

WŌCHĪIJE BĀLĀ ARĪYĒCHE YĪ YALA

(Yala Proverbs and Other Wise Sayings)

The Yala Proverbs and Wise Sayings consist of direct proverbs, direct quotations from humans, animals and plants, with meanings based on the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the Yala people.

The following Wise Sayings and Proverbs are illustrative:

1. Yεje i hō la wólé nì, otukū ré εbé.
When the tiger was not at home, the mongoose consumes more prey.
2. Ibricháku i hō la wólé nì, ihú ē gwō Ogrinya.
When the cat is not at home, the rats dance the Music of Heroes/warriors.
3. É ē de ɔjā gla okóo tá géē de lengū nì.
No one passes food omitting the mouth to the nose.
4. Ihī ijèni ē bī ojiya géē de okónu áne.
Yam not well-cooked is the cause of rumbling noise for the mouth.
5. Ɔchi gé jē kaná-kaná, aje ma áne.
No matter how majestic a tree stands, the earth is the mother.
6. Wɔma okū emī nīpī réka wɔma okū emī nīpī.
The generation of the ancestral parent surely affects the offspring.
7. Ébéyēenyi yá bōɔjā nīi ohū i yá ɔ nī má.
A fish acts as if it is not affected by the cold of the water.
8. Yēgrāa nīi ana i wá nī má, yékā mla oji?
When the wild fruits fail, what do monkeys feed on?
9. Ɔche ɔchrēerō i ē kú erō nì.
A messenger is not held responsible because of the message delivered.
10. É ē tū inyi yēkwrāa nì.
It's unwise to invite an elephant to labour festivals.

11. È ē glà olibobo ē mīyē igbēpa ni.
A man cannot deceive a foolish woman twice in sexual relation.
12. Ɔlà nīi pà úkájō nīi uhwi de yà áklógo.
The heat of fire on a piece of pottery scents to the piece of calabash.
13. Are ɔnà nīi n i mà pi mle ni nīi ó geē mà tà nyi ɔlà mà?
If I do not have enough spittle to swallow, where could I produce enough to put out a burning fire?
14. Obrīihu chōchiya gè hētà la lēpà.
A bore-holed pottery breaks following the holes.
15. Okū yī yēhī chiya la abō yī oyóōókū.
A weak pottery usually breaks in the hands of an orphan.
16. Íyámwóónóni ka èle gè bī likū ga ógra.
A non-contributor asks for a burial ceremony to be extended to the play ground.
17. Ɔyi nīi i ye yī yeche ni mà ka èle gè de arī ku yanō de anú.
A child unlikely to survive asks for his/her palm-fruits to be fried with palm oil.
18. Íjé ebe nīi é ngmó ni, jé ebe nīi ó che la ɔda.
One who does not know how the person died, but is present where the body lies in state.
19. È ē hē wórà tū yanyī ga wōgō ni.
No one can put a price on a Rabbit still in its hole.
20. È ē de ɔbakúkú tà Ɔwɔ léba ni.
No one can hide from God by any secret movement.
21. È ē de íkpēē oróórú che ugū wórà ni.
No one sends a threshed grain seed through the fowls for sale.
22. Ugū yī wólé le íkpó emēmī.
A domestic fowl is looked upon as being very filthy.

23. Àchì tū arō ɔpléēlā.
Information can be gathered while in the bush. (The bush have ears.)
24. Olichō jè arī ɔpōpiya àné.
It is one who is on the tree who is able to prove that the palm fruits are really ripe for harvest.
25. Ɖtáanyī i pò lèhi ní. Ɖtáanyī i tà lèhi ní.
Hatred does not listen to offer of love.
Hatred does not care if love is offered.
26. Ichákùrè ré wòhè ngmó imōrī mà, abà nīi ó géē che akwa ē ga mà?
Since the forest squirrel killed the forest vine by witch, where does it have left to climb through the forest?
27. Ōkwrìchi hè wòma, ó hè igà ní.
Although an old woman has stopped bearing children, she has not stopped passing excreta.
28. Yēhī olibi i wú abō yī ɔlà mē ní.
A smoke-filled cooking pot cannot stop being used on fire.
29. Ihó yī inyi i jē inyi ní.
The load on the elephant's structure is never too much for him.
30. Ítāākū hlá létā jì.
The desire of having laps by the cricket is vanity.
31. Ɖlèmiyè lè ɔtūngurangura.
A hungry person is an angry person.
32. Létā i tū yeyī ní mà, ó ē ka lèpō yī yeyī ní.
Since a cricket has no blood, it does not listen to blood case.
33. Ènúūgū ka hīka ayi yī anù élè ē bī anù ikpó gāa rimīimū àné.
The mother hen says, it is her chicks that take her to the dumps.

