

## Ethnomedicinal uses of trees among *Bachama* tribe of Adamawa state, Nigeria

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*Bachama* tribe inhabits most parts of Numan Local Government Area. They utilize many plants for medicinal purposes from their surroundings for the treatment of ailments and diseases. The present communication deals with 21 trees species used by the *Bachama* people.

**Key words:** Ethnomedicine, Medicinal plants, *Bachama* tribe, Nigeria

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The *Bachama* people claim to have come from the area around *Sokoto* in the days of the *Jihad*. They also claim descendancy from *Gobir* people<sup>1</sup>. They are mainly farmers and fishermen, and in the years past, they were good hunters. They use to rear both pigs and goats. Today, they are among the best-educated tribe in Adamawa state due to the early advent of the Christian Missionaries to the area<sup>1,2</sup>.

The *Bachamas* belief in nature spirits, ancestors and demigods are very strong. Spirits living in trees, stones, mountains and parts of men, and animals are believed to have power to harm people and so are feared and needed to be appeased. However, they are not worshipped. Some people have power to communicate with the spirits through media. They are normally notable and useful people to the society. They act as seers and medicine men, claiming to use their powers for the welfare of the society. Those who misuse their powers with the intention of harming others are called witches. Today, the exercise of these powers is largely confined to the secretive and select societies. Two most popular cults in this area are the *Ji-Boshe* and *Makaine*. Many young men are involved in this cult, which has its spread in most *Bachama* villages including Numan town. The local government authority recognizes them as traditional healers. Despite the domination of these cults in traditional medicine, herbal healers still have a strong presence in the area in delivering the much needed healthcare to the less privileged communities.

Due to close association with trees, which mostly grow throughout the year, they have learnt to utilize

these resources for various ailments and diseases prevalent among them. Ethnomedicinal work of Nigeria is well documented<sup>3-8</sup>. In this paper, the folk uses of these species by the *Bachamas* of Adamawa state, Nigeria (Fig. 1) are presented.

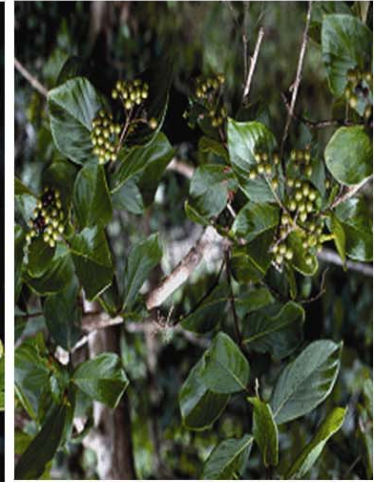
### Methodology

Field tours of 20-30 days duration were planned to cover the tribal areas in different seasons to collect the ethnomedicinal tree species either in flowering or fruiting. One hundred informants were interviewed regarding the type of medicinal plants used by them in Numan Local Government Area. People who were interviewed included full time/part-time herbalists, old ladies, family heads, and village heads in order to get a better understanding of local customs, beliefs and habits.

During oral interviewing specific questions were asked (Form 1) and the information supplied by the informants was recorded. If at least two informants independently reported the use of a plant in the treatment for a particular disease, the data were considered to be reliable and thus recorded. Also, the samples of the plants used by the informants were collected for identification.

To develop a good rapport with them and to gain the confidence of the healers and headmen, a task which is often difficult to accomplish, as the healers usually keep their knowledge a secret and are unwilling to reveal it to outsiders, eatables, money and local beer (*brukutu*) made from Guinea corn (*Sorghum* sp.) were offered to them, which were accepted. During the survey, it was easier to approach the healers individually in private, as they were

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Fig. 2 *Khaya senegalensis* DesrFig. 3 *Kigelia africana* Benth.Fig. 4 *M. senegalensis* (Lam.) ExellFig. 5 *S. longepedunculata* FresenFig. 6 *Voacanga thouarsii* Roem. & Schult.Fig. 7 *C. febrifuga* Benth.Fig. 8 *Acacia seyal* Del.Fig. 9 *Ficus sycomorus* Linn.

