



NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF CHINESE ETHNIC ASSIMILATION IN CLARA NG'S NOVEL *DIMSUM TERAKHIR*

Negosiasi Identitas dan Politik Asimilasi Etnis Tionghoa dalam Novel Dimsum Terakhir Karya Clara Ng

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Naskah Diterima Tanggal 17 Februari 2026—Direvisi Akhir Tanggal 18 Mei 2026—Disetujui Tanggal 25 Mei 2026

doi: <https://doi.org/10.26499/jentera.v15i1.8591>

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representation of Chinese identity in Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*. The study uses a qualitative approach with a text analysis design based on Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory and a sociological perspective of literature to uncover the construction of ethnic identity through narratives, characters, and social contexts in literary works. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies using the reading and note-taking method. The researcher conducted intensive and repeated readings of the text (close reading) to identify relevant data, then grouped them based on thematic categories. Data analysis refers to the stages of qualitative analysis according to Creswell (2015), including organizing data, coding, interpreting themes, and drawing interpretive conclusions by considering the social, historical, and ideological contexts of the text. The results of the study indicate that Chinese identity in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* is not singular and static but rather a dynamic and continuously negotiated social construction. The representation of identity is evident through identity politics, such as changes in name, religion, and citizenship status, which reflect structural pressures and assimilation practices. In addition, discrimination and stereotypes that emerge in social interactions indicate the existence of unequal power relations. Culturally, traditions such as Chinese New Year celebrations and the consumption of dim sum are maintained despite restrictions placed on private spaces. This research confirms that the novel "*Dimsum Terakhir*" represents Chinese identity as a space for social, political, and psychological negotiation, while also providing implications for strengthening multiculturalism and respecting cultural diversity in Indonesia.

Keywords: Cultural Assimilation; Social Discrimination; Chinese Identity; Literary Representation

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi identitas Tionghoa dalam novel "*Dimsum Terakhir*" karya Clara Ng. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain analisis teks yang didasarkan pada teori identitas budaya Stuart Hall dan perspektif sosiologi sastra untuk mengungkap konstruksi identitas etnis melalui narasi, tokoh, dan konteks sosial dalam karya sastra. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka dengan metode baca dan catat. Peneliti melakukan pembacaan teks secara intensif dan berulang (*close reading*) untuk mengidentifikasi data yang relevan, kemudian mengelompokkannya berdasarkan kategori tematik. Analisis data mengacu pada tahapan analisis kualitatif menurut Creswell (2015), meliputi pengorganisasian data, pengodean, interpretasi tema, dan penarikan simpulan secara interpretatif dengan mempertimbangkan konteks sosial, historis, dan ideologis teks. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas Tionghoa dalam novel "*Dimsum Terakhir*" tidak bersifat tunggal dan statis, melainkan merupakan konstruksi sosial yang

dinamis dan terus dinegosiasikan. Representasi identitas tampak melalui politik identitas, seperti perubahan nama, agama, dan status kewarganegaraan, yang mencerminkan tekanan struktural serta praktik asimilasi. Selain itu, diskriminasi dan stereotip yang muncul dalam interaksi sosial menunjukkan adanya relasi kuasa yang tidak setara. Dalam aspek budaya, tradisi seperti perayaan Imlek dan konsumsi dimsum tetap dipertahankan meskipun mengalami pembatasan dalam ruang privat. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa novel "Dimsum Terakhir" merepresentasikan identitas Tionghoa sebagai ruang negosiasi sosial, politik, dan psikologis sekaligus memberikan implikasi bagi penguatan multikulturalisme dan penghargaan terhadap keberagaman budaya di Indonesia.

Kata-kata kunci: Asimilasi Budaya; Diskriminasi Sosial; Identitas Tionghoa; Representasi Sastra

How to Cite: Lin, Z. Y., Wiyatmi., & Yao, D. (2026). Negotiating Identity and the Politics of Chinese Ethnic Assimilation in Clara Ng's Novel *Dimsum Terakhir*. *Jentera: Jurnal Kajian Sastra*, 15(1), 80—98. doi: <https://doi.org/10.26499/jentera.v15i1.8591>

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country with a high level of ethnic diversity, where each group has a distinct historical background, culture, and identity. One ethnic group that has experienced complex dynamics throughout Indonesian history is the Chinese ethnic group. The Chinese population in Indonesia is not only geographically dispersed but also exhibits heterogeneity in terms of social, economic, and cultural identity (Arifin, Hasbullah, & Pramono, 2017). This situation emphasizes that Chinese identity is not a single entity, but rather a social construct that continues to evolve and be negotiated in various contexts.

Throughout Indonesian history, Chinese identity has often been problematic. During the New Order era, assimilation policies forced ethnic Chinese to adapt to the dominant culture, which resulted in restrictions on their cultural expression and identity (Ilyas, Nuratikah, & Wardana, 2020). Practices such as name changes, restrictions on traditions, and administrative regulations demonstrate state intervention in the realm of personal identity. Post-reform, space for identity expression has become more open, but stigma, stereotypes, and discrimination against ethnic Chinese have not completely disappeared (Setijadi, 2019). In fact, in the contemporary context, the debate over the terms "Tionghoa" and "Cina" demonstrates that identity remains a sensitive and political arena for negotiation (Sinaga, Kusumaningtyas, & Rozi, 2023). This demonstrates that ethnic identity remains a forum for negotiation.

In this context, literature becomes an important medium for representing the experience of Chinese ethnic identity. Literary works not only reflect social realities but also shape society's perspectives on certain identities. In diasporic literature, identity is often constructed through the concept of an "imaginary homeland," reflecting both the emotional attachment and cultural distance between individuals and their origins (Kusumaningtyas & Cohen, 2020). This demonstrates that Chinese identity in literature is not static, but rather dynamic and full of ambiguity. Through its narrative, characterization, and conflict, literature can demonstrate how identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated within complex social relations.

