

Cannabis in Semi-Bantu's Ethnobotany in West Cameroon: Understanding its resistance to the Judiciary Repression

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to explain the factors contributing to the obstinacy of marijuana against legal repression in Cameroon throughout the case study of Semi-Bantu people, by examining the cultural practices and beliefs shaping the relationship between cannabis and the concerned indigenous populations. The research design is explorative, using qualitative method of the research. Ethnography has provided Primary data through interviews and direct observation, using a containing open-ended questions Form. Because of the repression from the police about cannabis and ethical considerations, the researcher has avoided Focus groups discussions. Secondary data were provided by written sources and Internet. Data analysis consisted in Explanation, Comment, Comparison. Functionalism and Cultural Interpretative approaches have been exploited to explain facts. According to the Research findings, Cannabis resists to legal repressions because, it is a Culture Core, a cultural feature that is fundamental among Semi-Bantu people's ways of making their living; including Food, Ethno medicine, Spirituality, Social Organization, and other domains of Semi-Bantu's Ethno Science. Cannabis is embedded in Semi-Bantu's traditions. The Government's Law preventing people from Cannabis Use, is culturally incompatible or inappropriate. The Survival of Cannabis to Law is also due to its high prize in the black market, it provides much more than other Crops. As suggestion, Local cultural practices and beliefs should be taken into account before the implementation of any Policy. Failure in the application of that principle has caused the resistance from the concerned populations in Cameroon.

Keywords: Ethnobotany -Cannabis – Culture Core - Cash Crop- Semi-Bantu.

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Introduction

The Northwest and West Regions in Cameroon are home to Grass field peoples or Semi-Bantu Cultural Area, which populations have a long tradition of using plants including cannabis. Yet in Cameroon, Cannabis is harshly forbidden by the Laws. The Cameroonian Law N° 97/019 of 7 August 1997 related to the control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substance and precursors and on extradition of Cannabis in its Section 91 states that any person found guilty of violation the Legal provisions governing the cultivation, production, manufacture, extraction, preparation or processing of Cannabis, shall be punish by imprisonment of 10 to 20 years and a fine of 250.000 CFA to 1000 000 FCFA. In Cameroon, compare to some parts of the rest of the World, Cannabis or “*bángàà*”, (the local name in Cameroon,) is perceived in public policy as lethal, a socially dangerous substance, hallucinogens, etc. Cannabis users are considered murderers, marginal and deviants. That law causes cannabis to be used in hidden and sold in the black market. Despite the fact it is illegal, cannabis usage is common in Cameroon. The country's Anti-Drug National Committee release statistics in 2018, showing that 21% of the population had “tried a hard drug”, with 10% being regular users. Cannabis in 2018, was the most commonly used drug, accounting for 58,54% of demand. Additionally, over12000 people below the age of 15 have already used Drugs. The Authorities are always addressing this problem by campaigning against drug use in Schools across the country. In schools, some Crusades are organized to sensitize them against Drugs, among which Cannabis. Amongst the messages spread are: “*Drug is addictive, don't*

start”; “*you don't need heroin to be a hero*”; “*Abuse of drug, only takes you to the highway of Death*”; “*Drugs are addictive, escaping is hard, don't start*”; “*You don't need Heroine to be a hero*”, etc. Out of school, Social media and Television are publishing the interventions of Police in the field to dissuade population from consuming or trafficking Cannabis. In Rural areas like in cities, people deceitfully discuss about the Cannabis among Youths and mature people. The problem of this research lay on the fact that, despites crusades and the efforts of the Police to dissuade the consumption and the flow of Cannabis within the population, it has instate become very rampant, (Veldman, 2021). The aim of this research is to understand the factors contributing to the obstinacy of cannabis to legal repression, using one of the four Cultural area of Cameroon, as case study, and by discussing about cultural values, practices and beliefs surrounding Cannabis and some strategies to but put in place in order to protect some indigenous knowledge among peoples of Cameroon.

Relevance of the Study

This research is an advocacy for political decisions in Cameroon to be sociocultural fit by taken local cultures into account. It also emphasizes ethnobotanists concerns with the treat to native cultures and their knowledge of plant uses and relationships, (Miller, 2006). The study advocates for the researchers to take advantage of indigenous knowledge skills and for the need to catalogue knowledge about plants because of the fast disappearing of natural resources in tropical forest and



elsewhere, leading to the decrease of biological diversity as well as cultural loss, (Boom,1996). Culturally compatible policies or Legal systems which put people first by responding to need for change must be intensified. A social expertise is necessary to devise efficiently socially compatible ways of implementing, policies, (Miller,2006).

This research presents a situation of the response from people without power to resist against Political and Legal decisions that do not fit their sociocultural realities. It raises the issue of cultural survival across the world in order to promote greater understanding and tolerance. States and other powerful Institutions fail to seek professional advice about deeper insight, when intervening in the affairs of diverse ethnic groups. Such failure has caused errors in planning and policies making.

