

Negotiating Identity through Dual Spatial Narratives: The Construction of the Third Space in Sinophone Indonesian Fiction Beyond Qizhou Ocean

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Abstract: Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the Third Space provide an analytical framework for interpreting the dual spatial narratives of homeland and hostland and the attendant identity politics in overseas Chinese diasporic fiction. The Indonesian Chinese novel *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* employs Tangshan and Hebu as its core spatial images, revealing the intrinsic connection between spatial production and identity negotiation. This paper argues that, Tangshan functions as a spiritual homeland, bearing the cultural memory and identity origins of the migrant subjects; Hebu, by contrast, is a real-world arena for diasporic identity construction, interwoven with colonial oppression, survival opportunities, and modern challenges. The novel's portrayal of identity suspension arises precisely from the tension between these two spaces. Transcending the tragic narrative of migrant identity anxiety rooted in binary spatial opposition, the novel meticulously depicts how the Indonesian Chinese community exercises agency through linguistic hybridity, educational practices, and social networks. It thereby reveals their active identity negotiation within a Third Space, offering a vivid case study for understanding the interplay between spatial narrative and identity construction in Chinese diasporic literature. By foregrounding the entanglement of the Third Space with power structures, this study aims to provide a more critical and dialectical perspective on diasporic identity in the age of globalization.

Keywords: *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*; Sinophone Indonesian Fiction; Dual Spatial Narrative; Third Space; Identity Negotiation.

1. Introduction

The representative Indonesian Chinese writer Huang Dongping's novel *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* (*Qizhouyang Wai*) [1], with its profound historical texture and compelling literary expression, vividly portrays the arduous journey of early Nanyang Chinese as they crossed the Seven Seas—the "southern part of the South China Sea" [1]—to seek survival and prosperity in Hebu, a colonial Indonesian city under the rule of the Dutch East India Company. In the novel, the juxtaposition and interweaving of the two spaces, Tangshan (China) and Hebu (the Dutch colonial settlement), constitute a tension-filled dual spatial narrative structure. Tangshan, as the cultural homeland and spiritual origin that the Indonesian Chinese yearn for, draws upon their emotions and memories of the motherland. Hebu, as the land of their immediate survival, is a colony fraught with opportunities and oppression, demanding that the Chinese devise strategies for adaptation and survival. This spatial schism and coexistence reflect the identity negotiation dilemmas faced by Indonesian Chinese caught between two cultures and two orders.

While researchers have astutely identified the identity gap or suspended state engendered by the binary spaces of homeland and hostland in spatial narratives, analyses often remain at a static level, focusing on the individual migrant's narrative of predicament [2]. They tend to lack a systematic theoretical account of how the text, through collective spatial practices and dynamic narratives, portrays the active identity negotiations of overseas Chinese caught between two spatial poles, ultimately leading to the construction of a Third Space that transcends binary opposition—a dynamic field proposed by Homi K. Bhabha that goes beyond the native/foreign dichotomy and accommodates cultural hybridity and identity negotiation.

This paper, therefore, takes *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* as a case study to address three core questions concerning the relationship between the dual spatial narrative of homeland and hostland and identity negotiation in diasporic fiction: First, how is the dual spatial narrative of Tangshan-Hebu specifically constructed in the novel? What social, cultural, and emotional functions do each of these spaces serve, and how do they together create a narrative tension that pulls at the identity of the migrant subjects? Second, in terms of identity politics, how does this specific juxtaposition of Tangshan and Hebu profoundly reflect and shape the identity predicaments—feelings of suspension and hybridity—of the Indonesian Chinese? How does it simultaneously provide the stage and impetus for their identity negotiation? Third, regarding the agency and resolution of identity construction, how do the novel's characters actively negotiate their identities within this binary spatial structure through everyday spatial practices such as language use, education, and social networks? How does this negotiation ultimately lead to the emergence of a creative Third Space, enabling a shift from passive identity suspension to a proactive reconfiguration of subjectivity?

