

## Beliefs and Practices Relating to the *Tchie-peuh* Rite among the Baleng of the Mifi Department

Edouard Valérie WETHE FOSSO, Chandel EBALE MONEZE

Department of Psychology, University of Yaoundé1, Yaoundé, Cameroon

**Abstract:** This study aims to verify the correlation between beliefs and practices related to the Tchie-peuh rite among the Baleng people. It seeks to test the hypothesis that beliefs about the Tchie-peuh rite are correlated with the practice of that rite among the Baleng people of the Mifi division. Although it is a fundamental element in the transition from young Baleng men to accomplished Baleng men, the Tchie-peuh rite is becoming less and less practiced by young Baleng men, and thus risks disappearing over time.

To test our hypothesis, an investigation was conducted with 458 participants, students or members of associations, aged between 14 and 57 years. Their level of education ranged from the class of 4e to the final year of secondary education. They were selected based on a reasoned choice sampling technique. The data were processed using correlation and regression analysis, which showed that beliefs about the Tchie-peuh rite are significantly correlated with the practice of the rite ( $r=0.743$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). These results support the main hypothesis and suggest that the more the participants are socially close to a traditional environment, the more they tend to practice the rite.

**Key points:** Tchie-peuh rite, beliefs, practices, Baleng community.

### Introduction

Cultural beliefs and practices play a fundamental role in the construction of social identities and community structures around the world (Ménissier, 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Cameroon, traditions, often materialized by rituals perceived as sacred and unavoidable means of connection between the living and the ancestors. They involve cultural practices that are deeply rooted in socio-cultural dynamics and play an intense role in the transmission of values, the maintenance of social order and the perpetuation of social roles. The latter form a complex network of communication between the visible and invisible worlds, and consolidate collective values and social cohesion.

### 1. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

#### 1.1. The Baleng Cultural Universe

In the Bamileke community, funeral ceremonies and skull worship are rituals that guarantee the structuring of family and social relationships. These rites, perceived as a means of guaranteeing harmony between the living and the ancestors, also reveal the crucial role of beliefs in preventing "*bad deaths*" and cultural continuity (Kuipou, 2015). Also, recent studies show that these beliefs, often materialized by rituals, act as mechanisms of social cohesion that strengthen the link between individuals and their ancestral traditions (Kenmogne, 2020). However, in many African communities, the tensions between modernity and tradition considerably challenge cultural practices.

In the West Cameroon region, in the "Bamileke country", tradition is considered a sacred force that connects the living and the ancestors. Rites, whether related to death or other stages of life, serve

not only to honour ancestors, but also to affirm and perpetuate essential social roles and statuses. Thus, widowhood rites, initially conceived as purificatory and unifying ceremonies, also serve to structure social relations and preserve identity values (Kenmogne, 2020). These traditional practices are sometimes transformed by modernity, which leads us to question their sustainability.

Among the Baleng of the Mifi Department, masculinity is closely linked to specific beliefs and rituals, among which the *Tchie-peuh* rite occupies a central place. This rite, which symbolizes the passage to a valued social status, is a crucial step in the construction of masculine identity, as revealed by anthropological work (Taka, 2018). These practices are not limited to symbolic ceremonies, but convey deep-rooted social and cultural representations. Anthropological works (Exodus Tikere Moffor, 1987; Ngwa, September 29, 2022) confirm that such practices, although rooted in traditions, are often subject to social transformations. Modernization and societal changes sometimes modify these rituals, with a view to adapting them to new social realities.

Therefore, this study intends to examine the relationships between beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite and the practice of the said rite among the Baleng of the Mifi Department, in order to answer the following question: are the beliefs associated with the *Tchie-peuh* rite correlated with its practice in this community?

## 1.2. The importance of belief among the Baleng

### 1.2.1. Notion of Belief

According to the fundamental dictionary of psychology, belief is the fact of holding a statement or a fact as true without there necessarily being any objective and acceptable demonstration related to it, it is therefore imbued with conviction. Several authors have been interested in this notion. According to Hume, quoted by Pradelles de Latour (1986, p.548), "*Belief is nothing more than the intimate and vivid representation of an idea, the effect of a feeling that does not depend on the will, but emanates from causes and principles of which we are not masters*".