One work that explicitly addresses this issue is Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2012. This novel presents a portrait of the life of a Chinese family in Indonesia, colored by various conflicts, both internal and external. Through the experiences of its characters, this novel shows that Chinese identity is not only shaped by cultural and traditional factors but also by external pressures such as political policies, social stereotypes, and unequal power relations. The uniqueness of the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* compared to other literary works lies in its success in depicting Chinese identity in a complex manner through family dynamics, generational differences, religious issues, name changes, and experiences of discrimination experienced by its characters in everyday life. Furthermore, this novel does not only present Chinese identity as a mere cultural symbol but also as a social and psychological experience full of negotiations in Indonesia's multicultural society. Therefore,

this novel was chosen as the object of research because it is able to represent the issue of Chinese identity in a more in-depth, realistic, and contextual way compared to other works that tend to only highlight its cultural or historical aspects. Thus, identity in this novel appears as the result of a continuous negotiation process between efforts to maintain identity and demands to adapt to dominant norms.

Several previous studies have examined the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* from various perspectives. Sabillah and Wachidah (2022), in their study titled Discrimination of Chinese Ethnicity in Clara Ng's Novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, found that the novel represents forms of discrimination experienced by ethnic Chinese in everyday life. This discrimination is not only structural but also appears in personal social interactions (Sabillah & Wachidah, 2022). Meanwhile, Khotimah et al. (2025), through their study Discrimination of Chinese Female Characters in *Dimsum Terakhir* Novel by Clara Ng, highlighted how the Chinese female characters in the novel experience multiple levels of discrimination, both as women and as members of an ethnic minority (Khotimah, Tleumuratov, & Tanasavate, 2025). Clara Ng's novels often address issues of identity, marginality, cultural diversity, and social relations in modern Indonesian society. This shows that *Dimsum Terakhir* is not only relevant as a literary work with a Chinese ethnic theme but is also important to study in the context of identity negotiations and the politics of assimilation in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Although various studies have addressed Chinese identity in Indonesian literature, studies specifically focusing on the representation of identity in the novel "*Dimsum Terakhir*" tend to be limited to specific aspects, such as discrimination, stereotypes, or gender issues. These findings indicate that the characters in the novel experience various forms of marginalization, both in the social and cultural spheres. However, these studies generally focus on specific aspects, thus failing to fully capture the complexity of identity representation.

However, as a literary work that represents life in a multicultural society, the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* encompasses various interconnected dimensions of identity, ranging from identity politics and cultural practices to the psychological conflicts experienced by the characters. Chinese identity in this novel is not merely an ethnic marker but also a construct that continually changes through social interactions, structural pressures, and personal dynamics. Therefore, a more comprehensive study is needed to understand how this identity is constructed, negotiated, and represented in the text.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the representation of Chinese identity in Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir* in depth. The analysis focuses on various interrelated aspects, namely identity politics, discrimination and stereotypes, representations of tradition, and the identity conflicts experienced by the characters. Thus, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Chinese identity in Indonesian literature, while also enriching studies on identity representation in the context of a multicultural society.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Representation in Literary Studies

Representation in literary studies is an important approach to understanding the relationship between texts and the social realities surrounding them. Literature does not exist in a vacuum, but rather as a cultural product born from specific social, historical, and ideological contexts. Therefore, every literary work always contains traces of reality that have been processed through the author's imagination and influenced by the values that develop in society. Within this framework, literature functions not only as a means of aesthetic expression but also as a medium for reflection and construction of meaning regarding various social phenomena, including issues of ethnic identity, power relations, and cultural dynamics. Thus, literary works

can be viewed as symbolic spaces that bring together individual experiences and social structures in complex narrative forms.

The concept of representation is the primary foundation for understanding how social reality, including ethnic identity, is presented in literary works. Representation does not simply reflect reality directly but rather is a process of constructing meaning through language, symbols, and narrative. From a cultural studies perspective, representation is understood as the practice of meaning-making through a system of signs that operates within a text (Hall, 2017). Language, in this case, is not transparent or neutral but rather contains values, ideologies, and specific interests that contribute to the formation of meaning. Therefore, representation in literature must be understood as an active process involving the selection, emphasis, and obscuration of certain aspects of reality. Thus, literary works function not only as a mirror of social reality but also as a medium that actively shapes and reproduces readers' perspectives on the social world.

Representation, Discourse, and Power Relations

Representation is never neutral, as it is always embedded within a network of discourses and power relations. Discourse is understood as a system of knowledge that regulates how an object is discussed, understood, and interpreted within a particular context (Foucault, 2019). Discourse not only reflects reality but also plays a role in shaping that reality itself through the production of socially legitimated knowledge.

In this context, representation in literary works cannot be separated from the power structures that influence the production of meaning. What is represented, how it is constructed, and what is omitted from the representation are all part of a discursive practice that plays a role in shaping knowledge while maintaining certain power relations. Thus, literary works can be understood as discursive fields that not only represent reality but also participate in the production and reproduction of ideology.

Representation of Ethnic Identity in Postcolonial Perspective

Literary works can be understood as spaces where various social discourses interact, negotiate, and even conflict. Chinese ethnic identity in Indonesia is not singular but rather shaped through complex historical processes, including state policies, migration, and constantly changing social dynamics (Arifin et al., 2017; Gayatri et al., 2019). Representations of ethnic identities, including Chinese identity, not only reflect social experiences but are also the result of discursive constructions influenced by dominant ideologies, political history, and the surrounding social structures. Therefore, analysis of representation in literature focuses not only on what is depicted but also on how and for what purpose those representations are constructed. This approach allows researchers to view texts as social practices inseparable from ideological interests, as well as spaces of resistance that can challenge dominant discourses.

From a postcolonial perspective, representation is also closely related to issues of power and domination. Representations of "the Other" are often constructed through dominant, hegemonic perspectives (Said, 2016). This kind of representation not only emphasizes differences but also reinforces the hierarchy between the dominant group and the group being represented. In the Indonesian context, ethnic Chinese are often placed in an ambivalent position, as both part of society and the "other" that is constantly being negotiated (Setijadi, 2019; Sinaga et al., 2023). The stereotypes and prejudices attached to this group demonstrate how representation functions as an ideological instrument in maintaining power relations. This suggests that representation functions not only as a process of meaning-making but also as an ideological instrument that shapes social perceptions of certain groups.

Representation in Intrinsic Elements and Research Framework

In literary works, representation is manifested through various intrinsic elements such as characterization, plot, setting, and dialogue between characters. Through these elements, authors construct a specific picture of identity, social relations, and power dynamics. Characterization, for example, can reproduce stereotypes or deconstruct them (Fikri, 2025). Social and historical settings reinforce the context of representation, while dialogue between characters reflects communication practices imbued with cultural values and power relations. In this context, literary works become an important medium for examining how discrimination, resistance, and identity negotiation are represented (Cahyaningtiyas & Putra, 2020; Sabillah & Wachidah, 2022). Therefore, representational analysis focuses not only on the content of the text but also on the narrative strategies used to construct meaning. This approach allows researchers to uncover latent meanings within the text while simultaneously understanding the ideological positions presented by the author.

