

## NARRATING DISPLACEMENT: CHINESE-INDONESIAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN *LVDAO SANWEN JI* (绿岛散文集)

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### ABSTRACT

*While ethnic Chinese-Indonesians are often stereotyped as 'economic figures', many are also actively engaged in literature. Among their literary contributions is The Green Island Prose Compilation (2015), which is a post-Reformasi anthology of Mandarin language prose selected from the monthly Lüdao column in the International Daily News. These writings reflect personal experiences and preserve the memory of ethnic Chinese life in Indonesia. This study aims to examine how individual life narratives in the Green Island Prose Collection, shaped by social and historical context, contribute to the collective memory of Chinese-Indonesians. It explores how literature serves as a medium for documenting everyday life, preserving cultural identity, and bridging generational gaps. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, utilizes purposive sampling to identify relevant themes of prose, and applies content analysis based on Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory. The data includes prose works that reveal recurring themes such as childhood, family, social life, and historical events. The findings indicate that the collective memory among Chinese-Indonesians is constructed from individual memories, incorporating elements of childhood, adulthood, and historical recollections. This becomes a significant shared experience and memory repository. This study not only addresses a gap in the study of the Chinese-Indonesian literature but also provides insights into the role of literature in preserving culture, shaping identity, and facilitating intergenerational communication. In this way, it enhances the understanding of the Chinese-Indonesian community within the broader context of contemporary Indonesian society.*

**Keywords:** collective memory, Chinese-Indonesian literature, Maurice Halbwachs, prose, life writing

### INTRODUCTION

It has been more than twenty years since Indonesia entered the Reformasi (Reform) era, starting in 1998. This has led to significant changes at all levels of society, including for Chinese-Indonesians. The Reformasi era offers Chinese-Indonesians an opportunity to contribute to Indonesia's development as a multicultural nation and to integrate into mainstream society, including through literature.

Throughout the Orde Baru (New Order) era (1966-1998), publishing materials in Chinese characters was prohibited, except for government publishers. As a result, Chinese individuals had limited involvement in public life, aside from business. Then,

in the period after 1998, President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) revoked the Orde Baru laws that prohibited public recognition of Chinese cultural and religious festivities, such as the Lunar New Year, thereby enabling Chinese places of worship to gain public acknowledgment and lifting the ban on the use of Chinese writing (Vickers, 2023). It was at this point that the resurgence of Chinese Indonesian literature commenced.

Chinese-Indonesian literature is created by ethnic Chinese individuals living in Indonesia. It can be categorized based on the language used in the literary works: either in Mandarin or other Chinese languages, or in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language. It is important to note that ethnic Chinese authors do not

limit themselves to writing only in local dialects, such as Javanese, nor do they restrict their work to foreign languages like English (Vasantadjaja, 2023).

This research focuses on Chinese-Indonesian literature written in Mandarin or the Chinese language. This type of literature primarily circulates among the Chinese community or readership. The existence of this literature has a long history. It reached its peak in the 1950s. However, three decades of cultural suppression under the Orde Baru era posed significant obstacles to its development. At the beginning of the Reformasi era, this literature re-emerged. Many ethnic Chinese authors resumed their literary activities, and a number of them began publishing again, either individually or through collective efforts. Their works often appeared in Chinese-language newspapers or literary magazines, both within Indonesia and internationally. This resurgence of literary activity indicates not just a revival of literature in the Mandarin language but also a wider cultural renaissance within the Chinese-Indonesian community. One significant milestone in this literary revival is the publication of *the Green Island Prose Compilation* 《绿岛散文集》 *Lüdao Sanwen Ji*, published in 2015. This anthology, published by the Komunitas Sastra Tionghoa-Indonesia (Chinese-Indonesian Literary Community), brings together prose works published initially over more than ten years in the 'Green Island' literary section of a well-known Chinese-language newspaper in Indonesia, *the International Daily News*.

*The Green Island Prose Compilation* is noteworthy as a literary achievement in contemporary Chinese-Indonesian literature. The collection showcases the prose genre, which has become a preferred medium for many writers due to its accessibility and emotional resonance. Through prose, these authors document personal memories, reflect on their life journeys, and preserve communal experiences in a language that is culturally and historically significant to them. The anthology includes reflections on war, childhood, meaningful places, and influential individuals—each contributing to a mosaic of recollected experience. In doing so, the authors not only revisit their own pasts but also contribute to the construction and preservation of the collective memory of the Chinese-Indonesian community.