2. Literature Review

Current scholarship on *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* predominantly employs the grand narratives of Indonesian Chinese immigration history and the history of suffering as its primary analytical framework. Research focuses on the survival conditions of overseas Chinese in the diasporic location of Hebu during the Dutch colonial period—examining the literary depictions of colonial oppression, racial discrimination, and other immigrant experiences—to reconstruct the diasporic history of the Chinese in the Nanyang [3]. As Zhuang Liwei observed, "the author's

detailed descriptions of the overseas Chinese economy, education, social landscape, and Dutch colonial rule endow this excellent work on the overseas Chinese subject not only with literary value but also with considerable historiographical significance for the study of Southeast Asian Chinese and colonial history" [4]. These studies have uncovered the rich connections between the novel's text and its socio-historical context. However, they tend to underemphasize the novel's internal spatial narrative art and the subjective dimension of migrant identity construction, resulting in a research bias that prioritizes history over aesthetics.

Scholars have begun to focus on the theme of cultural identity in *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*, exploring the identity anxiety of overseas Chinese in the colonial context by analyzing the protagonist's vacillation between Chinese identification and local adaptation[5]. While this work addresses a partial gap in the study of spatial narratives and identity construction by acknowledging the identity anxiety of Indonesian Chinese within dual spaces, it still does not sufficiently connect the dynamic nature of spatial narrative with identity negotiation. Regarding the spatial imagery in the novel, existing research often interprets the juxtaposition of Tangshan and Hebuas a static background setting, employing binary opposition frameworks like tradition-modernity or homeland-hostland to analyze the superficial effects of the dual spatial narrative on character development and cultural anxiety[6]. This approach fails to reveal space as an active and productive narrative force that participates in plot progression and shapes the dynamic trajectory of identity construction for the Chinese community. In particular, the interwoven narrative of Tangshan and Hebu—a fundamental textual structure that organizes the plot, generates narrative tension, and propels internal character conflict—has not yet received systematic in-depth examination, representing a significant gap in current research.

In international scholarship, there are few studies directly addressing *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*. However, research on the diasporic history and identity of overseas Chinese communities provides a crucial macro-framework and historical contextual support for interpreting the novel's diasporic identity construction. Wang Gungwu's delineation of the historical trajectory of overseas Chinese from sojourning to seeking autonomy offers a trans-temporal reference for understanding the identity choices of the Chinese in *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*, and his notion of seeking autonomy resonates with the subjectivity in Third Space construction explored in this study[7]. Charles A. Coppel provides historical grounding for the identity anxiety and cultural negotiation depicted in the novel[in his analysis of the complexity of cultural identity among Indonesian Chinese under assimilation policies[8]. Leo Suryadinata's edited volume on the contemporary Chinese minority in Indonesia adds a contemporary dimension for comparison with the colonial-era identity negotiations portrayed in the text[9].

Existing research provides a valuable foundation for understanding the spatial narratives and identity construction in *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*. However, it has notable shortcomings: first, the analysis of the relationship between the dual spatial narrative structure and the dynamic mechanisms of spatial narrative within the novel is relatively weak; second, insufficient attention is paid to the agency and initiative of the Indonesian Chinese community in the process of identity construction. These gaps constitute the point of

departure for this paper.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Production of Space: Analyzing the Social Constitution of Dual Spaces

Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space provides a core framework for analyzing the social constitution of the dual spaces of homeland and hostland in the novel. This theory breaks from the conventional notion of space as a static container—a meaningless box or stagemerely serving as a backdrop—and redefines space as a product and reproducer of social relations[10]. Lefebvre's triadic dialectic for analyzing the production of space offers a concrete analytical path for dissecting the Tangshanand Hebu spaces in *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*. Lefebvre'sspatial triad comprises spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces .

Spatial practice is perceived physical space, the field of spatial relationships generated by spatial practice, constituting the spatiality of social life[10]; it is not merely physical but a constitutive process of social life. Representations of space are conceptualized spaces, dominant spaces conceived by power (such as colonizers, patriarchal authorities) through knowledge, signs, and discourse. These are spaces conceived by planners, architects, scientists, and urban administrators, closely tied to relations of production and order [10]. As Zhang Yibing notes, representations of space are placed under the dual constraint of knowledge and power,incorporating power relations and organizing space as a tool of domination[11].

