

**December, 2004**

Dec 26 & 19, 2004

**Proverbs in the Ewe Language (West Africa)**

Amedzro (dzrovi) metsoa ame kuku fe tagbÇ o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A stranger does not hold the head of a coffin.'

(b) Explanation: In some villages people are not all buried in one common graveyard. Sometimes the typ

Ñukpe ta gbolowÇla toa xÇ xa.

(a) Literal Translation: 'It is because of shame that the harlot does not use the main street of a village'.

(b) Explanation: Harlotry is one of the social evils in the traditional society and its practice produces a se

(c) Moral Teaching: Evil behaviour has its own punishment, i.e. it does not pay in the long run to misbeh

Hlofiwulae (Úlofiwulae) sea kpododo.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The person who steals mushrooms hears the evening announcement'.

(b) Explanation: In the villages people who have found their crops or any personal belongings stolen cau

(c) Moral Teaching: Guilty conscience is a form of punishment for wrong doing which any normal wrong-

Klemeđoa (Kelemeđoa) metsia ñuifi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The person who has gone into a patch of giant-grass does not complain of skin ir

(b) Explanation: This proverb comes from a farming experience and especially from farmers who work o

(c) Moral Teaching: The skin irritation caused by the giant-grass may be compared to minor distractions

Womeđoa tÇ tso gakÇa ko ðe dzi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'Once you make up your mind to cross a river by walking through, you do not com

(b) Moral Teaching: The moral lesson is as in the preceding proverb, and may be summed up in tl~e bib

FiafitÇ međuna wua agbletÇ o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A thief does not reap more than the farmer himself'.

(b) Explanation: Some people use the fact that thieves will steal their crops as an excuse for not farming

(c) Moral Teaching: The moral lesson of this proverb is like the two previous ones, but its emphasis is slightly different.

Ne yevu be yeana kuku wò la nakpÇ epe ta tÇ ða.

(a) Literal Translation: 'If a whiteman wants to give you a hat, look at the one he is wearing before you accept it.'

(b) Moral Teaching: This proverb is used to warn people against the tendency to be gullible and credulous.

Opete (Kañgba, glu) mewÇna takoko matsi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The vulture cannot cure baldness, (because if it can it would have cured its own baldness).'

(b) Moral Teaching: In the traditional society some people lay claim to certain powers to cure diseases, but they are often unable to do so.

Koklo be vÇvÇ enye agbe.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The chicken says, "Fear is life".'

(b) Moral Teaching: There is time to show bravery and time to show 'fear, i.e. cautious retreat.

Tsi dza to madze meli o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'There is no rain whose flood can submerge all mountains' i.e. there is an end to everything.

(b) Moral Teaching: There is an end to everything and people are supposed to use this knowledge to guide their actions.

Agbe didi megbÇa yÇdo ñu yina o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'Even the longest life ends in a grave, it does not prolong its longevity beyond the grave.'

(b) Moral Teaching: This proverb also teaches that there is an end to everything especially to wealth and power.

Dec 12, 2004

**Proverbs in the Kuria Language: Northwestern Tanzania near Lake Victoria and Southwestern Kenya**  
**Collected and explained by Emmanuel P. Chacha, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics**

Ono agoorwa nkwiwakaare.

\* Swahili: Anayesifiwa hutamba

- \* English: The one who is praised, comes forth to chant
- \* Meaning: A person who has been praised in public is challenged to chant (praise-poems)

Engonge yasekerreeye iyende igikuri.

- \* Swahili: Nyani humcheka makalio ya nyani mwenzake
- \* English: A baboon laughs at the buttocks of another baboon
- \* Meaning: Everyone has his/her weakness

Kena ngebo karainuguna.

- \* Swahili: Mtu hujivuna kwa alichu nacho
- \* English: What has a dress, it boasts
- \* Meaning: People do not become proud of nothing, but because of specific things

Umwiheemi newe akuhirwa na amaanche.

- \* Swahili: Anayesjisifu ndiye anayezama majini
- \* English: A boaster is one who drowns
- \* Meaning: Warning against being overly confident

Otoba umumura waanga gotoba obaaye mogaaka.

- \* Swahili: Afadhali uwe maskini ukiwa bado kijana kuliko kuwa maskini umezeeka
- \* English: It is beter to be poor when one is young, rather than becoming poor at old age
- \* Meaning: Young people should work hard

Dec 05, 2004

**From Collection of 197 Sumbwa Proverbs Geita/Kahama Districts around the southern part of La  
Collected by Joseph Nkumbulwa with help of Max Tertrais, M. Afr. in conjunction with Sukama R**

Kutimila mhofu kumala mali kuwashia kipofu kumaliza nyasi

- \* Literal Translation: To teach a heavy mind person is a lost of time of energy. Everything passes over h
- \* Meaning: Don't loose your to share with somebody who has no intention of attention.

- \* Swahili Translation: Kumfundisha mtu wa akili nzito bi kuponda wakati na nguzu. Anapokea maeleze y
- \* Swahili Meaning: Wkiwa mleze wa watu, walau unahitaji usikivu kutoka mwa mwanafunzi wako; bila hu

Mwongo gakulyaga mkumbuzi,kijito huuwa mwenye safari mkumbulwa ali sele

- \* Literal Translation: You go trouble because of a neighbor, but this man/woman keeps silent, although h
- \* Meaning: Many people are really irresponsible, they disturb you, but they go away when you need help
- \* Swahili Translation: Mtu mmoja aliweza kupata matatizo kwa ahili ya jirani, lakini jirani ana kaa kimya i
- \* Swahili Meaning: Watu wendi katika dunia hii hawashughulikii wajibu wao: wanakudhuru na kukuletea

Bwila ne mpona mtu mkarimu ni tajiri

- \* Literal Translation: What is the intention of your welcome? Isn't it in order to do the same when you are
- \* Meaning: Rare are the rich people who are purely gracious, many times, they have a secret intention to
- \* Swahili: Kwa nini ukarimu kwa-ko? Ni kwa kurudishwa kurudishwa ukarimu na watu wengine baadaye
- \* Swahili Meaning: Watajiri wachache wana nia safi wakati wanawafadhili watu: mara nyingim watajaribu

