

## From Religious Gathering to Ethnic Visibility: The Danu Son See Yar Day Festival and Identity Construction in Myanmar

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**Abstract:** This article examines how the Danu Son See Yar Day (DSSYD) festival functions as a religious-cultural medium for strengthening ethnic visibility and identity among the Danu community in Myanmar, addressing the limited scholarly attention to festival-based minority identity formation. Using a qualitative research design, the study draws on documentary materials, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions, with the data analyzed thematically. The findings show that Danu identity historically had limited public visibility due to weak symbolic and linguistic differentiation, dispersed interregional connectivity, limited cultural promotion, and comparatively low public-political visibility. DSSYD created a recurring shared arena where dispersed Danu communities could gather, strengthen social connections, and reinforce collective belonging through religious rituals and cultural performances. The festival also contributed to clearer ethnic visibility and broader coordination associated with the Danu National Conference and the Danu National Affairs Organization. These findings demonstrate that religious-cultural festivals can function as mechanisms of social visibility, communal solidarity, and institutional consolidation among minority communities. The study contributes an original account of how recurring festival interaction can connect ethnic identity formation with relational coordination and more durable forms of minority representation.

**Keywords:** Danu Son See Yar Day; Danu ethnic identity; religious-cultural festival; ethnic visibility.

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana festival *Danu Son See Yar Day* (DSSYD) berfungsi sebagai medium religius-kultural dalam memperkuat visibilitas etnis dan identitas komunitas Danu di Myanmar, dengan menanggapi masih terbatasnya perhatian akademik terhadap pembentukan identitas kelompok minoritas melalui festival. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, studi ini memanfaatkan bahan dokumenter, observasi partisipatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan diskusi kelompok, serta menganalisis data secara tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa identitas Danu secara historis memiliki visibilitas publik yang terbatas akibat lemahnya diferensiasi simbolik dan linguistik, tersebarnya konektivitas antardaerah, terbatasnya promosi budaya, serta visibilitas politik-simbolik yang relatif rendah. DSSYD membentuk arena bersama yang berlangsung berulang, tempat komunitas Danu yang tersebar dapat berkumpul, memperkuat konektivitas sosial, dan meneguhkan rasa memiliki secara kolektif melalui ritual keagamaan serta pertunjukan budaya. Festival ini juga berkontribusi terhadap semakin jelasnya visibilitas etnis dan semakin luasnya koordinasi yang berkaitan dengan *Danu National Conference* dan *Danu National Affairs Organization*. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa festival religius-kultural dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme visibilitas sosial, solidaritas komunal, dan konsolidasi kelembagaan bagi komunitas minoritas. Kontribusi orisinal penelitian ini terletak pada penjelasan mengenai bagaimana interaksi yang berlangsung secara berulang melalui festival dapat menghubungkan pembentukan identitas etnis dengan koordinasi relasional serta bentuk representasi minoritas yang lebih berkelanjutan.

**Kata kunci:** *Danu Son See Yar Day*; identitas etnis Danu; festival religius-kultural; visibilitas etnis.

## 1. Introduction

Myanmar provides an important social context for examining ethnic identity because it is a deeply plural society in which demographic diversity is unevenly counted, recognized, and politically mediated. The provisional results of the 2024 Population and Housing Census recorded a population of 51,316,756, with 31% living in urban areas and 69% in rural areas. However, the census was fully conducted in only 145 of the country's 330 townships and relied extensively on estimates for areas that could not be accessed (Myanmar Digital News, 2025; The Nation, 2025). These limitations demonstrate that even Myanmar's demographic representation is shaped by uneven state reach. Religious diversity is similarly significant. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF, 2024) reports that Buddhists constitute 87.9% of the population, followed by Christians at 6.2%, Muslims at 4.3%, animists at 0.8%, and Hindus at 0.5%. Ethnic plurality is likewise not merely demographic but also classificatory and political. Myanmar is home to more than 135 ethnic groups, while the state organizes ethnic recognition around eight major categories commonly referred to as "national races" (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2025). Such classifications have historically shaped access to citizenship, representation, and recognition. Consequently, demographic plurality does not necessarily produce equal public visibility, particularly for smaller ethnic communities whose identities remain mediated by unequal institutional and political structures.

Within this broader landscape, the Danu constitute a particularly revealing case. The community possesses historical continuity and formal recognition within Myanmar's ethnic-administrative system, most visibly through the Danu Self-Administered Zone in Shan State. Nevertheless, formal administrative recognition does not necessarily translate into equal social and cultural visibility. Research on Myanmar has shown that state approaches to ethnic diversity continue to be shaped by historical classifications, uneven recognition, and differentiated institutional arrangements among ethnic communities (Ng, 2022; Wansai, 2024). The problem of ethnic visibility is further complicated by the role of language and public representation in determining how minority identities become recognizable beyond their immediate communities (The-Thitsar, 2022). This issue is particularly relevant in Southern Shan State, where ethnic identification develops through interaction with neighboring communities and through the availability of cultural and symbolic markers that distinguish one group from another (Pain, 2025). The Danu case is therefore analytically significant because it demonstrates how an ethnic community may be formally recognized even as its collective identity remains comparatively weak in broader public representation. This condition raises a broader sociological question concerning how recurring religious and cultural practices can transform dispersed ethnic belonging into a more connected, publicly visible, and institutionally organized collective presence. The Danu Son See Yar Day (DSSYD) festival provides an important arena for examining this process.

Existing scholarship on festivals and collective identity can be grouped into at least three major tendencies. The first emphasizes ritual participation as a mechanism of collective belonging and solidarity. Studies in this strand show that repeated participation in festivals can generate shared emotional experiences, strengthen communal attachment, and reinforce collective identity. Yin et al. (2026), for example, demonstrate that festival rituals can foster cultural confidence, cultural identity, and community citizenship, while Dutta (2025) shows that the Gajan festival produces an embodied ritual community in which individual experience becomes closely intertwined with collective identity. In the Indonesian context, Ariwibowo et al. (2025) similarly find that the Tukuder Festival reinforces religious and cultural continuity through ritual practice, traditional foodways, and intergenerational participation. Related research further shows that festival participation can strengthen emotional solidarity, place-based identity, and community identification among participants (Lin & Lee, 2020; Mohanty & Dash, 2023; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). Together, these studies establish that ritual participation can sustain belonging and solidarity. However, they primarily explain identity reinforcement at the

experiential and communal levels and provide less explanation of how recurring ritual participation may generate broader public recognition, interregional coordination, or institutional capacity.