34. Lɛ́ɛ́nɛ́ yī ikpārī i hwɔ́hi ni; lɛ́ɛ́nɛ́ yī abrinō hwɔ́hi ànɛ́.
The pairing of palm kernels in a shell shows no love;
The pairing of groundnuts in a shell demonstrates real love.
35. Yoō ka anóló i géē má ogbló la eyī nīi ogbló óló ē gwō anú ni.
The dog says he will not allow himself to be beaten by a stick he has seen coming towards him.
36. Yáblá ka óló gé hi lɛ́hú ode gbo ɔ́chi hī wɔ́kpá ɔ́pā la yɛ́nɔ́.
Dykar antelope says that it is better to hit the head against trees than to let one's skin spread to be dried in a courtyard.
37. Okriká ka yāhō nīi anóló hō la yenyi má nīi anóló hō la úché ànɛ́.
The crab says, his life situation in the river-bed is the same as the one in the fish trap, so he cares less.
38. Ɔ́gá Abīyehɔ́ ka, abō gbudugbudu óló ngmá la ɔ́yóyá;
Óló i ngmá la oróoré ni.
The hare says, many hands in work is better than many hands in food.
39. Ígbrú ka ɔ́jɔ́nyɛ́ óló ē fiyé ɔ́nyɛ́ eyī ànɛ́.
The yam-biscuit says, it's only those who know the value of food who clean up with a blow of air before eating.
40. Eyī má ɔ́lɔ́jā de lɛ́lā ka la ajajɛ́.
When the eye sees the person being spoken about, the voice is lowered.
41. Ímá óklóo ni de abō gbo origō.
One who could not have access to a calabash cup with a handle is likely to pick a piece of calabash without a handle.
42. Ɔ́nyākú nīi kú wɔ́gā de ɔ́pē má, ɔ́pē má, ɔ́pē gé de jē, ó ē kú de ɔ́nyākú.
If an elderly person catches locust for a child, when the child is matured, he is obliged to provide for the elder in return.
43. Ɔ́jā wōbōbō yī ɔ́nyɛ́ i pá ɔ́nyɛ́ ɔ́lá la abō ni.
What belongs to a person cannot implicate him in usage.

44. Upla má εβε ρε kogbó de ayéēchi.
Upla is a savanna tree which stands in isolation from other trees. For that reason, it can boast to other trees concerning overcrowding.
45. N twótè yī ɔkrākpā, n i má ɔkrākpā ní;
N ga lɛkpa yī ɔkrākpā, n kpó ákrákpá yī ɔkrākpā.
I hunted for pangola lizards but found none;
When I visited the habitat forest, I found skeletons of the lizards.
46. È ē he ihú owú yī uwī owōwī ní.
No one can ban rats from stealing.
47. Lihu Ínaku tá lɛkū de yachu chiya āpū.
The man (Lihu Inaku) sent a fist blow that split a tree bark off.
- Note: The three sentences above (45, 46, and 47) are utterances which are very difficult to utter speedily in succession. They may be better referred to as, “Hard Utterances in Yala”.
48. Ɔchi kú óbū ní, ɔche i hu ihu la anú ní.
Except a tree is dead, no one finds a mushroom on it.
49. Íkprī i má okū ní, ó ē hu yeje ní.
Except the eyes witness the dead, it is difficult to shed tears.
50. Íbāni de wɔjī dɔkɔ; ɔbɔbā chí de wɔjī dɔkɔ.
To do or not to do, human energy is wasted.
51. Ikpó nīi bī aje gé de ɔjwɔlā.
It is the feet that carry sand to the mat/bed.
52. Ɔgurá i jē ní nīi Ɔtraá géē jē áne?
If the swallowing of a lump is not enough, can the licking of liquid be enough?
53. Áchi tū arɔ ɔpléélā.
The bush has ears to hear. (Someone may be there in the bush.)
54. Eyī ερεπα má ɔjā, ɔjā i bī ní.
Two eyes (witnesses) are better than one.