The awareness of Government about the mistake of repression against cultural practices without seeking the point of view of the concerned populations. Public policies cannot succeed, however well intentioned, when it is based on the ignorance of the populations practicing it and concerned by the political decisions. This is an arena in which anthropological knowledge can make important contributions. The Anthropological knowledge through Ethnographic data can contribute for the success of governmental policies by advocating for populations who are usually speechless because they have little access to power and policies initiations, and Public policies are often directed toward populations about whose real cultural patterns is little known, and who are speechless or powerless about public policies concerning them, (Maybury-Lewis:1993). In a context of rapid modernization and disastrous effects of globalization on indigenous cultures, this research can contribute to slow and reverse the loss of Traditional knowledge; Promotes the collaboration between policy makers and indigenous people; Encourages the exchange of knowledge and ideas between communities and scientists by hosting native members in some national and international meetings.

The study also aims to inspire researchers to take advantage of local people's skills and acknowledge them for their experiences. Workshops with community's members need to be organized regularly and long-term collaboration in developments projects should be encouraged. It also shows the importance to Educate and train young generations of researchers in ethnobotany and to make efforts in increasing the involvement of the indigenous communities wherever ethnobotanical studies are conducted, (Ramirez, 2007).

It is an opportunity address the issue of medical pluralism by recognizing the existence of more than one health system in the world, or to encourage government policy to promote the integration of local healing systems into "biomedical practice".

Conceptual Framework

Semi-Bantu Cultural Area

Cultural Area is a geographical area in which a number of societies make similar adaptations to a particular ecological zone and through diffusion come to develop similar cultural patterns, (Nanda, 2004).

The Semi-Bantu Cultural Area corresponds to 02 neighboring administrative Regions in the geographical landscape of Cameroon, which are the Nord-West and the West Regions. Commonly, they are called Grass field people, because of the vegetation covering and characterizing their land.

The traditional sociopolitical organization is centralized. The main economic activities are Trade, farming and rearing. The shape of the soil is made by hills and valleys. The climate is cold that causes some people to consume cannabis and keep them warm.

Some Semi-Bantu, the Bamileke people in the West Region of Cameroon, believe in ancestral Spirit and practice the skull Cult.

The Semi-Bantu's are also called "Grass field" people, that can explain why the indigenous ethnomedicine is largely phytotherapy. Semi-Bantu people have a long history of using plants, including cannabis, for various purposes.

Ethnobotany

Ethnobotany is an area of inquiry exploring knowledge in different cultures of plants and their uses, (Miller,2006). Ethnobotany refers to the study of the relationships between humans and plants, focusing on traditional knowledge and practices surrounding plant use. Ethnobotany explores how different cultures utilized plants for various purposes, including medicine, food, and other cultural ritual. Ethnobotany is an interdisciplinary field where botany, anthropology, ecology; and other disciplines collaborate to understand the interrelation between plants and people, (Wikipedia). Ethnobotany play an important function in many areas of the research in preserving and promoting the knowledge and practices of indigenous communities regarding plant use management. It can be applied in food security, drug discovery, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, (Wikipedia). Cannabis is part of phototherapy among people in Cameroon.

Cannabis

It is a plant also known as marijuana or Indian hem. Its scientific name is *Cannabis sativa*; plant of the family Cannabaceae cultivated for its fiber or its edible leaves and seeds. Marijuana contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) a compound that produces psychoactive effects in humans.

In botany, cannabis is a hem plant used for its psychoactive properties. Cannabinol is the psychotropic substance extracted from the plant.

Cash Crop

It refers to a plant farmed and grown primarily for sale rather than own-use. Among the Semi-Bantu in Cameroon, Cannabis is at the same time for sale, to consume and for cultural purposes. The poor living conditions has made peoples to illegally, use it as source of income.

Cultural Survival

Culture is basic to human survival; it is the medium through which humans handle the problems of existence. Some cultures face a fundamental problem of survival; They cannot survive unless they adapt themselves to some available environment, (Havilland,2000). If a cultural element is to survive, some practices or behavior are required, that will contribute to the adaptation of that cultural element, to an environment to its advantage. Organisms need to have biological equipment that allows the development of appropriate patterns of behavior. For the hundreds of millions of years of life on earth, biological adaptation has been the primary means by which the problem of Survival has been solved (Havilland,2000).

When two or more cultures come into contact, domination of one culture may occur, and usually there is a form of resistance. Cultures in the defensive may manage to adapt and survive. In worse cases, the dominated cultures may collapse or be absorbed. That situation is called ethnocide. In case people die off or be exterminated it is a genocide. Then, despite the appearance of submission, people usually disobey in private out of the sight of the power holders. The resistance can be individual and disguised, or collective and defiant, (Kottack, 2000).

The above situation fits to the context of the research where Cultural norms, beliefs and practices surrounding cannabis, resist to the modern legal system of social control.

The survival of cannabis is in its biological traits, and has been made possible through the tradition of enculturation (transmission of indigenous knowledge) and farming which are respectively a cultural and a biological mechanisms of adaptation.