The second tendency approaches cultural performance as a medium for expressing, reproducing, and publicly displaying ethnic identity. From this perspective, dance, music, costume, bodily practice, and other symbolic performances function as mechanisms through which communities represent themselves and communicate collective distinctiveness. Liu and Natayakulwong (2023) show how the Sinan Lantern Dance embodies Tujia ethnic traditions through bodily practice and symbolic representation, while Özkan (2026) demonstrates that highland festivals in Türkiye operate as ritualized cultural performances that sustain collective continuity and solidarity. Herdiati et al. (2025) likewise show that Guel music and dance contribute to social cohesion and cultural sustainability by strengthening pride, belonging, and communal participation. Comparable studies indicate that festivals can turn cultural symbols into publicly recognizable markers of identity, create arenas for negotiating ethnic and racial representation, and enhance cultural visibility through performative and symbolic display (Enriquez, 2024; Medford, 2021; Rossetti & Quinn, 2021; Zou et al., 2021). These studies convincingly demonstrate that cultural performance can make collective identity visible and recognizable. Nevertheless, they tend to emphasize cultural reproduction, representation, and symbolic display rather than explaining how such visibility may develop into more durable forms of interregional coordination, organizational representation, and institutional recognition.

The third tendency emphasizes repeated gathering, social networks, and community cohesion. Scholarship in this category shows that festivals are socially significant not only because of the meanings they symbolize but also because of the relationships they repeatedly produce. Mahalakshmi et al. (2025) demonstrate that participation in local festivals can strengthen social cohesion, interpersonal trust, community engagement, and collective identity. McClinchey (2021) shows that multi-ethnic festivals contribute to social sustainability by generating opportunities for both bonding and bridging social capital through multicultural encounters, while Wood and Homolja (2021) demonstrate that cultural festivals provide diasporic youth with relational spaces in which traditional identities are affirmed, and more plural forms of belonging are negotiated. This relational perspective is reinforced by Kuo et al. (2021), who show that social capital and place identity can shape collective support and community attachment, and by Koefoed et al. (2022), who demonstrate that festival encounters can create socially significant spaces of cross-cultural interaction and negotiation. Taken together, this literature explains how recurring gatherings can generate trust, relational networks, social cohesion, and collective attachment. However, its primary focus remains on social integration, multicultural coexistence, place attachment, and identity affirmation rather than on the longer process through which festival-generated relationships become resources for organized ethnic coordination and durable institutional representation.

Taken together, these three strands demonstrate that festivals can reinforce collective identity through ritual participation, cultural performance, and repeated social interaction. Yet an important analytical gap remains. Existing studies have paid considerably less attention to the process through which a recurring religious-cultural festival may connect ritual solidarity, ethnic visibility, social coordination, and institutionalization. This limitation is particularly significant for minority communities whose ethnic identities are historically present but weakly represented in wider public and institutional arenas. In the specific case of the Danu, Javanasami (2020) demonstrates that DSSYD played an important role in strengthening ethnic awareness, connectivity, communal unity, and inter-ethnic relations among a community whose identity had previously received limited public recognition. Nevertheless, that study primarily establishes the festival's contribution to identity construction and community cohesion. It does not fully trace how repeated religious-cultural gatherings may generate social relations and organizational capacities that extend beyond the festival itself and become embedded in more durable forms of ethnic representation. Consequently, the transition from festival-based identity formation to sustained ethnic visibility and institutional articulation remains insufficiently explained.

To address this gap, this study examines how the Danu Son See Yar Day festival contributed to the transformation of the limited public visibility of Danu identity into a more cohesive, recognizable, and institutionally articulated ethnic presence in Shan State, Myanmar. Specifically, the study investigates three interrelated questions: first, what historical and social conditions contributed to the limited public visibility of Danu ethnic identity; second, how DSSYD functioned as a religious-cultural arena in which Buddhist ritual practices and cultural performances enabled geographically dispersed Danu communities to interact and strengthen collective belonging; and third, how repeated festival-based interactions generated wider networks and coordination that subsequently supported more formal forms of ethnic organization, including the Danu National Conference (DNC) and the Danu National Affairs Organization (D.N.A.O.).

The study advances the theoretical argument that DSSYD should be understood not merely as a periodic cultural celebration but as a sequential social mechanism through which ritual interaction can be converted into social capital and, under particular conditions, institutionalized ethnic representation. At the micro-social level, Collins's (2004) theory of interaction ritual chains explains how repeated bodily copresence, mutual attention, shared emotional experience, and symbolic interaction can generate solidarity, group symbols, and emotional energy that persist beyond individual ritual events. At the relational level, Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital explains how repeated interaction can transform such solidarity into networks of trust, reciprocity, and coordination among community members. At the institutional level, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of institutionalization explains how repeatedly enacted and socially recognized practices can become habitualized, typified, and eventually embedded in more durable organizational structures. Integrating these perspectives, this study proposes that the sociological significance of DSSYD lies in its capacity to connect ritual solidarity, network formation, and institutional consolidation. The study, therefore, extends the application of interaction ritual theory beyond immediate emotional solidarity by examining its potential organizational consequences, develops the social-capital perspective by tracing how festival-generated networks can support collective representation, and specifies institutionalization as the process through which repeated religious-cultural interaction may crystallize into durable structures of minority ethnic visibility.

## 2. Methods

This study takes the Danu Son See Yar Day (DSSYD) festival in Pindaya, Southern Shan State, Myanmar, as its primary unit of analysis. More specifically, the study examines DSSYD as a recurring religious-cultural event through which the public visibility, social cohesion, and institutional articulation of Danu ethnic identity developed over time. The analytical focus, therefore, extends beyond the festival as an isolated cultural celebration to the social processes generated through repeated ritual participation, cultural performance, interregional encounters, and subsequent forms of ethnic coordination. Individual informants served as sources of knowledge and experience, while the principal unit of analysis remained the broader social process by which Danu identity shifted from limited public visibility to a more connected, recognizable, and organized collective presence.

