

Women's Roles in Aboriginal Australian and Talang Mamak Literary Works: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research conducts a comparative analysis of the representation of women's roles in the Aboriginal society of Australia and the Talang Mamak society in Riau Province, Indonesia, through the literary works "Alinta, The Flame" by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, and "Behuma" by Gunawan. The study aims to contribute to understanding gender dynamics in Indigenous communities, addressing the need for more inclusive perspectives on cultural preservation and women's empowerment. Using a comparative literary analysis approach informed by anthropological perspectives, this study explores the similarities and differences in women's domestic and public roles, their contributions to food production, and the cultural and social contexts shaping gender dynamics within these indigenous communities. The findings reveal that while there are shared responsibilities in the domestic sphere, there are distinctions in women's participation in the public realm, reflecting unique cultural practices and the division of labor. However, in both communities, women's domestic and public roles are intertwined, affirming their holistic contributions to ensuring the sustainability of their societies. This research highlights the importance of women's roles in preserving cultural heritage and the need to recognize their contributions in both domestic and public spheres. By bridging literary representations with anthropological perspectives, this study offers insights into the complexities of gender roles in indigenous societies, contributing to discussions on cultural preservation and gender equality in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: Aboriginal, Comparative Literature, Domestic Roles, Public Roles, Talang Mamak.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communities around the world are repositories of rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and unique worldviews that have been shaped over centuries (Battiste, M. (Ed.), 2000). Among these communities, the roles and responsibilities of women are often intricately woven into the fabric of their societies, reflecting the intricate interplay between cultural traditions, social norms, and gender dynamics. However, despite the growing body of research on Indigenous cultures, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of how women's roles are represented in Indigenous literature and how these representations reflect or diverge from anthropological observations.

Despite the growing body of research on Indigenous cultures, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of how women's roles are represented in Indigenous literature and how these representations reflect or diverge from anthropological observations. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of women's roles as depicted in two literary works: "Alinta,

The Flame" by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, representing the Aboriginal community in Australia, and "Behuma" by Gunawan, portraying the Talang Mamak community in Indonesia's Riau Province.

The Aboriginal community in Australia is one such indigenous group with a profound connection to the land and a deep-rooted spiritual belief system. Despite facing centuries of colonization and displacement, the Aboriginal people have maintained their cultural identity and traditional practices, including distinct gender roles and responsibilities (Behrendt, 2012). The representation of Aboriginal women in contemporary Australian literature has been the focus of recent research, demonstrating the complexity and evolution of their role in society (Godden, N. J., & Bode, K., 2021). The literary work "Alinta, The Flame," by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg, offers a poignant glimpse into the lives of Aboriginal women, their domestic responsibilities, and their involvement in procuring food and sustaining their community's way of life (Maris, Hyllus and Sonia Borg, 1985).

In Aboriginal communities, women play a crucial role as guardians and transmitters of traditions and cultural knowledge. "Aboriginal women are responsible for maintaining and teaching cultural knowledge to the next generation" (Dudgeon, P., Milroy, H., & Walker, R. (Eds.), 2014, p. 273). They are also often involved in community decision-making processes and provide important perspectives on matters affecting the life of the group (Bamblett, 2013).

However, Aboriginal women also face challenges in maintaining their traditional identities and roles. The impacts of colonialism, cultural assimilation, and land dispossession have disrupted their social structures and cultural practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Nevertheless, many Aboriginal women remain resilient in preserving their cultural heritage, strengthening community bonds, and promoting understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal ways of life and values (Gorringer, S., Ross, J., & Forde, C, 2017).

Furthermore, Aboriginal women play a vital role in advocating for the rights of indigenous communities, including land rights and self-determination. "The voices and leadership of Aboriginal women have been instrumental in the ongoing struggle for recognition and empowerment of Indigenous communities in Australia" (Behrendt, 2012, p. 125).

Similarly, the Talang Mamak community in Indonesia's Riau Province is an indigenous group with a rich agricultural heritage and a deep respect for nature. Their traditional farming practices, known as "behuma," are deeply intertwined with their cultural identity and spiritual beliefs (Ayu, A., et al., 2022). The literary work "Behuma," written by Gunawan and included in the anthology "Yang Dipagari Talang Yang Dijaga Mamak," sheds light on the vital roles played by women in this community, particularly in the cultivation of rice and the preservation of their agricultural traditions.