According to Fontaine (2003), belief is "*an act of the mind consisting in affirming the reality or truth of a thing... in the absence of certainty attested by the existence of evidence*". In other words, it is a "*hold-for-truth*", a presumption or claim of truth that asserts itself in the absence of evidence and is based on the subjective conviction of the subject.

According to (Jodelet et al., 2008), belief is a set of attitudes, expectations and assumptions that are conscious or not accepted by an individual as true. Belief is above all an attitude of the mind that affirms something without being able to give proof of it. It is also the adherence of the mind to truths that are not known by reason. By extension, the term belief refers to opinions that take the form of intimate convictions, non-rational certainties, and exclude doubt, for which the human mind considers something to be true or real.

According to (Bonckart, 1998, p.174-175), taken up by (Pouombe, 2008, p.39), belief is, in general, an attitude of adherence to a proposition whose truth is not necessarily demonstrable. It is based, on the one hand, on elements of knowledge, and on the other hand, on a subjective feeling of the order of assertion, and it presents three degrees.

- The lower level, where the opinion is situated: a belief that attributes to knowledge only a probable character and that does not exclude a reservation in adherence (doubt);
- The higher level at which knowledge is situated: a resolutely assertive belief based on socially recognized knowledge (even if it is not always demonstrable);
- The third degree: this is the intermediate degree and it is at this level that belief itself is located, i.e. the one that excludes doubt (uncertainty). It can also be based on "*common sense*" knowledge or ad hoc knowledge developed according to individual or collective interests.

Belief and opinion are synonymous when we define belief as "*a mental state that leads to assent to a certain representation or to make a judgment whose objective scope is not guaranteed and which is not accompanied by a subjective feeling of certainty*" (Philocour, 2003). It follows from this

definition that the belief is only probable because it is insufficiently founded and capable of being contradicted.

The notion of belief is closely associated with research on attitudes, the cognitive component of attitude being provided mainly with beliefs. Like other cognitive structures involved in the processing of information, beliefs function as " *cognitive filters* " (Deconchy, 1987) that allow individuals or groups to position themselves. It is in this sense that Tapia and Roussy (1991, p.25) state: "*Belief allows one to position oneself in relation to the different social groups constituting one's environment. It produces social interactions and results from them.*"

According to (Fontaine, 2003), belief is an act of the mind consisting in affirming the reality or truth of a thing... in the absence of certainty evidenced by the existence of evidence. Belief is therefore above all a given of the mind which affirms something without being able to give proof of it. It is also the adherence of the mind to truths that are not known by reason. "A mental state that leads to assent to a certain representation or to make a judgment whose objective scope is not guaranteed and which is not accompanied by a subjective feeling of certainty" (Philocour, 2003).

## **1.2.2. Tchie-peuh Practice and Rite**

### **1.2.2.1 Tchie-peuh rite**

According to Maisonneuve (1999), rite refers to a usage or custom in a broad sense. It also refers to mechanical, stereotyped behavior, whose meaning and scope are more or less outdated, if not derisory. It can also be defined as a set of acts intended to ensure a transformation. In psychology, rites are representations of the symbolic link that both try to make between the real and the imaginary, a symbolic link between the subject and the other. The "*Tchie-peuh*" is an initiation rite of the Baleng that transforms the status of male initiates and makes them Baleng men. So on the socio-cultural level, he is the one who makes him belong to the Baleng group of men. Thus, he opens the doors to socio-cultural ascension in the Baleng community.

### **1.2.2.2 Practice**

Practice refers to an activity whose conduct is related to an art or science and based on a habitual way of acting. The practice of the rite reflects a conduct that can be favorable or unfavorable. In the context of our work, submitting to the *Tchie-peuh* rite is considered an active, engaging participation that reveals the participant's adherence to the rite. In other words, practicing the *Tchie-peuh rite* is an indicator that one is in favor of it. On the other hand, not practicing it reflects a behavior of rejection, therefore that one is unfavorable to participating in the said rite.

The practice here therefore refers to the social relationship that the Baleng have established with the beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite. This is a behavior of the Baleng with regard to beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite. The practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite appears to be a social fact, in the sense that this rite occupies a preponderant place in Baleng society thanks to its importance in changing the social status of the Baleng man. And like any important social object, it can be the object of a social representation and thus be expressed, in terms of opinions, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices or stereotypes relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite. All these modalities of expression of the social representation of the *Tchie-peuh* rite are linked to its practice.