The research employed a qualitative case study design with an interpretive approach because this design is well-suited to examining meaning, experience, and social processes within a bounded context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). Rather than measuring attitudes or causal relationships statistically, the study focused on how religious practice, cultural performance, repeated gathering, and ethnic coordination became interconnected within DSSYD. This approach enabled an in-depth examination of the festival as a socially bounded case through which broader processes of minority identity formation, public visibility, and institutional development could be interpreted within their specific historical and cultural context.

The study drew on three principal sources of data. First, primary data were obtained from 37 informants through individual interviews and group discussions. They included cultural informants, members of the festival organizing committee, festival participants, and attendees, thereby representing different forms of knowledge, involvement, and experience related to DSSYD and Danu

identity. Second, observational data were generated during fieldwork at the 2019 DSSYD festival, particularly through observation of the Son See Yar gathering, ritual offerings, donation activities, social interactions, and cultural performances. Third, documentary materials were examined to reconstruct the festival's historical and institutional context. These materials included festival schedules, organizational notes, meeting handouts, local records, and written documents concerning the development of DSSYD and subsequent Danu cultural, administrative, and representative organizations.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and documentary and visual documentation during the 2019 DSSYD celebration in Pindaya. Participant observation enabled the researcher to examine directly the sequence of religious, social, and cultural activities through which Danu identity was publicly expressed and collectively experienced. Semi-structured interviews allowed informants to describe both their experiences of the festival and their interpretations of its significance for Danu identity, unity, social connectivity, and recognition. Group discussions were used to explore collectively shared understandings of the historical public visibility of the Danu, the relationship between religion and cultural performance within DSSYD, and the perceived consequences of repeated annual gatherings. The main research instruments and records consisted of a semi-structured interview guide, field notes, audio recordings, photographs, and documentary materials collected during and shortly after the festival.

The data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis through several interconnected stages (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, interview transcripts, group discussion notes, observational records, and documentary materials were repeatedly reviewed to become familiar with the data. Second, relevant materials were coded to identify recurring patterns concerning the limited historical visibility of Danu identity, religious legitimacy, cultural performance, interregional encounters, social connectivity, collective belonging, and institutional development. Third, related codes were clustered into broader analytical themes that subsequently structured the findings: the historical conditions of Danu ethnic visibility, DSSYD as a religious-cultural arena for collective solidarity, and the institutional articulation of Danu identity through repeated gathering. Finally, interpretations developed from interviews and group discussions were compared with observational and documentary evidence as a form of data-source triangulation. This process enabled the analysis to move from descriptive coding toward an interpretive explanation of how repeated festival participation generated solidarity, social connectivity, public ethnic visibility, and increasingly organized forms of Danu representation.

### 3. Results

#### *Historical Conditions of Limited Danu Ethnic Visibility*

The findings indicate that the historically limited public visibility of the Danu ethnic identity did not stem from a lack of ethnic belonging or collective historical continuity. Rather, it emerged from several interrelated conditions that constrained the public articulation and recognition of Danu identity. These conditions included limited symbolic and linguistic distinctiveness, weak interregional connectivity among geographically dispersed Danu communities, insufficient promotion and preservation of cultural expressions, and comparatively low public and political visibility. Taken together, these factors meant that Danu's identity remained socially present within the community but was less clearly articulated and recognizable in the wider public sphere. The following findings demonstrate how these conditions operated across symbolic, political, social, and cultural dimensions before DSSYD became a recurring arena for collective interaction and ethnic expression.

A prominent source of limited Danu ethnic visibility was the weak public distinctiveness of its linguistic, literary, cultural, and territorial markers. Informants A, C, and D consistently described Danu identity as difficult for outsiders to distinguish from the broader Burmese cultural environment, particularly because Danu people commonly spoke a Burmese dialect and used Burmese in reading and writing. Informant A explained that "the language, culture, and literature of the Danu are indistinguishable from those of the Burmese; even the language is known as totally Burmese by a lot of

people" (Informant A, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Informants C and D expressed similar perceptions, emphasizing that Danu cultural and linguistic characteristics were not widely recognized as markers of a distinct ethnic identity (Informant C, personal communication, March 23, 2019; Informant D, personal communication, March 24, 2019). This limited symbolic differentiation was compounded by the absence of a territorial marker that, historically, enjoyed the same level of public prominence as that of some neighboring ethnic groups. Consequently, although Danu identity remained meaningful to community members, its linguistic, cultural, and territorial signifiers were less readily legible to wider publics, contributing to its comparatively limited visibility within Myanmar's broader ethnic landscape.

A further dimension of limited Danu visibility concerned the community's perception within Myanmar's political landscape. This point emerged primarily from Informant A, who attributed the comparatively low national visibility of the Danu to their limited association with overt political confrontation or strategic engagement with the military authorities. As the informant stated,

"Danu people were unknown to people around the country because they neither revolted against the military government nor did they know how to make friends with the high-ranking military officials for the sake of the Danu ethnicity's benefit" (Informant A, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

This account should be understood as an informant's interpretation rather than as a comprehensive historical explanation. Nevertheless, it indicates that, from the perspective of at least one cultural informant, Danu ethnic identity had not acquired the kind of political-symbolic visibility associated with more publicly assertive forms of ethnic representation. In this sense, limited political prominence constituted an additional dimension of the Danu's restricted public legibility, although the evidence for this aspect is more limited than that concerning linguistic, cultural, and communal factors.

Another major condition underlying the limited public visibility of Danu identity was the geographical dispersion of Danu communities and the resulting weakness of interregional connectivity. Informants B, C, and E consistently emphasized that Danu people had historically lived across different areas without sufficiently regular communication or sustained mechanisms for collective interaction (Informant B, personal communication, March 22, 2019; Informant C, personal communication, March 23, 2019; Informant E, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Their accounts suggest that the central issue was not the absence of ethnic belonging, but the limited social infrastructure through which that belonging could be connected across localities and expressed collectively. Dispersed settlement patterns limited opportunities for regular communication, hindered the formation of durable interregional ties, and reduced the likelihood of developing a shared communal platform. As a result, Danu communities remained socially connected at the local level but comparatively weakly integrated across regions. This fragmentation limited the collective articulation of Danu identity in the wider public sphere and helps explain why ethnic visibility remained uneven before the emergence of a recurring gathering that could link geographically dispersed communities.

