

Boko Proverbs



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Introduction

Nothing defines a culture as distinctly as its language, and the element of language that best encapsulates a society's values, beliefs, and moral foundation, is its proverbs.

Proverbs are short and pithy sayings that express some traditionally held truth. The Boko people are by tradition subsistence farmers and their proverbs are characteristically lessons that they learn from nature and the environment around them, from animals, birds, plants, people, God, fire and water.

Study of a language's proverbs helps one understand the belief and value system of the society. Translation of the proverbs into English is difficult if the translator has not lived in that society and understood their culture. Many of the Boko proverbs will sound strange to a westerner's understanding and the meaning is not always what you would gather from a casual reading of the proverb.

Each proverb is presented in four lines. The first two lines are in the Boko language, the first line being the proverb itself, and the second line the explanation as given by a Boko expert named Yaka Levis and his son Orou Yaka Levis Isaac. The third and fourth lines give the English translation, translated by myself after fifty years of experience in the language as a Bible translator.

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Total of 410 proverbs	

Lessons from birds

1. Dõna lío fñeũ ví ní a zè musuoo.

Tó Lua gbẽ gbà pɔ, nsu me ade kèwà fñeũo.

The partridge is not little when on his anthill.

Nobody is insignificant in his own station.

2. Yãamusu dõ s' geá ña no.

Gbẽ pɔ ì pɔ òkpae a a beee dõo.

The vulture doesn't realise that the horse's corpse cost money.

He who wastes something doesn't realise its value.

3. Wà ma ko nunu sè wà kosa dìlemee a gbeu.

Wà gbẽ pɔ maa sè, ñ wà pɔ giana dileè.

They took my young hen and replaced it with a rooster.

To be the victim of a bad deal.

4. A dõ felena le swãfõ a néeo.

Yãpi le kèè yãe ùo.

He doesn't know that the dove is piercing the ears of its young.

He doesn't realise the gravity of the situation.

5. Lá bã vùà, màa wì a go da.

Lá yã n kpa, màa ni κε.

According to how the bird flies one throws the stick.

One should act appropriately to the situation you are in.

6. À bò koσ bøkĩi.

Daakena ì bσ gu pσ de àà bσuoε.

He took the chicken exit.

The guilty escape by deception.

7. Busebuse ã bã ì a sakpe da.

Kpalea yãì ì to yã bσ maa.

Little by little a bird builds her nest.

Taking care leads to good outcome.

8. Kεwatokõε mé dεena né dà ìatēi.

Yã pσ wà fêle kàa ã wìσ κε.

Tradition caused the nightjar to lay eggs in the sun.

Children follow their parents' example.

9. Bã lenade lí sakpe maa dao.

Yãbσlenzõσde lí zĩ maa κεo.

A songster doesn't make a good nest.

A talkative person doesn't work well.

10. Bānena pɔ lousìsi ɔ̃ lou ì gbě.

Gbě pɔ yā wèele ɔ̃ yā ì le.

It's the young bird that prayed for rain that gets wet.

He who looks for problems gets them.

11. Bā gĩa a ɔ̃lɔ gbãoa?

Pɔ pɔ wá è gĩa wá e gbãoa?

Won't yesterday's bird sing again today?

Can we get today what we got before?

12. Asea yāi ko ɔ̃lɔi.

Yā pɔ a ke, baa tó wi yāe keo, a kee.

The rooster crowed to fulfil his role.

Even though we don't do anything, whatever will happen will happen.

13. Bānan'ɔ̃zī wé mé ì tēa.

Tó wà gbě lè wa kù, wì pɔeã oèe.

It's the captured bird whose eyes are red.

A prisoner is treated anyhow.

14. Dõna a fõ ko bɔ beo.

Nibɔ a fõ bele bɔ beo.

A partridge can't chase a chicken from its home.

A stranger can't expel a local from his village.

15. Bānena pɔ le swāɔ a da ɔio ò ɔ zilo dɔe.

Né pɔ le a da ní a deo yāmao ò gē azīazi ní yāoe.

A fledgling that doesn't listen to it's mother's cry will make a different sound.

A child who doesn't listen to his parents brings trouble on himself.

16. Dōntēna ní a wezēkeo, felensia ò yādaèe.

Tó nle e gbē ònōo, a yāe gōgōnēe.

Despite the partridge's intelligence, a dove teaches him.

If you consider someone less intelligent, he'll solve your problems.

17. Gbaonne pɔ aà da i aà gwa li'euo mé ò sakpe da ní felenaɔ sānu.

Gbē pɔ wi gwa a buio guuo lío a buio yā gbadōo.

The young hornbill who wasn't raised by his mother in a tree hole makes his nest with doves.

A child not raised by his own race doesn't have his race's values.

18. Felenaɔ le kō gbē ese'ũa yāi.

Gbēo le soleke gbēpāle pɔ yāi.

The doves are fighting over bran.

People are fighting over what doesn't belong to them.

19. Gã a da dõ ã a tẽd koi.

Nekpamagwai mé ì o a gwanae màa, tó a ye ta.

The guinea-fowl knows its mother but follows a chicken.

An adopted child says it when he wants to go home.

20. Koda lí ɔɔɔ kosa aeo.

Nɔe yãbɔbɔa a zǎ lezĩ zé vĩo.

A hen doesn't cluck in front of a rooster.

A woman shouldn't override her husband's conversation.

21. Ko neande lí vĩ téao.

Dɔaana lí yãpii keo.

A mother hen never jumps over a fire.

A leader must set a good example.

22. Kone pɔ lí te a daio ãme ì zu téu.

Né pɔ lí a da yãmao ì yã'i azĩae.

A chick who doesn't follow his mother falls into the fire.

A disobedient child gets himself into trouble.

23. Kulesonaá ko pɔblea no.

Yã pɔ a zekɛo, nsu yõwào.

Spinegrass is not chicken feed.

Don't attempt the impossible.

24. Sũ ìò e kosia nòò ìò siaε.

Lá nle e yã de, ìli su àò de màao.

The fool thinks that the black chicken's meat is black.

When something isn't the way you thought.

25. Felen gãsí'εa ìò a kulekĩi dõε.

Taaside ìò a yãkea dõε.

A dove with a broken wing knows where to rest.

The poor know how to cope.

26. Wetẽamɔane yãi kosa le vĩake bleaaε.

Tó gbẽ vĩa vĩ za a nézĩ, baa tó à gbãakũ, ìò kenεε.

Because of mistreatment the rooster fears the hawk.

Childhood fears continue into adulthood.

27. Wà mè wà kõpe to, mé gãò le ge mitãi.

Wa ye wà kõ yã'oo, mé wàε yãke a zéwao.

People are told not to gossip and the guinea fowl are off to weave their hair.

Forbidden to gossip people act inappropriately.

28. Felena pè n sabawa.

Tó ni yãgõgõ, wì su wà gõgõnεε.

A dove is perched on your bowstring.

If you judge others, they will certainly judge you.

29. **N pɔ yã mé ì bā zõne n kuawa.**

N pɔ yãĩ ã wì n dei.

Your wealth makes a bird perch on your chest.

Because of your wealth people will bother you.

30. **Wìli naalea dada dõntẽnaeo.**

Gbẽ pɔ dõa vĩ, wìli dõa kasaèo.

You don't teach a partridge to crouch.

Don't preach to the converted.

31. **Àle ɔkulewẽe yãamusu néwa kone ùe.**

Yã pɔ gbẽ le wẽele ulené, a bɔ gupauu.

He's hatching a vulture as if it's a chicken.

What a person tries to hide will be discovered.

32. **Bã pɔ a ɔɔɔ wẽle wi, tó àle gasiale, wì gièe.**

Tó gbẽ le bɔ ñ gudeyão, wà gie gɔɔ.

A bird whose song disturbs the village is stopped as soon as it flaps its wings.

One who causes a disturbance is immediately stopped.

33. **Ko lí kesepele a néwa gaa yãio.**

Né totoaá nedeà no.

A hen doesn't tread on her chickens to kill them

Discipline is not infanticide.

34. À yāamusu pà ní kao.

À kpeboyā kè.

He shot a vulture with an arrow.

He did something dishonorable.

35. À bā pla yà.

Àlè pɔ wɛɛlɛ mɛn pla ɡɔɔdoũĩ.

He chased two birds.

He's trying to do two things at once.

36. Tó n esewena ula dà, ísu kotenzi gbɛao.

Aizɛɛde fĩ gi wà teazio.

*If you wear a robe made from guinea corn, don't ask why
chickens are following you.*

A wealthy person can't complain about hangers-on.

37. Lí nede lá ɔ bāo ì āsābleu.

Gbẽ pɔ pɔ vĩ ɔ wìɔ tɛi.

Birds spend a week in the foliage of a fruit-tree.

The rich have many followers.

Lessons from domestic animals

1. **Gu pɔ zuda gbooblèu, we a né ì bleu.**

Lá da de, màa né ì de.

Where the cow licks limestone, there the calf will lick it.

Like mother/father, like daughter/son.

2. **Zaa'ina lí fɔ yiongo aso seɔ.**

Yā pɔ gbēɔ ì fɔ, gbēɔ lí fɔ.

A donkey can't carry a camel's load.

Not everyone has the same ability.

3. **Àa s'ó lí gbekūo.**

Tó n pɔ àa lù, ìli gēgēo.

A cheap horse doesn't climb a mountain.

You get what you pay for.

4. **Pɔ pɔ sã è a nilɔ, tó gbē è a gbokeɛ.**

Pɔ pɔ gbēɔ vī aa nilè a ìanaka gbēɔwae.

What a sheep sees and is silent, when a dog sees it, he barks.

What some endure quietly will drive others crazy.

5. **Má fɔ mà blesana wetēa gwa, tãa í laao.**

Má n pɔna ya ma pɔ siakūo.

*I can't look at the suffering of a buck when the fetish
requires blood from me.*

I can't make you happy to my detriment.

6. Bɔkaau ba na de s̄s̄a.

Wìli gbě pɔ b̀ kaau leo.

The early riser runs faster than a horse.

You can't catch an early riser.

7. Ma gbě a s̄s̄ã, ma kule ɛa v̄ãaao.

Ma nɔ a gimazi mà a néɔ toèo.

I can't lose my dog and also misplace my flute.

My wife can't divorce me and make me give her the children.

8. Gu pɔ wà zaa'ina lèu, àà legbe zie.

Tó gbě be ní taasio gɔɔpii, taasi pãle lí keè yãe ùo.

The place where the donkey is beaten is an old scar.

Those who suffer daily are not bothered by another problem.

9. Mad̄ s̄e mé le s̄́ so tiai?

Gbě pɔ kù wà ikokewà mé lé ikoke gběwa.

Is the grass eating the horse now?

Someone who should be ruled over is ruling.

10. Máo go k̄ã gbě ma soo.

Máo pɔ v̄i mà taasikeo.

I won't carry a stick and allow a dog to bite me.

I won't have the means and allow myself to suffer.

11. Sāsakao plaaᵛ lí imi dāa doũ guuo.

Gbē gbāaᵛ lí yāale gudoũ.

Two rams don't drink from the same trough.

Two officials can't hold the same position.

12. Pᵛ pᵛ bᵛ sāda wéwa mé ì bᵛ sāne wéwa.

Lá da de, màa né ì de.

