

# The Role of Mahua Literature in Shaping Malaysian Cultural Identity and Historical Discourse

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## Abstract

*This research paper examines the significant influence of Mahua (Chinese-Malaysian) literature on the formation of Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse. The study investigates the emergence of Mahua literature as a counter-narrative to the prevailing Malay-centric literary tradition, portraying the challenges and aspirations of the Chinese-Malaysian community. This research examines the intricate relationship between Mahua and Malay literature in Malaysia, revealing the power dynamics that have influenced the country's national identity. It employs Keke's theory of pluralism, Foucault's discourse analysis, and Tansley's ecosystem concept to analyse this interplay. The paper also examines the influence of Malay nationalism on the growth of national literature, emphasising the language-focused prejudices that have marginalised Mahua literature. This study promotes a broader and more diverse approach to national literature by conducting a thorough comparative analysis of prominent literary figures and their works. It emphasises the importance of recognising the contributions made by all ethnic communities. The research findings have profound implications for understanding the role of minority literature in postcolonial countries and fostering cultural diversity within national literary traditions.*

**Keywords:** *Mahua Literature, Malaysian National Literature, Cultural Identity, Historical Discourse and Pluralism*

## INTRODUCTION

### Context and Background

Mahua literature, which encompasses the literary works produced by the Chinese-Malaysian community, has exerted a significant influence in moulding Malaysia's cultural identity and historical narrative. This literature originated in a multifaceted socio-political environment characterised by the convergence of ethnicity, language, and national identity. Mahua literature emerged in the early 20th century, parallel to the notable influx of Chinese immigrants to Malaya and the subsequent socio-cultural development of the Chinese diaspora. Mahua literature has developed over time to mirror the challenges, ambitions, and cultural manifestations of the Chinese-Malaysian community. It has emerged as a notable alternative to the prevailing Malay-centric narrative in Malaysian national literature (Carstens, 1998; Wijaya, 2023). Various factors, such as colonialism, migration, and the socio-political dynamics of post-independence Malaysia, have influenced the development of Mahua literature. During Malaysia's shift from being a British colony to becoming an independent nation, the Chinese-Malaysian community encountered considerable obstacles in establishing their cultural identity within a national context that placed greater emphasis on Malay language and culture. Mahua literature arose as a reaction to these difficulties, providing a forum for Chinese and Malaysian authors to express their encounters and viewpoints. This literature not only portrays the historical and cultural legacy of the Chinese community in Malaysia but also addresses wider concerns regarding national identity, cultural variety, and social equity (Fang, 2002).

### Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the influence of Mahua literature on the formation of Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse. This study investigates the impact of Malay nationalist consciousness on the evolution of national literature in Malaysia, focussing on language policies and cultural dominance. This research seeks to investigate the interactions between Mahua and Malay literature, identifying common traits

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and emphasising the role of pluralism in promoting a more comprehensive literary environment in Malaysia. This study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the power dynamics and cultural negotiations that have influenced Malaysian literature by utilising theoretical frameworks such as Kekes's pluralism, Foucault's discourse analysis, and Tansley's ecosystem concept (Kuek et al., 2021). This research seeks to contribute to the wider field of postcolonial literary studies by investigating how minority literatures, like Mahua literature, navigate the intricate aspects of national identity in societies with multiple ethnic groups. This study offers valuable insights into how literature in the Malaysian context can both mirror and question prevailing cultural narratives, presenting alternative viewpoints on history, identity, and belonging. The results of this research are anticipated to have consequences not just for the examination of Malaysian literature but also for the comprehension of cultural diversity and inclusion in national literatures worldwide (Wijaya, 2023).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mahua Literature and Its Evolution**

Mahua Malaysian Chinese literature, also known as Mahua literature, has developed alongside Malaysia's political and social changes, offering a unique viewpoint that portrays the experiences of the Chinese-Malaysian community. The literature encompasses a wide range of genres, such as poetry, fiction, drama, and essays, all of which play a role in shaping a unique cultural identity. Major themes explored in Mahua literature encompass issues of identity, belonging, and marginalisation, as demonstrated by notable authors such as Fang Bei Fang, Chong Fah Hing, and Ng Kim Chew. Through their writings, the authors challenge the prevalent notion that Bahasa Melayu is the exclusive medium for Malaysian national literature. Instead, they argue for a broader and more diverse interpretation of national literature. Carstens (1998) and Wijaya (2023) support this viewpoint. The wider socio-political circumstances of Malaysia intricately connect to the development of Mahua literature.

