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Indigenous Identity and Resilience in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*

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Abstract: *Mamang Dai's novel* The Black Hill *(2014) vividly portrays the profound impact of colonialism on Northeast India's indigenous communities, particularly the Abor and Mishmee tribes during the mid-19th century British Raj. The paper attempts to explore how Dai's narrative illuminates the formation of collective memory and cultural resilience in response to colonial pressures. It aims to analyse the thematic portrayal of adaptation and cultural continuity amidst external challenges and uncover the intricate interplay between historical legacies and contemporary indigenous identities. Furthermore, the paper investigates the enduring relevance of indigenous perspectives on the notion of 'strangers', highlighting ongoing struggles for rights, recognition, and cultural preservation in modern contexts. It provides profound insights into the enduring cultural impacts of colonialism and the evolving discourse on indigenous rights and identity in the Northeast India. By integrating historical analysis with contemporary perspectives, the paper underscores the persistent struggle for indigenous rights beyond the colonial era, emphasizing the challenges faced by indigenous communities in their quest for recognition and fundamental rights.*

Keywords: *Colonialism, Indigenous Identities, Culture, Collective Memory, Strangers, Rights, Land.*

Introduction

India hosts a vast tribal population of around 70 million. Geographically, 55% of tribes are in central India, 28% in the west, 12% in the Northeast, 4% in the south, and 1% elsewhere. Based on the data from the 2001 Census, tribes make up 8.14% of India's population, totaling 84.51 million and covering about 15% of the country's area. Northeast India, known for its cultural diversity, includes the Seven Sister States—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura—plus Sikkim, and is home to over 200 tribes. These tribes, originating from Tibeto-Burmese, Proto-Australoid, and Indo-Mongoloid ethnic groups, include the Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Adi, Mizo, Karbi, Nyishi, Angami, Konyak, Bhutia, Kuki, Rengma, Bodo, and Deori (Sivakumar et al. 6).

Mamang Dai, a renowned writer from Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, vividly portrays the rich cultural and ecological diversity of tribal folks of Northeast India in her literary works. Dai's novel *The Black Hill* (2014) received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2017. Set in Northeast India during British rule, the novel that is based on a historical event of killing of two French missionaries in the 1800s at Somme village in Lohit, Arunachal Pradesh while on their way to Tibet. The missionaries Nicholas-Michel Krick and Augustin-Etienne Bourry were only an hour away from Tibet on their mission to promote Christianity when the Mishmi tribe chief, Kaisha, killed them on August 2, 1854, because they resembled British rulers (Parashar).

In 1608, during the rule of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, the British began their presence in India through the East India Company. They were granted permission to establish trading posts in the region. As their trade operations expanded, the British secured political authority over various princely states and territories throughout India. After establishing control over India, the British shifted their focus to Southeast Asia. Burma, with its strong economy and extensive trade links, presented a significant challenge to British expansion. The Anglo-Burmese Wars, fought from 1824 to 1826, underscored this difficulty. Both the British and Burmese had vested interests in Northeast India. Ultimately, the British emerged victorious, leading to signing of the Treaty of Yandabo on February 24, 1826, which resulted

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in their control over Assam and Manipur and subsequently the annexation of various territories in the region. Scholars, such as Supriya M., have analyzed the novel's ecological and postcolonial perspectives. However, the novel's portrayal of colonialism's impact on tribal communities, their forms of resistance, and the subsequent construction of their identities has received less scholarly attention. This paper examines how the collective memories and experiences of tribal individuals with white colonizers, or 'strangers,' shape their future plans, struggle for their rights, and the structures of feeling it produces. Dai's novel explores the lives of Gimur and Kajinsha, and several other members of indigenous tribes, alongside the journey of French missionary Father Krick as he travels to Tibet through the Mishmee hills. It critically examines the tribes' thoughts and actions upon learning of Father Krick's passage through their territory, highlighting their skepticism towards his intentions despite his assertions of noble motives. Even though Krick's intentions were pure and unlike migluns, for natives "he is still a white foreigner- a kla kamphlung! Who knows about these people? To us they are all strangers" (Dai 78). This paper employs a postcolonial theoretical framework, drawing on the works of Edward Said and Sara Ahmed to analyze the themes of identity, resistance, and cultural resilience in *The Black Hill*. The analysis involves a close reading of the text, supported by historical context and contemporary indigenous perspectives.

