quantified, and
- 3) Epistemological Rigor – It introduces a non-reductionist framework that captures symbolic and contextual values, intentionally resisting market-based pricing. Therefore, the CEA is not a re-labelling of existing concepts, but a conceptual-analytical framework providing both theoretical grounding and procedural clarity for intangible asset evaluation. This distinction is particularly evident in heritage contexts where value is culturally embedded rather than quantitatively measurable.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopts a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, appropriate for an interpretive analysis combining the socio-economic dimensions of cultural value within the theoretical frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu and David Throsby. This approach enables the exploration of the intangible dimensions of cultural value, including embodied experience, tacit knowledge, and culturally embedded mechanisms of evaluation. Rather than relying solely on market indicators, the study focuses on how value emerges through the negotiation and convergence of expert perceptions within the CEA framework.

## **Study Population and Context**

The study focuses on the Yemeni jambiya and its associated trade, craftsmanship, and cultural narratives – a culturally embedded field practiced across major urban centers such as Sana’a, Saa’dah, and Dhamar, as well as in tribal regions where the jambiya holds significant symbolic and social weight. While precise statistics on the total number of original jambiyas, traders, and craftsmen are not formally documented due to the informal nature of the traditional economy, the craft is sustained through family-based workshops, local markets, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

A purposive sample of twelve experts was selected based on the following criteria:

- Extensive experience (from 10 to more than 20 years) in jambiya crafting, maintenance, trading, or appraisal.
- Recognized expertise within the local market.
- Deep knowledge of the historical, material, and symbolic aspects of jambiyas.
- Strong cultural capital, particularly in terms of embodied knowledge and evaluative judgment.

The sample comprised three groups: four participants from families practicing the craft across generations; four with extensive experience in jambiya trading; and four owners of historically valuable jambiyas. This composition ensured access to diverse tacit and experiential knowledge. All participants possess substantial cultural capital in the Yemeni jambiya sector and have demonstrable experience in formal or informal appraisal.

## **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Data collection was conducted between June and August 2025 in Sana’a, Yemen, over three sequential phases. This period was selected to ensure full access to expert participants and to accommodate iterative field engagement across the study phases:

### **Phase 1: Exploratory Elicitation**

At the outset, experts responded to an open-ended question: “What are the qualities of a valuable jambiya?” This phase aimed to elicit spontaneous, experience-based criteria without imposing predefined categories. It allowed researchers to capture experts’ implicit knowledge and culturally grounded perceptions of value, generating an initial pool of valuation criteria rooted in practice.

### **Phase 2: Individual Appraisal**

Each expert was asked to independently evaluate three selected jambiyas and assign a value based on their professional judgment. This step aimed to capture individual expert judgments prior to group influence.

### **Phase 3: Collective Deliberation (CEA Implementation)**

In the final phase, all twelve experts participated in an informal group discussion. They collectively examined the same jambiyas and engaged in comparative dialogue. The discussion addressed material characteristics (e.g., gold, silver, and blade type), craftsmanship quality, aesthetic features (such as harmony and shine), authenticity, and historical significance. Through this interactive process, individual evaluations were critically examined and refined. Notably, several individual valuations were revised during this phase as a result of debate, particularly regarding historical and social narratives. To protect participant confidentiality within a highly specialized market, all expert identities were pseudonymized.

## **DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS**

All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Arabic, and translated into English for analysis. To maintain conceptual integrity, initial coding was performed on the Arabic transcripts before translation, ensuring that culturally specific terms and idioms were preserved. Data were analyzed using a three-stage thematic coding process:

### **Open Coding**

Initial coding identified key semantic units representing valuation criteria.

“The older the jambiya, the more valuable ...” → Antiquity/Historical Value

“Its shine shows its maturity ...” → Aesthetic Quality

“If it belonged to a well-known person ...” → Symbolic Value/Provenance

### **Axial Coding**

Codes were grouped into broader analytical categories:

- Tangible – Material type, size, and physical components.
- Embodied – Craftsmanship skill and historical knowledge.
- Symbolic – Prestige, social status, and emotional attachment.