The concept of collective memory was developed by the prominent twentieth-century French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). He first introduced this idea in his work, *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). Halbwachs asserts that collective memory is socially constructed. He elaborates, stating, "While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember." (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992) In simple terms, collective memory refers to a shared remembrance or recollection held by a group of people or society, which exists because individuals within the group recall experiences or interactions.

Halbwachs' framework provides a critical

tool for understanding how individual recollections function within collective, socially constructed memory systems. For Chinese-Indonesian authors writing after periods of sociopolitical rupture—such as the May 1998 riots—literature becomes a vehicle through which collective memory is preserved, contested, and transmitted. Thus, this study adopts Halbwachs' theory as a lens to analyze how memory operates in the prose works of *the Green Island Prose Compilation*, revealing the dynamics of identity and cultural preservation within Chinese-Indonesian narratives.

The concept of collective memory has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years, particularly at the intersection of literature, identity, and cultural memory. Scholars have explored how literature serves not merely as a reflection of memory but as an active site where individual and group memories are narrated, contested, and preserved. This study builds on such intersections, specifically addressing the Chinese-Indonesian context—a domain still underrepresented in this study.

In the past five years, research on collective memory in literature has been predominantly represented by Chinese scholars. For example, Li (2024) 《集体记忆与历史重述——左翼作家“左翼文学”回忆》 *Collective Memory and Historical Restatement: On Left-Wing Authors' Memories of Left-Wing Literature* examines the collective memory of China's Left-Wing literature and its relationship to the individual left-wing authors. It also considers that the left-wing literary canon is shaped by the collective memory of left-wing literature, which is constructed from certain ideologies and conceptual frameworks. Thus, it contributes to bringing a new understanding and impact to China's contemporary literature. Similarly, Li (2023) in her article 《集体记忆、历史与民族认同——贾平凹〈高老庄〉新论》 *Collective Memory, History and National Identity—A New Discussion on Jia Pingwa's Gao Lao Zhuang* analyzes a distinguished novel titled *Gao Lao Zhuang* by China's prominent author Jia Pingwa. This study examines the collective memory of a village in Shaanxi Province through the inscriptions and brick statues that formed historical memory for the villagers and other groups. It shows the significance of collective memory not only for certain ethnic groups, but also for a country and nation.

Beyond China, the dynamics of memory in African literature are explored by Senegalese scholar Mamadou Abdou Babou Ngom (2022) in *When the Personal and the Collective Merge into Oneness: The Dynamics of Memory in Petina Gappah's The Book of Memory*. The article explores the significance of memory in shaping our perception of life. It highlights that memory allows us to reflect on the future. Additionally, Ngom also investigates the politics of memory in African fiction written in English, using Petinah Gappah's novel *The Book of Memory* to uncover sociological, anthropological, and other elements, to understand how literature serves as a

platform for reconstructing identity and history. This perspective resonates within communities such as the Chinese-Indonesians.

From a theoretical standpoint, Gu and Shao (2022) in 《集体记忆：意识形态叙事媒介的理论探讨》 *Collective Memory: A Theoretical Approach to the Medium of Ideological Narrative*, argue that collective memory through symbols, ceremonies, and technology-driven media serves as a dependable instrument for creating and improving the impact of ideological narratives. Complementing this, Huang et al. (2023) in *The Influence Mechanism of Collective Memory on the Heritage Protection Behavior of Inheritors* 《集体记忆对传统技艺类非遗传承人遗产保护行为的影响机制》, explore how local collective memory enhances cultural heritage preservation, using the case of Hui'an stone carving. Here, memory not only preserves the past but motivates present-day behavior, suggesting its performative and identity-shaping power.

Interdisciplinary studies further demonstrate how collective memory operates across cultures and social contexts. Effects of Memory Conversation and Group Identity on Collective Memory 《记忆对话及身份标识对记忆记忆的影响》 by Guo and Guan (2023) is a psychological study that employs a quantitative approach to reveal how group identity and memory conversations shape recollections, confirming the relational and constructed nature of memory. Meanwhile, Priwati and Sanitioso (2024) compare collective memory in Indonesia and France, showing how national identity narratives are shaped differently in postcolonial and European contexts.