*That which appears on the ewe's eye is what appears on the
lamb's eye.*

Like mother like child.

13. Té lí di sᵛ ïi kpeo.

Gbē pᵛ té nàwà ì vīe.

Fire doesn't ride an incompetent horse.

He who walks on hot coals jumps.

14. Taaside zu lí bēneᵛᵛo.

Taaside lí pᵛ e dīleo.

A poor man's oxen don't grow horns.

A poor man never keeps anything for long.

15. Zune bēnabᵛᵛsai lí zᵛ nabeu yaalᵛo.

Nsu gbēe yaalᵛo, asa ní dᵛ lá n kua aᵛ de ziao.

A hornless calf doesn't laugh at one with crooked horns.

Don't laugh at anybody, because you don't know how
your state will be tomorrow.

16. Za kɔɔ ɔ̄ zawa ì kɔ̄ɔdɔ a n̄e.

A maa wà né dazewa a f̄ēnēnzī.

From the start a zebu gives its calf a hump.

It's good to train a child from an early age.

17. Zù d̄ɔaana lí í v̄āi mio.

Gb̄ē pɔ d̄ɔaaa mé ì pɔmaa s̄e.

The lead cow never drinks dirty water.

The early bird catches the worm.

**18. Tó ãana kàka mé n s̄ɔbaona k̄ɔmpa,
tó a s̄ia le kaka, ñ n kpi b̄ɔle.**

Tó n gev̄i nɔ è, tó a s̄ia m̄ò, n ḡɔ p̄ãe.

If a storm blows up and you find a mule, when the next one blows up, remove your halter.

If you discover your wife at a funeral, you'll lose her at the next one.

19. Wì gb̄ē í ga í a w̄ãaoe.

Yãḡɔḡɔa a gɔɔwa mé ì na.

You drink the dog's soup while it is hot.

It's good to settle matters at the right time.

20. Tó ble kosokū kākū'ese vīe, àà ke azīae.

Tó ní pɔ'e'ese vī, ke nzīae.

If a goat has a remedy for knee baldness, let him treat himself.

If you know the secret of success, put it into practice.

21. Wīli ś gbāa dɔ basaio.

Tó gbē kà nɔseə, wì nɔkpawàe.

You don't tie up a healthy horse without a rope.

When someone is old enough to marry, a wife is given to him (so he'll live at home).

22. Wīli bàasi gbē kū a káawao.

Pɔ pɔ n pɔ no, laaikai.

Don't catch a stray dog by the skin of its back.

Beware of what is not yours.

23. Tó ní te musunai, ni ko búsu soe.

Tó ní te daadei, ni àà dàa seə.

If you follow a cat, you eat raw chicken.

Bad company corrupts good character.

24. Gbē lí gbaũ kũ a dii mikpeo.

Gbē pɔ zennode v̄io yã lí bɔleio.

A dog doesn't catch a baboon behind his owner's back.

You won't succeed without a defender.

25. Tó n̄ ku beo, n ble ì ne'i sa ùe.

Tó n̄ ku beo, n yãeɔ lí bɔɔlekeo.

If you're not at home, your goat gives birth o a male.

If you're not there, your affairs don't work out well.

26. W̄ili zaaĩna nakõwà n̄ zuoo.

W̄ili gbē pɔ an yã a kõseoo nakõwao.

You don't hitch up a donkey with an ox.

Don't bring incompatible people together.

Lessons from wild animals

1. N lé s̄ez̄z̄ne lan ãnawa.

N lé mé n da yãu.

Your mouth cut grass for you like a rat.

Your own mouth has condemned you.

2. We vlá kà à aà ye.

Gbēpi kà à azĩa yã ḡḡḡ.

A monkey's tail is long enough to tie it up.

He is able to solve his own problem.

3. Ënda lí tekpa kpawakeo.

Gbē pɔ fīasea lí a aizee ãnadão.

The cane rat doesn't announce the bushfire.

A person in debt doesn't brag about his wealth.

4. Tó n mē sawa gbāsī, ñ àà wulekīi gwa.

Tó nle gbē vāibo, wēele ñ dō pɔ pɔ le àà ke màa.

If you say a pig is dirty, look at its pen.

If you are criticizing someone, seek to know what is making him like that.

5. Baalea gɔɔ do lí gbotēna koe eo.

Zī gɔɔ do kea guu negōna lí fuo.

Running all day doesn't break a bubal's leg.

A full day's work won't hurt a young man.

6. Nɔɔ pɔ gà lí kpása ó mao.

Yā pɔ a gbē le, a àà lee.

An animal that is about to die never hears the sound of the hatchet.

Whatever will happen to someone will happen.

7. Nɔɔkusine lí sēsoo.

Aizee pɔ Lua dīle gbē baa ũ, àà pɔe.

A young lion never eat grass.

To each one whatever God has given him.

8. Nili gbēnakpa ní weo n go gǔ lí musuo.

Tó n gbēna vī, ní vīε.

You don't befriend a monkey and get your baton stuck in a tree.

Whatever your friend has is yours.

9. Nilio di wesa kpe kasafii n gbēo.

Tó ní zede vī, dēε lí isimao.

You don't ride an elephant and get wet from dew.

If you have a powerful friend, you won't suffer.

10. Nɔɔmusu kǔɔ de gbɔ gbāaa.

Táaa zede a fǔ kie taaside gā li a kpeo.

A crippled lion is better than a strong bubal.

A strong commoner can't defeat a weak ruler.

11. Semai gbēpāle nɔna tē azīa pɔ yāie.

Yā pɔ ní ye wà kenεo nsu kenéo.

The hyena refuses another's intestines because of his own.

Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you.

12. Sawa lí fu a lemiwao.

Gbē zīa yā lí aà fuo.

A pig never tires of its snout.

People don't change their way of doing things.

13. Zīila lí ne'i kō ũo.

Gbēe a fĩ azĩa lile ƿƿpāle ũo.

A civet cat doesn't give birth to a mongoose.

Nobody can change into something else.

14. Tó kiwesao le soleke, sē n̄ lác mé aaì yã'e.

Tó gbēzōƿƿ le soleke, an iwao mé ì yã'e.

When elephants fight, it's the grass and bushes that suffer.

When the powerful fight, it's the commoners who suffer.

15. Tó yã'o zōo no, wìli o wee líe bee gbàaεo.

Yābɔlezōo ì to wà yã aisai oε.

*Unless it's idle chatter, you don't tell a monkey that this tree
is tall.*

Much talk results in useless comments.

16. Wìli semai kpa blè kpéao.

Wìli le'ude kpa n̄o zīao.

You don't put a hyena in charge of a cage of goats.

You don't put a glutton in charge of the meat.

17. Tó sasi fùakpaa, ñyō tei.

Tó n̄ ye n̄ ƿo e gbēwa, nsu kēwào.

If a bat is wearing a cap, follow him.

If you want something from somebody, don't leave him.

18. Wà kyale kpà maie.

Wà taa'obɔ kpà taa'onawa.

They put shoes on a hyena.

They equipped a traveler.

19. Tó wesa go zù, wesa mé ì kũ.

Tó gbě gbãa le yãke, gbě gbãa mé ì ledau.

When an elephant throws a stick, it's an elephant that catches it.

When a powerful man is doing something, it's a powerful man who gives his opinion.

20. Tó n ẽna pɔ mà, kpoo pɔ ma lo.

Tó n gbě pɔ mà, gbědo pɔ ma lo sã.

If you smell a mouse, smell the mustard also.

Listen to everyone's point of view.

21. Gbaũ vĩa mamatẽn isi dõo.

Tó nɔana le gbě de, ilio dò ïi dõo.

A blind baboon doesn't distinguish ripe and green fruit.

A hungry person is not fussy about the soup.

22. We lí kɔɔ'o ní a ilioo.

Néɔ su dɔe ní n inaco.

A monkey doesn't play with the branch where he sleeps.

Children should respect their parents.

23. Wesa gbeu ɔ bana ì imiu.

Gbēeɔ sabai ɔ gbēeɔ ì pɔ e.

An antelope drinks water from an elephant's footprint.

People benefit from one another.

24. Wìli gbaũkũ'ese ka sãeɔ.

Pɔ pɔ gbē lí keo, wìli a ese kaèo.

You don't give baboon-catching medicine to a sheep.

Don't give a remedy to someone who doesn't need it.

25. Tó we ne'ì gwã, ì vũaae.

Gusia naai vïo.

When a monkey gives birth at night, she throws it away.

You cant trust the darkness.

26. Gbēeɔ yãì gbēeɔ wesa nɔɔ sòì.

Gbēeɔ yãì ɔ gbēeɔ ì pɔeɔ ei.

Thanks to others, some people ate elephant meat.

Others help other get what we couldn't get by ourselves.

27. Tó ni wetěsa taa'oo, wìli gbē soikemao.

Yã pɔ ni dɔdɔ a leio, wa n peoo.

*If you don't imitate the walk of a big monkey, they won't
sool dogs onto you.*

What you don't pretend to do, you won't be slandered
for.

28. Tó gbě ěmbaasuna lè ní ɔgbalao, ì a ka wolo ní swaaœ.

Tó n yã pɔ a maa ò keo kè, ì isimæ.

If you strike a porcupine with the palm of your hand, you'll remove the spines with your teeth.

If you do something you shouldn't, you'll pay the price.

29. Tó wesa vùaa, wì wéele ní koɔ kpéœ.

Pɔ pɔ vùaa wélekíi tẽ vïo.

If an elephant is lost, you look even in the chicken coop.

When something is lost, you'll search everywhere.

30. Tέ mé kù gbeaanawa ɔ wàle e zĩilæ.

Pɔ pɔ pãsí ɔ wàle e a pãsío.

The leopard got burnt and was mistaken for a civet cat.

When one underestimates the ferocity of something.

Lessons from insects

1. Wìli au wéele kwawao.

Tó gbě pɔ vïo, wìli ewào.

You don't look for blood from a grasshopper.

You don't get something from someone who hasn't got it.

2. Busebuse kolo ì Nii le.

Mena fĩ, ñyĩ pɔ pɔ nle ya le.

Little by little a snail reaches Niki.

Be patient and you'll get what you are after.

3. Kòò pɔ n dɔewà mé ì zu n níú.

Yã pɔ nle dɔewà mé ì isima.

The insect you underestimate gets up your nose.

It's the problem you minimize that will bother you.

4. Tó nle vīikeena yĩ n goneo, n pɔ no.

Gbẽ pɔ le azĩa yãgõgõ ní lefɔlɔ ì kuawà.

If you are digging up a cricket with a pestle, it doesn't belong to you.

He who settles a dispute discourteously will lose out.

5. Gbẽ pɔ menafĩ mé ì kɔɔbii wá e.

Gbẽ pɔ mena vī ã yã ì bɔè maa.

It's the patient person who finds the maggot's bones.

Everything comes out well to those with patience.

6. Tó n mè n be bɔɔna a n pao, baasi babasi a n pa.

Gbẽ pɔ le baale a beɛ a taasike baasi.

If you say the ant at your home won't sting you, a bigger ant from outside will sting you.

He who runs away from home will suffer elsewhere.

7. Lakɛɛ pɔ le sɛɛmpa, blé lí dɔwàò.

Gbẽ pɔ le wɛɛle ì ɛɛ.

