
COVID 19 AND ENDOGENOUS THERAPEUTIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE BASSA AND EWONDO OF CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

Covid 19, development, therapies, endogenous, Bassa, Ewondo. The particularism of man and of each socio-culture is adaptation in time and space. Faced with a difficulty, resolution strategies are those that allow societal dynamics. Between copying, borrowing and mimicry, the COVID 19 pandemic has led the Bassa and Ewondo to an endogenous development of preventive and curative therapies. Moreover, it is in this that the expression of these sociocultural manifests their cultural markers of existentiality. The manifestation of endogenous knowledge which is the expression of adaptation to its environment appears here as a particularism and a contribution in the struggle for survival and the eradication of the difficulties facing our societies. Faced with this pandemic which imposes and sets new rules of life for the whole world, this article aims to describe the therapeutic mechanisms developed by the Bassa and Ewondo entities to remedy it.

KEYWORDS: Covid 19, development, therapies, endogenous, Bassa, Ewondo

INTRODUCTION

The new coronavirus discovered in China in December 2019 is spreading at high speed in countries around the world and the number of cases and deaths is increasing over time. In an early phase considered an epidemic, Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 after surpassing the 100 infected countries worldwide. More than 184 countries are affected. Not being immune to this new virus, its impact and severity are potentially higher than in the case of already known viruses. When this pandemic begins to spread, for the Cameroonian population, it is a matter for the "whites". Its rapid expansion and the reporting of the first cases in Cameroon will create widespread psychosis and the development by populations of endogenous strategies outside of those "so-called conventional". This is how the Bassa and Ewondo, like the others, will set up endogenous therapies. This article is therefore an ethnology of these preventive and curative therapeutic practices of these groups of Greater South Cameroon. Based on a field survey with individual interviews and participant observations, the data from this research work were organized around the theoretical marker of ethnomethodology through "self-evident," "ethnomethodies," and "contextuality."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We think we are focusing our analyses under the ethno-anthropological gaze of ethno-perspective (Mbonji Edjenguèlè, 2005) and ¹ethnomethodology through "self-evidentness," "ethnomethodies," and "contextuality." This approach is intended to be exclusively culturalist. To conduct our analyses on the development of endogenous therapeutics in the prevention and treatment of Covid19 in the Basaa and Ewondo of Cameroon, we used the theory of African epistemology in some of its orientations or principles of reading of African reality. In addition, the ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel. ²This theoretical framework has allowed us to be part of the approach recommended for the anthropologist. We put it back into the production context that we were interested in. This has, on the whole, facilitated his understanding by drawing on the entire Basaa and Ewondo culture. We therefore immersed ourselves in these sociocultures, sought the processes that the members of the groups studied to carry out their therapeutic actions (ethnomethods), as well as the behaviors seen and not noticed by them (self-evident).

Study context

Faced with this pandemic that extends to a continent, or even to the whole world, it is difficult to grasp the nuance between epidemic and pandemic. The main difference is the geographical extent of an infectious disease. An epidemic (from the Latin *epidemia* meaning "at home") is the rapid development and spread of a contagious disease, most often of infectious origin, in a large number of people. The epidemic would therefore be limited to a region, country or well-defined area. On the other hand, a pandemic (from the Greek *pan* meaning "everything" and *demos* meaning "people") is an epidemic with several outbreaks. The pandemic extends to the entire population of a continent, and even to the whole world. Its impact and severity (number of contaminations and mortality rates) are therefore greater than those of an epidemic. In the development of this pandemic, there was only one official outbreak: Wuhan in China. In a very short period of time, thousands of contaminations and deaths from the new Chinese coronavirus will make it an official "pandemic" with the presence of the virus in 184 countries of the world and the development of risk areas outside China, including Singapore, South Korea, Iran and Italy. As these areas have become hotbeds of the epidemic, WHO officially