In this study, the representation of Chinese identity in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* is understood as the result of a narrative construction influenced by social, historical, and ideological contexts. This representation is not neutral, but rather loaded with meanings that reflect the power relations and social dynamics surrounding the Chinese ethnic group in Indonesia. The identities depicted in the novel do not exist as static but rather as the result of an ongoing negotiation process between external pressures and the characters' internal efforts to maintain their identity.

Thus, analyzing representations is crucial for uncovering how these identities are formed, negotiated, and interpreted in literary texts. This approach not only helps us understand the content of literary works more deeply but also contributes to understanding how literature plays a role in reflecting and shaping broader social realities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a textual analysis design to examine the representation of Chinese identity in Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding, interpreting, and uncovering the meaning behind the phenomenon of ethnic identity representation presented in literary texts. Unlike quantitative approaches, which emphasize measurement, a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the dimensions of meaning, ideology, and the social context underlying the emergence of these representations. Therefore, this research is interpretive and contextual, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how Chinese identity is constructed in the novel.

The research data consists of narrative excerpts, dialogue, and descriptions in the text that represent Chinese identity, particularly those related to aspects of identity politics, discrimination and stereotyping, cultural practices, and identity conflict and alienation. The primary data source for this study is Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir* (2012), published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama. Supporting data was obtained from various relevant scholarly literature, such as books and journal articles discussing representation theory, identity construction, and the socio-historical context of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia.

Data collection techniques were conducted through literature review using the reading and note-taking method. Researchers conducted intensive, in-depth, and repeated close readings of texts to identify sections relevant to the research focus. Each piece of data found was then recorded, classified, and grouped according to predetermined thematic categories. This process aimed to facilitate data organization while maintaining the relationship between the data and the focus of the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted by referring to the stages of qualitative analysis according

to Creswell (2015), namely (1) organizing and preparing data for analysis, (2) reading the entire data to gain a general understanding, (3) conducting a coding process to identify main themes, (4) developing descriptions and interpretations based on the themes found, and (5) drawing conclusions that reflect the meaning of identity representation in the text. In the data organizing stage, the researcher collected and grouped quotations related to identity politics, discrimination and stereotypes, and representations of cultural traditions, as well as identity conflicts and feelings of alienation. In the stage of reading the entire data, the researcher conducted an in-depth understanding of the narrative, dialogue, and social context in the novel to find the connections between events and the characters' experiences. Next, the coding process was carried out by giving thematic categories to the data, such as identity through name, religion, citizenship status, discriminatory practices, and forms of cultural resistance. The interpretation stage was carried out by interpreting the data using Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory and a sociological perspective of literature to explain how Chinese identity is constructed through power relations, political pressure, and the social experiences of the characters. In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions regarding the representation of Chinese identity as a result of an ongoing negotiation process between efforts to maintain cultural identity and demands for assimilation within Indonesian society. The analysis process is conducted interpretively, taking into account the social, historical, and ideological contexts underlying the text, so that the results are not only descriptive but also analytical and critical.

To ensure data validity, this study applied several qualitative data validation techniques. First, the researcher employed theoretical triangulation by comparing the analysis results across various theoretical perspectives, such as representation theory, cultural identity, and social discrimination. This step was taken to ensure that the resulting interpretations had a strong academic foundation and were able to explain the phenomenon of Chinese identity in the novel more comprehensively. The application of theoretical triangulation was evident when data regarding name changes, religion, citizenship status, discrimination, and cultural traditions were analyzed not only as literary phenomena, but also as representations of power relations, identity politics, and assimilation practices in the Indonesian social context. Second, the researcher applied increased diligence through repeated, in-depth, and intensive readings of the text (close reading). This step was taken to ensure that the selected data were truly relevant to the research focus, particularly those related to identity politics, discrimination, stereotypes, representations of tradition, as well as identity conflict and feelings of alienation in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir*. Repeated readings also helped the researcher understand the narrative context, characters' emotions, and the implicit meanings contained in the analyzed quotations. Third, the researcher checked the consistency of the interpretation by reviewing the relationships between the data, thematic categories, and the analysis results. This step aimed to minimize interpretive subjectivity so that any conclusions drawn remained aligned with the textual data found in the novel. Furthermore, the use of various relevant scientific references on Chinese identity, literary representation, and social discrimination was also used to strengthen the argument and support the validity of the research findings.

Thus, this research method is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth analysis in revealing the dynamics of the representation of Chinese identity in the novel being studied.

DISCUSSION

In the study of literary representation, ethnic identity cannot be separated from its historical and social context. Clara Ng's novel, *Dimsum Terakhir*, presents a complex picture of the experiences of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, particularly during a time when state policies also regulated the expression of cultural identity. Through a narrative that focuses on family

life and social interactions between characters, this novel shows that Chinese identity is not only shaped by internal factors such as culture and tradition but also by external pressures in the form of political regulations, social stereotypes, and unequal power relations. The research findings indicate that several forms of identity politics appear in this novel. First, in the aspect of identity politics regarding names, it was found that names not only function as personal identity but also became a symbol of assimilation politics during the New Order era. Second, in the aspect of religion, the study found that religion is represented as an arena for identity negotiation and social adaptation strategies. Third, in the aspect of citizenship status, an identity paradox is found for ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, where formal recognition as citizens is not always accompanied by equal social acceptance. Fourth, representations of discrimination and stereotypes against ethnic Chinese in everyday life are found, demonstrating how language and social practices are used to reproduce the marginalization of minority groups. Fifth, in terms of the representation of tradition, it is found that Chinese culture is maintained despite political pressure and cultural restrictions. Thus, the representation of identity in this novel can be understood as the result of a continuous negotiation process between efforts to maintain identity and demands to adapt to dominant societal norms.

Identity Politics: Names, Religion, and Citizenship

Identity Politics of Names

In Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, identity politics related to names plays a crucial role in representing the experiences of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Names serve not only as markers of personal identity but also as cultural symbols imbued with social, historical, and political meaning. In this context, the practice of name change reflects the intervention of power that contributes to the construction of individual identity. Representation is the process of producing meaning through language and cultural symbols, so identity is not inherently natural but constructed through social practices and power relations (Hall, 2017). Thus, names can be understood as a form of identity representation that has a symbolic function in determining an individual's position within society.