Nuwaho nsazi halyamvi shahidi inzi kwenye mavi

- \* Literal Translation: Eyewitness is better than the hearer of title-tattles...
- \* Meaning: You attended a bad or joyful event, you can be a faithful witness more than somebody who h
- \* Swahili: Lazima mtu atoe ushahidi wa kuona kwake, siyo wa kuambiwa tu.
- \* Swahili Meaning: Uliudhuria kwa karibu tukio fulani: ushshidi wako ni muhumi zaidi kuliko wale waliosik

## November, 2004

Nov 28, 2004

**From Collection of 100 Rundi (BUrundi) Proverbs collected and explained by Jean Nyandwi, 2003**

Wanka bangwe ntiwanka zana ndabe

- \* Translation: You refuse to stop fighting but you cannot refuse to show the wounds/consequences.
- \* Meaning: Peaceful conflict resolution is better than war or fighting, which always has negative or destr

Umanika agatu wicaye mu kukamanura ugahaguruka

\* Translation: You can hang an item from where you are seated but when you want to get it down you have to climb.

\* Meaning: It is easier to start a conflict or war than to stop it.

Ikiza kitaguhitanye kiraguhitaniza

\* Translation: when an epidemic does not kill you, it gives you some benefits.

\* Meaning: Conflict, war or calamities have both negative and positive consequences.

Amanyama arasara ntasaba

\* Translation: Stubbornness/stiffness leads to foolishness but not to servanthood.

\* Meaning: Stubbornness does not lead to honor, but it rather leads to humiliation and shame.

Urya incuti ukinovora intuntu.

\* Translation: When you eat your relatives, you lick agony.

\* Meaning: Mistreating or killing your relative leads to your own moral and physical destruction.

Nov 21, 2004

**Ethiopian Wisdom Proverbs and Sayings of the Oromo People Oromo Language)**

**George Cotter, Pretoria University of South Africa 1996**

**John Mbiti, Series Editor**

Alagaa gaafa kolfaa / fira ofi gaafa rakko.

\* The stranger is good for laughing, the relative for trouble.

\* Explanation: In trouble go to a relative because he/she will help you. (Kinship, Help)

Alagaaf makaraa waakkatu / sanyif sanyirraa fuudhu.

\* One refuses to give for the outsider from the bumper crop; one takes the seeds for the sowing for the next year.

\* Explanation: Though one won't help an outsider, one will make any sacrifice for a relative. (Generosity, Kinship)

Angafa doofe / qotisuun karra dhaala.

\* When the first born becomes foolish, the last born inherits the cattle.

\* Explanation: If one is not keen and alert, one will be outdone by some-one else. (Carelessness)

Arifatanif haadhaf abbaa dura / hindhalatani.

\* Because one is in a hurry he/she is not born before his/her mother and father.

\* Explanation: No matter how impatient a person is he/she does not change the order of nature. (Haste,

Bakka dardarri lafa guutetti / dullumni na fudhate jedhe namichi.

\* "At a time when girls fill the land old age caught up with me," said the old man.

\* Explanation: Regretting what one can no longer do. (Regret, Limitation)

Nov 14, 2004

## Sechuana Proverbs from Botswana

### Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and Their European Equivalents

[Diane tsa Secoana le Maele a Sekgooaa a Dumalanang Naco]

Solomon T. Plaatje (1916)

#### Note to the Reader

This 80 year-old collection of translations of Tswana proverbs has never been improved upon, th

A e ne modiga!

Let it drop! (Said by one who settles a quarrel between two contending parties.)

A ga eare lo bolela loare kolobe o kana ka poo?

Did not you tell us that a pig was as big as a bull?

A Hura ja Mmotlana, boroko!

O sleep the poor man's fat (=luxury).

A lo mpona phiri-oa-potlana loa mpataganela?

Because you see that I am a small wolf you (both) join forces against me.

A ngoedi oa tla' tshege letsatsi, are "U moshoeu?"

Can the moon laugh at the sun and say, "You are white"

Nov 07, 2004

**A Collection of Umbundu Proverbs, Adages and Conundrums  
from Angola by W.H. Sanders, American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (1914).**

**Note: In some cases the proverb is literally translated, but for others the English meaning rather**

\* A fele viso, mbanje omo vomena muleha.

Pretend trouble in eye to get a smell at his breath.

\* Ambuaka kuate; ka va lingile ha vati, Ambua ka lie.

As dog its catch to the hunter, so the young fellow should bring his gettings to the sekulu.

\* Ame cipange congulu si pikila omola; ka kaya.

I have instructed my children, brought them up well, and none of them need to be foolish or wicked.

\* Ame elenaino oku vanda (tumba) utue. Si lingi ongombe yomala.

Though gentle like the chameleon I am not a children's ox, to be played with, made sport of, be trifled with

\* Ame olohaku hu onjekela; ko Ndombe si endi love.

Take or reject the advice as you please. You are the one that will be carried into servitude.

**October, 2004**

Oct 31, 2004

**From Collection of Sumbwa Proverbs Geita/Kahama Districts around the southern part of Lake V  
Collected by Joseph Nkumbulwa with the help of Max Tertrais in conjunction with the Sukuma R**

Watega zyabwene umetega huku zimeona

- \* English: Keep your life in its secret and its protection. Othewise, you will be astonished everybody will
- \* Meaning: Secret has its exigences. Don't break it even with your wife!
- \* Swahili: Labda ukafanya jambo is siri kumbe, watu wamsona huku. Utashangaa siri zako zikafichuka
- \* Swahili meaning: Siri ni siri. Ukiongea na mke wako su watoto wako, si siri tena.

