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## **Cultural Diversity and Repositioning in Ettia Meh's Ika and Her Husbands**



**Dr. Nsaghah Samuel Siben,**  
University of Bertoua

**Abstract :**

*The quest for belonging; a problematic topic resulting from erroneous views in the post-colonial setting has been a subject of discussion amongst contemporary writers. As is the case with postcolonial literature, the fight to reclaim lost values is an important thematic that defines postcolonial settings. It is at the backdrop of the struggle for redefinition that this paper aims at exploring the noteworthy effect of culture as a salient component for transposition. Bearing in mind the struggle that has long existed, and is still existing, Ettia Meh's Ika and Her Husbands seeks to discredit the flawed notions engraved by the colonizers as a means to heighten the Africans' cultural belief systems. By examining African hegemony, through cultural values, this paper reveals truth about African heritage, contrarily to claims by Europeans that Africans do not have a meaningful culture that gives them voice in a society that is meant to marginalize them. Focusing on the postcolonial theoretical framework, specifically ethnicity that deals with the qualities explicit to a particular community intended to differentiate them, Ettia Meh's Ika and Her Husbands presents the pertinence of cultural beliefs in asserting African identity. As interplay between the past and the present, the significant pattern highlighted in Ika and Her Husbands is visible. Obvious in this discussion is the argument that cultural diversity whatever form it takes, plays an undeniable role in shaping, and building nations that have been negatively influenced by colonialism. From the postcolonial perspective, this paper sets out to demonstrate how the playwright uses his culture*

*as a measure for redefining the self through those patterns unique to Africans. Our findings undoubtedly prove that Ika and Her Husbands depicts African heritage that serves as weapon to critique the eroding nature of indigenous beliefs defined by the colonial masters, giving an opportunity to redeem lost values.*

**Keywords:**

*Post-colonialism, Cultural Diversity, Identity and Repositioning*



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**Nsaghah Samuel Siben (PhD)**

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### **Abstract:**

The quest for belonging; a problematic topic resulting from erroneous views in the post-colonial setting has been a subject of discussion amongst contemporary writers. As is the case with postcolonial literature, the fight to reclaim lost values is an important thematic that defines postcolonial settings. It is at the backdrop of the struggle for redefinition that this paper aims at exploring the noteworthy effect of culture as a salient component for transposition. Bearing in mind the struggle that has long existed, and is still existing, Ettia Meh's *Ika and Her Husbands* seeks to discredit the flawed notions engraved by the colonizers as a means to heighten the Africans' cultural belief systems. By examining African hegemony, through cultural values, this paper reveals truth about African heritage, contrarily to claims by Europeans that Africans do not have a meaningful culture that gives them voice in a society that is meant to marginalize them. Focusing on the postcolonial theoretical framework, specifically ethnicity that deals with the qualities explicit to a particular community intended to differentiate them, Ettia Meh's *Ika and Her Husbands* presents the pertinence of cultural beliefs in asserting African identity. As interplay between the past and the present, the significant pattern highlighted in *Ika and Her Husbands* is visible. Obvious in this discussion is the argument that cultural diversity whatever form it takes, plays an undeniable role in shaping, and building nations that have been negatively influenced by colonialism. From the postcolonial perspective, this paper sets out to demonstrate how the playwright uses his culture as a measure for redefining the self through those patterns unique to Africans. Our findings undoubtedly prove that *Ika and Her Husbands* depicts African heritage that serves as weapon to critique the eroding nature of indigenous beliefs defined by the colonial masters, giving an opportunity to redeem lost values.