Representational spaces are lived spaces, passively experienced, created, and modified through the images and symbols of their users and inhabitants [10]. They are dominated spaces, but also spaces where the imagination seeks change, associated with the concealed aspects of everyday life. This is the core field where identity negotiation occurs, the result of creative reshaping of dominated space through lived experience. As Liu Huaiyu and Lu Bao argue, the core vitality of Lefebvre's theory of spatial production lies in seeking new possibilities for social life creation, transformation, and political practice amidst the irresolvable internal spatial contradictions and crises of capitalism[12]. Therefore, the spatial triad is not merely an analytical tool but a critical methodology aimed at revealing contradictions and seeking liberation.

3.2. Third Spaceand Hybridity: Exploring Pathways for Identity Negotiation

Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of the Third Space and hybridity provide perspectives and analytical tools for understanding the mechanisms of identity negotiation that occur in the interstices between different cultural spaces. Bhabha seeks to deconstruct fixed cultural identities, emphasizing the creative agency that emerges in the in-between spaces of culture. His concepts of the Third Space and hybridity offer a framework for interpreting spatial narrative and identity politics in diasporic fiction.

Bhabha argues that when different cultures interact under conditions of unequal power, the result is not mere imitation or confrontation, but a new hybrid form [13]. Hybridity is not a dilution of culture but the generation of new meanings. It implies that "the colonized appropriate, modify, and translate the meanings of the colonizer's power discourse through their

own indigenous culture, turning it to their own use" [14]. It is not only a strategy for identity negotiation but also a practice that "threatens authority with its mimicry and its mockery"[13]. The Third Space refers to an enunciative and constructive field that exists between cultural differences, neither one nor the other, yet both" [13]. It is not a physical location but a discursive condition and a critical position. The core of Bhabha's theory lies in breaking down the binary barrier between East and West and creating new spaces for negotiation at cultural boundaries.

4. Presentation of Predicament: The Identity Dilemmas of Indonesian Chinese Reflected in the Dual Spatial Narrative

4.1. Tangshan: The Spiritual Homeland and Identity Anchor in Cultural Memory

In the narrative of *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*, Tangshan is far more than a simple geographical coordinate. It is a representational space continuously represented and reinforced through collective memory, family letters, traditional customs, and orally transmitted stories. As a cultural and spiritual landscape of China within the hearts of Indonesian Chinese, it carries a profound cultural unconscious and the emotional function of homeland attachment.

Within the novel's diasporic geographical landscape, Tangshan first appears as an entity of cultural memory of the motherland. The emotions of the Indonesian Chinese characters toward Tangshan are not created out of nothing but are continually awakened and nourished by a series of specific cultural practices: from the highly ritualized celebrations of Chinese festivals like Spring Festival and Qingming, to the comfort and memories evoked by a taste of hometown flavors—"What are Nanyang bananas compared to ours? They have no fragrance at all. Our Tangshan bananas are the real ones! Keep one in the room, and not only will people entering the hall smell it, even passers-by at the door can catch the scent"—to the deep longing and concern for distant ancestral halls and hometowns, and their conscious incorporation of Chinese architectural elements into their living space in Hebu[1]301. "Among these streets, one can find many old buildings that are of Tangshan-style architecture... with their peeling vermilion gates, couplets, and door knockers, their painted beams and ancient Chinese patterns" [1]2.

Particularly significant is the veneration of the "Sanbaogong Temple" (dedicated to the eunuch admiral Zheng He): "Nowadays, a few old temples remain in the settlement. The most majestic is the 'Sanbaogong Temple'... In the devotion of the older generation, incense burns brightly year after year. For generations, it has laid the foundation for Chinese life in Hebu"[1]7. These detailed spatial narratives concretize abstract nostalgia and cultural memory into visible cultural symbols of the motherland, constructing a representational space—a space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence through its inhabitants and users[10]. These representational spaces are actively created and maintained through the inhabitants' imagery, symbols, and life practices. These everyday spaces, filled with cultural symbols of the homeland and cultural practices, weave together a powerful web of meaning,

allowing the symbolized motherland Tangshan to transcend geographical distance and serve as a sustaining spiritual force.

