

Yoruba

Proverb

ON PLANTS & HERBS



*The Untold Wisdom Hidden in Leaves: Their Life
Application & Moral Teachings*

By

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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife – Alake mi owon! Omo owawa ajini...

Your love is the rhythm behind every word in this book.

Your warmth, wisdom, and unwavering support have been my guiding light.

Thank you for being my *Olólùfẹ́*

My inspiration, my muse, my constant in all seasons.

This book is as much yours as it is mine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed—directly or indirectly—to the completion of this book. My first appreciation goes to Eledumare, Who made this book a success.

Also, to the elders, custodians of Yoruba culture, whose wisdom forms the backbone of this work. Their teachings, stories, and proverbs have guided generations and continue to radiate our understanding of nature and human conduct.

I also acknowledge the herbalists, farmers, storytellers, linguists, and scholars who have preserved bits and pieces of Yoruba plant knowledge across centuries. Without their quiet dedication, many of the insights in this book would have disappeared long ago.

To my family, friends, and readers who encouraged this project from the beginning, thank you. Your support gave me the strength to gather, verify, and interpret these proverbs with the respect they deserve. Thank you all!

Ẹ ṣeun púpò.

PREFACE

Among the Yoruba people, plants are more than biological life forms; they are teachers, reminders, warnings, and moral instructors. Every leaf carries a lesson, and every herb has a story about human character, relationships, leadership, and survival. Yoruba proverbs inspired by plant life offer practical wisdoms and knowledge.

This book brings together these proverbs and presents them in a clear, accessible way—showing not only the literal meaning of each plant but also the moral message it offers. My goal is to take readers beyond the surface of each proverb, helping them see how nature and life are connected in Yoruba thought.

In a world where attention shifts quickly and traditions are fading, documenting these teachings is essential. This book is therefore both a cultural preservation effort and a practical guide for anyone who wants to understand Yoruba worldview through the lens of plants and herbs.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I wrote this book because many Yoruba proverbs that reference plants and herbs are slowly losing their original form, meaning, and cultural accuracy. A large number of people quote these proverbs today without knowing the actual plant being mentioned, while others say the proverb wrongly or misinterpret the message behind it. Even more surprising is that many do not realize that certain popular proverbs were coined directly by the characteristics of real plants and herbs.

This gap in understanding motivated me to create a well-structured guide that preserves this important aspect of Yoruba knowledge. Each proverb in this book is presented with clarity and accuracy, featuring:

- 1) Proverb at a Glance – A quick snapshot that includes the Yoruba proverb, its English translation, and the literal meaning.
- 2) Plant Featured – A dedicated section showing the specific plant, with its correct name and a high-quality image for instant recognition.
- 3) Plant Identification Properties – Clear details such as the Yoruba name, English name, botanical name, and plant family.
- 4) Uses and Application in Modern Life – A practical interpretation that explains how the proverb can be applied today in relationships, personal conduct, leadership, conflict resolution, and everyday behavior.

I wrote this book to document this fading connection between nature and culture, and to help both young and old understand the wisdom that lie in plants. It is my way of preserving accurate knowledge and reviving the original voice behind these sayings.

WHY YOU SHOULD GET THIS BOOK

This book is not just a collection of proverbs—it is a complete guide that helps you understand each saying from the root to the message it carries. If you have ever heard a Yoruba proverb and wondered what plant it refers to, how the plant looks, or how the message applies to today's life, this book provides all the answers in one place.

You should get this book because:

- ➡ It reveals the true plants behind popular Yoruba proverbs.
- ➡ It corrects mis-quoted or mis-understood proverbs.
- ➡ It provides a HD photograph of every referenced plant for easy recognition.
- ➡ It gives accurate identification details—Yoruba, English, botanical, and family names.
- ➡ It offers modern-day applications, helping you understand how each proverb can guide decisions, relationships, leadership, work ethics, and personal development.
- ➡ It helps students, teachers, cultural enthusiasts, herbal practitioners, and researchers to know more about Yoruba culture and morals.
- ➡ It is written clearly, making it valuable for both beginners and experts in Yoruba language or culture.

If you want a book that explains Yoruba proverbs in a fresh, visual, practical, and accurate way, this is the perfect choice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Among the Yoruba people, proverbs are more than simple expressions—they are words of wisdom, reminders of character, and guides for daily living. Yet one of the least understood aspects of Yoruba proverbs is how they are connected to the natural world. In Yoruba land, our forefathers observed plants, herbs, and leaves with accuracy. They studied how each plant grows, behaves, survives, adapts, or fails. From these observations came proverbs that shows truths about human life—proverbs that teach patience, warn against pride, encourage unity, or caution against carelessness.