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## **Introduction:**

The aftermath of colonialism proves that the colonial masters had indoctrinated the colonized with Western beliefs, giving them the impression that their identity is valueless, absurd and obscure. Regarding the colonized as ‘inferior’ beings, or ‘outcasts’ because of race and geographical location, has been a preoccupying discussion presented by writers. It is from this premise that Postcolonial writers debunk obsolete views advanced by the colonizers however fashioned they may seem. By using their cultures and tradition as weapon of indictment, postcolonial writers like Ettia Meh deconstruct colonial fabrics that were once considered valid. The multi-dimensional standpoint by most postcolonial writers as means of guaranteeing, and ensuring existence and continuity by the indigenes, showcases the importance of ethnicity in redesigning the society. With the passing of time, literature produced by the colonizing culture evidently distorts the authenticities of the colonized, incising their subordination. As measure to castigate fragmentary and inaccurate notions, Innocent Ettia Meh, in joining his voice to other postcolonial writers, instills love for one’s cultural heritage by underscoring its contemporary relevance, thereby questioning the past, by presenting the positive side of African culture.

Ettia Meh’s *Ika and Her Husbands* intersects with other postcolonial texts like Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Bole Butake’s *Lake God*, Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ola Rotimi’s *Her Husband Has Gone Mad Again* and others to celebrate African diversity, by seeking to reposition the self. *Ika and Her Husbands* is an intriguing four act play, with a titillating plot, centering on the life of Ika, an imaginary African maiden entrapped in her demise of her first marriage. Ettia Meh implores rich elements of culture to highlight the story line of the play, rendering it mind-blowing. Act 1 reveals the appalling realities of a typical African setting faced with the advent of change. Act 1 middles on Bai and Nai Ika’s house; a typical African abode. The enthralling setting, character and other elements particular to drama lend interest in the reading. It is equally important to note the highly significant nature of the title that appeals to modern way of life. The whole idea of polyandry is derived from a first look at the title “Ika and Her Husbands.” This suspense pokes curiosity since we want to find out, how in a classically

African society, a lady gets married to more than one man. The title sounds paradoxical, but after a succinct reading of the text, it is crystal clear that the author is not unintentional in his presentation of Ika's marital instability due to some imbalance considered as a taboo within the African biosphere. Vivid description becomes a motif implored with richness to present African beauty. In scene two, this rich and evocative exquisiteness is revealed when the stage direction reads, "...built with sun-dry bricks and roofed with corrugated iron sheets", "ten litres of fresh frotting palm wine and a bunch of half ripe banana hanging on a long bamboo" (7). The exact words depict enchanting African scenery, drawing influence from deep rooted ancestry. The wide use of vocabulary such as , "sleeping bamboo beds with grass mattresses", "fireside, bundles of dried groundnut", "bamboo cupboard-like structure in which firewood is stored", "a ladder placed to the wall leading into the barn", "A large clay pot of drinking water", "Bamboo shelves, dried plantain and the compound as being surrounded by fruit trees of all kinds such as mangoes, avocado, plums, plantain and bananas" (7), no doubt intensely describe an enriching environment, pregnant with natural resources. By presenting African beauty, the author celebrates the ecosystem, and somewhat encourages its preservation. Similar to other post-colonial texts like Bole Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, *Ika and Her Husbands* recapitulates unique aspects of custom that do not only give a sense of belonging, but project the Africans inexpressibly. The widespread of rituals inevitably expose the concept of ethnicity that would be a necessary post-colonial tenet in the interpretation of *Ika and Her Husbands*. We are informed, "at the centre of the compound is a curved hole of 20cm deep for occasional pouring libation by the family head" (7). The author's literary fragrance in projecting elements of customs and tradition buttresses the theme of identity as pivotal in defining post-colonial Literature.

Like Wole Soyinka who underscores the significant effect of African cultural belief systems in works like *Death and the King's Horseman*, and Chinua Achebe who presents cultural dynamism in *Things Fall Apart*, similarly Ettia Meh presents familiar ideologies within the African setting in a very concise, yet stimulating manner. For instance, by contrasting Ning(Bai Ika's son) to Kum(Pa Jeremiah and Nsen Mbeifei- daughter of Fei Mbongheka, sister of late Ndzeteghe), the author as a custodian of customs and tradition, celebrates the theme of hard work, typical in most African texts. Similarly, Ettia Meh joins other postcolonial writers like Ola Rotimi's *Her Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, and Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *I Will Marry When I*

*Want*, among others to epitomize the pertinence of African tradition. Soundly, the Post-Colonial theory, specifically, ethnicity as a tenet would be of vital importance since components of culture peculiar to the author would be used.