The novel *Dimsum Terakhir* shows that ethnic Chinese experienced pressure to change their names to be “more Indonesian” as part of the assimilation policy during the New Order era.

Data 1

Banyak yang akhirnya menjadi lebih Indonesia daripada orang Indonesia asli. Tapi, mereka masih tidak dianggap sebagai tuan di negara mereka sendiri. Bahkan beberapa puluh tahun lalu, mereka tidak berhak menyandang tiga-nama-Cina. Mereka harus mengubah nama mereka menjadi lebih “Indonesia” (Ng, 2012: 134).

Many have become more Indonesian than native Indonesians. However, they are still not considered masters in their own country. Even a few decades ago, they were not entitled to bear three Chinese names. They had to change their names to something more “Indonesian” (Ng, 2012: 134).

Data 2

“Nama Cina diberikan oleh Nung. Nama Indonesia diberikan oleh mbok Hetih. Lucu kedengarannya. Tapi Nung dan Anas memercayakan pembantu setianya untuk memberikan nama yang terbaik bagi empat putrinya” (Ng, 2012: 203).

"The Chinese names were given by Nung. The Indonesian names were given by Mbok Hetih. It sounds funny. But Nung and Anas entrusted their loyal servant to give the best names to their four daughters" (Ng, 2012: 203).

Data 3

Nama tidak akan mengubah mereka menjadi orang lain. Di dalam darah mereka mengalir darah Cina.

"Seorang keturunan Tionghoa tidak akan berhenti menjadi Cina..., " lanjut Nung tajam, ngotot, "...dengan atau tanpa nama Cina mereka." (Ng, 2012: 206).

The name will not change them into someone else. In their blood flows Chinese blood. "A person of Chinese descent will not cease to be Chinese..., " continued Nung sharply, insistently, "...with or without their Chinese name" (Ng, 2012: 206).

These data emphasize that the use of Chinese names is not only restricted but also positioned as inconsistent with the national identity idealized by the state. Thus, names become an arena for identity politics, where individuals are forced to negotiate between ethnic identity and the demands of nationalism. This situation demonstrates a cleavage of identity that is not only symbolic but also structural. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia manifests not only in the form of social prejudice but also through national discourse that positions ethnic Chinese as "the other" (Setijadi, 2019). Therefore, name changes cannot be understood simply as administrative changes, but rather as part of a process of symbolic exclusion in the formation of national identity.

The irony in these quotes reflects the unusual nature of the naming process, which involves people outside the family, who in this case represent the dominance of the majority culture. Indonesian names serve as a means of social legitimacy in the public sphere, while Chinese names are retained as symbols of cultural identity in the private sphere. This duality demonstrates an ambivalent adaptation strategy in the face of socio-political pressures.

In addition, the issue of names is also described as a source of anxiety and conflict in the family, as stated that the matter of naming becomes a "midnight ghost" that disturbs the character's mind.

Data 4

"Ternyata mempunyai empat anak tidak membuat hidup menjadi lebih mudah. Soal pemberian nama, misalnya. Masalah yang kelihatan sepele itu menjadi hantu tengah malam buta yang mengganggu malam-malam Nung." (Ng, 2012: 204).

"It turns out that having four children doesn't make life easier. About naming things, for example. This seemingly trivial problem becomes a ghost in the middle of the night that disturbs Nung's nights" (Ng, 2012: 204).

This data demonstrates that naming decisions are not simple matters, but rather carry a deep psychological burden. Names become the intersection of external pressures and internal family considerations. On the one hand, parents are faced with socio-political demands that encourage the use of "Indonesian" names to avoid discrimination. On the other hand, there is a desire to maintain cultural identity through Chinese names, a legacy of ancestral heritage. This tension creates a dilemma that is not easily resolved, making the naming process a source of constant anxiety.

This anxiety reflects how power extends into the domestic sphere. State intervention and social norms not only influence public spaces but also permeate personal family decisions. Names, which should symbolize parental affection and hope, have instead transformed into survival strategies in discriminatory environments. Stereotypes and prejudices against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have persisted historically and impacted social relations between groups (Murdianto, 2019). This situation has forced ethnic Chinese to employ various adaptation

strategies to gain social acceptance.

The politics of identity through names in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* reflects the complex position of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Names serve as symbols of the negotiation between cultural identity and socio-political demands, while also demonstrating that the process of assimilation can never completely erase ethnic identity. Through this narrative, Clara Ng critically reveals that behind the practice of name change lies a power relationship that influences how individuals understand and define themselves in society.

Identity Politics about Religion

From a cultural representation perspective, religion can be understood as part of the practice of identity interpretation, shaped by social relations and power. Cultural identity is not fixed, but is continually produced and negotiated through social representations and historical experiences (Hall, 2017). In the context of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, religion becomes an important medium in the process of identity negotiation, especially when the state and dominant society establish certain standards regarding national identity that are considered ideal. Identity is formed through social interactions influenced by power relations, ideology, and cultural practices (Bucholtz & Hall, 2016). Thus, religious choice in the lives of ethnic Chinese cannot be understood solely as an individual spiritual issue, but also as a response to socio-political pressures that occur in society.

In Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, religion plays a crucial role in representing the politics of ethnic Chinese identity in Indonesia. Religion is positioned not only as an individual spiritual choice but also as part of a social and cultural strategy for adapting to broader environmental pressures.

Data 5

Meja sembahyang terlihat jelas di ruang keluarga. Abu jatuh dari hio yang sedikit lagi habis terbakar, membuat sebagian meja Nampak kotor. Patung Dewi Kwan Im berdiri anggun di sana, diapit dua api yang menyala oleh minyak. Seikat bunga krisan berwarna kuning yang diletakkan di dalam vas tampak sedikit mengering. Di sampingnya, di sana lah abuku berada. (Ng, 2012: 15)

The prayer table was clearly visible in the living room. Ashes had fallen from the incense burners, which were about to burn out, making part of the table look dirty. A statue of the Goddess Kwan Im stood majestically there, flanked by two oil-burning flames. A bunch of yellow chrysanthemums in a vase looked a little dry. Beside it lay my ashes. (Ng, 2012: 15)

Data 6

"Kenapa dibaptis?"