The narrative function of Tangshan extends beyond nostalgia; it acts as a crucial cultural identity coordinate. For the Chinese sojourning in the Nanyang, the answer to the question "Who am I?" always points to the cultural origin represented by Tangshan. Here, "bringing honor to the ancestors" and "returning to one's roots" are not just proverbs but are ethical logics and life pursuits imbued with the cultural consciousness of the motherland. This concept is deeply embedded in their consciousness, making them instinctively regard the cultural norms of Tangshan as the yardstick for self-identification: "In this (Chinese) society, the Chinese have their own unique ethical standards and principles of living... These virtues are: love for the motherland and hometown, unity and mutual aid, diligence and frugality, keeping one's word..."[1]141. Thus, the Tangshan space in the novel essentially becomes a stable, centripetal gravitational source of cultural identity, pulling the identity perception of Indonesian Chinese toward a pure, authentic "Chinese" ethnic identity. This ethical order rooted in the homeland is deeply embedded in the subconscious of the Indonesian Chinese, making the cultural norms of the representational space Tangshan the definitive standard for self-examination and identity definition.

4.2. Hebu: A Battlefield for Survival under Colonial Reality and a Catalyst for Modernity

In contrast to Tangshan, the projection of homeland sentiment, the other space in the novel—Hebu, the hostland—is a real-world field of materiality, oppression, and heterogeneity. It is a reality where Lefebvre's spatial practice and representations of space interplay.

Hebu is the material embodiment of colonial power and capitalist logic. The novel meticulously depicts the spatial layout of Hebu: the Dutch occupy the higher ground and spacious neighborhoods, "they alone form a district (the Dutch quarter), where the government offices and Dutch houses are located..." each facing the green sea, independent Dutch-style houses with spacious courtyards in front, enclosed by iron railings, planted with trees, and covered with grass, making for a pleasant and beautiful environment, starkly contrasting with the dilapidated, crowded, and chaotic Chinatown" [1]434. The Chinese and other indigenous inhabitants are confined to the crowded dock areas and urban fringes. This spatial segregation and hierarchy constitute the most direct spatial inscription of colonial rule and racial discrimination.

This narrative spatial arrangement confirms Lefebvre's assertion that representations of space are constructed by power through planning and symbolism, revealing how colonial power enacts its domination through spatial order. Within this spatial order, the Chinese engage in arduous physical labor or seek survival in narrow commercial niches; their bodies and daily lives are directly exposed to colonial violence and capitalist exploitation: "Most Chinese in Hebu were miners, plantation workers, and dockworkers; next came vegetable growers, artisans, hawkers, and clerks... Only a very few could accumulate capital for business... Goods were all obtained on credit... And even these few Chinese merchants were under heavy pressure from the Dutch colonial authorities"[1]7. The spatial order of Hebu compels them to learn adaptation, endurance, and calculation for survival.

Hebu also serves as a catalyst for modern experience. As a port city, it gathers goods, information, and ideas from around the world: "By the end of 1928, an external serious incident further affected the residents' already difficult livelihoods. The Wall Street financial crisis erupted, and the Great Depression of the capitalist world had arrived..."[1]436-437. Compared to the relatively closed traditional society of Tangshan at the time, Hebu offered opportunities and risks for the Chinese, as well as new social rules of law and contract. This heterogeneous space forced the Chinese to come into contact with and learn new knowledge and skills, thus initiating a kind of modern enlightenment. While Hebu exerts pressure on the Chinese, it also provides them with a potential opportunity for self-reconstruction and breaking free from tradition, becoming a contradictory and tension-filled real battlefield.