### **Definition of Culture**

By way of definition, culture is the ideals, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society. Cultural patterns are those particular aspects of customs that give uniqueness to indigenous groups. This paper examines, by discussing the internal specificities particular to Ettia Meh, who emanates from Weh Fondom in Menchum Division. This, by implication includes ethnicity which gives a sense of belonging to a particular group of people. Ethnicity is our focus since via its lens; we would be able to evaluate how the author manipulates textual relevance by using elements of culture. Equally, by definition, “Diversity according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary” is the condition of having, or being composed of different elements: Variety especially: the inclusion of different types of people (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity>). How the author brings in various instances of culture to highlight African tradition for repositioning is our interest in this paper.

### **‘Cultural Patterns’: A Mark of Identity in *Ikia and Her Husbands***

Ettia Meh richly implores elements of culture and traditions to highlight the outset event of *Ikia and Her Husbands*, rendering it mind-blowing and contemporary, with visionary effect. Act 1 reveals the awful realisms of a typical African setting, accompanied by the predominant use of African names like “Bai Ika” (family head), Nai Ika (the mother), Ika, Kum, Tsou, Pa Jeremiah (family head in the neighboring quarter), Nai Ning (Pa Jeremiah’s second wife), Ning (their twenty-five years old son), Nai Ndze (Pa Jeremiah’s barren wife) and Ngong (Ning’s friend) Sei Bei (Ika’s maternal aunt who has been to the coast). To render meaning isolated, and contextualized within the African context, the author makes an elaborate use of lexicology particular to a certain tribe by underscoring words like, “knock-door (marriage proposal), Moukebei (head of the family), Nahtum (queen mother), Naiwaauboo (mother of a new born),

Ndawtse (highest traditional house that governs), Ngambe men (soothsayers), Nget (title holders), Ngow (bride price), Ngueto-okefum (traditional drum), Njamanjama (vegetables) and many others. These names disclose without doubt, the journey undertaken by the author to showcase his attachment to culture and tradition, using it as a weapon to reclaim African lost values.

Act 1 comprises four multifaceted scenes supported by rudiments of drama such as local color, stage directions, stage craft, decor and costumes. Act 1 middles on Bai and Nai Ika's house; a typical African abode. The enthralling setting, character and other elements of drama lend credibility and interest in the reader since it depicts a particular way of life set by a particular community. It is equally important to note the highly significant nature of the title that appeals to modern way of life. The whole idea of polyandry is derived from the title "Ika and Her Husbands" from the cover page. This suspense pokes curiosity since the reader is eager to find out, how in a classically African society, a lady gets married to more than one man with all the severe norms guiding it. The title sounds paradoxical, but after a succinct reading of the text, it is crystal clear that the author is not unintentional in his presentation of Ika's marital instability due to some imbalance considered as taboo within the African biosphere. By insinuation, by imploring satire, the title reinforces the need to stay bonded to norms of tradition that give Africans a sense of belonging. Vivid description thus becomes a motif to present African magnificence in a postcolonial world. To be more specific, in scene two, this rich and evocative exquisiteness is betrayed when the stage direction reads, "...built with sun-dry bricks and roofed with corrugated iron sheets", "ten litres of fresh frothing palm wine and a bunch of half ripe banana hanging on a long bamboo." The exact words depict enchanting African scenery, drawing influence from deep rooted ancestry.

The wide use of vocabulary such as , "sleeping bamboo beds with grass mattresses", "fireside, bundles of dried groundnut", "bamboo cupboard-like structure in which firewood is stored", "a ladder placed to the wall leading into the barn", "A large clay pot of drinking water", "Bamboo shelves, dried plantain and the compound as being surrounded by fruit trees of all kinds such as mangoes, avocado, plums, plantain and bananas" (7), no doubt intensely describes an enriching environment, full of natural resources. Similar to any other post-colonial text, *Ika and Her Husbands* recapitulates unique aspects of custom that give a sense of belonging, and of course,

project the significance of African hegemony. The widespread range of rituals inevitably exposes the concept of ethnicity and its importance in interpreting *Ika and Her Husbands*. We are informed, “at the centre of the compound is a curved hole of 20cm deep for occasional pouring libation by the family head” (7). The author’s literary fragrance in projecting fundamentals of customs and tradition betrays the theme of identity; pivotal in Postcolonial Literature, and worthwhile in defining the self.

