



Festivals as a Communicative Space in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh Borderland: A Study of *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of festivals as space for communication that enhance interethnic relationships. By concentrating on the *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals within the Mishing and Adi communities, it analyzes how cultural expressions and mutual engagement facilitate intercultural dialogue and promote social unity. Employing a qualitative ethnographic methodology, data were collected through interviews and participant observation during the festival cycles of 2023-2024. The analysis illustrates how these festivals function as venues for cultural negotiation. Moreover, the results indicate that festivals serve as grassroots mechanisms for peacebuilding, fostering mutual understanding, and enhancing community resilience in a politically sensitive and ethnically diverse borderland. Rather than being simple celebrations, *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* emerge as essential communicative actions that transform the borderland into a realm of coexistence and shared cultural identity.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, festivals, Borderland relations, Adi and Mishing communities, Cultural performance.

INTRODUCTION

Festivals are “scheduled, spatially and temporally bounded public events characterized by aesthetic expressions and programmed sequences. These events encompass both macro-level communal narratives and micro-level face-to-face interactions, offering a unique opportunity to examine the semiotic and social dimensions of cultural communication” (Stoeltje, 1992). They are dynamic cultural performances that function as expressive sites of communication and community interaction. Rooted in participatory ethos, festivals create communicative spaces where participants collectively construct meanings, reaffirm social bonds, and reinforce cultural identities. Performances involving music, dance, oral traditions, and rituals not only preserve heritage but also articulate history, values, and visions of community life, often serving as sites of resistance, revitalization, and renewal (Quinn, 2013).

Globally, the communicative and integrative potential of festivals has been well documented across diverse socio-cultural settings. In Japan, traditional *Matsuri* festivals promote *wa* (harmony) by fostering intergenerational and interclass solidarity (Yamaguchi, 2018). In Brazil, Carnival dissolves class boundaries, enabling cultural exchange and fostering unity across diverse groups (Silva, 2019). Similarly, Kenya’s *Harambee* gatherings strengthen collective ties and shared purpose (Kimani, 2017), while storytelling festivals in Zimbabwe sustain intergenerational knowledge transmission and cultural pride (Moyo, 2019). In Malawi, the Lake of Stars Festival brings together diverse communities, highlighting festivals as platforms for intercultural dialogue and appreciation.

In multicultural contexts, community-based festivals increasingly function as vehicles for intercultural understanding. Delanty (2012) argues that festivals foster transformative cultural encounters that bridge divides and cultivate inclusive identities. Similarly, Smith (2018) highlights their capacity to facilitate exchange and promote social harmony through shared participation. In the United Kingdom, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe exemplifies how diverse cultural expressions can enhance intercultural dialogue and mutual recognition (Thomas, 2019; Maughan & Bianchini, 2014).

Borderland regions present particularly complex sites of interethnic interaction, shaped by historical conflicts, cultural affinities, and political demarcations. The Assam–Arunachal Pradesh borderlands in Northeast India illustrate this dynamic. Here, the Adi and Mishing communities inhabit overlapping cultural and territorial spaces. Despite shared linguistic and ancestral ties, tensions have occasionally arisen over land and resource access. Within this

contested terrain, indigenous festivals such as *Ali-Aye-Ligang* (Mishing) and *Solung* (Adi) have evolved as distinctive communicative platforms that not only preserve cultural traditions but also enable interethnic encounters and dialogue. Yet, scholarly research on how these festivals operate as grassroots mechanisms for intercultural communication and community resilience remains limited.

This gap is particularly evident in Indian borderland studies, where academic attention has often emphasized conflict, security, and territoriality while overlooking the cultural and communicative dimensions of peacebuilding. In this context, the *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals are not merely cultural events but vital spaces of interethnic engagement. Their performative and participatory features such as mutual invitations, joint rituals, and collective celebrations, function as symbolic acts of kinship, negotiation, and solidarity. By exploring how these festivals facilitate interaction, this research accentuates their role as communicative spaces that strengthen intercommunity ties in politically sensitive environments.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- a. In what ways do *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* enable intercultural communication and interaction between the Adi and Mishing communities?
- b. How do participation and performance during these festivals contribute to intercommunity solidarity?