In the colonial era, the British government implemented policies that strengthened ethnic divisions, thereby fostering the emergence of distinct cultural identities among the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. The Chinese community in Malaya established its own cultural and literary traditions, which notably included the development of Mahua literature. This literature depicted the distinctive experiences of the community, encompassing their difficulties in establishing their sense of self, the process of moving from one place to another, and the obstacles they faced in terms of their social and economic circumstances. Following Malaysia's independence in 1957, the development of Mahua literature progressed, mirroring the shifting dynamics of the nation-state and the persistent conflicts among various ethnic groups (Chong, 2012).

During the period following independence, the Malaysian government's focus on Malay language and culture as the basis of national identity presented notable difficulties for Mahua literature. The National Language Act of 1967, which designated Bahasa Melayu as the exclusive official language, effectively marginalised other languages, such as Chinese, in the national literary canon. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Mahua literature endured, as authors employed their works to express their cultural identity and scrutinise the prevailing nationalist narrative. Ng (2015) argues that this literature has been instrumental in safeguarding the cultural legacy of the Chinese-Malaysian community, as well as making significant contributions to wider conversations about Malaysia's national identity and cultural variety.

### **Influence of Malay Nationalism on National Literature**

Since achieving independence in 1957, the Malaysian government has made a deliberate and focused attempt to encourage the Malay language and culture as the fundamental elements of Malaysian national identity. The focus on Malay nationalism is apparent in policies such as the National Language Act of 1967, which designated Bahasa Melayu as the exclusive official language of Malaysia. These policies have resulted in a bias towards a particular language in the national literary canon, often excluding works written in other languages such as Chinese and Tamil. The omission of non-Malay contributions from the authorised account of Malaysian history and culture exacerbates the marginalisation (Wijaya, 2023; Kuek et al., 2021). The influence of Malay nationalism on Malaysia's national literature progress has been significant. Promoting Malay as the national language was part of a broader effort to forge a cohesive national identity within a society that encompasses multiple ethnic groups. Nevertheless, this policy further solidified the supremacy of Malay culture while

marginalising other cultural and linguistic traditions. The omission of non-Malay literatures from the national canon has sparked controversy, as critics contend that it diminishes Malaysia's cultural diversity and perpetuates ethnic divisions.

The policies have had a significant impact on Mahua literature, resulting in the exclusion of many works from the national literary canon and limited recognition and support for them (Tham, 2017). Malay nationalism's influence on national literature is also evident in the education system. The emphasis on Malay as the primary language in schools has intensified the marginalisation of non-Malay literatures, impeding their visibility and acknowledgement. Consequently, a significant number of Malaysians are not acquainted with the extensive literary heritage of the Chinese, Indian, and indigenous populations. Despite the difficulties, Mahua literature has persevered, as authors employ their works to question the prevailing narrative and promote a broader comprehension of national literature (Ng, 2015).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study utilises multiple theoretical frameworks to examine the impact of Mahua literature on the formation of Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse. Kekes's theory of pluralism offers a perspective for comprehending the simultaneous existence and interplay of diverse literary traditions in Malaysia. It underscores the significance of diversity and inclusivity in cultural and literary activities (Kekes, 1993). Pluralism, as a theoretical framework, emphasises the importance of acknowledging and valuing the cultural contributions made by all ethnic groups within a nation. Pluralism in Malaysian literature provides a means to address the conflicts between the dominant Malay literary tradition and the marginalised Mahua literature, thereby fostering a more inclusive and fairer literary environment (Kekes, 1993). Foucault's discourse analysis is employed to scrutinise the power dynamics inherent in the connection between Mahua and Malay literature, specifically in how literary texts contribute to the wider discourse on national identity and cultural affiliation.