Metaphorically, Ettia explores ‘palm wine’ as a powerfully essential tool for identification within the African context. The symbolic effect of the palm wine which is an element of spectacle draws meaning from African roots, debunking the whole idea of rootlessness. Consequently, the themes of identity and belonging are visibly portrayed through the image of the ‘palm wine’ as often used by most African writers in present-day disposition. ‘Palm wine’ becomes a prevailing motif used by Ettia to venture, and present his African heritage through the pattern of ethnicity. Why ethnicity? Simply because certain practices identified in the dramatis personae are unique to the Africans, mostly exemplified in some contemporary texts like Bole Butake’s *Lake God* and *And Palm Wine Will Flow*. In correlating the realities of imaginary African scenes, Ettia Meh’s artistic brilliance is undoubtedly depicted in his presentation of themes particular to the author. Using ethnicity as a major postcolonial tenet, the play showcases elements of culture, and unravels them as instruments to deconstruct fallacy.

Ettia Meh recapitulates familiar ideologies within the African setting in a very concise and interesting plot. For instance, by contrasting Ning (Bai Ika’s son) to Kum (Pa Jeremiah and Nsen Mbeifei- daughter of Fei Mbongheka, a sister of late Ndzeteghe), the author as a custodian of customs and tradition celebrates the theme of hard work, typical in most African texts like Ola Rotimi’s *Her Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Bole Butake’s *Lake God*, John Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi’s *I Will Marry When I Want*, just to mention a few. By implication, the author lampoons laziness, considered abominable in African settings. By criticizing Kum’s attitude, the place of the boy child is underscored as compared to the girl’s. If a male is hard working, there is assurance and continuity because within the African setting, the male child is valorized than the girl child. By insinuation, male dominance is typical of such societies where the female child’s place is considered in the kitchen. Such ideas are preponderant in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous*

*Conditions*, Nkemngong's *Across the Mongolo*, Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and a host of others. Most often, African tradition makes it clear that females should be subjugated. Bai Ika is tempted to say, "You are the real son of your father. The one who will fire the gun and slaughter the goat on his final day. Not the loafer I have in my house" (15). Why can't the female child be projected as the real daughter of her father, or the one who will fire the gun? By contrasting the two characters; Ning and Kum, the author presents the dichotomy between modernity and tradition widely perceptible. Nai Ika sustains, "Few young boys and girls have such a mentality nowadays my son. Modernity is fast eroding the values of our forefathers. The other day, you helped me at the stream" (20). By presenting Ning as a good character who, in spite of the vicissitudes in his society, still maintains the values of his village as a custodian, the author celebrates fundamental principles guiding culture.

Satirically, the text ridicules aspects of tradition that are fast eroding. As depicted by the playwright, the preservation of cultures and tradition is one of the significant themes running through the play. In castigating obnoxious practices, the author, through Passer by's voice shows animosity for the act of elopement. How can tradition accept and celebrate such desecrating practices when Passer By says, "That sounds quite strange. Whereas a man caught with another man's wife in some tribes is killed through poisoning or given a public lashing, here, he is celebrated" (82). In *Ika and Her Husbands*, this act is welcomed, whereas African tradition does not celebrate it. By implication, the ironical twist in the text shows that Ettia Meh satirizes the alarming rate at which modern practices are erasing traditional ones.