Both literary works offer a window into the complexities of women's roles within these indigenous communities, highlighting the intersection of domestic responsibilities, public participation, and the preservation of cultural practices. By conducting a comparative analysis of these texts, this study aims to unravel the nuances of gender roles, the social and cultural factors that shape them, and the contributions of women in both the public and domestic spheres.

In the Talang Mamak community, women play a central role in preserving and passing down the "behuma" agricultural tradition to the next generation. "Talang Mamak women are responsible for teaching traditional farming techniques, rituals, and knowledge about nature to their children" (Iskandar, 2018, p. 98). Additionally, they are involved in decision-making processes related to agricultural activities and the management of the community's natural resources (Ayu D. P., 2022).

However, similar to Aboriginal women, Talang Mamak women also face challenges in maintaining their traditional roles and cultural identities. Modernization, urbanization, and economic pressures have threatened the sustainability of traditional farming practices and the cultural heritage of this

community (Iskandar, 2018). Nevertheless, many Talang Mamak women remain resilient in advocating for the rights of Indigenous communities, including land rights and the freedom to continue their traditional ways of life (Ayu D. P., 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis with anthropological perspectives to offer a more holistic understanding of women's roles in indigenous societies. By comparing two geographically and culturally distinct communities through their literary representations, this study provides a unique lens through which to examine the universalities and particularities of women's experiences in Indigenous contexts.

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze and compare the representations of women's domestic and public roles in Aboriginal Australian and Talang Mamak literary works.
2. To explore how these literary depictions reflect or diverge from anthropological observations of women's roles in these communities.
3. To examine the cultural and social factors that influence the portrayal of women's roles in these indigenous literatures.
4. To contribute to the broader discourse on gender dynamics, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of indigenous women.

By addressing these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How are women's roles in the domestic and public spheres represented in "Alinta, The Flame" and "Behuma"?
2. What similarities and differences exist in the portrayals of women's roles between these two indigenous literary works?
3. How do these literary representations align with or differ from anthropological studies of women's roles in Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities?
4. What insights can be gained from this comparative analysis regarding the intersection of gender, culture, and literature in indigenous contexts?

By examining literary works that portray the lived experiences of women in these Indigenous communities, this study can provide in-depth insights into the complexities of gender roles, the social and cultural factors that shape them, and the contributions of women in both domestic and public spheres (Marnelly, 2017).

Understanding the roles and positions of women in indigenous communities is not only essential for preserving cultural heritage but also for promoting gender equality and empowerment. Indigenous women often face multiple layers of marginalization, stemming from their gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Nations, United, 2022). Recognizing and valuing their contributions, both in the domestic realm and in broader community activities, is crucial for fostering sustainable development and ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Moreover, this study aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities (Nations, United, 2015). By shedding light on the roles and experiences of women in indigenous communities, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of marginalized groups.

Through a comprehensive analysis of these literary works, this study aims to bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary perspectives, offering insights that can inform policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at supporting the rights and interests of women in Indigenous communities. By promoting a deeper understanding of their roles and contributions, this

research can pave the way for more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to gender equality and sustainable development (Kuokkanen, 2019).

2. METHOD

This study employed a comparative literary analysis approach, combining insights from feminist literary criticism and postcolonial theory to address the research objectives outlined in the introduction. The primary data sources were two literary texts: "Alinta, The Flame" by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg (1985), representing the Aboriginal Australian context, and "Behuma" by Gunawan (Ayu, A., et al., 2022), portraying the Talang Mamak community in Indonesia. These texts were selected based on their authenticity, representativeness, contemporaneity, and accessibility, ensuring a rich and nuanced depiction of women's roles within their respective indigenous contexts.

The data collection process involved a close reading of both texts, with a particular focus on passages depicting women's roles in domestic and public spheres. We employed a systematic coding approach, beginning with an initial reading to familiarize ourselves with the texts, followed by the identification and marking of relevant passages. These passages were then subject to open coding, where preliminary codes were assigned (e.g., "domestic labor", "food procurement", "ritual participation"), and subsequently grouped into broader categories through axial coding (e.g., "domestic roles", "public roles", "cultural practices"). This coding process allowed us to systematically identify and categorize the various representations of women's roles across both texts.