Wapila mvula ali lume nalwe umpeona mvua na umande je? \* English: Rain as well as dewdrops are co

- \* Meaning: You can be stuck in very small things, what about huge ones?
- \* Swahili: Mtu anapohswindwa kunyeshwa mvua, hata umande hautamlowanisha.
- \* Swahili meaning: Katika maisha ya binadamu ukadhani kila kitu ni rahisi, lakini unakwama kwa jambo o

Wempeho atakulanganilwangwa hamilo mweny baridi haitiwi moto \* English: You can be obsessed by c

- \* Meaning: For working well, you need a quiet mind.
- \* Swahili: Mtu mwenye shida, hawezi kushurutiahwa afanye kazi ili ajipatie riziki, ingwaw ni kawaida ya n
- \* Swahili meaning: Kwa kufanya kazi vema, usiwe nw mahangaikp moyone. Utulie kwanza

Buhala bwe mbwa mahenbe mumavu, ustalabu wa mbwa lakini kulala kwenye majivu. \* English: The do

- \* Meaning: Don't trust the appearances, the bragging man can be a very poor and stupid fellow.
- \* Swahili: Mtu aweza kujivuna na kujidai, kumbe hata kwake, hana kitu. Anajitetea tu mbele ya watu. Ha
- \* Swahili meaning: Usiamgalie maumbile tu, mwenye kujivuna mbele ya watu anaweza kuwa maskini wa

Kwivuna bumasia mdali nagwe busirombo, kujivuna utakatifu, medali nayo iko ushirombo \* English: You

- \* Meaning: When you introduce your person alone without witness, this introduction is doubtful.
- \* Swahili: Unaweza kujidai utajirt was ndugu yako wakati wewe huna kitu. Ukajivuna wama wa midomor
- \* Swahili meaning: Kujitetea wewe mwenyewe, bila mshahidi, nani atakuamini?

Oct 24, 2004

### Proverbs in the Ewe Language (Ghana)

6. Xe po nu mepoa tÇmelo o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A predacious bird can prey on some animals but not on a crocodile'.

Moral Teaching: (b) Moral Teaching: There are certain things any human being can do and others he ca

7. Vi dzro nu medzroa golo pe azi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A beggar can beg for certain things but cannot beg for an ostrich's egg'. The egg

(b) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 6 above.

8. Devi ka akple gã mekaa nya gã o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A child can swallow a big morsel of akple (i.e. cornmeal food) but cannot swallow

(b) Explanation: A child can handle easy matters but cannot handle serious ones because his experienc

(c) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 6 above.

9. Dadi vi afi vi wòlena.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A kitten can catch only a baby mouse'.

(b) Moral Teaching: Always do what you can and have a realistic estimation of your abilities. Avoid over

10. WometsÇa deku eve dea alÇgo ðeka me o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'You cannot crack two palmnuts in the mouth at the same time'.

(b) Explanation: It is easier to crack one palmtree of a special oil-palm tree than to crack two with the tee

(c) Moral Teaching: Do not try to do too much at once. Learn to do one thing at a time.

Oct 18, 2004

### Runci (Burundi) Proverbs

**from The Endangered African Proverbs Collections  
Compiled by Jean Dyandwi**

Ugenda mu kibira utazi ugaca inkoni utazi

Translation: Going to a forest, you don't know leads to getting/cutting a stick you don't know

Meaning: Doing things without wisdom leads to failure

Igumba itazi ikibi irigata ishenyo

Translation: An ignorant barren animal/woman licks an axe

Meaning: Ignorance leads to death or serious consequences

Uwutazi umuti awubishako

Translation: He who does not know a medicine he/she defecates on it

Meaning: Ignorance kills

Ico utazi ntikiwica

Translation: What you do not know cannot kill you

Meaning: People should be judged according to their intentions

Uwanka agakura abaga umutavu

Translation: He who hates growth kills a calf

Meaning: Some people neglect the development of the youth because they don't foresee their importance

Oct 10, 2004

**From Collection of 104 Kuria Proverbs-Northwestern Tanzania near Lake Victoria and Southwest**

**Collected and Explained by Emmanuel P. Chacha**

**Research Committee**

**Maryknoll Language School**

**Musoma, Tanzania**

Egetoocho keihingiyi amatwi

Swahili: Sungura aligizidishia masikio

English: The hare, it has accumulated ears

Meaning: All animals have ears, but the hare claims to be the owner of the biggest ears. Many people p

Application: It is not good to boast

Nokaaroga butiko noramanywe

Swahili: Ukiroga usiku utajulikana tu

English: Even if you bewitch in the night, you will be known

Meaning: It is not possible to hide everything you do

Application: This is told to a person who thinks people will not understand his mistake

Hano watara egetong'o wansoongo aibembeeria

Swahili: Unapomsema mwenye chongo, mwenye mtoto wa jicho hunung'unika

English: When you mention the person with one eye, the one with the eye problem reacts

Meaning: When you have done something wrong, you are so conscious of it that you believe everyone e

Engoko eratoocha eraiyeya

Swahili: Kuku anakula huku anapangusa mdomo

English: The hen pecks and wipes its beak

Meaning: Many people are not ready to admit their mistakes. They deny having done anything wrong an

Application: This is told to a person who is hiding his/her mistakes and pretends to be good.

Hano iring'ondi retaara guchimburumete kwibarre

Swahili: Kondoo akitembea na mbuzi huwa miwizi

English: When a sheep is in the company of goats of trees, it steals

Meaning: A sheep that is together with goats that eats trees also becomes mischievous. Be aware that b

Application: It is not good to be in the company of people who do evil.

Oct 03, 2004

**Proverbs of the Nkundo-Mongo Tribes in Belgian Congo (Zaire)**

**Compiled by Wilma S. Jaggard Hobgood, Department of Africa, Division of Overseas Ministries, I**

Nboloko afaikusa bionjo becw'a njoku.

Tasks or burdens to be borne:

An ANTELOPE wouldn't be strong enough to carry the tusks an elephant bears.

Ikokongo afactomba mbengo:--ikoka l'ifofole kika.

A small (person's) BACK can not carry (a heavy basket of) supplies (for camping);--it is only strong enough

Ntacwaka ifele l'anko.

