

# African Beliefs in Buchi Emecheta's Writings

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## Abstract

The belief in Africa is multifaceted and has been a major influence on art, culture and philosophy. Today, the continent's various populations and individuals are mostly adherents of Christianity, Islam, and to a lesser extent several traditional African religions. In Christian or Islamic communities, religious beliefs are also sometimes characterized with syncretism with the beliefs and practices of traditional religions. However, a close look at African people shows that they are largely rooted on other sort of beliefs that we intend to scrutinize throughout this study. Thus, this paper aims not only at identifying existing beliefs in African culture but also at showing their sacredness in the life of people based on the writings of the African woman writer, Buchi Emecheta.

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*Index terms*— belief, africa, religion, christianity, islam, buchi emecheta.

## 1 Introduction

Africa is a large continent with multitudes of nations, which have complex cultures, innumerable languages and myriad dialects encompassing a wide variety of traditional beliefs. Although religious customs are sometimes shared by many local societies, they are usually unique to specific populations or geographic regions. All traditional African religions are united by a shared animistic core with special importance to ancestor worship. In this context, the word "traditional" means indigenous, that which is foundational, handed down from generation to generation, meant as to be upheld and practiced today and forevermore. A heritage from the past, yet not treated as a thing of the past but that which connects the past with the present and the present with eternity. The majority of Africans are adherents of Christianity or Islam and combine the practice of their traditional belief with the practice of Abrahamic religions, which are widespread throughout the continent. They have both spread and replaced indigenous African religions, but are often adapted to African cultural contexts and belief systems. The World Book Encyclopedia has estimated that in 2002 Christians formed 40% of the continent's population, with Muslims forming 45%. Indeed, Christianity is now one of the most widely practiced religions in Africa along with Islam and is the largest religion in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, several syncretistic and messianic sects have formed throughout much of the continent, including the Nazareth Baptist Church in South Africa and the Aladura churches in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, there is also fairly widespread populations believing in people, sacred objects or places, witches, death from where they draw faith. A closer look at Buchi Emecheta's writings reveals the existence of several beliefs among which some and their implications in the life of people will be considered in the present study.

## 2 II.

## 3 Buchi Emecheta and the Material

The literary history of Africa reveals that writing has been dominated by men, with comparatively few women producing literary works. This has been attributed to the highly patriarchal nature of the traditional and modern African society, which has continued to give more space for self-affirmation to men. Through institutionalized systems, women have continued to be comparatively disadvantaged when it comes to opportunities in education that is essential for self-expression and production of artistic works.

## 5 . (T)HE ESSENCE OF WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY IS THE CAUSING OF HARM TO PERSONS OR PROPERTY BY INVISIBLE MEANS".

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44 Born in Nigeria in 1944, Emecheta attended primary and secondary school in Lagos, Nigeria. She obtained  
45 a degree in Sociology from the University of London. Married at age 16, she emigrated with her husband from  
46 Nigeria to London in 1962. She began writing stories based on her life, including the problems she initially  
47 encountered in England. These works were first published in New Statesman magazine and were later collected  
48 in the novel *In the Ditch* ??1972). That work was followed by *Second-Class Citizen* ??1974), and both were later  
49 included in the single volume *Adah's Story* ??1983). Those books introduce Emecheta's three major themes: the  
50 quests for equal treatment, selfconfidence, and dignity as a woman. With more than a A 25 dozen novels to her  
51 credit, Buchi Emecheta is arguably one of Africa's prolific writers. Her presence within Africa's literary landscape  
52 is enhanced by the fact that she is an African writer (Nigerian) who has lived out of her country and Africa most  
53 of her life. Some critics have mentioned that her university training had a great influence on her writing. She  
54 has produced a number of novels and is recognized as one of the first female writers to overtly address issues of  
55 feminism.