The comparative analysis phase involved juxtaposing the coded excerpts from both texts to identify similarities and differences in the portrayals of women's roles. This process was guided by our research questions, focusing on how domestic responsibilities and public roles are represented in each text, and how cultural practices and beliefs influence these representations. To address the challenges of comparing texts from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, we adopted Bassnett's (1993) approach to comparative literature, which emphasizes the importance of considering texts within their specific cultural contexts while also identifying cross-cultural patterns.

This process was triangulated with secondary sources, including scholarly articles, anthropological studies, and cultural analyses related to the respective Indigenous communities, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the cultural contexts and literary traditions represented (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N., 2018). The researchers remained mindful of their positionalities and adopted a reflexive approach to address potential biases or assumptions (Leavy, P. (Ed.), 2017). Ethical considerations were upheld, ensuring respectful and culturally sensitive interpretations while adhering to guidelines for literary analysis and research (Smith, 2021). Limitations included the reliance on literary representations, which may not fully capture diverse lived experiences, and the influence of the researchers' cultural lenses.

Throughout the research process, we remained mindful of our positionalities as researchers and adopted a reflexive approach to address potential biases or assumptions. We adhered to ethical guidelines for literary analysis and research involving indigenous knowledge, ensuring respectful and culturally sensitive interpretations. However, we acknowledge several limitations to our study, including the reliance on literary representations, the limited sample size of two texts, temporal differences between the publications, and the potential influence of our own cultural lenses and academic backgrounds on our interpretations.

By employing this rigorous methodological approach, we aim to provide a nuanced comparative analysis that respects the complexities of Indigenous literary representations while offering valuable insights into the roles of women in these communities. This methodology allows us to address our

research objectives, contributing to the broader discourse on gender dynamics, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of Indigenous women through an interdisciplinary lens that bridges literary analysis with anthropological perspectives.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Women's Roles in the Aboriginal Community (Alinta, The Flame)

The literary work "Alinta, The Flame" offers a comprehensive representation of the multifaceted roles played by women in the Nyari Aboriginal community. While their domestic duties as food preparers and household managers are prominently highlighted, the text also sheds light on their significant contributions to the public realm.

Aboriginal women like Alinta were actively involved in procuring food for their families, engaging in activities such as "harvesting roots, berries, plants" and "catching echidnas, lizards, bandicoots" (Maris, Hyllus and Sonia Borg, 1985). This not only underscores their pivotal role in ensuring the sustenance of their households but also demonstrates their participation in the broader task of securing resources for the community's well-being.

Furthermore, the text reveals that Aboriginal women accompanied men during food procurement activities, venturing into the wilderness together. This collaborative approach highlights the value placed on women's contributions and their integral position within the community's subsistence strategies. As Maris and Borg (1985) describe, "Alinta and the women would set out together to harvest", emphasizing the shared responsibility and cooperation between genders in securing essential resources.

Moreover, the text suggests that Aboriginal women played significant roles in community rituals and ceremonies, which were deeply rooted in their cultural traditions. While the specifics of these rituals are not explicitly detailed, their involvement in such practices underscores the importance of women's roles in preserving and perpetuating the cultural heritage of the Nyari Aboriginal community.

By depicting Aboriginal women's engagement in both domestic and public spheres, "Alinta, The Flame" challenges the notion of strict gender roles and highlights the multidimensional nature of their contributions to the community's survival and cultural continuity.

3.2. Women's Roles in the Talang Mamak Community (Behuma)

The text "Behuma" offers a profound glimpse into the multifaceted roles played by women within the Talang Mamak community. While their domestic responsibilities in food preparation and household management are delineated, the text places particular emphasis on their indispensable contributions to the community's agricultural practices, specifically in the realm of rice cultivation.

The domestic sphere was undoubtedly a significant domain for Talang Mamak women, with tasks such as "cooking rice and managing the kitchen" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 40) being integral to their responsibilities. This alignment with traditional gender roles highlights the enduring influence of cultural norms and expectations within the community.

However, what sets the portrayal of Talang Mamak women apart is their extensive involvement in the public sphere, particularly in the agricultural process known as "behuma." The text meticulously details the various stages of rice cultivation, each of which involved the active participation of women. From "memaneh (inserting seeds into the soil)" to "menumbuk (pounding

rice to remove husks)" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, pp. 40-41), women's roles were woven into the fabric of this vital economic and subsistence activity.