Termites never attach themselves to dry leaves blowing around.

He who is busy succeeds.

8. Tó ua guo kɔɔbii kà, ìatē mé ní a wíó.

Gbẽ pɔ kù àà yāgɔgɔ mé i gɔgɔ, àà yāɛ.

If your compound is infested with maggots, the sun will be embarrassed.

If you don't fix a problem that is your responsibility, you'll be ashamed.

9. Tó ni sɛɛkɛɛ soo, n nɔsɛ lí ke yɔɛo.

Tó ni yāe keo, í wāa lí ka n pɔao.

If you don't eat cockroaches, you won't feel sick.

If you don't do anything wrong, you won't feel terror.

10. Ūsĩn wewāa ã gbõ wāa ì elewà.

Gbẽ pɔ wà yãε, yã ì àà lee.

It's the impatient fly that hot faeces land on.

The impetuous person creates his own problems.

11. Tó ñyõ kwa kũo, ɔta tũule.

Tó wàè zĩke, nsu ñyõ zõlea pão.

If you would trap a locust, close the gourd with your hand.

Don't remain inactive when others are working.

12. Soi le ta papa, ã ta lé a ú ble.

Yã pɔ a fõ pɔe ke gbẽεo ã nle keè.

The scorpion is stinging the bowl and the bowl continues to eat its food.

What cannot hurt anyone is what you are doing to him.

13. Dãnsaba lí zwãatão.

Les matériaux .

You can't weave cloth with spiderweb.

Poor quality materials don't do the job.

Lessons from fish and reptiles

1. Gbaa'i a ba kasonɛɔ wáaɛ.

Tó nle pɔ ãanadã, a laa gběpii wáaɛ.

The pond water will dry up on the tadpoles.

If you show-off about something, it will finish in front of everyone.

2. Gbě pɔ le kusi ba nabo nɛblè kòlo ɔzĩɛ.

Gbě pɔ pɔmaa dõo ì a zɔzɔna maaboɛ.

He who praises the speed of a tortoise was raised by a snail.

He who doesn't know good things praises inferior things.

3. Í le si kusiwa a tɔɔnaue we.

Yã le ãada gběwa ã wa dõo.

The tortoise is sweating in his shell there.

A person is suffering from problems unknown to others.

4. Idãmá lí kwã báa totoo.

Pɔsɛma a fɔ bɔɔlɛkɛnɛ piio.

A cup of water doesn't tan a crocodile's skin.

Something borrowed doesn't resolve all one's problems.

5. Baa ké kpāna pāsīo, wa ka í sòolo bòuo.

Baa ké gbē suuu vī, wa yāpii keèo.

*Even though the African beauty snake is harmless, people
don't put it in their trouser pocket.*

Even when a person is gracious, you don't trust him with
everything.

6. Kaso lí kule gugiiuo.

Tó í pɔ vī, wìo dinziè.

A toad never crouches in a dry/empty place.

If you are wealthy, people surround you.

7. Kaso be í pāpāoe, kpɔ mé a í vī.

Gbē pɔ pɔ vīo mé ì a ïanadã.

The toad struts around, but fish possess the marsh.

He who has nothing likes to show off.

8. Kpɔ lí dɔaa íeo.

Wãa Luae ì í kpa yāie.

Fish don't come before water.

Pre-empting God brings problems.

9. Kusi zīkanao mé aa kō zōkīi dō.

Yādoūkenao mé wìo kō asii dō.

Fighting tortoises know where to hit each other.

People of the same profession know each others' secrets.

10. Kusi ye wozuai, ãma à tè mé le kpaè.

Gbè ye gbada, ãma a vïo.

The tortoise wants to mate, but his shell hinders him.

You want to donate, but you don't have the means.

11. Kaso dõ í plao.

Gbè pɔ le namama líɔ dõ a su taasikeo.

Toads don't distinguish two waters (hot and cold).

The well-off don't know they will sometimes suffer.

12. Gẽn do kwã gbõpà íle.

Gẽn do ɔ ñyɔ bee kemεε.

The crocodile defecated in the water only once.

That's the last time you'll do that to me.

13. Limusu kisiaá sekaso yã no.

Yã pɔ gbè lí keo go lí à gbëo.

Tree-top dangers don't concern a toad.

You don't suffer consequences of things you don't do.

14. Má a zae leũkpaε í bõεoo.

Má pɔ gbëε kpa mà a nena sio.

I won't exchange my Nile monitor for a Savannah monitor.

I won't exchange a large thing for a little thing.

15. N̄ kpɔvlatē wezēo a f̄ kwā bɔ ɛuo.

Gbē ya bɔa a be àao.

Despite the catfish's intelligence, it can't chase a crocodile from its hole.

It's difficult to evict someone from their home.

16. Ml̄ mi mé ì ml̄ vl̄ liaa.

Gbē pɔ n vī mé ì ikokema.

The snake's head guides its tail.

Your supporter exerts authority over you.

17. N̄ ye z̄io, a na n kpesaai.

N̄ ye yāio, à n le.

You don't like lizards and they are in your eaves.

You have been subjected to what you don't like.

18. Ml̄da baa lí vuao.

N̄yō kua pɔ pɔ de n pɔ ũwao.

The python's share doesn't fly away.

You won't miss out on what is yours.

19. B̄ε l̄l̄ea n̄ aà z̄εao dōε.

Gbēε pɔ'ea n̄ n̄ pɔ'esaio yā dōε.

A Savannah monitor's falling or standing is the same.

For some people gain or loss amounts to the same thing.

20. Tó n̄ yei blɔɔ ʃ ma, kɛsɛpɛlɛ wáawa.

Tó n̄ ye n̄ yā susu ma, gbɛa a makīi.

If you want to hear a toad croak, step on the papyrus.

If you want to know the truth, ask at the source.

21. Tó n̄ è kusi libɛ ísi sea, fɔkpa zaa'ianawa n̄ zĩo.

Pɔ pɔ gbɛ̃ a fĩ eo mé n̄ è a vĩ, gbɛ̃e mé aà kàwà.

*If you see a tortoise carrying a green fruit, greet the storm
for its work.*

If you see someone with something that he couldn't get
by himself, another person enabled him.

22. Wì swami kwã dɛ n̄ zae tóœ.

Wì dàakɛ n̄ yāpāle tóo.

*One kills the crocodile at the source of the river and calls it a
monitor lizard.*

One commits a crime and calls it something else.

23. Zĩ lí a taa'oze too.

Lá yā kũ a kɛ, màa ì kɛ.

The lizard never leaves its path.

Whatever is appropriate happens.

24. Zāmaa nakɛnɛ mé sekaso g̃ò vlāsai.

Tó n̄ namakè gbɛ̃ɛɔnɛ, ì isima gbezāɛ.

Because of generosity to people the toad has no tail.

If you do good to people, you'll sweat later.

25. Zekīi maa mé ì ní kpɔ maa de.

Tó ní gbēmaa vī, ni pɔmaa ee.

A good position allows one to catch good fish.

If you have a good friend, you'll benefit.

26. Pɔ pɔ ì vīvī né lí kugaaleo.

Yākeao ì bɔ ia kīie.

The offspring of that which hops doesn't crawl.

Some actions are hereditary.

27. Wīli kpɔ lu ileuo.

Tó ni pɔ e ní nà n ɔzīo, nsu fiaboo.

You don't buy a fish in the water.

Don't pay until you take possession.

28. Sōakōi mé ì to bōe ta.

Kōyamasai lí to yā bōlekeo.

Waiting for each other allows the monitor to escape.

Misunderstanding results in no resolution.

29. Tó gbē le mlē kane, ñyō ēna kaè.

Tó gbē le vāikene, ñyō maakeè. ???

If someone is sending a snake against you, send him a mouse.

If someone treats you badly, outwit him.

30. Tó kòò sia n da dè, tó n limiɔn sia è, baale.

Tó yãvãie n le, tó a taa le mɔɔ, baale.

If a black insect killed your mother, when you see a black stump, run.

If a certain evil has affected you and a similar one is coming, flee from it.

31. Tó ka dɔ gbēwa, tó a dɔ gbēwao, ka da gbàlaue.

Tó yã gbē lè, gbē pɔ yã i àà leo líɔ a ãa dɔo.

If an arrow is pointed towards you and not to others, the arrow is in the quiver.

If you have a problem and others don't have it, they don't understand the difficulty.

32. Tó kpɔ mè swa wé do wiaɛ, déme a gii?

Gbē pɔ n asii dɔ, tó à ɛɛdɔma, wì sie.

If the fish said the river has only one eye, who'll contradict?

If someone who knows you well lies about you, he'll be believed.

33. Tó ni bua swawao, ñsu kwã lé gbàa boo.

Tó ni gao, ni bɔ wíuo.

If you haven't crossed the river, don't insult the crocodile about his long-nose.

If you haven't died you're still vulnerable to humiliation.

34. Tó n̄ ye ke kwã ù zia, ní ke kutée ù gbãe.

Tó n̄ ye òyõ de maezõõ maa ù zia, òyõ de nebõlõn laaide
ù gãa.

*If you want to be a crocodile tomorrow, be (rough) shea
bark today.*

If you want to be a wise man, first be a sensible youth.

35. Ligõna lí e kikpao ɔuo.

Gbẽ pɔ ì kpale yã, yã ì bɔè maa.

The branch doesn't break under the hand of the camelion.

He who goes carefully succeeds.

36. Baa tó bakaso pɔ pà, a fõ mlẽ mɔo.

Gbẽ pɔ òyõ fõ yãe keèò, tó n̄ pɔ pààazi, pãe.

Even if a toad gets angry, he can't swallow a snake.

Getting angry with someone you can't harm is useless.

37. Nèbõlõna lí a bõe daaloua e nòõ ùo.

Gbẽ lí gbẽ pɔ a dõ e pɔe ùo.

A child doesn't think of his pet monitor as meat.

People under-estimate people they know.

38. Pɔ pɔ gbẽ kù íle pii kwãe.

Gãli guu yã pɔ kè pii, dɔaana yãe.

Whatever attacks someone in the water is a crocodile.

In a group, whatever happens is the leader's
responsibility.

Lessons from trees

- 1. Tó wì ze ñdo wà gbãε, zaa a da líwa s̃uo.**
Gbẽdoũna pɔ ea àao.
If you could grow up alone, vines wouldn't climb trees.
It is not easy to make progress on your own.
- 2. Wìli lí gii totoo.**
Wì né da zéwa a f̃neũzĩε.
You can't bend dry wood.
Train a child at a young age.
- 3. Àle íle ñ ɔo àle kpababa ñ swaao.**
Taasi g̃εag̃èn we.
He is rowing with his hands and shelling locus-bean with his teeth.
He is suffering too much.
- 4. Kpewena mendo mé ì í ɔkpa.**
Gbẽṽai yãkea mé ì bila ɔkpa.
One locus bean seed spoils the water.
The deed of one bad person upsets many.

5. Kpawena dà kpoolɛ.

Pɔ pɔ gbɛ lɛ gɛ wɛɛlɛi ãa'ãa ɔ̃ a è a gbá saɛ.

The locust-bean gatherer met the mustard.

What one goes to seek laboriously he finds close by.