Suitable food to last during a long period in camp:

One does not set out for a hunting CAMP with bananas (only).

Tsa ifotekya loolo.

Great power is adequate for a hard task.

FIRE can soften iron.

Lituk'a weji ntambolaka mpifiji. (---ntonga.)

A beautiful, but dim light inadequate at times

The beauty of moonlight won't (enable one to) pick up CATERPILLARS.--(OR: --a needle.)

## **September, 2004**

Sep 26, 2004

### **From Collection of 100 Rundi (Burundi) Proverbs Collected and Explained by Jean Nyandwi**

Nta wutera atengase

Translation: You cannot throw one thing while you are holding many other things

Meaning: Prioritization is important

Ubuho bwinshi ntibugira umusururu

Translation: Many millet grains do not make porridge

Meaning: Sometime quality is better than quantity

Amayira abiri yananiye imfyisi

Translation: It has always been difficult for a hyena to go through two ways (at the same time

Meaning: Opposite things cannot be done at the same time

Amabanga abiri ntabangikana

Translation: Two responsibilities cannot be held at the same time

Meaning: Two important tasks cannot be done at the same time

Impfizi y'intama intendera nka se

Translation: A he-sheep behaves like his father

Meaning: People imitate their elders or superiors

Sep 19, 2004

### Proverbs in the Ewe Language (West Africa)

1. Avi metsoa agbleta wodzÇa dzi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'You do not rejoice when you see people arrive from the farm weeping'.

(b) Explanation: Whenever people arrive from the farm weeping it means that they have brought bad news.

(c) Moral Teaching: See proverb number 2 below for its moral teaching.

2. Ketiba medona wodoa dza ne o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'You do not welcome gladly a bundle made of mats', (because usually such bundles are made of mats).

(b) Moral Teaching: The moral lesson of the above two proverbs are the same. Avoid a precipitous action.

3. Devi gba abobogo megbaa klogo o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The child who breaks a snail's shell cannot break a tortoise's shell'.

(b) Moral Teaching: There are certain things any human being can do and others he cannot because his

(b) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 3 above.ambitions within them. Do not be overambitious.

4. Avu lé nu meléa dzata o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A dog can catch some animals but cannot catch a lion'.

(b) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 3 above.

6. Xe po nu mepoa tÇmelo o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A predacious bird can prey on some animals but not on a crocodile'.

Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 3 above.

Sep 12, 2004

### **From Collection of 197 Sumbwa Proverbs**

**Geita/Kahama Districts around the southern part of Lake Victoria in Western Tanzania**

**Collected by Joseph Nkumbulwa with the help of Max Tertais**

Kasumu kalalya muhesi wako

Kiswahili translation: Mukik ulimheuri mtegenezaji

English translation: You threw your spear on the skilled blacksmith who forged it.

Meaning: You wasted your wealth without reflection; today you become a beggar.

Rukwa lye mafuzi lukumalanga ne mafuzi gahe.

Kiswahili: Hatua ya mjambaji humalizika na na kujampa kwake.

English translation: This man is used to breaking wings, he will die in this incorrect way.

Meaning: If someone cheats, they will be cheated in return.

Kwisagila sitambo sye nnemela sili hibega

Kiswahili: Kutumaini mguu wa nyama ya nyemela kiko begani.

English translation: You would like to eat the "nyemela" (animal meat) which you see on the hunter's shoulder.

Meaning: Don't put your eyes on your neighbor's goods. You will be deceived or tempted to steal.

Busoga bwitetwe munda bubole.

Kiswahili: Tunda zuri, ndani uoze.

English translation: A beautiful fruit, but inside it is rotten.

Meaning: Don't trust the appearance. This man can have a good introduction, but his heart and behavior

Oti kumya nobe kalimwa mwino kalomo kutyelemzya.

Kiswahili: Eti shangaa nawe yako kwa mwenzako mudomo kubinua.

English translation: Your fellow companion gets trouble, you express your amazement, but you escape t

Meaning: You have a false compassion for your your neighbors; you don't like to relate to him and his pr

Sep 05, 2004

## **Rundi (Burundi) Proverbs**

**Collected and Explained by Jean Nyandwi**

**October 2003**

**Endangered African Proverbs Collections**

**A Continuation of the African Proverbs Project**

Proverb: Mu mahoro umuhoro urgamwa

English translation: Where there is peace a billhook (sickle) can be used to cut your hair or shave your b

Meaning: Peace is a very important asset on which every success depends

Proverb: Ubumwe bugira babiri

English translation: A union is made up of two people

Meaning: People need each other

Proverb: Ubugirigiri bugira babiri

English translation: An astute undertaking requires two persons

Meaning: Good planning, decision making or work requires the participation or involvement of more than

Proverb: Imisega ibiri ntinanirwa umugunza

English translation: Two skinny and weak dogs cannot fail to overcome a fierce animal

Meaning: There is power in union

Proverb: Ibuye riserutse nitryica isuka

English translation: A visible stone does not harm a hoe

Meaning: When you have been alerted to what you have to fear, you are able to be seriously careful or p

## August, 2004

Aug 29, 2004

### **Kuria Proverbs (Northwestern Tanzania near Lake Victoria and Southwestern Kenya in East Africa)**

**Collected and Explained by Emmanuel P. Chacha**

**Research Committee**

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**P.O. Box 298**

**Musoma, Tanzania**

Kuria: Otagacha kolaleka innyangi otige omonyalobeli

Swahili: Usije ukamasahau jirani (rafiki) wakati wa raha (sherehe) lakini ukamtegemea wakati wa shida

English: You should never forget your neighbor when you invite people to come to the feast

Meaning: The neighbor is the first person who comes to help you when there is a problem. Therefore, yo

Applications/Use: The proverb is used to insist on establishing good relationship with nay person who ha

Kuria: Te gutwi koogokina ghokera orosa hai.

Swahili: Sikio haliwezi kukua likapita shavu.