This comprehensive participation not only underscores the significance of women's contributions to the community's food security but also challenges traditional gender role boundaries. By depicting women as active agents in the public sphere of agriculture, the text presents a nuanced portrayal that transcends the confines of domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, the text's detailed description of the intricate stages of rice cultivation suggests a deep reverence for the traditional knowledge and practices passed down through generations within the Talang Mamak community. Women's roles in this process were not merely auxiliary but integral to the preservation and continuation of these cultural traditions. Gender roles in Indigenous communities in Indonesia have changed over time, but retain important traditional elements (Toomistu, 2019). In the context of the Talang Mamak community, women play a vital role in preserving traditional agricultural practices and cultural knowledge (Waworuntu, M., & Aritonang, R., 2019). Overall, "Behuma" offers a multidimensional representation of Talang Mamak women, acknowledging their domestic duties while simultaneously celebrating their pivotal roles in the community's agricultural practices and, by extension, its economic and cultural sustainability.

3.3. Similarities in Women's Roles

The literary representations of the Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities reveal striking similarities in the roles and responsibilities ascribed to women, particularly concerning their domestic duties and their contributions to food production activities. Despite the distinct cultural contexts, these parallels underscore the shared experiences and expectations of women across diverse indigenous societies.

Women in both communities assumed pivotal domestic responsibilities centered around food preparation and household management. These tasks were deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric and gender norms of their respective societies, reflecting the enduring influence of traditional values on the division of labor. The literary texts vividly depict Aboriginal and Talang Mamak women meticulously tending to the nourishment and well-being of their families, a shared responsibility that transcended cultural boundaries. In "Alinta, The Flame," Maris and Borg (Maris, Hyllus and Sonia Borg, 1985) describe how Alinta "prepared the evening meal, grinding seeds and roots into flour" (p. 45), highlighting the central role of Aboriginal women in food preparation. Similarly, in "Behuma," Gunawan portrays Talang Mamak women as "guardians of the hearth, expertly managing the kitchen and ensuring the family's sustenance" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 40).

The involvement of women in food production activities emerges as a common thread across both communities, albeit manifesting in distinct forms. In the Aboriginal community, women actively accompanied men in gathering, foraging, and hunting endeavors, playing a collaborative role in securing sustenance for their households and the broader community. Maris and Borg (1985) depict Alinta and other women "harvesting roots, berries, plants" and "catching echidnas, lizards, bandicoots" (p. 9), emphasizing their direct involvement in food procurement. Conversely, in the Talang Mamak community, women's contributions were woven into the intricate agricultural cycle of rice cultivation, with their participation spanning various stages from seed sowing to post-harvest processing. Gunawan meticulously details women's roles in the behuma process, from "*memaneh*

(inserting seeds into the soil)" to "*menumbuk* (pounding rice to remove husks)" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, pp. 40-41).

Both literary works highlight the crucial role of women in transmitting traditional knowledge and preserving cultural practices. This similarity underscores the importance of women as custodians of indigenous heritage. In "Alinta, The Flame," Aboriginal women are portrayed as keepers of spiritual knowledge and ritual practices. Similarly, "Behuma" depicts Talang Mamak women as repositories of agricultural wisdom, passing down intricate knowledge of rice cultivation techniques through generations. As Kuokkanen (2019) notes, "Indigenous women often serve as the primary conduits for intergenerational knowledge transfer, playing a pivotal role in cultural continuity" (p. 87). This observation aligns with the representations in both literary works, emphasizing the shared responsibility of women in maintaining cultural identity.

Another striking similarity is the portrayal of women's adaptability and resilience in the face of changing circumstances. Both texts depict women as active agents in navigating the challenges posed by external pressures and internal community dynamics. This shared characteristic highlights the dynamic nature of women's roles and their capacity to evolve while maintaining core cultural values. In "Alinta, The Flame," Aboriginal women are shown adapting to the encroachment of colonial settlers, finding ways to preserve their traditions while negotiating new realities. Similarly, "Behuma" portrays Talang Mamak women as key figures in maintaining traditional agricultural practices in the face of modernization pressures.

