

The African Chigoe: a Study of its Advent and Migrations

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Scientific literature published around 1850 and especially during the latter half of the nineteenth century devotes considerable interest to the chigoe. Both its distribution in the New World and the names under which the vermin is known, to give but some examples, rate careful descriptions. It should take us too far to give a more detailed account of these works, interesting though they oft are. Suffice it to mention a few of them in passing: V. CORONADO, L. GAGE-LEBAS, M. LABAT, and J. PUGLIESI. In 1862 A. HIRSCH states somewhat sharply that the chigoe is unknown in Africa, but towards the end of the nineteenth century reports from that continent become increasingly numerous. In 1899 P. HESSE collects the available evidence in a study which must be regarded as a remarkable accomplishment for those days. Although the jigger after that receives occasional mention in the literature, more than 50 years have to elapse before M. D. W. JEFFREYS in 1952 endeavours to elucidate the problems connected with its African distribution. These two studies complement each other in an excellent manner¹.

The present study is primarily intended to determine how and when the chigoe arrived in Africa and to trace its distribution through that continent. In consequence, the oldest "reliable" sources, while meriting particular attention, must at the same time be subjected to a critical scrutiny².

¹ CMQH 1890, p. 197/20; GZ 5, p. 522/30; HHHP 2, p. 541; SAJS 48, p. 249/55; GAGE-LEBAS, *Des animaux nuisibles à l'homme*, Paris 1867; LABAT, *Histoire médico-chirurgicale de la maladie produite par la chique* (s. l., s. a.); PUGLIESI, *La puce chique*, Paris 1885.

² Some of the "evidence" adduced in the discussion rates a closer scrutiny. JEFFREYS, for instance, does not exclude the possibility that the chigoe may have been brought into Africa prior to 1324 through pre-Columbian "Afro-American negro connections". The utter impossibility of this suggestion must be obvious. E. JEANSELME claims that J. LIND reports the vermin from Senegal (in the latter part of the 18th century). However, LIND's statement that "la quantité des mouches de sable, et des cousins, étoit excessive et pouvoit aussi passer pour un fléau" scarcely warrants this assertion. The report has its interest, though, in view of J. ADANSON's statement of a somewhat