



# Yoruba Proverbs

*Oyekan Owomoyela*

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## **Yoruba Proverbs** Oyekan Owomoyela

“The leopard’s stealthy gait is not a result of cowardice; it is simply stalking a prey.” (Do not mistake people’s gentle nature for spinelessness.) “The rabbit that eats yams and enjoys them will return for more.” (People remember good experiences and seek their repetition.) “The chicken sweats, but its down prevents us from knowing.” (Everybody has his or her problems, although strangers may not guess.) “The mouth does not say, ‘I ate once before.’” (Hunger is not something one assuages once and for all.) “It is a light rain that chases a child indoors; it is a raging torrent that shakes the raffia palm to its roots.” (Every person, however lowly or mighty, has his or her nemesis.)

*Yoruba Proverbs* is the most comprehensive collection to date of more than five thousand Yoruban proverbs that showcase Yoruba oral tradition. Following Oyekan Owomoyela’s introduction, which provides a framework and description of Yoruba cultural beliefs, the proverbs are arranged by theme into five sections: the good person; the fortunate person (or the good life); relationships; human nature; rights and responsibilities; and truisms. Each proverb is presented in Yoruba with a literal English translation, followed by a brief commentary explaining the meaning of the proverb within the oral tradition.

This definitive source book on Yoruba proverbs is the first to give such detailed, systematic classification and analysis alongside a careful assessment of the risks and pitfalls of submitting this genre to the canons of literary analysis.

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