

# MWAGHAVUL DISEASE NAMES

**[DRAFT -PREPARED FOR COMMENT ONLY]**

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**1. Introduction**

Although there is an extensive medical literature on Africa, rather less has been written about traditional concepts of disease. Herbal plants, often spurious, are often the subject of references, but not the diseases they cure. This paper<sup>1</sup> is an attempt to list the diseases identified by the Mwaghavul people, together with causes and cures.

**2. Background to Mwaghavul**

Mwaghavul is a relatively large West Chadic language 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 largely guesswork. Mupun, often considered a distinct language, is very close to Mwaghavul and the division may be more ethnic than linguistic. Although there is some geographic variation, Mwaghavul does not really group into distinct dialect areas. The closest relatives of Mwaghavul are Cakfem-Mushere and Miship and it falls within the same group as Ngas and Goemai. The Mwaghavul are known as ‘Sura’ in much of the older literature. Mwaghavul is bordered by Plateau (i.e. Benue-Congo) languages to the north and west, notably Berom and Izere. 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 Mupun language. Blench (2011) is an overview of the complex system of verbal plurality.

There are six vowels in Mwaghavul, the cardinal vowels and an additional central vowel /ɨ/. Phonetically, the mid-vowels are /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ but they are not in contrast with /e/ and /o/ and are thus represented by ‘e’ and ‘o’ in orthographic practice.

Degree	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	ɨ	u
Half Open	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

Vowel length is contrastive, but there are no nasal vowels.

Mwaghavul consonants are as follows:

	Bila- bial	Labio- dental	Alve- olar	Post- alveolar	Pala- tal	Vel- ar	Labial- velar	Glott-al
Plosive	p b		t d			k g		ʔ
Implosive			ɗ					
Nasal	m			n	ɲ	ŋ		
Fricative		f v		s z	ʃ ʒ	[χ]		h
Affricate						tʃ dʒ		
Approximant					y		w	
Trill			r					
Lateral			l					
Approximant								

There are three level tones; glide tones are extremely rare.

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<sup>1</sup> The data results from a dictionary development workshop held in Panyam, April 12-17<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The workshop was organised by Jacob Bess and Nathaniel Daapyaa undertook the primary elicitation, while Jacob Bess checked the transcription. Thanks to both of them, and the attendees at the workshop for their intense application to this project.

### **3. Mwaghavul data**

Table 1 represents a preliminary attempt to list and identify diseases named by the Mwaghavul. A possible English name is suggested in obvious cases, and the Hausa name, if known. The description is that given by speakers/sufferers. Traditional causes and cures are listed in two more columns.

**Table 1. Mwaghavul disease names**

No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
1.	ààk dáás		cirrhosis	ciwon hanta	The patient becomes thin and the stomach and legs swell.			
2.	bèló		chicken-pox		Fever followed the appearance of scattered spots across the body			
3.	bùùt láá	ndukúm	stomach pain	ciwon ciki	acute stomach pain	arises from failure to cleanse yourself ritually	treated with <i>Ndukúm</i> .	Medicine is given to the whole family.
4.	cíírép		wart		Begins as a pimple, but becomes hard and gradually bigger.		No cure	
5.	cilem		skin disease?		It begins with a high fever and then pimples form on the lips.			
6.	d̄yes put	d̄yes sùl	diarrhoea	zawo	Temporary loose stools due to unhygienic food or drink			Lasts two-three days.
7.	d̄yes tòghòm		dysentery	atini	General pain, weakness and sore joints. Bloody stool. Untreated leads to death.			
8.	fil gwóóm		ringworm, tinea capitis, dermatop hytosis	makenkero	Infection of the head Symptoms of ringworm include: Itchy, red, raised, scaly patches that may blister and ooze. Leaves circular white spots.			
9.	gàghàm				The symptoms are persistent crying of a child.	A particular gecko is believed to be responsible.	The parents seek a gecko in the house which is moving its tail. If one or two geckos are killed that night the child will stop crying.	
10.	gìrpéng			kaluluwa	Sharp pain as a result of cut or sore. If the pain is in the leg, it transfers to the thigh, if in the finger, pain transfers to the armpit.			