56 In a chronological way, her novels include *In the Ditch* ??1972) ??1986). Other Novels include *Gwendolen*  
57 (1989) and *Kehinde* (1994), among others. The primary materials used for arguments in this study are Buchi  
58 Emecheta's two novels: *The Bride Price* and *The Slave Girl* since they corroborate to the research theme.  
59 However, other fictional works of the author have also been used as reference sources. Apart from these, some  
60 literary critical works of the same interest have been used as secondary sources for the collection of data. Buchi  
61 Emecheta is a feminist who focuses on the victimization of women in her community. The title of the novel *The*  
62 *Bride Price* is very critical as it suggests that it is about price of a bride. Published in 1976 by George Braziller in  
63 New-York, *The bride Price* is a story of a young girl, Aku-nna, meaning "father's wealth" whose life is forbidden  
64 by customs and traditions and although she gets caught in a battle between the old and the new. Aku-nna's  
65 life shows that tradition is not an easy enemy to fight with. In Ibo community the daughter fetches a very good  
66 bride price to her father. It is a source of family income and marriage has become a business. Thus, *Bride price*  
67 is a marriage payment wherein Aku-nna's father expects. Unfortunately, Aku-nna dares to choose her own life  
68 partner against the wish of her father. She is allowed to complete her education because her diploma degree will  
69 enhance her bride price. After education Aku-nna has a new vision for life and her dreams give her strength to  
70 rebel against the traditional customs of her community.

71 The *Slave Girl* however, centers on Ojebeta who was sold as slave by her brother, Okolie. Published in 1977  
72 by Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl* is an irony upon Nigerian culture. As a matter of fact, the title of the novel  
73 reflects the burden upon the soldiers of a girl. The word slave is a label for the girl. *The Slave Girl* is a story  
74 of Ojebeta whose journey starts from girlhood and end with permanent slavehood and the author has not given  
75 identity to the girl. The title suggests Emecheta's quest for selfhood. Being a female novelist she is searching for  
76 a place, a place free from gender bias where a woman can be known and respected as a human being. Ojebeta's  
77 parents die when she is very young. She is left with her two brothers. After her parents' death her brother Okolie  
78 wants to sell her. He takes her to Onitsha market and sells her just for seven pounds and ten shillings. There  
79 she becomes a domestic slave. Ojebeta is lost, is displaced, screams and tries to run away. After this overview  
80 on the novels which centre this study it matters to recall that a belief is something that a person holds to be  
81 true. It may either be a conviction that the world is flat or that the world is round or a conviction that human  
82 beings were created by a supernatural power or that they evolved from other organisms by a process of natural  
83 selection.

84 Undoubtedly, the African culture is rooted upon a tradition, which remains a legacy from ancestors. However,  
85 the Nigerian religion in general and Iboland's religion in particular is based on the belief that there is one creator,  
86 God also called Chineke or Chukwu. Yet, the creator can be approached through numerous other deities or spirits  
87 in the form of natural objects, most commonly through the god of thunder known as Amadiora. There is also  
88 the belief that ancient ancestors protect their living descendants and are responsible for rain, harvest, health and  
89 children. In Buchi Emecheta's writings however, some other beliefs have been identified and stand as our main  
90 concern in the following discourse. Thus, what are they? In addition, for what are they?

### 91 4 a) Witches

92 In order to grasp what "witch" is, it imports to define witchcraft from which it originates. As a matter of  
93 fact, Wehmeier and Ashby (2000:1371) define witchcraft as "the use of magic powers, especially evil ones." This  
94 concept therefore refers to the use, by some people of evil magic powers to harm or cause misfortune to others.  
95 Additionally, the definition given by Hayes (1995: 339-340) really corroborates when he considers witchcraft as  
96 "? the supposed power of a person to harm others by occult or supernatural means, without necessarily being  
97 aware of it ..

## 98 5 . (T)he essence of witchcraft and sorcery is the causing of 99 harm to persons or property by invisible means".

100 According to this passage, a witch is a woman who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things,  
101 and is made popular in stories and legends. Because witches were very good at making things happen, the word  
102 eventually also came to describe an ordinary person who is particularly good at something. They are often  
103 characters in fantasy stories and can be good or bad and may serve as a guide or mentor for major characters in

104 a story. Usually, they are wise old women, sometimes with a long white beard and flowing robes using a wand  
105 or cast magic spells to help or harm other characters.