The significance of this study lies in its focus on indigenous cultural practices as tools for interethnic communication in politically sensitive border areas. While much borderland scholarship foregrounds conflict and contestation, this work highlights the cultural and performative dimensions of peacebuilding, dialogue, and resilience. By situating *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* within broader debates on cultural communication and border studies, the research reframes borderlands not merely as zones of conflict but also as opportunities for collaboration and intercultural engagement.

Solung Festival of the Adis

Festivals form an integral part of Adi culture, embodying traditions, beliefs, and communal identity. Among these, the Solung festival is one of the most significant. According to Rukbo (1968), it represents the lifeline and core of Adi culture and is considered genealogically the youngest of their festivals. The term “Solung” derives from *Eso* (mithun) and *Alung* (a flock), with the initial syllables dropped and combined (Rukbo, 1986). Celebrated annually between

August 31 and September 5, Solung is dedicated to deities such as Doying-Bote (the divine protector), Kiine-Naane (the mother goddess of prosperity), Dadi-Bote (the protector of domestic animals), and Gumin-Soyin (the guardian of the household and family). Through rituals, feasts, and collective performances, the festival reaffirms both cosmological beliefs and community solidarity.

Ali-Aye-Ligang Festival of the Mishing

Ali-Aye-Ligang is the Mishing community's spring festival, held annually on the first Wednesday of *Ginmur Polo* (February–March), marking the commencement of the agricultural season. The name derives from *Ali* (seeds), *Aye* (fruits), and *Ligang* (sowing). On this auspicious day, family heads sow paddy in their fields while praying for abundance and well-being. Essential to the rituals are *apong* (rice beer) and *purang* (food prepared in leaves). Music, dance, and songs form the core of the festival, with young men and women performing the traditional *Gumrag Soman* dance in courtyards and fields, often receiving gifts of rice beer, chicken, or money from hosts. The songs encompass a range of themes, from the struggles of life to the joys and sorrows of love. Lasting five days, the festival includes communal feasts, observance of taboos, and concludes with *lilen*, a large village feast featuring pork, dried fish, and *poro apong*.

By analyzing these festivals as communicative spaces, the study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersections of border studies, intercultural communication, and indigenous knowledge. It highlights how grassroots cultural practices—through performance, participation, and shared symbolic meaning—mediate interethnic relationships, foster solidarity, and sustain community resilience in contested borderland contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Festivals is a vital part of community life which provides spaces for meaningful social connectivity and exchange. It plays a crucial role in facilitating social interaction and in strengthening the identity of a group by bringing it together (Borgohain, n.d). According to Clifford Geertz the motivation behind participating in festivals is social interaction. The messages of the festival reflect the shared experience of the groups it communicates about the themselves (Geertz, 1973). Festivals play an essential role in communicating cultural values and fostering interethnic understanding. According to Stoeltje (1992), festivals represent collective phenomena rooted in group life and act as communicative spaces that engage participants in both aesthetic and social expressions. These events also reflect systems of

reciprocity and shared responsibility. As communicative situations, festivals create a dynamic interplay between performance and participation that reflect the shared experiences and evolving identities of the groups. Moreover, festivals serve as platforms for expressing ethnicity, social revitalization, and political engagement. These events regenerate community spirit and enact social life by bringing people together, thereby strengthening identity and communal cohesion. Through singing, dancing, and music, festivals promote constant in-group communication, enabling participants to reflect their collective concerns and reinforce ethnic identity (Stoeltje,1992).

In Japan, traditional celebrations known as Matsuri are intricately woven into the social fabric, highlighting the principle of harmony or 'wa'. Yamaguchi (2018) notes that these festivals enhance social unity by bringing together individuals from various backgrounds, thereby fostering mutual support and a profound sense of belonging. In a similar vein, Silva (2019) points out that Brazil's Carnival acts as a distinctive platform where social and cultural divides are temporarily bridged, allowing for collective identity and inclusivity. Furthermore, Kimani (2017) examines how Harambee gatherings in Kenya promote social cohesion through collective efforts and interdependence. Smith (2018) also accentuates the role of community-oriented cultural festivals in the United States in facilitating cultural exchange and social harmony, enabling participants from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to engage with one another, thus cultivating mutual respect and understanding. In multicultural contexts, such festivals play a crucial role in mitigating social fragmentation and fostering inclusivity.