¹ This is an approach advocated by Mbonji Edjenguèlè (2005) which revolves around a triptych of elements: contextuality, theholisticité and theendosémie. The first is used to *domicile the elements to be used, the institutions analyze in the sociocultures that generate them. [...] in the spatial-temporal and socio-cultural context that produced it, context where the researcher collected or described it and only gives it meaning.* (Mbonji E. 2005: 90) The second principle is a *microcosm/macrocosm dialectic by which every social fact, every trait, cultural item is at the same time one, alone, singular and plural by its totality, that is to say its approximation of the sum of the social life it contains, includes, by its return, its reference to all the other facts defining the culture in extension.* (Mbonji E. 2005: 93) and theendosémie, is none other than the meaning that social actors give to the act or actions they take on a daily basis

² The principles of African epistemology are founding rules of logic that, in our view, give meaning to sociocultures Negro-African. The ones we propose to evoke here form a theoretical continuity built by four decades of researchers. The most representative of this school of thought are: Engelbert Mveng (1964), Jean-Pierre Ombolo (1981), Prince Dika Akwa New Bonambela (1982), Jacqueline Roumeguere Eberhart (1986), Ama Mazama (2003) et Mbonji Edjenguèlè (2001-2006).

reclassified Covid-19 as a "pandemic" on Wednesday, March 11, 2020. A decision made because of the *"alarming levels of spread and severity"* of coronavirus worldwide.

What happens in the event of a pandemic?

When WHO officially declares a pandemic, its 198 Member States must comply with the International Health Regulations (IHR). It is an agreement that requires WHO Member States to work together for global health security. In concrete terms, these countries are committed to building their capacity to detect, assess and notify public health events. And also, to put in place special measures in ports, airports and border crossings (monitored crossing places between two countries) to limit the spread of the virus. This could include, for example, ordering medical equipment, restricting transport, mobilizing a health reserve, closing some public places, storing vaccines, building hospitals...

Heritage Medicine and Covid 19

It should be remembered that since 21 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a state of emergency for an unprecedented global health crisis. This moment led all specialists, practitioners of pharmacopoeia, modern medicine and heritage medicine, to conquer a miracle cure to face the virulence of the pandemic. The growth of victims by hundreds of thousands of infected, suspected and/or deceased people has given rise to a plurality of endogenous therapies. Many ethnomethods of care and prevention are, according to the self-evident, of each made, sold, and consumed by Cameroonians, Ewondo and Basaa. Psychosis is greater with the mediated fear of coronavirus spreading faster than the real coronavirus.

Despite the global, global nature of the fight against covid 19, he knew that no cure could be unanimously approved by the global scientific community. This is how even the Chloroquine whose experimentation in treatment and results are quite significant in France has some time after been questioned. This medicament and treatment proposed by Professor Didier Raoul of the Mediterranean Hospital-University Institute infection in Marseille (France), was first controversial before finally joining the treatments candidates for the fight against Covid-19, in a clinical trial called "Discovery".

In the face of Western, Eastern and American countries that still cannot agree on a definitive cure, heritage medicine through medicinal plants is proving to be an alternative to the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic. It should be noted that in Africa and elsewhere, 75-80% of populations are closely dependent on traditional medicine and more specifically on local herbal preparations. This is why since 21 March 2020; this medicine has been called upon by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the official WHO definition, traditional medicine "refers to health practices, methods, knowledge and beliefs that involve the medicinal use of plants, parts of animals and minerals, spiritual therapies, techniques and manual exercises" (WHO No. 939, 2003). Thus, the only purpose of recovering human health, as is currently the case with the Covid-19.

The multi-millennium nature of heritage medicine could help in the discovery of an effective treatment for Covid-19, through the panoply of remedies available such as Taberna the iboga, Apirivirine,

Artemisia and many other medicinal plants. It must be recognized that the above examples are the result of the power of plants enriched by science. In the face of emerging diseases, there is a need for action. Although it is possible that a cure may be baffled, we still need to respond to: how to demonstrate the effectiveness of a treatment?