Colonial and Postcolonial Studies

Colonial and Postcolonial studies have provided profound insights into the dynamics of power, identity, and resistance in colonized regions. Edward Said's seminal works, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, serve as foundational texts in this field. Said argues that colonialism is not only a political and economic venture but also a cultural project aimed at dominating and reshaping colonized societies (Said 9). He emphasizes that the colonial discourse constructs the Orient as the 'Other', inherently inferior and in need of Western intervention and control (Said 36). This theoretical framework is crucial for understanding the colonial dynamics depicted in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*.

Edward Said in his work *Culture and Imperialism* defines "colonialism" as consequence of imperialism – "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory". It is the "implanting of settlements in a distant territory" (Said 9). Nearly all colonial schemes start with the presumption that the native populations are inherently backward and generally incapable of achieving independence, equality, and competence (Said 81). These ventures are driven by the 'hunger' for expansion and acquisition of land. As Dai writes:

> Britain had risen as the dominant power in the nineteenth century, and the British East India Company with its merchants, soldiers and naval fleet was playing a pivotal role in restoring Christian communities in China and other eastern lands….. Church leaders began to look east again. They saw the island kingdoms of the Far East and Laos, New Japan, Indo-China and Korea, but what drew their gaze most were the unexplored mountains of the high Himalaya and the mysterious kingdom of Tibet. Remote, mystical, Tibet was the land of reincarnate god kings, the source of great rivers, the destination of caravans, immense riches, magic and miracles……Nicolas Krick might have felt this pull like many young men who were leaving their French parishes to serve in remote foreign missions. (14-15)

Concurrently, the indigenous populations strive to retain ownership of their land, aiming that they live in high valleys free from the presence of strangers and external threats. For them, "land is a place of ownership and rest" with "a heart of its own, a voice and language that beckoned men" (Dai 112-113). This clash of aspirations between the indigenous people and the colonizers led to resistance and a protracted struggle for freedom, rights, and identity. The natives clearly had distinction between "our land- barbarian land" in their minds (Said 54). In his work, Orientalism, Said implies that, "There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power" (Said 36). Said outlines that European culture often saw itself in a position of strength and power, exerting control over the Orient, essentially subduing it. This concept helps explain why European explorers and colonizers, despite their varying intentions, were frequently met with skepticism and resistance by indigenous populations. In context of Dai's

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novel, while Father Krick's intentions were genuine, his association with the 'white foreigner' category, which included exploitative British colonizers, led the natives to treat him with suspicion and hostility. The indigenous tribes' wariness towards strangers is a direct consequence of their colonial encounters. Kajinsha's killing of Father Krick, despite the latter's benign intentions, underscores the deep-seated mistrust that colonial experiences engendered. This act of violence is not merely a reaction to a single individual but a symbolic resistance against the broader colonial incursion into their lives. In the context of British colonialism in India, numerous scholars have examined the socio-political and cultural impacts of colonial rule. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, discussed in *The Location of Culture*, explores the intricate aspects of identity formation in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Bhabha posits that colonial encounters produce hybrid identities that transcend simplistic binaries of colonizer and colonized (Bhabha 112). This notion is particularly relevant in analyzing the characters in Dai's novel, who navigate the intricate intersections of indigenous traditions and colonial influences.

The Black Hill provides a narrative lens to explore these theoretical constructs. Dai's depiction of the Abor tribes' interaction with British colonial forces reveals the tensions and conflicts inherent in such encounters. The British involvement in local affairs, such as offering protection to runaway 'slaves' and extending control over traditional economic activities, exacerbates the mistrust and hostility between the colonizers and the indigenous tribes. As Dai writes:

> These 'slaves' were the offspring of men and women captured by the Abor in tribal wars who had been absorbed into the tribe to perform domestic and agricultural services. Now they had run away from their masters down to the plains, where they sought British protection. The British had not actively encouraged their desertion, but they did not respond to Abor demands to return them, either. Around the same time, the British began extending protection to the saniwals and beheeas, the gold washers and fishermen, who came up from the plains for profit and traditionally surrendered some payment in kind to the Abor and other original residents of the hills. Provoked by this, some Abor men had mounted a raid on a British garrison and kidnapped three saniwals. It was in retaliation that the British had burned the offending village and demanded the return of the saniwals (Dai 25-26).