Discourse analysis facilitates a more profound comprehension of the generation and maintenance of power and knowledge within literary texts, as well as the role of these texts in influencing national identity. This study aims to reveal the hidden power dynamics that have shaped the evolution of Malaysian national literature by examining the interactions and conflicts between Mahua and Malay literature (Foucault, 1972). Tansley's ecosystem concept provides a framework to understand the intricate and ever-changing interactions among various literary traditions. The concept of literature as an ecosystem underscores the mutual reliance of diverse literary traditions, emphasising their reciprocal impact and moulding on one another. Within the realm of Malaysian literature, this concept emphasises the significance of Mahua literature as a fundamental component of the country's literary scene, questioning the discriminatory practices that have marginalised it. This study seeks to enhance our understanding of the influence of Mahua literature on Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse by utilising these theoretical frameworks (Tansley, 1935).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Discourse Analysis**

This study utilises Foucault's discourse analysis to examine the interactions and conflicts between Mahua and Malay literature. Discourse analysis is a valuable tool for comprehending the generation and maintenance of power and knowledge within literary texts, as well as their role in shaping the larger conversation surrounding national identity and cultural affiliation. The analysis centres on pivotal writings by Mahua authors that contest the prevailing Malay-centric narratives and present alternative viewpoints on Malaysian history and culture. The study aims to uncover the hidden power dynamics that have influenced the growth of Malaysian national literature by analysing these texts using discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Wijaya, 2023). The methodology of discourse analysis entails a meticulous examination of specific literary texts, with a particular emphasis on the themes, language, and narrative strategies employed by Mahua authors to contest the prevailing discourse. The analysis also considers the historical and cultural context of the creation of these texts, along with the reception and interpretation of these works by diverse audiences. This study seeks to illuminate the intricate dynamics of cultural production and representation in Malaysia by analysing how Mahua literature addresses matters of identity, power, and resistance (Ng, 2015).

## **Comparative Analysis**

A comparative analysis is performed to identify the common characteristics and distinct elements between Mahua and Malay literature. This methodology enables a subtle comprehension of the interplay between these two literary traditions and their contribution to the wider discussion on national identity in Malaysia. The comparison centres on themes such as identity, belonging, and marginalisation, as well as the distinct approaches that Mahua and Malay authors employ in their exploration of historical events and cultural symbols. The study seeks to foster a more inclusive comprehension of Malaysian national literature by examining and emphasising both the shared characteristics and distinct aspects of these two literary traditions (Kuek et al., 2021; Carstens, 1998). The comparative analysis entails a methodical evaluation of specific texts from both the Mahua and Malay literary traditions. This analysis examines multiple facets of the texts, encompassing their thematic preoccupations, narrative frameworks, and stylistic attributes. The study also examines how these texts interact with wider cultural and political matters, such as nationalism, identity, and cultural diversity. This study aims to emphasise the distinctive contributions of Mahua literature to the literary scene in Malaysia, as well as its intersections with and challenges to the prevailing Malay literary tradition (Chong, 2012).

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Mahua Literature as a Cultural Identity Marker**

Mahua literature plays a crucial role in defining the cultural identity of the Chinese-Malaysian community. Mahua literature provides a unique perspective on the Chinese experience in Malaysia by examining themes such as diaspora, identity, and marginalization. This literature explores the intricate nature of cultural identity in a multicultural society, where the Chinese community faces the challenge of balancing their cultural heritage with assimilation into the wider Malaysian society (Carstens, 1998; Wijaya, 2023). The incorporation of Chinese language in Mahua literature sets it apart from the prevailing Malay literary tradition, acting as a linguistic indicator of cultural identity. Language is important in Mahua literature because it reflects the cultural and historical heritage of the Chinese-Malaysian community. Utilizing Chinese in literary creation facilitates the protection and perpetuation of cultural customs and traditions that are critical to the community's sense of self.