Existing research consistently affirms that collective memory serves as a significant conceptual framework applied across multiple disciplines, including literature, psychology, ideology, and cultural heritage studies. While extensively studied in various cultural settings, its role in Chinese-Indonesian literature, particularly works written in Mandarin, remains underexplored. Memories, formed through singular or multiple events and mediated by interactions with both social and physical environments, serve as a parameter that shapes how communities understand their past and envision their future (Maguire, 2022). This study seeks to bridge that gap by situating Chinese-Indonesian literature as an archive of lived experiences and cultural identity through memory.

The study addresses the research problem of how individual memories in Chinese-Indonesian literature contribute to the construction of a collective memory. It aims to identify memories articulated in this prose compilation and examine how these narratives contribute to the formation of a shared memory within Chinese-Indonesian society. This study argues that *the Green Island Prose Compilation* functions not merely as a nostalgic recollection of the past but as a deliberate act of cultural continuity and resistance. Through this analysis, the study aims to enhance the understanding of how ethnic Chinese communities in Indonesia navigate their identity, belonging, and

survival, especially in challenging times. Ultimately, it highlights the role of literature as a site of memory-making and identity transmission, offering a more nuanced perspective on the Chinese-Indonesian experience.

## METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research method, which focuses on exploring phenomena in their natural, real-world context (Furidha, 2023). Specifically, this research investigates representations of Chinese-Indonesian life as reflected in literary works, intending to provide a contextualized and nuanced understanding of Chinese-Indonesian society through literature.

The primary data source is *the Green Island Prose Compilation* 《绿岛散文集》 *Lüdao Sanwen Ji*, an anthology of prose works written in Mandarin by Chinese-Indonesian authors and published after the *Reformasi* era. From this anthology, twelve texts were purposively selected based on their thematic relevance to the study's focus—namely, life writing or narratives dealing with the memory of Chinese-Indonesian life experiences. This purposive sampling ensured that the selected text shared recurring themes related to individual and collective memory, such as family history, social life, and historical trauma.

The data analysis follows a descriptive qualitative data analysis, incorporating thematic identification and close reading of selected texts. First, the texts were categorized into four memory domains: childhood experiences, adulthood, social life, and remembrances of historical events. Next, a close reading was conducted to examine narrative structure, emotional tone, and symbolic language. The interpretation was guided by Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, which posits that individual memory is embedded in a broader social framework. The theoretical lens allowed the study to explore how Chinese-Indonesian authors narrate and preserve memory through literary writing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Chinese-Indonesian community is a dynamic and diverse ethnic group that plays a vital role in Indonesia's rich cultural mosaic. Currently, the Chinese-Indonesians are spread across the country, with the majority living in vibrant cities such as Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya, Semarang, Makassar, or Bandung. Despite living in different areas, they share a profound collective history, including the story of migration, the life evolution of modern Indonesia. Throughout history, Chinese-Indonesians have experienced both triumphs and challenges. This shared journey has forged a strong bond within them, making Chinese-Indonesians a tight-knit and supportive community.

Literature, as a repository of collective memory,

enables communities to recall and reflect on their shared past. *The Green Island Prose Compilation* 《绿岛散文集》 *Lüdao Sanwen Ji*, for instance, contains literary works produced by Chinese-Indonesian authors from across Indonesia, who infuse their narratives with personal experiences, emotions, and thoughts shaped by diverse social contexts. *The Green Island Prose Compilation* is a compilation of Chinese-language literary works spanning twenty-two years produced by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Building on Maurice Halbwachs' (1980) The key idea of collective memory, which suggests that "our memories remain collective, however, and are recalled to us through others even though we were participants in the events or saw the things concerned." This literary compilation vividly depicts the daily life experiences of Chinese-Indonesians, nostalgic recollections of childhood, historical events, and human relationships. Corning and Schumann (2015) further conceptualize collective memory as the interplay between essential individual memories and the broader societal and cultural contexts in which human life unfolds. In this view, these memories are common among group members, influencing and maintaining the group's identity, while simultaneously the group's presence strengthens and upholds those memories. The collective memory of Chinese-Indonesians is shaped by the interconnection and interdependence between individual memories and social constructs, as well as by shared narratives, commemorations, and broader cultural aspects. (Oriane & Eustache, 2023) In addition, the term does not imply the size of the group; it can range from two individuals to a nation or larger community. As such, this study identifies and examines the memories within *the Green Island Prose Compilation*, demonstrating how these prose works collectively shape the collective memory of Chinese-Indonesians, serving as a valuable historical record.