"Karena saya ingin jadi Khatolik," jawab Novera tenang. Ketenangan itu hasil mengumpulkan keberanian selama berminggu-minggu. "Menjadi Khatolik harus dibaptis." (Ng, 2012: 70)

"Why get baptized?"

"Because I want to be Catholic," Novera answered calmly. The calm was the result of gathering courage for weeks. "To be Catholic is to be baptized." (Ng, 2012: 70)

Data 7

Mereka telah berpindah agama, kebanyakan menganut Kristen atau Katolik. Mereka bermata sipit, berkulit putih, berambut lurus hitam panjang. (Ng, 2012: 134).

They have converted, mostly to Christianity or Catholicism. They have narrow eyes,

fair skin, and long, straight black hair. (Ng, 2012: 134).

These data demonstrate a collective tendency in ethnic Chinese religious practices as part of the assimilation process. Conversion can be understood as a response to political policies and social situations during the New Order era that restricted Chinese cultural expression. In this context, religion serves as a means of gaining social acceptance while minimizing the potential for discrimination. By embracing a religion that is officially recognized and relatively dominant in society, the characters in the novel attempt to negotiate their position as part of the Indonesian nation.

The representation of religion as an arena for identity negotiation is also apparent in the personal experiences of figures, such as Novera.

Data 8

Novera membuka matanya perlahan-lahan. Kepalanya yang sedari tadi sakit seakan dihantam palu kini sudah mendingan. Perasaan damai melingkupi hatinya. Setiap kali dia menatap salib itu, hatinya selalu menjadi lebih tenang. (Ng, 2012: 69)

Novera slowly opened her eyes. Her head, which had been aching as if it had been hit by a hammer, was now feeling better. A feeling of peace enveloped her heart. Every time she gazed at the cross, her heart grew calmer. (Ng, 2012: 69)

Data 9

"Dibaptis?" Novera mengangguk lugu. Siska, Rosii, dan Indah menoleh cepat, menatap adik kembar mereka yang bungsu. Perkataan Novera sangat mengejutkan mereka sekeluarga "kenapa dibaptis?" "Karena saya ingin menjadi katolik," jawab Novera tenang ketenangan itu hasil mengumpulkan keberanian selama berminggu-minggu. "menjadi katolik harus dibaptis." (Ng, 2012: 70).

"Baptized?" Novera nodded innocently. Siska, Rosii, and Indah turned quickly to look at their youngest twin sister. Novera's words shocked the whole family. "Why baptized?" "Because I want to be Catholic," Novera answered calmly, a composure that had been the result of weeks of gathering courage. "To become a Catholic, you have to be baptized." (Ng, 2012: 70).

Data 10

"Yang dimaksud dengan agama kita...," jawab Novera, "... adalah menghormati leluhur dan patuh pada tradisi Cina. Sejurnya, ini tidak dapat disebut agama, Siska, ini adalah..." (Ng, 2012: 71)

"What we mean by religion..." Novera replied, "is respecting our ancestors and adhering to Chinese traditions. Honestly, this can't be called a religion, Siska, it's..." (Ng, 2012: 71)

These religious choices are not solely spiritual in nature, but also involve a process of reflection and courage in facing family norms and social pressures. For some figures, the concept of "religion" is not always understood within the framework of formal institutions, but rather as a cultural practice that emphasizes respect for ancestors. This demonstrates the dimension of individual agency in determining one's identity, even while remaining within the framework of restrictive social structures.

Religion in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* functions as an arena for complex identity negotiations. On the one hand, it serves as a tool for social integration that allows ethnic Chinese to adapt to dominant norms. However, on the other hand, religion also demonstrates the

limitations of the assimilation process, as changes in belief do not necessarily eliminate structural discrimination and prejudice. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia is not only related to cultural issues but is also influenced by socio-political constructs that have been ingrained since the New Order era (Setijadi, 2019). Therefore, the representation of religion in *Dimsum Terakhir* emphasizes that ethnic Chinese identity is not singular or static, but rather is formed through an ongoing process of negotiation between external pressures and internal individual choices.

Identity Politics: Citizenship Status

From the perspective of cultural identity studies, citizenship is not only understood as a formal legal status, but also as a social construct related to recognition, acceptance, and power relations within society. Identity is always formed through processes of representation influenced by history, ideology, and social structure (Hall, 2017). Thus, citizenship identity is not neutral but can become an arena for the production of meaning that differentiates between "majority" and "minority" groups. Similarly, identity is formed through social interactions involving practices of social categorization and differentiation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2016). In the context of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, citizenship status is often negotiated through social relations that place them in an ambiguous position between being "recognized" and "questioned" as part of the Indonesian nation.

In Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, citizenship status plays a crucial role in representing the identity politics of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. In this text, citizenship is understood not only as a formal legal status but also as an arena for identity negotiation, fraught with tensions between administrative recognition and social acceptance.

Data 11

"... Mungkin karena aku kelihatan Cina banget, jadi santapan empuk bagi mereka semua!" (Ng, 2012: 54)

"... Maybe because I look so Chinese, I'm easy prey for them all!" (Ng, 2012: 54)

Data 12

Mereka orang-orang yang katanya WNI tapi harus punya surat bukti warga negara. SBKRI bahkan sampai surat ganti nama. (Ng, 2012: 134)

These are the people who claim to be Indonesian citizens but must have proof of citizenship, including a SBKRI (Indonesian Citizenship Certificate) and even a name change certificate. (Ng, 2012: 134)

Quote (13)

"paspor Indonesia tapi tetap harus punya Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia. harus punya bukti sebagai warg Negara. Haha! Tawa Qian Xen menggelegar sinis sampah dia nyaris tersedak ludanya sendir. A Yung, A Yung! Lu bikin gua shock sampai perlu kopi lagi nih. Boleh tambah lagi?." (Ng, 2012:205).

"Indonesian passport but still must have proof of citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia. must have proof as a citizen. Haha! Qian Xen's laughter boomed sarcastically, almost choking on his own saliva. A Yung, A Yung! You shocked me to the point that I need more coffee. Can I have some more?" (Ng, 2012:205).