## **1.2.2. Beliefs and the Tchie-peuh rite**

Human beliefs vary across cultures and societies. Thus, to speak of the beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh rite* among the Baleng is to take an interest in the beliefs of this culture accepted in the life of this people. They include notions about the nature of the Baleng man, his existence, his relationship to the divine and his social interactions. These beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite influence behaviour, particularly that relating to its practice among the Baleng. The beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite allow each baleng to position himself with regard to the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite or not. In other words, the Baleng's knowledge of the *Tchie-peuh* rite is subject to a cognitive filter that can guide their practice of the rite.

Social involvement, which indicates the degrees of internalization of roles and the modification of identity according to an individual's social status, is fundamental to understanding the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite. The fact that this rite changes social status, promotes socio-cultural ascent, shows that social identity through involvement, is likely to favor the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite for any Baleng who aspires to a change of social status.

According to (Beck et al., 2010, p.10) "*The principle of self-determination, which is the right of people to make their own choice and decisions in relation to their well-being, must be particularly respected; provided that it does not infringe on their rights, those of others, or the legitimate interests of others.* »

## **2. THEORETICAL APPROACH**

### **2.1. The theory of self-determination**

The theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) aims to explain the motivational mechanisms that influence an individual's choice to adopt or reject an activity. According to this theory, human beings have a natural tendency to self-actualize, while being influenced by their environment. It is based on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and social belonging (Byran & Solmon, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Autonomy translates into the perception of being at the origin of one's choices. In the case of the rite *Tchie-peuh*, many young people get involved voluntarily, financing the associated costs themselves, because they see it as a means of self-assertion and socio-cultural recognition. However, this autonomy must remain in line with the group's standards to avoid possible social conflicts. The need for competence, on the other hand, reflects the need to master one's environment and to achieve valued objectives. Participation in the rite is seen as proof of maturity and ability to take on responsibilities. Finally, the need for social belonging refers to the importance of feeling integrated into a group. The Rite *Tchie-peuh* is a strong marker of identity, strengthening the link with the community and providing a sense of acceptance.

These three dimensions are essential to understanding the persistence of the rite, which responds not only to an individual quest for fulfillment, through integration into the Baleng group of men, but also to a requirement of social conformity, as emphasized by the theory of social identity in relation to respect for the socio-cultural norms of the Baleng community.

### **2.2. Self-determination and social representations**

We opt for the theory of social representations as a framework for our approach to the *Tchie-peuh* rite, through its dimensions of objectification, anchoring and social dynamics. The concept of objectification accounts for the transformation of an abstract concept into a concrete and accessible reality by saturating it with evidence, which now allows it to structure the understanding of the phenomenon to which it relates and to be manipulated as a ready-to-use tool. Thus, the process of objectification promotes the appropriation and transmission of beliefs related to the *Tchie-peuh* rite.

Anchoring, on the other hand, inserts the objectified object into a system of values and cultural norms and makes it available for use, both for individuals and for the community. Finally, social dynamics relate to the evolution, the diffusion of the objectified object within a group, and its naturalization apprehended through its use during interactions, through collective discourses or experiences. Anchoring thus ensures the integration of beliefs related to the *Chiie Peuh* rite into the group's value system.

The social representations related to the *Tchie-peuh* rite influence the self-determination of the Baleng by giving them a sense of control and autonomy over their actions and decisions to practice the *Tchie-peuh* rite or reject it. In fact, the social representation of the *Tchie-peuh* rite plays an important role in understanding the motivations of the Baleng people about this rite.

The functions of social representations (cognitive, identity, orientation and justification) will thus make it possible to understand how the collective belief in the *Tchie-peuh* rite legitimizes its

practice and reinforces the identity of the group of initiates as Baleng men, to acquire and integrate new knowledge about the Baleng man, in order to avoid dissonance, to form points of view and attitudes towards the Tchie-peuh rite, then to acquire values, norms and ideologies that make an initiate an accomplished Baleng.

### 2.3. Self-determination and social identity

The theory of social identity by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) explains how individuals define their identity in relation to their membership in social groups. The *Tchie-peuh* initiation rite takes on the aspect of a tool used to strengthen the social identity of the individual by making him pass from one group to another. Social identity theory emphasizes the relationships between social groups rather than the relationships between individuals and groups to which they belong. However, this intergroup perspective certainly makes it possible to contribute in a decisive way to the understanding of the latter type of relationship.