Unfortunately, many of these plant-inspired proverbs are now mis-understood, mis-quoted, or completely unknown. Modern lifestyles, urban living, and reduced interaction with nature have slowly eroded the knowledge that once guided families and communities. Many people today use proverbs in conversations but do not know the plant being referenced, and as a result, the original meaning becomes weak or lost.

This book was written to reconnect readers with this forgotten part of Yoruba wisdom. It brings back the exact plants behind the proverbs, provides their names and identification features, and explains the moral message with clarity. With HD pictures, accurate translations, and practical interpretations, each proverb becomes easy to understand, appreciate, and apply in today's world.

Whether you are a student, a parent, a cultural lover, or simply someone who enjoys Yoruba language, this book is the ultimate avenue where nature speaks—and wisdom follows. As you read, you will discover that every leaf carries a lesson, every plant hides a principle, and every proverb reminds us that human behavior is linked to the world around us.

THE NEED TO PRESERVE PLANT-INSPIRED YORUBA PROVERBS

Plant-inspired proverbs shows a part of Yoruba culture that is slowly disappearing. In the past, people learned about plants by seeing them daily—on farms, in forests, along footpaths, or in family compounds. These plants naturally became symbols for life lessons. Today, however, fewer people have direct contact with these plants. As a result, the proverbs built around them are losing their meaning.

Preserving these proverbs is not just about saving old sayings. It is about safeguarding the worldview, wisdom, and intelligence of our ancestors. When we understand the plant behind a proverb, we understand the proverb more in real sense. And when these proverbs fade away, we lose a part of our identity, our values, and our connection to nature. Documenting them in a structured and visual way ensures that future generations will still have access to this knowledge—even decades from now.

CONNECTION BETWEEN PLANT CHARACTERISTICS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Yoruba proverbs often shows the behavior of real plants. For example, some plants can grow in harsh places—making them signs of patience or ruggedness. Some plants cause irritation when touched, teaching lessons about harmful friendships or careless choices. Others grow only when properly nurtured, depicting discipline and careful planning.

Our forefathers in Yoruba land used these natural characteristics to explain complex human behaviors in simple ways. Instead of giving long lectures, they pointed to a leaf or herb and expressed a proverb that pass the message perfectly. Understanding these plant traits helps us see the logic, humor, wisdom, and accuracy behind each proverb.

HOW MODERN LIFE IS CAUSING A DECLINE IN ACCURATE TRANSMISSION

Modern society has created a large gap between people and nature. Many Yoruba children grow up in cities where they do not see these plants every day. People now spend more time indoors, on phones, or in digital spaces, rather than on farms or in open fields where these plants grow.

Because of this disconnection:

- ◆ People quote proverbs without knowing their origin
- ◆ Some meanings are distorted
- ◆ The wrong plant gets associated with the wrong proverb
- ◆ The moral lesson becomes weaker
- ◆ Younger generations fail to appreciate the depth of indigenous knowledge

This book helps bridge that gap by visually re-introducing the plants and showcasing the meaning behind each proverb.

WHY THIS BOOK FOCUSES ON PLANT-INSPIRED PROVERBS

This book focuses on plant-inspired proverbs because they form a unique point between language, culture, nature, and everyday behavior. These proverbs are practical, visual useful in environmental observation. They are easy to remember because they show real-life behavior of plants.

Yet despite their value, they are under-documented, and rarely explained with the original plant reference. This book corrects that, by providing a complete and accurate guide—making it useful to students, elders, cultural enthusiasts, and modern readers who want to understand the true essence of Yoruba wisdom.

HOW EACH PROVERB IS ORGANIZED FOR CLARITY

To make every proverb easy to understand, each one is presented in four simple, practical sections:

a. Proverb at a Glance

- ✓ Yoruba proverb
- ✓ English translation
- ✓ Meaning in simple language

This gives an instant understanding.

b. Plant Featured

- ✓ Exact plant being referenced
- ✓ HD photograph for clear identification

Readers can immediately see the plant behind the proverb.

c. Plant Identification

- ✓ Yoruba name
- ✓ English name
- ✓ Botanical name
- ✓ Family name

This helps avoid mixing up similar plants and gives scientific accuracy.

d. Uses and Application

- ✓ Detailed explanation of how the proverb applies in modern-day life
- ✓ Lessons for character, relationships, work ethics, leadership, and personal development

This turns the proverb into a practical tool for daily living.