As an anthropological cultural pattern or marker, each sociocultural in the face of a crisis, faced with a major health situation, rushes to means, recipes and possible mechanisms for solving evil. Thus, Basaa and Ewondo have not deviated from this rule, so many miracle recipes will be developed to protect themselves or treat the coronavirus. Potions and herbal teas that are supposed to prevent and cure the disease multiply, although sometimes the consequences of these can be serious. This assertion is corroborated by Ines when she says "at the same time we have many situations of people with gastritis related to the consumption of mixtures and other decoctions supposed to prevent or cure Covid 19" Ines (35 years old, nurse, Yaounde Central Hospital, 11/06/20). It must be recognized that some treatments can cause new diseases. Florence in the services of a health training will say: "At this rate, it must be recognized that with the multiple consumption of uncontrolled decoctions, that we arrive at an increase in cases of amazement and even kidney problems due to the uncontrolled toxicity of these mixtures that people consume without any verification or approval of any laboratory. We really need to take a look at these so-called miracle recipes" Florence (40 years old, Nurse, Yaounde Gynecological Hospital, 9/06/2020)

Panic and fear of dying leads to the use of recipes. Validated or not, the Cameroonian population, Basaa and still want to believe. "Mr. Brother you think we're going to do how. We have infectious diseases, lung infections that heal with these endogenous potions. So, we think they can also overcome the coronavirus," says Cécile (45, Housewife, Yaounde - ahala, 14/06/2020). She will continue her point to produce one of her recipes widely shared by some around her: "take the leaves of guava, papaya, ndole, bitacola, lemon that relieve. I do not know if the research has been done, myis that is what we are offered. We note that, above all, the Cameroon authorities are calling on both authorities to show responsibility and respect the preventive measures recommended by the government.

Therapeutic approach of Covid 19 in the Basaa

Therapeutic approach of Covid 19 in the Ewondo

Preventive treatments

Far from becoming a doctor or laboratory specialist, we would like to point out that preventive treatment is essentially a building of the immune system. This section allows us to identify the few recipes received in the field through elements and preparation.

Recipe No.1

It consists of: 1) Lemon juice (*afumbi beti*), 2) crushed ginger (*djindja*), 4) and honey (*Wué*).

It will be named Alphonsine: "To take lemon juice with the crushed *ndjindja* (ginger) respectively to boil them and make a hot cup sweetened with honey or sugar, morning and evening" (Alphonsine, 48, Cultivator, Mbalmayo, 16/06/2020).

Recipe 2

The second recipe we have chosen is that of a lady from western Cameroon in marriage to an Ewondo. For Marlyse: "You just have to take the lemon juice and mix with the powder of the clove clous. Put water and boil the whole. When taking this in the evening in a hot cup, you can put sugar in tiles. But for my part it's better with honey. And when it comes to dosage, you have to have a cup every morning and every night." (Marlyse 45, Farmer, Afanoyo, 16/06/2020).

Recipe 3

The third recipe is that of Félicité, octogenarian, who notes that: "In the forties forty-five or sixty, I can't remember very well there was a flu called the Asian flu or "*sukbikum*" (*which shakes the stumps*) that was rampant. There have been many deaths. To prevent this, our parents had associated many species such as the bark of the *annonacée mfa* (*enantia chlorantha*), *the apocynacée éku?* (*alstonia congensis*), *tsid moro*, *medzanga medzanga* (*n.id*), *essingan* (*Gibourtia tessmanii*) and drink. For what was already achieved, there was also an additional treatment. Fecité (over 90 years, Matriarch, Ngoumou, 16/06/2020). T. Befolo, for his part, will say that "it is enough to take one of the following essences: *mf* (*enantia chlorantha*); *éku?* (*alstonia congensis*); *ebam*, *atet*, and boil and take it morning and evening. But for the *éku?* simply soak in water." T. Befolo (70 years, Matriarch, Nkolmeyang-Mbalmayo, 09/06/2020).