Ethno-science

A study that seeks to understand how natives perceive their universe. It is the description of a culture by the concerned people to describe their Society. The goal here is to systematically describe a culture as it is perceived by the concerned people by uncovering the linguistic categories that natives use to discuss their culture. In this research the various indigenous names of Cannabis among Semi-Bantu people reveal their perception and the value about the plant. Example: Nso people's language is called /Lamnso/, where Cannabis is called /nkang/ or /nkaang/ – This is the common term for cannabis among the Nso people. In some areas or among elders, it might also be referred to /mbeng nkang/, //the plant of trance/spirit// or //the plant for mind-clearing//. Sometimes referred to as /mbeng Nkang/, //plant of trance// or //spiritual herb//, particularly when used for divination or spiritual communication. Ethno-science contains, Ethno- medicine, Ethnobotany and other indigenous knowledge, (Kottack, 1991).

Culture core

It is a cultural feature that is fundamental in the society's way of making its living- including food-producing techniques, knowledge of available resources and the work arrangements involved in applying those techniques to the local environment, (Haviland, and al., 2002). Cannabis among the Semi-Bantu can be considered as Cultural Core. Those cultural features are specially promoted by a particular Society.

Indigenous knowledge

Local knowledge about the environment, including plants, animals and resources, (Miller, 2006). Indigenous knowledge contains tangible and intangibles cultural heritage. The Use of Cannabis is part of intangible cultural heritage. It is a view of culture, as manifested in oral traditions, languages, performing arts, rituals and festive events knowledge and practices about nature and the universe, and craft making). Also called living heritage.

Phyto-therapy

Healing through the use of Plants, (Miller, 2006). The practice is favored by the natural environment that shelters Semi-Bantu or Grass-field people. Cross Culturally, people know about and use many different plants for a wide range of health problem including gastrointestinal disorders, skin problems, wounds and sores, pain relief, infertility, fatigue, altitude sickness, and more. That situation increases the awareness of the potentially useful

plants worldwide provides a strong incentive for protecting the world's cultural diversity, because it concerns people who know about botanical resources, (Posey, 1990). Leaves of plants, like Cannabis, have for centuries been a key part of the health system of the native populations, around the world, (Allen, 2002).

Methodology

Ethnography, using data collection from the field for Primary data, Research Online and written sources for Secondary data.

The field work took place in June, July and August 2024 in West and North-West Regions-Cameroon.

Field Procedures:

Field procedures involve the practical research steps to collect data for the research to be carried out: Ethnography. In each cultural area, the researcher contacted first the authorities like mayors, traditional and administrative authorities, to seek permission to carry out research in their respective communities. For the researcher to prepare and familiarize with the informants and environment, meetings were organized before. Report and rendezvous for interviews and focus groups were taken in advance. Interviews and Discussion Groups were planned with the consent of informants, and according to their availability.

Research design and technics

The research design and technics are explorative using qualitative research methods. They allow the researcher to engage directly with informants in their natural milieu. Qualitative Methods include life stories, interviews, Direct Observations, that have ensured triangulation, improving the reliability and validity of the findings. An Interview guide containing open-ended questions has been used.

NB: The researcher has avoided Data collection through Focus Groups Discussion, because the topic is very sensitive. In Cameroon, Cannabis is illegal. The usage, farming or Traffic of Cannabis is forbidden by the Cameroonian Laws. The 2001 Law on Cannabis in its Section 91 states that *"any person found guilty of violation the Legal provisions governing the cultivation, production, manufacture, extraction, preparation or processing of Cannabis, shall be punished by imprisonment of 10 to 20 years and a fine of 250.000 CFA to 1000 000 FCFA"*. No informant would like to expose himself to suspicion. That is why, individual interviews are important in this case.

Sampling procedure

A Random Sampling has been preferred for Interviews than Focus Group Discussions. Because of the sensitivity of the topic and the legal context surrounding Cannabis, any willing informant could be interviewed among the Semi-Bantus of Cameroon. In the field, the researcher targeted traditional healers, men and women aged 25-78; that category is supposed to master semi-Bantu indigenous knowledge and ethno science about Cannabis. About 80 informants have been interviewed in Total, within the Semi-Bantu communities. Near to 15 among the Babanki, 10 among the Nso in Nord-West Region of Cameroon and 09 among Bamena and 12 among the Batoufam in West Region of Cameroon. By the fact that a characteristic of a culture is to be shared, all members of the target population have an equal statistical chance of being included. The availability and confidentiality of informants were taken into account for Ethical considerations.

Data collection

The research was longitudinal; the researcher went many times in the field to collect data. Data collection took 3 months. It has consisted in Interviews, Life stories, Focus Groups Discussion, for primary data. As far as life stories are concerned, in Anthropological research, they refer to the comprehensive personal accounts that individuals provide about their lives. These narratives are essential for understanding the intricate relationship between Culture, personality, and individual experience. The researcher was taking notes and recording while discussing with informants. Informants were asked questions, and some life stories sheared about cultural practices related to cannabis, experiences with Police and Gendarmes, also some misadventures, with customary practices about some peoples' experiences, were also collected.

Also secondary data were provided by written Sources and Online research to support primary information from the field. They permit to gather information concerning the Modern law, History and Cultural beliefs, perceptions and practices linked to Cannabis in Cameroon

Data analysis

It has started with a treatment of information from the field. On the basis of the questions and research Objectives, answers were classified according to ideas, which were differentiated by letters and colors. Each idea was coded with an alphabetic letter and color. Alphabetic letters corresponding to the same ideas were put together, representing a group of the same information. Main ideas have been considered as themes, which constituted paragraphs, headings and sub headings of the text. Explanations from informants have been taken into account as well as comments and interpretation from the researcher.

