

MWAGHAVUL PRONOUNS

[DRAFT -PREPARED FOR COMMENT ONLY]

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ACRONYMS

R	Reduced
TA	Tense/aspect
TAM	Tense/aspect marking

1. Introduction

African pronominal systems are often poorly served by the sketch grammars that constitute our knowledge of most languages. Multiple interacting systems, combined with complex tone changes are often passed over rapidly. Wieseemann (1986) was a useful beginning, although it covers a wide range of African languages. A forthcoming book (Storch, Blench & Atindogbe in press) focuses on the ICP phenomenon in the Nigeria-Cameroun area, but ICPs are only a small part of pronominal systems. With the exception of Hausa, the West Chadic languages of Central and Eastern Nigeria remain little studied, and certainly there are few in-depth accounts of their pronominal systems, Although Caron (2006) has described the pronominal systems in South Bauchi languages.

This paper¹ aims to remedy the situation, at least for Mwaghavul, a relatively large West Chadic language. The closest relatives of Mwaghavul are Cakfem-Mushere and Miship and it falls within the same group as Ngas and Goemai and Hausa more broadly. Mwaghavul is bordered by Plateau (i.e. Benue-Congo) languages to the north and west, notably Berom and Izere. The Mwaghavul are known as ‘Sura’ in much of the older literature. Mwaghavul (under the name Sura) was first described in modern linguistic terms by Jungraithmayr (1963/4). Frajyngier (1991, 1993) has published a dictionary and grammar of the related Mupun language. Mupun, often considered a distinct language, is very close to Mwaghavul and the division may be more ethnic than linguistic. Mwaghavul has long had an orthography, which has undergone numerous revisions, as early versions under-discriminated various consonants; some comments are made in the course of the paper about earlier forms of key pronouns, mainly for the benefit of Mwaghavul speakers.

Mwaghavul is spoken in Mangu Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. The main towns of the Mwaghavul are Mangu and Panyam. There are generally estimated to be some 150,000 speakers of Mwaghavul, although such a figure is guesswork. Although there is some geographic variation, Mwaghavul does not really group into distinct dialect areas, although speakers can distinguish approximate geographical areas such as Mangun and Pushit from particular usages. Cakfem is inter-intelligible with Mwaghavul and speakers occasionally note characteristic differences between the two.

Mwaghavul has come heavily under the influence of neighbouring Plateau (i.e. Niger-Congo) languages such as Berom and Tarok and has lost many typical Chadic features, such as complex nominal plurals. The incorporation of TAM marking into pronominal morphology is characteristic of Plateau, although it is not easy to detect any direct loans. However, one aspect of Mwaghavul that is of particular interest is gender-marking, which is retained for second and third person singular virtually throughout the pronominal system. This is conserved from Chadic and indeed some forms resemble Hausa closely.

2. Mwaghavul pronominal systems

2.1 Subject/Object pronouns

Mwaghavul marks gender on pronouns, but only for the second and third person singular. Each pronominal set also has a neuter or non-animate third person pronoun. Animals are referred to with this pronoun unless they are participants in folk-tales or there is a need to distinguish gender, for example when discussing livestock. There is no distinction between pronouns in the subject and object position. Table 1 shows the subject/object pronoun paradigm;

¹ As part of a large-scale dictionary project (Dapiya et al. forthcoming), numerous scattered examples of pronouns were collected. This paper is a preliminary attempt to order them and explain their uses. I would like to thank Jacob Bess, who patiently wrote out numerous examples in the quest to identify the significant differences between paradigms.

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

Table 1. Subject/Object unmarked pronoun paradigm

	Masc.	Red.	Fem.	Red.	non-animate
I	wán	án			
You sg.	wàghà	ghà, a	yi	wii	
3 rd person	wùrí	rí	wùrá	rà	ni
we	mu, mun				
you pl.	wú, wún				
They	mó, mmó				

In the Mangun dialect of Mwaghavul and Cakfem *ni* is also applied to humans. *mó* is a generalised plural marker in Mwaghavul, used to mark number in all but a very few nouns.

Each member of the singular unmarked pronoun set has a reduced form, which can generally be used interchangeably with the longer form. The full form provides prominence or focus and is often fronted in a sentence. Thus;

wán a laa Mwaghavul
 I am child Mwaghavul
 I am a Mwaghavul

but;

kàtdǎng a tu mee lwaa be a án a shii ni
 if you kill some meat then is me is leg it
 If you kill some meat then I will get the leg

Nonetheless, both

wàghà jì
 you m. came

and

a jì
 you m. came

are acceptable. Mwaghavul has another form of the second person masculine pronoun, *ghà*. This is used in subject position in certain constructions, typically questions;

ghà araŋ ye?
 you how are
 How are you?

and;

ghà mmeen aa?
 you how are
 How are you?

sense!