In addition, Mahua literature frequently confronts the difficulties of preserving cultural uniqueness in a society that encourages assimilation into the prevailing Malay culture. Mahua writers actively participate in the wider conversation about Malaysian national identity by emphasizing the importance of their language and cultural traditions. They advocate for a more comprehensive and diverse interpretation of what it truly means to be Malaysian (Ng, 2015). Mahua literature is instrumental in addressing the experiences of marginalization and exclusion faced by the Chinese-Malaysian community. Mahua authors illuminate the social, political, and economic obstacles faced by their community in Malaysia through their writings, providing valuable perspectives on the actual experiences of being Chinese. These narratives frequently question the prevailing Malay-centric viewpoint, presenting alternative perspectives on Malaysian history, culture, and identity. Mahua literature reflects the cultural identity of the Chinese-Malaysian community and also plays a role in the wider discussion on social justice, equality, and inclusion in Malaysia (Fang, 2002).

### **Historical Discourse in Mahua Literature**

Mahua literature has a notable impact on shaping the historical discourse in Malaysia by presenting alternative narratives that question the prevailing Malay-centric historical narratives. In a nation that frequently uses history to promote a unified national identity while disregarding the involvement of minority groups, this is especially crucial. Mahua authors have used their literary works to emphasize the experiences of the Chinese community during significant historical occurrences, including the Japanese occupation of Malaya, the Malayan Emergency, and Malaysia's establishment. Through their written works, they have attempted to restore the position of the Chinese community within the nation's historical narrative, questioning the deliberate omission and marginalization that have frequently characterized official historical records (Foucault, 1972; Wijaya, 2023). Mahua literature's portrayal of historical events is a critical element of its contribution to the national conversation.

Through a process of revisiting and reinterpreting historical events, Mahua authors offer a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of Malaysian history from a Chinese-Malaysian standpoint. An example of this is the Japanese occupation of Malaya during World War II, which is a recurring motif in Mahua literature. The authors delve into the consequences of this era for the Chinese community. These narratives frequently highlight the fortitude and opposition of the Chinese-Malaysians, questioning the official historical records that typically concentrate on the encounters of the Malay majority (Chong, 2012). Furthermore, the Malayan Emergency, which occurred during the 1940s and 1950s, was a noteworthy period characterised by intense conflict and political instability. This event holds enormous importance in the context of Mahua literature. Mahua authors have utilised their literary works to chronicle the experiences of the Chinese community during this turbulent era, emphasising their role in the anti-colonial movement and their endeavours to navigate the intricate political environment of post-war Malaya. Mahua literature provides different viewpoints on historical events, which helps to create a more thorough and inclusive comprehension of Malaysian history. It challenges the prevailing narratives that have frequently marginalised or disregarded the contributions made by minority communities (Ng, 2015).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Impact of Malay Nationalism on Literary Hierarchies**

In Malaysia, the promotion of Malay nationalism has resulted in a language-centric bias that has marginalized Mahua literature. The government's prioritisation of Bahasa Melayu as the exclusive official language has created a literary hierarchy that frequently disregards literary works written in other languages in the national literary canon. The bias is apparent in the insufficient acknowledgement and assistance that Mahua literature has received from the government, in contrast to works written in Bahasa Melayu. The dominance of language has had profound consequences for the progress of Mahua literature, as numerous Mahua writers have faced challenges in obtaining acknowledgement for their literary contributions, both domestically in Malaysia and on a global scale (Carstens, 1998; Wijaya, 2023). The language-centric bias has a significant impact on the difficulties faced by Mahua authors in achieving visibility and recognition for their literary works.