55. Ɛnyā jē ogbo, ó ē chē lēgō.
When the pursuit is too tough for the mongoose, it enters the hole.
56. Ɔchi rē ni, wōngma i bā ni.
If there are no poles, the fencing does not stand.
57. Abiyehō tū wōrō gla lēhū tà, ka ɔjā ɔlō ngmá la ɔjrēmiye
hōhī.
The hare/rabbit has long ears (above the head) saying, “Things need to be extra enough.”
58. Ɔmōmá la eyī lwōnyōnye; ojōjē la ikpó lakanya.
To watch a dance is interesting, but to perform alike is difficult.
59. Apō hī rikū erá gāa wólé ànē.
It is quarreling that invites death to the family.
60. Ɔhlēhū-ryéjé-gwá ka ɔjā yī ɔnye ɔlō í lā la aje nīi ɔnye ɔlō ga
uwīnī.
One who sells his head (life) for a drink says, “One does not have a valuable and go out for stealing.”
61. Yēnō ye gāa Ɔkpame mē.
The sun is setting towards the Western Yalaland
62. Ikpó kū iyōbū; ihi ɔlechà ànē.
The feet take the lead in traveling, but the back takes all
the abusive gossips
63. È í ē de ɔbakúkú tá Ɔwō lēba nī
No one can hide a camouflaged advance from God.
64. Okū-yēhī chiya la abō yī oyóōkū.
A weak clay pottery usually break in the care of of an
orphan.

65. Ìjé èbè nī è ngmó ní, jé èbè nī è che la ɔda
One who had no ideas of how someone died could see
the dead-body on the bed before burial.
66. Ɔlyéré ka ɔlá ɔlɔ ngmá la ɔbéedɔ kpáa!
An insane concluded that fire is a good investment
67. Yēgwā ka ɔpyē anù ɔpɔpyē ɔlɔ lélā ànɛ, ongmó anù
ongmóōngmó ɔlɔ í lélā ní.
The snake concluded that it was the person who found
him first that is responsible for his death. The one who
killed him is not responsible for the murder.
68. Okú ka anólɔ pīyihitá mɛ, anólɔ í pò lɛgba yī ɔyi gɛ ní
The dead proclaimed that he has turned his back to the earth, he has no
feeling towards the wailing child
69. Okriká ka yāhō nī anólɔ hō la yenyi má nī anólɔ hō la úché
ànɛ.
The crab concluded it is the same sitting she sat in the water that she
find herself in the fish-trap
70. Ɔyèɛje í tūuhwi yī lɛkpa yī ádā yī nū ní.
The tiger's cub is never afraid of the father's forest
71. Okónu hī u kpéé – wɔɔ hī u dɔɔ
As soon as the mouth moves to speak, the esophagus moves to
correspond.
72. Yewúna ka anólɔ géē gwó má, ɔyi yī anù ɔlɔ gé má anù la ɔkɔ
The spark (singing bird) advised that whenever she is singing, her chick
should look at her beck

73. Olyeklò í ē bú ochi ní.

The poor person need not castrate his/her animals.

74. Ɖkpòrò ɔpòpláa gè blatū ɔgege yī nū

One who is fun of taking too much of slippery soup on his balls of pounded-yam should watch out for spillage on his chest.

75. Ɛga ojīhi, é ē ngmò la ogblò

The last of the troop of soldier ant is bound to be brutally killed.

76. Ɖjā ɔkwiyanō = í akaakra ní

Food made out of red palm oil is not only Akra (fried beans cakes).

77. Uji yī ádā lā gbó ɔyi yī nū.

What a father is hated for passes on to the son.

78. Ikpekpe ɔbáábòlòtū ka anòlò bòbá yī lēlā

The beetle pupa with hand across its chest claims that it is in that posture for desolation.

79. A gè de úkpòchi ku engú, lēlā gēē gbo.

If anyone hit the honey with a stick, there will surely be trouble.