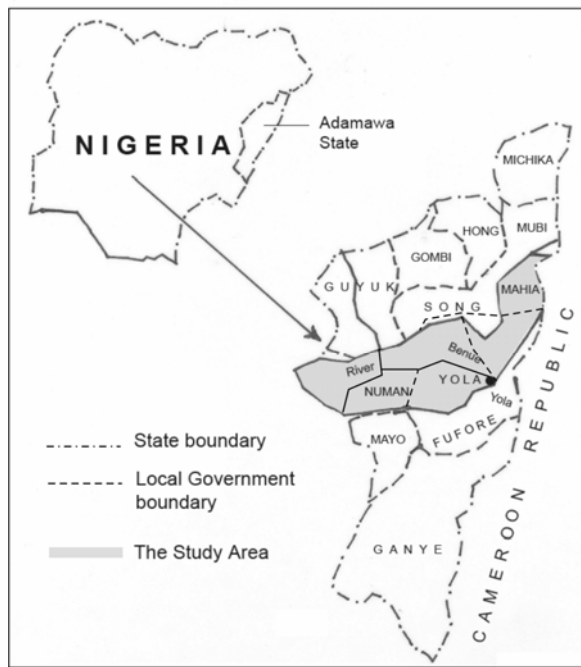


Fig. 1 Location map of Adamawa state, Nigeria

willing to reveal easily their traditional plant-lore than when they are in large groups.

Voucher specimens of herbarium materials were prepared and deposited in the herbarium of the Federal University of Technology, Yola, Adamawa state, with the specimen Field number as BSA-FNL, abbreviation for Botanical Survey of Adamawa state-Flora, Numan locality.

**Results and discussion**

Ethnomedicinal account of 21 tree species (Figs. 2-9) including the botanical names arranged alphabetically, followed by their family, local names, parts used, preparation, route - either internal or external, mode of administration and use have been enumerated (Table 1).

All the plants mentioned in this paper are very popular among the *Bachama* people and enjoy a good reputation in traditional medicine. Despite an extensive modern programme to uplift the rural health, the traditional healers are still the only medical

**Form 1—Questionnaire on medicinal plants used by the *Bachama* tribe of Adamawa state**

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(One form should be completed for each tree)

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Collection No. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Taxon: \_\_\_\_\_ Family: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Local name (s) (Specify language or dialect) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Locality (specific):  
Habitat: Tree: Monocot: \_\_\_\_\_ Dicot: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Diameter: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Bark Characteristics
10. Smell: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Latex: Present: \_\_\_\_\_ Absent: \_\_\_\_\_ Colour: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Tree parts used in medicine  
Root: \_\_\_\_\_ Stem: \_\_\_\_\_ Twig: \_\_\_\_\_ Root bark: \_\_\_\_\_ Stem bark: \_\_\_\_\_  
Flower: \_\_\_\_\_ Fruit: \_\_\_\_\_ Seed: \_\_\_\_\_
13. How a plant is used: Fresh: \_\_\_\_\_ Dried: \_\_\_\_\_ Boiled \_\_\_\_\_
14. Other plant or tree ingredient added to it \_\_\_\_\_
15. Method (s) of preparation for use: Powdered \_\_\_\_\_ Extracted with cold water \_\_\_\_\_  
With hot water \_\_\_\_\_ Boiled: \_\_\_\_\_ Extracted with local gin: \_\_\_\_\_ Any other \_\_\_\_\_
16. Mode of administration:
17. Dosage: \_\_\_\_\_
20. Any other comment on information: \_\_\_\_\_