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
11.	káápyán		headache	ciwon kai	It begins with cold and then a sharp pain. It is often the beginning of other sicknesses.		Treatment with sacrifice to <i>kum fam</i> or <i>cicip</i> .	
12.	kíshírók				Leg skin begins to peel, becomes very itchy and painful.			
13.	kúgík		paralysis		The hand or leg freezes			
14.	kúkúi		epilepsy	farfadiya	The patient is initially calm but then suddenly throws a fit and foams at the mouth.			
15.	kwás		scabies	kaswa	Spots filled with pus form on the buttocks, wrists and knees			
16.	kwàs nfyàm		scabies	kaswa	Spots filled with pus form on the buttocks, wrists and knees. Lasts for two-three years.			
17.	laa kíbít		ulcer	gyambo	Begins with a small spot which gradually grows. It may last for a long time.			
18.	laa ncíçàk		ulcer		The ear begins to itch and then begins to emit pus. Lasts a long time.			
19.	làà piit	sighim	cold	tari	Cough, headache and severe nasal blockage.			
20.	loghom		leprosy	kuturta	The skin develops roughness and bumps, the fingers begin to stiffen and parts of the body eventually rot away.		none	
21.	lúkbut		hiccough		This may begin with consumption of dry food. In extreme cases, the patient may be hospitalised.		No known treatment	
22.	mbìim mbyòl		tonsilitis	harwuya	The child has a high temperature and cannot keep down food.		A plant known as <i>yizep</i> is boiled in the child's water.	
23.	mburús		piles	ciwon kurga	Pains and swelling in the anus	Constant sitting in one place and eating chili pepper.		

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
24.	mmùùt tár		mental illness	hauka, taban hankali	The patient is initially calm, but then begins to talk in an uncontrolled way.			
25.	mmùùt wur		breast cancer		The breast becomes hard and a child is unable to suck.			
26.	mmùùt yit njàghàyáng		conjunctivitis	ciwon idò	Pains form behind the eyes. The eyes weep and produce fluid and crusted material			
27.	mùrùndyél		boil	maruru	Superficial lump which appears and dries up after a few days.			
28.	mùùt àghàs		toothache	ciwon hakori	Starts with one tooth and then spreads to others. Decay is in the root of the tooth. In another type, a hole forms in the tooth and it becomes sensitive to cold water. Also, happens when the gum begins to erode and the tooth of the root is exposed.			
29.	mùùt bwóón		backache		Pain in the muscles of the back			
30.	mùùt cìì	kùnkam, ngúzùm			Sharp bone pain incapacitates the sufferer.	Spiritual cause	Treatment is through sacrifice known as <i>kùnkam, ngúzùm</i>	
31.	mùùt dííl		hydrocele ?	gwaiwa	Enlargement of the testicles			
32.	mùùt féél		goitre	maƙoƙo	The throat gradually swells and forms a huge mass under the chin.			Not much seen since the introduction of iodised salt.
33.	mùùt fwo tòghòm	fwo mìyèl	childhood fever		The child becomes feverish		A fluid combining a herb and a grass species is boiled and the water turns red. The water is sprinkled on the patient.	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
34.	mùùt kòghòp	kàmbàng	rib pain		acute pain in the ribs	spiritual cause	treated through a <i>kum</i> sacrifice	
35.	mùùt kùrà̀m	yaa kuram	stroke		Freezing of the body and mental deterioration.			
36.	mùùt mmilór		nose bleed	hàbo	Can be following an injury to the nose or can be persistent due to some internal weakness.			
37.	mùùt pas		whitlow		It appears like and thorn stuck in the skin of the hand but continues to grow.		Cure by a herbal bandage.	
38.	mùùt pìder		constipation		The child cannot pass stool.		Fruit of <i>mmawe</i> , physic nut, is boiled and inserted in the child's anus through a straw.	
39.	mùùt sà̀am				sleeping sickness			
40.	mùùt shawara				jaundice, hepatitis, 'yellow fever'			
41.	mùùt shugar				diabetes			
42.	mùùt sighim				tuberculosis			
43.	mùùt tep ntóók				cerebrospinal meningitis			
44.	mùùt túghúrkaat				Starts with a sudden inability to swallow food or drink. The chest becomes stiff and the breathing is affected.		The patient is given a remedy of a type of mushroom or the <i>dùwó</i> plant.	
45.	mùùt zù̀ng		tuberculosis?	ciwon fuka	It begins with a chronic cough, leading to constant pain in the chest, general weakness and eventually death.			
46.	ngòrzól	ndwáng, mùbín	smallpox	agana	General body weakness, pustules appear across the body. Generally ends in death.			Effectively eliminated
47.	ngwang			kulu	A growth on the hand which makes it difficult to hold things.			
48.	njan		tapeworm	farin tsusa	Stomach bulges similarly to			