According to Laing, 1971, identity is to a large extent an individual-level actualization of a number of social components, including the definition of oneself by others and of others by oneself. As a social component, the social representation of the *Tchie-peuh* rite, which is constantly evolving through identity, allows young Baleng practitioners of this rite to discover facets of their personality in connection with the Baleng community through the way other Baleng look at them. The Baleng identity is thus the result of the interactive processes at work between the Baleng individual and the social field of the Baleng community, which is far from being related to the individual characteristics of the Baleng person.

The search for the social identity of the Baleng man influences the motivations and psychological needs of the Baleng to belong to the group of accomplished Baleng men. Thus, the Baleng, who have a positive and strong social identity, tend to have a motivation to satisfy their psychological need by practicing the Tchie-peuh rite.

Social identity theory distinguishes between personal identity and social identity, since they form the extremes of the same continuum. When social identity increases, personal identity decreases, and vice versa. Individuals, in search of a positive self-evaluation, may favor intergroup comparison if their personal identity does not provide them with sufficient value. Thus, depending on the circumstances, they will put forward either their personal identity or their social identity. In the case of Baleng men, a strong personal identity could be associated with the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite, which reinforces their belonging to the group.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants and Research Plan

This study was conducted in the District of Bafoussam IIème, located in the Department of MIFI, West Region of Cameroon. The participants are young people and adults from Baleng, and residing in the District of Bafoussam IIème; more specifically, teenagers attending the Bilingual High Schools of Baleng and Nkoni; of the Tantou College, André Wouking; as well as members of four associations of the villages or districts: Ghanka, Dionkou, Famtchouet, Toungang.

### 3.2. Study variables

The explanatory variable is belief. We use it to measure the effects of its variation on the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite, our dependent variable. The operationalization of belief was made with reference to the work of Seca (2002), Mannoni (1998) and the *Encyclopaedia universalis* (1972). It emerges that belief is a mental attitude of acceptance or assent, a feeling of intimate conviction, of persuasion which is characterized by the following indicators:

- Conviction that the status of man is linked to the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite.
- Conviction that every initiate of the *Tchie-peuh* rite has power.
- Conviction that not every uninitiated is a Baleng man.
- Adherence to the Tchie-peuh rite by performing the dance steps of the initiates.

- Adherence to the Tchie-peuh rite by having the members of my family initiated.

The dependent variable is the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite with the following modalities

- Introduction to the Tchie-peuh rite
- Non-initiation into the Tchie-peuh rite
- Consumption of Beverages of Insiders
- Performing dance steps reserved for initiates

### 3.3 Research Hypotheses

The cross-referencing of the modalities of the independent variable and that of the dependent variable allowed us to formulate the following research hypotheses:

**HR1:** Beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite are correlated with the practice of this rite;

**HR2:** Adherence to the Tchie-peuh rite is correlated with its practice.

### 3.4. Data collection tools and procedure

To select the participants for the study, we proceeded using the reasoned choice technique. The inclusion criteria were: be from Baleng; reside in the district of Baleng and attend the chosen establishments or be a member of the selected associations of age in the [14 - 57] age group, and have a level ranging from the 4th to the final year. To do this, we first consulted the administrative files of schools and associations (9964 students and 472 association members). Then, we constituted the sample by retaining 458 participants (students or adult members of associations) from Baleng. We have benefited from the help of guidance counsellors, general supervisors in schools, and presidents of associations.

Our data collection tool was the questionnaire, designed using factor analysis. We relied on the five-level attitude scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

## 4. Results

**Table 4.1 : Distribution of the participants' averages relating to the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite**

Items relating to the practice of the <i>Chi-peuh rite</i>	Average	Standard deviation
<b>PRAT1</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> by performing the steps of the dances reserved for initiates only	4,07	1,201
<b>PRAT2</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> by playing the instruments and sounds reserved for initiates only	3,75	1,276
<b>PRAT3</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> , I have always participated in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung festival</i> .	3,62	1,405
<b>PRAT4</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> by having the members of my family initiated.	3,59	1,395
<b>PRAT5</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> by regularly frequenting the huts reserved for initiates.	3,70	1,333
<b>PRAT6</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> , I have always participated in the closing of the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung festival</i> .	3,53	1,415
<b>PRAT7</b> Despite my professional occupations, I still want to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung festival</i> .	3,58	1,413
<b>PRAT8</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> , I still participate in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung festival</i> even though I am out of the country.	2,86	1,451
<b>PRAT9</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh rite</i> , I still participate in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung festival</i> even though I am outside the Western region.	3,20	1,521