Limited cultural promotion and preservation constituted another important condition shaping the restricted public visibility of Danu identity. Informants D and E described Danu cultural engagement earlier as relatively passive, particularly regarding the promotion and preservation of cultural expressions that could distinguish the community in the wider public sphere. Informant D stated that Danu people had "neither unity nor interest to promote and preserve their culture in the past," while Informant E similarly characterized the community as "rather passive on their cultural affairs," adding that "not only was their ethnic identity invisible, but also their culture was dying out" (Informant D, personal communication, March 24, 2019; Informant E, personal communication, March 25, 2019). These statements should be understood as informants' assessments of the condition of Danu cultural life rather than as objective measures of cultural decline. Their perceptions were nevertheless reinforced by the organizing committee's group discussion, in which participants emphasized that Danu cultural dances and songs had historically received limited promotion and preservation efforts, even though such expressions were considered important markers of ethnic identity (Organizing committee group discussion, personal communication, March 26, 2019). Taken together, the interview and group-

discussion data indicate that the limited circulation and public performance of Danu cultural expressions reduced the availability of recognizable symbols through which Danu identity could be communicated to both community members and wider audiences. This convergence of evidence across individual interviews and group discussions strengthens the finding that weak cultural promotion contributed directly to the limited symbolic visibility of Danu ethnicity prior to the development of DSSYD as a more sustained platform for collective cultural expression.

Taken together, the findings show that the historically limited public visibility of Danu ethnic identity resulted from the intersection of several mutually reinforcing conditions. Limited symbolic and linguistic differentiation reduced the extent to which Danu identity could be readily distinguished in the wider public sphere, while comparatively low political-symbolic prominence further constrained its broader recognition. At the same time, geographically dispersed settlement patterns and weak interregional connectivity limited sustained communication and collective coordination among Danu communities. These conditions were compounded by the limited promotion and preservation of cultural expressions such as songs, dances, and other markers of ethnic distinctiveness. The resulting pattern was therefore not one of absent ethnic identity, but of restricted public articulation: Danu identity remained socially meaningful while lacking sufficiently durable symbolic, social, and organizational mechanisms through which it could be collectively expressed and widely recognized. These historical conditions formed the immediate background against which DSSYD emerged as a recurring communal arena that brought together religious practice, cultural expression, and interregional gathering.

#### *DSSYD as a Religious-Cultural Arena of Collective Solidarity and Ethnic Visibility*

The findings indicate that DSSYD functioned as a religious-cultural arena in which religious legitimacy and cultural expression operated as mutually reinforcing mechanisms of collective solidarity and ethnic visibility. Its integration into an established Buddhist festival provided a socially recognized and religiously meaningful basis for bringing geographically dispersed Danu communities together, while cultural performances, traditional dress, music, dance, and other expressive practices made Danu identity more publicly visible and distinguishable. The significance of DSSYD, therefore, extended beyond the creation of a temporary festive gathering. Through its annual repetition, the festival provided a recurring setting in which participants could encounter one another, enact shared religious and cultural practices, and strengthen a broader sense of collective belonging. In this process, religious participation facilitated communal assembly, cultural expression enhanced ethnic legibility, and repeated interaction gradually reinforced both interregional solidarity and the public presence of Danu identity.

The capacity of DSSYD to attract broad participation was closely tied to its integration into the existing Shwe U Min pagoda festival, locally known as Tabaungpwaltaw, rather than to its establishment as a separate ethnic celebration. This placement embedded DSSYD within a religious calendar that was already familiar, socially recognized, and meaningful to Danu communities. U Chit Sein explained the practical reasoning behind this decision:

“If we tried to do this event independently, it would be impossible to make many people come because we already have many festivals in our community. Therefore, we decided to make it as part of the pagoda festival” (U Chit Sein, personal communication, March 24, 2019).

He further emphasized the effect of this arrangement on attendance, stating, “By doing so, we did not have to worry about people’s participation” (U Chit Sein, personal communication, March 24, 2019). These accounts indicate that the existing religious setting provided an established framework through which DSSYD could mobilize participation without requiring the creation of an entirely new communal occasion. By being situated within a trusted sacred event, DSSYD acquired a recognized basis for collective attendance and enabled Danu participants from different localities to gather within a shared religious setting that was already socially legitimate and widely understood.

Field observation showed that DSSYD brought Danu participants together through a formally structured sequence of collective religious activities rather than through an unorganized festive gathering. On the morning of March 19, 2019, the *Son See Yar* gathering marked the formal assembly of participants in a shared public space. Large numbers of Danu participants gathered in an orderly setting, many wearing coordinated traditional dress and taking part in the event as members of a visibly constituted communal gathering. As illustrated in Figure 1, the arrangement of participants shows that DSSYD provided a recognizable setting in which Danu people from different localities assembled before the subsequent ritual and cultural activities.

**Figure 1. The Son See Yar gathering during DSSYD**



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2019.

The collective assembly was followed by a sequence of religious practices that further structured participation. On March 19, participants took part in food offerings to Buddha statues and temples, followed later in the day by *Sonn San Sein*, which involved donating raw rice. On the following morning, the ritual sequence continued with *Sonn Kyet*, the offering of cooked rice to members of the Sangha. Field observation also documented Danu women in traditional dress moving together in a ritual procession while carrying ceremonial offerings, as shown in Figure 2. These coordinated acts of offering, donation, procession, and merit-making demonstrate that participation in DSSYD was organized through shared religious practice and physical assembly. The festival, therefore, created a structured setting in which collective presence was enacted through a common sequence of Buddhist ritual activities.

**Figure 2. Danu women carrying ceremonial offerings in a ritual procession during DSSYD**



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2019.