Analysis of content was done by transcribing the data from field, in order to identified main themes through similar and frequency or recurrence of answer and quotes used by the informants. Data analysis also consisted in Comment, Description and Comparison of Primary and Secondary information.

A comparison was made to see what are similarities, differences, generalities and specificities within cultural areas. The research Online and written sources permit to compare sociocultural practices and legal realities about cannabis among the Semi-Bantu of Cameroon with other cultures in the World.

Theoretical Frame work

To understand the resistance of Cannabis to police repressions, two Theories have been exploited: The Functionalism and the Cultural interpretative approach.

Functionalism

In social Science, Functionalism is a holistic approach that considers interdependence of social functions in order to satisfy primary and cultural needs. Functionalism emphasizes how various social functions work together to meet the needs of a society. All cultural or social phenomena have positive function and that all are indispensable. Functionalism stipulates that culture is composed by interacting or inter connecting Parts. The aspect of functionalism that concerns this study is the fact that all aspects of the society-institution-, roles, norms, etc. serve a purpose and all are indispensable for the long-term survival of the society.

Functionalism postulates that cultural traditions developed as a response to specific human needs. These needs can be

categorized into fundamental needs such as food, safety, reproduction, and livelihood.

Malinowski used the term culture as a functioning whole and developed the ideas of studying the use or function of beliefs, practices, customs and institutions which together made the whole of a culture. To understand a cultural fact, one should not isolate it or study it separate it from other. Almost every aspect of a culture serves some practical purpose that satisfies people's needs and desires. Malinowski emphasized the importance of understanding cultural practices in their own context, rather than imposing external interpretations or values. According to that view, every aspect of culture has a function. They are all interdependent and interrelated.

According to Robert Merton Among the most important concepts in functionalism appear Social function, latent, manifest function and etc., According to the structural- functionalism perspective, a manifest function is something that a social group or an institution does that is intentional and beneficial to society. A latent function is beneficial to society, but is an unintended by-product of manifest function. Dysfunctions happen when unintended actions cause harm and fear within the society.

Manifest functions are the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern, while latent functions are those unrecognized and unintended consequences.

The interrelation between Cannabis and other cultural practices needs to be understood, in advance, without its isolation. Latent and Manifest functions of Cannabis among Semi-Bantus need to be known preliminary. In that point of View, considering Cannabis as a Drug, or something socially dangerous, only or simply, fake the understanding of cultural realities and cause the implementation of laws against Cannabis to fail. That Law is culturally incompatible.

Cultural Interpretative Approach

The theory focuses on understanding culture by studying what people think about, their explanation of their lives and the symbols that are important to them. Cultural Interpretative Theory emphasizes on the socio-centrality or cultural particularism Contextualization and the EMIC aspect of the study.

According to the interpretative Anthropologist view, cultural elements should be analyzed by explaining their meanings to people who practice them and they should be understood according to their local context; The Interpretative theory, generally emphasizes cultural diversity and the unique qualities of particular cultures. It shows how one thing in a cultural system makes sense in terms of other things in the same system, because interpretation is studying how things make sense when understood in their cultural context. Interpretative Theory seek to understand a people's way of life as they understand it; by seeking to grasp "native's point of view" (...), *to figure out what devil they think they are up to*". This involves acquiring intimate knowledge of a particular culture so that the ethnographer can make sense of the culture for those who do not know it", (Clifford Geertz, 1983).

Instate of Repression or before, the Cameroonian Government could have sought first the compatibility of the Law against the traffic of Cannabis, to be implemented with Cultural realities through a Socio cultural Impact Assessment. The negligence of cultural values of Cannabis has caused the Laws

preventing its Use to face the reject from the population. It is culturally inappropriate.

Cultural Beliefs and Practices about Cannabis among the Semi-Bantu of Western Cameroon

Historical Background of Cannabis in Cameroon and among the Semi-Bantu people

According to written source, it is believed that cannabis arrived in Cameroon at some point after the 15th century CE, via Portuguese traders operating in the area. This is late than the east coast of Africa, where it's thought that Cannabis was introduced via the Hindi, Arabic or Farsi-speaking traders, in the 11th Century, (Sensi Seeds, Online). Other Sources reveal that, between 1870s and 1890s, which corresponds to colonial period, Cannabis was initially legal under colonial governments but the practice was outlawed by 1925, when it became subject to international control under the Geneva Opium Convention. Colonial governance impelled authorities to seek revenue from controlled territories. For Centuries, Cannabis has been traded in Africa. Several colonial governments capitalized upon Cannabis by taxing preexisting markets, (...), (Duvall, 2019).

After its arrival, cannabis swiftly became established in Cameroon. However, Trade didn't really take off until the 1980s. This sudden surge was due to two factors. Firstly, the country's cotton, cocoa and coffee industries tumbled, due to global prices failing. Secondly, the soil in the arable land was exhausted, due to intensive farming practice. Cannabis with its high market value and ability to thrive in poor soil, suddenly became a much more viable option for farmers. In the 21st Century, Cameroon does have a domestic Cannabis market, though most of its cannabis comes from Nigeria, (Sensi Seeds, Online).