Despite the rich cultural and literary traditions of the Chinese-Malaysian community, the national literary canon frequently excludes Mahua literature, leading to limited opportunities for publication, distribution, and critical analysis. The absence of institutional backing, such as financial support, literary accolades, and scholarly investigation, exacerbates the marginalisation of Mahua literature. Consequently, Mahua literature has faced difficulties in attaining the rightful acknowledgement it merits, both domestically in Malaysia and globally (Ng, 2015). The marginalization of Mahua literature also reflects the wider problem of cultural and linguistic inequality in Malaysia.

The prioritisation of Malay as the official language has frequently resulted in the marginalisation of other languages, resulting in the devaluation or neglect of non-Malay cultural and literary customs. These findings have important consequences for safeguarding and advancing Malaysia's cultural variety, as well as for integrating minority communities into the country's overall story. This study sheds light on the difficulties encountered by Mahua literature, adding to the ongoing discourse on cultural and linguistic diversity in Malaysia. It also promotes a fair and comprehensive approach to national literature.

### **Counter-Narratives in Mahua Literature**

Many Mahua authors have responded to the marginalization of Mahua literature by creating counter-narratives that aim to challenge the prevailing Malay-centric perspective. These alternative narratives frequently highlight the significance of cultural diversity and the need for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of national identity. Authors such as Fang Bei Fang, Chong Fah Hing, and Ng Kim Chew have been leading this movement by using their works to promote a more inclusive definition of Malaysian national literature, which encompasses publications written in Chinese. The authors have aimed to emphasise the significant role of the Chinese-Malaysian community in shaping the cultural and historical heritage of the nation. They have also questioned the exclusive practices that have shaped the growth of national literature (Kuek et al., 2021; Wijaya,

2023). These counter-narratives serve not only as a response to exclusion but also as a proactive effort to emphasise the importance and worth of Chinese-Malaysian culture within the national context.

Through the act of reclaiming space within the national literary canon, Mahua authors make a valuable contribution to the wider conversation surrounding cultural diversity, inclusion, and national identity. Counter-narratives frequently utilise the abundant cultural legacy of the Chinese-Malaysian community, integrating aspects of Chinese philosophy, history, and tradition into their creations. The amalgamation of cultural influences in Malaysia exemplifies the intricate and ever-changing nature of Malaysian identity, which defies oversimplified or uniform notions of what it entails to be Malaysian (Fang, 2002). Furthermore, these counter-narratives function as a means of opposing the prevailing power structures that have attempted to marginalise cultures and literatures that are not Malay. Through affirming their cultural identity and questioning the discriminatory actions of the government, Mahua authors actively participate in a wider campaign for social and cultural fairness in Malaysia. This movement strives to not only acknowledge Mahua literature but also cultivate a society that is more inclusive and equitable, valuing and treating all cultural and linguistic groups with dignity. Mahua literature is instrumental in shaping the future of Malaysian national identity by promoting an inclusive, diverse, and pluralistic vision of the nation (Ng, 2015).

## **CASE STUDIES OF KEY MAHUA LITERARY FIGURES**

### **Fang Bei Fang**

Fang Bei Fang is a highly influential figure in Mahua literature, renowned for his examination of topics such as identity, inclusion, and cultural exclusion. His works frequently depict the challenges faced by the Chinese-Malaysian community in establishing their cultural identity within a predominantly Malay nationalism-influenced society. Fang's writing aims to question the prevailing narratives that have marginalized Mahua literature while promoting a broader and more inclusive perspective on Malaysian national literature. Fang's work stands out for its deep engagement with cultural identity and its insightful perspective on Malaysia's societal and political dynamics following independence (Carstens, 1998; Wijaya, 2023). Fang's contributions to Mahua literature are noteworthy not only for their literary excellence but also for their influence in shaping the discussion on national identity in Malaysia. Fang has written about the Chinese experience in Malaysia, examining the conflicts between culture preservation and national integration. His works frequently emphasize the experiences of marginalization and exclusion encountered by the Chinese-Malaysian community, providing a compelling analysis of the prevailing nationalist storyline. Fang's literary works have had an enduring influence on Mahua literature, motivating future writers to persevere in their efforts to gain cultural acknowledgement and integration (Chong, 2012).