Table 1—Enumeration of plants used by the *Bachamas*

Name of plant species (voucher number)	Vernacular name	Locality	Parts used	Preparation	*Route		Dosage and use
					I	E	
<i>Acacia seyal</i> Del. (Mimosaceae) BSA-FNL316	Numan	Yelwa, Bolon, Lamurde	Root	Ear drop	-	+	Two drops/ear twice daily for ear problem
<i>Anogeissus leiocarpa</i> (DC.) Guill and Perr. (Combretaceae) BAS-FNL321	Korgose	Lamurde	Bark	Decoction mixed with local porridge ( <i>Kunu</i> )	+	-	Two cups taken daily prescribed as worm expellant
<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i> (L.) Del. (Balanitaceae) BSA-FNL323	Tirme	Lamurde Lainde	Bark along with leaves of <i>Viscum album</i>	Powder	+	-	Used as snuff by adults to stop headache
<i>Boswellia dalzielli</i> (Roife.) Hutch. and Dalz. (Burseraceae) BASE-FNL:305	Ndakato	Kohumto, Yelwa, Lainda	Bark	Infusion or decoction, bath	+	-	One cup taken three times daily for relief from migraine and epistaxis
<i>Combretum ghasalense</i> Engl. and Diels. (Combretaceae) BSA FNL:315	Fotokumge	Yelwa, Lamurde	Root/Bark	Maceration mixed with <i>Kunu</i> prepared from Guinea corn	+	-	One cup taken 3-4 times daily for the treating amenorrhoea
<i>Crossopteryx febrifuga</i> (G.Don.) Benth. (Rubiaceae) BAS-FNL: 322	Tirme Kawe	Numan	Bark with <i>Viscum album</i> leaves growing on it	Maceration	+	-	As food for fattening children
<i>Daniella oliveri</i> (Roife.) Hutch and Dalz. (Caesalpiniaceae) BSA-FNL:304	Banga	Lainde, Lamurde, Tingo	Bark with whole plant of <i>Viscum album</i> growing on tree branch	Powder	+	-	Preparation mixed with fat from a black goat, burnt to produce smoke, which is inhaled to overcome vertigo
<i>Euphorbia kamerunica</i> Pax. (Euphorbiaceae) BSA-FNL: 308	Wato	Numan	Leaves	Maceration, pomade	-	+	Crushed with rib of a dog, resolvent is applied to spleen region to control inflammation
<i>Entada africana</i> Guill. & Perr. (Mimosaceae) BSA-FNL: 324	Buntin	Lainde	Bark	Powder	+	-	Powder is used as snuff to stop headache
<i>Ficus sycomorus</i> L. (Moraceae) BSA-FNL: 301	Ngwalle	Kikan	Bark with fresh whole plant of <i>Viscum album</i> growing on the tree branch	Maceration	+	-	One cup taken as infusion daily as cardiotonic
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i> (Desr.) A. Juss. (Meliaceae) BSA-FNL:302	Digene	Lamurde	Bark/oil from seed	-Decoction  -Oil extract	+	-	One cup, twice daily for stomach pain Three teaspoons mixed with <i>Kunu</i> (local porridge) for two days as ascaricide
<i>Kigelia africana</i> Benth (Bignoniaceae) BSA-FNL:314	Ruwe	Sabon Gari, Lainde	Bark	Macerate with three hand full of red <i>Sorghum vulgare</i>	+	-	Taken with <i>Kunu</i> , as meal used as anti- amenorrhoea

Contd



Table 1—Enumeration of plants used by the *Bachamas*—Contd

Name of plant species (voucher number)	Vernacular name	Locality	Parts used	Preparation	*Route		Dosage and use
					I	E	
<i>Maytenus senegalensis</i> . Exell. (Celastraceae) BSA-FNL:309	Kpatakpalato	Lainde, Ngbalang, Zekun, Opalo	Leaves	Decoction	+	-	Taken two times daily for protection against measles
<i>Parkia biglobosa</i> (Jacq.) R.Br.Ex.G. Don. (Mimosaceae) BSA-FNL: 303	Rire	Lainde, Kohumto, Kohumso.	Leaves & bark	Decoction, bath	+	-	Two tea spoon full, twice daily, to cure measles
<i>Piliostigma reticulatum</i> (DC) Hochst. (Caesalpinaceae) BSA-FNL: 320	Banda	Numan	Leaves with bark of <i>Tamarindus</i> <i>indica</i>	Bath	+	-	Dermatic agents
<i>Securidaca</i> <i>longepedunculata</i> Fres. (Polygalaceae) BSA-FNL: 306	Mborme	Kedimuye, Lamurde	Root	Powder	+	-	Crushed to powder, used as snuff to cure biliousness
<i>Syzygium guineense</i> (Willd.) DC. (Myrtaceae) BSA-FNL: 307	Kadaduwe	Bolong, Dong	Root	Decoction	+	-	Two-table spoon, taken three times daily to control flatulence and stomachache
<i>Terminalia</i> <i>avicennioides</i> Guil. And Perr. (Combretaceae) BSA-FNL: 312	Panke	Numan	Bark	Decoction	+	-	One cup taken three times daily to cure colic and diarrhoea
<i>Vitex doniana</i> Sweet. (Verbenaceae) BSA-FNL: 352	Fil	Numan	Bark	Decoction	+	-	A cup taken three times daily for dysentery
<i>Voacanga thouarsii</i> Roem & Roem & Schultes (Apocynaceae) BSA-FNL: 325	Tabura	Yelwa, Kokunto	Leaves and roots	Maceration	+	-	Powder taken with yogurt ( <i>Nunnu</i> ) to cure gonorrhoea

\*I= Internal. E= External

practitioners available to the *Bachama* people living in the remote part of the Local Government Area. The trees are used more commonly in medicine than the herbs as this part of Nigeria enjoys longer period of very hot/dry season (approximately 7 months) during which most herbs dry out. This might be the reason for the dependency on tree species.

The knowledge of local plants and their uses can be vital for health development programme as well as for the local population. The resources can be harnessed for the pharmacological investigation in the modern system of medicine. Also, it may very well be utilized for the preparation of drugs in the Integrated

System of Medicine. It is hoped that the information will be of use in planning for future research in this direction.

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