From this compilation of literary works emerge what Halbwachs refers to as individual memory, also known as autobiographical memory, internal, or personal memory, the remembrance of occurrences that individuals have directly experienced in the past. (Halbwachs, 1980; Halbwachs & Coser, 1992) When a person remembers, they interact with other participants in the memory, reinforcing the memory, for example, when attending an alumni meeting, recalling the time when we went to college, we may not be able to remember some of the details, however, when talking to other friends about the past, they may help us to remember those things that we have forgotten. This will give us a more profound impression of that memory.

Cordonnier et al. (2022) propose the concept of the relationship between collective memory and individual memory using the analogy of an hourglass. The top bulb represents historical, political, and social context, the narrow passage between two bulbs represents family memory, and the bottom bulb represents individual memory. Memory at both ends can pass through one another, meaning that collective

memory and individual memory are inseparable and mutually influential. Applied to Chinese-Indonesian collective memory, this model shows how individual recollections are continually shaped by family narratives and the broader historical and cultural contexts, and how, through this reciprocal exchange, they are transformed into a shared heritage that sustains and renews collective memory across generations.

The topic of nostalgic childhood is a relatively common theme in ethnic Chinese-Indonesian literature. Childhood-themed prose evokes nostalgic memories that shape personal and communal identity. However, in the case of childhood memory, it is difficult for human beings to recall anything from their childhood. This difficulty arises because children have not yet really integrated into society and established their roles within it. During this early stage of life, human beings can only perceive their external impressions and are not yet capable of relating these impressions or thoughts to those around them. Children retain only images since they possess brightness, intensity, and distinct characteristics, which make them stand out in the child's mind. Once children transition from this purely sensory phase and begin to explore the meanings of the images and scenes they perceive, new ideas start to form. At this point, the individual's mind connects with the shared experiences of others, leading to the creation of childhood memories.

Prose such as Liu Chang's *The Train* 《火车高速飞轮底下制小刀》 (Liu, 2015) recalls a childhood game with a symbolic meaning, where a flattened coin under a speeding train embodies the thrill and risk of youthful innocence. Liu Chang takes us back to his childhood in a small town east of Bandung, where a railway station served as a gathering place for him and his friends. Each afternoon, when the train from Surabaya briefly stopped at four, he would place a copper coin on the track and wait for the train to pass. The flattened coin, now shiny, thin, and sharp like a small knife, filled him with amazement. Though he repeated the risky game many times, he later reflected that he would not have done so had he known the dangers. The vivid memory, preserved over five decades, continues to hold personal significance and even inspired him to revisit his hometown.

Liu Chang's *The Train* reminisces about childhood activities, particularly the experience of making a knife by flattening a coin under the high-speed train's flywheel. This memory remains vivid in its sensory details, the shine of the metal, the thrill of waiting, the astonishment of change, all of which are shaped by shared experiences with friends. Halbwachs's concept helps clarify how this personal memory has its significance from being embedded in a social context. Personal memory is maintained not just by the author's childhood particular experiences, but also by repeated play games with others, the train schedule, and the community of childhood play. The coin's transformation also expresses a meaningful and joyful childhood, and a symbolic connection to a carefree and adventurous time in a specific setting.

*The Gold Bracelet* 《那串金手鐲》 (Xiaotong, 2015) tells the story of Xiaotong's experience when she was eight or nine years old, and she vividly remembers the day her mother took her to the market to sell her jewelry. At the time, she did not understand why her mom did that, but later she realized it was to help support the family. Because her father's writing job was not enough to support the family, the most heartbreaking thing was that her mother had to sell a diamond pendant that her grandmother had given her before her marriage. The gold bracelet her mother was selling was also a family heirloom that had been passed down before her marriage. Xiaotong recalls that her mother was so protective of the jewelry given to her by her grandmother. It was a family tradition to give to daughters upon their marriage. She understands the challenges of family life and emphasizes the importance of preserving the meaningful connections within it.

*The Gold Bracelet* exemplifies Halbwachs's observation that the values of the community reshape individual memory. The scene of the market, the remembrance of gold and jewels, and the emotional impact of her mother's prospective gestures are reinterpreted in adulthood through the perspective of family legacy and economic struggle. The individual memory thus becomes a symbol of resilience and filial obligation among many Chinese-Indonesian families, transforming an individual memory of sacrifice into a collective narrative of endurance.