6. Lá pɔ lí dɛ, màa ì nɛ'i.

Bui pii ní a fɛlɛkaayãoɛ.

As a tree is, so it bears fruit.

Every race has its own customs.

7. Kãsí dà gbɔ̃nawa.

Ínỹ f̃ ò gbɛ sɛo ɔ̃ ade lòoma.

The squash has spread over the flax.

When someone you can't support depends on you.

8. Kù isi lɛlɛa kù mai ãá zãmaɛ.

Nɛbɔlɔna gaa gbɛz̃ɔ̃ ãá yãbɔnsaɛɛ.

A green shea fruit falling before a ripe one is unexpected.

The death of a young person before an old is a shock.

9. Zà s̃ dafu d̃ zà lá zi kiblè yãao.

ɛwaaso d̃ maez̃ɔ̃ ɛwaasoblè yãao.

A new palm frond doesn't realize the old one used to reign.

A youth ignores the fact that the old were once young.

10. Swami mendo mé lío gběne gběne vī adoo.

Mme ñyõ e ñyõ deñla dūnia guu ndoo.

It is not only one river source that has big copal trees.

It's not only you who thinks he'll be the greatest in the world.

11. Tó té i ñ mamatēnawao, ìli né maa io.

Tó wì wētēa mɔ dàadeeo, ìli a dàa too.

If fire doesn't damage the yellow plum, it doesn't bear good fruit

If an offender is not punished, he doesn't reform.

12. Tó n dɔe n n bàala bao, ni kpa ka n gāue.

Tó n dɔe n pɔ pɔ n vīwa, ni taasikee.

If you belittle your 'baala' cord, you carry the locust-bean on your shoulder.

If you despise what you have, you suffer.

13. Kuaa wísiwa mé ì mɔ n kɔpamiao.

Tó wi a maa eo, wì a zɔzɔna sɛɛ.

Lack of spiced flour makes one drink locust-bean drink.

If you don't get the best one, you take the inferior.

**14. Maezɔɔ pɔ ku zĩle gu'ea zã de né pɔ da zà lí
musua.**

Baa tó ewaaso yã dɔ, maezɔɔ dũnia dɔa deaàla.

*An old man standing sees further than a child up the palm
tree.*

Even if a young person is knowledgeable, the aged know
the world better than him.

15. Kɔbeá á no.

Ɛeá sĩana no.

The sausage tree fruit is not a yam.

A lie is not the truth.

16. Gu pɔ wà tawa le'i kòleu ã nle kãwa weeleu.

Gu pɔ nyɔ pɔ euo ã nle weeleu.

*You're looking for potash in the place where someone spit
tobacco.*

You are looking where you won't find.

17. Fɔ ùade fɔ yɔlɔ ì.

Tó yãmaa bɔ yãvã guu.

The irritating baobab has produced a smooth baobab.

When good has resulted from evil.

Lessons from plants

1. Ese'ina mé ì pisi a áwawa.

Tó mae ye né dazi, ɔ̀ ìò ye nézi.

Wild sugar cane gives its taste to the stalk.

If the father loves the child's mother, he'll love him also.

2. Gbě pọ̀ le ese z̄z̄ kapaá lí z̄lẽ gwao.

Daavãikena lí laasookẹ yã pọ̀ asu à a le ziawao.

He who harvests sorghum on the stem doesn't look down.

A criminal doesn't think about what will happen to him tomorrow.

3. Pěna lí kě a kɔwao.

Yã pọ̀ gbě dɔ̀ekè̀ò toa ìa.

A calabash is never separated from its stalk.

It's hard for a person to quit bad habits.

4. Gawaton minade ɔ̀ wì gē z̄ú.

Minade mé ì pọ̀ e.

It's the lucky grass stem that is dipped in the honey.

It's the lucky person who wins something.

5. Tó ese i f̄ p̄e k̄eò, a b̄usua a f̄ p̄e keo.

Tó nz̄ia pọ̀ i m̄mao, gb̄p̄ãle pọ̀ a m̄mao.

If the sorghum can't do anything, neither can its bran.

If your own things aren't enough, another person's
won't be enough.

6. Saena le sãma kũmabo.

Gbẽvãio le kõ vãibo.

The rosella is criticizing the tamarind's sourness.

When bad people criticize each other.

7. Tó n ese wen do è vūaaa, à b̀̀ a dasio guue.

Nsu nibo dile gbẽando ão.

If you see a grain of spilt sorghum, it came from a pile.

Don't think a stranger is a loner.

8. Wili z̀̀ boe tazio.

Soukea za kaaú mé maa.

You don't halve the gourd on the day of travel.

It's good to do your preparations early.

9. Blaa lí ne'i kaableneaø.

Gbẽ pɔ pɔ m̀̀aok̄ea d̄õ lí eo. ???

Beans don't produce for cake eaters.

When the consumer doesn't find it.

10. Tó ese kaaú i ne'io, a gbẽzãá ese gbõsie.

Tó d̄aana i p̄e woo, wa gbẽ pɔ te z̄ã yã'o l̄é?

If the early sorghum didn't produce, the latter is blighted.

If the leader did nothing, don't talk about his successors.

11. Wìli sɛpu zɔ̀ wà aedòwàò.

Tó wàè gbě pe, wìliò ye àà mao.

You don't chop down thorny succulent while looking at it.

You don't slander someone in their presence.

12. Gbě pɔ̀ sǐ sò mé ì a í mi.

Tó n yā̀kè a go lé n gbě, nsu gběe tàae eo.

It's the person who eats peanuts who drinks water.

If you suffer from doing something, don't blame others.

13. Tó n m̀è gbě a ka gbauo, ebe mé a n pɔ̀ dɛ.

Tó n m̀è gbě a eo, míme ni su kuawà.

If you someone won't fill his granary, weeds will kill yours.

If you say someone won't have something, it's you who will miss out.

14. Nibɔ̀ lí saena kuu beleɛo.

Nibɔ̀ lí dɔaa beleɛo.

A stranger doesn't prepare rosella soup for a local.

Strangers don't guide the locals.

15. Pɔ̀ pɔ̀ kǎna gà mé ì sě ga.

Tó yā̀ n gwana lè, a n leɛ.

Whatever pulls up the gardenia pulls up grass.

What affects your carer will affect you also.

16. Saena ì fele ní a kũmaoε.

Baade ì fele ní a dàaoε.

Rosella grows with its sourness.

Everybody grows up with his vices.

Lessons from people

1. Dε zi mé tò vĩa a kpe gwà.

Yã pɔ gbě dεkèdò ì εa κεε.

An old habit caused the blind man to look back.

You continue to do what you habitually do.

2. Daade lí a dàa too.

Yã pɔ gbě dεkèdò toa ãa.

A bad person never gives up his bad habit.

It's difficult to give up a bad habit.

3. Gbě pɔ aafia è mé ì wěni galike.

Tó gbě b̀ ga lεzĩ ̃ i a wěni bεεε d̃.

He who has recovered reminisces about life.

A survivor recognizes the value of life.

4. **Gbē pɔ ɡīa s̄aàɡuá ɡulue.**

Gbē pɔ wà nakèè mé i d̄n̄éó, ɡulue.

He who forgets the past is ungrateful.

He who doesn't recognize a past favor is ungrateful.

5. **Gbē pɔ le i'oo vua ìò ãæ.**

Gbē pɔ le e á ñno lí gbē yāmao.

It is difficult to wake somebody who isn't asleep.

You can't teach someone who thinks he is smart.

6. **Gbēz̄ɔ́á tufue, pɔ pɔ kè vāi pii ñ wì kɔlewà.**

Wì yāpii di gbēz̄ɔ́æ.

A leader is a trash can, whatever goes bad is thrown at him.

People burden leaders with all their problems.

7. **Daε ɡo lí εo, ì kooε.**

Lá yākele ɡè kai pii, daε ì εa ke naε.

The family cane doesn't break, it bends.

No matter what problems arrive, family members make up.

8. **Tó n mē εde a gbē eo, bīide ku kái no.**

Tó n mē gbēblena a e gbēbleo, bīide ku we no.

If you say the liar won't get anyone, a greedy person is not near.

If you say a deceiver won't cheat anyone, there are no greedy people there.

9. Gbē pɔ le n so, ìli n fěfěa gwao.

Gbē pɔ ì pɔ ema, ìli n pɔkesai yādao.

The person who is eating you ignores your emaciation.

The person who benefits from you ignores your moment of need.

10. Gbē pɔ le dɔe ní gbao tēa dōo.

Gbē pɔ ì pɔ fēnembo, wi àà tē yāa no.

He who underestimates a gift hasn't experienced refusal.

He who belittles something hasn't been refused before.

11. Kpāi mé ì kpāi gbesi gbɛ musu.

Daadoũdeɔ mé aaì kō asii dō.

It's a thief who tracks a thief on a mountain.

Those with the same vice know each other's secrets.

12. Maezō lí kagba zu ile pāo.

Maezō lí yāke pāo.

An older man doesn't shoot a poison arrow in water for nothing.

Older men don't do something for no reason.

13. Kia gběá kiaɛ.

Wì misiile kia pɔɛɛ.

The chief's dog is a chief.

One respects what belongs to a chief.

14. Baa tó wēle kia vīo, a zōe zōo vī.

Gue líe d̄aanasaio.

Even when a village is without a chief, it has a great farmer.

No society is without a leader.

15. Tó kia tōfō, aà d̄oaiɔ̀ ì gbōpaε.

Tó d̄aana yāvāikè, aà iwaò ì ke deaàlaε.

When a chief farts, his guards defecate.

Whenever a chief acts badly, his officials do worse.

16. Vīaò wēleu wēdode mé ìo kia ũ.

Gu pɔ̀ wēde vīo, wēsāngai mé ìo wēde ũ.

Au village des aveugles le bogne est roi.

Where there is no enlightend person, an adventurer is
king.

17. Tó sōũ le tōkaŋgu, tó ni me kũ'ũuo, ìliɔ̀ dō a gĩ vīo.

Tó wàle yā'ōmakene mé ni lesio, wiliɔ̀ dō àle ōmao.

*If a fool is farting in others' presence and you don't say m'm,
he'll never know that it smells.*

If someone acts offensively toward you and you don't
speak up, they won't know you were offended.

18. Gbezu'ɔ'ulena ɔ̃ àlɛ kɛ̀.

Àlɛ kɛ̀ landɔ̃ áme i kɛowa.

He's throwing a stone and hiding his hand.

He's pretending that he didn't do it.

19. Gbẽ pɔ̃ gbasia dɔ̃ ɔ̃ wì gba kãfiɛ.

Gbẽ pɔ̃ ì gba saaukpa ɔ̃ wì a dafu daè.

He who knows how to receive a gift receives more.

He who shows appreciation for a gift gets a new one.

20. Nibɔ̃ lí vìà mia dɔ̃o.

Tó nibɔ̃ wẽlɛ asii dɔ̃, bele mé òè.

A stranger doesn't know where the blind man's grave is.

If a stranger knows a village secret, a local told him.

21. Ɔwãñ'iide de zempãdea.

Gbẽ pɔ̃ yãke à zãwà maa de gbẽ pɔ̃ i yãe kɛola.

A bad dancer is better than a bystander.

It's better to do something and make a mistake than to do nothing.