The West and Northwest Regions- Cameroon feature prominently among regions that cultivate *"the herb that threatens health care and inspires evil"*. Services working against the promotion of the herb reveal that virtually all the seven Divisions of the North West cultivate marijuana with some neighborhoods of Bui and Mezam Divisions, among other, leading cultivation as a way of life; Consumption is more beyond the nations frontier, (Liengu, 2018).

In some neighborhoods like Oku, Wainama, Kifem, Noni, Bafut, etc., it is known that the forces of Law and Order are regularly involved in running battles with promoters of the herb. Unorthodox methods are used to move the drug from farms through transit points in cities, (Liengu, 2018).

They travel during odd hours. Late night travel is common when they suspect that there are fewer or no forces of Law on highway. Often, accomplice transporters mix or hide the bags of herb within bags of huckleberry locally called *"njama-njama"*. Other load them in trucks transporting plank or wood because it is difficult for Security forces to track, (Liengu, 2018).

From the farm, they use foot paths, farm to market roads and stretches uncommon to intervention forces. Traffickers sometimes hire people to transit with the herb as head load from some very exposed highways where they cannot escape the vigilance of Security forces. Commercial motorcycles also feature in the business of ferrying marijuana from farm to neighborhoods of demand because they can make it through some difficult or inaccessible routes, (Interview with Security sources in North-West Region Cameroon).

Some high status individuals in society are accomplices and use their personal cars to transit marijuana from town to town and Region to Region, (Interview in North- West Region Cameroon). The cultivation, Consumption and circulation of the herb popularly known as *"banga"* is steady increase in the region (Interview with Security sources in North- West Region Cameroon).

It is against this backdrop that the forces of law and order have embarked on a sensitization campaign to educate the population on the illegality of the activity. They have often been spotted in action on the field where they file out destroying marijuana farms and encouraging the population to engage in the productive farming of conventional crops that activities that spell doom, (Liengu, 2018).

Cultural values, practices and Beliefs surrounding Cannabis among the Semi-Bantu People of Cameroon

While its usage today faces modern scrutiny and legal challenges, it remains a vital part of the cultural and spiritual identity of Semi-Bantu peoples. Though its name may vary slightly across villages or dialects. Cannabis in the traditional context of Semi-Bantu people is known by local names that reflect its cultural familiarity. Cannabis is often used quietly or in respectful settings, (Interview in 2023, in Nord-West Cameroon).

In Babanki language is */Kejom/*, language; Cannabis is often called */ntafuo/* or */nfuang/*. Among elders, it may also be referred to *//leaf of the spirits//* or *//leaf of wisdom//*; depending on the context in which it's being used (ritual, healing, etc.). These names are often not spoken openly, especially in modern times due to stigma, but among elders and traditionalists, who are understood and respected, (Interview in 2023, in Nord-West Cameroon).

Nso people's language is called */Lamnsol/*, where Cannabis is called */nkang/* or */nkaang/* – This is the common term for cannabis among the Nso people. In some areas or among elders, it might also be referred to */mbeng nkang/*, meaning *//the plant of trance/spirit//* or *//the plant for mind-clearing//*. It sometimes referred to */mbeng Nkang/*, *//plant of trance//* or *//spiritual herb//*, particularly when used for divination or spiritual communication (Interview in 2023, in Nord-West Cameroon).

Cannabis and social Organization

Cannabis plays a significant role in Social gathering among Semi-Bantu People, fostering the sense of belonging.

In Kom Villages, *"Cannabis is often shared during Communal Work parties /njangu/, //work groups//, providing a source of relaxation and social bonding after a long day of labor"*, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region).

Among the Bamileke, *"Cannabis is sometime consumed during celebrations like gathering, promoting discussions on Community issues and personal experiences"*. The act of consuming Cannabis together can break down social barriers and promote discussions on various topics, from personal experiences to communal issues," (Interview in 2023 in West Region).

Among the Babanki People, the Community Leader the */kwifon /*, *//traditional Leader//*, is the custodian of tradition and justice. Cannabis may be *"discreetly used during sacred rituals, such as initiations, to strengthen spiritual bonds or invoke ancestral presence"*. Sharing Cannabis symbolize unity and community bounding, among native, (Interview in North-West Region).

In the Bamun Tradition, “*during initiation ceremonies, young men are introduced to cannabis as part of their transition into adulthood. The Use of cannabis in this context is thought to provide courage and facilitate the sharing of knowledge between elders and young initiated individuals*”, (Interview in West Region).

These gatherings often serve as platforms for storytelling, where elders pass down oral histories and cultural narratives. Cannabis can enhance relaxation and openness during these exchanges, allowing for deeper connections and understanding among participants. This communal aspect of cannabis reinforces social ties and cultural identity within the group.

Cannabis in Semi-Bantu's Cuisine

One of the functions of Cannabis in Semi-Bantu Cuisine is Appetite Stimulation, which is beneficial for individuals undergoing treatments like chemotherapy that usually suppress hunger; It can also be intake as tea during Cold season to maintain Warm, (Interview in west region).