<b>PRAT10</b> I am ready to make the trip to participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite even if I happen to be outside the village.	3,51	1,475
<b>PRAT11</b> Even if I don't participate in the whole week of the initiation activities to the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I at least participate in the closing dance.	3,74	1,335
<b>PRAT12</b> In spite of my professional occupations, I still insist on attending the closing of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite.	3,58	1,417
<b>PRAT13</b> Every two years, I am happy to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival every day of the week dedicated to this event.	3,48	1,424
Total	3,55	1,389

PRAT = Practical

Table 4.1 shows that the overall average practice of the participants is 3.55 with a standard deviation of 1.389. It emerges from our items that they actually practice the *Tchie-peuh* rite in the sense that the majority of items relating to this variable are quite close to the general average. It can be seen that the average of participants per item is 4.07 relating to participation in the *Tchie-peuh* rite by performing the steps of the dances reserved for initiates only. This is explained by the fact that the expression of the dance expresses that the initiate has reached a level, now he is part of the circle of men.

The lowest average of the participants' practice is 2.86, it concerns the item "Since my initiation into the *Tchie-peuh* rite, I still participate in the biennial *Ngou-ngoung* festival even if I am out of the country". Despite this low average, it is noted that distance is not an obstacle for some Baleng to practice the *Tchie-peuh* rite.

These results confirm that the participants are very involved in the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite in its various articulations.

**Table 4.2 : Distribution of participants' averages relating to the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite, according to their level of study**

Items related to the practice of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite according to the level of study	Primary		Secondary		Academic	
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
<b>PRAT1</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by performing the steps of the dances reserved for initiates only	4,43	0,917	3,95	1,244	4,06	1,345
<b>PRAT2</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by playing the instruments and sounds reserved for initiates only	4,20	1,183	3,69	1,283	3,24	1,200
<b>PRAT3</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I have always participated in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	4,09	1,314	3,65	1,392	2,53	1,125
<b>PRAT4</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by having the members of my family initiated.	4,20	1,208	3,55	1,379	2,59	1,278
<b>PRAT5</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by	4,09	1,292	3,74	1,246	2,65	1,498

regularly frequenting the huts reserved for initiates.						
<b>PRAT6</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I have always participated in the closing of the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	4,03	1,361	3,51	1,373	2,65	1,412
<b>PRAT7</b> Despite my professional occupations, I still want to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	3,91	1,292	3,64	1,399	2,53	1,328
<b>PRAT8</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I still participate in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival even though I am out of the country.	3,40	1,557	2,79	1,434	2,24	0,970
<b>PRAT9</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I still participate in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival even though I am outside the Western region.	3,74	1,482	3,15	1,507	2,47	1,375
<b>PRAT10</b> I am ready to make the trip to participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite even if I happen to be outside the village.	4,00	1,306	3,48	1,495	2,65	1,320
<b>PRAT11</b> Even if I don't participate in the whole week of the initiation activities to the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I at least participate in the closing dance.	3,94	1,305	3,75	1,328	3,24	1,393
<b>PRAT12</b> In spite of my professional occupations, I still insist on attending the closing of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite.	4,09	1,197	3,54	1,438	2,82	1,380
<b>PRAT13</b> Every two years, I am happy to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival every day of the week dedicated to this event.	3,89	1,345	3,44	1,450	2,94	1,249
Total	4,03	1,098	3,52	1,171	2,65	1,222

PRAT = Practical

Table 4.2 shows that the highest average practice of the participants is that of primary school subjects with an average of 4.03; followed by the secondary level 3.52 and the lowest average is the university level 2.65. These results can be explained by the fact that the study site is rural and semi-rural. Thus, the majority of participants have a level, either primary or secondary. In addition, there is a strong presence of primary and secondary schools, and a low presence of higher education institutions.