In the old orthography *ghà* was written *ha*, which was inconsistent and sometimes leads to confusion reading earlier texts.

Mwaghavul also has a set of inclusive/exclusive distinctions for plural pronouns, shown in Table 2;

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

Table 2. Inclusive/exclusive plural pronoun paradigm

	Inclusive	Exclusive
we	mun	mùmún
you pl.	wún	wùwún
they	mmó	mùmó

mùmún nkaa cín dǎk
 we excl. about do work
 we are working

would mean that the speaker refers to a subset of all those present, while in;

mún nkaa cín dǎk
 we incl. about do work
 we incl. are working

the speaker would include all those present. These pronouns are not marked for TAM and thus require a verbal auxiliary or a repeated pronoun to clarify the time-status of the action. The exclusive pronouns, can therefore play a role as emphatics or focus pronouns when followed by a TAM-marked pronoun. Thus;

mùmún mùù cín dǎk
 we excl. we PAST do work
 we, we have worked

mùmó mòò cín dǎk
 they excl. they PAST do work
 they, they have worked

The dative in Mwaghavul is marked by prefixing the unmarked pronoun set with a low-tone homorganic nasal.

Table 3. Mwaghavul dative pronoun paradigm

	Masc.	Fem.	non-animate
I	ñwán		
You sg.	ñwàghà	ñwii	
3 rd person	ñwùrí	ñwùrá	ñni
we	ñmu		
you pl.	ñwún		
They	ñmó		

For example;

a cín mèmée ñwán
 you add another one for me
 add one more for me

a cín ñmó nzughum
 you give to them freely
 you give [it] to them freely

Although Mwaghavul has a quite distinct set of possessive adjectives, these dative forms can also be used as equivalents. Thus;

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

nlir ñwán
 shirt for me
 my shirt

2.2 TAM marking

The unmarked pronouns in Table 1 assume an incomplete action. Thus;

mu so mbong
 we went farm
 we went to the farm (and may not have returned)

The same sentence might also mean ‘Let us go to the farm’. Similarly, unmarked pronouns may have a present continuous sense.

mu an wàghà zam
 we worry about you much
 we worry a lot about you

When Mwaghavul pronouns are marked for TA, they are either lengthened or undergo tone-change. The completive aspect is marked by lengthening the final vowel. Thus;

wàghàà jì
 you have come

Table 4 shows the paradigm for the completive aspect;

Table 4. Pronoun paradigm for the completive aspect

	Masc.	R	Fem.	R	non-animate
I	—	án			
You sg.	wàghàà	aa	yii		
3 rd person	wùrii	rii	wùraa	raa	nii
we	muu				
you pl.	wuu				
They	moo				

This pronoun set is defective in that the unmarked first person singular is absent and the reduced form is not morphologically marked. All tones are neutralised to mid on the plural pronouns.

Future aspect is marked by an –n suffix on the pronoun and an ñ- prefix on the verb. Table 5 shows the paradigm for the future tense;

Table 5. Pronoun paradigm marked for future/incompletive

	Masc.	R	Fem.	R	non-animate
I	wán	án			
You sg.	wàghàn	a	yin	wii yin	
3 rd person	wùrín	rín	wùrán	rán	nin
we	mun				
you pl.	wun				
They	món				

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

Thus;

wàghàn òjì
you sg. m. will come
wùrán òjì
she will come

The first person singular, which already has an –n in final position, is disambiguated by the ò- prefix on the verb. However, if the verb following the incomplete is a copula (or possibly any verb beginning with a vowel), the ò- prefix is not realised. Thus;

mun a mboŋ
we are on farm
we are on the farm

Similarly, if a verbal auxiliary is used to mark future, then again the main verb has no prefix.

mun ndùŋ jì wàà
we about to come home
we are about to come home

The progressive can also be marked with the auxiliary *kí*. Thus;

wàghà kí jì
you PROG come
you are coming

However, it is common in normal speech to drop the *kí*, in which case the final vowel of the pronoun becomes lengthened and develops a high tone. So;

wàgháá jì
you sg. m. come
you are coming

Table 6 shows the paradigm for the progressive;

Table 6. Pronoun paradigm marked for progressive

	Masc.	R	Fem.	R	non-animate
I	wán	án			
You sg.	wàgháá	a	yi	wì	
3 rd person	wùríí	rí	wùráá	rá	nii
we	mun				
you pl.	wún				
They	mó				

2.2 Possessive pronouns

pronouns

a daam fwagha it is your m. bag
a daam mwaghá is equivalent
a daam furu it is their bag