22. Seade ìɔ be ní a gbalaoɛ.

Gbẽ pɔ̃ yãkè swã ìɔ dɔdɔɛ.

A doubtful person moves around with his quiver.

A guilty person is always on the look-out.

23. Suuude mé ì gbɛ disa à ma.

Gbɛ pɔ mena vī mé ì yāfɔ̄.

A patient person can boil a stone until it is cooked.

The patient person is capable.

24. Wīli fɔkpa ãandewa n̄ gĩa baoo.

Wīli daade saaukpa àà dàa yā musuo.

You don't greet a fool for yesterday's news.

You don't thank a villain for his bad behaviour.

25. Vūana lí kpassa gii d̄ɔao.

Gu pɔ gbɛ a pɔ euo, ìli a zé sɔo.

Fulani don't guard their empty camps.

Nobody wears a path to where he'll find nothing.

26. Tó gbɛ ãana è, ì gbefãɛ.

Tó gbɛɛɔ pɔ è, yā pɔ deńla ɔ̄ aaì ɔkakai.

When someone finds the wind, he throws gravel.

Some people get something and attempt too much.

27. Vūana ì pila a dee kpassaue.

Daadoũdeɔ mé aaì tek̄ɔi.

Fulani stays at their neighbor's camp.

People of the same character stick together.

28. Wìli εε gbēgo ulèè.

Tó wà ɔ̀pèlè tàaedewa, wìli yǎ pɔ wa ye daè ulèè.

You don't hide a blind man's rod from him.

When the guilty is apprehended, his punishment is not hidden from him.

29. Tó vĩa i gao, àà koe bɔ lí laao.

Tó gbē i gao, àà taasi lí laao.

If a blind man doesn't die, his shin ulcer never ends.

If a man doesn't die, his suffering would never end.

30. Bānde a gò gbēne sekii d5ε.

Gbēlelena lí f5 gbēpii leleo.

The moron knows where to find his big stick.

The rebuker can't rebuke everyone.

31. Gu pɔ εεũ 5 kpāi ì vĩa.

Gbē pɔ buse 5 wì àà gbāa le.

The thief jumps over the lowest part.

It's the weak person who is teased.

32. Ma bɔɔde pɔ sì lemide pɔwa.

Ma bɔɔde sì gbēkpɛbɔnawa.

I prefer a dirty person to a bragger.

I prefer the dirty to a slanderer.

33. Nezōngāu lío gu zā dō.

Gbē pɔ le taasikeo lío dō yā'ia kuo.

The child on the shoulder doesn't know about long distance.

One who doesn't suffer doesn't realize there are difficulties.

34. N gai a boo'o tia.

Wàle gbēa lezamáe.

Your evil spirit will soon speak Boko.

Warning someone he is about to be punished.

35. Tó n wē'i zāe, dɔaa ñ na n ge'owa kaau.

Tó ní dō n yāo lí bɔleke kpaao, nawà kaau.

If your tears are far, begin your death cries early.

If you know your affairs don't resolve quickly, start doing it early.

36. Baade le ãatē gwa a minanguoe.

Baade zā yā ō a dō.

Everybody sees the sun above his head.

Everyboday is preoccupied with his own problems.

37. Zumendodāna lí kpe gwao.

Gbē pɔ gbē vīo lí yāke à kpe gwào.

He who grazes one ox doesn't look behind him.

The loner only cares about himself.

38. Zɔfēna mé ì ɔsāsā.

Gbē pɔ ì zīke mé ì pɔble.

He who squeezes a honeycomb licks his hand.

He who works eats.

39. Soona mi ì wi buae.

Gbē pɔ le yāke mé ì zāwà.

The hoe head breaks at the farm.

It's the one who is active who makes a mistake.

40. Zakologbasenaɔ ì lekpaaī kaaue.

Yā pɔ á ye o bilae, à a lekpaaī kaaue.

Those who gather the dry palm fronds plan early.

Discuss early what you want to tell the crowd.

41. Tó n mē gāgaa a zwāa yeo, kapoo i ma no.

Tó n mē gbē a pɔ eo, ade pɔ'egɔɔ i ka no.

*If you say the bramble won't wear clothes, the kapok hasn't
yet burst open.*

If you say someone will not get anything, his time hasn't
come yet.

42. Tó nle gbōpa, tó n aà è, zí zōleu.

Ze yā pɔ gudena a sele taò keae.

If you are defecating and you see him, sit on it.

Stop doing what a troublemaker will report.

Lessons from God

1. Lua lí guzule tatao.

Taaside taasi io kãfiẽ.

God doesn't fill in a valley.

The suffering of the poor always increases.

2. Lí pɔ Lua pè ãatẽ lí fɔ dɛo.

Pɔ pɔ Lua i dɛo lí gao.

The sun can't kill a tree planted by God.

What God hasn't killed doesn't die.

3. Lua su ese de ñ a nɔoo.

Yã pɔ gbẽ le ya, Lua to àà le.

God mustn't kill the sorghum with its seed head.

May God allow a person to attain what he is seeking.

4. Lua ye gãzi, ñ ka lí pà.

Lua ye gbẽi, yã zãàzi.

God loves the guinea-fowl, so the arrow hit a tree.

God loves someone, so he escaped from danger.

5. **Zu pɔ vlã vĩo, Lua mé le ũsĩna yaè.**

Lua mé ì ɔlia wēnadezi.

It's God who chases flies from a tailless cow.

It's God who cares for the miserable.

6. **Gbemusu emasa, Lua mé le ikawa.**

Gbẽ pɔ zennɔde vĩo, Lua mé ì zeaàɔ.

It's God who waters the mountain top onion.

It's God who supports those who have no helper.

7. **Tó Lua ãnkpeuna b̀ zɔɔ k̀olou aafia, a wɛkpale
kiikasauo.**

Tó n bɔ yãpãsiũ aafia, ñyõ we ñ yõ a siawa lo.

*If God saved the house rat from the crooked gourd, it won't
look into the palm-leaf sieve.*

If you escape from a difficult situation, you won't be
willing to try another one.

8. **Lua mé we gbà asea, ã à gbẽ sãnkɛ.**

Tó n taaekè nɛbɔɔnaɛ, ì n lelee. ???

God gave the monkey the means, then he slapped the dog.

God give people the means, then they do what is not
acceptable.

9. **Lua mé kikpao vĩa pɔblea dõ.**

Lua lí gbẽe tẽ a baao.

God knows what the blindameleon eats.

God never refuses to give anyone his share.

10. Tó n mè Lua n bɔ, lí kũ gbãa.

Tó n̄ ye Lua yãe kene, nsu ɔkpasio.

If you ask God to save you, hold the tree tightly.

If you want something from God, don't be idle.

(God helps those who help themselves.)

11. Tó Lua ye kpãizi, a ye pɔdei.

Yã pɔ n̄le ke, ziewa Lua a bɔnnɔ.

If God loves the thief, he also loves the owner.

Whatever you are doing, one day God will find you out.

12. Lua lezuaazi, à we n̄ sweo.

Wà n weele n̄ yãmaao ñ n gi gei.

God called him and he responded by whistling.

Someone wanted to do you good and you refused.

13. Tó gb̄eɔ kã, aai me Lua pila wà d̄eekaɛ.

Tó gb̄eɔ pɔ è, aaliɔ d̄ɔ Lua ku loo.

*When some people are satisfied, they challenge God to a
wrestle.*

When some people succeed, they forget that God exists.

14. Lua lí de à v̄uaao, ì a s̄ɔkpale líie.

Tó yã gb̄e lè, Lua ì zebɔèe.

God doesn't kill and throw away, he leans it against a tree.

God opens a way for those who are in difficulties.

Lessons from fire

1. **À té se mò.**

À lelekpà pāsīpāsī.

He swallowed a hot coal.

He strongly denied it.

2. **Té lí e kù sēwa gēn plao.**

Baa tó wa ye n yāio, bee a kpa n gea aεεo.

Fire isn't able to burn grass twice.

Even when you are not liked, that won't hinder your progress.

3. **Àle pɔ di té, gbēe a blena lé dōo.**

Nɔ pɔ nle wēele, tó ni seo, n pɔε gīao.

Nobody knows the number of people who will eat what she is putting on the stove.

Unless you marry your fiancée, she is not yet your wife.

4. **Baa tó í gbāsī a pɔε keo, a tedεε.**

Baa tó gbē maaο, ì yāmaake zīεo.

Even though dirty water is good for nothing, it can put out a fire.

Even a bad person does good sometimes.

5. Tó tēgbe i bɔo, limiɔna su tufu yaalɔo.

Tó ní pɔ vī, nsu pɔsaide yaalɔo.

If the bushfire hasn't finished, the stump shouldn't laugh at the ashes.

If you have something, don't mock those who don't.

6. Yaamiɔna de tufua.

Gbē pɔ kunnɔ de gbē pɔ kunnɔola.

A piece of firewood is better than ashes.

He who is with you is better than he who isn't.

7. Tó nle yaamiɔn suelede vūaavūaa, nýɔ̄ gɔ̄ yàa saie.

Tó ni gbē vāibo mé ni ní yaya, nýɔ̄ gɔ̄ gbēsaie.

If you are throwing away smoking pieces of firewood, you'll finish up with no firewood.

If you criticize people and chase them away, you'll become friendless.

8. Gbē pɔ tufu naaikè ɔ̄ té ì nawà.

Gbē pɔ gbēpii naaikè, wì aà zāmakee.

He who trusts ashes gets burnt.

He who trusts everyone gets betrayed.

9. Tó n lé gbāae, ò n kuu tevū.

Tó ni gbē yāgɔ̄gɔ̄e, ò n zīa yāgɔ̄gɔ̄.

If your mouth is long, blow the fire in front of you.

If you resolve others' problems, resolve your own.

10. Wìli tekū wà kòoo gbεao.

Tó yã n le, à n lee.

You don't get burnt and ask about charring.

If something happens to you, it has happened.

(Don't cry over spilt milk.)

11. Té gàε, ̃ nle kɔ̃'o ní tufuo.

Gbē pāsī a pāsī tò, ̃ nle yākeè.

The fire is out and you are playing with ashes.

You're treating a remorseful sinner badly.

12. Ikanleu wà tevuò.

Mɔafiliden we.

One blows the fire with a mouthful of water.

A way of describing a hypocrite.

13. Nle kpasa busaa yāio.

Ìli yāke à kpegwào.

You are not grilling it to take it off the fire.

You act without thinking about the consequences.

14. Suele kùà ledamadewae, ̃ à tà luabe.

Tó ní ledamade ṽio, ńỹ yāmaakeo.

The smoke didn't find an adviser and departed in the sky.

If you don't have an adviser, you'll do badly.

15. Bó té ì i yāai yō baasio?

Gbē pāsī né ìo pāsīē.

What does fire produce if not hot coals.

A violent person child will also be violent.

16. Tó nle té gwa sia kpéwa, āa kpé ni su ewà.

Tó nle gbē gwa vāi, ìli su ào vāio.

*If you see fire on the blacksmith's hut, you'll think it's the
tanner's hut.*

If you regard someone as bad, he may not be.

17. Wìli té ule buntafauo.

Tó n vāi ùlè, a bœ.

You don't hide fire in cotton.

If you hide evil, it'll be exposed.

Lessons from water

1. Í lí a baalèze too.