*Memory of My Childhood* 《忆童年的往事》 (Ye, 2015) is Ye Shichang's "remembering the past of childhood". He further underscores the impact of parental love and early life challenges on shaping an individual's journey. This prose describes the first thing he remembers from his childhood, which is that he attended a strict school in Sukabumi, unlike other Chinese children who attended Chinese schools.

"Even my mother had to accompany me to the first day of class, but when I arrived at the school gate, I cried a lot, and my mother took me home. For several days in a row, I went to school with this attitude. My mother scolded me, whipped me, didn't feed me, and didn't allow me to go into my bedroom, so I slept on the floor in the kitchen. The second thing that comes to mind is my weak body. Since the day I was born, I was often sick, and I went to the doctor several times, and my mom spent a lot of money on medical care. Doctor Huang once told my mother that he would give me to him to raise after seeing me get sick many times, seeing that my mother had to work very hard to raise many children, and he did not have a son there, so that she could be relieved of her burden. But my mom refused doctor Huang's request. Thinking back to this incident, I also remembered, mother's love for her children, like the willow. Willow tree is so gentle, is so accommodating, is so bent head smile, is so peaceful and silent. These two things

make me deeply feel that my mother raised me well to adulthood."

*Memory of My Childhood* highlights how early memories, though fragmented, are rooted in family life. He reflects on his reluctance to attend school, struggles with illness, yet what remains in his memory is his mother's unwavering love—scolding, sacrifice, and steadfast presence. Collective memory is reflected through individual experiences; here the mother's actions embody values of perseverance and devotion to the family. The school gate, the kitchen floor, the physical weakness are a recognition of maternal love, resonating the ideal of parental duty with the Chinese-Indonesian community.

Halbwachs offers a compelling explanation of how social interactions shape and maintain individual memory. A person's memories are evoked and deepened in the presence of parents, friends, or others who stimulate recall. Through this interaction, personal memories blend with those of others, enabling individuals to recall and recognize past experiences. As (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992) argue, individual memory is reconstructed within a social framework, merging into a collective memory that, in turn, is maintained by individual recollections. In this interdependent relationship, the individual finds their place within the group, while the group's memory is expressed through individual experiences. Thus, individual memory not only reflects personal history but also serves as a gateway into the broader realm of collective memory.

The childhood memories illustrated in Liu Chang's *The Train*, Xiaotong's *The Gold Bracelet*, Ye Shichang's *Memory of My Childhood* showcase this phenomenon. These narratives depict childhood as a period marked by vivid experiences influenced by familial interactions and personal growth. Although (Halbwachs, 1980) points out that recalling early childhood can be inherently challenging because children are not yet fully integrated into society, he emphasizes that what remains are powerful, vividly detailed sensory memories. In the prose works of Chinese-Indonesian authors, these memories come alive through storytelling, gradually gaining significance as they are situated within the broader context of family and ethnic identity. These literary narratives not only preserve treasured moments from the authors' past but also embed them within the collective memory of the Chinese-Indonesian community, demonstrating how individual memory sustains and is sustained by the group memory, the interdependence of individual and collective memory. The result is a literary preservation of Chinese-Indonesian cultural memory, where nostalgia for childhood becomes both a personal anchor and a shared heritage.

Besides childhood memories, there are adult memories. Adults can evoke original yet complex connected memories. However, an adult is also an individual who is a part of groups, and their thoughts come together harmoniously and constructively (Halbwachs, 1980). *The Green Island Prose*

*Compilation* appears to have a distinctive style of writing that has been a feature of ethnic Chinese Indonesians' literature for many decades. It becomes a habit for ethnic Chinese authors to express their condolences or write memoirs of ethnic Chinese figures, so that they are worthy of being part of a larger remembrance in the community. It can also be referred to as a memory of an obituary.

Among the prose works in the compilation is a tribute to Yan Weizhen, a notable poet and literature activist. In *Is Life Like Passing By?* 《人生就像过客吗?》 (Shalihong, 2015), a male author, Shalihong, writes about Mr. Yan Weizhen. He recalls meeting Yan in the 1960s, first through the exchange of manuscripts and later in literary gatherings. Their shared commitment to promoting Chinese-Indonesian literature in Mandarin forged a lasting friendship. Shalihong remembers Yan as a headstrong, confident, and frank literary predecessor who was always approachable, traits that have made him unforgettable. This personal remembrance not only honors Yan's character but also situates him within the collective memory of the Chinese-Indonesian literary community.