### **Chong Fah Hing**

Chong Fah Hing is a prominent figure in Mahua literature, renowned for his emphasis on the historical encounters of the Chinese-Malaysian community. His works frequently emphasise the role of the Chinese community in Malaysian history, questioning the deliberate omission and marginalisation that have been prevalent in official historical records. Chong's writing presents a strong alternative viewpoint to the prevailing Malay-centric perspective, highlighting the significance of cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the country's literary heritage (Carstens, 1998; Wijaya, 2023). Chong's approach to historical fiction is noteworthy for its distinct focus on alternative perspectives and voices. Chong's examination of the Chinese community's experiences during significant historical events provides a more intricate and comprehensive comprehension of Malaysian history. The artist frequently questions the established historical records that have preferred the experiences of the Malay majority, presenting alternative stories that emphasise the variety and intricacy of Malaysian society. Chong's writings have made substantial contributions to the advancement of Mahua literature, playing a crucial role in establishing its importance and influence within the national literary scene (Ng, 2015).

### **Ng Kim Chew**

Ng Kim Chew is a modern writer of Mahua literature who has achieved global acclaim for his literary contributions. His writing frequently delves into the intricacies of cultural identity in a diverse society, emphasising the conflicts between preserving one's cultural heritage and assimilating into the wider Malaysian society. Ng's work provides a strong critique of the bias towards language and the marginalization of Mahua literature, promoting a more inclusive understanding of national identity. The contributions made by him to Mahua literature are noteworthy not only for their literary excellence but also for their active involvement in addressing wider social and cultural concerns in Malaysia (Kuek et al., 2021; Wijaya, 2023). The inventive narrative techniques and profound exploration of themes related to identity, migration, and cultural affiliation distinguish Ng's work. Ng examines the difficulties encountered by the Chinese-Malaysian community in dealing with the intricate dynamics of cultural identity in a diverse society, primarily through his written works. His works frequently depict the conflicts arising from the inclination to uphold one's cultural legacy and the demands to conform to the prevailing culture. Ng's contributions to Mahua literature have gained widespread recognition both domestically in Malaysia and internationally. His works remain a significant influence on modern Malaysian literature (Fang, 2002).

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Application of Kekes's Theory of Pluralism**

Kekes's theory of pluralism offers a valuable framework for comprehending the simultaneous existence and interplay of diverse literary traditions in Malaysia. Pluralism prioritises the significance of diversity and inclusivity in cultural and literary activities, promoting a more receptive and adaptable stance towards national identity. Pluralism, within the framework of Malaysian literature, provides a means to address the conflicts between the prevailing Malay literary tradition and the marginalised Mahua literature. This fosters a literary environment that is more comprehensive and fairer, promoting inclusivity and equality (Kekes, 1993). Applying pluralism to the analysis of Mahua literature highlights the importance of acknowledging and valuing the cultural contributions made by all ethnic groups within a country. Malaysia can cultivate a more comprehensive and varied literary environment that mirrors the abundance and complexity of its multicultural society by adopting a pluralistic approach to national literature. This approach also has wider ramifications for the examination of literature in other multi-ethnic societies, where matters of cultural diversity and inclusion frequently take centre stage in national discussions. This study expands our understanding of the influence of literature on national identity and cultural diversity by utilizing Kekes's theory of pluralism to analyse Mahua literature (Ng, 2015).