**Table 4.3 : Distribution of participants' averages for the practice of the *Chie-peuh* rite, according to their place of residence**

Items relating to the practice of the <i>Chi-peuh</i> rite according to place of residence	Semi-rural		Rural	
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
<b>PRAT1</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by performing the steps of the dances reserved for initiates only	4,06	1,210	4,14	1,069
<b>PRAT2</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by playing the instruments and sounds reserved for initiates only	3,79	1,279	3,00	1,000
<b>PRAT3</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I have always participated in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	3,61	1,430	4,00	0,577
<b>PRAT4</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by having the members of my family initiated.	3,57	1,409	4,00	1,000
<b>PRAT5</b> I participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite by regularly frequenting the huts reserved for initiates.	3,66	1,350	4,43	0,535
<b>PRAT6</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I have always participated in the closing of the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	3,51	1,434	4,00	0,816
<b>PRAT7</b> Despite my professional occupations, I still want to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival.	3,57	1,428	3,86	1,069
<b>PRAT8</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I still participate in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival even though I am out of the country.	2,85	1,467	3,14	1,069
<b>PRAT9</b> Since my initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I have always participated in the biennial <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival even though I am outside the Western Region.	3,19	1,538	3,43	1,134
<b>PRAT10</b> I am ready to make the trip to participate in the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite even if I happen to be outside the village.	3,50	1,487	3,57	1,272
<b>PRAT11</b> Even if I don't participate in the whole week of the initiation activities to the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, I at least participate in the closing dance.	3,73	1,345	4,00	1,155
<b>PRAT12</b> In spite of my professional occupations, I still insist on attending the closing of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite.	3,56	1,437	4,00	0,816
<b>PRAT13</b> Every two years, I am happy to participate in the <i>Ngou-ngoung</i> festival every day of the week dedicated to this event.	3,47	1,447	3,71	0,756
Total	3,52	1,229	4,00	,577

Table 4.3 shows that the highest average practice of the participants (4.00) is that of the subjects residing in rural areas. This could be explained by their social proximity to an environment marked by strong traditional symbols with the presence of traditional authority. This result can be seen as the social influence of the participants' environment.

The lowest average, 3.52, is that of subjects residing in semi-rural areas, reflecting the distance that some participants have from traditional or cultural practices.

These results suggest that the more social proximity participants have to an environment in which there is a strong practice of rites, the more they practice, and the further away they are from this environment, the lower their participation.

**Table 4.4 : Distribution of the Participants' Mean Beliefs in the Tchie-Peuh Rite**

Items of beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite	Average	Standard deviation
<b>CROY1</b> I believe that after initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, the young boy becomes a Baleng man with mystical powers.	2,93	1,577
<b>CROY2</b> I believe that after his initiation into the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, the young Baleng boy is protected by the Baleng ancestors	3,51	1,475
<b>CROY3</b> I believe that he who practices the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite is truly a man.	3,66	1,402
<b>CROY4</b> By practising the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, each Baleng is convinced that he will later be able to benefit from a title of notability.	3,49	1,480
<b>CROY5</b> I believe that by practicing the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, the cohesion of the family is strengthened.	3,32	1,456
<b>CROY6</b> By practicing the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite, each Baleng is convinced that he will be buried by the dignitaries with the sounds of tamtam and traditional dances.	4,21	1,117
<b>CROY7</b> I believe that the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite makes the young boy a strong and highly respected Baleng man.	3,54	1,319
<b>CROY8</b> I believe that the practice of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite allows the initiates to benefit from a private funeral.	4,14	1,203
<b>CROY9</b> I believe that if a layman speaks in public, he may be cursed.	2,52	1,533
<b>CROY10</b> To have an identity as a Baleng man, I think it is important to practice the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite.	3,76	1,422
<b>CROY11</b> I believe that the practice of the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite will strengthen communion with the Baleng ancestors.	3,57	1,387
<b>CROY12</b> I believe that in order to honor the parents, the young Baleng must practice the <i>Tchie-peuh</i> rite.	3,51	1,437
<b>CROY13</b> I believe that a non-initiate cannot succeed his parents.	3,30	1,595
Total	3,49	1,415

*CROY = Belief*

Table 4.4 shows that the general average beliefs of the participants in the *Tchie-peuh* rite is 3.49 with a standard deviation of 1.415. It emerges that the beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite by the participants are correlated with the practice of this rite. It appears from this table that the average of participants per item is 4.21, which relates to the conviction that the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite allows the initiates to benefit from a private funeral. This is explained by the honors, the mobilization that is made at the funeral of an initiate through the construction of the tomb, the execution of dance steps and sounds by the initiates, the presence of traditional authority. This is what makes the funeral of an insider special. However, we can see that the majority of items relating to this variable are fairly close to the general average.