English: The ear cannot grow more than the chick. {cheek?}

Meaning: The mouth is the source of information, which feeds the ear.

Application/Use: The proverb is told to remind the young generation to be attentive to what is said by the

Kuria: Tembeba ikuchuburia endi ilikanda.

Swahili: Panya hammenyei mwenzake ganda.

English: The rat does not help the other rat to peel a piece of maize.

Meaning: It is not always easy for people with the same problem to help each other.

Application/Use: The proverb is used to encourage people to seek assistance from those who are better

Kuria: Umunywa ghoseriyi omogendi.

Swahili: Mdomo ulimkosesha mtembezi.

English: The mouth wronged the walker.

Meaning: The person who says words without care can end up breaking good relationship with those pe

Application/Use: The proverb is told to a person who likes gossiping or backbiting.

Kuria: Kegwita monto ngeke.

Swahili: Kitu kinachomua mtu ni kidogo.

English: The thing that kills someone is small.

Meaning: One should not ignore small matters.

Application/Use: Small things could be a source of big problems.

Aug 23, 2004

### **Proverbs in the Kaonde Language compiled by John C. Ganly, M.M.**

Bana bankazhi inge balonde maimba, bakaja buki.

Translation: If brothers follow the honey bird, they will eat honey.

Explanation: The accused cannot be a witness in his own case.

Kujimuka kwa kitengwe kana wamona bwishi.

Translation: The cleverness of the kitengwe (a bird which goes to a grass fire to catch insects) when it s

Explanation: Everyone is clever when he is drinking. He knows it all.

Wafwisha mwaji, walala nayo. Translation: If the chief's wife dies, he lies down with it (hunger).

Explanation: A man is lenient when he is judging his own children (in comparison with others).

Kulu ko walemeneko, ko ukasunkuchila.

Translation: The lame leg will be used for limping.

Explanation: You will never forget a happy time, even though many years have passed (you are only ab

Baja bantu bajila, pakuba baja nwen, baseka.

Those who eat people, cry; those who eat a crocodile, laugh.

Explanation: We rejoice when our enemies are killed, but we cry when our friends are killed.

Aug 16, 2004

## **Sesotho-The Voice of the People (Mokitimi)**

**Edited by John S. Mbiti**

Ho robala ke ho fetoha.

Translation: To sleep is to change.

Explanation: It is human nature to have changing views.

Ho tsamaea ho naka li maripa.

Translation: To travel is like stunted horns.

Explanation: One meets many adventures in one's travels.

Ho tsamaea ke ho bona.

Translation: To travel is to see.

Explanation: Extensive travelling gives one more experience.

Tieho e tsoala tahleho.

Translation: Hesitation begets loss.

Explanation: There is danger or disappointment in delay.

Bofutsana bo jesa likatana.

Translation: Poverty makes one eat tattered clothes.

Explanation: A poor person has little choice.

Aug 7, 2004

### **Lesotho/South Africa**

Mpa-tsehla ha e bolae.

Translation: A full belly does not kill.

Explanation: Food without clothing is better than clothing without food.

Ho fahla 'muso ka lehlabathe.

Translation: To put sand into the eyes of the government.

Explanation: He/she has committed a criminal offence.

Mo-ja-pele o ts'oana le mo-ja-morao.

Translation: The first eater is like the latter eater.

Explanation: Waiting time is the time that pays best.

'Mele oa motho e mong ke chaba se hole.

Translation: Somebody else's body is a far-away nation.

Explanation: What is experienced by one cannot be experienced by others.

Ngoan'a lelala o antse khonong.

Translation: A child of a blacksmith has suckled well.

Explanation: A person has taken after his/her industrious parent

## July, 2004

Jul 7, 2004

### **Kuria Proverbs-Northwestern Tanzania near Lake Victoria and Southwestern Kenya in East Africa**

Amanche tegagutira inguku

Swahili translation: Maji hayapandi mlima

English translation: Water never flows up the mountain

Meaning: Problems happen where there is a weakness

Application/Use: The proverb is used to teach that our weakness is the source of most problems.

Amogooro tegana amaiso

Swahili translation: Miguu haina macho

English translation: Feet have no eyes

Meaning: Feet cannot stop one from going into danger

Application/Use: A person's conscience is responsible for the decisions he makes.

Amang'o gaitere umuchora amang'o

Swahili translation: Matunda yalimponza muokotaji

English translation: The abundance of fruit caused the death of fruit lover

Meaning: When we find ourselves in the middle of what we like most, we forget the danger that could happen

Application/Use: When we find ourselves in the middle of what we like most, we forget the danger that could happen

Egete keno keraagutuir niga ogilchabela

Swahili translation: Ukiona kigiti kinaelekea jichoni kipishe

English translation: When you see that a stick is pointing to your eye, move away from it

Meaning: You have to run away from any kind of evil for your safety

Application/Use: It is not possible to face all problems. Sometimes we have to run away before confronting

Engoge yasekerei eende

Swahili translation: Nyani alimcheka nyani mwenzake

English translation: Chimpanzee laughed at each other's tail

Meaning: It is easy for one to look for and criticize others mistakes forgetting his/her own mistakes

Application/Use: The proverb is told to a person who likes to criticize.

## June, 2004

Jun 27, 2004

### **From Collection of 197 Sumbwa Proverbs: Geita/Kahama Districts, Tanzania**

Kwivuna bumasia mdali nagwe busirombo

Translation: You are able to pray yourself in you won speeches, but really you are full of selfishness with

Buhala bwe mbwa mahenbe mumvuu

Translation: The dog can bark when people are passing, but look at him: his bed is as dirty as ashes.

Meaning: Don't trust appearances, the bragging man can be a very poor and stupid fellow.

Wempeho atakulanganilwanga hamilo

Translation: You can be obsessed by certain problems in your life, who can oblige you to work hardly the

Meaning: For working well, you need a quiet mind.

Wapila mvula lume nalwe

Translation: Rain as well as dewdrops are coming from the same sky. You can be dry because of both c

Meaning: You can be stuck in very small things, what about the huge ones?