4.3. Spatial Tug-of-War and Identity Suspension

The two heterogeneous spaces in the novel, Tangshan and Hebu, do not exist in isolation. They are juxtaposed, interwoven, and in collision within the narrative, creating a continuous spatial tension that physically and mentally pulls at the Indonesian Chinese characters. They are caught between two heterogeneous cultural logics: on one hand, Tangshan demands they continue the lineage of Chinese culture and remain emotionally attached to the motherland; on the other, the survival reality of Hebu forces them to adapt to colonial rules and seek a foothold in a foreign culture. This sense of fragmentation leads to a profound spiritual dilemma and identity suspension for the Indonesian Chinese. They cannot fully return to the traditional world of Tangshan, as their experiences in Hebu have transformed them. Yet they find it difficult to truly integrate into the colonial order of Hebu; racial and cultural barriers ensure they are always perceived as others in the host country.

Under the pressure and pull of the binary opposition between motherland and hostland, the identity of the Indonesian Chinese takes on hybrid characteristics: they are neither fully Chinese nor accepted as locals. This suspended state is not a vacuum of identity but a zone filled with anxiety, confusion, and questioning—a space for identity negotiation. It signifies the breakdown of a fixed, single identity. The identity anxiety arising from the tearing of the dual spaces makes the characters' search for relief and transcendence through identity construction both urgent and necessary. The following section delves deeper into the text to examine how the novel's narrative of Third Space construction transforms this structural predicament into a creative field for identity negotiation.

5. Negotiation Mechanism: Construction of the Third Space and Identity Negotiation

5.1. Linguistic Hybridity: Deconstruction of Cultural Power and Emergence of New Discursive Practices

In the narrative of *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*, language serves not only as a tool for communication between different ethnic groups but also as a frontline arena for cultural power struggle and identity negotiation. The novel features a significant

amount of linguistic hybridity—the interweaving of Chinese vocabulary and syntax with colonial languages (Dutch or Malay). This is a vivid literary illustration of what Homi Bhabha terms "hybridity": "The local name of the town is 'Kota Benteng,' meaning a coastal city. Due to its close ties with the Chinese, the Chinese, according to their custom, gave it an elegant abbreviated name, *Hebu* (River Port), just as they call Manila *Minbu* (Min Port), Singapore *Xingzhou* (Star Island), and Batavia *Ba Cheng* (City of Betawi)" [1]1. "To this day, traces of Chinese labor remain in the local language: *louding* (upstairs), *doufu* (bean curd), *douya* (bean sprouts), *doujiang* (soy sauce), *fenglu* (stove), *muji* (wooden clogs), *rouwan* (meat balls)... all are Hokkien transliterations"[1]6. "*Nongbang* is the Chinese transliteration of the local word, meaning to stay temporarily"[1]16.

This linguistic hybridity effectively deconstructs the authority of any single culture. "The Chinatown of this Hebu, the locals call it *Bei Zhina An*, meaning the place where Chinese (*Zhina*) gather. This street name exists in various ports of the Dutch East Indies, and there are even specific names for Arab quarters. But the official street name is the Dutch street sign erected at the entrance: *Chinas Hofstraat* (Chinese Court Street)"[1]137. When characters naturally intersperse Malay terms for local objects or use Dutch concepts to understand the colonial administration, they are not simply betraying their mother tongue or yielding to colonial culture. Rather, this practice creates a discursive space in the interstices of the two linguistic systems—one belonging neither fully to Tangshan nor completely to Hebu. It parodies and disrupts the purity of the colonial language while simultaneously expanding the expressive capacity of the mother tongue, challenging the cultural hegemony carried by any single language. This phenomenon of creating new cultural space through linguistic hybridity is not unique to *Beyond Qizhou Ocean*. Li Minghuan, in her study of European Chinese communities, notes that linguistic hybridity is an important strategy for overseas Chinese to build cultural enclaves in foreign soil[15]. Aihwa Ong's concept of flexible citizenship also suggests that "linguistic flexibility and hybridity are micro-level cultural manifestations of the strategic survival postures adopted by Chinese in the global political economy"[16].