#### **'Witchcraft': African Heritage in *Ika and Her Husbands***

Witchcraft or mysticism is outstanding in *Ika and Her Husbands* since it acts as an essential element for identification. Wizardry practices are intimated when Ika articulates, "...There are witches and wizards in this village who can stop the rain and also cause it to come down even in the heart of the dry season for the destruction or killing of somebody through what is commonly called thunder lightening" (28). As part of African forte, the belief in the supernatural lends meaning and visibility through exotic performances. More clearly, the protagonist elucidates, "A person can eliminate through thunder lightning during an unusual downpour" (28). The



supernatural is enhanced in Ettia's *Ika and Her Husbands* where the Western world is exposed to dreadful African settings, creating room for them to question the African belief systems. By implication, a unique cultural pattern is derived from *Ika and Her Husbands*. This cultural pattern deconstructs wrong beliefs, thereby reclaiming lost values. The whole notion of binaries produced at some point because of divergent beliefs, this gives the opportunity to interrogate the colonized who consider blacks as a race without a distinct culture. By valorizing aspects of culture as projected in *Ika and Her Husbands*, Ettia Meh succeeds to portray the theme of African heritage, making blacks to reposition themselves within the postcolonial world.

Notwithstanding, the author is multidimensional in examining African inheritance. Though attention-grabbing, at some point, he negates some of the questionable happenings in the contemporary world. Because of the negative influence of witches and wizards in the community, Nai Ika doubts the safety of Wuukuum, Papa Cheghe Ika's son who is expected to arrive from the Coast. She is reassured of his protection because his mother consults the soothsayer-Mentop who guarantees his safety (52-53). Conversely, in the African setting, ancestors play an undeniable role in protection as Nai Ika beckons on them to watch over Ning wherever he finds himself (21). Ironically, witchcraft, considered as a dreaded and inhumane practice by world views is accepted and applauded by the indigenes, giving a distinct sense of belonging. Pa Africa at Azor, and Mamy Isa Fei Zoutseghe's ability to stop the thunder until the burial phase is striking, and full of mixed delight. Equally, the text gives the opportunity to visualize the importance of spectacle as Pa Africa uses a mere pot where he mystically puts a small stone to capture the rain in the sky. He also uses incense behind the "cry die" compound (30). Objects in the African setting are highly significant because their use renders them relevant and indispensable. A vivid case is in marriage rites where a black rope is tied on the hand of a baby as visible trace of identification (44). Some elements like objects play a vital role in depicting the significance of ancestry in *Ika and Her Husbands*. Like a post-colonial writer that he is, Ettia, shows the relevance of culture within his society in this imaginary African setting which is a microcosm of a typical rural locale pregnant with fascinating beauty. Of course, the diction used by Ettia betrays his origin; Weh Fondom in Menchum Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. The plot is absorbing, highlighting drilling and thrilling aspects of tradition like burial ceremonies, and respect of the dead. The dexterity in Pa Africa and Mamy Isa Fei Zoutsenghe's acts corroborate how African writers capitalize on the valorization of the dead as

projected in some artistic works of which *Ika and Her Husband* depicts. The death of Wuukuum Papa Cheghe Ika is of valid importance, partly because of his age and the position he occupies in that community. The experience he has gathered and the fact that he is now a link between the living and the death is quite significant within the African setting. The text discusses the importance of old age within the African context which is a fundamental aspect of ancestry used by post-colonial writers to reposition the colonized.