Baade ní a yākeaoe.

Water never leaves its path.

Each person has his way of doing things.

2. **Tó n m̀è gbē í a pio, n pɔ a swepɛo.**

Tó n m̀è gbē a pɔ eo, ñyõ e s̄o.

If you say someone's water won't boil, yours won't whistle.

If you say someone won't get something, you won't
either.

3. **Tó n bia yõ, tó í i bɔo, gɔɛu.**

Tó n pɔ wèɛɛ mé ni eo, sakau.

If you dig a waterhole and don't find water, defecate in it.

When you fail to get what you seek, forget about it.

4. **Tó wàɛ ní saadee ləkānabo, ikɛ n pɔwa.**

Tó yā n gbē lè gbā, ñyõ ku sɔu guu zia.

If your peer is being shaved today, moisten your own.

If your peer is in difficulty today, be prepared for
tomorrow.

5. **Nibɔ́á kasafiie.**

Nsu to nibɔgwaa n fuo.

A visitor is dew.

Don't fail to be hospitable.

6. **Tó Sɛna í i n bleo, dāna í a f̄õ n gbá seo.**

Tó yā pāsī i n fuo, yā yɔɔna a n fuo.

*If the Niger river didn't drown him, the marsh water won't
sweep him off his feet.*

If a big problem didn't defeat you, a small one won't.

7. Wìli dǒ bo swada lèio.

Wìli kisia gbadao.

You don't build a granary on the edge of a river.

Don't provoke misfortune.

8. Í lí kale pelea saio.

Yãe lí ke pão.

Water doesn't stagnate without mud.

Everything has its consequences.

9. Swa lí pa à sísĩ kũo.

Yã lí e kè de a léao.

A river in flood doesn't reach the hill.

Nothing is able to surpass its extremity.

10. Swa pɔ ku zǎ nisĩna mé ìo maa.

Tó ní zǎ n gbẽo ɔ ìo gbẽmaa ù.

The silhouette of a far-off river is beautiful.

When you are far from someone, they are faultless.

11. Nle ikɔle zòo kpee.

Yã pɔ nle o le gẽ ade swãuo.

You are spilling water on the outside of the gourd.

What you are saying isn't entering his ears.

12. Í pɔ wǎ̃ a su nini.

Yǎ pɔ mò pii a su laae.

Water that was heated must cool.

Everything that happens has an end.

13. Tó ni izu n aeo, nili kẹsẹpele guniewao.

Tó ní ye gbě dɔnlẹ ziaẹ, dɔ adele gbǎ.

If you don't water in front of you, you don't walk on fresh ground.

If you want to help someone tomorrow, start today.

14. Tó nle kpá dada, ni ze isaae.

Tó nle yádada, daale busebuse.

If you're learning to swim, you stay in shallow water.

If you're learning to do something, start gradually.

15. Tó n n imikii dà ní konao, òyǎ̃ n imikii dǎ.

Gbě pɔ à n gba pɔ mé n vǎikèè, òyǎ̃ a sia ekii dǎ.

If you fish with poison where you drink, know where you'll drink in future.

If you displease your provider, know where you'll get your next meal.

16. Wìli níkōε íu isaaο.

Wìli εεto gu ƨɔ wa bɔ́nɔuo.

People don't hide from each other in shallow water.

Don't tell lies in a place where you'll be discovered.

17. Gbē ƨɔ le γε swai mé ì t̀u wi.

Gbē ƨɔ ì yāke mé ì zāwà.

It's he who goes to the river who breaks the gourd.

It's the person who is active who makes a mistake.

18. Í ƨà à kàwázi, kia gbāade ƨìla.

Wàle gbē ƨe, ade m̀ à kàa.

Water flooded all around us, the powerful chief arrived.

They were talking about someone when he came and joined in.

19. Tó í n kũ n ǹε, tó wà fēntɔba d̀ne, ni kũε.

Tó yā'ia gbē lè, ì yā ƨɔ m̀wà ƨíi keε.

If water comes up to your neck and a two-edged sword is extended to you, grab it.

In a grave situation, take any means to escape.

Lessons from body parts

- 1. Tó ní yei wà mibone gbě pɔwa, ò n mibe gwa.**
Yākea lan gbēwa lé kue.
If you want to cut your hair like someone, look at the shape of your crown.
Imitating others has its limits.
- 2. Àà ɔ gbāa.**
A kpāi vīn we.
Hi arm is long.
He's a thief.
- 3. Àà ɔ le àà kpɛ leo.**
Taasidee.
His hand doesn't reach his back.
He lacks means.
- 4. Àà zí gbiaɛ.**
Yākea líɔ àaaàncɔ.
His buttocks are heavy.
He is inactive.
- 5. Wìli kesepɛle vĩa lebawa gēn plao.**
Wìli e yādoū kè gbēɛ gēn plao.
You don't step on a blind man's scrotum twice.
You don't make the same mistake with someone twice.

6. Baade ì gaiga a waa gbãa leue.

Wì yãke ñ yẽẽ leue.

Each possessed person goes into a trance according to the strength of his neck.

Each person does things according to his energy.

7. Má ɔɔ ma aɛ mà mizõ gĩwao.

Máo kai dõ à ma leo!

I won't put my hand out in front and hit my head on a wall.

I won't know about a danger and let it happen to me.

8. Tó ñ ku kpaalekena wéu, mé ñ ku àà nɔseuo, pãe.

Gbẽ pɔ yenzi mé ì n gba pɔ.

It's useless to be in the sight of a distributor if you're not in his heart.

It's the person who loves you who gives you a gift.

9. Gbẽe lí ɔzɛɛɔ a búeo.

Gbẽe zĩa yã lí sãaàgu bauo.

Nobody extends his left hand toward his farm.

Nobody ever forgets about himself.

10. Gu lí si léwao.

Tó wa yei, wa pɔblee.

Night doesn't fall on the mouth.

You can eat whenever you like.

11. Kεεε gea kō be mé daε ũ.

Gea kō be mé ì gbēke kāfī.

Feet going to each other's house means relationship.

Visiting each other strengthens relationships.

12. Kusunaᵑ le kō ɔne ε'ε.

Taaedeᵑ le kō taae'e.

The lepers are breaking each others' fingers.

The guilty are accusing each other.

13. Mɔnkaa lí a gbá seᵑ.

Tó n mɔ n ka yāa, ñ n lé fō.

The passerby doesn't take big steps.

If you just showed up, keep quiet.

14. Wìli tē kpaale í swaaᵑᵑ.

Yā pɔ nili keᵑ, ísu leᵑauᵑ.

You don't divide a taboo item with your teeth.

Don't intervene in things you don't do.

15. Nebɔlɔna báa wì ye wà gēᵑ ìle.

Nebɔlɔna ñ wì à tainke.

You wear a child's leather pants for entering into the water.

It's children who are teased.

16. Nefēnena ɔ i gē tūu guu, gbēzōɔ ɔ i gba musu le.

Nefēnena zī ku a zēi, gbēzōɔ pɔ ku a zēi.

The child's hand goes into the gourd, the adult's hand reaches the top of the platform.

Children and adults both have their own work.

17. Nɔse mé i gbáse.

Tó pɔblea kuo, zī lí geo.

It's the stomach that lifts the feet.

Without food work won't progress.

18. ɔplaa mé i ɔzεε zu'o, ɔzεε mé i ɔplaa zu'o.

Wì kō kpelaε.

The right hand washes the left hand and the left the right.

People show respect to each other.

19. ɔplaa zā mé bō à dà ɔzεεwa we.

Pɔ pɔ nle kuawà, n be gbē è.

The right-hand bracelet came off and is on the left hand.

What you missed out on, your family member got.

20. ɔtoen do lí dozāε gagao.

Gbē men do kea pɔde ũ líɔ àao.

One finger doesn't lap up the slippery soup.

It's not easy for a single person to become rich.

21. Pɔ pɔ lɛ mi too, a fùà toé?

Tó dɔaana i bɔɔ, àà ìwao bɔɔ.

That which doesn't spare the head, will it spare the cap?

If the chief didn't escape, neither will his subjects.

22. Swã lí gbã à vî miao.

Zíkɛna lí e àò dɛ a diilao.

The ear doesn't grow above the head.

The servant is not greater than his master.

23. Tõsemá lí n̄ ò̄ na boo.

Wìli e kɛ n̄ gběpãle pɔɔ lá wì kɛ n̄ nzĩa pɔwao.

Borrowing a penis doesn't allow one to urinate well.

You can't use a borrowed item as if it was your own.

24. Tó bele vlã vî, nibɔ ì súsu pɛ a pòɔu.

Gu pɔ n̄ kuu, gu bee yã ni kɛ.

If the locals have tails, the visitor puts a stirring rod in his bottom.

Wherever you are, you adapt to the customs of that place.

25. Tó kulukuluna mè á gĩdɔ, pòò gè buae.

Tó nle e n̄ dɛnla, gběpãle denla.

If the armpit said it smells, the buttocks went to the farm.

If you think yourself to be the best, another is better.

26. Tó n gi sãmbaai, wa n mi f̄õε.

Tó n gi totoa yɔɔnaε, ñyõ wetẽa zõõ e.

If you refuse to have your ears boxed, your head will be pierced.

If you refuse a little discipline, you'll receive a severe punishment.

27. Wé lí kē bɔgbε saio.

Yã'iaɔ gbεa õ wì ñnɔkũ.

Eyes aren't enlightened without scars.

You get wiser after experiencing difficulties.

28. Wìli wé kɔɔ ñ gbãaoo.

Gbãa mé lí ñ ka pɔwao.

You don't scratch your eyes with force.

It's not with force that you win out.

29. Wìliɔ swaade yaalɔa dõo.

Wìli yãdõ mekaawao.

You never know the smile of a person with prominent teeth.

You can't judge by outward appearance.

30. Zɔ pɔ a nɔsε dè ì gõ ua né ùε.

Zíkɛna pɔ a dii yãmà ì namama.

A compliant servant become a member of the family.

A servant who obeys will be at ease.

**31. Baade swaa vīε, gbē pɔ a pɔ b̀̀ a lé kpe mé
swaade ũ.**

Baade pii ì yā̀kεε, āma gbē pɔ a pɔ b̀̀ ̄̀ wì o.

Everyone has teeth, it's he who has prominent teeth who is toothed.

Everyone does things, but one talks about the person whose work is outstanding.

32. Baa tó n lekpe maao, ̄̀ n̄̀ȳ̀ lenamai.

Baa tó n pɔ vā̀i, n pɔε.

Even when your lips aren't clean, you lick them.

Even though you have something bad, you accept it.

33. Lé pɔ wa d̄̀́ n̄̀ ḡ̀w̄̀w̄̀ maa n̄̀ vl̄̀̀ beoo.

Wēε maa n̄̀ z̄̀yā̀kεaoo.

The mouth you know with cola nut isn't good with plum.

It's not good to see a noble person act like a slave.

34. Tó teasi gbadàma, gā̀dawà.

Lá yā̀ n kpa, ke màa.

If obligation puts its leg over you, put your arm around it.

Embrace what you feel obliged to do.

35. Wìli mez̄̀́ dada líwao.

D̄̀́a pii n̄̀ a dadak̄̀̀io.

You don't learn how to give injections on a tree.