Thomas (2020) highlights the significance of government-supported cultural initiatives in nurturing mutual understanding and combating discrimination, with his research indicating that state-sponsored festivals greatly enhance interethnic relations by promoting cultural exchange. This viewpoint is echoed by Nakamura (2017), who, through his analysis of Japanese tea ceremonies, illustrates how these intimate cultural gatherings foster mutual respect and social connections among attendees. Oliveira (2021) further observes that rural communities in Brazil benefit from increased social cohesion and mutual support through shared cultural practices. Additionally, African traditions emphasize the importance of storytelling in enhancing cultural understanding, as Moyo (2019) reveals that storytelling festivals reinforce intergenerational connections and community ties, which are essential for fostering social cohesion in diverse societies. The significance of festivals in encouraging interaction is further corroborated by Quinn (2013), who observes that festivals provide opportunities for community members to express their cultural practices and develop a sense of pride and identity. Delanty (2012) points

how festivals can bridge social divides by offering platforms for collective celebration and dialogue. Similarly, the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival has been recognized for promoting cultural understanding (Yamaguchi, 2015).

In multicultural societies festivals break down cultural barriers and foster dialogue (Smith, 2018). In United Kingdom, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe provides a stage for diverse cultural expressions and intercultural engagement (Thomas, 2019). Moreover, festival significantly enhance social cohesion and appreciation of cultural diversity (Maughan & Bianchini (2014).

Traditional festivals in Japan, such as the Gion Matsuri in Kyoto, are integral to community life. These events bring together various segments of society, thereby sustaining social ties (Nakamura, 2017). In Brazil, festival functions as a symbol of national unity, promoting social cohesion through inclusive participation (Oliveira, 2021). African festivals such Lake of Stars Festival of Malawi provides platform for intercultural exchange and mutual appreciation. Moyo (2019) suggests that these events foster social cohesion by creating a collective space for celebrating heritage. Similarly, Heritage Festival of Singapore promotes dialogue between diverse cultural groups, which, according to Tan (2018), enhances mutual respect and understanding.

In the specific case of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Thomas (2019) establishes how cultural festivals contribute to feelings of shared experience and community identity. He endorses further research to identify elements that most effectively foster cohesion. Moyo (2019), in turn, calls for continued support for traditional storytelling festivals, given their vital role in promoting intergenerational dialogue and social unity. Oliveira (2016) also explores how the inclusive nature of the Brazil's Carnival promotes interactions that enhance mutual respect, a sense of solidarity, and cultural pride. Smith (2018) also concludes that festivals in the U.S. context catalyze social interaction and trust among multicultural populations, while Delanty (2012) emphasizes their transformative potential in community integration across Europe.

These studies collectively affirm that festivals whether traditional or contemporary serve as powerful mechanisms for social cohesion, cultural preservation, and interethnic understanding. The communicative, participatory, and performative dimensions of festivals make them critical tools in both affirming cultural identity and bridging ethnic divides.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach grounded in fieldwork conducted in selected villages namely, Debing, Detak, Rayang, Ishwar Pather, Sirakhowa, Oyan, Oiram Ghat located along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border inhabited by both Mishing and Adi communities. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, oral narratives, and participant observation during *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals between 2023 and 2024. Key informants included community elders, festival organizers, youth participants, and local cultural practitioners. The analysis was backed by existing secondary literature. Data were coded thematically to trace how symbols, rituals, and interactions during festivals contribute to communicative practices and interethnic relationships. Ethical clearance was obtained, and participants' consent was secured in accordance with research guidelines.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines symbolic interactionism, intercultural communication theory, and borderland theory to investigate the role of festivals as communicative environments. These frameworks collectively facilitate an understanding of the dynamic processes involved in identity formation, intercultural engagement, and the creation of symbolic meanings within the historically interconnected Mishing and Adi communities. Symbolic Interactionism, initially proposed by George Herbert Mead and further developed by Herbert Blumer (1937), asserts that individuals derive meanings through social interactions that rely on shared symbols. In the context of the *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals, rituals, performances, songs, and traditional attire serve as cultural symbols that facilitate communication and strengthen collective identity. These interactions entail an active negotiation of cultural meanings, social roles, and emotional expressions that foster community cohesion. Intercultural communication theory enhances this framework by elucidating how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds engage, negotiate meanings, and adapt through communicative actions. The research of Gudykunst and Kim (2003) on intercultural adaptation, along with Ting-Toomey's identity negotiation theory (2005), is pertinent in comprehending how individuals and groups navigate cultural similarities and differences during shared festive occasions, thereby fostering mutual respect and understanding across ethnic divides. Additionally, borderland theory (Donnan & Wilson, 1999; Baud & van Schendel, 1997) conceptualizes borders as dynamic socio-cultural spaces of interaction, hybridity, and exchange. Within this framework, festivals transcend geographical boundaries, functioning as space where borderland communities actively construct and redefine interethnic relationships, shared histories, and collective memories.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive analysis of how festivals serve as symbolic, communicative, and performative platforms for the expression of identity, enacting cultural continuity, and negotiating inter-ethnic cohesion in the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh borderland.