Cooking special Meal like Dog, Cat and Pork Meat

Dog and Cat meats are special among Semi-Bantu people. These meats are considered “*witchcraft or magic antidote*”. They are believed to be spiritual animal which have “*many lives in the spiritual realm*”. Eating dog or cat meat, protects people from spiritual attack and magic harm. It is believed that when somebody consumes dog or cat meat, the person cannot be harmed nor killed by spiritual means; a dog or a cat will spiritually replace the person. “*If somebody sell you in magic or in witchcraft, a dog or a cat will appear, not you*”, (Interview in 2023in North-west Cameroon). That is why it is supposed to be cooked with precautions.

The other specificity of Dog meat, among the Semi- Bantu is the fact that, it is believed to contain harmful germs of Sickness, because dogs and pork consume anything; that is reason why their meat should be cooked with Cannabis, which is believed, according to Semi-Bantu, to carry antibiotic properties, (Interview, in 2023in North-West Cameroon).

Cannabis in spirituality among the Semi-Bantu People

Semi-Bantu people like the Bamun, Kom and Bamileke, use it in Ritual Ceremonies; according to Informants, people use Cannabis to facilitate communication with ancestors and enhance spiritual experiences, (Interview in West Region). Used carefully, Cannabis is seen as a gateway to spiritual awareness and insight, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region). It is often believed that the plant can help individuals to connect with the spiritual realm, by enhancing their ability to communicate with ancestors or deities, (Interview in West Region).

Among the Nso people, /ngwerong/ is a traditional regulatory society that sometimes uses cannabis during initiations or spiritual gatherings. Cannabis Use here is secretive and symbolic.

-Among the Nso /laim/ refers to a traditional divination or spiritual consultation, where a Seer or Diviner /ngam/ or /shufai laim/ might use cannabis to enter a spiritual state. /Laim/, //divination//; The plant is believed to aid in spiritual openness and clarity. The diviner or spiritual consultant, /Ngam/ or /Shufai Laim/, may use cannabis to enter a trance state during consultations. It is thought to help “*open the mind*” to ancestral

voices or hidden knowledge, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region).

To perform some Rites as Ancestral Offerings, Cannabis is sometimes included in herbal mixtures or burned during healing rituals. In libation ceremonies, small amounts may be offered to the ancestors along with kola nuts and palm wine, (Interview in2023 in North-West Cameroon).

Among Babanki people, /mfu' nyam /or /mfu' laa/ refers to an //ancestral and cleansing rituals//. These are traditional ceremonies for purifying land, homes, or individuals. “*Cannabis might be burned or smoked by elders to invite ancestral spirits or ward off malevolent forces*”.

Among Oku people, (closely related to Nso), /kilum/ is rituals usually performed in forest-edge community's cannabis may be used in healing or forest-related ancestral rites, often not named directly but included in the rite. _/tangfu/, a case when cannabis may be used by traditional healers during healing dances or trance ceremonies, though not always openly declared, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region).

Among the Kom people, cannabis is traditionally used in /juju/ ;// masquerade// or //mask//. “*traditional spiritual Beings*”. The Kom people, (like other Semi-Bantu people and similar), have /juju/ which is said to be “*half human, half spirit*”. “*Before the /juju/ goes for any event, it consumes cannabis to help it connect with the spiritual real*” and to perform extraordinary, (that is) to dance and to do actions that a normal human being cannot do, (Interview in North West).

Among the Bamileke in West Region, “*during the /la'akam/ dance, // the Secret Society dance//, Cannabis is usually consumed by dancers to boost their confidence and give them strength to dance*”, (Interview in West Region)

Cannabis in native Healing System among the Semi-Bantu People

Among its cultural significance, Cannabis is also recognized for its medicinal properties among the Semi-Bantus. The plant's psychoactive compounds are believed to have therapeutic effects that can aid in healing process. Traditional Healer may use Cannabis to treat various ailments, including Pain relief, anxiety, digestive issues.

Cannabis is use in divination practices, where its proactive effects are believed to assist the Shaman or the Spiritual Healer in accessing hidden knowledge. “*In Case where a villager is accused of Witchcraft, the traditional healer smokes cannabis to be able to communicate with the Witch*”, (Interview in West region).

- For Banbanki people, in North West, /ntangfu/, //healing and trance ceremonies//, consists in herbal healing ceremonies, cannabis may be part of the preparation or ritual to aid the healer in entering trance states. Cannabis is also known for its Anti-Inflammatory properties; that can benefit conditions like inflammatory bowel Diseases and multiple Sclerosis

An Interview with some Elders among Kom people, in North West, reveal that” *Cannabis is traditionally used to treat deep wounds, (even the Cancer or Diabetes wounds) or Bone Sprain or Bone Fractures at the leg, foot, arm or any path of the body. The healer boils the cannabis leaf and give the patient to drink or grind the leaf and apply on the patient's wound to ease pain*”, The Traditional Healer can use Cannabis to prepare

remedies for treating headaches and stomach ailment". They take dry Cannabis leaf, grind it to dust and leak then drink enough water. They sometime mix the grind cannabis leaf with red Oil (Palm Oil), before leaking, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region).

Bamileke traditional practitioners use cannabis in combination with other herbs to treat malaria, typhoid or even body pains. They harvest the fresh cannabis leaves, fever grass, blood medicine leaves, guava leaves and other leaves, and boil in water then make the patient to drink, (Interview in West Region).