Similarly, *In Memory of Mr Yan Weizhen* 《悼念严唯真老师》 (Lin, 2015), another well-known male author, Lin Wanli emphasizes Yan Weizhen's lifelong dedication to literature, beginning with his role as a reporter for *Koran Penghidupan*, continuing through his publications in Hong Kong, and his tireless efforts and contributions to the revival of ethnic Chinese literature in the post-*Reformasi* era. Lin Wanli concludes that Yan Weizhen consistently showed persistence and was wholeheartedly devoted to the cause of Chinese-Indonesian literature for decades, until right up to the end of his life.

In the piece *Uncle Qiang, Take Care of Yourself* 《阿强伯，一路走好》 (Yang, 2015a), Yang Yang pays tribute to the one-year anniversary of Yan Weizhen's passing, recalling him by his birth name, Lin Zhiqiang. From his time as a student at Tsinghua Middle School, Yang Yang remembers Mr. Lin, who taught Chinese literature and history, as someone who dressed plainly, wore glasses, and was easy to approach, such a typical honest uncle whom students lovingly referred to as 'Uncle Qiang'. This image complements Shalihong's *Is Life Like Passing By?* and Lin Wanli's *In Memory of Mr. Yan Weizhen*, which portray Yan Weizhen as a loyal literary companion from the 1960s and as a dedicated proponent of Chinese-Indonesian literature, active from his youth until the end of his life.

Together, Shalihong's *Is Life Like Passing By?*, Lin Wanli's *In Memory of Mr Yan Weizhen*, Yang Yang's *Uncle Qiang, Take Care of Yourself*, these three prose works not only capture the individual memories of friendship and collaboration but also the collective memory of Yan Weizhen as a symbol of cultural resilience and literary activism. While each author's memory is anchored in distinct relationships—teacher, friend, colleague—they highlight common themes: Yan's humility, dedication, and lasting impact on Chinese-Indonesian literature. The varied portrayals

demonstrate how memories are continually revived, reshaped, and validated within social groups through discussions, media, and activities, and they are also closely tied to other subjects. (Erlil, 2022)

These narratives also reflect Wang's (2021) insight that in diasporic contexts, Chinese-Indonesians tend to remember or recall memories in 'significant others', connecting their roles and personal identity to the community. In this sense, remembering Yan Weizhen is not merely about the man himself, but about reaffirming the community's shared values, struggles, and aspirations. The enduring image of Yan Weizhen, despite the passage of time and distance, illustrates how collective memory upholds a person's symbolic presence. This process combines personal affection with public acknowledgment. As such, memorializing Yan Weizhen serves as both a record of personal connections and a reinforcement of collective identity, creating a living archive from which the community continues to draw meaning.

In addition, there are also prose works reflecting urban experiences and social concerns, illuminating the contemporary realities of Chinese-Indonesian life. Yafei's *A Glimpse of the Street* 《街头一瞥》 (Yafei, 2015b) depicts the ordinary phenomenon of urban joints as she recalls particular scenes in front of her store. First, she recalls the street children inhaling cheap glue directly from cans, as an improvised and inexpensive form of drug abuse. Second, she describes the phenomenon of the 'crocodile' beggars, who conceal their arms within their clothing and dramatically collapse on the street to feign disability, soliciting sympathy and financial help from passersby. Third, she portrays wandering street performers who appear during festivals, equipped with large microphones to entertain in front of stores before asking for payment. In response, some shopkeepers hang signs that state 'singing is free,' indicating that while the performers may entertain, they will not receive any payment. Yafei refers to these performers as a 'beggar band.' These three snapshots—youth glue addiction, staged begging, and the annoyance of street performances—reflect not only the realities of urban living but also the ongoing social challenges ingrained in daily life.

In a different narrative, *Santi* 《姗蒂》 (Yafei, 2015a), Yafei shifts to a more personal story, sharing the life of her former nanny, a woman from a rural background with limited education. Santi, who had a daughter the same age as Yafei, once purchased papayas with her own money for the child's birthday, aware of the girl's love for the fruit. Years later, after leaving due to family matters during Eid, Santi reappeared online to reconnect. By that time, she was employed in Singapore as a migrant worker, studying English during her free time, and aspiring to become a tour guide. Her drive and positivity led Yafei to contemplate her own unfulfilled educational aspirations.