Meaning: When you introduce your person alone without

Jun 20, 2004

**From Collection of 100 Rundi (Burundi) Proverbs Collect and Explained by Jean Nyandwi**

Ubumwe buramota

Translation: Cohesion embalms

Meaning: Concord has beneficial effects

Aho ishari ritari agashato ka Rukwavu gakwira bane

Translation: Where there is no jealousy, a small hare's leather is enough to cover four people

Meaning: Where there is no jealousy, people are able to share the little they have

Aho Uburundi butunze urutoke hunakwa inzu

Translation: Wherever Burundi points a finger, a house is built

Meaning: In harmony, everything succeeds

Isinzi ntibesha

Translation: The crowd does not lie

Meaning: What the majority agrees on in one accord is trustworthy and acceptable

Jun 13, 2004

Rea rera ho phetha Molimo.

We plan, God acts.

Expl: Man proposes, God disposes.

Liketso tsa Molimo ekare lilotho.

Acts of God are like riddles.

Expl: Nobody knows what will happen in the near future. Sometimes unexpected things happen.

Khomo Molimo o nko e metsi.

The cow: God with a wet nose.

Expl: The importance of a cow to a Mosotho is seen to be like the importance of God to the people, because

Molomo oa mofu ha o tloloe.

The mouth of the dead is respected.

Expl: What has been said by a person before his death is followed to the letter.

Ho rokoa ea shoeleng.

The dead is praised.

Expl: Nothing bad is said of a dead person.

Pha-balimo o ja le bona.

A person who gives to the ancestors, eats with them.

Expl: Hospitality is a virtue.

Jun 06, 2004

### **Kiswahili Proverbs**

Wawili kwenye kupalilia magugu, kumi kwenye mfuko. Two are working but ten wait for the profit.

'Wote watawala', huleta mafarakano. 'All are rulers/leaders', causes riots.

Yai haliatamii kuku. An egg never sits (as a hen does when she has eggs) on a hen (i.e. a child is not gr

Yaotayo kwanza (meno) siyo yatumiwayo kula. Those which come first (teeth) are not those which are u

Zimeanguka (senene au panzi) wasipozila. They have fallen (grasshoppers) where people never eat the

### May, 2004

May 30, 2004

Alomte efon miao bo.  
The cat does not cease to cry " miao."

Ka foo loflo.  
A crab does not beget a bird.

Silafo etsoo filafo gbe.  
A blind man does not show the way to a blind man.

Kole nya nson.  
The Kole (River) flows into the sea.  
N.B.-This is quoted as we say, "Walls (or winds) have ears," warning people not to speak out their secrets

Nme kome fiteo nmei fe.  
One (bad) nut spoils all.

May 23, 2004

**From Rev. Dr N. K. Dzobo of Cape Coast University**

Avi metsoa agbleta wodzÇa dzi o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'You do not rejoice when you see people arrive from the farm weeping'.

(b) Explanation: Whenever people arrive from the farm weeping it means that they have brought bad news.

(c) Moral Teaching: See proverb number 2 below for its moral teaching.

Ketiba medona wodoa dza ne o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'You do not welcome gladly a bundle made of mats', (because usually such bundles are made of mats).

(b) Moral Teaching: The moral lesson of the above two proverbs are the same. Avoid a precipitate action.

Đevi gba abobogo megbaa klogo o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'The child who breaks a snail's shell cannot break a tortoise's shell'.

(b) Moral Teaching: There are certain things any human being can do and others he cannot because his strength is limited.

Avu lé nu meléa dzata o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A dog can catch some animals but cannot catch a lion'.

(b) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 3 above.

Avu ðu þu međua ga o.

(a) Literal Translation: 'A dog can break bones but cannot break a piece of iron'.

(b) Moral Teaching: As in proverb number 3 above.

May 16, 2004

Nsamanfo po pe won dodow, na menne ateasefo?

Even the dead want an increase in their number, how much more the living?

Expl: Having more and more people is a desire of the Akan and few libation prayers leave out a request

Oteasefo na oma osaman kon do oto.

It is the living person who makes the inhabitant of the spirit world long for the mashed yam.

Expl: The Akan have a ritual food, oto, made up of mashed yam (plain or mixed with palm oil) and hard

Osaman ntwen oteasefo ansa na wadidi.

A departed spirit does not wait for the living before it eats. That is, a departed spirit does not depend on

Expl: The Akan belief is that their departed relatives are spirits and that they have unlimited mobility and

Wunni osaman aduan a, womfa wo nsa nto mu.

If you are not going to partake of the food of the departed spirit, you do not put your hand into it.

Expl: Although the Akan express fellowship with their departed spirits, they nevertheless keep a respect

Osaman tee ne nsa kyia wo a, wopono wo de mu.

When an apparition (ghost) stretches its hand to greet you, you pull yours back.

Expl: Although shaking hands with each other and with strangers is stressed in the Akan tradition, this m

Osaman bubu ba a, na eye hu; obeto wo a, wo nua ne no.

When a ghost is approaching at a distance, it is fearful; but when it gets closer (you discover that) it is a

Expl: The avoidance of direct physical contact with ghosts as a result of the fear of the consequences of

May 9, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selections from African Proverbs on Peace and War, collected and com**

"It is not possible to dodge the arrow before it has been thrown."

Maasai

“As long as fire stays in one’s breast, it does not cool down.”  
Ethiopia

“What you recognize as deadly will not kill you.”  
Uganda

“A man with too much ambition cannot sleep in peace.”  
African

“He that forgives gains the victory.”  
Nigeria

May 2, 2004

**This week’s proverbs are selections from Dagbani Proverbs #2 by Pageault et al.**

To the fool don’t say: “Your father is sick”; say: “Your father is dead.”  
(A fool must be frightened into action.)

If your horse can race well, you don’t use it to run after birds.  
(Don’t be presumptuous or imprudent in the use of your strengths, wealth, your people, or workers. Don’t

If you didn’t send someone to the market, you won’t expect his return.  
(To express surprise at something unexpected. Or: Why worry?)