106 In the African context a witch may even go without clothing, a scenario that specifically applies to night  
107 witches. Light on the implementation of witchcraft is shared by many scholars. Parrinder is one of them. Indeed,  
108 Parrinder (1971:61) reveals that "The witch is generally thought to fly at night from her sleeping body and  
109 feed on the soul of her victim who thereupon sickens and dies." This amounts to the most horrendous act of  
110 destruction of another human being -feeding on his or her soul. In an analogical way, Kritzinger another critics  
111 who formulates a comment about African witches. In this connection, ??ritzinger (2004:180) writes:

112 In Africa, witches are always viewed as evil, and are not always female. In many African countries, it is  
113 believed that witchcraft runs in the family and that one is born a witch. Witches are believed to have a natural  
114 inclination to carry out evil, making people ill and even causing death.

115 While the power of witches is denied in some parts of the world for several reasons, in Africa this belief is still  
116 topical. That is why, being African woman writer, Buchi Emecheta's literary productions are not an exception.  
117 Indeed, characters in her novels are imbued with such beliefs and this, doubtlessly for some reasons too. Thus,  
118 why is this practice so common and running in these characters? One of the main answers among several is the  
119 characters' protection against enemies, a belief which stands standard in Ibo community. Truly, witches have  
120 two facets: whether they act for people's profit or on their detriment and people also believe on them very often  
121 when their needs met otherwise they would desire to get rid of them. The following case from Emecheta's *The  
122 Slave ??irl* (1977:20) where witches were cast away from the community for their misdeeds is telling much:

123 All Okwuekwu Oda knew for sure at the time that no journey was too hazardous to make in order to ensure  
124 the life of this little girl of his. He pondered sometimes about this great Oba Idu whose chief wife, they said, was  
125 also a chief witch and priestess. Normally, witches in Idu were cast away to live apart from other human beings,  
126 where they were left to fend for themselves until they died, miserably, as befit any witch; but the big king  
127 kept his chief wife, to guard him and tell him who his enemies were.

128 We can however learn from the above quotation that dignified men keep their wives whoever they are for  
129 their own interest as the king Oba Idu did keep his. Another analogical instance of belief experienced in Ibo  
130 community is that which consists in consulting the oracle though supported by wizards. Indeed, there is the  
131 Oracle of the Hills and the caves in which the oracle is called Agbala, a women who then gets possessed by the  
132 spirit when the people come to consult the oracle. When people have troubles or anything, they may travel to the  
133 oracle and ask for advice. The people will usually listen to everything that the oracle says because they believe  
134 that it is very wise. Put differently, in Ibo traditional society, when something goes wrong in the welfare of the  
135 individual or his family, he immediately wondered who had caused it to happen. In most cases, the individual  
136 would suspect that someone had used evil magic, sorcery, or witchcraft against him or his household, animals,  
137 or fields. This is the case experienced by Ikemefuna in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as he was wondering  
138 about his mother's fate, whether she is alive or dead. What is important to know in this consultation is that the  
139 implementation went through the song as Achebe puts:

140 He sang it in his mind, and walked to its beats. ??f It is now understandable that African people in general  
141 and Ibo people of Nigeria in particular are often subjected to incredible suffering because of the activity of witches  
142 or even evil forces. However, they also don't hesitate to consult the same "witches" for several purposes, some of  
143 them being protection, discovering his or her destiny, to name only a few. It is a belief that Ibo community trusts  
144 and shows their faith. In Buchi Emecheta's writings also the belief in oracle is commonly share by and among  
145 members of the community. The vivid instance is that of Nnu Ego, the protagonist of *The Joys of Motherhood*  
146 who through Agbadi, her father consults the oracle. As a matter of fact, Nnu Ego becomes pregnant and seeks  
147 her own protection and that of the expected new born baby. In this connection, Emecheta (1979: 79) writes:  
148 ?she wrote to her father and told him what she had noticed, that she was going to have another child. He sent  
149 messages back in reply to say that the Oracle foretold that it would be a boy, who would go far in modern  
150 learning but who in so doing would attract a lot of jealousy. All the required sacrifices for him had been made  
151 to take away any evil eye people might cast on him, so that instead, he would be loved by many. Agbadi sent  
152 charms for Nnu Ego to wear as a kind of protection around her neck and special home-made soap for bathing as  
153 part of the ritual.