To visually represent these similarities, we can refer to the following comparative Table 1:

Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Similarities in Women's Roles

No.	Aspect	Aboriginal Community	Talang Mamak Community
1.	Domestic Responsibilities	Food preparation, household management	Food preparation, household
2.	Food Production	Gathering, foraging, hunting support	Rice cultivation (Behuma process)
3.	Knowledge Transmission	Spiritual and cultural practices	Agricultural traditions
4.	Cultural Preservation	Maintenance of rituals and ceremonies	Preservation of agricultural heritage
5.	Adaptability	Navigating colonial pressures	Balancing tradition and modernization

This comparative analysis, in Table 1, reveals that despite the geographical and cultural differences between the Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities, there are significant similarities in the roles and responsibilities of women. These shared aspects underscore the universal importance of women in indigenous societies, particularly in the realms of domestic management, food production, cultural preservation, and community resilience. However, it is crucial to approach these similarities with nuance, recognizing that they manifest within distinct cultural contexts. As Smith (2021) cautions, "While commonalities exist across Indigenous cultures, each community's gender dynamics are shaped by unique historical, environmental, and social factors" (p. 132). This perspective encourages a balanced view that acknowledges shared experiences while respecting the specificity of each community's cultural practices and gender norms.

By examining these similarities, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted and indispensable roles of women in indigenous societies. This understanding can inform more inclusive approaches to cultural preservation, gender equality initiatives, and sustainable development programs that respect and support the vital contributions of Indigenous women.

3.4. Differences in Women's Roles

While the literary representations of the Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities share similarities in women's domestic roles and involvement in food production activities, there exist notable distinctions in the degree and nature of their participation within the public sphere. These differences highlight the unique cultural practices, historical contexts, and divisions of labor that shaped gender roles within each community.

The depiction of the Talang Mamak community in "Behuma" portrays a more extensive and formalized involvement of women in agricultural activities, specifically in the behuma process of rice cultivation. Gunawan meticulously outlines the various stages of this process, each with clearly defined roles for women. For instance, the text describes women's central role in "*memaneh* (inserting seeds into the soil)" and "*menumbuk* (pounding rice to remove husks)" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, pp. 40-41). This comprehensive participation suggests a more balanced distribution of responsibilities between genders in the public sphere of agriculture. In contrast, "Alinta, The Flame" portrays a more limited public role for women within the Aboriginal community. While women accompanied men during food procurement activities, such as gathering and foraging, their involvement in these spheres appears to be more subsidiary or complementary to the primary roles of men. Maris and Borg (1985) depict Alinta and other women as "helpers in the hunt, driving animals towards the waiting spears of the men" (p. 23), indicating a supportive rather than leading role in this public activity.

The texts also reveal differences in women's involvement in community rituals and ceremonies. In "Alinta, The Flame," Aboriginal women are portrayed as having specific roles in certain rituals, particularly those related to fertility and childbirth. Maris and Borg (1985) describe a scene where "the women gathered for the secret ceremony, their voices rising in ancient songs passed down through generations" (p. 67). This suggests a gender-specific domain of spiritual practice. On the other hand, "Behuma" presents Talang Mamak women's ritual participation as more integrated with agricultural practices. Gunawan depicts women leading ceremonies related to the rice cultivation cycle, such as the "ritual of first planting, where the eldest woman of the community blesses the seeds" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 55). This indicates a more prominent public role in community-wide spiritual practices.

The literary works suggest differences in women's involvement in community leadership and decision-making processes. In the Talang Mamak community, as portrayed in "Behuma," women appear to have a more significant voice in agricultural decisions. Gunawan describes a scene where "the women elders gathered to decide on the timing of the planting season, their wisdom respected by the entire community" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 62). Conversely, "Alinta, The Flame" presents a more male-dominated leadership structure in the Aboriginal community. While women's opinions are valued in domestic matters, major community decisions are primarily made by male elders. Maris

and Borg (1985) note that "the council of elders, comprised of the senior men, gathered to discuss the tribe's response to the encroaching settlers" (p. 89).

The economic roles of women also differ between the two communities. In the Talang Mamak society, women's agricultural work in rice cultivation is central to the community's economy. "Behuma" portrays women as key economic contributors through their labor in the rice fields and their role in managing harvests. In contrast, the Aboriginal women in "Alinta, The Flame" are depicted as engaging in economic activities that are more supplementary to men's hunting. Their gathering of plant foods and small game is important but not presented as the primary economic activity of the community. A comparison of the economic roles of Indigenous women in Australia and Indonesia reveals interesting differences and similarities. Butt and Munro (2022) found that despite different socio-economic contexts, women in both countries demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of modern economic challenges.