These data reveal an identity paradox, where citizenship status does not automatically guarantee equal recognition in social life. The existence of the Indonesian Citizenship

Certificate (SBKRI) is a concrete symbol of institutionalized administrative discriminatory practices. Implicitly, this condition places ethnic Chinese in the position of "conditional citizens," a group whose existence must be continually proven through bureaucratic mechanisms that are not applied equally to other groups.

This representation demonstrates that citizenship identity is not solely determined by official documents, but also by social perceptions inherent in physical appearance and ethnic stereotypes. The phrase "looks very Chinese" demonstrates that visual identity can be the basis for social exclusion, even though individuals have been legally recognized as Indonesian citizens. This practice of labeling can be understood as a form of "othering," namely the process of constructing certain groups as "other" through stereotypes and social representations (Said, 2016). Thus, citizenship in this context is ambivalent: on the one hand, formally recognized, but on the other, questioned in everyday social practices.

Through this narrative construction, *Dimsum Terakhir* reveals the tension between formal and social identities. The novel emphasizes that citizenship status cannot be understood simply as administrative recognition but also requires equal social legitimacy. Thus, Clara Ng implicitly critiques exclusive models of citizenship and emphasizes the importance of building an inclusive concept of national identity, one that accommodates diversity as an integral part of national life.

Discrimination and Stereotypes Against Chinese Ethnic Groups

Discrimination and stereotypes against ethnic Chinese in the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* can be understood as a representation of power relations that operate through language, symbols, and everyday social practices. Representation is never neutral, as it is always connected to the process of meaning production influenced by dominant ideologies (Hall, 2017). In this context, the use of terms like "damn Chinese," "stingy Chinese," and "Amoy" demonstrates how ethnic identity is constructed through derogatory stereotypes. Stereotypes work by simplifying and standardizing the identity of a particular group, positioning them as "different" or "other."

Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir* powerfully depicts the discrimination her characters face in their daily lives. This representation is evident through various utterances containing negative stereotypes of ethnic Chinese, both in the form of direct insults and demeaning social judgments.

Data 14

"Iyalah, pasti! Aku mau saja kasih duit." Rosi terus mencerocos di ponsel. "Tapi, baru aku mau ambil dompet, ada yang kasih komentar menyedihkan hati. Katanya, dasar Cina sialan. Sudah belagu, sok kaya, sok borjuis pula. Itu benar-benar pelecehan kelas berat, Ndah! Masa aku dibilang Cina sialan! Bayangkan, padahal aku sudah mau mengalah, mau kasih duit." (Ng, 2012: 55)

"Of course! I'd give him money." Rosi continued chatting on her phone. "But, just as I was about to grab my wallet, someone made a stifling comment. They said, 'You damn Chinese. You're so arrogant, you act rich, and you act bourgeois.' That was truly a serious insult, Ndah! How could I be called a damn Chinese! Imagine, even though I was ready to give in and give him money." (Ng, 2012: 55)

Data 15

"Waktu aku mau kasih duit, ada lagi yang kasih komentar di belakangku. Dasar Cina pelit, kasih duit selalu sedikit. Dengar seperti itu langsung ada darahku tancap gas sampai ubun-ubun. Sialan benar. Aku tersinggung sekali mendengarnya" (Ng, 2012: 55)

55—56).

“Just as I was about to give him money, someone else made a comment behind my back. ‘You stingy Chinese, you always give me so little.’ Hearing that, my blood boiled all the way to the top of my head. Damn it. I was so offended by it (Ng, 2012: 55—56).

Data 16

"Setelah ramai-ramai, rupanya ada juga lho Melayu yang maju tak gentar membela orang Cina. Eh, maksudnya membela yang benar. Orang ini berteriak, dasar bangsat, sudah mau dikasih duit kok ngeyel. Terus si peneriak ini balas teriak lagi, lu jangan ikut campur urusan Cina. Dasar pembela Cina lu! Wah benar-benar gila, isunya kok jadi rasialis gini? Makin banyak orang berkumpul, makin aku kebat-kebit. Jangan sampai terjadi tindakan anarkis gara-gara aku. Bisa mati deh! Tapi apa mau dikata, ada yang berantem beneran..." (Ng, 2012:56).

“After all the commotion, it turns out there are Malays who are fearlessly standing up for the Chinese. Uh, I mean, standing up for what's right. This person shouted, "You bastard, you're going to give me money. Why are you so stubborn?" Then the shouter shouted back, "Don't interfere in Chinese affairs. You're a defender of China! Wow, this is really crazy. How come the issue has become so racist? The more people gather, the more I get excited. Don't let anarchy break out because of me. I could die! But what can I do? There's a real fight..." (Ng, 2012:56).

Data 17

"Amoy! Amoy! Hei amoy! Baris di sini dong!" Novera purapura tidak mendengar walau dalam hati, kupingnya panas mendengar panggilan menyebalkan itu. Entah kenapa, gerombolan teman-teman lelaki dari kelasnya senang sekali menggodanya dengan panggilan Amoy. Mereka sering menghadang jalannya, menunjuk-nunjuk mata Novera sambil berteriak seperti orang kesurupan. "Amoy" katanya. Ditambah dengan cekikikan kurang ajar (Ng, 2012:235).

"Amoy! Amoy! Hey, Amoy! Line up here!" Novera pretended not to hear it, even though in her heart, her ears were burning at the annoying nickname. For some reason, the group of male friends from her class loved teasing her with the nickname Amoy. They often blocked her path, pointing at Novera's eyes while shouting like they were possessed. "Amoy!" they said. They also giggled cheekily (Ng, 2012:235).

These utterances are not only verbal but also accompanied by nonverbal actions that are humiliating and intimidating, such as eye-rolling and mocking laughter. This demonstrates that discrimination operates not solely through language but also through social practices that demean individuals. From a pragmatic perspective, these utterances can be categorized as derogatory expressive speech acts, as they contain a negative assessment of the interlocutor's identity.

The use of the terms "Cina" and "Amoy" in this context is not neutral, but rather pejorative, reinforcing the process of marginalization. Language, in this case, functions as an instrument of legitimizing discrimination, where stereotypes are repeatedly reproduced until they appear normal in social interactions. Representation works through a process of meaning production that often standardizes stereotypes about certain groups (Hall, 2017). These stereotypes then create boundaries between dominant groups and minority groups positioned as "others." In the context of the novel *Dimsum Terakhir*, the use of racist terms demonstrates how Chinese identity is negatively constructed through discriminatory representational

practices. This condition demonstrates how symbolic power works through language to shape perceptions of minority groups.