DATA ANALYSIS

Festivals act as significant platforms for enhancing intercultural dialogue between the Mishing and Adi communities. Grounded in a common heritage and geographical closeness, *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* serve as a ceremonial space that honours cultural similarities, strengthens social connections, and reconciles ethnic disparities. Through comprehensive interviews, participant observation, and public narratives, this study identified four key themes, reinforced by global empirical research that highlights the wider significance of cultural festivals in promoting interethnic harmony.

Festivals as Reciprocal Cultural Participation and Kinship Reinforcement

One of the most striking findings from field narratives is the manner in which festivals function as reciprocal platforms of cultural participation, reinforcing kinship and solidarity between the Adi and Mishing communities. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that the practice of attending each other's festivals has now become not only habitual but also emotionally significant. This reciprocal participation transcends mere attendance; it is an enactment of cultural solidarity and a reaffirmation of interethnic bonds.

For instance, Pradip Panging of Rayang village observed, "My family has a strong bond with the Jerang family. Our connection extends beyond festivals to important life events like marriage ceremonies. Attending each other's festivals has become part of how we reaffirm that bond year after year."

Such accounts reflect James Carey's (1989) ritual model of communication, which shifts attention away from the transmission of information to the symbolic enactment of shared meanings. In this model, communication is seen as a cultural performance that reproduces social order and collective identity. When members of the Adi community attend *Ali-Aye-Ligang*, or when Mishing families join in the celebration of *Solung*, they are not simply spectators of rituals. Rather, they are active participants in reaffirming a shared ancestry, cultural alignment, and long-standing relationships of reciprocity. These shared acts

symbolically repair and reinforce interethnic ties that might otherwise be strained by borderland disputes over land, resources, or political representation.

Reciprocal festival attendance also reflects the concept of social capital (Putnam, 2000). These gatherings generate bridging social capital by creating networks of trust and cooperation across ethnic boundaries. The exchange of hospitality, gifts, and shared meals during festivals such as *Ligang* and *Solung* deepens interpersonal bonds and anchors long-term obligations between families. This symbolic economy of exchange not only ensures continuity of intergroup relations but also prevents alienation or marginalization.

Comparative examples reinforce this point. In Nigeria, the Argungu Fishing Festival provides a compelling parallel. As Shyllon (2007) documents, the festival brings together communities from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds who collaborate and compete in fishing activities, transforming the event into a celebratory site of peaceful coexistence. Much like *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung*, the festival acts as an arena where difference is acknowledged but transcended through collective ritual participation.

Respondents in the field repeatedly described how attendance at each other's festivals not only sustains kinship ties but also produces emotional resonance. The sense of familiarity and belonging generated through dancing together, sharing rice beer, or participating in collective feasts ensures that cultural differences do not harden into antagonisms. In effect, festivals become performative rituals of kinship reaffirmation, reconstituting interethnic relationships in ways that are deeply affective, symbolic, and communicative.

Festivals as Instruments of Intergenerational Cultural Transmission

Another major theme that emerged was the role of festivals in mediating intergenerational cultural transmission, especially in households formed through interethnic marriages. Respondents described how women, in particular, played a crucial role in introducing children to the cultural practices of both communities, thereby enabling the emergence of dual identities among younger generations.

As Subadra Pegu narrated, "During *Ali-Aye-Ligang*, I take my in-laws to my parental home. My children witness both the Adi and the Mishing way of celebrating. These exchanges allow them to grow up appreciating both cultures equally."