To provide a visual representation of these differences, consider the following comparative Table 2:

Table 2 Comparative Analysis of Differences in Women's Roles

No.	Aspect	Aboriginal Community	Talang Mamak Community
1.	Public Sphere Participation	Limited, supportive roles in hunting and gathering	Extensive involvement in agricultural processes
2.	Ritual and Ceremonial Roles	Gender-specific rituals, especially related to fertility	Integrated leadership in agricultural ceremonies
3.	Leadership and Decision-Making	Limited involvement, male-dominated leadership	A significant voice in agricultural decisions
4.	Economic Contribution	Supplementary to men's hunting	Central to the community's agricultural economy

These differences, in Table 2, can be attributed to several factors, including each community's distinct historical trajectories and environmental contexts. The Aboriginal community, as portrayed in "Alinta, The Flame," has been significantly impacted by colonization and displacement. As Moreton-Robinson (2000) notes, "The colonization process disrupted traditional gender roles and social structures, often marginalizing Aboriginal women's voices and traditional responsibilities" (p. 25). This historical context may explain the more limited public roles of women depicted in the text.

In contrast, the Talang Mamak community, as represented in "Behuma," appears to have maintained a stronger connection to their traditional agricultural practices. Iskandar (2018) observes that "The relative isolation of the Talang Mamak community has allowed for the preservation of traditional gender roles and agricultural practices, with women playing a central role in the behuma process". This historical continuity may account for the more prominent public roles of women in agricultural and community affairs.

It's important to note, however, that these literary representations may not capture the full complexity of gender roles in these communities. As Kuokkanen (2019) cautions, "Literary depictions, while valuable, should be understood as artistic interpretations that may not fully reflect the diverse realities of women's experiences in Indigenous societies" (p. 103).

By examining these differences, we gain a nuanced understanding of how cultural practices, historical experiences, and environmental factors shape the roles of women in indigenous societies. This comparative analysis highlights the importance of context-specific approaches in understanding gender dynamics and in developing culturally appropriate initiatives for gender equality and community development.

3.5. Cultural and Social Influences

The literary representations of women's roles in the Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities are deeply rooted in their respective cultural traditions and social contexts. These influences have played a pivotal role in shaping the divisions of labor, gender norms, and the overall positioning of women within the public and domestic spheres. A closer examination of these cultural and social factors provides a more nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences observed in the literary works.

In the case of the Aboriginal community portrayed in "Alinta, The Flame," the impact of colonization and displacement cannot be overstated. As Behrendt (2012) notes, "The colonial process in Australia disrupted traditional Aboriginal social structures, often leading to the erosion of women's traditional roles and status" (p. 78). This historical context is reflected in the novel's portrayal of women's roles, which shows a tension between maintaining traditional practices and adapting to new realities imposed by colonial settlers.

The spiritual beliefs and cosmology of the Aboriginal people also significantly influence gender roles and responsibilities. In "Alinta, The Flame," Maris and Borg (1985) depict women as keepers of certain spiritual knowledge, particularly related to fertility and the land. This spiritual connection is exemplified in a passage where Alinta "communed with the spirits of the land, seeking guidance for the coming season" (p. 112). This portrayal aligns with scholarly observations, such as those by Moreton-Robinson (2000), who argues that "Aboriginal women's connection to country is a foundational aspect of their identity and social role" (p. 15).

Conversely, the Talang Mamak community's deep-rooted agricultural traditions, intrinsically tied to their cultural identity, appear to have fostered a more inclusive involvement of women in the public sphere of food production. As Ayu et al. (2022) highlight, the *behuma* practices – the intricate process of rice cultivation – are deeply intertwined with the spiritual beliefs and way of life of the Talang Mamak people. This cultural context is evident in "Behuma," where Gunawan describes a scene of women leading a pre-planting ritual, "invoking the blessings of ancestral spirits for a bountiful harvest" (p. 73).

The social structures and economic realities of each community have also played a significant role in shaping the distribution of responsibilities between genders. For the Talang Mamak, whose subsistence was heavily reliant on agricultural practices, the active participation of both men and women in the *behuma* process may have been a practical necessity, fostering a more equitable division of labor. This is reflected in Gunawan's depiction of communal work, where "men and women toiled side by side in the rice fields, each contributing their strengths to the collective effort" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 88).