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter
my	f̄na		
your	fwagha	fii	
his/hers/its	f̄ri	f̄ra	k̄ni
our	funu		
your pl.	fuu, fughu		
their	furu, fud̄u		

fuu is a dialect form from Pushit

Possessive pronouns

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter
I	m̄ná		
You sg.	mwaghá	mií	
3 rd . person	m̄rí	m̄rá	m̄ní
We	mùnú		
You pl.	mùú, mùghú		
They	mùrú, mùd̄u		

mùú is a dialect form used in Pushit

a m̄ná it is mine

Exclusive

all mid-mid

mbina	mine
mbwagha	your
mbid̄i	his
mbira	hers
mbunu	ours
mbughu	yours
mbud̄u	theirs

As with many languages in this region, there is a distinct set of bound possessives which occur only with certain kin terms. Thus;

ḡinàà	my sibling
ḡinán̄	your sibling
ḡin ^y in̄	your sister (female)

nóghón	her mother	
pèèt	her father (of female)	
p̄ik	your father	(by female, singular)
pàk	your father	(by male, singular)

2.3 Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns in Mwaghavul are formed with a *mù-* prefix (Table 7);

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

Table 7. Mwaghavul reflexive pronouns
Gloss

san	mùsan	myself
sak	mùsak	yourself
shin	mùshin	himself
sat	mùsat	herself
sun	mùsun	ourselves
suk	mùsuk	yourselves (inclusive)
sut	mùsut	themselves

mo sat a sut m̀ini
 they said it themselves
 they are talking about themselves

mo le m̀ini a nsut
 they put that one for themselves
 they set that one aside for themselves

mo ji nkaa mùsut be mo le nighin ni des
 they came on themselves then they put so much it plenty
 when it came to their turn, they assigned a great deal to themselves

You couldn't put munsut here etc.

2.4 Logophorics: reported speech

Not true reported speech

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter
I	wán		
You sg.	ghà	yì	
3 rd . person	wùdí	wùdǎ	m̀ni
We	mùmún		
You pl.	wùwún		
They	wùdún		

mini1 /m̀ini/ it is

2.5 Indefinite pronouns

Mwaghavul has a wide range of indefinite pronouns indicating different degrees of specificity.

gwàr person

gwar d̀isi wuri a p̀ikor
 person that he is foreigner
 that person's a foreigner

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

komtak a certain person [we know who it is but we won't give their name]

a sat mun a gaak nne a komtak
you say us it openly that is certain person

kóó...ye everyone, everybody, whoever, whatever, whichever, whenever

kóó we ye jì
who so ever come
Everybody come!

kóó we ye dí tal ɓe wu cin nwuri
who so ever that ask then you pl. give him
everyone who asks, you give it to him

kóó ngo dīdang ye dí wuri jì ɓe wu cin nwuri
who ever which ever that he come then you pl. give him
everyone who asks, you give it to him

kóó p̄irang ye ɓe a cin ñmó nzughum
which time ever then it give them freely
Give it freely at any time

mee

one, some, a, another

mèè ngó somebody, someone (unknown)

mèè ngó jì lap caan f̄ina
some body come take away hoe my
somebody (unknown) came and took away my hoe

mee gwéé

a person Pushit dialect

as opposed to;

mèè gwàr a certain person

mèè gwar jì lap caan f̄ina
some particular person come take away hoe my
a certain person came and took away my hoe

mèè mbii, membii something

mèè mbii 'something' also has an elided form **membii** with identical use and meaning;

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

mèè mbii yàà nliṛ nwan
some thing snag shirt my
something snagged my shirt

mee dás mó some men
mee na mó some women

mee dás mó teer a ar
some man pl. sleep on road
some men slept on the road
i.e. they had to stay the night when coming here

mèméé one of them, another one, extra one

a cin mèméé nwan
you add another one for me
add one more for me

a le mèméé dí ki
you add one more on it
add one extra

Where the sentence has two clauses and *mèméé* is repeated it is reduced to *mèè* on the second occurrence;

a mang **mèméé** ku a yit **mèè** dí nwan
you take one ? you leave one for me

2.6 Demonstratives

díísí that one
díísì this one

mìni [mo]
that one

add mo to make a plural. plus use a plural verb.

mbii sí pron. /mbi:-sí/ that thing

2.7 Vocatives

fii you, (reference to female)
inàà Name by which women of the same age/peer group call themselves
my friend, my dear one, when women are close
mii fīna my relation
mwól (of male) same father but half-brother

Mwaghavul pronouns: draft for comment

	different mothers	
mwòl	they are of the same father but	half-brother
shàk	different mothers	
náng	(of man) your mother,	note that the use of this word in this context is now considered insulting between people of the same age, but could be used by an old person to a younger one
pà/àpà	young girl, young woman	has to be said by someone much older than her
wéét	both, in pairs, in twos	

2.8 Relative pronouns

3. Maghavul pronouns in context

4. Conclusions

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