The characters' responses to this treatment reflect the ongoing accumulation of psychological stress. Emotional reactions such as anger, offense, and anxiety can be understood as forms of resistance to the social injustice experienced. Thus, identity is not only shaped internally by the individual but also externally by social constructs rife with discriminatory practices. This narrative emphasizes that the experience of being "other" is not merely symbolic but also has a real impact on an individual's psychological and social well-being.

Representation of Tradition Under Political Pressure

Cultural traditions are not only understood as hereditary practices, but also as systems of meaning that are continuously negotiated within power relations (Hall, 2017). Chinese traditions in *Dimsum Terakhir* are represented not merely as ceremonial activities, but as symbols of collective identity maintained amidst political and social pressures. Cultural representation is always related to the process of meaning production in society, so that restrictions on Chinese cultural expression during the New Order can be understood as an effort to control ethnic identity in the public sphere.

Chinese cultural traditions in Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir* are depicted in a context of political constraints and pressure. The Chinese New Year celebration, held shortly before school hours, demonstrates that cultural practices must adapt to state policies that restrict cultural expression.

Data 18

"Jam dinding menunjukkan waktu lima lewat sepuluh. Dua puluh menit lagi mereka akan merayakan tahun baru Cina dengan makan pagi bersama-sama. Menyantap dimsum. Tradisi yang sangat aneh, tapi bagi keluarga Nung Atasana, tradisi itu tampaknya normal-normal saja. Makan dimsum pada pagi Imlek dirayakan selama satu jam karena setelahnya mereka harus berangkat ke sekolah pada pukul enam tiga puluh. Tidak ada libur imlek pada masa itu, masa pemerintahan Soeharto." (Ng, 2012:60).

"The clock on the wall showed ten past five. In twenty minutes they would celebrate Chinese New Year by having breakfast together. Eating dim sum. It was a very strange tradition, but for Nung Atasana's family, it seemed perfectly normal. Eating dim sum on Chinese New Year morning was celebrated for an hour because afterward they had to leave for school at six-thirty. There was no Chinese New Year holiday in those days, during the Soeharto era." (Ng, 2012:60).

Data 19

"Tapi dalam hati, terus terang, Nung khawatir. Hari ini Imlek, Tahun Baru Cina. Hari raya besar dalam kebudayaan Cina. Tidak ada bedanya dengan muslim yang merayakan lebaran. Pemerintah zaman itu telah mengancam setiap sekolah di seluruh Jakarta agar memberikan peringatan keras kepada para murid keturunan Cina yang mencoba-coba tidak masuk sekolah dengan alasan Imlek." (Ng, 2012: 218).

"But in her heart, frankly, Nung was worried. Today was Chinese New Year. A major holiday in Chinese culture. It was no different from Muslims celebrating Eid. The government at that time had threatened every school in Jakarta with stern warnings to any Chinese students who tried to skip school using Chinese New Year as an excuse." (Ng, 2012:218).

Data 20

Mama meletakkan meja dengan taplak merah di depan teras dan menata beberapa kue di atas meja tersebut. Sudah pasti ada kue bulan dan bakpao. Kata "persatuan" yaitu "yuan," diucapkan sama dengan kata untuk "bulat." Hari itu menjadi peringatan istimewa untuk setiap keluarga Cina, bahwa hari itu tonggak pengingat bahwa persatuan keluarga sangatlah penting. Keluarga yang bulat adalah keluarga yang tidak terpecah belah. (Ng, 2012: 171—172)

Mama set a table with a red tablecloth on the front porch and arranged several cakes on it. There are, of course, mooncakes and steamed buns. The word for "unity," yuan, is pronounced the same as the word for "round." This day is a special commemoration for every Chinese family, a reminder of the importance of family unity. A united family is a family that is not divided. (Ng, 2012: 171—172)

These data demonstrate that tradition was not completely erased, but rather reduced and shifted to the private sphere. Cultural representation is always linked to the production of meaning within power relations (Hall, 2017). The Chinese New Year celebrations in this novel not only function as cultural activities but can also be read as a form of symbolic resistance to the various restrictions imposed by the state during the New Order era. The limited practice of traditions within the family environment demonstrates that cultural identity is maintained even though the public sphere does not provide equal legitimacy to Chinese cultural expressions.

Dim sum, in this case, is not simply a food item, but also a symbol of the continuity of cultural identity. The practice of eating together within the family represents an effort to maintain solidarity while preserving the continuity of tradition amidst external pressures. However, the labeling of this tradition as "strange" indicates the internalization of the dominant perspective that views Chinese culture as "other." This indicates the emergence of identity ambivalence, where the tradition is maintained but at the same time undergoes a process of problematization in the consciousness of its characters.

This narrative demonstrates that Chinese cultural practices serve not only as cultural expression but also as a space for identity negotiation amidst power dynamics. Tradition, in this case, serves as a medium for maintaining existence while simultaneously responding to political pressures that limit cultural diversity.

Identity Conflict and Feelings of Alienation

The identity conflict experienced by the characters in *Dimsum Terakhir* can be understood as the result of a prolonged negotiation between ethnic identity and national identity. Identity is not a fixed essence, but a continuous process of becoming that is shaped through representation, history, and social relations (Hall, 2017). In the context of the novel, the efforts of ethnic Chinese characters to assimilate through language, names, and religion demonstrate an attempt to construct themselves as part of the Indonesian nation. However, the statement that they are "still not considered masters in their own country" reveals that assimilation does not automatically guarantee social acceptance. This condition reflects what Hall describes as the instability of identity, in which individuals remain positioned as "the other" despite their efforts to integrate into the dominant culture. This is evident in the statement:

Data 21

Banyak yang akhirnya menjadi lebih Indonesia daripada orang Indonesia asli. Tapi, mereka masih tidak dianggap sebagai tuan di negara mereka sendiri. Bahkan beberapa puluh tahun lalu, mereka tidak berhak menyandang tiga-nama-Cina. Mereka harus mengubah nama mereka menjadi lebih "Indonesia" (Ng, 2012: 134).

Many have become more Indonesian than native Indonesians. However, they are still not considered masters in their own country. Even a few decades ago, they were not entitled to bear three Chinese names. They had to change their names to something more “Indonesian” (Ng, 2012: 134).