CHAPTER TWO

ENTERING THE WORLD WHERE PLANTS SPEAK AND PROVERBS TEACH

Chapter Two is the heart of this book. Here, you will find each Yoruba plant-inspired proverb in its clearest, and most practical form. Every proverb you are about to read has a message shaped by the natural behavior of the plant it refers to. As you move through this chapter, you will see how our Yoruba forefathers studied leaves, stems, roots, and fruits—not just for herbal healing, but also for moral instruction and everyday guidance.

Each section has been carefully arranged to help you understand the proverb at a glance, see the exact plant behind it, know its correct identification, and apply its message to modern-day life. You will not only learn the wording of the proverb but also discover why the plant matters, how the saying originated, and what practical lesson it holds for today's world.

Whether you are reading for knowledge, research, or personal growth, please take time to ruminate on each proverb. Observe the plant, reflect on its behavior, and let the wisdom within guide your thoughts and actions.

Let's go in them one after the other...

YORUBA PROVERBS ON PLANTS - 01

THE PROVERB & ITS CORE MEANING

Owe Yoruba:

Bí olóde ò kú, òde rè kì í wu Gbégi

English Translation:

If the owner of the house is not dead, the house will not grow weeds.

Meaning at a Glance:

No one can carry out your responsibilities as effectively as you can. Your presence, effort, and attention are what keep your affairs in order.

THE PLANT BEHIND THE PROVERB

Plant Referenced: Gbégi (Weeds)



PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Yoruba Name:	Ewe Gbegi
English Name:	Wiregrass / Goosegrass
Botanical Name:	Eleusine indica
Plant Family:	Poaceae

LIFE APPLICATION (USES & MEANING IN TODAY’S WORLD)

Moral Lesson

Your duties, dreams, family, and responsibilities remain your own. Others may help, but no help can replace your personal involvement.

Relating The Proverb With The Plant

This proverb encourages diligence and self-responsibility. It reminds you to stay actively involved in your life. Whether it is your job, family, business, or personal goals, success requires your consistent attention. If you are passive or absent, disorder will gradually set in — just like weeds.

Modern-Day Examples

Family: A father or mother must be present; relatives can assist, but they cannot raise your children exactly the way you would.

Workplace: If you ignore your role or duties, someone else may try to fill in, but mistakes and decline will appear.

Business: A business owner who withdraws attention will soon see “weeds” — poor customer service, declining sales, or disorganized staff.

Personal Goals: Your dreams cannot grow without your involvement; you cannot delegate your destiny – this is why Yoruba people say “A kii fi ise igbonse ran omo eni”.

Leadership: A leader who is absent loses control because only the leader understands the vision enough to maintain order.

Key Takeaway

Your life flourishes when you are present; it falls apart when you withdraw

YORUBA PROVERBS ON PLANTS - 02

THE PROVERB & ITS CORE MEANING

Owe Yoruba:

Ẹní tí kòkó ẹ ba yè ló mọ kòkó lo

English Translation:

The person whose cocoa survives is the one who truly knows how to cultivate cocoa.

Meaning at a Glance:

Success is the true measure of skill. Only the person who achieves results can rightly claim mastery in a field. Talk means little — accomplishment speaks louder.

THE PLANT BEHIND THE PROVERB

Plant Referenced: Cocoa



PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Yoruba Name:	Ewe Kòkó
English Name:	Cocoa Leaf
Botanical Name:	Theobroma cacao
Plant Family:	Malvaceae

LIFE APPLICATION (USES & MEANING IN TODAY’S WORLD)

Moral Lesson

This proverb emphasizes competence, results, and proven ability. Just as cocoa farming requires skill, patience, and knowledge — only the farmer whose plantation thrives is acknowledged as truly skilled.

Relating The Proverb With The Plant

Use this proverb to reinforce a culture of excellence and competence:

Workplace:

Promotions and recognition should go to those who actually deliver results, not those who merely talk about what they can do.

Education:

Students who put in effort and pass exams well show true understanding of their subjects.

Business:

Those who grow their business successfully prove they are entrepreneurs; profit is the real evidence of good strategy.

Modern-Day Examples

A technician who repairs machines successfully shows more expertise than one who boasts without results.

A writer proves talent by producing quality work, not by talking about plans.

A farmer with a healthy, productive cocoa farm is honoured because the results speak for him.

A student who studies diligently and performs well demonstrates true academic strength.

A business owner with loyal customers and stable income has proven competence.

Key Takeaway

True mastery is measured by results. Accomplishment, not talk, shows the real expert.

YORUBA PROVERBS ON PLANTS - 03

THE PROVERB & ITS CORE MEANING

Owe Yoruba:

Odó iyán ò jé gún èlú; odó èlú ò jé gúnyán; àtẹ tá-a fi npàtẹ ilèkẹ, a ò jé fi pàtẹ ọ̀rúnlá.

