

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 paper¹ 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.

¹ The data results from a dictionary development workshop held in Panyam, April 12-17th, 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.	ngòrzól	ndwáng, mùbín	smallpox	agana	General body weakness, pustules appear across the body. Generally ends in death.			Effectively eliminated
2.	bèló				Fever followed the appearance of scattered spots across the body			
3.	kwás		scabies	kaswa	Spots filled with pus form on the buttocks, wrists and knees			
4.	kwàs nfyàm		scabies	kaswa	Spots filled with pus form on the buttocks, wrists and knees. Lasts for two-three years.			
5.	siràp		boil	maruru	Begins with a fever, then lumps appear, which may break open and form a wound.			
6.	mùrùmdyéì		boil	maruru	Superficial lump which appears and dries up after a few days.			
7.	laa kíbít		ulcer	gyambo	Begins with a small spot which gradually grows. It may last for a long time.			
8.	nvél		ulcer		Spot usually forming the chin, emits pus. Can eventually kill			
9.	mmùùt yit njàghàyáng		conjuncti vitis	ciwon idó	Pains form behind the eyes. The eyes weep and produce fluid and crusted material			
10.	tílés	mùùt kom	ear pain	ciwon kunne	The ears are painful, and emit pus.			
11.	laa ncíàk		ulcer		The ear begins to itch and then begins to emit pus. Lasts a long time.			
12.	njàng lùmwát		wound	ciruwa	Small cut under the toe.		Treated with a plant with the same name as the disease	
13.	cícrép				Begins as a pimple, but becomes hard and gradually bigger.		No cure	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
14.	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.			
15.	njàngjàng		mumps		It begins with generalised pain, and then eaten and drunk tastes sour. Then the cheeks and throat area swell up.			
16.	tep ntóók		cerebro- spinal meningiti s	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 effectiveness.
17.	mùùt kòghòp	kàmbàng	rib pain		acute pain in the ribs	spiritual cause	treated through a <i>kum</i> sacrifice	
18.	bùùt láá	ndukúm	stomach pain	ciwon ciki	acute stomach pain	arises from failure to cleanse yourself ritually	treated with to <i>Ndukúm</i> .	Medicine is given to the whole family.
19.	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.			
20.	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>	
21.	d̄yes put	d̄yes sùl	diarrhoea	zawo	Temporary loose stools due to unhygienic food or drink			Lasts two-three days.
22.	d̄yes tòghòm		dysentery	atini	General pain, weakness and sore joints. Bloody stool. Untreated leads to death.			
23.	mùùt cìi	kùnkam, ngúzùm			Sharp bone pain incapacitates the sufferer.	Spiritual cause	Treatment is through sacrifice	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment known as <i>kùnkam</i> , <i>ngúzùm</i>	Comments
24.	kíshírók				Leg skin begins to peel, becomes very itchy and painful.			
25.	shwàgàr		gonorrhoea	ciwon tsanyi	A sexually transmitted disease. Acute stomach pain and painful urination.			
26.	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.
27.	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.			
28.	làà piit	sighim	cold	tari	Cough, headache and severe nasal blockage.			
29.	shíshóór	sighim	cold	tari	Slight headache with running nose and dizziness.			
30.	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.			
31.	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</i> <i>fam</i> or <i>cicip</i> .	
32.	nyèt máár		worms	tsusan ciki	Begins with stomach ache, following by constant vomiting. Later stool is observed with worms.			
33.	njan		tapeworms	farin tsusas	Stomach bulges similarly to kwashiorkor. Sufferer eats plentifully without gaining			

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34.	nyet dween	dii nyèt njwàn	intestinal worms		weight.			
35.	mburús		piles	ciwon kurga	Pains and swelling in the anus	Constant sitting in one place and eating chili pepper.		
36.	mùùt dfil		hydrocele ?	gwaiwa	Enlargement of the testicles			
37.	shíí bighit				The foot becomes painful in the rainy season.			
38.	shìi girik		elephantia sis		Begins with itching in the leg, which eventually swells to an enormous size.			
39.	kúgík		paralysis		The hand or leg freezes			
40.	mùùt bwóón		backache		Pain in the muscles of the back			
41.	mùùt kùrà̀m	yaa kuram	stroke		Freezing of the body and mental deterioration.			
42.	tùzúk	nnidwè̀n	measles	bakon dauro	Begins with small spots which gradually spread. Can kill children.			
43.	mùùt zù̀ng		tuberculo sis?	ciwon fuka	It begins with a chronic cough, leading to constant pain in the chest, general weakness and eventually death.			
44.	ààk dáás		cirrhosis	ciwon hanta	The patient becomes thin and the stomach and legs swell.			
45.	mùùt mmilór		nose bleed	habo	Can be following an injury to the nose or can be persistent due to some internal weakness.			
46.	ngwang			kulu	A growth on the hand which makes it difficult to hold things.			
47.	cilem		skin disease?		It begins with a high fever and then pimples form on the lips.			
48.	kúkúi		epilepsy	farfadiya	The patient is initially clam but then			

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					suddenly beings throwing fits and foaming a the mouth.			
49.	mmùùt tár		mental illness	hauka, taban hankali	The patient is initially calm, but then begins to talk in an uncontrolled way.			
50.	mùùt féél		goitre	maKoko	The throat gradually swells and forms a huge mass under the chin.			Not much seen since the introduction of iodised salt.
51.	mmùùt wur		breast cancer		The breast becomes hard and a child is unable to suck.			
52.	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.	
53.	mbim 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.	
54.	piin làà ngàghàm	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 child. If she fails, she is punished.	
55.	mùùt tòghòm	fwo fwo m̀̀yèl	childhood fever		The child becomes feverish		A fluid combining a herb and a grass	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
56.	mùùt pìder		constipation		The child cannot pass stool.		species is boiled and the water turns red. The water is sprinkled on the patient.	
57.	rigyàk			kushakushi	Small spots form on the leg, filled with pus.		Fruit of <i>mmawe</i> , physic nut, is boiled and inserted in the child's anus through a straw.	
58.	lúkùt		hiccough		This may begin with consumption of dry food. In extreme cases, the patient may be hospitalised.		Treatment with herbs.	
59.	mùùt túghúrkaat				Starts with a sudden inability to swallow food or drink. The chest becomes stiff and the breathing is affected.		No known treatment	
60.	nkoghor				Caused by a piece of thorn which breaks off and is left inside the body. Can become seriously infected if not treated		The patient is given a remedy of a type of mushroom or the <i>dùwó</i> plant.	
61.	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	
62.	rùm mbaas			masasaku	? Schistosomiasis. An infection enters		The patient drinks	

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No.	Mwaghavul	Also	English	Hausa	Description	Cause	Treatment	Comments
					through contaminated water and enters the bloodstream, eventually affecting the lungs. Can eventually be fatal.		salt water	
63.	loghom		leprosy	kurturta	The skin develops roughness and bumps, the fingers begin to stiffen and parts of the body eventually rot away.		none	
64.	pòòpìt				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.			A herb with the name <i>pòòpìt</i> is boiled and given to the patient.
65.	mùùt pas		whitlow		It appears like a thorn stuck in the skin of the hand but continues to grow.			Cure by a herbal bandage.

4. Conclusions

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