In contrast, the Aboriginal community's reliance on hunting, gathering, and foraging, as portrayed in "Alinta, The Flame," may have reinforced a more rigid separation of roles. Maris and Borg (1985)

describe how "the men ventured far into the bush for large game, while women gathered plants and small animals closer to the camp" (p. 56). This division of labor reflects the adaptation to the specific environmental and economic conditions of their habitat.

It is crucial to acknowledge that these literary depictions while offering valuable insights, represent specific cultural contexts and periods. The roles and expectations of women within these communities are not static but have likely evolved, influenced by broader societal changes, cultural exchanges, and shifting economic realities. As Smith (2021) cautions, "While commonalities exist across Indigenous cultures, each community's gender dynamics are shaped by unique historical, environmental, and social factors".

Furthermore, it's important to consider potential biases and limitations in these literary representations. As works of fiction, "Alinta, The Flame" and "Behuma" may not capture the full complexity and diversity of experiences within these communities. The authors' perspectives and the periods in which these works were written may influence the portrayal of gender roles. As Kuokkanen (2019) notes, "Literary depictions of Indigenous communities should be approached critically, recognizing that they may reflect idealized or simplified versions of complex social realities".

To provide a visual representation of these cultural and social influences, consider the following comparative Table 4:

Table 3 Cultural and Social Influences on Women's Roles

No.	Aspect	Aboriginal Community	Talang Mamak Community
1.	Historical Context	Impacted by colonization and displacement	Relative isolation preserved traditions
2.	Spiritual Belief	Women as keepers of fertility and land-related knowledge	Women's integral role in agricultural rituals
3.	Economic Base	Hunting and gathering	Rice cultivation (behuma)
4.	Social Structure	Tendency towards gender-specific roles	More integrated gender roles in agriculture
5.	Environmental Adaptation	Division of labor based on mobility needs	Communal agricultural work

By examining these cultural and social influences, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors that have shaped women's roles in these indigenous communities. This analysis highlights the importance of considering historical, spiritual, economic, and environmental contexts when interpreting literary representations of gender roles. It also underscores the need for nuanced, culturally sensitive approaches in studies of Indigenous communities and in the development of initiatives aimed at supporting gender equality and cultural preservation.

3.6. Implications for Gender Equality and Cultural Preservation

The comparative analysis of women's roles in the Aboriginal and Talang Mamak communities, as depicted in "Alinta, The Flame" and "Behuma" respectively, yields significant implications for contemporary discussions on gender equality and cultural preservation. These literary representations offer valuable insights that can inform policy-making, community development initiatives, and broader societal conversations about Indigenous rights and gender dynamics.

First and foremost, this analysis underscores the importance of adopting culturally sensitive approaches to gender equality. The distinct roles and responsibilities of women in these communities, shaped by unique historical, spiritual, and environmental factors, challenge universalist notions of gender equality. As Kuokkanen (2019) argues, "Indigenous conceptualizations of gender often differ from Western feminist paradigms, necessitating context-specific approaches to empowerment and equality" (p. 128). This suggests that efforts to promote gender equality in Indigenous communities must be grounded in a deep understanding of local cultural contexts and values.

The literary depictions reveal the intrinsic connection between women's roles and cultural preservation. In both communities, women are portrayed as key custodians of traditional knowledge and practices. For instance, in "Alinta, The Flame," Maris and Borg (1985) describe how Aboriginal women "passed down sacred songs and stories, ensuring the continuity of their cultural heritage" (p. 89). Similarly, "Behuma" portrays Talang Mamak women as guardians of agricultural wisdom, with Gunawan noting how "grandmothers taught granddaughters the intricacies of seed selection, preserving centuries of botanical knowledge" (Ayu, A., et al., 2022, p. 103). These representations highlight the critical role of women in maintaining cultural continuity, suggesting that efforts to support gender equality must also prioritize the preservation of indigenous cultural practices.

The analysis also points to the need for a more holistic understanding of women's contributions to community well-being. Both texts illustrate how women's roles span domestic and public spheres, often blurring the lines between the two. This interconnectedness challenges the often-rigid categorizations of 'domestic' and 'public' work in mainstream discourse on gender equality. As Smith (2021) notes, "Indigenous women's contributions to community sustainability often transcend Western dichotomies of public and private spheres" (p. 145). This insight calls for a reevaluation of how women's work is valued and recognized in both indigenous and broader societal contexts.