**Convergence and Agreement Analysis** – To operationalize the CEA, a consensus threshold was established based on the absolute majority of the expert panel. A criterion was designated as a “core consensus-based element” if it was independently validated by at least two-thirds of the cohort (8 out of 12 experts). This threshold was utilized as an operational benchmark to minimize individual bias while remaining appropriate for the exploratory nature of the qualitative sample. This approach aligns with established practices in qualitative consensus studies and expert elicitation methods, where agreement thresholds in the range 0,60-0,75 are commonly adopted to balance rigor and interpretive flexibility.

## **COLLECTIVE EXPERT APPRAISAL OPERATIONALIZATION**

The CEA framework was operationalized through a three-tiered synthesis:

- 1) Data Integration – Merging individual appraisal metrics with qualitative insights generated during group-based deliberations.
- 2) Cross-Expert Comparative Coding – Systematically mapping and contrasting individual evaluative criteria across the entire expert cohort.
- 3) Iterative Consensus-Building – Facilitating structured reflection and dialogue to track how individual perceptions converged into shared frameworks.

The definitive output of this process is a Collective Assessment Matrix, which systematically presents:

- 1) Criterion – The evaluative dimension elicited from expert interviews, encompassing both tangible and intangible attributes (e.g., size, gold, antiquity, and social history).
- 2) Type of value – The category of value assigned to each criterion (e.g., aesthetic, historical, technical, or symbolic).
- 3) Qualitative Consensus – The level of agreement among experts for each criterion.
- 4) Cultural Capital Classification – Based on the integrated Bourdieu and Throsby frameworks (e.g., embodied, objectified, or symbolic value across both frameworks).
- 5) Qualitative Interpretation – The socio-cultural explanation of each criterion’s significance.

Ultimately, this matrix operationalizes the core theoretical objective of the CEA: demonstrating how highly individualized, subjective expert judgments are structurally transformed through deliberation into a negotiated, socially grounded, and collectively validated framework of cultural value.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the levels of qualitative consensus among experts, highlighting consensus on key aesthetic, historical, and symbolic criteria used to assess the value of the jambiya. As illustrated in Table 3, the in-depth interviews revealed a complete consensus among experts regarding size as a fundamental aesthetic criterion in assessing the value of the jambiya. All participants (12 experts) indicated that the jambiya's full size at hand-grip level and its balanced proportions confer visual presence and symbolic prestige within the social context. Size is thus understood not as a mere physical measurement, but as an aesthetic element evaluated in terms of formal harmony, integration with other components, and its capacity to showcase the quality of craftsmanship and artistry. Similarly, all 12 experts reached full agreement that antiquity is a pivotal historical criterion. Antiquity reflects the temporal accumulation of cultural significance, representing the continuity of the jambiya's cultural origins. It was described as an inherent value, derived not only from chronological age but also from cultural continuity, chains of ownership, and the social narratives associated with the jambiya across generations. Moreover, the hilt (*Ras*) of the jambiya develops greater maturity and shine over time, such that very old jambiyas differ from newer ones in colour, material quality, and overall aesthetic appeal, with the passage of time contributing to their full maturity, brilliance, and attractiveness.