154 So far, people come from far and near to consult the oracle. They came when misfortune dogged their steps  
155 or even they had a dispute with their neighbours. One of the purposes had been to discover what the future held  
156 for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo who did  
157 not have the start in life (the start that many men usually had) did not inherit a barn from his father for he was  
158 a lazy man. And the story was told in Umuofia of how his father, Unoka had gone to consult the Oracle of the  
159 Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest (1958:12). If the Ibo people centre their  
160 beliefs in witches in one hand, other kinds of beliefs are not to be ignored in the other hand. Native doctors are  
161 also part of these beliefs.

## 162 6 b) Native doctors

163 To Christians, the bible says "and call me in the day of distress, I shall rescue you and you will glorify me"  
164 (Psamms50:15). Believing in the power of The Almighty God, at any circumstances Christians invoke God  
165 who is always attentive to their cries. This is because Christians recognize that they are limited and there is

7 A PERSON CANNOT BE CURED BY WORD OR DEED UNLESS SHE OR HE BELIEVES IN THE POWER OF THAT WORD OR DEED. NOW, OUR PEOPLE SAY THAT GOOD ADVICE SPRINGS FROM FRANK WORDS, AND WHEN IT COMES TO CURING ON ILLNESS, TABOOS SHOULD BE

166 **IN THE WAY?** which can rescue them in time of distress. While doing so, Christians recall to God his own  
167 wordings to them which stand as a promise. However, if Christians believe in God for multiple reasons, in some  
168 communities around the world, people also believe in other forces provided they reach their target. This is the  
169 case of the Nigerian Ibo community as exemplified in the fictitious world of Buchi Emecheta. In fact, instead of  
170 God's power, they believe in native doctors who refer to African traditional men or women who possess special  
171 powers that can be used to heal people. They are therefore engaged and involved in the broad task of resolving  
172 health or illness issues, as well as in predicting the future in order to bring transformation that will improve the  
173 conditions of individuals within black African communities. Among their diverse responsibilities, can mention  
174 the healing of relationships that is between fellow humans, people and their ancestors, people and nature spirits,  
175 and between people and the environment. As such, they are held in high regard within the communities since  
176 they have exceptional knowledge and powers that can be used to aid people with a twofold aim to remove the  
177 influence of sorcery and evil spirits and restore the wellbeing of the soul or spirit, or providing a solution to the  
178 troubled person. These attributions resemble the description of native doctors made by Shorter. In fact, ??horter  
179 (1985: 8) paints the different activities, skills and even competencies of native doctors in the following terms:

180 The term is used to refer to traditional diviner-doctors in preliterate societies, particularly in Africa. Divination  
181 is a form of revelation. It goes beyond mere diagnosis, the examination of the patient and the knowledge of natural  
182 cures and remedies to include the analysis of dreams, the restoration of mental hygienic balance and the dynamics  
183 of human and supra-human relationships. The healing performed by a traditional diviner-doctor is carried out at  
184 various levels and by various means. There may be a greater or lesser proportion of treatment of physical ailments,  
185 using herbal remedies. There may be a care and respect for the natural environment and a preoccupation with  
186 social reconciliation as a prerequisite for healing. Attention may be paid to the effects of enmity, to cursing, to  
187 witchcraft and sorcery, as well as to the intervention of ancestral spirits and non-human or supra-human agencies.

188 The name native doctor does not therefore convey the full spectrum of the role and function of the traditional  
189 medicine man or woman, the term diviner can also to some extent be associated. However, in Buchi Emecheta's  
190 writings some characters in quest of solutions to their troubles believe in native doctors.