Cannabis as biological pesticide in Farming

Cannabis is used as a natural pesticide in parasites disease management in agriculture. It is considered as natural organic pesticides to control pest while minimizing environmental impact. Local farmers among the Semi-Bantu often rely on traditional methods for pest control to manage plant diseases without using chemical pesticides, (Interview with Bantu Natives).

Cannabis as Cash Crop

Cannabis has been illegally, transformed into cash crops. *"Cannabis is a higher- Value Crop Compare to traditional options like Corn, Groundnuts, Beans and other Pulses, Vegetables and other Seasoning Leaves, Fruits, etc., It provides a lot of Money, when One succeeds in Selling Cannabis"*, (Interview in 2023 in Nord-West Region). Cannabis among the Semi-Bantu has become a source of income.

If the Legalization occurs, the access to new Markets means Farmers can earn more for their Crops and improve their overall livelihoods by investing in better farming practices and providing for their Families.

The Market economy, with its commercialization of exchange and the use of money for all purpose has affected rural economies. The modernization has transformed the subsistence economies to cash economy; Money has become a value, as indigenous peoples move into the World- market economy by increasing their cultivation of cash crops and move from farming to intensive agriculture, (Nanda, S.:200).

Because of Legal Restrictions Cannabis Use is now criminalized under Cameroonian law, creating tension between traditional Practices and State policies. Among youths, Cannabis is often seen as a recreational drug, which may cause generational misunderstandings about its traditional value. As globalization and urbanization increase, traditional Cannabis Use is becoming more hidden or replaced by modern alternatives.

Through migrations, Previous remote autonomous cultural groups are drawn into national and international network and try to escape the control of the State, (Nanda, S.:200). That situation could also explain the resistance of the Traffic of Cannabis to the repression from the police. Trade, boost productivity, initiation to adulthood and other, etc. Migrations, Previous remote autonomous cultural groups are drawn into national and international network and try to escape the control of the State. The modernization has transformed the subsistence economies to cash economy; Cannabis has been illegally, transformed into cash crops as indigenous peoples move into the World- market economy. Some ethnographic studies on Cannabis Practice in various societies show that the effects of the Drug are not only drunkenness but the use and the effects of cannabis vary according to their cultural contexts and then the perception of cannabis users as criminals or

marginal in the society, does not always correspond to the realities in the field.

Both Local and global demand for Cannabis, often serve as supplementary source of revenue. This is important in rural areas with limited economic opportunities.

Underatnding the Resistance of Cannabis to judiciary repression among the Semi-Bantu: Interpretation of Data

According to the result, the Cannabis resistance to judiciary repression has two main reasons: Despitess its negative effects non mental Health and addiction linked to its consumption, Cannabis is a Culture Core and a Cash Crop among the Semi-Bantu.

Cannabis as a Culture core among the Semi-Bantu

In order to help government to formulate and implement effective policies, it is first of all, important to understand the cultural values of Marijuana. The traffic of marijuana is linked to its production, distribution and consumption. All are interconnected with other aspects of people's cultures and marijuana has different importance according to cultural area and social group. Cannabis is a cultural element; it is culture Core, it plays many cultural functions and can be used in traditional activities and practices. Cannabis is an integral part of people's cultures; its importance cannot be understood in isolation from other aspects or element of the culture. Marijuana can be used in belief systems and rituals, in the preparation of special traditional dishes, for health reasons, or, as cosmetic, as energizer to make workers to perform better, etc.

Cannabis as a Cash Crop

Cannabis is a higher- Value Crop Compare to traditional options like Corn, Groundnuts, Beans and other Pulses, Vegetables and other Seasoning Leaves, Fruits, Tomato, etc., When One succeeds in Selling Cannabis, it provides a lot of Money.

As long as Cannabis remains illegal, farmers and traders are forced to operate outside the law, exposing them to Criminal risks of arrest. This reliance on an illicit economy undermines Indigenous knowledge, local economy activities and prevents the establishment of fair and transparent Market.

A Comparative Study

Cannabis among Bantus and other Cultural Areas in Cameroon

Among other Cultural Areas in Cameroon, Cannabis is also a Cultural Core. It serves Cultural Purposes. It is also used in hidden because of the Laws against it.

Among the Forest-Bantu people of the South Region, the Bulu, the Fang and the Fong, etc., Cannabis is used as conservators; *"when somebody dies, the Corps is embalmed and treated with Cannabis leaves, mixed with other ingredients, then the Death body will be covered with the Sand to delay its decomposition, for about three days, while relatives are preparing for funeral"*, (Interview with Bantu Natives). The mechanism of Corps conservation using Cannabis is a tradition, especially when Mortuary is not available.

Farmers use Cannabis extracts as natural pesticides to protect crop from pests. In spirituality, "mixtures containing Cannabis are used to wash individuals, it is believed to cleanse them and to protect them from evil spirits". During Cool periods,

Some people use Cannabis as tea to keep them Warmth all the time. Other Bantu people use Cannabis to cure filarial or skin Diseases; by rubbing it on the Hair or Skin or mixing with Toilet Oil, (Interview with Bantu Natives).