Regarding gold type, 11 experts reached strong consensus on its importance as a highly significant aesthetic criterion. Evaluation extended beyond material properties to encompass the role of shared expertise and historical knowledge in shaping a common understanding of quality, including preferred types such as Himyarite gold. As one expert noted: "Himyarite

**Table 3.** CEA matrix for cultural valuation of Yemeni jambiyas.

Criterion	Type of Value	Number of Experts	Qualitative Importance	Cultural Capital	Contextual Interpretation
Size	Aesthetic	12	High	Tangible	Directly affects visual perception and market value
Antiquity	Historical	12	High	Embodied	Reflects temporal dimension and cultural accumulation
Type of Gold	Aesthetic	11	High	Tangible	Associated with purity and rarity
Hilt Type	Technical	12	High	Tangible	Indicator of the craftsmanship school
Silver	Aesthetic	10	High	Tangible	Complementary element for aesthetic value
Formal Harmony	Aesthetic	10	High	Symbolic	Reflects artistic taste
Lustre	Aesthetic	10	High	Tangible	Related to the condition and level of maturity of the piece
Engraving Accuracy	Technical	10	High	Tangible	Evidence of the maker's skill
Neck Length	Aesthetic	12	High	Tangible	Distinctive formal element
Blade Type	Technical	10	High	Embodied	Related to function and origin
Vitality	Symbolic	8	Medium	Symbolic	Subjective perceptual factor
Social History	Symbolic	12	High	Embodied	Connects the piece to the societal context
Passion	Symbolic	12	High	Symbolic	Reflects emotional attachment

gold coins are always fixed with a nail at the centre, not at the edge”. In this sense, gold represents a form of tangible cultural capital, contributing to aesthetic balance and reflecting prevailing artistic tastes that are collectively validated within the expert community.

The hilt type was unanimously identified by all 12 experts as a crucial technical criterion. Expert judgments converged through a shared knowledge of horn quality, with Saifani recognized as the highest standard and Zuraf as comparatively less valuable. The hilt also signals the craftsmanship school and technique, demonstrating how collective recognition of technical standards underpins consensus on value. As one expert explained: “To identify a Saifani hilt, one can observe tiny dots or pores on its surface, resembling the oil glands on the peel of a ripe orange”.

Silver was acknowledged as a complementary aesthetic element (10 experts) valued not in isolation but within the context of the group’s shared understanding of aesthetic harmony. Its assessment illustrates how experts’ appraisals converge to produce a negotiated, collectively agreed hierarchy of features, contributing to a coherent system of cultural valuation.

Formal harmony was highlighted as an aesthetic criterion of high symbolic significance (10 experts), reflecting deeply rooted cultural taste that governs the relationship among elements. Harmony embodies a complete aesthetic model, granting the jambiya a symbolic presence beyond its material form. Lustre and brilliance were considered highly important aesthetic criteria (10 experts), linked to the condition of the piece and the care it has received. Lustre serves as an indicator of preservation quality and respect shown by successive owners, adding a tangible cultural dimension.

Engraving precision was deemed a highly important technical criterion (10 experts), reflecting the maker’s skill and craftsmanship. Precision embodies accumulated technical knowledge and inherited working methods, forming part of intangible cultural capital.

Neck length was unanimously identified (12 experts) as an aesthetic criterion of high importance, contributing to formal identity and visual balance. Its evaluation is relational, considered in the context of other features, making it a tangible element within a comprehensive aesthetic framework. Blade type was recognized as a pivotal technical criterion (10 experts), linked to the dagger’s function and historical origin. The blade reflects specific manufacturing traditions, including craftsmanship technique and alignment with the piece’s temporal and cultural context, representing intrinsic value.

Vitality (*al-hayawiyya*) was identified by eight experts as a state of “visual vigour,” in which the hilt acquires an inner brilliance. This “flow of life” was vividly described by one expert as “al-dam yatasharraḡh fihā mashāriḡhah” (“blood is visibly flowing through it”), suggesting a latent “spirit” that confers prestige. This quality reflects an emotional response rooted in Embodied Cultural Capital, wherein the material transcends its stillness to become a “living” heritage asset. Social history was identified as a highly valued criterion (12 experts). This dimension situates the jambiya within its broader social context, linking it to narratives, community heritage, and accumulated cultural meanings, thereby enhancing its authenticity. As one expert noted, echoing a Yemeni proverb, “Seet al-jambiya min seet sahibha” (“A jambiya’s reputation reflects that of its owner”).