191 Accordingly, in The Slave Girl, Umeadi experiences fatalism in so far as each time she gives birth to a baby  
192 girl, this latter always passes away. This fact, coming timelessly forces Umeadi to consult native doctors where  
193 she could not only be aware of "causes of these deaths" and also of "what to do" in order to stop the recurrence  
194 of such fatal fact. To this effect, the following passage based on the survival or not of Umeadi's daughter serves  
195 as illustration:

196 Umeadi, you'd better get up, 'remarked Ukabegwu's wife. Your Ogbanje, this visitor, looks as if she is staying  
197 this time. She is crying out with hunger. Why not put her to your breast? Umeadi did as she was told and as it  
198 became apparent that the child might indeed live, her mind went to all the sacrifices she had made to her chi, the  
199 personal god to whom every Ibuza individual appealed in time of troubles. Her loss of daughters had continued  
200 for many years, however that Umeadi had reconciled herself to the fact that maybe that was her lot. Now the  
201 new baby suckled with so much force, she was convinced there was some life in this one. She handed the baby  
202 to Ukabegwu's wife, and ran as fast as her health would allow to the house of her dibia, the native doctor who  
203 said to her: "your child would stay this time if you tie her with safety charms?It is our duty to make her stay as  
204 long as possible, until she is grown enough to reject her friends. (1977: 17-18)

205 As we can read from the aforesaid, dibia plays important roles in the life of people. He, not only comfort  
206 troubled hearts but also suggests a way out to heal them from afflictions. This time Umeadi has saved the  
207 life of her daughter since she observed the native doctor's prescriptions: "she did as she was told". This belief,  
208 considered as common standard in African communities is also certified by the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wathiong'o.  
209 Accordingly, in his Wizard of the Crow, Ngugi (2007: 279) opines that

210 7 A person cannot be cured by word or deed unless she or he  
211 believes in the power of that word or deed. Now, our people  
212 say that good advice springs from frank words, and when it  
213 comes to curing on illness, taboos should be in the way?

214 The above quotation backs up the African people's beliefs in native doctors, the implementation of their skills to  
215 heal or relieve people but also consents to qualify native doctors as advisers. In the vision of the writer people  
216 engaged in this belief would trust without any doubt for the achievement of the belief. Unfortunately, Kanurrer  
217 did not meet the goal because of his dubious attitude. Additionally, one of the many functions of native doctors  
218 is to grow, mix and sell various herbs for medicinal purposes. In this way they refer to herbalists as mixtures are  
219 available for almost anything, from medical problems to love potions. Thus, together with native doctors, they  
220 both provide protection in the form of personal charms against evil.

221 So far, in Ibo community, whenever a person suffers or experiences difficulties he or she doesn't hesitate to  
222 seek assistance from his dibia, the native doctor. The case of Umeadi tells much as she was Year 2020

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224 healed from her recurrent loss of new baby girl. This is done thanks to the belief of a native doctor's mysticism,  
225 as we can understand from the following passage: ?thus, Ojebeta remined in the land of the living, with her  
226 mother Umeadi, her father Ukwewku Oda and her two brothers, close by the Eke market. She was cherished and  
227 marked with special tattoos, and she thrived and grew, and had to make annual visits to the dibia at Ezukwu  
228 who adjusted her charms as she grew from babyhood to girlhood. ??1977: 21).

229 Commenting on this extract, we can say that this is the demonstration of the spiritual power from which native  
230 doctors through their dibia possess or embody the liability to force away invisible forces which bewitch members  
231 of the community, to release captives them and bring solutions to the multiple issues of their daily life. In the case  
232 of Ujebeta's daughter, the mysticism proves itself useful on sending away evil forces through a ceaseless metal  
233 bell ring. It has been noticed that in African communities, wealth, childbearing, kindheartedness, politeness or  
234 courtesy, and other values generate some jealousy on the other side where these values lack. Moreover, the Ibo  
235 community is not an exception. Indeed, in the fictitious world Buchi Emecheta such behaviours are obversed.  
236 One way to sort out from this tricky implication or realities or even antagonism is entrust oneself to native  
237 doctors. The Ibo society being a polygamous one, it is in this climate that senior wives even consult native  
238 doctors to ensure the life of their children vis-à-vis the junior wives. Thus, Nnu Ego stands as stereotype. By so  
239 doing, senior wives believe in the magic power of native doctors or the dibia as the following quotation sounds:

240 Nnu Ego rushed Oshia to the native medicine man who listened to the boy's story. He didn't say that the boy  
241 was imagining the whole thing or tell him that he was lying; after all, he had his livelihood to earn. Instead, the  
242 dibia danced and jabbered and spat and convulsed in turn, and then announced in a strange voice: "the child is  
243 right. You must protect your sons against the jealousy of the younger wife. If you bring me two hens and a yard  
244 of white cloth, I shall prepare a charm for your sons to wear. No jealousy will be able to reach them after that'  
245 ?? (1979: 129).

246 In the African continent, this reality is currently experienced despite the fact that the author's concern is about  
247 her actual time and life; what justifies the autobiographical dimension of her writings. To end this sub-section,  
248 we can say that native doctors are very important within Ibo community and this for many reasons raised above.  
249 If one group of people believe in their magical power for protection, another one believe in it for different needs  
250 including childbearing, wealth, foretelling future happenings, harvest, fertility, etc. Moreover, giving birth is the  
251 expected result of a woman once married and she proves herself useful within her household when she bears  
252 children. Unproductiveness refers to bad lot that drives many women to believe in strange powers or consult  
253 native doctors able to likely change their situations. In Ibo society this practice was and is still newsworthy.  
254 Thus, with reference to Buchi Emecheta's writings, Ma Blackie is an evidence. In fact, facing barrenness Ma  
255 Blackie has no available possibilities than consulting a native doctor believing in his magic power which can help  
256 her meeting the goal. She made her way every morning to Ezekwu, the place in Ibuza where her medicine-man  
257 lived. She had to be up very early at the first cockcrow and often receives decoction from the magic man with  
258 proscription to follow as Emecheta writes:

259 She was not to wash her face, or chew any chewing-stick, talk to anyone, but was just to walk very fast, in  
260 the jewy mornings to the medicine-man's hut. There she would gulp down the roots mixture which was rapidly  
261 fermenting and tasted like a kind of wild but unsugared wine. She would wash her face with some of it, and then  
262 enter the hut to give the medicine man his special greetings, "Igwe", which meant "the heavens ???" (1976: 45).

263 The reading we can make from the aforesaid is that Buchi Emecheta's fictitious world comprises a lot of beliefs  
264 including that in native doctors where Ma Blackie is one of the believers for her unproductiveness. From there,  
265 we can realize how important native doctors are in a traditional society when people meet their target after a  
266 strict respect of instructions.

267 However, it is important to notice that Western medicine is primarily interested in the recognition and  
268 treatment of disease. But traditional medicine through native doctors seeks to provide a meaningful explanation  
269 for illness and to respond to the personal, family and community issues surrounding illness. Native doctors  
270 explain not only the 'how' but also the 'why' of a sickness' and to some extent appear like spiritual advisers. But  
271 the belief in native doctors is not sufficient to cover our analysis. Another worthy belief in Ibo community is also  
272 necessary: the belief in personal god.

## 273 9 c) Chi or Personal God

274 There is a variety of health-related beliefs held by people throughout Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.  
275 This means that apart from the universal God that everyone believes in, there are also other gods from which  
276 people consider as true gods able to provide solutions to their problems. In this connection, Appiah Opoku 2007  
277 develops a similar conception from where he recognizes the existence of indigenous practices among local people.  
278 Accordingly, he writes:

## 11 D) RIVER GODDESS

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### 279 10 Since time immemorial, local people have developed a variety 280 of resources management practices and approaches that 281 continue to exist in tropical Africa, Asia, South America and 282 other parts of the world (Appiah-Opoku, 2007).

283 In Ibo society however, local people believe in Chi, considered as a personal god. Thus, in reference with Buchi's  
284 writings, what is Chi? What is his implication among owners?

