

# Images of inter-tribal strife and Border Consciousness Symbolism in Mamang Dai's Writings: with specific reference to the Black Hill

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to explore the social realities and life in the Tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh, North- Eastern part of India under the framework of 'Orientalism' by 'Edward Said' as the key to explore the condition of the state during the colonial period which will lead to the understanding of term 'Borderland consciousness' by 'Gloria Anzaldua's Borderlands/ Le Frontera: The New Mestiza'. Also highlight the establishment of inter- tribe unrest among the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Borderland, Colonial, Kla Kamplung, Miglun, Orientalism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh- the Land of Rising Sun is one of the North- Eastern states of India. The North- Eastern states of India comprises of originally seven states known as the seven sister states before, Sikkim was added to it. Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous territory standing as a boundary to many neighboring states and countries. The people are generally known as Hills and comprising many tribes and sub- tribes who generally practices Animism and glorifies nature as the mother- nature. The state is a remote region showcasing beautiful landscapes, rivers, mountains, different tribes with different customs and traditions majorly depends their livelihood on Mother Nature. The author Mamang Dai is one of the most celebrated authors from this region, who takes pride in opening up and writing about the place from where she belongs to. She is a Neo- Romantic author and highlights the area as an Exotic land brooding the history of the ancestors their belief in oral traditions and the love for Mother Nature. She had written many collections of Poems and Novels which mainly focuses on the tribal life of Arunachal Pradesh. The Black Hill is one of the major book in her career which best describes the life of tribal's and a reflection of Orientalism and Borderland consciousness in the colonized North-Eastern part of India.

The Black Hill is a fictional novel which deals with the recorded historical events during the period of colonized India. The story revolves around three major characters- Kajinsha, Gimur and Father Nicholas Krick. The story begins with the introduction of the lady protagonist Gimur- who belongs to the Abor tribe of Arunachal Pradesh who simultaneously falls in love with a Mishmee chief Kajinsha- who is visiting the Mebo village for the purpose of meeting with the Adi tribes to discuss and solve the problems of Border trespassing by the Migluns (British). By the time their love began to bloom and they elope from Mebo to the Mishmee (Mishmi) hills near Tibetan Border for a start of their new life. In between all these the third character Father Nicholas Krick- a Jesuit priest has been introduced who desperately wants to reach Tibet to set up missionary there.

Orientalism is a Eurocentric idea and prejudice which categorizes into two parts where the term Orient symbolizes the primitive backward communities of the East which is counted inferior, where on the other hand, the Occident is the term which symbolizes the Superior Western communities. The Occident finds themselves superior of Orientals in every aspect and they believe to teach them the way of life as they find them too backward to find themselves by studying their lives and cultures. The culture of the East was bound to reflect the superior culture of the West.

Said, has considered, Orientalism, a discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice- where the certain collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies used by anyone who tried to talk about the East (Orientalism, 1977:187). The term Orientalism means an establishment in

the text in the ground of Post-colonial cultural studies, which examines the literal meaning of the Orientalism and the history of the period. The Orientals were basically used as a study material. Said points out that no person was born inferior and no one's culture should be dominated by arousing fear. A person's culture is a description of his/her society, tradition and their lives, the evolution of culture should be ongoing process not a dominated reflection of other stronger community.

*Orientalism* proposed that much Western study of Islamic civilization was political intellectualism, meant for the self-affirmation of European identity, rather than objective academic study; thus, the academic field of Oriental studies functioned as a practical method of cultural discrimination and imperialist domination—that is to say, the Western Orientalist knows more about the Orient than do the Orientals. (Windschuttle, 2008; Said. 2008).

The West has always dominated the East as the history witnesses, since the whole country was under the British rule; the Migluns (British) were all set to explore the lure of the tribal hills. The story recounts the historical developments in tribal areas with the advent of the Britisher's as the Miglun's has set their foot on the land of the Hills people, the Hills people were also checking up on them, planning the ways to get them out of the hill and not letting them into their respected territories. It was one of those meetings at Mebo where Kajinsha and Gimur had caught glimpses and fall in love. The hatred for the White's is real as they have heard and faced a lot of troubles because of the white. Kajinsha's whole community had to move from their original establishment to the Mishmee Hills near the Tibetan border, the Migluns were occupying the areas under their control.

When their own Mishmee brothers were betraying them under the fear of British dominance, there was no way left but to fight against them. So Kajinsha's Father had agreed on the marriage pact between their tribe and the Tibetan tribe for the withdrawal of the war between the Tibetan tribe and the Mishmee tribe. In one of the advent Kajinsha has lost his father in a fight with the Migluns. There were many of the tribe's people who did compromise with the Migluns for their safety and power and some would lead the Migluns the way to the hidden territories. There were also some people who would die for their land and the communities and have internal strives to protect their borders and boundaries. They believe in free land of their ancestors and hated the idea of being dominated.

The Mountains has been portrayed as the major strength of the tribal people as there were no other boundaries that would safe guard the areas and distinguishes the areas of communities, it was the Mountain who acted as the greatest barrier to the Migluns which breeds the borderline consciousness. "This borderland consciousness is a collective consciousness which "break(s) down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (Anzaldúa, Gloria. 2017). The Mountain not just stands as a border to the British soldiers but also stands as the borderline to many of the neighboring states and countries. "Geographically, the Eastern Himalayas range of the Arunachal from the eastern border of Bhutan through the Gorge of Tsangpo (Dihang) up to the syntaxial bend in the Mishmee hills lies entirely within Tibet and Assam" (Bose, 1997). "The physical features of the territory of Arunachal Pradesh have restricted the mingling of the people of different tribes and retarded the growth of national consciousness among the people; geography of the area favors retention of the local identity, and the lack of transport and communication facilities had kept the tribe separate from each other" (Bose, 1997).