After the religious setting had established a legitimate basis for collective participation, DSSYD introduced a more explicit arena for the public expression of Danu culture. Informants emphasized that, before DSSYD became part of *Tabaungpwaltaw*, the pagoda festival had not prominently featured Danu cultural performances such as traditional dancing and singing. U Nyi Lay Chan and U Wana Thein explained that “before this ‘DSSYD’ was held as a part of *Tabaungpwaltaw*, there were no cultural presentations such as Danu dancing and singing. We are sure that these festivities have made the entire festival elegant” (U Nyi Lay Chan, personal communication, March 19, 2019; U Wana Thein, personal communication, March 24, 2019). Their accounts indicate that DSSYD added a distinct ethnic-cultural dimension to an existing religious gathering by creating a public stage for Danu performance. Through this development, cultural expression became more visible within the festival setting, allowing Danu's identity to be presented collectively through recognizable forms of dress, music, dance, and performance. As shown in Figure 3, the DSSYD stage functioned as a focal site where Danu performers appeared in traditional costume and publicly enacted cultural identity before a wider audience.

**Figure 3. Danu cultural performance on the DSSYD stage**



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2019

Field observation further showed that Danu ethnic visibility was produced through a set of recognizable cultural markers that distinguished the community within the festival space. These markers included coordinated dancing and singing, traditional dress, and musical accompaniment by instruments such as the *O-Zee* drum, cymbals, gongs, and bamboo clappers. Presented together in organized performances, these elements created a distinctive visual and auditory expression of Danu culture that could be collectively witnessed by participants and audiences. The performances, therefore, did more than add entertainment to the festival program; they provided concrete cultural forms through which Danu identity became publicly legible. Traditional costume made ethnic affiliation visually recognizable, while music, dance, and coordinated performance gave that identity an audible and embodied presence in the shared festival arena. As illustrated in Figure 4, the large-scale staging of dancers and musicians in an organized formation further reinforced the public presentation of Danu identity as a collective cultural presence rather than as an identity expressed only within dispersed local communities.

Figure 4. Danu cultural performances



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2019

Beyond increasing cultural visibility, DSSYD also created a recurring structure for interregional contact among Danu communities that had previously been geographically dispersed and only weakly connected across localities. Informants explained that the formation of these connections required active mobilization rather than occurring spontaneously. Members of the DLCRDA traveled from town to town and village to village to invite Danu communities to attend DSSYD and participate in its cultural activities, gradually drawing previously separated local populations into a wider network centered on the annual gathering in Pindaya. U Chit Sein and U Soe Naing emphasized the relational consequences of this process, stating, "Through this participation in the festival, Danu people from different regions came to know each other and could establish strong connections between themselves in ways unprecedented in the past" (U Chit Sein, personal communication, March 24, 2019; U Soe Naing, personal communication, March 24, 2019). The social significance of gathering was also reflected in participants' interpretation of the festival terminology itself. U Nyi Lay Chan and U Wanna Thein explained that *tabaung* and *son-see* both conveyed meanings associated with meeting, seeing, and gathering (U Nyi Lay Chan, personal communication, March 19, 2019; U Wanna Thein, personal communication, March 24, 2019). These accounts indicate that DSSYD became more than an annual destination for cultural participation; it served as a recurring meeting point through which Danu people from different regions could establish direct contact, recognize one another as members of a broader ethnic collectivity, and develop social connections that had previously been difficult to sustain across dispersed communities.

The effects of repeated participation in DSSYD were evident not only in the increased public visibility of Danu identity but also in the way participants described their own confidence in identifying themselves as Danu. Daw Khin Win Yee recalled that, before Danu identity became more publicly recognizable, other people often responded with uncertainty when she identified herself as Danu, asking, "Is that a people's name or an ethnicity's name? Is that Shan or what?" (Daw Khin Win Yee, personal communication, March 19, 2019). Her account illustrates the ambiguity that individual Danu participants could encounter when expressing an ethnic identity that was not widely understood outside the community. In contrast, members of the Nawngkhio and Kyaut Me dancing groups described a stronger sense of confidence after participating in the festival, stating, "We are now brave enough to tell other people that we are Danu. Before, it was very difficult to explain our identity because it was known not as well as the Pa'O and Shan ethnic identities" (Nawngkhio and Kyaut Me dancing groups, personal communication, March 19, 2019). The contrast between these accounts indicates a shift from uncertainty in public self-identification toward greater confidence in expressing Danu ethnic belonging. Repeated participation in the festival, therefore, coincided with a more affirmative

experience of identity, as participants encountered Danu symbols, performances, rituals, and fellow community members in a recurring public setting where their ethnic identity was collectively displayed and recognized.

Taken together, the findings show that DSSYD strengthened Danu collective solidarity and ethnic visibility through a combination of religious, cultural, and relational processes. Its incorporation into an established Buddhist festival provided a socially legitimate and familiar basis for communal gathering, while cultural performances supplied visible and audible markers through which Danu identity could be publicly distinguished. The annual repetition of the festival also created sustained opportunities for geographically dispersed Danu communities to establish interregional connections, interact directly, and develop a broader sense of collective belonging. At the individual level, recurring participation was associated with greater confidence in publicly identifying as Danu, suggesting that the festival contributed not only to external ethnic visibility but also to strengthening ethnic self-identification among participants. In this way, DSSYD served as a recurring communal arena where religious participation, cultural expression, social connectivity, and collective recognition converged. The networks and patterns of coordination that developed through these repeated festival encounters subsequently provided an important foundation for the more organized and institutional forms of Danu ethnic representation examined in the following section.

#### *From Festival-Based Coordination to the Institutionalization of Danu Ethnic Identity*

The findings indicate that the significance of DSSYD extended beyond strengthening collective solidarity and ethnic visibility to include the development of broader forms of interregional coordination. Repeated festival-based encounters created recurring opportunities for Danu participants from different localities to establish relationships, maintain contact, and engage in increasingly organized forms of collective interaction. Over time, these connections contributed to the conditions under which broader coordination could emerge beyond the festival's immediate setting. The resulting process can be understood empirically as a progression from repeated festival-based interaction to broader social and organizational coordination and subsequently to more formal forms of ethnic representation. DSSYD should therefore not be treated as the sole cause of later institutional developments, but as an important recurring arena that supported the relational and organizational conditions through which Danu collective representation became more durable and institutionally articulated.