285 Chi represents a personal god that each individual has. It is there to fulfill a lot of roles within the owner.  
286 In Buchi's literary work also characters believe that in their daily life each individual possesses his personal god  
287 detaining supernatural power. Whatever told by the personal god must be implemented the owner as chi has  
288 the knowledge of foretelling the future. This is what Nnu Ego experienced as she was living in the conditions  
289 of unproductiveness. In fact, Nnu Ego was told in a dream to pick up a dirty boy lying in a stream and this  
290 was a way out for her state of barrenness in a community where self-confident or value as a woman depends on  
291 the children you have. Nnu Ego believes in what she dreams, receives advices and consolations as the following  
292 passage from Buchi advocates:

293 It was then that people understood the reason for her irrational behavior. Even some of the men had tears of  
294 pity in their eyes. Pieces of advice and consolation poured from people she had never seen and would never see  
295 again. Many took the time to tell her their own stories. Even the woman who had slapped her told her that out  
296 of six pregnancies she has only two children alive, yet she was still living. She reminded to Nnu Ego that she was  
297 still very young, and said that once babies started coming, they came in great numbers?she is not mad after all.  
298 The woman took it upon herself to inform the crowd in her imperfect Yoruba. "She has only just lost the child  
299 that told the world that she is not barren". And they all agreed that a woman without a child for her husband  
300 was a failed woman. ??1979:62).

301 Admittedly, Nnu Ego faces a two -dimensional situation: one can read affliction or unhappiness on one hand  
302 and hope on the other hand. Indeed, the loss of a child is often followed by some worries but with the presence of  
303 her Chi, Nnu Ego believes in a long run to bear and give birth to children who this time will live for long. From  
304 there, we can understand how the personal god centers the life of his owner. He is there to change the owner's  
305 misfortune into fortune, to set free the captives, to heal the sick persons, to bring solutions to any problems.  
306 Since Emecheta's geographical fictitious area is the same as that Chinua Achebe's, for they originate from the  
307 same community that is Ibo land, Achebe also paints and advocates the necessity of each individual to have his  
308 personal god which is the source of all happiness. This extract from Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958: 10) tells  
309 better as the narrator puts:

310 Near the barn was the small house, 'the medicine house' or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of  
311 his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of cola nut, food and palm-wine  
312 and offer prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children. This is to say that all members  
313 venerate personal god or chi for he has the ability to intervene at any case. That is why each individual must  
314 live in perfect harmony with his chi from which his future depends on. The character of Nnu Ego in Emecheta's  
315 The Joys of Motherhood is example as she expects having a baby boy according to her dream when she fell into  
316 that tired sleep often characteristic of early pregnancy and saw a baby boy, about three months old. As we can  
317 see, Nnu Ego believes in the operational mystical power of her chi, a belief that each member of the community  
318 must consider for the fulfillment of promises. A man's Chi has the ability to bring fortune or misfortune to his  
319 owner and this depends on the behavior presented by the owner. It is admitted in Ibo community that the loss  
320 of children at childbearing or a few days after its birth is considered as failure with regard to her husband and  
321 as such is ranked among unworthy and undignified women. This is one of the beliefs effectively approved by this  
322 community and Nnu Ego experienced it as soon as she lost her child. Actually, Nnu condemned her chi who  
323 possesses the capacity and ability to protect her and her family; what is even the reason of having a personal  
324 god. In fact, when the Chi does not approve one's ways, he would allow curse instead of blessing. For Nnu, her  
325 Chi has taken her child away and is no longer a mother or a woman for having lost only child. Another kind of  
326 belief which is also common in Ibo society is the in the mysticism of the river goddess. Thus, what is the river  
327 goddess and what is its implication on the life of this people?