The British, while not overtly encouraging desertions, implicitly supported actions that undermined indigenous social structures. This reflects Said's assertion that colonialism is fundamentally about exerting dominance over the territory and lives of the colonized (Said 81). The novel also resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern, introduced in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*". Spivak argues that colonial power structures render the voices of the colonized subaltern classes marginalized and unheard (Spivak 27). In *The Black Hill*, the indigenous people's resistance against colonial incursions and their efforts to maintain their cultural integrity can be perceived as an effort to assert their agency and voice in the face of oppressive colonial dominance. Furthermore, Franz Fanon's analysis of the psychological effects of colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth* is pertinent to understanding the deeper emotional and psychological struggles of the characters in Dai's novel. Fanon discusses the internalization of colonial ideologies and the resulting identity crises among the colonized people (Fanon 250). This is evident in the characters' internal conflicts and the societal changes they experience due to colonial influence.

The novel also highlights the emotional and cultural ramifications of colonialism on indigenous communities. Gimur's reflection on the potential changes in the men's eyes post-encounter with strangers indicates an awareness of the transformative, often detrimental, impact of such encounters. This aligns with Said's assertion that colonialism profoundly alters the colonized, often leading to a lasting legacy of cultural disruption and loss.

The portrayal of Father Krick in *The Black Hill* invites a critical examination of role of missionaries in the colonial enterprise. Historians and scholars like Jeffrey Cox in *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* have explored how missionaries often acted as cultural imperialists, promoting Western values and beliefs under the guise of religious conversion (Cox 5). Despite their altruistic intentions, missionaries frequently contributed to the erosion of indigenous cultures and the reinforcement of colonial hierarchies. In the context of Dai's novel, while Father Krick's intentions were genuine, his

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association with the 'white foreigner' category, which included exploitative British colonizers, led the natives to treat him with suspicion and hostility. The indigenous tribes' wariness towards strangers is a direct consequence of their colonial encounters. Kajinsha's killing of Father Krick, despite the latter's benign intentions, underscores the deep-seated mistrust that colonial experiences engendered. This act of violence is not merely a reaction to a single individual but a symbolic resistance against the broader colonial incursion into their lives.

Decoding The Stranger Concept

The concept of the 'stranger' was introduced by sociologist Georg Simmel in his 1908 essay. Simmel describes the stranger as that of a 'potential wanderer' who comes today and stays tomorrow. He explains:

> fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself. (Simmel 402)

This duality of belonging and otherness is central to understanding the dynamics between the British colonizers and the indigenous tribes in Dai's novel. The British, despite their physical presence in the region, remain strangers to the indigenous people, representing an alien culture and worldview. As Simmel says the strangers appear either as 'traders' or vice versa for the products that originate outside the local group as nobody else has a chance to make a living (403).This stranger concept also extends to other characters in the novel who embody the intersection of different cultural identities. Gimur while waiting for the men in Mebo to return wanted to understand if anything has changed post the encounter: "if she could detect any change in their eyes—something new, something different—after their contact with the strangers from faraway worlds. Who were the strangers?" (Dai 3). As Sara Ahmed describes "encounters" as a "meeting which involves both surprise and conflict"(6). The purpose of this meeting was to talk about establishing a trading post and to make peace with fishermen and gold washers as these white migluns wanted gold from their territory. Lendem's father however found it difficult to "trust the strangers" (Dai 3). As Simmel explains, "the stranger is by nature no 'owner of soil'" (403). The novel explores the arrival of strangers, collective memories of the tribes, desire, to live free of strangers in the high valleys and protecting their identity and culture. Kajinsha from the novel asks Marpa the purpose of tying away thoughts in the form of papers to which he replied: "These are texts that are thousands of years old, written and passed down from generation to generation but it will not interest you because you do not know what religion is, what a script is. It is what makes us strong and invincible. It is what keeps us "safe from strangers"" (Dai 229). The two villages – Abor and Mebo conveyed the meaning as 'independent' whereas Mebo was a place of both desire and nostalgia (Dai 26).