The lowest average of participants' beliefs is 2.52; relating to the item entitled "I believe that if a layman speaks in public, he may be cursed". This is a belief that not all participants share.

The items relating to the first research hypothesis reveal an average of 3.56 participants, which confirms that the Baleng's beliefs about the Tchie-peuh rite are correlated with the practice of this rite. In addition, the items relating to the second research hypothesis reveal an average of 3.54 participants, which confirms that adherence to the Tchie-peuh rite of the Baleng is correlated with its practice.

These results confirm that the beliefs of the participants are very strong to the point of engaging them in the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite in its various articulations.

**Table 4.5: Correlation matrix between beliefs and the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite**

		Avg. Croy	Avg. prat
Avg1	Pearson correlation	1	0,743**
	P value		0,001
Moyprat2	Pearson correlation	0,743**	1
	P value	0,001	

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral); <sup>1</sup>Average of beliefs; <sup>2</sup>Average of practices

Table 4.5 shows the correlation between beliefs about the Tchie-peuh rite and its practice among the Baleng. This correlation matrix indicates that the correlation index between beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite and its practice among the Baleng is  $r = 0.743$  with a significance threshold  $p = 0.001$ . This result means that the correlation between beliefs about the Tchie-peuh rite and its practice among the Baleng is strong, positive, and significant. Thus, the more people believe in the importance of the Tchie-peuh rite, the more they practice it.

This result is complemented by the analysis of regressions to make a decision with respect to our general hypothesis.

**Table 4.6: Linear regression of the belief factor on the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite**

Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	P value
	Has	Standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	0,605	0,218		2,770	0,006
MOYCROY	0,836	0,060	0,743	14,041	0,001

$R = 0.743$ ;  $R\text{-two} = 0.552$ ;  $\text{adjusted } R\text{-two} = 0.549$ ;  $\text{Standard error of estimate} = 0.813$ ;  $F = 197.160$ ;  $p = 0.001$

Table 4.6 above is the linear regression of the factor beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite on the practice of this Tchie-peuh rite among the Baleng. He indicates that the general model that predicts the practice of the rite according to beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite is significant ( $F=197,160$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and explains 55.2% of its variance ( $R\text{-two}=0.552$ ), which allows us to conclude, without risk of error, that the above results are in line with our two research hypotheses and clearly suggest that the beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite are correlated with its practice among the Balengs.

The correlation analysis carried out in the first place showed a strong and significant correlation between our two variables and the regression analysis that followed clearly suggests that beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite significantly predict the practice of this rite among the Baleng. Our two research hypotheses and our general hypothesis are therefore confirmed.

## 5. Discussion

Human beliefs vary across cultures and societies. Thus, to speak of the beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite among the Baleng is to take an interest in the beliefs of this culture accepted in the life of this people. They include notions about the nature of the Baleng man, his existence, his relationship to the divine and his social interactions. These beliefs relating to the Tchie-peuh rite are correlated with behaviour, particularly that relating to its practice among the Baleng.

The Pearson correlation test carried out in this study confirms that about 55.2% of the average of participants related to the practice of the Tchie-peuh rite varies according to those of the beliefs relating to this rite among the Baleng. Overall, the correlation between these variables is significant

( $r=0.552$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the rate of beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh rite* can explain nearly 55.2% of the variation in the practice of the rite among the Baleng.

The work of Abric (1994) has contributed to the understanding of social beliefs and behaviours. This author has developed a theoretical framework for understanding how collective beliefs influence individual behavior. Thus, initiation rites are perceived as social representations that help to strengthen collective identity. Similarly, by referring to his research on dynamics, we can show that a rite, like the *Tchie-peuh* initiation rite, makes it possible to strengthen social ties, create a sense of belonging to the social category of Baleng man, and thus establish hierarchies within society or within a social group.