Similarly, Yidishui's *Dad, I'm Sorry* 《爸爸，对不起》 (Yidishui, 2015) presents an intensely personal narrative about revealing his homosexuality.

As the oldest son, he faced his father's expectations to marry and preserve the family lineage. Having studied in the United States and established a career, he took pride in his accomplishments, yet shunned arranged introductions, recognizing from a young age that he was gay. The prose begins with an almost idealized portrayal of his beloved—whose beauty, he confides, once belonged to a man. In the closing moments of his father's life, he confessed that he could not meet the traditional role expected of him. His father's death without reconciliation left him with deep regret.

These adulthood memories illustrate what (Halbwachs, 1980) identifies as the social foundation of collective memory. The individual's memory remains collective, whether participating in an activity, witnessing an event, or recalling it through others' memories. In *Dad, I'm Sorry!*, the tension between individual authenticity and familial expectations highlights the collective memory of the Chinese-Indonesian family as a social unit, where marriage and heritage are highly valued, and deviations are often silenced. In Yafei's *A Glimpse of the Street*, the recurring images of on the street – glue-sniffing kids, 'crocodile' beggars, street singers resonate with a shared urban experience that residents collectively recognize and narrate, despite differing viewpoints. In *Santi*, the transformation of a rural nanny into an empowered migrant worker is part of a larger narrative of labor migration—a social phenomenon that, through repeated telling, becomes part of the community's collective memory.

According to Halbwachs and Coser (1992), collective memory is both to preserve the past and to reconstruct it according to present needs. These prose works reveal that individual memories are constantly reshaped by current circumstances: the social stigma of homosexuality, the urban poverty, and the hopes of migrant workers are all recalled and narrated in ways that provide significance to the present. Through such narratives, individual memories do not remain private but become integrated into collective consciousness, linking private experiences to broader societal contexts. Halbwachs and Coser (1992) state that memory preserves history and past events, yet it also reconstructs images of the past to provide meaning for the present. Several works in this compilation use historical events as frameworks for recording personal experiences, integrating them into a shared historical memory.

One example is Han Yangbo's *The Chronicle of the Fall of Batavia* 《巴城落陷纪实》 (Han, 2015) which documented his experiences during the transition from Dutch colonial to Japanese occupation. In 1942, while working under the Dutch East Indies Company administration, Han observed Dutch officials retreating in preparation for the Japanese invasion, even as he was directed to maintain his responsibilities until the official surrender was made by bureau chief De Wield. He describes scenes of chaos: Japanese advance troops landing, ronin spies mingling in public spaces, ethnic Chinese residents attempting in

vain to defend their properties, and the devastation of Pancoran's commercial district. That evening, the Japanese army entered Batavia, raised their flag over the surrendered Dutch administration, and the city fell. Han's account—rarely found in Indonesia's colonial or Chinese-Indonesian historiography—merges personal testimony with major historical events, demonstrating how individual memory becomes part of the historical record and preserving the wartime experiences of Chinese-Indonesians.

The following accounts of Japan's invasion of Indonesia are presented in this compilation. For example, Bingling's *Green Island Nostalgia* 《绿岛怀旧》 (Bingling, 2015) recalls her early years at a Chinese school during the late 1930s. At the age of six, she learned from her teachers about the suffering in China during the Sino-Japanese War. A haunting newspaper image, showing a grieving man next to a corpse, while a blood-covered child crying nearby, left a lasting impression, as did a film depicting refugees bombed from the air. Such visuals sparked nightmares and a stronger sense of national unity, leading her to contribute her snack money to support the war efforts. Through these recollections, Bingling demonstrates how education and visual media can immerse children into a broader sense of nationalism, connecting personal awareness with a collective historical identity.

Yiruxiang's *The Memory of the Japanese Invasion Era* 《日治时代的往事》 (Yiruxiang, 2015), narrates the story of her family's escape from Singapore to Sumatra, and finally to Bengkalis, in search of safety from Japanese forces. Even in this small coastal town, the Japanese eventually came and forced the family to leave their home. After Japan's surrender in 1945, a political vacuum allowed two members of the Malayan Communist Party Red Army they organize the local youths and conduct military drills every day. Yiruxiang recounts the public capture and execution of Li Ya, a Taiwanese interpreter who had collaborated with the Japanese. This execution, witnessed by the author as a child, forms the emotional climax of her wartime recollections.

