

African Proverb of The Month
July 2010

Kakuthu kaneeyumba kayaa muti utemwa. (Kamba)

Kichaka ambacho kimekua hakikosi mti wa kukatwa. (Swahili)

-----*Un buisson ne manque jamais un arbre utile à couper.* (French)

A well developed bush cannot lack or miss a useful tree to be felled. (English)

Kamba ([Kenya](#)) Proverb

Background, Explanation, Meaning and Everyday Use

This is a Kamba proverb that is said by people when they start to take notice of small things that start to show signs of growth or development. The Akamba people belong to the Bantu linguistics grouping that is the largest language grouping in Kenya. They speak the Kamba language and are found in the lower Eastern Province of Kenya that is a relatively semi-arid region where rain is unreliable making water scarce. They are mixed farmers, that is, they keep cattle and grow food crops like maize (corn), beans, cowpeas and cassava among other indigenous crops. Since land is plentiful in most areas, the preferred method of cattle keeping is herding though some people practice tethering. The Akamba people still build houses the traditional way, that is, huts that are grass thatched. Since the Akamba people use trees for most of their constructions, this Kamba proverb connects to all age groups because when one wants to build, the person has to go into the bush and look for suitable trees to fell so as to get poles for building. This exercise is not easy since their land is not covered with vegetation even though the people occupy vast land.

Biblical Parallels

Mark 6:2-4: "On the sabbath Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.'

These bible verses relates to the Kamba proverb. Jesus was being rejected by people in his home town. He told them that a prophet has no honor among his own people. Jesus told them that something good can come from HIM who is Salvation to all who believe.

Contemporary Use and Religious Application

In our contemporary world, this proverb can relate to, or can be used to, make people alert to, or to take notice of, new upcoming projects or developments especially when people are marketing

new products. Since many companies or groups of people do not want to be referred to as underdogs, they would like to make an effort in order to show that they can contribute something positive to the society. This Kamba proverb is presently used in advertisements on one of the vernacular radio stations in Kenya.

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