The quotation also reflects the operation of symbolic boundaries within society. Identity is produced relationally through processes of distinction between “self” and “other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2016). In this case, ethnic Chinese Indonesians are continuously marked as culturally different, even when they have adopted markers associated with Indonesian national identity. The obligation to change Chinese names into Indonesian names during the New Order era illustrates how state power attempted to regulate identity through assimilation policies. Nevertheless, the persistence of prejudice indicates that social recognition is not solely determined by legal or cultural adaptation, but also by deeply rooted social perceptions. Therefore, the characters experience a paradoxical situation: they are formally Indonesian, yet socially positioned as outsiders.

This sense of alienation can also be interpreted through Edward Said’s (2016) concept of othering. Said explains that dominant groups often define themselves by constructing minority groups as fundamentally different and inferior. In the novel, ethnic Chinese characters continue to be viewed through racial and cultural stereotypes despite their efforts to assimilate. As a result, their identity remains contested and unstable. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia has historically reproduced the discourse of pribumi and non-pribumi, creating social divisions that marginalize Chinese Indonesians from the imagined national community (Setijadi, 2019). Consequently, the feeling of not fully belonging emerges not only from individual experiences but also from structural patterns embedded within Indonesian social and political history.

In addition, the collective memory of violence also deepens this sense of alienation, as illustrated in the following incident:

Data 22

Peristiwa Mei 1998 membekas dengan jelas di hati setiap orang, termasuk Indah. Pada hari itu, dia berada di daerah Karet, sedang melakukan wawancara kerja dengan perusahaan majalah remaja. Siapa yang menyangka hari itu berakhir dengan begitu banyak darah tertumpah dan sakit hati yang tidak dapat disembuhkan begitu saja?

Papanya yang kehidupan sehari-harinya ditopang dari toko elektronik “Sinar Berjaya” hilang secara misterius. Toko itu terletak di Glodok. Hanya tiga jam yang dibutuhkan untuk menguras habis seluruh isi toko. Hanya tiga jam yang dibutuhkan untuk mengubah Papa yang mempunyai penghasilan tetap menjadi Papa yang tidak punya apa-apa. Bangkrut mendadak. Dulu, penghasilan “Sinar Berjaya” itu benar-benar berjaya karena mampu menyekolahkan mereka berempat, menjadi sarjana. (Ng, 2012: 264—265)

The events of May 1998 left a deep impression on everyone, including Indah. That day, she was in the Karet area, conducting a job interview with a teen magazine company. Who would have thought that day would end with so much bloodshed and heartache that could not be healed so easily?

Her father, whose daily life was supported by the electronics store “Sinar Berjaya,” mysteriously disappeared. The store was located in Glodok. It took only three hours to empty the store’s contents. Only three hours were needed to turn a father who had a steady income into a father who had nothing. Suddenly bankrupt. Previously, the income from “Sinar Berjaya” was truly glorious, having been able to send the four of them to school and earn college degrees. (Ng, 2012: 264—265)

This incident not only demonstrates economic vulnerability but also emphasizes the position of ethnic Chinese Indonesians as a vulnerable minority during socio-political crises. The destruction of property, the disappearance of family members, and the sudden collapse of economic stability reflect how violence during the May 1998 riots targeted not only material possessions but also the dignity and security of ethnic Chinese communities. In *Dimsum Terakhir*, the riots are represented not merely as historical events, but as traumatic experiences that continue to shape the characters' emotional and social identities.

Collective memory plays a crucial role in shaping identity because historical experiences influence how individuals perceive themselves and their relationship with society (Hall, 2017). The traumatic memory of the riots reinforces the feeling that ethnic Chinese Indonesians remain socially vulnerable despite their legal status as citizens. The characters' fear and insecurity, therefore, reveal that national belonging is not solely determined by formal citizenship, but also by social acceptance and protection within society.

This assertion demonstrates that ethnic identity is seen as inherent, inherent, and ineradicable through mere symbolic change. In other words, identity is not merely an administrative or cultural construct, but also linked to deeply rooted social perceptions.

This narrative critiques the coercive and superficial nature of assimilation policies. Changes in name, language, or religion fail to address the root of the problem: structural discrimination and social prejudice that are continually reproduced. Therefore, the novel *Dimsum Terakhir* emphasizes that true acceptance cannot be built through standardizing identities, but rather through recognizing diversity and respecting differences.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Clara Ng's novel *Dimsum Terakhir* presents Chinese ethnic identity as a complex, dynamic, and never entirely stable social construct. This identity is formed through an intense interaction between internal factors such as tradition, culture, and personal choices, with external factors such as political pressure, state policies, and social stereotypes. Thus, Chinese identity in this novel emerges as the result of a continuous negotiation process across various spheres of life.

Through the perspective of identity politics, this research finds that name, religion, and citizenship status play key roles in the structural assimilation process. The practice of name change, conversions, and administrative obligations such as ownership of a National Identity Card (SBKRI) reflect state intervention in shaping and controlling individual identities. This emphasizes that identity is not solely personal but is also constructed through power relations and hegemonic social regulations.

In addition, experiences of discrimination and stereotyping demonstrate that ethnic identity is also shaped through exclusionary social practices. Pejorative remarks and demeaning nonverbal actions demonstrate that language functions as a medium for the reproduction of symbolic power. The impact of these practices is not only social but also psychological, which then gives rise to various forms of response, including resistance from the characters.

In the cultural realm, Chinese traditions are depicted as experiencing restrictions and shifting to the private sphere as a result of political pressure. Cultural practices such as Chinese New Year celebrations are maintained, albeit in a limited form, thus being interpreted as a form of symbolic resistance. However, the emergence of ambivalence towards tradition also indicates the internalization of dominant perspectives in the characters' consciousness.

Furthermore, this research reveals identity conflicts and feelings of alienation experienced by the characters. Although various forms of assimilation have been implemented, equal social acceptance has not been fully achieved. This condition is reinforced by collective

memories of violence, which further emphasizes the position of ethnic Chinese as a vulnerable group in socio-political dynamics.

The novel *Dimsum Terakhir* represents Chinese identity as an entity constantly undergoing a process of formation, negotiation, and resistance amidst a stressful social structure. This work not only reflects social reality but also critiques the power relations that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Therefore, this study emphasizes that understanding ethnic identity cannot be separated from its surrounding historical, political, and cultural context, as well as the importance of building an inclusive concept of national identity through acknowledging diversity as the basis for creating social justice.

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