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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
			s		kwashiorkor. Sufferer eats plentifully without gaining weight.			
49.	njàng lùmwát		wound	ciruwa	Small cut under the toe.		Treated with a plant with the same name as the disease	
50.	njàngjàng		mumps		It begins with generalised pain, and then eaten and drunk tastes sour. Then the cheeks and throat area swell up.			
51.	njiga		jigger	jiga	A small insect penetrates the skin between the toes and a serious irritation develops.		a) Robb balm is applied b) The foot is packed in soil and then wrapped in cloth for several days which kills the infection	
52.	nkoghor				Caused by a piece of thorn which breaks off and is left inside the body. Can become seriously infected if not treated			
53.	nrághás		hernia		Begins with a pain in the groin. Patient ends up hardly able to walk.		treatment is with a sacrifice named <i>nrághás</i>	
54.	nvél		ulcer		Spot usually forming the chin, emits pus. Can eventually kill			
55.	nyet dween	dii	nyèt njwàn	intestinal worms				
56.	nyèt máár		worms	tsusan ciki	Begins with stomach ache, following by constant vomiting. Later stool is observed with worms.			
57.	piin ngàghàm	làà	tèn làà ngàghàm		Child fall sick.	Caused by an evil woman who has been playing with the child.	A diviner is called to determine the woman responsible for the child's sickness. She is then called to cure the	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
58.	pòòpit				When the maize is nearly ripe, the monkeys come to destroy it. When someone goes to the farm and touches the fresh maize, the body is covered in boils.		child. If she fails, she is punished. A herb with the name <i>pòòpit</i> is boiled and given to the patient.	
59.	rigyàk			kushakushi	Small spots form on the leg, filled with pus.		Treatment with herbs.	
60.	rùm mbaas			masasaku	? Schistosomiasis. An infection enters through contaminated water and enters the bloodstream, eventually affecting the lungs. Can eventually be fatal.		The patient drinks salt water	
61.	shíí bighit				The foot becomes painful in the rainy season.			
62.	shìì gìrik		elephantiasis		Begins with itching in the leg, which eventually swells to an enormous size.			
63.	shíshóór	sighim	cold	tari	Slight headache with running nose and dizziness.			
64.	shwàgàr		gonorrhoea	ciwon tsanyi	A sexually transmitted disease. Acute stomach pain and painful urination.			
65.	sighim híík	sighim gílók	whooping cough	tarin jaki	Begins with a cough, followed by severe blockage of the nose and shortness of breath. Common in children.			
66.	siràp		boil	maruru	Begins with a fever, then lumps appear, which may break open and form a wound.			
67.	tep ntóók		cerebro-spinal meningitis	sankarau	It begins with a heavy fever, usual in hot, overcrowded conditions. Kills within a week or two if not treated			Nigeria has had inoculation campaigns every dry season, of varying

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
68.	tílés	mùùt kom	ear pain	ciwon kunne	The ears are painful, and emit pus.			effectiveness.
69.	tùnjere		syphilis	tunjere	It begins with spots and pain in the penis, which bleeds and may eventually be amputated.			The borrowing of this term from Hausa indicates that it probably spread from Hausaland.
70.	tùzúk	nnìd̀wè̀n	measles	bakon dauro	Begins with small spots which gradually spread. Can kill children.			
	<b>njàghàyáng</b>		n.	/ <sup>n</sup> jàgàyán/	conjunctivitis, inflammation of the eyelid			

#### **4. Conclusions**

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