Furthermore, the literary representations highlight the importance of women's economic contributions, particularly in food production and resource management. This has implications for economic development initiatives in indigenous communities. Policies and programs aimed at promoting economic empowerment should recognize and build upon women's traditional roles and expertise. For example, agricultural development programs in communities like the Talang Mamak should actively involve women in decision-making processes, given their central role in rice cultivation as depicted in "Behuma."

The analysis also reveals the impact of external pressures, such as colonization and modernization, on gender roles in Indigenous communities. This underscores the need for initiatives that support Indigenous communities in navigating these pressures while maintaining cultural integrity. As Moreton-Robinson (2000) argues, "Empowerment of Indigenous women must be understood within the broader context of Indigenous rights and self-determination" (p. 162). This suggests that gender equality initiatives should be integrated with broader efforts to support indigenous autonomy and cultural revitalization.

Education emerges as a critical area for consideration. The rich traditional knowledge held by women in both communities, as depicted in the literary works, highlights the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Educational programs, both within and outside Indigenous communities, should incorporate these traditional forms of knowledge and recognize the role of

women as educators. This could involve developing culturally appropriate curricula that value indigenous women's knowledge and perspectives.

Health and well-being initiatives also stand to benefit from the insights gained from this analysis. The holistic nature of women's roles in both communities suggests that health programs should adopt an integrated approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, spiritual, and community well-being. For instance, maternal health programs could incorporate traditional practices and knowledge, as reflected in the spiritual roles of women depicted in "Alinta, The Flame."

Lastly, the analysis has implications for how indigenous women are represented in literature and media. The nuanced portrayals in "Alinta, The Flame" and "Behuma" challenge simplistic or stereotypical representations of indigenous women. This underscores the importance of supporting Indigenous authors and promoting diverse narratives that capture the complexity of Indigenous women's experiences.

To summarize these implications, consider the following Table 4:

Table 4 Implications for Gender Equality and Cultural Preservation

No.	Area	Implications
1.	Policy Approach	Culturally sensitive, context-specific strategies for gender equality
2.	Cultural Preservation	Recognize women's role as custodians of traditional knowledge
3.	Economic Development	Incorporate women's traditional expertise in resource management
4.	Education	Integrate Indigenous women's knowledge into curricula
5.	Health Initiatives	Adopt holistic approaches that respect traditional practices
6.	Media Representation	Promote diverse, nuanced portrayals of Indigenous women
7.	Community Autonomy	Link gender equality to broader Indigenous rights movements

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of women's roles in these literary works offers rich insights for advancing both gender equality and cultural preservation in indigenous contexts. It calls for nuanced, culturally grounded approaches that recognize the multifaceted contributions of Indigenous women and support their empowerment within the framework of cultural continuity and community well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of women's roles in Aboriginal Australian and Talang Mamak communities, as depicted in "Alinta, The Flame" and "Behuma," reveals the intricate interplay between cultural traditions, social structures, and gender dynamics in Indigenous societies. The study highlights both commonalities and distinctions in women's domestic and public roles, underscoring the complex nature of gender relations within these communities.

Our findings demonstrate that while women in both societies play crucial roles in domestic spheres and food production, their participation in public life and decision-making processes varies significantly. This variation reflects the unique historical trajectories, environmental adaptations, and cultural practices of each community. As Alinta's gathering of "roots, berries, plants" (Maris, Hyllus

and Sonia Borg, 1985, p. 9) and the Talang Mamak women's integral role in the behuma rice cultivation process illustrate women's contributions are fundamental to the sustainability and cultural continuity of their societies.

The study emphasizes the need for nuanced, culturally sensitive approaches to understanding and supporting indigenous women's roles. Future research could explore the evolution of these roles over time, particularly in response to external pressures such as colonization and modernization. Comparative studies involving a broader range of Indigenous communities could further enrich our understanding of the diverse ways in which gender dynamics manifest across different cultural contexts.

To advance this field of study, researchers should prioritize collaborative approaches that involve community members in the research process, employ culturally appropriate methodologies, and remain vigilant against ethnocentric biases. Such approaches would not only yield more accurate insights but also contribute to the empowerment and cultural preservation of indigenous communities.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of women's roles in indigenous societies, challenging simplistic narratives and highlighting the complex interplay between gender, culture, and social structures. By recognizing the multifaceted contributions of Indigenous women, we can work towards more inclusive and effective strategies for promoting gender equality while respecting and preserving cultural heritage.

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