### 328 11 d) River Goddess

329 Many authors agree with the idea that a belief is part of life. As such an individual cannot live without beliefs.  
330 Among the Ibo people the belief in river goddess is legendary as the country part is geographically covered with  
331 an important number of bodies of water: rivers, streams, lakes, sea. River goddess is one of the many gods that  
332 this people believe in, a female deity who resides in water with supernatural power. It is of course, a kind of  
333 idolatry, but a positive source of happiness where people find solutions to their diverse issues. Every member of  
334 the community is right to go and get purified in a river hoping in exchange to be healed of his pain. In Buchi  
335 Emecheta's writings this practice is remarkable and recurrent. Indeed, in The Bride Price, it is known that  
336 Ma Blakie experiences troubles when it comes to giving birth. She becomes worried about and this situation  
337 preoccupies other members of her community. Thus, believing in the power of the river goddess, Okonkwo thinks

338 that her case may be resolved once she meets the river goddess. This can be evidenced in the wordings of  
339 Emecheta when she writes:

340 Were there any clever medicine-men in Lagos? Okonkwo asked. Why, all they had there were those people  
341 they called "dokitas" who poured poison water into you and called it medicine. Ma Blackie, he affirmed, was to  
342 stay in Ibuza and had her system purified by the clear and unpolluted water from the Oboshi River; the river  
343 and the goddess of the river were gifts to all Ibuza people from the greater gods. It was the right of all Ibuza's  
344 sons and daughters to come to have Year 2020

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346 themselves cleansed by the river whenever they found themselves in difficulties in distant places of work  
347 ??1976:47).

348 Oboshi is one of the rivers in Ibo land and it was there that Ma Blackie was advised to go and get purified in  
349 order to likely become productive. Through this extract Emecheta clearly shows the existence of belief in river  
350 goddess by both Okonkwo who advises Ma Blackie and ma Blackie herself who fulfills the offer. Similarly, the  
351 belief in objects is remarkable within Ibo people. While this sub-section highlights the belief in river goddess,  
352 other beliefs are not to be ignored. As a matter fact, although raised by another writer, the belief in the magic  
353 power of trees is also worthwhile. The existence of a sacred tree is noticed in the village where the whole villagers  
354 stood round in a huge circle waiting for to view a wrestling match. Accordingly, ??chebe (1958:33) through his  
355 narrator puts:

356 The wrestlers were not there yet and the drummers held the field. They too sat just in front of the huge circle  
357 of spectators, facing22 the elders. Behind them, was the big and ancient silk-cotton tree which was sacred. Spirits  
358 of good children lived in that tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days young women who desired children came  
359 to sit under its shade.

360 It is certain that the belief in different things, be it river goddess or any other object is a mere idolatry. This  
361 means Ibo community is idolatrous, rooted in their tradition which requires them to consult goddess when facing  
362 difficulties. Ma Blackie in quest of children was advised to get purified in the river is an evidence. From then, it  
363 can be admitted that despite foreign religions (Christianity and Muslim) which invaded the Ibo environment, this  
364 people remain attached to their traditional religions made of several beliefs. That is why like the other beliefs,  
365 the river goddess is also of great importance for this people as they get purification of their bad lot. So far, the  
366 river, with it "water" symbolizes life, wealthy as from water people draw essential for life.

## 367 **13 III.**

## 368 **14 Conclusion**

369 This paper centers on African beliefs in the writings of Buchi Emecheta. It has been recognized from the outset  
370 that the faith of Ibo people has been gained by two foreign main religions but this fact does not prevent them  
371 to believe in their own traditional religion. It is in this perspective that a number of beliefs common to Ibo  
372 community have been purposely recorded and analyzed. In fact, the whole writing of Buchi Emecheta is full of  
373 traditional beliefs but the novels of The Bride Price and The Slave Girl have been selected to lead this study.  
374 Throughout the paper, we have shown that Ibo people strongly believe in the mystical power of many people or  
375 objects among which witches, native doctors, personal god, and river goddess. We also have not failed to show  
376 that the purpose of these beliefs was multidimensional: healing from diseases for some, getting productivity,  
377 protection, and wealth for the others, knowing the future as well as finding solutions to any situation that they  
confront with. Such are the cases experienced by Buchi Emecheta's characters in the novels chosen for this study.

Figure 1: ,

378 1

Figure 2:

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## 14 CONCLUSION

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