This linguistic hybridity also gives rise to new forms of discourse and identity expression. Bhabha highlights that the significance of hybridity lies precisely in the emergence of the new. In the novel, the Chinese use this mixed language for internal communication, forming a unique speech style specific to the Nanyang Chinese community: "The first thing a new guest (*xinke*, new immigrant) needed upon arriving in Nanyang was to learn the foreign language; once they could speak it, they could do business" [1]94. "People in the shops indeed spoke their hometown dialects, yet there were many unfamiliar words... and in a sentence of hometown dialect, there were words like *dabi* (local word for 'but'), when asking the price, they would ask one *zhilu* how many *lei*?' The answer would be one *dalu*.. " [1]100. The hybrid language facilitates the Chinese community's communication and survival in the culturally diverse Hebu environment while retaining their emotional and cultural roots. This hybrid language is not merely a communicative tool; it is itself a positive identity negotiation strategy. At least at the discursive level, it signals the emergence of a hybrid Nanyang Chinese consciousness.

5.2. Dual-Track Education: Continuity of Tradition and Articulation with Modernity

The educational spaces depicted in *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* are concentrated sites of convergence and collision between the binary cultural spaces of the motherland and the hostland. The Chinese in Hebu actively established Chinese schools to preserve their cultural roots and traditions, while their children were also compelled to come into contact with, and even systematically receive, western/colonial education. This complex picture reveals the difficult choices Indonesian Chinese faced in balancing the need to continue cultural traditions with the realities of local survival. The Chinese community's insistence on Chinese-language education in Hebu is a conscious effort to perpetuate the cultural lineage of Tangshan. "This small Hebu truly placed great importance on the culture and education of the motherland"[1]110.

This was their far-sighted plan for the entire Chinese community, especially for the younger generation: by reading Chinese books and learning Chinese characters, with Chinese culture, they would remember their Tangshan motherland and be Chinese. Otherwise, they would become returned fan (*gui fan*, assimilated or lost to the Chinese community). In their understanding, this was a crucial issue—whether or not their descendants would remain Chinese" [1]110. "The Chinese valued Chinese schools and employed teachers from the motherland, but their intention was not merely for reading Chinese books and learning Chinese characters. More important than literacy, they believed, was learning the traditional lifestyle, customs, and habits from the teachers from the motherland, ensuring that their children and descendants would forever remain Chinese and not be assimilated by other ethnic groups"[1]111. Consequently, they spared no expense to invite a university graduate, Xu Qun, from Tangshan to teach the Chinese children of the settlement. This practice constitutes a form of resistance to the representations of space (colonial assimilation education), striving to maintain a cultural representational space centered on Tangshan.

However, unlike a rigid adherence to tradition or submission to colonial culture, the Chinese merchants formed a pragmatic and strategic educational outlook based on their lived experience and practical interests: "Based on their own life experiences and interests, what they hoped for from schooling was only to cultivate their children into people who could apply the literary skills they learned to business, not to produce dead-reading pedants[1]111. This perception translated into a dual-track educational practice: while adhering to traditional cultural foundations, they actively embraced Western-style knowledge education within the colonial context. The episode in the novel where, "given the superiority of Dutch merchants... and the prevailing trend among the local-born Chinese (*Qiaosheng*) to admire Dutch ways, the matriarch *Niang Re* decided to let Tianshou enter a Dutch school to study Dutch", exemplifies the Chinese community's active articulation with the realities of Hebu[1]348.

This dual-track educational choice was not a cultural compromise but a creative survival strategy that transcended the Tangshan-Hebu binary. To survive and thrive in the hostland, it was necessary to master new knowledge discourses. This dual-track educational practice enabled the new generation of Chinese to navigate two cultural codes, forging a new type of subjectivity capable of adapting to a

dual world within a broader Third Space. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this seemingly successful path of identity negotiation and construction also reveals the power imbalances within the Third Space. The forced acceptance and integration into the colonial education system inherently involved acquiescing to and, in a roundabout way, reinforcing the underlying power structures and knowledge hegemony. This strategic choice, while empowering the migrant identity, may simultaneously sow seeds of cultural alienation across generations, meaning the emergence of the Third Space remains entangled with the structural inequalities of the representations of space it seeks to negotiate or challenge.