It is impossible for the outsider to cross the Mountain as on his own. The hills people practice animistic faith that is woven around forest ecology and co-existence with the natural world. It is the Mother Nature who has been there in every part and parcel of their lives, every small little thing that they have has been provided by the Nature. To people in the tribal community, loyalties come first and National allegiance and the most crucial thing in their lives is the Nature. The British did found them very exotic and vulnerable, that they were scared of their innocence and the straight forwardness. They were confused and curious of their rawness that they wanted to examine them vividly.

"Beyond the Assam plain was terra incognita and anyone who went into those wild hills did do at their own risk. It was the land of 'savage mountaineers'." (Dai, 2014).

Father Nicholas Krick heard about the tribe's man that they are savage, and it would be very dangerous for him to get passage through their territory to reach Tibet. But, Father Krick didn't even think twice and have never lost his hope and faith on God and tried every possible way to get there. On the way he gets to meet many tribal's who somehow led him to Kajinsha's territory. Kajinsha was already annoyed of the Miglun's and the trespassers, and there this Priest wants to get passage through his territory to reach Tibet which made him more suspicious of the priest. "Everyone wants to go to Tibet and walk through our land to get there. They want to see us, you, me, our homes and our houses and . . ." he spread his arms taking in the valley and the hills, 'and they want to see all this . . . who knows what they want! What do you think?' (Dai, 2014).

Krick told him that he is just a priest who wants to visit Tibet to do his preaching of Christianity and start a missionary, and not a harmful soldier but, Kajinsha never trusted him. After all Krick is a Kila Kamplung (stranger).

He believed that the Miglun (British) would act innocent and web nice stories in the beginning, to explore the hidden land of tribal's filled with myth, custom and rich history and steal every bit of their lives. Recounting every painful memory that has been given by the Miglun's to their tribesmen's. Kajinsha recalls many of his elders and brothers had already been brainwashed and dominated by them, Kajinsha could never trust a white, even if he talks of God and Love. Though there was a sense of strangeness Kajinsha promised to get him to the Tibet. On the way they faced many hurdles but somehow they reached Tibet, the priest was so happy to reach his destination and on the other hand the Tibetans were also glad to have him but, there the situation was also same, no one trusted a white and so, they decided to send him back to Assam.

The people believed that through the presence of Priest the Miglun's would follow him with guns and garrisons. Again Kajinsha was asked to take him back to Assam. Father Krick felt hopeless and sad; he was so happy one moment and was caught in grief on the second. On the way back to Assam the priest was shot dead. Kajinsha and Gimur were lost in the sadness of the death of the priest, Kajinsha realized the Tibetan had betrayed him "Who else could it be but Marpa, he thought. Marpa must have paid Lamet to do it. lamet would do anything for price, even if it was only a bag of grain. He was a mean, greedy man with a grudge against Kajinsha and his clan" (Dai, 2014). The conflict between tribes flamed too harsh that it turned out deadly and burned down the livelihood of Kajinsha and Gimur. Marpa was sowing doubts between the tribes to eliminate the priest out of the territory and, his plan actually worked. Kajinsha became the victim and sacrifice in the inter-tribe unrest and the consequences would be tough on them.

"The white man would hunt them down" (Dai, 2014). After the incident Kajinsha and Gimur along with Awesa escaped from the place and started to live somewhere high in their mountain home, far away from the presence of livelihood. Spending every hour of the day scared. Even the whistle gets Kajinsha startled. Just when they started to live a little in peace and believed that no one was looking for them, the Tibetans revealed their hiding place. The British soldiers attacked and took Kajinsha to Debrooghur jail. Kajinsha one of the bravest chieftains in the tribes of Mishmee, he never did beg or lose against the British and the rival from his own tribe. even in jail when a British sepoy tried to manipulate him, he roar out "Do you want to see how I die? Come closer you coward! You are afraid. It is your defeat!" (Dai, 2014). He is the major sacrifice in the story line, where Kajinsha's own tribesman and friends have betrayed and handed him to the British. The Death of Kajinsha provoked the emotions the tribesman and it started as a beginning of the war against the British.

The novel reflects the lost history and the culture of the Hills people of Arunachal Pradesh. It reveals the history when the whole of the Siang valley had been under the dominance of the British rule. The novel takes us to the inert part of the lives of the Tribal's and gives the glimpse of the value of Land and culture as their greatest possession. The Migluns tried every way to get into the lands of the tribes but, was unable to because of the Borders of Nature. The idea of the Missionary was seen as a different concept in the tribal area, as the tribal found the Migluns as the people who wanted to invade their lands and culture, they found that the Britisher's were coming up with the idea of bringing the missionary to invade their territories. Though Krick was a determined priest, he was a white and the tribe would never trust a white. For the tribal their land is everything. And in between all the hatred for Migluns, the Tribal community also crushed each other, when it comes to land no tribesmen would forgive any person.

"The Tibetan lamas have books and you read your book for knowledge of God. We read the land. The land is our book. Everything here on this hill, the grass and rocks and stones is saying something. And what falls from the sky- rain, thunder and lightning- are also the voices of spirits telling us something. It is how we have learnt what is good and what is sweet or bitter by living here and remembering what happens during the day and the night, everyday, for hundreds of years" (Dai, 2014). Kajinsha was the image of sacrifice in every aspect. Thus brooding Borderland consciousness among the Tribals and the quest to save their lands and the boundary. Mamang Dai historicizes the cultural circumstances of the tribal people and attempts justify the actions of the tribal society.

"East is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet" (Kipling, 1889)".

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