Recipe 4

This is a tea very popular with the elderly in the great south of Cameroon. Known as "medim me zong," this tea is made with three main ingredients: eggplant (*zong*), chilli and water. Fired for a period of time varying from one individual to another, the juice that came from it is taken hot. The virtues of this tea are no longer to be demonstrated. Jean will not hesitate to say "medim me zong is very good for the body. It fights all forms of colds, purifies the blood, and invigorates the immune system. It also burns fat and with all this corona will go where? John, 85, Patriarch, Nkoumassi II-Ngomedzap 09/06/2020)

As a result of these preventive treatments, we have been given the right to collect curative treatments according to our informants.

II. Curative treatment

In terms of curative treatments, we will start with:

Recipe No.1

This recipe was provided to us by a retired teacher. Alphonse Nguini will say that: "To fight this disease, you have to take the eucalyptus feuilles, associated with the lemongrass leaves (Fever Grass). If possible, take even with the stem and just remove the roots. Wash the whole thing well and boil in five liters of water. You will then make a steam bath and covered by a sheet or towel with the pot between the thighs, sitting on a stool: inhale hard and exhale the steam for a period of twenty to thirty minutes. When it comes to dosage, you have to do it three times a day for ten days." (Alphonse Nguini, 75, Patriarch, Nkoabe-Ngomedzap, 08/06/2020)

Recipe 2

One of the matrons we met will say that; "As for the treatment of covid-19, just take a tablespoon of honey, the good honey not the banana that you are sold in Yaounde there, you add half a teaspoon of gem salt called kanwa, with the juice of four to six lemons and a tablespoon of ginger (*djindja*) all in a glass of water. You mix the whole thing well and then sift. As for the dosage, adult people, take a tablespoon three times a day for ten days. And the children take a teaspoon three times a day for five days." (Rosalie, 80, matron, Mbalngong-Nomayos, 11/06/2020)

Recipe 3

This recipe would like as Maximilian points out to take: "pineapple skins with limes, ginger. These elements should be washed, cut into small pieces to boil them in five liters of water for thirty to forty minutes. You'll have to make a drink morning and night for 10 days." (Maximilian, 70, retired, Nsimalen, 10/06/2020)

Recipe 4

This recipe consists of looking for, as Martine points out: "the papaya leaves of garlic, radioneons, ginger cut lemons or lemon juice, honey and water." Martine goes on to say: "You have to take five large, well-washed papaya leaves or a tablespoon of gem salt; 250g garlic ramemes cleaned and peeled; 150g of pre-cherance red onions, cleaned and peeled; 150g cleaned ginger ramemes; a glass (25 cl) of lemon juice or ten chopped lemons; a glass (25 cl) of water; half a glass (12.5 cl) of good honey. As for the preparation, grind the papaya leaves with water, in a blender, filter and set aside. (In the case of rock salt, make it powdered and pour into the glass of water.) Then, put the ginger, garlic and onions in the blender with the juice of the papaya leaves (or the glass of rock salt) and grind. Wiretreat to get a good juice. Then, mix the juice obtained with the lemon juice, then heat about ten to fifteen minutes. Remove from heat and let cool completely, then add honey. In the end it gives you a kind of syrup that you will have to take as well as it follows: Adult over fifteen years and 40kg of weight will take for a start half a glass or 12.5 cl and then a quarter of a drink morning and evening." (Martine, 47, teacher, Yaounde-Ahala, 06/06/2020)

We should stress that this treatment is taken when we have already visible symptoms of the disease. This is why Martine will continue by saying: "It is important to continue treatment for three to four days after the symptoms have disappeared. For the infant of more than two and a half years, initially give him a quarter of glass (6.25 cl) and then two tablespoons morning and evening. It is important to continue treatment for three to four days after the symptoms have disappeared. Even without being sick, you can take the syrup in the same dosage, to strengthen the immune system." (Martine, 47, teacher, Yaounde-Ahala, 06/06/2020)

It should be noted in passing that this recipe is effective against any cough or flu, and against typhoid. And also, we must not lose sight of the fact that onions are an extraordinary magnet for bacteria, and even more so for viruses that can be transported into the air.