Yang Yang's *Sex Slave and Comfort Women* 《“性奴”与慰安妇》 (Yang, 2015b) addresses the Jugun Ianfu or comfort women when Japan invaded Indonesia for three years, and also about Japan's intrusion in Asian countries. Through the story of a mother who sacrifices her own safety to a Japanese officer in place of her captured daughter, Yang Yang reveals the physical and emotional trauma experienced by comfort women. The narrative also places these experiences within ongoing global controversies surrounding historical recognition and the need for apologies.

Those prose works are about the historical memory: Han Yangbo's *The Chronicle of the Fall of Batavia* recounts the trauma of Japanese occupation; Bingling's *Green Island Nostalgia* captures childhood memories of the Sino-Japanese War; Yiruxiang's *Memory of Japanese Invasion Era* describes displacement and survival in the period of Japanese

invasion; Yang Yang's *Sex Slave and Comfort Women* tells wartime atrocities, all these prose constitutes the collective memory of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia of the Japanese invasion. While deeply personal, each account resonates with broader social remembrance, illustrating how traumatic experiences are preserved and conveyed.

Unexpected or stressful events, such as wars, natural disasters, or traumatic events, can impact individuals who experience them or learn about them through the media. People can also remember those events for a long time, have a deeply emotional relationship, even potentially triggering a flashbulb memory or intense flashbacks. That memory is influenced by the group of people or nations (Erll & Hirst, 2023; Heux et al., 2023; Rouhani et al., 2023). That is why historical memory can be passed down from generation to generation. Moreover, Halbwachs states that "The historical memory reaches the social actor only through written records and other types of records, such as photography. But it can be kept alive through commemorations, festive enactments, and the like." These stories not only safeguard memories that are missing from mainstream historical records but also enhance the emotional and mnemonic resonance of significant historical occurrences. Thus, these prose represent more than just literary evidence; they serve as a cultural and historical archive, preserving the Chinese-Indonesian wartime recollections through generations and emphasizing the significance of literature as a vessel for historical trauma and resilience.

## CONCLUSIONS

*The Green Island Prose Compilation* 《绿岛散文集》 provides a rich literary landscape for exploring the formation of collective memory among Chinese-Indonesians. This study has shown that the author's personal memories are not just individual representations but are influenced by larger social contexts. These contexts, as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs, facilitate the integration of personal memories into a collective cultural awareness that upholds the identity of Chinese-Indonesians across generations.

The collective memory of Chinese-Indonesians in this prose compilation encompasses childhood memories, adulthood experiences, and historical recollections. Childhood memories evoke vivid images from each author's early years, reconstructing personal narratives that highlight themes such as the innocence of youth, the struggles endured, and the influential role of family and environment. This enriches the shared memory of growing up as Chinese-Indonesians. Adulthood memories, particularly those that honor notable community figures or tackle urban living challenges, underscore the formation of collective identity through shared experiences and social interactions. Furthermore, *The Green Island Prose Compilation* serves as a poignant reminder of past

events and an essential archive of historical memory, offering valuable insights into the lived realities of Chinese-Indonesians during pivotal historical moments. It is imperative that we preserve and pass down this historical memory across generations.

This study contributes to the field of collective memory studies and Chinese diaspora literature. It offers a localized perspective on the construction of collective memory amidst cultural preservation and shifting identities. Nonetheless, certain limitations must be taken into account. The study focuses on a single anthology, which may not fully represent the diversity of Chinese-Indonesian memory discourse. Future research could explore other forms, such as oral histories or visual media, that shape collective memory among Chinese-Indonesians. Comparative studies across ethnic literature in Indonesia could also provide valuable insights into how collective memory operates in multiethnic contexts.

In conclusion, *the Green Island Prose Compilation* functions as more than a literary anthology; it embodies the convergence of memory, identity, and resistance. Through literature, Chinese-Indonesians assert their presence and cultural continuity, contributing to a broader Indonesian national identity. Analyzing these texts through the lens of collective memory reveals both the structure of remembrance and the potential for belonging in a diverse society.

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