

## Representation of the Binaries of Culture and Nature in Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*

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### Abstract

The two binaries of culture and nature have been represented differently throughout literature. While some works of fiction have depicted them as separate entities and shown the 'nature-culture divide', others have stressed on the intermingling of the two. One such novel that combines nature and culture and presents them coexisting in harmony and even collapsing into one another is Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*. The novel deals with the insurgency that took place in the history of Nagaland. While the story of Moses' family and the violence in Nagaland is the primary plot of the novel, Kire does not disregard the importance of the natural landscape of Nagaland, and neither does she forget the Naga tribes' cultural roots. It describes nature in close relation to the culture of Nagaland. This paper, thus, aims to explore how Kire represents the binaries of nature and culture through her novel *Bitter Wormwood*.

**Keywords:** *nature, culture, Nagas, women, landscape.*

### Article

Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* is a realistic depiction of the violence that took over Nagaland during the times of insurgency. Kire boldly describes the events through her characters and uses her work as a mirror to reveal the truth about the upheavals and protests in Nagaland by the natives against the Indian army. Without mincing the brutal reality and the political conspiracies, she paints a tale recounting the lives of the civilians who suffered because of the quest for power by the people in authority. However, besides the theme of violence and destruction, the work also deals with the binaries of culture and nature which shall be discussed in this paper. It aims to reveal how Kire used her creativity to represent a peaceful and evergreen picture of the Naga landscape that has provided them with the means for a livelihood since time past. Culture is man-made, but nature is God gifted. However, although both are different, the novel shows how both weave together to establish the norms, beliefs and way of living of the Nagas in Nagaland.

Culture could be defined as the ideas, beliefs and practices that any community or society adheres to. The different cultures are given shape and formed on the basis of the customs and beliefs of a particular group of people. Nature on the other hand is gifted to us by God. Culture and nature are two binaries. As far as the nature-culture divide theory goes, anthropologists might define them as separate entities. "Nature and culture are often seen as opposite ideas—what belongs to nature *cannot* be the result of human intervention and, on the other hand, cultural development is achieved against nature."- is one such take on the division by Andrea Borghini based on other theorists and