### **Foucault's Discourse Analysis**

Foucault's discourse analysis is highly applicable to the examination of Mahua literature, as it facilitates a more profound comprehension of the power dynamics inherent in the interplay between Mahua and Malay literature. Discourse analysis uncovers the power structures that have influenced the growth of Malaysian national literature by studying how literary texts contribute to the discussion on national identity and cultural belonging. This approach emphasises the significance of Mahua literature in questioning the prevailing Malay-centric narrative and promoting a broader and more comprehensive comprehension of national identity (Foucault, 1972). Discourse analysis, when applied to the study of Mahua literature, reveals the generation and maintenance of power and knowledge through literary texts. This study examines the interactions and conflicts between Mahua and Malay literature in order to reveal the intricate dynamics of cultural production and representation in Malaysia. This approach also has wider ramifications for the examination of literature in additional postcolonial societies, where matters of authority, identity, and opposition frequently occupy a central position in the literary conversation. This research employs Foucault's discourse analysis to examine Mahua literature, aiming to enhance comprehension of how literature influences national identity and questions prevailing cultural narratives (Ng, 2015).

### **Tansley's Ecosystem Concept**

Tansley's ecosystem concept provides a framework to understand the intricate and ever-changing interactions among various literary traditions in Malaysia. The concept of literature as an ecosystem underscores the mutual reliance of various literary traditions, accentuating the manner in which they exert influence on and mould one

another. This concept in Malaysian literature emphasizes the significance of Mahua literature as a fundamental component of the country's literary scene while also questioning the discriminatory practices that have marginalized it. This study seeks to enhance our understanding of the influence of Mahua literature on Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse by utilising these theoretical frameworks (Tansley, 1935). The concept of the ecosystem also emphasises the significance of diversity and interconnectivity within the literary landscape. This study emphasizes the importance of adopting a comprehensive and unified approach to national literature by treating it as an ecosystem. Such an approach acknowledges and appreciates the contributions made by all cultural and linguistic groups. This approach has broader implications for the study of literature in diverse societies, where issues of diversity, inclusivity, and cultural interconnectedness frequently form the core of literary discussions. Ng (2015) argues that by utilizing Tansley's ecosystem concept, this research enhances our understanding of how Mahua literature contributes to the promotion of cultural diversity and the development of a more inclusive national identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Summary of Findings**

This study has emphasised the crucial role that Mahua literature plays in influencing Malaysian cultural identity and historical discourse. Mahua literature provides a unique viewpoint on the Chinese experience in Malaysia by examining themes of identity, belonging, and marginalisation. The literature contests the prevailing Malay-centric narrative that has marginalised the contributions of the Chinese-Malaysian community, promoting a more diverse and inclusive comprehension of national identity. The study also analysed the influence of Malay nationalism on the progress of national literature in Malaysia, emphasising the language-focused prejudices that have marginalised Mahua literature. Numerous Mahua authors have responded to marginalisation by producing counter-narratives that challenge the prevailing viewpoint, advocating for a more comprehensive definition of Malaysian national literature that includes works written in Chinese. This study has used a thorough comparative analysis of significant literary figures and their works to show how Mahua literature has played a crucial role in influencing the cultural and historical conversation in Malaysia. The use of theoretical frameworks such as Kekes's pluralism, Foucault's discourse analysis, and Tansley's ecosystem concept has yielded valuable insights into Malaysia's intricate dynamics of cultural production and representation. These frameworks have emphasized the significance of diversity, inclusivity, and interconnectivity in the national literary landscape, underscoring the need for a more integrated and fair approach to national literature. The research findings have profound implications for understanding the role of minority literature in postcolonial countries and fostering cultural diversity within national literary traditions.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study have significant ramifications for future investigations on Malaysian literature and cultural identity. Subsequent research endeavours may investigate the role of additional marginalised literary traditions in Malaysia, namely Tamil and indigenous literature, in shaping the advancement of national literature. In addition, future research could investigate the influence of globalisation and transnationalism on the evolution of Mahua literature and its contribution to the formation of Malaysian cultural identity. Ultimately, Mahua literature is a crucial component of the literary scene in Malaysia, providing valuable perspectives on the intricacies of cultural identity within a diverse society. Mahua literature plays a significant role in shaping Malaysia's cultural and historical discourse by challenging the prevailing Malay-centric narrative and promoting a more inclusive understanding of national identity.

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