Ganja: a
Select
Bibliography

of Resources at the
National Library of
Jamaica

Part One-Books & Pamphlets
Introduction

Cannabis Sativa, commonly called marijuana is an “herbaceous annual plant that is cultivated or grows wild in most tropical and temperate regions of the world” (Lowe & Morrison 1). It is one of man’s oldest cultivated non-food plants and is cultivated for three main reasons: hemp fiber from its stem, oil from its seeds and the psychoactive substances from its flowering tops (Comitas 3). Ganja as it is popularly called in Jamaica is, however, illegal in many countries including Jamaica where it should not be cultivated, reaped nor smoked.

Use in Jamaica

The relationship between Ganja and Jamaica is very strong and therefore the subject of many controversial and heated arguments. Jamaica’s history with ganja is officially noted as starting in the 19th century when Indian indentured immigrants came to Jamaica and popularized its use. It is used in Jamaica for medicinal, folk and cultural/religious reasons. In folk medicine ganja may be brewed or soaked in white rum and is believed to remedy asthma. Ganja assumed a cultural/religious significance in Jamaica through its use in the indigenous Rastafari “religion” where it is smoked and regarded as the “holy herb.” It also has a close link to music and is almost as synonymous to reggae as Rastafarians. In the scientific arena medical preparations have been developed locally by Prof. Manley West and Dr. Albert Lockhart for the treatment of glaucoma and asthma. Doctors Henry Lowe and Errol Morrison are also lead researchers in the medical use of ganja.

Legal Status

Though popularly used in Jamaica, cultivated and exported; the consumption and sale of ganja has been illegal since 1913. With calls for its legalization, the government of Jamaica in 1977 set up a joint select committee to consider the criminality, legislation, uses, abuses and possible medicinal properties of ganja and to make appropriate recommendations. This committee did not recommend legalization but suggest that the law should be amended for decriminalization of personal use (Report on the National Commission on Ganja 2). It also proposed that marijuana be lawfully used for medical purposes. Again in 2000 a National Commission on ganja was formed, headed by Professor Barry Chevannes, to carry out a comprehensive review of the issues surrounding ganja. The commission also recommended decriminalization but its recommendation was never implemented.

World trend indicates gradual softening of laws on ganja. In addition the voices of law reformers have been getting louder. The legalization debate was brought to the forefront in January 2014 when the US state of Colorado legalised the use of marijuana. Concerns are being raised that Jamaica might lose out on the economic benefits that could be derived from the

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commercial production of marijuana because of the reluctance of the Jamaican government to decriminalize. Presently the government has announced that it is actively seeking to reform Jamaica’s ganja laws.

**Literature on Ganja**

It is against this background that the National Library of Jamaica seeks to create a bibliography of resources in its collection related to ganja. This will be done in TWO (2) parts; part one lists the books and pamphlets available and part two exposes numerous selected articles (scheduled for completion in September). It is our hope that researchers and the general public will find this bibliography helpful for researching the social, political, medicinal and economic aspect of ganja.

In this Part ONE, the resources are organized alphabetically in section one and chronologically in section two. Literature on ganja dates back to 1951 when Government Chemist W.L Barnett produced *Ganja*, published by the Government Printing Office. For such a highly controversial plant there have not been many publications; majority of the literature is to be found in newspaper articles and other grey literature. The publications however, span medical, economic, social and cultural outlook and most recently, in 2011 fiction, by reggae superstar Ziggy Marley titled *Ziggy Marley’s Marijuanaman*.

Each item list the author/creator, title and publication information and the library’s call number.
Books & Pamphlets


Beaubrun, Michael H. The pros and cons of cannabis used in Jamaica. Mona: U.W.I., 1971

- Cannabis or alcohol, the Jamaican experience [in Cannabis and Culture]. The Hague: Molton Press, 1975

Bilby, Kenneth. The holy herb- notes on the background of cannabis in Jamaica. Kingston: University of the West Indies, 1985


Comitas, Lambros. The social nexus of ganja in Jamaica [in Cannabis and Culture]. The Hague, Moulton Publishers, 1975

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Nahas, Gabriel G. *Keep off the grass: a scientist’s documented account of marijuana’s destructive effects*. New York: Reader’s Digest Press, 1976


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Chronological List of Sources


Beaubrun, Michael H. *The pros and cons of cannabis used in Jamaica*. Mona: U.W.I., 1971


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Bilby, Kenneth. *The holy herb, notes on the background of cannabis in Jamaica*. Kingston: University of the West Indies, 1985

Forsythe, Dennis. *The law against ganja in Jamaica*. Kingston: Zacka Publisher, 1993


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