

Analysis of Jukun of Wukari and Jukun of Takum

Wm. E. Welmers, Ph.D.

O.O. The material on which this study is based was gathered during the last three months of 1949 at the Lupwe and Wukari stations of the Sudan Mission of the Christian Reformed Church (a branch of the Sudan United Mission) in Benue Province, Northern Nigeria. This research was made possible by a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, and by the hospitality and generosity of the above-named mission.

O.1. Jukun is the name commonly given to a tribe estimated to number some 25,000 people, and to their language. The tribe occupies approximately the area from 9°E to 12°E, and from 7°N to 10°N. This area, intersected by the Benue river, is not occupied exclusively by Jukun people. Groups from several other tribes are scattered through the same area, and it is quite possible that the area includes one or more entire tribes besides the Jukun. As a designation for the tribe and language, the name Jukun is derived (probably first by the Hausa people) from the phrase /'ápa dyúku/, which in the speech of the Wukari area means 'people' (not 'Jukun people'; compare /'ápa/ 'person'). In the Wukari area, the so-called Jukun people call themselves and their language /wapá/; in the Takum area to the south, they call themselves and their language /díyí/.¹

0.2. The dialects treated in this study are those of the Takum area, in the extreme south-central part of the area described above, and of the Wukari area about fifty miles further north and a little to the west. It is questionable whether these should properly be termed "dialects" of the same language or two distinct languages. Many natives of Takum and Wukari understand each other, but this may be because of frequent contact rather than dialectal similarity. A speaker of either dialect, without having previously heard a word of the other, would unquestionably understand many words and sentences in the other with no difficulty. But whether he would understand a connected speech of some length -- a folk story, for example -- is another question.

0.3. North and northeast of Wukari, it is reported that three or more principal dialect areas exist besides the two included in this study. However, it appears that the two dialects included here represent extremes of difference within what is called Jukun, and that a study of other dialects would not reveal many new features. but different combinations and patterns of those four^d kum (/diyí/) and Wukari (/wapá/). The dialect of the town of Donga, about eighteen miles south-east of Wukari, is closely similar to that of Takum. References to this and other dialects much like that of Takum are to be found in this study.²

JUKUN of WUKARI

and

JUKUN of TAKUM

by

William E. ^{Everett} Welmers

Occasional Publication No. 16

Institute of African Studies
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
1968