In her work, *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed posits that the concept of strangers extends beyond individuals we have yet to meet. She argues that strangers include those we have previously encountered and identified explicitly as strangers. This identification is an act of recognition, where we distinguish someone as a stranger rather than merely not recognizing them (Ahmed 21). The indigenous characters in the novel perceive the British as strangers who disrupt their traditional ways of life. This perception is illustrated through various interactions and conflicts. For example, the British officials' attempts to extend their control over the region and impose their administrative structures are met with suspicion and resistance from the indigenous tribes (Dai 8-10). This tension reflects Simmel's idea that the stranger is often viewed with a mix of curiosity and apprehension, as their presence challenges the existing social order (Simmel 406-407).

Dai's novel also explores the internalization of the stranger concept among the indigenous characters themselves. The character of Kajinsha, who interacts with both the British and his own community, embodies this internal conflict. His dual identity as both an insider and outsider within his tribe highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of identity in colonial contexts. Kajinsha's experiences illustrate how colonial encounters create hybrid identities that transcend simplistic binaries. Furthermore, the stranger concept is not limited to the British colonizers but extends to other external

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influences that disrupt the indigenous social and cultural fabric. The novel portrays how these strangers, despite their foreign origins, become entangled in the local dynamics and significantly impact the lives of the indigenous people. This dynamic underscores the complexities of colonial encounters, where the colonizer and the colonized are inextricably linked in a relationship marked by power imbalances, cultural exchanges, and resistance. Simmel's stranger concept also resonates with Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Bhabha argues that colonial encounters produce hybrid identities that blur the boundaries between colonizer and colonized (Bhabha 113-114). This hybridity is evident in the characters' interactions and adaptations in *The Black Hill*. The indigenous characters navigate the complexities of their identities, balancing their cultural traditions with the influences of colonial modernity. This negotiation of identities reflects the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural exchange in colonial contexts.

Memories, Resistance and Adaptation

Dai's portrayal of the indigenous characters' responses to colonialism reveals the various strategies of cultural resilience and continuity employed by the indigenous communities. These strategies are not merely defensive reactions to colonial pressures but involve active efforts to preserve and adapt their cultural practices to the changing socio-political landscape. The novel explores role of collective memory and storytelling in sustaining cultural continuity. The novel depicts how the indigenous people's collective memories of their past, including their ancestral traditions, legends, and historical experiences, serve as a source of strength and resilience in the face of colonial disruption. These collective memories are not static but are continually reinterpreted and adapted to the present context. This dynamic process of remembering and reinterpreting the past reflects the indigenous people's resilience and resourcefulness in maintaining their cultural identity. Their stories and legends are not merely entertainment but are integral to their cultural identity and social cohesion. These stories serve as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and traditions across generations. They also provide a framework for understanding and navigating the challenges posed by colonialism. For example, the characters' stories of their ancestors' resistance against external threats serve as a source of inspiration and guidance in their own struggles against colonial encroachments.

In Dai's novel, the characters consistently perceive strangers through the lens of past negative experiences. These strangers evoke memories associated with war and death. She vividly portrays the indigenous characters' responses to the British colonizers and other external influences, highlighting the various strategies of adaptation, resistance, and negotiation employed by the indigenous communities. These responses are not monolithic but vary according to individual experiences, social positions, and historical contexts. The novel thus highlights the agency of the indigenous people in shaping their destinies, despite the overwhelming pressures of colonial domination. Edward Said, in his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism*, asserts:

> Appeals to the past are the commonest of the strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions-about influence, about blame and judgement, about present actualities and future priorities. (3)

Said's observation resonates profoundly with Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*, where characters are incessantly haunted by their collective memories. The characters' struggles and identity crises are deeply rooted in their historical experiences with colonialism. Kajinsha's deep-seated animosity towards white men is a direct consequence of his father's demise at the hands of the British. This personal loss is emblematic of the broader collective trauma experienced by the indigenous tribes under colonial rule. Kajinsha's unyielding hatred is not merely personal but a manifestation of the collective memory of resistance and suffering. Dai writes that Kajinsha "never forgot anything," (Dai 10) illustrating how the past's grip on the present is unrelenting.