Those who go to examine the rainwater puddle will meet scorpions (around it).  
(You’ll get into trouble if you’re too inquisitive.)

The poor man laid an egg and the rich man hatched it.  
(The rich exploit the poor.)

**Apr, 2004**

Apr 25, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selections from "Collection of 100 Rundi (Burundi) Proverbs" collected**

Inda y'uwundi irakoma induru nti wumva.  
You can't hear somebody else's belly screaming.

Ukura utabaza ugasaza utamenye.  
When you don't ask questions while growing up, you become old while still ignorant.

Ukuri guca mu ziko ntigusha.  
The truth passes through fire and does not burn.

Aho ishari ritari agashato ka Rukwavu gakwira bane.  
Where there is no jealousy a small hare's leather is enough to cover four people.

Ivya gusa bitera ubwenge buke.  
Free things decrease one's intelligence.

Apr 18, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selections from Dagbani Proverbs #2 by Pageault et al.**

"I always go in the water" is the one the crocodile catches.

If the foot doesn't go (to the place of the quarrel), the mouth won't interfere.

A blind man already has his foot on the stone he threatens to throw at you.

Sending (someone to get something for you) gives rest to your feet, not your heart.

Dig out a noxious thing; don't turn it around in its hole.

Apr 11, 2004

**These week's proverbs are selections from Dagbani Proverbs #2  
by Pageault et al.**

However nice the elbow maybe, it cannot remove dirt from the eye.

A human being wants speed, but speed depends on God.

The quiver of God's servant broke under the rope tree. [right where he could get the fiber to fix it]

A cheap horse won't climb a hill.

An old man sitting on the ground sees something a child can't see even if he climbs a tree.

Apr 04, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selections from "African Proverbs on Peace and War" collected and co**

"If you can't resolve your problems in peace, you can't solve war."  
- Somalia

"The chaser and the one who is chased get tired."  
- Kikuyu, Kenya

"The weak warrior wearing sandals overcomes the brave with a thorn in his foot."  
- Uganda

"A fight between grasshoppers is a joy to the crow."  
- Lesotho

"If the stone falls on the pot, woe to the pot; if the pot falls on the stone, woe to the pot."  
- Ghana

**Mar, 2004**

Mar 21, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selections from "Wit and Wisdom of Ethiopia" by Negussay Ayele.**

Two things that are hard to notice: an elephant losing weight and a wealthy person becoming a pauper.

Wisdom is attained at sixty; money is accumulated at thirty – if only the process could be reversed!

If you are not sure of what is yonder throw a pebble toward it and see what happens.

Flailing after falling only results in more bruising.

When they gossip about someone listen as if it were about you.

Mar 14, 2004

**This weeks proverbs are selctions from "Proverbs of Africa, Human Nature in the Nigerian Oral T**

Bitir mizsham o'nya gida.  
Thatch water can fill the water pot.  
(Steadiness and patience can result in great success.)

Ngon jin zjhan del ishe ah, abaka nhgari.  
When a drum begins to sound melodiously, it is near to bursting.  
(When you begin to blow your own trumpet, it is usually an indication that you are heading for some disa

Wuniya tha gotha kandza'u.

You leave your cow and you run after a snake for meat.

(Trying to get something better than what you already have, you may result in losing the very thing you have.)

Ashi wo shi me lishi lishi wo za he lishi lifung.

What you do in black hair you will eat in white hair.

(The outcome of your life is best seen when you are old.)

Mmini zo afu na ukwu ogazi di ise.

When it rains we see that a guinea fowl has five toes.

(The exact character of a person is revealed when something happens.)

Mar 07, 2004

**This weeks proverbs are selected from “Collection of 100 Rundi (Burundi) Proverbs” collected and translated by...**

N'iritagira inkoko riraca.

A night without roosters will still end.

(Hope does not necessarily have to be based on tangible signs.)

Akanyoni katagurutse ntikamenya iyo bweze.

A bird cannot know where the sorghum is ready (to eat) unless it flies.

(A lazy person is not aware of opportunities.)

Ingona iva mu ruzi ikarigata urume.

A crocodile comes out of the river to lick the dew.

(Other people's possessions appear to be more important or better than what one has.)

Uwutazi umuti awubishako.

He who does not know a medicine, he/she defecates on it.  
(Ignorance kills.)

Bene vyo nibo bene inambu.  
The haves are the have-nots.  
(Some rich people want to get more and more possessions even when it means being unfair to the poor.)

## Feb, 2004

Feb 29, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selected from "Collection of 197 Sumbwa Proverbs, from the Geita/ Kati region."**

Kwiluzya nakani ne seko.  
To pursue a rabbit and to laugh together, you will miss him.  
(When you begin a serious work, don't chat with anybody in the same time, you could not pay the needed attention.)

Ndavitogwa ndebitolwe.  
If I have decided to love somebody, I oblige myself to be patient with him/her.  
(Love is patience. To love includes long-suffering also.)

Ngoyo yakanga bwobo.  
Hen is fighting with a mushroom which has no aggressivity!  
(You lose your time in a false cause. Don't break your nails uselessly on things which are irreducible.)

Mkulu kumuleka numbiko mumulomo.  
You can run quicker than an old man, but for his wiseness and his words you are behind.  
(A man is a man, but the difference between a young one and an old one is wide.)

Kalomo kasoga kalalazya nfihi hizyalala.

Everybody, even he who has a bad character, can be softened by kind conversation. He will make a ste  
(Try to be kind with everybody; you will harvest friends, even hard people.)

Feb 22, 2004

**This week's proverbs are selected from "Collection of 104 Kuria Proverbs, Northwestern Tanzania"**

Mkaa ndio hugeuka kuwa jivu.

Burning charcoal is turned into ashes.

(Every burning conflict eventually settles down and is forgotten.)

Sisimizi hawaumani.

A black ant will not bite another (black ant).

(People belonging to the same group should not fight each other.)