Such acts illustrate how festivals function as pedagogical sites of cultural communication, offering children opportunities to learn not only the rituals, dances, and songs of their

community of origin but also those of their in-laws' community. Children in such families often develop heightened cultural awareness and linguistic adaptability, embodying what Byram (1997) describes as *intercultural communicative competence*, a capacity rooted in empathy, openness, and tolerance.

The involvement of children in dances, feasts, and rituals also underscores the performative nature of cultural transmission. Participation is not simply about learning abstract values but about embodied experience—singing in the local language, dancing in traditional attire, or consuming symbolic foods such as *apong* and *purang*. This process fosters both cognitive understanding and affective attachment to multiple cultural traditions.

The role of festivals in intergenerational transmission is not unique to Northeast India. Moyo (2019), in his study of storytelling festivals in Zimbabwe, emphasizes how cultural events serve as vehicles for linking youth to ancestral wisdom, ethics, and cosmology. Through symbolic narratives and performative immersion, children gain a sense of rootedness that strengthens identity. Similarly, in Native American contexts, powwows function as spaces for young people to learn traditional songs, dances, and values, ensuring cultural continuity across generations (King, 2015).

For the Mishing and Adi communities, festivals are particularly significant because they take place in contested borderlands where cultural erosion or political pressures could otherwise fragment interethnic ties. By ensuring that children are exposed to both cultural repertoires, festivals lay the foundation for long-term interethnic coexistence. In this sense, they act as both cultural classrooms and intergenerational bridges, producing youth who are adept at navigating dual cultural affiliations while reinforcing kinship bonds across community boundaries.

Challenging Stereotypes and Reducing Prejudices through Festival Participation

A recurring narrative from respondents was the way in which festival participation helped dismantle stereotypes and prejudices, particularly in families formed through intermarriage. Many described how initial tensions and negative perceptions diminished through sustained participation in each other's cultural rituals.

For example, Omem Jamoh recalled, “At first, my father faced stereotyping when I married into a Mishing family. There were doubts about customs and differences. But over the years, as we celebrated *Ali-Aye-Ligang* together, perceptions changed. Now both families look forward to joining these festivals.”

Similarly, Monti Moyong observed, “I also faced challenges with language and customs initially. But with time, through celebrating both *Solung* and *Ligang* together, our families built a relationship of respect and trust.”

These experiences align with Allport’s (1954) Contact Hypothesis, which posits that prejudice can be reduced through sustained interaction, especially when such contact occurs under conditions of equal status, shared goals, and institutional support. Festivals provide exactly this: a context where communities meet on equal footing, share collective objectives (such as successful harvest rituals), and engage in structured, repeated interactions.

Global parallels further illustrate this dynamic. In post-apartheid South Africa, Heritage Day celebrations unite diverse groups including Zulu, Xhosa, Indian, and white communities around a shared national identity while respecting cultural diversity (Nkosi, 2016). Similarly, multicultural festivals in Western contexts, as noted by Smith (2018) and Thomas (2020), provide opportunities for immigrant and host communities to display cultural traditions, thereby reducing misunderstandings and building trust. In the United States, cultural festivals allow different ethnic groups to showcase food, music, and storytelling, fostering empathy while breaking down entrenched stereotypes.

In the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh borderlands, such processes take on heightened significance because ethnic prejudices are often tied to territorial disputes and political tensions. By creating emotionally positive encounters and shared celebratory memories, festivals help to soften hardened perceptions, reduce suspicion, and open space for new forms of social trust. Thus, festivals act as communicative strategies of prejudice reduction, transforming difference into familiarity and hostility into kinship.

Institutionalization of Festivals and Cultural Diplomacy

Finally, the institutionalization of intercultural festival practices represents an important development in the consolidation of Adi-Mishing relations. Organizations such as the Adi-Mising Bane Kebang (AMBK) have taken deliberate steps to formalize festival collaborations and to address shared challenges ranging from land disputes to drug abuse.

As Mojit Pao, a representative of AMBK, explained, “We collaboratively organize *Solung* and *Ligang* festivals across both states. This is not only about culture but also about unity. Through these festivals, we create awareness of our common heritage and address issues facing both communities.”

Such initiatives transform festivals from purely cultural rituals into instruments of cultural diplomacy and political solidarity. They function as public demonstrations of unity, signaling to both communities and external actors (such as state authorities) that Adis and Mishings are aligned in preserving their shared heritage and addressing collective concerns.