Cannabis is burned like incense in traditional and Spiritual ceremonies to connect with the ancestor, among the Bantu People.

Law related to Cannabis in the Republic of South Africa

Following a Constitutional Court judgement in September 2018. South Africa became the first African Country to legally permit the private recreational use of Cannabis. This ground-breaking judgement was the culmination of a long battle between citizens and will of the Government. The Constitutional Court Judgement authorized and to decriminalize private use and cultivation of Cannabis. The existing law authorizes Cannabis for medical Use but remains skeptical for recreational use. The Drugs Act 140 of 1992 allows exceptionally cannabis for medical purposes. When it is used for medical treatment or prevention of a medical condition of a specific patient, or for purposes of education, analysis or research. There are currently two acts that govern the use, cultivation, possession and dealing in Cannabis locally known in South Africa as “dagga”. Only the Director-General of the national Department of Health should authorizes the acquisition, possession, manufacturing or supply Cannabis. (Duvall, C.S. :2019)

The South Africa legislature is to liberalized and simplify cannabis legislation in order to facilitate growth in the sector, and to ensure that the industry be accessible to both foreign and local investors.

Some strategies for culturally compatible policies about Cannabis

Realistic political and Legal Decisions

Decisions that take Sociocultural realities needs to be undertaken. Many changes are possible if the aim is to preserve local systems while making them working better. Successful Socioeconomic political or legal Decisions, should not attack local cultural patterns. They should instate, draw on indigenous cultural practices and Social Structures, (Kottack, 1991).

Paul Romer’s Model of indigenous Growth

The improvement of native conditions of Life should be generated by indigenous factors. For a successful and compatible decision making, Over-innovation should be avoided, according to Paul Romer’s Model. The change cannot be sudden nor caused by external factors, but it should occur gradually taking indigenous socio cultural realities into account. Generally, people do not cooperate with laws that require major changes in their daily life, especially ones that interfere too much with customary subsistence pursuits. When Peasants want certain improvements, their motives for modifying their behavior come from their traditional culture and little consents of everyday life existence. People’s needs, values and aspirations for subsistence are different from the Policies Maker’s objectives. These difference of values systems should be taken into account, (Kottack, 1991).

A strict enforcement of Law against Cannabis in Cameroon has Created a climate of fear and secrecy around the Herb Use among the Semi-Bantu People. The condition could hinder the effort of indigenous Knowledge or Cultural practices preservation.

Need for appraisal of Law concerning cannabis and Sociocultural impact assessment before the implementation of a policy

Law forbidding the cannabis uses and traffic needs to be appraised before the implementation, in order to determine the feasibility within the population. For the law concerning cannabis to be successful, policy makers, are supposed to put people first by identifying and responding to the need for change that the concerned population perceive, (Miller,2006). A legal reform about Cannabis among Semi-Bantu people, is required. A study should be conducted to measure or to evaluate the potential social costs and benefits of a particular innovations before change is undertaken, (Miller,2006).

“Always the police and Authorities publishes to dissuade populations when the cannabis Farmers, vendors or traffickers are caught, but nobody talk about who are the consignees, where is the destination or who are the people buying it. When bags of Cannabis are caught in Travelling Agencies or at Airport, where are their destinations and where are they transferred to? for what Purposes?”, (Interview in West Region). The state’s policy of controlling the production and the consumption of cannabis can be successful if, a study to evaluate socio cultural benefits or consequences of the repression is conducted in advance. In fact, the imposition of policies without the free, prior and consent of the concerned people has leaded to the resistance of practices surrounding cannabis among the semi-Bantu people.

A social impact assessment can indicate and examine local people’s history, practices and other knowledge about cannabis in order to understand what is good for them and limit cultural loss.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to understand the resistance of Cannabis Use to Judiciary Repression, by examining cultural belief, practices surrounding Cannabis among the Semi-Bantu people of Cameroon. After ethnography, the results reveal that a part of the addiction and the mental health problem linked to the consumption of Cannabis, it is an important herb in Semi-Bantu’s ethno botany. Cannabis is a cultural Core in Semi-Bantu’s indigenous knowledge. People use Cannabis for various traditional purposes, including Health, Spirituality, Cuisine, Social Organization, Agriculture, etc., According to a comparative study, Neighboring Cultural Areas, like the Bantu and Sudano-Sahelian peoples, also use Cannabis in their Cultural practices. Another reason is the fact that Cannabis has become a Cash Crop providing much money than other Crops.

Considering the preceding reasons, the Cameroonian Legal provisions in Law N° 97/019 of 7 August 1997 related to the cultivation, production, manufacture, extraction, preparation or processing of Cannabis, that punishes and condemns by imprisonment of 10 to 20 years and a fine of 250.000 CFA to 1000 000 FCFA, is culturally incompatible and inappropriate. There is a risk of Cultural Loss.

The research has also suggested some strategies for the success in the implementation of that law against the Use of Cannabis, among suggestions are some Realistic political and Legal Decisions: A needs Appraisal should be undertaken among the natives, before any political Decision. To Seek for Cultural compatibility of the Laws that should take indigenous knowledge

into consideration. The gradual implementation of the Law, by paying attention to indigenous values.

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