Unapoanika unakausha.

When you spread it in the sun, it becomes dry.

(Whenever you hide your problems, nobody can help you.)

Mbeleko moja haibebi watoto wawili.

One piece of cloth cannot carry two children.

(You have to do one thing at a time.)

Apendaye asali huumwa na nyuki.

Bees sting him who loves honey.

(Great achievement is attained through painful experiences.)

Feb 15, 2004

**This weeks proverbs are selections from “Wit and Wisdom of Ethiopia” by Negussay Ayele**

The haughty blind person picks a fight with his guide.

To his hosts the incoming stranger first appeared like gold, then turned to silver and eventually ended up

Some people appear satiated and content in public even if they may go to bed hungry at home.

When taken for granted, gold in one’s hand is sometimes considered like cheap copper – so are people.

You may begin to like people without trusting them and when you get to trust them, it becomes redundant

Feb 8, 2004

**This week’s proverbs are selected from “Swahili Proverbs” by Albert Scheven.**

Ndovu wawili wakisongana ziumiazo ni nyika.  
When two elephants jostle, that which is hurt is the grass.

Vita vya panzi (ni) furaha ya kunguru.  
War among grasshoppers delights the crow. (Used when people benefit from the misfortunes of others.)

Achanikaye kwenye mpini hafi njaa.  
He who gets blisters from the hoe-handle will not die of hunger.

Mtoto ni kito, mzigo mzito.  
A child is like a precious stone, [but also] a heavy burden.

Mkosefu wa mali si maskini.  
Lacking money is not [necessarily the same as] being poor.

Feb 1, 2004

**This week's proverbs are all selected from "Swahili Proverbs" by Jan Knappert.**

Shauku kathiri huondoa ubasiri.  
Surfeit of passion bereaves of wisdom.

Penye kuku wengi simwage mahindi.  
Where there are many chickens do not spill maize. (Discretion.)

Ngalawa na iwe juu wimbi chini.  
May the boat be on top, the wave below. (Bon voyage.)

Mwenye moyo wa furaha humzaidia raha.  
The owner of a cheerful heart will find his joy ever increasing.

Msema kweli hana wajoli.  
The speaker of truth has no friends.

Jan, 2004

Jan 25, 2004

**This week's proverbs are all selected from Ryszard Pachocinski, Proverbs of Africa: Human Nature**

Laa mang goetok goeman muan wu soeng.

A child who is carried on the back will not know how far the journey is. (Spoon-feeding does not help the child learn.)  
Njak

Daga funfuru nyi wun ga e ka yika o.

It is only when fish is fresh that you can bend it. (You can inculcate good habits in individuals only when they are young.)  
Nupe

Gbogbo alangba ro dina de le, a e mo ghin na i dun.

All lizards lie on their bellies, but nobody knows which of them suffers stomach ache. (Used when someone is lying about something.)  
Yoruba

A ki wo ago alago sise.

We do not look at another person's clock in order to work. (Said to those who imitate other people's life styles.)  
Yoruba

Shimfidar fuska ta fi ta tabarma.

Spreading of the face is better than the spreading of the mat. (Cheerfulness is better welcome than an ornate mat.)  
Hausa

Jan 18, 2004

**This week's proverbs are all selected from Ryszard Pachocinski, Proverbs of Africa: Human Nature**

Agwo nabu ana na-cju ukpa.

A snake which escapes fills a basket. (The snake which escapes is always described as big enough to fill a basket.)  
Igbo

Ichaka mi che egwa.

My trousers are ten. (I have ten pairs of trousers but I can only put on one at a time. It is not good to have too many.)  
Igala

Akwa ohuru na-akpa mamiri.

A new cloth induces urine. (If people have new clothes, they will seek any occasion for showing them off.)  
Igbo

Iyuhu ka mtwen.

Jealousy is like ash. (Jealousy is like ashes that are poured on the wind which could blow back onto you.)  
Tiv

Orihi ana zu ete osi o hu.

The ground has drunk the rain that was fallen down. (Let us forgive.)  
Ebira

Jan 11, 2004

**This week's proverbs are all selected from Ryszard Pachocinski, Proverbs of Africa: Human Nature**

"Iyawo iyi a fi ijo fe iran nie wo lo."

A wife that we see and marry at the party will always like to be going to the party and later ask for a divorce.  
Igbomina

"Or yer iyol i nan er inundugh ga."

Nobody refers to part of his body as a hump.

(Said to mean that however useless or hopeless your relative is you do not disown him/her.)

Tiv

"Nin lom leu ga je ku te so."

When teeth bite the tongue, it is not the case of hatred.

(Said when two related persons mistakenly clash or one hits the other.)

Chamba

"Akinaabo lo apu wiye olo oko te eche."

The tortoise adorned itself with hard shells but its neck is bare so that relatives might touch him.

(No matter how successful and self-sufficient, one still needs love and kindness from others.)

Idoma

"Bua maren sha ashe a ior ga."

A cow does not deliver in the presence of people.

(Used to advise people, for example husband and wife, that a quarrel need not be settled when people are present.)

Tiv

Jan 04, 2004

**This week's proverbs are all selected from Ryszard Pachocinski, Proverbs of Africa: Human Nature**

Kada Allah ya kawo ranar yabo.

May God not bring the praising day.

(Worth of a person is not known or discovered until after he is dead or transferred. A person may be praised only after death.)

Hausa

Uno ana ra zi yionu, Osiomoshi ono pe dusi.  
God keeps away flies from the tailless cow.  
(The helpless rely on God.)  
Igarra

Ikon Allah kare a bakin zomo.  
In God's will the dog will be in the hare's mouth.  
(To underline God's omnipotence.)  
Hausa

Olorun ki i fi nkan se ni ki o ma fi aye ope sile.  
God does not allow anyone to suffer without leaving a gap for thankfulness.  
(To console someone in time of adversity.)  
Igbomina

Gani ga wani ya isa tsoron Allah.  
Everyone's experience is enough to fear God.  
Hausa