Finally, passion, or *Ishq* (intense love or deep passion), was recognized as a symbolic criterion with full expert agreement (12 experts), reflecting strong emotional attachment to the cultural origins of the jambiya. Experts noted that this passion arises from the interplay of beauty, history, and craftsmanship, creating a symbolic value that enriches the overall appreciation of the artifact. They often cited the Yemeni popular proverb: “The jambiya is *Ishq*, or *Ti’shaq*”, using the emphatic Classical Arabic form *Ta’ashuḡan* (infatuated), derived from *ta’ashuḡ* (to fall deeply in love). While the interpretation of *Ishq* as a deeply personal and emotional state

is not unanimously agreed upon, it is considered critical in valuation. Experts explained that when someone experiences *Ishq* for this cultural asset, they are willing to offer a very high “dowry,” echoing the saying: “He who truly loves a beautiful woman will never find her dowry too high.” This highlights how intense emotional attachment can significantly enhance both the symbolic and economic value of the cultural asset.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS IN LIGHT OF COLLECTIVE EXPERT APPRAISAL**

These results clearly reflect the logic of the CEA, where the value of criteria such as size, antiquity, type of gold, hilt type, or engraving precision is not derived from isolated physical characteristics but emerges from a negotiated consensus among experts possessing high levels of embodied and institutionalized cultural capital within the cultural field of the jambiya. Tangible or technical features acquire aesthetic, historical, or symbolic value only when interpreted collectively within a shared cognitive framework that defines what is “well-made,” “authentic,” or “traditional,” aligning with Bourdieu’s conception of taste and expertise as products of active positions within the cultural field. Size, although tangible, gains aesthetic significance through the convergence of expert judgments, illustrating Bourdieu’s notion of taste as a socially conditioned practice. Similarly, antiquity exemplifies time-bound cultural value, as proposed by Throsby: an antique jambiya is regarded as a cultural repository accumulated over time, not merely a physical object. Activation of this value occurs through experts’ appraisal, linking historical context to social narratives and symbolic legitimacy.

Technical criteria, such as blade type and engraving precision, highlight the role of specialized expertise in transforming craft knowledge into culturally and economically recognized value. These features, often invisible to the untrained eye, carry significant weight within the CEA framework, as experts decode them in relation to inherited production chains and craft traditions. This underscores that value is not inherent in the object but produced through interpretive acts by actors with epistemic legitimacy.

Aesthetic criteria – including formal harmony, lustre and shine, and neck length – demonstrate how perceptual qualities function as extensions of embodied cultural capital. These attributes are assessed through a relatively stable consensus of taste rather than rigid quantitative standards, explaining the high levels of expert agreement despite their intangible nature. This reflects Bourdieu’s argument that taste is structured socially rather than individually.

Variations in agreement on criteria such as vitality highlight the limits of symbolic stability within the cultural field. These emotional and subjective values depend on individual experiences and cultural backgrounds, indicating that CEA integrates, rather than eliminates, the subjective dimension within a collective evaluative framework.

Criteria such as social history and affection reveal the symbolic and social dimensions of valuation. Social history connects jambiya to community narratives, enhancing authenticity and cultural significance.

The empirical findings presented in this study resonate closely with the theoretical illustration discussed earlier in the literature review concerning the differential valuation of material and symbolic attributes. Just as a historically significant iron sword may surpass a contemporary gold sword in cultural worth despite inferior material composition, the valuation of the jambiya examined here extends well beyond its physical properties. This dynamic is made explicit in participants’ accounts of the “Lady of Jambiyas,” a narrative repeatedly cited as a decisive factor in appraisal. Participants emphasized that it was not the material composition of the jambiya, but rather its association with political authority, historical rupture, and elite lineage that elevated its value. In this sense, the jambiya operates as a culturally charged object whose worth is constituted through social history and collective recognition rather than intrinsic materiality.