Similarly, Gimur's perspectives and actions are profoundly shaped by the tales of her father's death, referred to as the work of 'white devils'. These narratives fuel her resolve and perceptions, highlighting how the collective memory of oppression and resistance informs individual and communal identities.

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Dai notes that Gimur's thoughts "were fuelled by the stories surrounding the death of her father" (Dai 18), underscoring the enduring impact of these memories on her psyche. The transmission of collective memories through oral histories and stories is a critical theme in the novel. In tribal societies, oral storytelling is not merely a method of entertainment but a vital means of preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, history, and values. It serves as a communal activity that reinforces social bonds and ensures the continuity of cultural identity. Paul Ricoeur, in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2006), discusses the significance of narrative identity, where storytelling plays a crucial role in shaping collective and individual identities through shared memories.

In *The Black Hill*, the significance of oral storytelling is embodied in characters like Moi, the elder of the tribe. Moi's stories are a repository of the community's collective memory, encompassing tales of resistance, survival, and wisdom. Her belief that white men are difficult to drive away is based on past experiences and shared stories within the community. This oral tradition serves as a repository of collective memory, ensuring that the struggles and wisdom of past generations are not forgotten but continue to guide the present and future actions of the community. The character of Gimur exemplifies the indigenous resistance and adaptation. Her relationship with Kajinsha, a character who embodies the intersection of indigenous and colonial identities, reflects the complexities of cultural exchange in colonial contexts. Gimur's resilience and determination to maintain her cultural traditions, despite the external pressures, highlight the indigenous people's agency in shaping their destinies. Her story also underscores the emotional and psychological dimensions of colonial encounters, revealing the deep impacts of these encounters on individual lives and identities.

Another theme in the novel is the indigenous resistance against colonial encroachments. The novel depicts various forms of resistance, ranging from armed conflicts to subtle acts of defiance. For example, the indigenous tribes' refusal to comply with British administrative regulations and their efforts to protect their land and resources from colonial exploitation are significant acts of resistance. These acts underscore the indigenous people's determination to defend their autonomy and cultural integrity in the face of external pressures. The novel also portrays the indigenous people's adaptation to the changing socio-political landscape brought about by colonialism. This adaptation is not merely a passive acceptance of colonial rule but involves active negotiation and modification of their cultural practices to navigate the new realities. For instance, the characters' interactions with the British officials reveal a nuanced understanding of the power dynamics at play and their efforts to leverage these dynamics for their benefit. This strategic adaptation reflects the indigenous people's resilience and resourcefulness in maintaining their cultural identity amidst colonial disruption. Moreover, the novel highlights the importance of land and territory in the indigenous people's resistance against colonial encroachments. Land is not merely a physical space but is imbued with cultural, spiritual, and social significance. The indigenous people's connection to their land is a crucial aspect of their identity and cultural continuity. The colonial intrusion into this sacred space represents a profound threat to their way of life, prompting various forms of resistance to defend their territory and preserve their cultural heritage.

The Role of Women in Indigenous Resistance

The role of women in indigenous resistance is a significant aspect of Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*. The novel portrays the indigenous women as active participants in the resistance against colonial encroachments, highlighting their agency and resilience in the face of external pressures. This portrayal challenges the stereotypical notions of indigenous women as passive victims and underscores their crucial role in sustaining cultural continuity and resistance. The character of Gimur exemplifies the active role of women in indigenous resistance. Her resilience and determination to maintain her cultural traditions, despite the external pressures, highlight the indigenous women's agency in shaping their destinies.