It is in this sense that (Deconchy, 1993) states that initiation rites make it possible to mark important transitions in life and to strengthen social ties. This is confirmed by the results of the item Croy10 which attests that "in order to have an identity as a Baleng man, I believe it is important to practice the *Tchie-peuh* rite". With an average of 3.76 which justifies that the social identity of Baleng man is determined by the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite. This is corroborated by the postulate of Tajfel and Turner's theory of social identity, which states that individuals challenge their identity based on their membership in social groups.

Abric's work emphasizes the importance of rite in the personal process. It can be used to show that the *Tchie-Peuh* rite allows initiates to redefine themselves, to acquire new skills and to adopt new social roles.

According to (Bonckart and Prevost, 1998, p.174-175), taken up by (Pouombe 2008, p.39), belief is, in a general sense, an attitude of adherence to a proposition, the truth of which cannot always be demonstrated. The notion of belief is closely associated in research on attitudes, the cognitive component of attitude being conceived as containing mainly beliefs. It is always inseparable from a social problem implying, on the one hand, that it always potentially has a collective basis and, on the other hand, that we can have different beliefs.

Beliefs, like other cognitive structures, have been shown to function as "cognitive filters" in the treatment of (Deconchy, 1987). From this perspective, belief allows individuals or groups to position themselves. It is in this sense that (Tapia and Roussy, 1991, p.25) state: belief "allows one to position oneself in relation to the different social groups constituting one's environment. It produces social interactions and results from them. »

Indeed, descriptive analyses reveal that the general average beliefs of participants in the *Tchie-peuh rite* is 3.49 with a standard deviation of 1.415. It emerges from our items that the beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite of the latter favor the practice of this rite. However, we can see that the majority of items relating to this variable are fairly close to the general average. In view of this table, we can see that the average number of participants per item reveals that the highest is 4.21, referring to the conviction that the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite allows the initiates to benefit from private funerals. This is explained by the honors, the mobilization that is made at the funeral of an initiate through the construction of the vault, the execution of dance steps and sounds by the initiates, the presence of traditional authority; all things that make the funeral of an initiate special.

Our results are in line with the work of (Tapia and Roussy, 1991, p.25) in the sense that the beliefs of the participants reveal their position of adherence through the practice of the *Tchie-peuh* rite. The beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite allow each Baleng to position himself with regard to the practice of this rite or not. In other words, all the knowledge of the Baleng relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite is subject to a cognitive filter that can guide the practice of this rite.

## Conclusion

The analysis of beliefs relating to the *Tchie-peuh* rite and their correlation to the practice of this rite among the Baleng highlights the complexity of the interactions between cognition, culture and social identity. The results of this research have confirmed the hypothesis that beliefs, as shared cognitive constructs within a community, play a decisive role in the preservation of cultural

practices and the transmission of social norms. These beliefs, deeply rooted in the history and tradition of the Baleng, act as vectors of social regulation, strengthening not only the bonds between community members, but also their sense of belonging to a specific collective identity.

On the theoretical level, this study is part of a sociocognitive perspective by highlighting the central role of social representations and collective beliefs in individual and collective behaviors. The results obtained corroborate the work of Abric on the dynamics of social representations and that of Deconchy, who explores the identity function of rites in social groups. By confronting these perspectives, it appears that rites, such as the *Tchie-peuh*, constitute powerful symbolic devices for the structuring of social relations, in particular through their ability to regulate roles, establish hierarchies, and ensure the continuity of traditions.

Empirically, the significant correlation between the beliefs related to the *Tchie-peuh* rite and its practice among the Baleng strongly illustrates the interdependence between these two dimensions. This link demonstrates that beliefs are not limited to simple individual opinions or judgments, but that they constitute a cultural and social matrix that guides behaviour, especially in contexts as ritualized as that of the Baleng. The beliefs expressed by the participants, in particular their adherence to the compulsory nature of the rite in order to be recognized as men, underline the importance attached to respect for cultural norms as a condition for social integration.

In terms of perspectives, the results obtained invite further reflection on the way in which cultural practices evolve under the effect of social and economic transformations. While beliefs about the *Tchie-peuh* rite remain strong, it would be relevant to examine their resilience in the face of phenomena such as modernization, migration, or the influence of the media. In addition, this study could be extended to other African communities to explore the similarities and specificities of the dynamics between beliefs and ritual practices in various cultural contexts.

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