



59 Kalanga Proverbs

Collected and Edited by Tholani Alli

[This collection of 59 Kalanga proverbs will help many people to explore again Kalanga wisdom and it will also contribute to the study of Kalanga Language which needs to be revitalized today.]

Tholani Alli

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I Thank the Lord Jesus for this opportunity and the Grace He has given me to put this writing into use. I Thank God for all the help and the support of the good friends and family He has blessed me with and that have contributed knowingly and unknowingly into my life. Though this is a small project; I pray it will be the first of many Paremiological projects I will be embarking on. Personally I Thank the Lord for the lives of Mwaji Sikamo, Andrew Levi, Stephan Eyeson, Kevin Boakye, Natalie Amenze and Lanre Suleiman; without which inspiration and encouragement for this project would have been lacklustre and not non-existent.

FOREWORD:

“In difficult situations, people turn to proverbs for answers. They are creatively employed to speed up communication, convey weighty messages and to sharpen arguments. They are equally used for blunt criticism and clarification of difficult ideas. The potential capacities of all these relevancies of proverbs are not in doubt since proverbs are replete with wit, wisdom, imagination, amusement, instruction and insight.”

Ademola Kazeem Fayemi (2009), Deconstructing Proverbs in African discourse: the Yoruba Example. (Lagos State University) Afroeuropa. Revista de estudios afroeuropéicos journal of afroeupean studies revue des études afroeuropéennes, (Nigeria)

I hope this booklet will give you an overview of how proverbs were used to shape African communities before the arrival of gospel and are still helpful even today. As you go through this small booklet you might find something which you need to share, please do not hesitate to let us know, all your feedback are highly welcomed.

Email your comments on the address below:

Tholani Alli

tholani@nasihohi.com

NOTE:

Copyright © 2011 by Tholani Alli

The author grants permission to download and/or print this book in whole or in part, for any non-commercial use as long as the copyright notice is included and the text is unchanged. You are welcome to print your own copy of this ebook.

INTRODUCTION

The Kalanga and the Shona migrated in separate groups from a common region in the north. The Kalanga speaking people are thought to have been the first. They first settled in South Africa. Ruins of their oldest settlement are called the Mapungubwe ruins. Their speech shows considerable differences from that of the Shona people. The Kalanga, also known as the Bakalanga are one of the first Bantu speaking tribes to migrate to present day Botswana, followed by the Bakgalagadi and then the Batswana (Bakwena who then split). The Kalanga had first settled in Mapungubwe in South Africa, the first Kalanga state. They later moved to the Great Zimbabwe ruins site in Masvingo Zimbabwe. After sometime they moved to Khami and finally ending in Botswana. However wherever they went they left relics of their masonry and at every site a group of the Kalanga remained. The Khami state occupied south-western Zimbabwe (now Matabeleland) and adjacent parts of present day Botswana.¹

These examples stem from extensive research into the gradual decreasing Bantu southern African language of the Kalanga people. This work is hardly original as the proverbs have been collected and edited from African students, internet sources and various research initiatives; majority stem from the resources of the MAZINA E IKALANGA 'baKalanga social group.' The Kalanga or (Bakalanga) reside in north eastern Botswana and the extreme western regions of Zimbabwe. Scholarship has revealed similarities between the Kalanga and Shona language.

The 59 Proverbs are as follows:

1. Tahwa kale la chibulugwi, atichahwa la lulavi.

Trans: We have heard from the bad locust, we do not hear any from the good locust.

Sem: First words are often attentively listened to, but the latter words are ignored (even as they can be good).

2. Chibuya, ja ne hama, ntogwa una hangang'wa./ Chawawana chije ne hama, ntogwa unokangwana.

Trans: When you have a good thing eat it with a friend, the stranger forgets.

Sem: The appreciation of a friend makes the joy of life; Sharing good things with a friend spices life.

3. Kudwa kwe bhalo, kotangisa ngobaba.

Trans: The beginning of a bald head, it first gives an itch.

Sem: Harmful things start in a harmless way, but then become bad. A serious disease starts with small symptoms but develops into an incurable condition.

¹ Wikipedia account of the Kalanga http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalanga_language

4. Chimona ntumbu manyoka.

Trans: A little stomach upset, is stomach ache.

Sem: DO not hide a small problem, it will get big and irresolvable.

5. Lume ling'ompela alikombi chiwulu.

Trans: One man cannot round the anthill.

Sem: It is hard to do something single-handed.

6. Chinyala ching'ompela achitodzwinya nda.

Trans: A single finger cannot crush a louse.

Sem: It is hard to do a thin alone.

7. Kulembeleka kwe damba ateli iko kuwa (kwalo).

Trans: The hanging of a monkey fruit is not a sign that it is falling.

Sem: Impressions are not realities.