The novel also highlights the role of women in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge and traditions. The indigenous women's stories and legends are integral to their cultural identity and social cohesion. These stories serve as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and traditions across generations. They also provide a framework for understanding and navigating the challenges

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posed by colonialism. In her narratives, Gimur recounts the tales of her ancestors' resistance against external threats, which serve as a source of inspiration and guidance in her own struggles against colonial encroachments (Dai 18-19). Both Moi and Gimur share a profound connection rooted in their desire for a life of freedom and their continual questioning of the intentions of white migluns on their land. Furthermore, the novel portrays the importance of women's participation in cultural practices and rituals in sustaining cultural continuity. These practices are not merely symbolic but are deeply embedded in the indigenous people's social and spiritual life. They provide a sense of continuity and stability amidst the disruptions caused by colonialism. The indigenous women's participation in traditional rituals and ceremonies reflects their efforts to preserve their cultural heritage and maintain their connection to their ancestral traditions.

The portrayal of women in *The Black Hill* resonates with postcolonial feminist theories that emphasize the agency and resilience of women in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty have critiqued the stereotypical representations of Third World women as passive victims and highlighted their active role in resistance and cultural continuity. Spivak's concept of the subaltern, discussed in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", underscores the need to recognize and amplify the voices and agency of marginalized women in colonial and postcolonial contexts (29).

Dai's portrayal of indigenous women in *The Black Hill* provides a nuanced and complex representation of their role in resistance and cultural continuity. By highlighting the agency and resilience of women like Gimur, the novel challenges the stereotypical notions of indigenous women and underscores their crucial role in sustaining cultural identity and resisting colonial encroachments.

Conclusion

In Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*, the complexities of cultural resilience, indigenous identity, and colonial encounters are brought to the forefront, offering a profound exploration of the indigenous experience in the face of external imposition. By employing postcolonial theories from Said, Spivak, Bhabha, and Fanon, this paper has revealed how Dai's narrative encapsulates the indigenous characters' efforts to resist and navigate the pervasive influence of colonial powers. This resistance is deeply intertwined with a profound connection to the land, a cornerstone of their identity, and a powerful source of resilience.

One of the central themes explored in this paper is the concept of strangers within the narrative. The arrival of outsiders, be they colonial figures or other external influences, serves as a catalyst for tension and transformation within the indigenous community. However, rather than merely being passive recipients of these changes, the indigenous characters in *The Black Hill* actively engage with, reinterpret, and resist these external forces. This engagement reflects a dynamic process of identity negotiation, where the presence of the stranger becomes an opportunity for the reaffirmation of cultural values and the strengthening of communal bonds. The paper highlights the critical role of storytelling in *The Black Hill* as a means of preserving cultural identity and resisting the erasure of indigenous knowledge systems by colonial powers. Storytelling not only serves as a repository of cultural memory but also as a tool of resistance, allowing the community to maintain continuity and coherence in the face of disruption. Through these narratives, the indigenous characters assert their agency, challenging the colonial narrative and reclaiming their history. The exploration of these themes underscores the broader implications of Dai's work, particularly in the context of cultural preservation and decolonization. In a world where indigenous perspectives are frequently marginalized, *The Black Hill* offers a compelling argument for the integration of these voices into global discourses on identity, history, and cultural survival. This paper contributes to this ongoing conversation by demonstrating how indigenous narratives can enrich our understanding of colonial encounters and their lasting impact.

While this paper provides valuable insights, it also recognizes its limitations, particularly in its focus on a single text and the application of specific theoretical frameworks. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of indigenous responses to colonialism, future research could expand to include a broader range of texts, oral histories, and cultural practices. Additionally, incorporating perspectives from indigenous scholars and communities would offer a more nuanced and authentic view of the issues at

hand. Future research might also explore comparative analyses of how different indigenous communities have navigated the presence of "strangers" and external influences. Examining the role of women in these processes, as well as the intersection of gender and colonial power, could further illuminate the complexities of cultural resilience. Furthermore, investigating the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems to contemporary ecological and social justice movements could provide crucial insights into the ongoing relevance of these traditions.

In conclusion, *The Black Hill* by Mamang Dai stands as a powerful testament to the resilience and vitality of indigenous cultures in the face of colonial encroachment. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this paper has highlighted the ways in which the indigenous peoples resist, adapt, and ultimately reaffirm their cultural identity in the face of the stranger. As we continue to grapple with the legacies of colonialism, this work serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of preserving and honoring indigenous voices. Doing so not only enriches our understanding of history but also strengthens efforts to create a more just and inclusive world where diverse cultural identities are valued and respected.

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