80, A gè de áchi tū ɔlà, a gēē má wɔgɔ (jé wɔgɔ)

If one set bush on fire, he will surely see the black-hawk (know the black hawk).

81. A gè chē ɛwú gōga, a ē bēédò yī ehɔ.

If you are fun of collecting plenty fire-woods, you are bound to harvest all kind of ants.

82. Ɔnyá le réréré ingóó ji, ojooje ne.

No matter how tiny a needle is, it is all metal.

83. Ɛbè nīi anyā i ré ni má, éē tū ɔmā hwō ɔ ni.

Any meat (food) the woman (cook) does not eat she will surely not put enough salt (cook well).

84. È de ikpó de ugū la wɔchà, wɔnɔ lā la ɔtū.

When a chicken is hurt on the wings, the pain is centred on the mind

85. Úbléēnyī – ɔnyākú yī angūu ne; angūu chī lwɔhɔhú hé ubléēnyī.

The tongue is older than the teeth; but the teeth is by far stronger than the teeth.

86. Ɛga gé chē ga ɔka-yēwū óbū nīi alɔ ā má ejē yī yēwū.

Let the soldier ants enter the goats' pen before me see how the goats could dance.

87. Ɔnyā ɔdwɔma i da wɔlé ni.

A barren woman is not invaluable in a home.

88. A yéēlā, a yá iyī wɔ.

Whatever you do, you do to yourself (boomerangs)

89. Ɔlyélé hwɔhi hé ɔche ɔwiyémwɔ.

An insane person is better than a drunk person

90. Yáblá ka ɔkú gbo ingóó ɔlɔ hi yayi ɔóné anú ɔtū áne.

The brown dykar said that to die in such manner is what its brother white dykar deserves.

91. Yoō ka anóló gé má ogbló la eyī, ogbló ọ́lọ́ i gwō anù ní.
The dog says that if he see a club about to hit him, he doesn't allow himself to be hit.
92. Wọ́bi hi ọ́lọ́jā ọ́tū.
One who is ugly loves himself.
93. Ọ́nyākù de ọ́gọ́dọ́ che la ọ́kọ́ chikpó hīka: iyī iyọ́bū bála iyī okwiihi má ọ́nà ọ́lọ́ gōga má?
An elder carrying his staff on his shoulder ask ‘which end of the staff – front or behind is longer?’
94. Urúu ka yenyi yī ọ́chī ọ́lọ́ ēr hiya ayúūrī.
The stripped antelope claimed that drinking of water early in the morning breaks hunger net.
95. Ọ́gabīyẹhọ́ ka, abō gbudu-gbudu ọ́lọ́ ngmá la ọ́yọ́yá; ọ́lọ́ i ngmá la oróórè ní.
The hare said that many hands at work is fitting for working, but not fitting for food consuming.
96. Yẹnū ka áchí ọ́lọ́ gé wọ́lá ọ́bū nīi ẹ́lẹ́ gé má ẹ́nya la ubi.
The brown antelope said that people should wait to see how fast it can run when the field is burnt.
97. Ọ́yọ́ọ́ ọ́fiyaje i lẹ́ bāa yẹnọ́ ní
A shining moon light is not equivalent to a broad day light.
98. Yala de útu; ọ́ i de lẹ́hú ní.
The buttocks (of a daughter) is wholly given (to a man) but the head is not given by Yala.
99. Wọ́hú lā la ukpokú.

Strength is derived from the bone.

100. Lelā nīi lā la ajε má nīi ejē de pīya wōchīije ànε.

It is the background of an incident that makes a song to become proverbial.

101. Abō yī ɔnyā ɔmáyi í lwɔnyε la ɔrō ní.

A mother of many children does not cook well.

102. Ɔchi í rε ní, wɔngma bá la oji?

If there are no fixed poles, where would the mat fence be bound.

103. A yarare má ɔjā, ɔjā yarare ē má wɔ! A pú kpéé yá ɔjā, ɔjā gwá enyɛnya súu!

If one stands looking at a job, the work stands looking back at him. If however, one bend down to do the work, the work starts running away at full speed.

104. Obúūgū chokóo yī ɔpá abō ohoo hu óbū lā ɔnyā yī nū.

The cock promises fathoms of cloths to the wife before having sexual relationship.