Globally, similar patterns can be observed. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe has evolved into a platform where minority groups use performance not only to express identity but also to advance political claims (Thomas, 2019). In Singapore, the state-supported Heritage Festival is explicitly framed as a mechanism for promoting interethnic understanding and cultivating pride in a shared national narrative (Tan, 2018). These examples highlight how festivals can transcend their cultural origins to become vehicles of diplomacy, negotiation, and solidarity.

In the Assam–Arunachal context, the institutionalization of *Solung* and *Ali-Aye-Ligang* as joint celebrations demonstrates how indigenous cultural practices can be strategically mobilized for borderland peacebuilding. By formalizing cooperation, organizations such as AMBK ensure continuity, structure, and visibility for intercultural exchanges, thereby embedding them within broader frameworks of social governance. This process creates what might be termed a borderland public sphere, where festivals operate as communicative spaces for both cultural reaffirmation and political dialogue.

Altogether, these four dimensions, reciprocal participation, intergenerational transmission, prejudice reduction, and institutionalization show that festivals are not passive cultural remnants but active communicative arenas. They generate kinship, build competencies, dismantle stereotypes, and foster collective agency in ways that sustain intercultural relations in contested borderlands.

DISCUSSION

This research illustrates that the *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals serve as a vital communicative platform that promote intercultural dialogue, foster social cohesion, and strengthen interethnic relationships between the Mishing and Adi communities. These festivals are deeply embedded in a shared cultural heritage and geographical closeness, creating environment where cultural identities are expressed, negotiated, and reaffirmed. Rather than being mere static representations of ethnic traditions, these festivals emerge as dynamic practices that facilitate community involvement and collective meaning-making. The empirical narratives collected in this research also demonstrate how participation in these festivals contributes to reducing intergroup prejudice. Numerous participants noted positive shifts in

familial and community attitudes through consistent exposure and engagement in each other's cultural events. These observations closely align with Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which posits that regular and meaningful intergroup interaction, grounded in equal status and shared goals, can eliminate stereotypes and enhance mutual understanding. The formalization of joint celebrations through organizations like the Adi-Mishing Bane Kebang (AMBK) further enhances the importance of these festivals. Such initiatives represent a form of grassroots cultural diplomacy, where cultural performances are utilized not only for celebration but also for addressing broader social challenges such as drug menace, border disputes, and youth disengagement. By transforming the borderland into a shared cultural space, these institutions contest narratives of division and advocate for a model of inclusive solidarity rooted in ritual cooperation and shared cultural memory. The results of this study strongly support the global literature regarding the communicative power of festivals. In various contexts, festivals have fostered an environment conducive to interethnic understanding, cultural preservation, and community resilience.

CONCLUSION

This research establishes that the *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Solung* festivals serve as a vibrant platform for communication, enhancing intercultural understanding, fostering social cohesion, and promoting symbolic diplomacy between the Mishing and Adi communities. Based on empirical narratives, the findings indicate that these festivals embody practices that reinforce kinship, particularly through reciprocal participation and shared emotional investments among communities. Intermarried families are crucial in facilitating the transmission of culture across generations, exposing their children to dual cultural experiences and cultivating intercultural competence through lived experiences and empathetic interaction. Furthermore, engagement in these festivals has proven vital in challenging stereotypes and diminishing entrenched prejudices, thereby supporting theories such as Allport's Contact Hypothesis in a culturally rich yet politically sensitive area. The formalization of collaborative celebrations by organizations like the Adi-Mishing Bane Kebang (AMBK) highlights how cultural performances can evolve into strategic instruments of grassroots diplomacy, allowing communities to address shared issues while reinforcing a collective identity. By reconceptualizing borders as communicative spaces of convergence rather than divisions, this research offers a counter-narrative to prevailing state-centric perspectives that frequently neglect local agency and cultural resilience. Echoing intercultural practices seen in other multiethnic societies worldwide, the experiences of the Mishing and Adi communities illustrate

that festivals, when grounded in mutual respect and inclusive participation, possess the capacity to transform contested areas into realms of coexistence, dialogue, and social solidarity. Eventually, this study affirms that cultural events serve as enduring tools for negotiating identity and fostering sustainable interethnic relations.

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