5.3. Community Networks: Mutual Aid and Identity Reshaping through Ties of Place and Trade

The Chinese associations, ancestral halls, and trade guilds established by the Chinese in Hebu constitute core institutions for spatial reproduction and social integration within the heterogeneous environment. A crucial detail worth exploring is that while these community networks physically reproduced a unique social space resembling a Little Tangshan in Hebu, functionally and substantively, it was not a simple replica of the homeland but a representational space creatively reconstructed according to the conditions of Hebu. "The area where the Chinese congregate forms a unique sphere of life... called the Chinese society" [1]7. "*Nongbang* is one of the fine customs unique to overseas Chinese society. Those staying in *nongbang* receive the same provisions as regular shop staff but without pay; they may assist with shop work according to their abilities but have no fixed duties. They may leave whenever they find suitable work or opportunities"[1]94.

These organizations provide new immigrants with accommodation, job referrals, dispute mediation, and assistance for the poor and sick. Such community organizations, based on ties of place and kinship, are a widely observed phenomenon in studies of the global Chinese diaspora. Philip A. Kuhn views these organizations as security spaces and trust networks spontaneously constructed by Chinese immigrants in unfamiliar environments[17]. They closely link survival in Hebu with the cultural lineage of Tangshan, forming a transnational, fluid social space. Under the severe oppression and injustice faced by the Chinese from the colonial government, these organizations provided a buffer for material survival, and their construction constituted a negotiation with and response to the harsh living conditions in Hebu.

In Tangshan, kinship and local organizations were natural components of traditional society. In Hebu, these organizations were endowed with new missions. Through mutual assistance within the Chinese community, they strengthened internal cohesion amidst the surrounding heterogeneous culture and took on a function of cultural identity reconstruction: "Like the Chinese elsewhere, the entire Hebu, indeed all Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, had common life goals, habits, and customs... They sent large amounts of remittances home every year. When they had saved enough, they returned home to visit relatives. They grandly celebrated every national festival overseas. They dedicated their lives to the customs and habits of the motherland. They never forgot the scenery, produce, and climate of their homeland, reminiscing about their life experiences back home. They told the next generation about

the deeds of their ancestral homeland. They supported every cause and construction project beneficial to their hometowns. They developed Chinese culture and education overseas..."[1]141.

However, the organizational forms, management styles, and rules for handling local affairs also incorporated the commercial logic and legal elements of Hebu: "There were also various oppositions, conflicts, struggles, divisions, corruption, and degradation among the Chinese... but overall, they united into a powerful tide, moving forward in a positive direction" [1]142. Thus, this Little Tangshanboth carries the cultural memory of Tangshan and bears the deep imprint of survival in Hebu. Through its hybrid, dynamic existence, it announces the birth of a new sociality and a sense of cultural belonging, a community space situated between the homeland and the hostland.

6. Conclusion

In sum, the spatial narrative of the novel *Beyond Qizhou Ocean* presents not the tragedy of Indonesian Chinese seeking a singular cultural identity, but the dynamic process of constructing identity subjectivity through the building of a Third Space in the cultural interstices between the binary spaces of motherland and hostland. The ethnic subjectivity formed in this process is not an essentialist, fixed set of ethnic cultural traits and identity, but a situated, performative, and agentive negotiation—a survival wisdom capable of flexibly drawing on different cultural resources in response to varying spatial and power relations, characterized by strong adaptability and creativity. However, while affirming the creative value of the Third Space, we must maintain theoretical caution: the emergence of this field of identity negotiation does not occur in a vacuum. It is perpetually entangled with unequal power relations, whether between colonizer and colonized, or between tradition and modernity. Therefore, each instance of hybridity and transcendence achieved by the Indonesian Chinese characters in the novel is accompanied by implicit compromise and struggle. The process of establishing their identity subjectivity is simultaneously a continuous negotiation with external power structures.

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