Each area of knowledge has its place of learning.

36. Tó wàlè mibone, nsu kɔɔɔ.

Tó wàlè lɛdama, nsu kaamaikɛo.

If your head is being shaved, don't scratch it.

If you are being counselled, don't argue.

37. Zõlɛ pã mé ì mɔ́ n̄ lɛkãñ kã gagaaɔ.

Gbẽ pɔ zõlɛ pã mé ì yãyaaabɔlɛ.

Idleness causes you to pull on your beard.

He who is idle talks nonsense.

38. Gbẽpãlɛ a aso sɛa, míɔ a kɔɔbɔɔ.

Gbẽpãlɛ a yãkɛ a go ma gbẽo.

If another person is burdened, I won't cower under it.

I won't suffer for another person's actions.

Lessons from food

1. Dasi na, ãma a kasa gaga mé ãa.

Dasi na, a yãkɛlɛ gɔgɔa mé ìɔ zĩ'ũ.

A crowd is exciting, but its potash is difficult to drink.

Crowds are nice, but its difficult to solve their disputes.

2. **Ɛede lí muu pa ka gèo.**

Tó gbě Ɛ ẽ vĩ, baa tó àle sĩana o, gběe lí sio.

A liar's arrow shot at the maize paste doesn't enter.

If someone is dishonest, even when he tells the truth,
people don't believe him.

3. **Wa ye waagase pɔnaie, ɔ wàle li n fěnao.**

Tó wa ye gbězi, ɔ wì yakeè nana.

You enjoy cheese, then you are cutting it with a knife.

When you love someone, you should treat them gently.

4. **Ìli zéńń ublembe yãio.**

Tó gbě yã kuo, zɛaaàń pɔ yã maao.

He doesn't support them so he can eat at their house.

Supporting the guilty to gain something is bad.

5. **Né pɔ da vĩo lí ɔɔle ele kaaio.**

Pɔ pɔ nýɔ eo n̄su wɛdɔio.

An orphan doesn't cry for a market cake.

Don't hope for what you won't get.

6. **Tó n wisilɔgbene zù nzĩae, nýɔ ú gwã kee.**

Tó ni yãke a gɔɔwao, ni taasikeè.

*If you work the millstone by yourself, you'll make night
food.*

If you don't act at the right time, you'll suffer.

7. **Gbē pɔ dee pɔblè à pìsi, a sãɔ gbē pɔ i e blèowa.**
Gbē pɔ pɔ vī yãa mé asu vī lɔo, a sãɔ gbē pɔ vīowa.
He who ate his food and vomited is better off than he who didn't find anything to eat.
He who has had something but doesn't have it anymore is better off than he who never had it.
8. **Nisi lí kpasa ń disaaoo.**
N̄su kpasa ń yã pɔ nle keoo.
Oil never tires of being boiled.
Never get tired with what you are doing.
9. **Tó n uke tò n ibee yãì, n baakpɛe mé ì ga ń nɔanao.**
Tó n maakɛa tò n zangude yãì, nzĩa gbē mé ì yã'e.
When you stop making food because of your enemy, your friend dies from hunger.
When you cease doing good because of your enemy, it's your own people who will suffer.
10. **Nɔɔ pɔ ńyɔ̄ soo, ńsu da gbēpãlee a uao.**
Yã pɔ ń ye wà kenɛo, nsu ke gbēpãleeo.
Meat you won't eat, don't give it to another in his house.
Don't do to another what you don't want him to do to you.

11. Vĩ lí kpèlɛ ɔ̀kpao.

Kãfiáá laoa no.

Milk doesn't spoil porridge.

An addition doesn't subtract.

12. Wì asii á ble ní a sĩĩoɛ.

Yã pɔ wa ye wà mao wì bee gɔ̃gɔ̃ asii guue.

You eat the secret yam with its burnt bits.

What you don't want others to hear is put in order with discretion.

13. Tó n baakɛna tề ú, nsu ua zɔ̃ɔ ɔ̀lɔ̀èo.

Tó n gbẽ tề pɔ, nsu gbẽ pɔ vĩ ɔ̀lɔ̀èo.

If you refuse to give a beggar food, don't show him a big house.

If you refuse someone something, don't guide him to another person.

14. Wisi lí azĩa naboo.

Nsu ò nziã saaukpao.

Salt doesn't praise its own taste.

Don't praise yourself.

15. Wìli muu sɛ wà gbaa lào.

Wìli yã pɔ de wà lao gbeao.

You don't take akassa and ask for a bowl.

Don't ask for what is obvious.

16. Yā'ōma pɔ ku akpasa gbɛɛu, fēna mé dõ.

Gbēna fēɛɛ mé ìò a gbēna pɔsia dõ.

Only the knife knows what is in the grilling yam's stomach.

Only a close friend knows a person's sadness.

17. Baa tó do le doli ε, dosĩna lí doli εo.

Baa tó wàɛ gbē lele, gbēpii a àà leleo.

*Even though a sauce is breaking the ladle, baobab soup
doesn't break it.*

Even when someone is being rebuked, not everyone will
rebuke him.

18. Wìli pɔ kīsā dõ ñ wéoo.

Lá yā de pii, yōwà gĩa.

You don't recognize a bitter thing by its appearance.

Try something first to see how it is.

19. Tó gu dè màiwa, wìli de ñdoo.

Tó gu dè blɛ kīniwa, wìli e wa blè ñdoo.

*When day dawns on left-over food, you aren't alone in
eating it.*

One is never alone in finishing off leftovers.

20. Tó n ádateu dõ, ñyõ a lilea dõ.

Tó n kɔmalekeea dõ, ñyõ a gõgɔa dõ.

If you know how to put a yam on the fire, know how to turn it.

If you know how to tell tales, know how to resolve them.

Conditional proverbs

1. Tó n ku ue maai, ãatẽ a n leo.

Tó n n yã nà gbẽmaae a ɔzĩ, a bɔɔlekeɛɛ.

If you are in good shade, the sun won't affect you.

If you entrust your problems to a good person, it will be resolved.

2. Tó nle e ni pɔnamie, gueɔ ni bataeɛ.

Tó nle e n dõa vĩe, gbẽeɔ denla.

If you think you can sew, in some places you make rope.

If you think you are knowledgeable, some others are moreso.

3. Tó n bú nie, ba kaau.

Yãke a gɔɔwa.

If your field is damp, sow it early.

Do things at the right time.

4. **Tó n da ku beo, n da gǔaá n dae.**

Tó ni pɔ pɔ ní yei eo, ze ní a taataao.

If your mother is not home, your step-mother is your mother.

If you don't get what you want, be content with something similar.

5. **Tó n gone m̀, ze susu.**

Yā pɔ n zè, zè susu.

If you swallow a pestle, stand straight.

Whatever you decide, stand firm.

6. **Tó n n gyã ùle, ñȳ e ò n mia uleo.**

Yā'uleane maao.

You can hide your sickness, but not your grave.

Hiding problems is not good.

7. **Tó ní ye wíio, ñsu k̄o'ò ní gb̄oo.**

Tó ní ye wí n k̄o, nsu faasaiyãkeo.

If you don't like shame, don't play with faeces.

If you don't want to be ashamed, don't act irresponsibly.

8. **Tó ni gao, n baa kpee.**

Gb̄e pɔ ku pii wé gi dɔ pɔie.

If you haven't died, your share is still coming.

While there is life there is hope.

9. Tó n mikpekūna vīo, nsu dēe za gbeseena musuo.

Tó n zennode vīo, nýõ fñ yāpii keo.

*If you don't have a body-guard, don't challenge someone to
a wrestle on flat rock.*

If you don't have a helper, you can't do everything.

10. Tó n mē gbēpāle né a taa'oo, n pɔ a kugaaleo.

Tó n ye gbē ge aeo, nýõ ge ae sōo.

If you say another's child won't walk, yours won't crawl.

If you don't want another to succeed, nor will you.

11. Tó n mē neɔɔɔna gbala kē gbēne, ì dozōgoona looe.

Tó n gbēeɔ saaukpà n wáa, aaì ñanadāe.

*When you say the infant's quiver is too big, he carries a spice
mortar.*

When you congratulate some people, they brag.

12. Tó n tōtō maa, ì ɔle maa.

Yā pɔ gbē kē ài ñ ì e.

If you sow well, it produces well.

You reap according to what you have done.

13. Tó n ye n ka n pɔeã ɔɔɔ, fele n teasi ɔɔɔ.

Tó n ye yā ɔne maa zia, sɔuke za gbā.

*If you want to arrive at your preferred time, get moving at
the right time.*

If you want to do well tomorrow, prepare from today.

14. Tó n̄ ye ñ bɔ̄ maa kɔ̄, zu'o oosi.

Tó n̄ ye ñ pɔ̄ e, zĩkɛ.

If you want to look good in the morning. bathe in the evening.

If you want something, work on it.

15. Tó n̄ ye z̄ɛ̄ d̄ɔ̄ sà kpaiai, lipɛɛ aà d̄ɔ̄ sawa.

Tó n̄ ye gb̄ɛ̄ n gba pɔ̄, pɔ̄pi taa pɔ̄ aà pɔ̄ d̄ɔ̄wà wabikewà.

If you want the farmer's second row of yams, make your claim at the first row.

If you want someone to give you something, ask him for the one he likes best.

16. Tó n̄ ye wà zɛ̄ n kpeo, n̄su gɛ̄ ɛ̄ɛ̄uo.

Tó n̄ ye wà kãmao, z̄ɛ̄ɛ̄ n bɛ̄.

If you don't want someone to stand behind you, don't go to the market.

If you don't like people touching you, stay at home.

17. Tó ni è n̄ena kakao, ní a z̄ɔ̄ kakaā.

Tó ni yãkɛkɛ a gɔ̄ɔ̄wao, a zĩ'ũkũɛ̄.

If you don't fill a small hole, you'll fill a bigger one.

If you don't fix a problem at the right time, it will get bigger.

18. Tó n gē gbōkpēu, n gbōpàe.

Tó ni yāe keo, wa yādoṃmao.

If you went to the toilet, you defecated.

If you didn't do anything, you wouldn't be accused.

19. Tó ni ge eleuo, wa elene gbeamao.

Tó ni leda gbē yāuo, wa boo'onēo.

If you don't go to market, you won't be asked for produce.

If you don't interfere in another's problem, you won't be spoken to harshly.

20. Tó ni ke iatē záo, nýṽ bo lou zá.

Tó ní ye pœ woaiio, nýṽ poble nanao.

If you don't work under the sun, you'll go out in the rain.

If you don't want to anything, you won't eat well.

21. Tó ni vūaaao, nýṽ a kōnseō.

Tó n ɔ lí pooo, Lua a ɔpoone sōo.

If you don't lose, you won't unexpectedly find.

If you are not generous, God won't be generous to you.

22. Tó ni wekpaleuo, nýṽ a zā eo.

Tó ni yā leweo, ìli n leo.

If you don't look inside, you won't see the depth.

If you don't tempt trouble, it doesn't happen to you.

23. Tó ni wá to mao, ñyĩ wá fɔɔ ma.

Gbē pɔ̀ gí lɛdamamai ì yā'ee.

*If you don't listen to our warnings, you'll hear our
condolences.*

He who refuses advice will suffer.