This empirical case substantiates Throsby's emphasis on accumulated cultural attributes such as antiquity, narrative, and symbolic resonance, while simultaneously affirming Bourdieu's argument that cultural capital derives from social recognition and symbolic legitimacy. The jambiya's valuation illustrates the dynamic exchange between signifier and signified described by [19] in which symbolic power emerges through collective endorsement and is reproduced through expert appraisal. The findings therefore demonstrate that cultural value is not merely perceived but actively produced through socially situated narratives and historically grounded legitimacy.

Emotional attachment arises from the interplay between beauty, craftsmanship, and historical context, demonstrating how shared affective responses become culturally stabilized when validated collectively by experts.

The concept of accumulation is evident in the experts' assessment of antiquity and social history. Time is not treated as a neutral quantitative measure, but as a process of cultural accumulation intertwined with experience, usage, and social narratives. Similarly, the embodiment of cultural capital, in both tangible and intangible forms, is central to expert appraisal: material criteria such as type of gold, hilt, and blade represent tangible capital, while value is activated through the experts' experience, taste, and discernment. Value emerges from the interaction of materiality and taste within a structured cultural context. Sustainability is reflected in the experts' focus on criteria indicating the capacity of the cultural origin to retain symbolic meaning over time, such as craftsmanship quality, engraving precision, and social history. These characteristics are linked to the jambiya's ability to maintain meaning and value across generations, aligning with Throsby's notion of cultural sustainability without reducing it to a standardized measure.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that the theoretical points of convergence between Bourdieu and Throsby – cultural value, accumulation, tangible and intangible capital, sustainability, and taste – are not abstract ideas but are embodied in practical expert valuation within the CEA framework. Cultural value is produced through interpretation, deriving meaning from the social and cognitive context, reflecting the intersection of Bourdieu's view of value as a product of the cultural field with Throsby's conception of cultural stock and non-market dimensions. In summary, CEA functions as an interpretive mechanism linking the physical characteristics of the cultural artifact, the cultural capital of the experts, and the social context that imbues these characteristics with meaning and value. High levels of expert agreement indicate symbolic stability within the cultural field, explaining how these attributes can inform economic valuation without themselves constituting a market price.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates how Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Throsby's economic perspective can be integrated, via the Collective Expert Appraisal (CEA) framework, to understand the formation and activation of the cultural value of heritage assets in practice. The findings indicate that the cultural value of a heritage asset does not derive solely from its physical characteristics – such as size, craftsmanship, or material – but is shaped by its interaction with non-physical elements, including historical context, social narratives, and emotional attachment. The study further shows that recognition of cultural value occurs collectively within the cultural field, preceding any economic valuation, thereby highlighting the pivotal role of social norms and shared taste in shaping value.

The CEA framework offers an interpretive tool that links the material attributes of an asset, the cultural capital of experts, and the social context that imbues these attributes with meaning. It illustrates how key theoretical dimensions – cultural value, accumulation, tangible and

intangible capital, sustainability, and taste – manifest in practical appraisals of cultural assets. As such, it provides a meaningful scholarly contribution to discussions on heritage appraisal, symbolic capital, and heritage management.

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Reflecting on its application, the CEA is conceived as an interpretive conceptual-analytical framework rather than a fully validated or generalizable model. In this study, it was applied exploratorily to the traditional Yemeni jambiya context to structure and interpret expert tacit knowledge. Operating within an interpretive paradigm, the framework is inherently context-dependent, as evaluative judgments are shaped by field-specific dynamics, cultural capital, and consensus-building processes. A key limitation lies in its reliance on specialized, localized expertise, which makes outcomes sensitive to the composition of the expert panel. Accordingly, the CEA should be understood as an adaptable and evolving framework that invites further application, critique, and refinement across diverse cultural heritage contexts.

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