The development of a more formal Danu representation took place within an organizational and territorial context that both predated and subsequently enabled the wider coordinating role of DSSYD. At the organizational level, the Danu Literature, Culture, and Regional Development Association (DLCRDA) provided an initial institutional vehicle through which local Danu leaders could coordinate cultural and communal activities. U Wanna Thein explained that this process began locally in Pindaya and grew from an earlier social welfare initiative, noting that the association was initially developed from "a social welfare group of Danu youths in the city" (U Wanna Thein, personal communication, March 24, 2019). This account indicates that DLCRDA did not emerge as an outcome of DSSYD; rather, it constituted an organizational foundation through which cultural coordination, community mobilization, and later festival-related activities could be developed more systematically. A second enabling condition was the establishment of the Danu Self-Administered Zone (DSAZ), which provided a broader administrative and territorial framework within which Danu collective identity could be publicly situated. While the available evidence does not support treating DSAZ as a direct product of festival activity, its existence formed part of the wider institutional environment in which Danu organizational initiatives acquired greater spatial and symbolic coherence. Taken together, DLCRDA and DSAZ should therefore be understood as enabling contexts rather than institutional outcomes of DSSYD: the former supplied an early organizational platform for coordinated cultural action, while the latter provided a broader administrative-territorial setting within which recurring festival-based interaction and subsequent forms of collective representation could develop.

The recurring encounters created through DSSYD gradually extended beyond the immediate festival setting, facilitating more sustained communication and coordination among Danu communities across different localities. Relationships first established through annual participation could be renewed in subsequent gatherings and maintained through wider organizational contact, thereby increasing the capacity for collective action across previously dispersed communities. This process was reinforced by the active outreach undertaken by DLCRDA members, who did not rely solely on festival attendance but deliberately expanded communication networks beyond Pindaya. U Soe Naing described this mobilization by explaining that committee members “traveled from town to town and village to village” to invite Danu communities to participate in the festival and related cultural activities (U Soe Naing, personal communication, March 24, 2019). Such outreach helped connect local groups to a broader interregional network and created repeated channels through which information, invitations, and collective concerns could circulate. The findings, therefore, indicate that DSSYD-related interaction became significant not only because it brought people together annually, but also because it supported an expanding pattern of communication and coordination that increasingly extended beyond the festival itself.

The expansion of interregional communication and coordination eventually created conditions for more formal collective deliberation among Danu leaders and community representatives. Informants linked the emergence of the Danu National Conference (DNC) to the accumulated experience of repeated meetings, growing familiarity, and sustained interaction that had developed through DSSYD and related forms of coordination. U Ba Maw, U Soe Ngwe, and U Win Wanna Win explained that the conference became possible only after Danu people from different areas had met repeatedly, established greater familiarity with one another, and developed sufficient communication to discuss shared ethnic concerns in a more organized forum (U Ba Maw, personal communication, March 24, 2019; U Soe Ngwe, personal communication, March 29, 2019; U Win Wanna Win, personal communication, March 30, 2019). Their accounts indicate that the DNC did not emerge as an isolated institutional initiative, but from a broader process in which recurring social contact gradually developed into the capacity for coordinated deliberation. The transition from repeated encounters to a formal conference, therefore, marked an important shift in the Danu collective organization: relationships that had initially been strengthened through festival-based interaction increasingly served as the basis for discussing common concerns, aligning perspectives across localities, and convening a more structured forum for ethnic representation.

The establishment of the Danu National Conference marked a further shift from primarily relational and festival-centered interaction toward a more formally organized arena of collective deliberation. Whereas earlier encounters had enabled Danu participants and leaders from different localities to build familiarity, maintain contact, and identify shared concerns, the DNC provided a more structured setting in which those relationships could be translated into collective discussion and coordinated decision-making. In this sense, the conference represented a qualitative change in the form of Danu collective engagement: interaction that had previously occurred through recurring gatherings and informal networks increasingly acquired an explicitly deliberative and organizational character. The DNC, therefore, served as a formal forum through which broader Danu concerns could be articulated across localities and considered within a collective framework, demonstrating that the interregional connections strengthened through repeated encounters had developed into a capacity for more organized ethnic coordination. This development constituted an important intermediate stage between festival-based social connectivity and the emergence of a more durable organizational structure of Danu representation.

The transition from the Danu National Conference to the establishment of the Danu National Affairs Organization (D.N.A.O.) marked a further consolidation of Danu collective representation. Whereas the DNC provided a formal arena for deliberating shared concerns, D.N.A.O. gave these collective processes a more durable organizational form through which Danu interests could be represented beyond episodic meetings and festival gatherings. Documentary evidence supports this institutional sequence: the DNC was organized in 2017, followed by the establishment of D.N.A.O. in

2018 (Javansami, 2020). This period was also associated with the increasing formalization of shared ethnic symbols. Javansami (2020) records that the final version of the Danu ethnic dress was approved at the DNC on November 27, 2017, and identifies the Danu flag, national song, ethnic day, and dress as important symbolic markers that had previously been absent or insufficiently established. These developments signaled an important change in the public articulation of Danu identity, as cultural markers that had previously been expressed primarily through festival participation increasingly came to be associated with a more organized and recognizable framework of collective representation. In this sense, the establishment of D.N.A.O. represented a shift from conference-based deliberation toward sustained organizational representation, while the consolidation of shared ethnic symbols enhanced the continuity and public recognizability of Danu identity. The sequence of these developments is summarized in Table 1, which presents the empirical pathways connecting organizational context, recurring festival interaction, interregional coordination, collective deliberation, and more formalized ethnic representation.