### **‘Proverbs and Musicality’: African Heritage in *Ika and Her Husbands***

To demonstrate that the Africans have a culture unique to them that reflects their identity, the author uses a vast range of proverbs. Firstly, Ettia as a disciple of culture clearly elucidates its use when Nai Ika articulates, “it is really true that a child belongs to an individual only when it is still in the womb.” Secondly, she further explains, “Our people say that an empty hand does not go to the mouth.” Thirdly, more is revealed when she adds, “A young man who pays respect to the elderly adds the number of his days on earth” (25). The Barmaid postulates, “When you give a handshake to a lepered it will next demand for an embrace” (26). Nai Ndze in her discussion with Tsou and Ika says, “Is it not often said that he who laughs last, laughs best?”, “Our people say that what an old man sees sitting, down, a young man cannot see while standing on the highest mountain”(34). Furthermore, Pa Jeremiah continues, “A man overbudden with a heavy load puts it down from his head before he settles down on any decision....A toad does not run in the day time for nothing” (54). The author shows the splendor derived in the use of proverbs. Through proverbs, writers display the grandiloquence in African lineage. By coding meaning from outsiders (the west), these idiomatic expressions in *Ika and Her Husbands* give a sense of belonging, value, and national pride to the Africans. Expressly, the varied use of Pidgin English, accompanied by proverbs highlights a sense of identity in the traders in the market square. This communication skill is a dominant ideology in post-colonial societies. As presented by Ettia Meh, the buyers make it clear, “All wuna things them “na only” wuna talk fine. I di hurry. Time don go soteh. I go pay 1200 for the granot and 1000 for the planti...”(36). Though humorous, yet thought-provoking, the use of pidgin English within Ettia’s conceived market square, reveals communication skills as a form of preservation of customs and tradition. Interestingly, the buyer and sellers perfectly understand each other, contrary to the Western world where comprehension

may be incomprehensible as a result of language barrier. It is obvious that, from Ettia Meh's perspective, the colonized have a sense of belonging and can use language as a weapon to highlight their values.

By underlining, and projecting cultural diversity, Ettia's use of songs and dance adds to the attractiveness in *Ika and Her Husbands*. Spectacle, as an essential component in theatre is emphasized when Ika and Kum excitedly welcome their father in a unique African style, "Papa ele, yayato; Papa ele yayato!" (8). symbolically, this attitude reflects the excitement in the kids' particular in the African biosphere, revealing their anticipations for their father's return. The importance of dance is equally underlined when Ika reminds, "...festival or dance like djitsem, these persons are often solicited to stop the rain from spoiling the occasion" (29). Ika's cultural dexterity is further visible when she articulates, "the rain is held back to give the chance to all traditional dances and juju groups to display and also for in-laws to bring pigs, goats, palm wine and firewood" (31). Femi Ojo-Ade in an article titled, "De Origen africano, soy cubano: African Elements in the Literature of Cuba" in *African Literature Today* discloses the place of songs as an element to express joy and sorrow.(10) In *Ika and Her Husbands*, Dances display an engaging presentation of local colour when Nai Ika sings as an expression of overflowing joy to celebrate the birth of her grandchild:

*Oh ghedoulewaa loh*

*Naiwaaloh ghedoulewaaloh*

*Waanebenghe(2x)*

*Oh ghedoulewaa loh*

*Baiwaaloh ghedoulewaaloh*

*Waanenbeghe (2x)*

*Naiwaaloh bensonzime bentsonzime ghefe*

*Naiwaaloh benleme benleme gheme (88-9).*

This song inexhaustibly expresses Nai Ika and the women flock's happiness in welcoming the newborn, and the good tidings accompanying a child's birth within the African context. The use of songs shows that Ettia is very much influenced by aspects of tradition. This joviality is justified by dances, reason why Ngong's compound is scrambled with visitors who stem from different corners to express their joy for the birth of his first son. Bole Butake's *Lake God* equally presents the importance of songs:

*From backstage a mourning song, Mangvun, is heard. It rises gradually to the rhythm of the Ngem or double-gonng bell. Then a lone person makes his entrance on stage, performing unsteady funeral steps and chanting the mourning song (6).*

The prologue reveals the correlation between Butake and Ettia Meh in aspects patterning to culture. Both authors valorize customs and tradition as reflected in the funeral song which gives the writers a sense of identification. Moreover, as an epitome of customs and tradition, the author reiterates the place, and role played by marriage in a typically African society. As a relevant theme peculiar in postcolonial societies, marriage is given a noteworthy place when Pa.Jeremiah intentionally visits Nai Ika to seek for Ika's hand in marriage. As tradition demands, she is just a care taker (56). This ironical twist exposes the signification of customs and tradition. What is the outcome should Ika's bride price be paid without the knowledge of other relatives? Of course, the repercussions are drastic, reason why Nai Ika presents herself as merely the concierge because in their tradition, a child belongs to the whole community. This act depicts the unity characterizing African settings, and the repositioning that occurs. The use of flashback is rich and evocative since it emphasizes the importance of betrothal or engagement. To illustrate this, Nai Ika informs Ika, "I also remember that when you were born, his father came to the house and tied a black rope on your hand to say that when you grow up, you'll be his wife. Since then, he has been visiting us with many gifts like firewood, games, fruits etc" (44). Marriage is a strong element that gathers, and unites Africans together. Polygamy attests the importance of marriage in the case of Pa Jeremiah who has many wives (54). Ngong; Ning's best friend woes Ika and finally marries her as one of his wives. By satirizing this obnoxious way of life that goes contrary to the norms of tradition, Ettia presents the dual nature of the Lunatic in his sarcastic tone. By drawing the attention of Ika in the beer house, the author praises this imaginary setting that epitomizes sanity. This act of infidelity betrays the contemporary world where sexuality has