8. Chinodana ithamo, lufu nde gunotebela.

Trans: What calls (first) are troubles, death comes afterwards.

Sem: Small things cause big troubles.

9. Chinonyadza meya mbudzi wuti mbgwa ya ja chimela iyo ilipo.

Trans: What discourages the goat is that the dog eats a plant while it looks.

Sem: What discourages is when people who have no business with something do it before those who could do it better.

10. Ndoita hwila pa mbili, swimbo yaloba dapi.

Trans: I make it a belly feel, the rod has hit a rat.

Sem: if you have something that you can do alone, do it, other people will only make you do what is of no worth, or make you to lose your mark.

11. Zwochenamisa gudo kuwa mu nti.

Trans: It astonishes the baboon to fall from a tree.

Sem: It is embarrassingly astonishing to see a person who is capable of doing a thing not being able to do it.

12. Chitata mabuya, chobuza mabi.

Trans: The person chasing away good things brings back bad things.

Sem: If you scatter or destroy good things, you will be left with bad things to gather.

13. Panotolegwa chilume demo (shathu) kosala matshunetshune.

Trans: Where a man's axe was taken by force from him, remain signs of struggling on the ground.

Sem: It is not easy to take away something that a person loves.

14. Chiviriviri ndeche hwudzululu, cha mansiabhundu chidzetedzete.

Trans: The swift flight is of the blue bird, the hump-tailed bird makes quick dashes

Sem: Speed is for the fast, if you are slow, rely on tactics.

15. Chilungulila chitenda, shungu dzimu moyo dzowolebgwa.

Trans: The heart that burns be grateful, the urge in the heart will tell.

Sem: If you have a burning matter, present it, if you do not, it will torment you.

16. Chimwe chitekesi chimwe chisipo.

Trans: One boasts of knowledge when the other is not there.

Sem: A person who knows little boasts when experts are not there.

17. Moyo we chitombi uku masendeko.

Trans: The heart of liking turns towards where it has leanings.

Sem: When one does something that he does not like, his heart is with what he loves to do most.

18. Chibendebende unoseka chimbgwimbngwi.

Trans: The one who lost a tooth laughs at the one who has no teeth.

Sem: People do not see their defaults; Faults are faults, the person with one should not laugh at the one with two.

19. Kushema chibi wubina chibuya.

Trans: To hate something bad is to see a good thing.

Sem: When a new thing comes the old thing is despised.

20. Wapota dombo wadzimila.

Trans: who goes around the hill gets lost.

Sem: Out of sight out of mind.

21. Bhadza gulu ipa nlimi, kupa simbe inoma nalo.

Trans: Give the big hoe to the hard working cultivator; you give to the lazy he stands with it.

Sem: To the hard worker give more, to produce more.

22. Pakapinda bhadza akutozezesa.

Trans: Where the plough passed by, it is not hard to work.

Sem: When good work has been done, what follows does not discourage.

23. Mlomo iphako unozwidzibilila.

Trans: The mouth is a cleft (in a tree), it blocks the inlet for itself.

Sem: A talkative person forgets that s/he wears other people.

24. Chithu ichithu, chozhalila phako.

Trans: A thing is a thing, it closes a cleft.

Sem: Do not despise small things; even a small thing has its own great use.

25. Kuziba benzi wushwa nabo.

Trans: To know people in a home, you must spend the day with them.

Sem: You cannot know the defaults of a person if you do not spend time with him/her.

26. Leba phele wakazhalila dendele.

Trans: Talk about the hyena when the hut is closed.

Sem: Be careful when you gossip about someone, you might be telling a person who will tell him/her.

27. Leba she wakatathat dombo.

Trans: Talk about the chief when you are on top of a hill.

Sem: Be careful when you talk about your senior, those around you maybe his pimps.

28. Chalobeledzela chalobeledzela, phele yakatizha nenyanga dze mbudzi.

Trans: Tough can be tough, the hyena ran away with goat's horns.

Sem: He who is used to do hard things, gets used to and pleased in doing them.

29. Chalobeledzela chalobeledzela, gudo lotatha pashongwe pakakunguluka.

Trans: Tough can be touch, the baboon climbs the precipitous rock.

30. Nyambi ina bunyambi / nyambi.

Trans: A dexterous person has dexterity.

Sem: A skilful person accomplishes many things.

31. Chigale bupitipiti, nsi we thamo uchileye.

Trans: Sit on it with tricks, the day of danger escape it.

Sem: During time of peace, prepare for trouble; Do not live as if there will never be trouble befalling you.

32. Swimbo ing'ombela aina chigo / Swimbo ing'ombela ina ngwa.

Trans: One rod has no fight.

Sem: To rely on one thing does not help (in the time of trouble); It is not enough to hold a weapon, you must also trust your intuitions /instincts.