English Translation:

The mortar used for pounding yams will not do for pounding indigo leaves; the mortar for pounding indigo leaves will not do for yams; the tray used for displaying beads cannot be used to display dried okro.

Meaning at a Glance:

Each object has its proper use; tools and methods are effective only when applied appropriately to the task at hand.

THE PLANT BEHIND THE PROVERB

Plant Referenced: Èlú (Indigo Leaf)



PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Yoruba Name: Èlú
English Name: Indigo Leaf
Botanical Name: Indigofera tinctoria
Family: Fabaceae

LIFE APPLICATION (USES & MEANING IN TODAY'S WORLD)

Moral Lesson

This proverb teaches discernment, practicality, and respect for proper methods. Just as the mortar for pounding yams cannot be used for indigo leaves, and a tray for beads cannot display dried okro properly, every tool, method, and resource has its intended purpose. Mis-using or forcing objects outside their function often leads to inefficiency, frustration, or failure.

The lesson extends to life, work, and personal endeavors. People, like tools, have unique strengths, skills, and capacities. Recognizing these distinctions ensures that tasks are delegated effectively, methods are applied appropriately, and outcomes are optimized. It also tells us to respect boundaries, avoid shortcuts, and avoid forcing unsuitable solutions into complex problems.

Relating The Proverb With The Plant

Use this proverb in everyday decision-making and resource management:

Workplace: Assign tasks according to employees' strengths and expertise.

Education: Choose appropriate study methods or materials for different subjects.

Business: Use suitable tools, software, or processes for each type of task.

Home & Daily Life: Select proper utensils or equipment for cooking, cleaning, or craft.

Modern-Day Examples

A carpenter using a knife instead of a saw will struggle to cut wood efficiently.

A teacher using a simple explanation for a complex concept may confuse students.

An entrepreneur using inadequate tools for production risks poor quality.

A gardener using the wrong fertilizer or method may harm plants.

Delegating tasks without considering abilities can result in inefficiency or mistakes.

Key Takeaway

Effectiveness depends on using the right tool for the right purpose; one size does not fit all.

YORUBA PROVERBS ON PLANTS - 04

THE PROVERB & ITS CORE MEANING

Owe Yoruba:

Màrìwò tò nífi ìgbáṣọ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀sín, òun náà nǎbò wá di àgbéléhè

English Translation:

The young palm fronds that deride the older ones would soon become items to be picked on the ground, as well.

Meaning at a Glance:

Aging is inevitable; growth and time cannot be reversed. Respect for elders and acknowledgment of life's natural course are necessary.

THE PLANT BEHIND THE PROVERB

Plant Referenced: Màrìwò (Palm Frond)



PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Yoruba Name: Màrìwò
English Name: Palm Frond
Botanical Name: *Elaeis guineensis*
Family: Arecaceae

LIFE APPLICATION (USES & MEANING IN TODAY'S WORLD)

Moral Lesson

This proverb teaches humility, respect for elders, and acceptance of the natural progression of life. Just as young palm fronds eventually age and fall to the ground, everyone experiences the passage of time. Arrogance toward those older or more experienced is unwise because age, wisdom, and time cannot be reversed.

It also emphasizes foresight and reflection. The experiences and achievements of elders are invaluable, and deriding them is both disrespectful and shortsighted. Understanding the inevitability of aging encourages personal growth, patience, and appreciation of each life stage. Additionally, it reminds individuals to plan and live wisely, recognizing that youth is temporary and life cycles are inevitable. Respect for the natural order promotes unity in social, families, and professional relationships.

Relating The Proverb With The Plant

Apply this proverb in daily life to foster respect and awareness of life's natural progression:

Workplace: Value and learn from senior colleagues' experience.

Education: Respect teachers, elders, and their guidance.

Business: Recognize the wisdom of experienced partners or competitors.

Personal Growth: Accept aging as a natural part of life and plan accordingly.

Social Life: Show humility toward elders and avoid disrespectful behavior.

Modern-Day Examples

A young professional listens to mentorship rather than mocking advice.

A student appreciates the guidance of experienced teachers.

A junior executive values input from senior managers.

Families respect elders' advice in decision-making.

A young entrepreneur acknowledges lessons from experienced business leaders.

Key Takeaway

Respect elders and accept the natural passage of time; aging is irreversible and inevitable.

This is the end of the sample copy.

You can enjoy more evergreen proverbs with their meanings, morals and cultural teachings by ordering a full version today.



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