Recipe 5

This recipe was provided to us by a positive test person who already has symptoms. Panic led her to flee from the care centre to her village and take this treatment with the whole family. This is the fruit of Quinquelibia. "At the size of a handball and yellowish color, this fruit must be cut and set on fire with five liters to six liters of water for thirty to forty-five minutes. Then have a drink morning and evening until healing and even after. This treatment is also preventative I take it with my children and some members of my family do the same and it's fine. (Martinez, 50, engineer, Yaounde, 11/06/2020)

Body, Health and Covid-19

In the participants' speech, it is possible to read the will to preserve health, as Lux and Richard (1978) points out: "It is better to prevent than to warn" (Lux and Richard, 1978:143). It is a testimony to a time when the modern doctor shows his limits in the face of the pandemic of the Covid - 19.

When the Covid-19 epidemic appears, populations through communication channels learn about the presence of the virus and prevention mechanisms, devise interpersonal modes of transmission, and repeat recommendations to preserve themselves: "between hiding nose (toucan), sneezing in his elbow, no longer greeting himself by the hand but by the elbow or feet", "respect social distance", etc. and if the disease appears, cohabitation takes a hit and: "you have to quarantine to avoid transmitting", etc. This conception is reflected in mentalities and ways of doing things and even becomes synonymous with it, despite the degree of knowledge of each other. It becomes empty that for the Ewondo and the basaa it is necessary to adapt and exceed its own representations of prevention and care. Laplantine writes that "what we learn from an anthropological reading of the history of medicine, (...) it is (...) the resumption in a new form of a very archaic system of representations that our society certainly did not invent" (Laplantine, 1986: 51). Because they represent common backgrounds related to a common history. Because the concern to preserve itself has not disappeared with medical care, oral tradition preserves and perpetuates the recipes of "grandmothers" that coexist with the scientificity of conventional medicine. Thus, "men, whether from here or elsewhere, are constantly reinvesting their practices by recycling old uses that they update by assigning them new

meanings" (Schmitz, 2006: 225). It is these recycling systems that explain the discrepancy that can be found between the uses and the concomitant knowledge today in the basaa and the Ewondo. With regard to the disease, there are warnings to the rules enacted whether they are food, behavioral or clothing. Thus, someone who has Covid-19 in these cultural universes is rather invited to forget this morbidity which reflects in fact his non-compliance with the rules of conduct, prevention both in behavior and in preventive strategies existing in the latter. Car "who hurts and complains twice badly" notes Lux and Richard (1978; 152). This may be especially true for patients with Covid 19 for whom medicine has no (yet?) healing power.

It should be noted that despite advances in science, familial transmission of endogenous medications persists and is part of so-called "natural" medicine or the family use of self-medication products. Simply put that the meaning carried by the Basaa and Ewondo on heritage practices is a reflection of these societies in its relation to the body, disease, health and death. In fact, "it is never easy to unravel the medical of the ritual" as Schmitz (2006:7) points out. Let us not forget that the body is and remains present as an instrument of relation to the world. The body, in its cultural body, allows us to glimpse the changes of this world where the body remains central, but no longer usually as a tool or means of action, but as a means of exchange with this world.

Body and society: plural and common in the context of Covid 19

For Andrieu, "the feeling of our identity comes from the feeling of contact with his body so that he is aware of what he feels" (Andrieu, 2008: 10). Thus, Man would be aware of his body through the skin and its function, his limbs and their exercise in relation to each other and the world. "Touch allows us to feel ourselves alive, to feel the living of the flesh from within, without waiting for the language or judgment of others (...) The skin delimits physical form so that its consciousness materializes the body's image by making it sensitive" (Andrieu, 2008:191). If the body, through the skin and the various limbs, comes to consciousness, these become elements of socialization and enculturation that Man gives to see in order to recognize himself. "The skin is both an envelope protecting the body, a biological object and an identity marker" (Bostsch in Andrieu, 2008: 200).