33. Chabe chigondola, chabe ching'ombe, kukhona fula bulema gwacho.

Trans: It is lame, it is now a big ox, to able to graze it is its lameness.

Sem: Difficulties teach survival skills.

34. Chikulu china chimwe chikulili.

Trans: A big thing has also something bigger than it.

Sem: A person will meet those who boast better than him/her.

35. Nkulu nde una chimela / Nkulu nde una chimu dula.

Trans: An adult person is the one with the fermenting grain / An adult is the one with a granary.

Sem: A person without reserve will perish; Keep some reserve for the days of need.

36. Chingoma chililisi, ndicho chipaluki / Chiambalo chiambalasiswa ndicho chinopaluka.

Trans: The drum that is drummed a lot is the one that wears off. / An over worn garment is that one that wears.

Sem: Over usage of a good things destroys it; Over usage spoils usage.

37. Lima nge chicho, ching'wango nkumbigwa achina ndima.

Trans: Plough with your own, the borrowed hoe does not make you cover a portion of a field.

Sem: You own means a better than borrowed means; With your own you do not wait and you make progress.

38. Chinopururuka chowopururuka, chikati phara pasi.

Trans: What flies will fly, but it will also land down.

Sem: If a person disregards your advice, leave him alone, one day he will come to what you were advising about.

39. Chinofumisa achitotethegwa.

Trans: Waht enriches is not kept in the enclosure.

Sem: What you keep stored does not increase your fortune.

40. Chipitipiti chakazwala chimwandamwanda.

Trans: Too much haste has brought forth weariness.

Sem: Make haste slowly, else you will tire and defeat it.

41. Zwaka fumika mbeba matenje

(External appearance is often deceptive)

42. Tjilume tja ndi yendis nkathu-nkathu ndo wo tji tenda nda gala

(Learning may be difficult, but later will prove to have laid a better foundation)

43. Tizha ko dwa pa sisila, leba ko dwa pa shama nyayi

(We do things step by step)

44. To viya phungubgwe lume

(We are facing a serious problem)

45. Ha mwana e lilila nyele ye mfute u mpe l mputile mu maboko

(If one continues to insist on something against others advice, let them do it and face the consequences alone)

46. Baji be mafuta ha bana moyo

(It's difficult for the rich to have mercy on the poor)

47. Nyoka fupi I tjilailo tje ndefu

(Poor people are exploited by rich ones)

48. Tjibgwe tji lemela ba kule ba pejo be tamba natjo

(It's easy to manage difficulties you live with even though it looks terrible from outside)

49. Lembeleka kwe damba ha te iko wa kwalo

(Experiencing a misfortune earlier than the rest does not really mean you are out of the picture)

50. Dza ka be dzi li njizi dza be hwoba,dza ke dzi li hwoba dze be njizi

(It's possible for a bigwig to be nothing so don't be so proud)

51. Ku lebela njiba mu mathiwa

(To reveal a secret)

52. Tizhila kwa inona ko

(To seek help where there is no help)

53. Denje mbuya nde la muka shulo la muka ntshitshinyoka bana ba no li tja

(A welcoming person is popular as to an unfriendly person)

54. Phembgwe ludzi ya zwagwa ina litoba

(People from one family usually exhibit similar behavioural traits)

55. Tjinyuni babili nkomba woga tjo wuluka

(Team work wins as compared to individualistic pursuits)

56. Ngombe ya tshamba dope ya ngwa

(Just a brief visit or the little you share with me shows how much you care about me)

57. Ka ikumbu ha ku to yendiwa,ka tjilema ko yendiwa

(It's better to be crippled than be dead)

58. Nlada mbuya nde we nbgwa u noo fuluka a ka se lebe ne zwizo

(A good person is the one who does not gossip about you)

59. Bhembgwe ko mimiligwa lamuka

(You must only speak badly of a person if proven guilty)

Bibliography:

Malikongwa Albert G. T. K. (2005). Proverbs from the Ages Ikalanga Setswana English. Matama ano Pesa ne Mitetembelo ye Ikalanga (Ikalanga Proverbs)

Wendland, E, R. Hachibamba, S. 2007. Galu wamkota: missiological reflections from South-Central Africa. Issue 25 of Kachere monograph. African Books Collective, pg. 89

AuthorsMax Gluckman, M. 1965. The Ideas in Barotse Jurisprudence. Institute for African Studies Series. Storrs lectures on jurisprudence. University of Zambia. Institute for African Studies. Reprint, revised. Manchester University Press ND, pp 8-9

<http://mmegi.bw/index.php?sid=7&aid=12&dir=2007/November/Thursday29>

(Date Accessed: August 2011)

<http://te-in.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=18798058418&topic=7214>

(Date Accessed: August 2011)

<http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/botcso.htm>

(Date Accessed: August 2011)