24. Tó n̄ dēe d̄e, ka n̄ n̄ sáao.

Nsu gbāamɔ̀ gbē pɔ̀ aà gbāa i kanwaoeɔ.

If you know wrestling, do it with your peers.

Don't oppress those who are weaker than you.

25. Tó gbē lèlè n̄ āa, ì fele n̄ āae.

Tó gbē d̄aaane, ì n̄ kēe.

He who falls in front of you gets up in front of you.

He who starts before you outpaces you.

26. Tó n̄ gbenē lè, gbedē le.

Tó n̄ gbēe bee pɔ̀ mà, gbē kee pɔ̀ ma.

If you hit the small millstone, hit the large one.

If you listen to this one, listen to that one.

27. Tó nle bia yō, nili belefīma lao.

Tó nle yāgōgō gbēone, wa n sōsōe.

If you're digging a waterhole, don't ask about your muddy appearance.

If you are settling a dispute, you'll be insulted.

28. Tó le na, wà ma a sina léu.

Wà yāma yāde léue.

If the song is sweet, let's hear it from the singer's mouth.

Let's hear it from the author's mouth.

29. Tó wí i a pana kūo, a a selena kūo.

Tó wí i yākena kūo, wa àà lele widesai.

If the defecator isn't ashamed, the gatherer won't be ashamed.

If the culprit isn't ashamed, he'll be rebuked without embarrassment.

30. Tó ese kè zō, ìli gyāe gbāgbāo.

Tó lelea kè zō, ìli to gbē swāgbāa làao.

If the medicine is too much, it doesn't heal the sick.

If the reprimand is too strong, it doesn't stop a person's stubbornness.

31. Tó wà gbezù dasi guu, baade ì ɔku a miwae.

Tó wà yā'ò bilau, baade ì e áme.

If a stone is thrown into a crowd, everyone covers his head.

If you speaks to a crowd, everyone thinks it's about him.

32. Tó gbě ze yobaawa, tó lou mà, wa e lá a ke.

Tó gbě gbã'è yā pɔ a a bɔowa, a bɔaàno nao.

*If someone stands on an anthill and it rains, what he'll do
will be seen.*

If you lean on something that can't save you, it won't
save you.

33. Tó gbě mē filile gĩ vīo, a kuaàno zàe.

Tó gbě le e pɔe vāio, ade i sīi no.

*If someone says the bathing place doesn't smell, it's far from
him.*

If someone says certain things are not evil, he didn't get
close enough.

34. Tó a àae, bala gāa gba.

Tó ní ye wà n gba pɔe, gbě gba sō.

If it's easy, let the bard give to the drummer.

If you want people to give to you, give to them.

35. Tó oogboo mè á kpá d̄ɛ, p̄ɛnkaso ku k̄ãioɛ.

Tó nl̄e e n̄ ȳãd̄ɛ, gb̄ɛɛ d̄ɔ denla.

If the base of a broken pot says it knows how to swim, the calabash is not near.

If you think you know something, some people know better than you.

Prohibition proverbs

1. W̄ili s̄ouke z̄i w̄áao.

D̄ɔaa n̄ ȳãke e a ḡɔɔ àɔ ge kai.

You don't make preparations in the presence of war.

Act in advance before the time arrives.

2. W̄ili gu z̄ã ya n̄ baoo.

W̄ãa ȳãe maao.

You don't plan a long voyage in haste.

Rushing things is not good.

3. W̄i ḡè bala dada ḡè miaae.

W̄i ȳãdada a kek̄iie.

You learn the death-drum rhythm at the grave.

You learn a skill at the work site.

4. Wìli nɔana zī kisia masokeio.

Wìli gbě pɔ yã wãa kẹkẹa i kɔsiaànɔo zī kẹkẹio.

You don't send a pretty girl to ask the diviner about bad omens.

You don't send an inappropriate person to fix up an urgent matter.

5. Wìli ìanape yɔɔn tuu guuo.

Wìli gbě pāsī le wẹẹleo.

You don't blow into a chilli gourd.

You don't provoke a violent person.

6. Wìli busukɔɔtē zī iwe gwaio.

Wìli zīda gbě pɔ i kɔsiaànɔoɛo.

You don't throw a clod into water to measure its depth.

You don't give work to an inappropriate person.

7. Wìli tá na masokeo.

Pɔ pɔ Lua dīle gbě pɔ ũ, a eɛ.

You don't divine for a good journey.

You receive what God has reserved for you.

8. Wìli dabudabuke uladasaio.

Wìli yāke wesio.

You don't enact a miracle without a large gown.

You don't do anything without know-how.

14. Wìliᵛ kpooyan t̄́ gĩ d̄́o.

Tó yãᵛ yàale, wìli a gba d̄́o.

You can't recognize a mustard-maker's fart.

You can't find the meaning of complicated situations.

15. Wìli εε gbẽgo ulèèo.

Tó n na gbẽ ɔzi, lá a yei ì onεε.

You don't hide a lame man's stick from him.

If you depend on someone, he tells you what he wants.

Various proverbs

1. Tēkapa zi ã wi a dafu yõwà.

Tó wàε yã dafu εε, a zi wì gwa gĩa.

An old arrow shaft is used to measure the new one.

When you start something new, you look at the former one first.

2. Εε ì vukpa, ãma ìli ne'io.

Εε ì to wà wedo poi, ãma wìli eo.

Lies flourish, but they don't bear fruit.

I lie gives you hope, but it's in vain.

3. Gu i sio ɔ̃ vĩa le n kũa?

Yã i mɔo, ɔ̃ vĩa le n kũa?

It isn't dark and you are afraid?

Don't be afraid when nothing has happened.

4. Yãpi i ka aà bakanswãua ũo.

Yãpi le keè yãe ũo.

This matter is not even an ear-string for him.

Someone is not concerned about a matter.

5. N n gẽmbɔlekĩi tò, ɔ̃ nle n lelekĩi gbẽ.

N zã yãwa ɔ̃ nle yãesaide taa'e.

*You spared your stumbling place and are beating the place
where you fell.*

You made a mistake and are accusing the innocent.

6. Vĩa lòɔa n kpeo.

Risking life or tempting fate.

Jumping the well backwards.

Risking your life.

7. Máo gò kooloe bee kũa, mío a súsú wɛɛlèò.

Máo ke bee kũa, mío a maa wɛɛlèò.

I'll hold a crooked rod and seek a strait one with it.

I'll keep going with what I have while hoping for better.

8. Wekpēnedaa gōadee nēi lí aà deo.

Fēa gbēzi pā a pɔe kèè.

Disapproving a co-wife's child doesn't affect him.

Getting angry at someone for nothing won't affect him.

9. À buletē leūkpakè ní kpasegbeo.

À a maa leūkpakè ní a zòzɔnao.

He exchanged a yam field for cleared land.

He exchanged a good thing for an inferior thing.

10. Dɔɛá zaza no.

Yā pɔ gbē dɔɛkèdà dɔɛma no.

Familiarity is not disrespect.

Being used to something doesn't imply denigration.

11. Daama'ea mé ì mɔ ní gyaableao.

Gbē pɔ zé vī ì yāke de a zaaa.

Being well off brings expression of widowhood. ???

He who has the means acts beyond measure.

12. Dadakōi mé baabaa kè zwāada ũ.

Pɔ kãakãaaa guu ã ì zõkũ.

Sewing bits together turns linen into a sheet.

From gathering pieces comes something big.

13. Wì vua yia a dōnawa.

Wì pɔ bɛɛɛde kpa gbẽ pɔ a bɛɛɛ dōwae.

You sell gold to a goldsmith.

You give valuables to one who appreciates the value.

14. Na'onwaa.

Mɔafiliden we.

Speaking pleasantly in their presence.

To give the wrong impression.

15. Sisia na mé wea na ù.

Yākea na ì mɔ́ n̄ wea nao.

A pleasant invitation means a pleasant response.

A pleasant deed brings a pleasant response.

16. Sōn mendo lí kua pɛlekīiwao.

Tó gbẽ ado, ìli kua a lé mendo pɔbleawao.

One spear doesn't lack a place to stand.

An individual doesn't lack something to eat.

17. Gbò nena n̄ a gbēneo gĩ doũe.

Yāvāi nena n̄ a zōo piiá yāvāie.

A little or a lot of faeces has the same smell

Little or big offences are all offences.

18. Igofampaa guu ʃ wì i na dʒu.

Tó yā a bɔ maa, wì dʒ a daalɛawae.

When dozing you know the sweetness of sleep.

You recognize whether something will go well by its beginning.

19. I wio, à pàa.

Yā pɔ kè pāsī laoa yā'oa guu.

It didn't break, it cracked.

Toning done the gravity of a situation.

20. Limusudakīiá ikīi no.

Gɔɔpla yāá gɔɔpii pɔ no.

A tree watchtower is not a place to sleep.

A short time doesn't mean always.

21. Pɔ pɔ vlâ pii a gībɔ.

Gɔɔewa vāi pii a bɔ gupuau.

Whatever is rotten will smell.

Every evil will be revealed one day.

22. Àɛ musī laata.

Pɔ pɔ ade ɛ kɛ pii, ì ya'ìè.

He is doing business with disaster.

Whatever he does ends in disaster.

23. Nsu wá dāa maaε wio.

Nsu wá yāmaae ɔ̃kpao.

Don't break this beautiful water pot of ours.

Don't spoil our good relationship.

24. Ga yāi ɔ̃ wa ne'i toio.

Wili yā pɔ a bɔ maa to we taasikea yāio.

People won't stop giving birth for fear of death.

You don't abandon what will do well because of suffering.

25. Gbe pɔ ku zā lé mé ìɔ kpaaĩa.

Tó n̄ ku n gbēε zā ɔ̃ aaiɔ maa.

The peaks of the far-off mountains seem to be level.

When you're far from people, they all seem to be good.

26. Īatē n̄ mɔvuao kɔ̃ kũ.

Nεgɔ̃naɔ kɔ̃ lèn we.

The sun and the moon seized each other.

When powerful people meet.

27. Golo gii mé ì kĩake.

Gbē pɔ pɔε v̄io mé ì me á v̄i.

It's the empty calabash that makes a noise.

It's those who don't have nothing who say they have it.

28. Pɔgale ia ɔ wì pɔ gbesiwà.

Gu pɔ yã zebò ɔ wì tei.

It's the track of something dragged that is pursued.

You follow what gives you opportunity.

29. Pɔ le mɔma, ní me wà n se ò gwaa?

Tó yã le mɔ n lei, nsu dɔaaèò.

Something is coming to you and you say, take me to see it?

Don't preempt the inevitable.

30. Wàle pisi ple vīu.

Zī gbasai keae.

They're picking vomit out of milk.

They're doing something impossible.

31. Kaau mé kaau ese ũ.

Yã pɔ ñyɔ kee, ke kaau.

Early is early medicine.

Do it as soon as possible.

32. Zɔle pã lí dauo.

Gbē pɔ zɔlea pã lí pɔ eo.

Sitting idle adds nothing.

Idleness gets you nowhere.

33. Be ìṣ nae, ã sã ìṣ na.

Tó ni bọ be ní kisiaoo, gu pọ n geu aṣ nae.

Home is peaceful, so the bush is.

If you don't leave the house with a bad omen,
everywhere you go will be pleasant.