

MYTH AND FOLKLORE IN EASTERINE KIRE'S SON OF THE THUNDERCLOUD

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Abstract

This paper examines the myths and folklore embedded in Easterine Kire's Son of the Thundercloud. This study analyses the symbolic role of natural elements, mythical characters and spiritual motifs, revealing how Kire use of folklore revives ancient stories while addressing contemporary themes, such as environmental guardianship and cultural resilience. The study also underscores how Kire's narrative bridges the past and present, open the readers to explore the enduring values embedded in Naga myths.

Keywords: *symbolic, guardianship, cultural resilience, explore*

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Introduction:

Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud* is deeply rooted in the myths and folklore of the Naga. The novel reflects the interweaving of ancient tales with contemporary storytelling in time when globalized modernity often overshadows local traditions. Despite challenges posed by colonial influences and cultural shifts, Naga writers like Easterine Kire sought to safeguard and showcase their people's narrative through historical novels based on folktales. Embracing the role of chroniclers, Naga writers imbued their works with spiritual depth and socio-cultural insights, bridging the gap between historical narratives and contemporary realities. This paper analyses how myth and folklore work in *Son of the Thundercloud* by examining the mythic elements, particular characters and symbolic landscapes.

Naga folktales emerged as not just sources of entertainment but repositories of moral values, cultural insights, and natural world knowledge. As Kire mentioned in her book, *Walking the Roadless Road: exploring the tribes of Nagaland*, these tales, imparted in communal spaces like the morung, functioned as educational tools conveying tribal traditions, warrior tactics, artistic skills, and societal norms. The *morung*, a sacred community hall, fostered a spirit of equality, discipline, and cultural preservation, where elders imparted wisdom, and younger generations imbibed the cultural heritage through stories, songs, and dances.

Jan Vansina in her book *Oral tradition as History* writes "Ancient things are today" or "History repeats itself." She continues to say that whether memory change or not culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation. How it is possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing to spin complex ideas, messages, and instruction for living, which manifest

continuity over time, is one of the greatest wonders one can study, comparable only to human intelligence and thought itself.

William Bascom in his journal *The Forms of Folklores: Prose Narratives* says that myths are a story of the remote past, which is considered to be true within the society in which they are told. He continues saying, myths are the embodiment of dogma; they are usually sacred; and they are often associated with theology and ritual. Their main characters are usually non-human beings, but they often have human attributes. They can be gods, demigods or culture heroes and supernatural figures (Bascom 4).

Myth and Folklore in the Novel

In *Son of the Thundercloud*, Kire highlight the essence of folklore by portraying storytelling as a communal and binding activity. As mentioned in the story, many years ago, an old widow women name Mesanuo live in a small village of Angamis. She is the saddest person alive in those hills as her heart still not healed from the tragic death that happened to her husband and to her seven sons. She was called tiger widow by the villager of the weaver. After the death of her husband and sons, she was ignored and abandoned by the villager considered her to be a cursed woman. No one in the village belief in the prophecy that was prophecies. "One afternoon, the woman was drying paddy outside her house when, all of a sudden, the sun disappeared, and a raindrop fell on her from the sky. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She was happy again, and the son grew up to be a mighty warrior who avenged his father and seven brothers. The two sisters, Kethonuo which means 'truth' and Siedze means 'future full of hope' are four hundred years old and the famine had been continuing for seven hundred years in which they have never seen rain in their life. They also represent mythical qualities, as they are closely linked to the land's fate. They believed Pele had brought the rain to this abandoned place as the next day they could hear the thunder. Pele, the protagonist in the novel, unfolds the prophecy of the birth of the *Son of the Thundercloud*.

Through storytelling, the characters in the novel reconnect with their past, find strength and share collective wisdom that reinforces cultural identity. Myths and folklores serve as moral compasses, providing guidance on how to

live honorably, relate to one another and protect their natural world. She highlights the importance and power of shared stories in preserving culture and imparting values across generations. It is mentioned in the novel that the older people of the village often say, "It's the best place to live in. We are blessed. Our young should not think there are lands better than this to build a home. They belong here, they must take the place of their ancestors.' They feared that if the young were not taught to love the village, it will be abandoned" (Kire 12). Here, Kire uses the Naga folklore, showing reverence for ancestors, the belief in prophecy and the connection to the land and its spirits. These reflect the deep roots of the community beliefs and values. This is how Kire preserved Naga tradition of storytelling and folklore through her writing.

In this novel Kire highlights the importance of the cultural myths and traditions of storytelling and prophecy in the novel. Mesanou, was the tiger widow, children used to hear stories from the old people, but they never believed this would ever happen, because they thought it was just a story. The women mythical connection and spiritual roles depicted in the novel are also directly link to the health of the environment. This myth reflects the Naga people people's respect for the natural world and divine forces that nurture and sustain life.

Through these mythical and folkloric elements in the novel, Kire represents the timeless beliefs, values and resilience of the Naga people and also persevered myths and folklore that carries ancestors' wisdom and values. Thus, Easterine Kire *Son of the Thundercloud* is a poignant reminder of the power of myths and folklore to preserve cultural identity. Kire highlights how myth and folklore plays as crucial role in bridging the past and open up the rich legacy of indigenous folklore and its vital role in the rapidly changing world.

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