**Table 1. Empirical Pathways from Festival-Based Interaction to Institutionalized Danu Representation**

| Stage                              | Empirical Development                                                                                                               | Evidence Identified in the Study                                                                                                                     | Significance for Danu Ethnic Representation                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organizational foundation          | DLCRDA provided an early organizational platform for cultural coordination and community mobilization in Pindaya.                   | U Wanna Thein, personal communication, March 24, 2019; Javansami (2020)                                                                              | Established an organizational basis through which coordinated Danu cultural and communal activities could be developed.          |
| Administrative-territorial context | DSAZ provided a broader administrative and territorial framework within which Danu collective initiatives could develop.            | Documentary evidence summarized by Javansami (2020)                                                                                                  | Strengthened the administrative and territorial context within which the Danu collective identity could be publicly articulated. |
| Recurring festival interaction     | DSSYD repeatedly brought geographically dispersed Danu communities into direct religious, cultural, and social interaction.         | Interview data, field observation, festival documentation; Javansami (2020)                                                                          | Expanded interregional interaction, mutual recognition, and social connectivity.                                                 |
| Network expansion and coordination | DLCRDA outreach and repeated festival encounters extended communication across towns and villages.                                  | U Soe Naing, personal communication, March 24, 2019; related interview evidence                                                                      | Strengthened communication channels and increased the capacity for coordination beyond the annual festival.                      |
| Collective deliberation            | Repeated interregional interaction helped create the conditions for the DNC to function as a formal forum for shared Danu concerns. | U Ba Maw, personal communication, March 24, 2019; U Soe Ngwe, personal communication, March 29, 2019; U Win Wanna Win, personal communication, March | Transformed accumulated social connectivity into more formally organized collective deliberation.                                |

| Stage                        | Empirical Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Evidence Identified in the Study                                                      | Significance for Danu Ethnic Representation                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 30, 2019; Javansami (2020)                                                            |                                                                                                                                                     |
| Organizational consolidation | The DNC was organized in 2017, followed by the establishment of D.N.A.O. in 2018.                                                                                                                                                          | Javansami (2020); interview and organizational evidence from the study                | Extended Danu representation beyond temporary festival gatherings and conference-based deliberation into a more durable organizational form.        |
| Symbolic formalization       | The final version of the Danu ethnic dress was approved at the DNC on November 27, 2017; the broader period was also associated with clearer articulation of the Danu flag, national song, ethnic day, and dress as shared ethnic markers. | Javansami (2020); documentary materials concerning the DNC were examined in the study | Strengthened the continuity, recognizability, and public articulation of Danu ethnic identity through increasingly standardized collective symbols. |

Note. Compiled from interviews, observational, documentary, and published evidence used in the study, including Javansami (2020).

Taken together, the findings indicate that DSSYD was not the sole cause of later institutional developments within the Danu community; rather, its recurring gatherings contributed to the social and organizational conditions that supported the emergence of more formal forms of Danu representation. Annual participation enabled repeated contact among geographically dispersed Danu communities, strengthened interregional relationships, and created channels for sustained communication and coordination beyond the immediate festival setting. These connections, in turn, supported broader collective deliberation and helped create the relational basis on which the Danu National Conference and, subsequently, the Danu National Affairs Organization could develop. The empirical pattern, therefore, shows a gradual movement from temporary ethnic visibility within a festival setting toward more durable forms of organizational representation. Through this process, the public expression of Danu identity became increasingly connected to sustained networks, formal deliberative forums, representative organizations, and shared ethnic symbols, providing a more enduring basis for collective recognition beyond the annual festival itself.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings reveal a sequential social process through which Danu's ethnic identity moved from limited public visibility toward stronger collective recognition and more organized forms of representation. First, the historical visibility of Danu identity was constrained by weak symbolic and linguistic differentiation, dispersed interregional connectivity, limited cultural promotion, and comparatively low political-symbolic prominence. Second, DSSYD brought these dispersed communities into a recurring religious-cultural arena in which Buddhist ritual legitimacy, cultural performance, and repeated social encounter strengthened collective solidarity, increased ethnic visibility, expanded interregional connections, and reinforced confidence in publicly identifying as Danu. Third, the networks and coordination developed through repeated festival participation helped

create the conditions for more formal forms of collective deliberation and representation, including the Danu National Conference and the Danu National Affairs Organization. These findings should not be read as three separate outcomes, but as interconnected stages in a broader process linking limited ethnic legibility, recurring ritual and cultural interaction, relational consolidation, and institutional articulation. The discussion that follows interprets this process through interaction ritual theory, social capital, and institutionalization in order to explain how a religious-cultural festival can become socially consequential beyond the immediate moment of celebration.

The first finding suggests that the central problem was not the absence of Danu ethnic identity, but its limited public legibility. Linguistic similarity to Burmese, weak symbolic differentiation, dispersed settlement, limited interregional linkages, and insufficient cultural promotion constrained the markers by which Danu identity could be recognized beyond local settings. This finding is consistent with studies showing that cultural identity becomes more publicly intelligible when it is expressed through recognizable forms of dress, music, dance, embodied practice, and other cultural symbols (Herdiati et al., 2025; Liu & Natayakulwong, 2023; Özkan, 2026). Related research further demonstrates that festivals can provide arenas for displaying and reinforcing cultural resources, negotiating ethnoracial representation, and mobilizing symbolic markers through which minority groups become visible to wider publics (Enriquez, 2024; Medford, 2021; Rossetti & Quinn, 2021; Zou et al., 2021). The Danu case supports this literature but extends Javansami's (2020) earlier account of Danu identity invisibility by identifying the social conditions that produced such limited visibility. Ethnic existence, therefore, does not automatically generate public recognition; public legibility depends on the availability of recognizable symbolic forms and sustained relational mechanisms through which identity can be collectively articulated.

The second finding explains how DSSYD began to alter these conditions through repeated religious participation. Collins's (2004) theory of interaction ritual chains helps clarify why embedding DSSYD within *Tabaungpwaltaw* was socially consequential: the religious setting brought participants into bodily copresence, shared attention, common ritual activity, and a collective emotional orientation. The Son See Yar gathering, *Sonn San Sein*, *Sonn Kyet*, offerings, processions, and merit-making thus functioned not merely as a religious background to the festival, but as recurring practices through which solidarity was generated and renewed. This interpretation corresponds with studies showing that festival rituals strengthen belonging, collective attachment, and cultural identity through repeated participation (Ariwibowo et al., 2025; Dutta, 2025; Yin et al., 2026). It is also consistent with research linking festival experience and participation to emotional solidarity, festival and place identity, and stronger community identification (Lin & Lee, 2020; Mohanty & Dash, 2023; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). The Danu case nevertheless extends Collins's framework because ritual effects did not remain confined to immediate solidarity: repeated interaction generated relationships that persisted beyond individual festival occasions and subsequently supported wider forms of social coordination.