Cultural Corps and Covid 19

If we conceive that in the process of enculturation, man becomes his body, then "dressing is concealed his objectivity, it is claimed the right to see without being seen, that is to say to be pure subject" (Sartre, 1943: 336). Therefore, modesty would then be the possibility of masking who we are. A large part of the ability to live in society is based on the ability to assume and live well these unspeakable glances on us. With the wearing of the toucan, we witness the dissimulation of our objectivity. Yet, "the symbolic subjugation of the body means the loss of complete nudity. Even fundamentalist, naturism remains a cultural practice rather than a return to an archaic body" (Andrieu, 2002: 26). The body, and the face, are incarnations of being whether naked or paré, it is what the individual gives to see in a world where, according to Le Breton, "the gaze is today the hegemonic figure of urban sociality" (Le Breton, 1990: 162).

When Man decides to live naked on the face, the first expression of who we are and our identity, he then expresses a particular meaning of his body. If the face referred yesterday to the expression of who we are with beauty and ugliness, old age and youth, "it referred to the realm of wisdom and knowledge, today old age (ugliness, beauty as well as youth) becomes disfigurement that must be repaired or masked" (Vigarello, 2008: 117). We must also agree that the possession of our body makes it the fruit of all attentions, but also an object distinct from oneself by what it has alive, fluctuating and changing "through oneself". The mask makes us almost identical in what actually established the difference i.e. the face. "The body is therefore the sign of the individual, the place of his difference, of his distinction, but at the same time, paradoxically, it is often dissociated from him, because of the dualist heritage that still weighs on his characterization" (Le Breton, 1990:12-13).

With the requirements of Covid 19 and the wearing of the mask, the denial of greetings, it is possible to recognize that what was once misperceived and accepted, markers of a "social deviance" defines "as something essentially pathological, which reveals the presence of an "evil" (Becker, 1963: 29) has become logical and well to protect itself from the pandemic. We can recognize with Canguilhem (1943) that, "normal man is the normative man, being able to institute new standards, even organic" (Canguilhem, 1943: 87). With this Covidic situation, it is possible to rethink the body through the social body and new rules that make it a "social and cultural produit, (because) the body must meet the norms; it no longer has the right to arch or grow, and fewer and fewer social categories escape the imperatives of youth at all costs" (Melchior-Bonnet, 2000: 152). More than a story of will to do or not to do, the body through gestures, behaviors, protection of oneself and others is then the projection of the integration of a subject in today's society. "The level of consent and individual freedom is more complex than one might think, since it is in all cases a question of responding both to a social normalization of the body and to that of its image" in the current context (Bostsch and Chev e, 2000: 12).

Material body or body image, soul or body, the interweaving of the living, the palpable, the changing with the virtual, the immaterial and the immutable reflects the complexity of the relationship between a body and the society that contains it. Despite the evolution of knowledge about the body, no man can thus claim to know his body other than in a fragmented way and through the prism of collective representations of the society to which he belongs and of which he is subject. The prevention and treatments established by the basaa and the Ewondo thus appear as an affirmation of his social and individual body at a time when multiple barriers are imposed and arise as markers of protection of oneself and the other.

CONCLUSION

Through a visitation of prevention and healing strategies in the basaa and ewondocultural universes, it must be remembered that the latter in the expression of what constitutes their cultural markers protect themselves and their own by heritage medicine. Many recipes and panaceas exist and are used by them. However, in the choice of these (recettes) we have chosen not to retain those including the *ndol e* given its incompatibility and toxicity that it generates in its combination with lemon. This pandemic context

has led all social structures to rethink and redefine themselves. There was also talk of rejuvenating and questioning the endogenous heritage, especially on the medical level, in the face of the failure of Western medicine.

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