become the order of the day. Prophetically, the Lunatic pinpoints, “Young woman, I see you changing home in a very near future. Stop fooling around with your so-called husband’s friend. You may wave me away today but time will tell” (75). The Lunatic becomes the voice through which the author highlights the fact that culture is regarded as light for the younger generation.

### **‘Greenery’: African Heritage in *Ika and Her Husbands***

Nature plays an undeniable role in *Ika and Her Husbands*. By appealing to nature, the author shows the connectivity between customs and tradition, and elements of nature. The use of vivid description such as “bamboo”, “bundles of dried groundnuts”, “bamboo ladder”, “clay pot of drinking water”, “dried plantain cobs” (3), shows the usefulness of nature within the African setting. The author underscores the relevance of these elements of nature in human existence. Notwithstanding, Pa Jeremiah reveals the role of nature when he says, “The fresh stems of bananas or plantain are cut, opened up, squeezed and placed on the flat surface...” (52). The place of herbs is made evident when Nai Ika reminds, “I must say that there is really something in our customs and tradition that can make for interesting modern scientific research as far as the production of pharmaceutical products are concerned (53). How corpses are embalmed by using herbs from plantain and banana stems with fever grass is of interest (52-3). Sei Bei equally attests the importance of herbs, “Who says traditional medicine is not effective? Also, worthy of note is the fact that Ika did not labour for long before having her baby (90). The ecosystem is valorized by the Africans since plants serve as medicine to them. *Ika and Her Husbands* gives an opportunity to celebrate nature, and to emphasize its prominence in this African biosphere. From all indication, the author debunks deforestation through his presentation of daily routines like farm work, fetching water and firewood, and a host of others.

It is important to underline the importance in economic factors as motivational for the passion driving African men to be polygamous. They consider their wives and children as machinery for productivity. *Ika and Her Husbands* presents an African setting purely rich in diversity. By exposing agriculture as an important economic activity, the author shows the dedication of the characters to it since most of the casts are illiterates. In this millennium, farm work is considered as an economic activity mainly for sustainability and dependency. In addition to the theme of

nature, the author pictures agriculture as an element of identification. To this effect, we are told that Bai and Nai Ika, Pa Jeremiah, Ngong, Ning and many other characters are solely dependent on agriculture. To attest the author's display of agriculture as an invaluable constituent in rural setting, the stage direction in Act three, scene three clearly describes, "(In the evening, at about 5pm. Nai Ika and Ika have just returned from the farm)"(7). Ettia Meh's ability to coin elements of culture with contemporary ideologies is worth applauding. By depicting the importance of ecology through farm work, the author vividly describes the preservation of the natural environment for longevity.

### **Conclusion:**

Our findings no doubt reveal that *Ika and Her Husbands*, among many postcolonial texts showcases the relevance of culture by redefinition and repositioning the Africans. Within the postcolonial ecosphere, the writer, encompassed by different experiences in the Weh Fondom in Menchum Division of the North West Region of Cameroon, seeks to present African culture as a significant theme in redefining the self. By valiantly exposing innumerable realities in *Ika and Her Husbands*, Innocent Ettia Meh reclaims the neglected, and forgotten aspects of tradition that give meaning to the Africans, by giving them a sense of belonging.

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