Cultural performance then translated this collective solidarity into more visible ethnic expression, while repeated encounters expanded the relational infrastructure connecting dispersed Danu communities. Traditional dress, dance, singing, and instruments such as the *O-Zee* drum, gongs, cymbals, and bamboo clappers made Danu identity visible, audible, and embodied within public festival space. More importantly, these performances occurred within an annually recurring arena in which participants from different localities could repeatedly meet and maintain relationships. From Putnam's (2000) perspective, this pattern illustrates the development of social capital through networks, familiarity, reciprocity, and the capacity for collective coordination. Previous studies similarly show that festivals can strengthen community cohesion and identity, generate bonding and bridging relations, sustain diasporic and plural forms of belonging, and create meaningful spaces of intercultural encounter (Kofoed et al., 2022; Mahalakshmi et al., 2025; McClinchey, 2021; Wood & Homolja, 2021). Kuo et al. (2021) further demonstrate the importance of social capital in strengthening place identity and collective support surrounding festival participation. The Danu case develops this perspective by showing that festival-generated social capital can become more than an outcome of

community cohesion: under appropriate conditions, it can operate as a relational resource for interregional coordination and subsequent collective representation.

The third finding shows how these relational processes became connected to more durable institutional forms. This development should not be interpreted as a simple causal sequence in which DSSYD directly produced the DNC or D.N.A.O.; DLCRDA and DSAZ constituted important organizational and territorial enabling conditions. Nevertheless, repeated DSSYD encounters contributed to sustained networks, recurring communication, deliberative capacity, and increasingly organized coordination. This process is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) account of institutionalization, in which recurrent social practices become habitualized, reciprocally recognized, and progressively stabilized into durable structures. Empirically, the movement from recurring interaction to the DNC as a formal deliberative forum, followed by D.N.A.O. as a more durable representative organization and the formalization of shared ethnic symbols, illustrates this process in the Danu context (Javansami, 2020). Yin et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate that festival organizations can acquire institutional durability when supported by sufficient resources, stakeholder relationships, legitimacy, and political conditions. The Danu case adds an important distinction: institutionalization did not simply transform the festival organization itself into a permanent institution; rather, networks generated and reinforced through recurring festival interaction contributed to organizational forms of ethnic representation beyond the festival. It therefore specifies an empirical pathway through which repeated religio-cultural interaction can support coordination, formal deliberation, organizational representation, and symbolic standardization under enabling conditions.

Taken together, these findings support an integrated theoretical explanation in which interaction ritual, social capital, and institutionalization constitute connected analytical levels rather than independent theoretical lenses. Collins (2004) explains how shared ritual interaction generates solidarity and collective symbols at the micro-social level; Putnam (2000) clarifies how repeated interaction can extend such solidarity into relational networks, reciprocity, and coordination; and Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain how recurrent and socially recognized practices may become embedded in more durable organizational and symbolic structures. Existing festival studies have established important links between festivals and ritual belonging, cultural visibility, identity affirmation, cultural transmission, social cohesion, and relational networks, while more recent scholarship also demonstrates the potential institutional significance of festival organizations (Yin et al., 2024). The Danu case connects these dimensions by identifying a sequential mechanism operating across micro-social, relational, and organizational levels. Conceptually, the findings suggest a process in which religious legitimacy facilitates ritual solidarity, cultural performance increases ethnic visibility, repeated encounters strengthen social connectivity, and these relational capacities support broader coordination and, under enabling organizational and territorial conditions, more durable institutional articulation. The theoretical contribution of the study, therefore, lies not merely in combining three theories but in demonstrating how their respective mechanisms can be connected to explain the shift from recurring religious-cultural interaction toward sustained minority ethnic representation.

The findings have both scholarly and practical implications for the study of minority identity. Analytically, religious-cultural festivals should be understood not only as sites of heritage preservation or cultural entertainment, but also as potential infrastructures of ethnic visibility, relational integration, and collective organization (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021; S. Yin et al., 2024). In practice, recurring festivals may provide minority communities with opportunities to strengthen interregional communication, transmit cultural knowledge, and expand coordination among representatives; however, such outcomes depend on enabling organizational and territorial conditions, as illustrated by the roles of DLCRDA and DSAZ in the Danu case. These conclusions should nevertheless be interpreted within the limits of a single qualitative case study. The mechanisms identified here are analytically transferable but cannot be assumed to operate identically across all ethnic festivals or minority settings. Future research should therefore compare the Danu experience with communities possessing stronger linguistic, territorial, political, or institutional markers to assess whether similar sequences of ritual

interaction, network formation, and institutional articulation occur. The principal contribution of the Danu case lies in demonstrating how a recurring religious-cultural festival can connect symbolic identity formation with relational coordination and, under enabling conditions, more durable forms of minority ethnic representation.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Danu Son See Yar Day festival played an important role in transforming the limited public visibility of Danu ethnic identity into a more connected, recognizable, and organized collective presence. The findings show that this process developed through the interaction of religious legitimacy, cultural performance, repeated interregional gathering, and expanding social coordination. DSSYD therefore functioned not merely as a recurring celebration, but as a social arena in which collective solidarity, ethnic visibility, and broader forms of coordination were progressively strengthened.

The principal scientific contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that religious-cultural festivals can connect symbolic identity formation with relational and institutional processes. By integrating interaction ritual theory, social capital, and institutionalization, the study shows how repeated ritual participation can generate solidarity, how recurring interaction can strengthen networks and coordination, and how, under enabling organizational and territorial conditions, these processes may contribute to more durable forms of minority ethnic representation. The Danu case thus extends festival and minority-identity scholarship beyond questions of cultural preservation and communal belonging toward the institutional consequences of repeated collective interaction.

This study is limited by its focus on a single qualitative case and by its reliance on fieldwork conducted during the 2019 DSSYD festival, together with interview and documentary materials concerning subsequent organizational developments. Its findings, therefore, should not be generalized automatically to other ethnic communities or festival contexts. Future research should compare the Danu experience with that of minority groups that possess stronger linguistic, territorial, political, or institutional markers, and examine similar processes over time to determine how recurring cultural and religious gatherings contribute to ethnic visibility, social coordination, and institutional representation across different contexts.

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