105. Oloko ē hé εbé la ɔkó de ɔyi

The giant fishing bird feed its young one by using her beak to cut the fishes into its mouth.

106. A tá ɔkpa ku ajε, a de ē hu; a tá okóo ku ajε, a í ē hu ɔ mε ní.

If one fixes a spear to the ground, one can easily retrieve it; but if one hits a point to the target, it cannot be easily erased.

107. È í ē kúyεnɔ la abwōhú gāa ajε ní.

No one can forcefully bring down the sun to set.

108. N j̄j̄ē ḡe du ȳewu, n̄ ī j̄e ȳchī nīi ȳewu ngm̄a nī.
I grew up to see mountain, I don't know their origin.
109. Lipi ohiyenyi ī ē p̄o yenyi ȳkw̄l̄a nī.
A waterly vagina cannot be healed with hot water therapy.
110. Ogugu ī m̄a ȳp̄a onyokū ni de oku nyi l̄egba.
Since the owl could not provide the clothing of burial rite, it substituted it with wailing.
111. ȳm̄a ȳegw̄a gbo la enya; ȳegw̄a ȳl̄j̄ā gbo la enya.
One who sees a snake usually runs away; while the snake also usually runs away.
112. ȳbe ȳlekurekure ē hu yeyī, ȳbe oligbigb̄o ē b̄u ar̄e.
A short way cut causes blood to spill; while a long way journey causes sweat to drop.
113. ȳr̄o om̄omū hw̄chi hi l̄emiye ȳch̄ch̄ā.
To take some soup is better than no food before going to bed.
114. Ochikp̄o-l̄ēl̄ā = ī oliibobo nī.
One who asks to know is not a fool.
115. A miȳēgbla yī ȳche, a ē r̄e agb̄ah̄a l̄im̄ē-l̄im̄ē.
If you imitate a person, you will surely eat raw cocoyam.
116. L̄eya = ȳchi ȳkwaje n̄e; ȳh̄a ch̄ar̄ē, a ē n̄āa ȳh̄a.
Friendship is like a walking stick; if the one is broken, you pick up another.
117. L̄ēn̄ē ȳh̄o la ȳcha ȳh̄a l̄e Alij̄ēgū w̄onye ḡōga.

Relatives living outside the community are more beloved than the resident ones.

118. È í ē de arī ɛpa ē tū la okòo ē chiya ugbóhe ní.

One does not put two kernels in the mouth and break them at a single chop.

119. Ɖkpáaje tū wɔgbɔ í ē ré wɔgbɔ ní.

One responsible for fertilizing the banana plant usually is not allowed to have share of the yields.

120. Ikriihu má iyī nū lipú ka anólɔ = okróbiya nɛ.

When the toad looked at its lower/abdomen skin, it proclaimed that it is a handsome being.

121. Ɖwaangūu, hɛhɛ kwákwa mé gɛ/!

You with rotten teeth, laugh loadly! Can you?

122. Ɖdarɔ de eyī hé óbóbe.

A deft person is very watchful to answer greetings

123. Olúkwrɔ́ í ē pò yɛnɔ ní.

A hard working person fears no sun heat.

124. Ufiye pi ɛpa, pi ɛtá ó ē gba orī ɔgbɔgba.

When a bundle of brooms drops out one by one – or two by twos, the binding rope get weakened.

125. A gbláa ɔyi ɔkɔkū, a ē de ɔyi priyī.

If one continues to over beautify a child, you make the child to become blind.

126. Ɖduu nīi é chē nīi ɔtū wú ɔlɛmiyɛ.

A heavy belching of one person sparks anger to the hungry.

127. Ɔyɔ̄ɔ̄jā́ í ē kā́ iyī́ nū́ ɔkɔ̄kā́ ní.

A hard working person need not praise himself.

128. Ɔkɔ̄lēyī́ ē de ē pīya olirwɛ.

One who is in hurry may end up being the late.

129. Í ijḗ apā́ kátá́ réká ijḗ àní; ájìáná́ gwōtū́ ɔ́che ó ē yá́ ɔ́che
nyáá́.

It is not only the giant spike tree that can be called dangerous spike; the minor compound vegetable spike do hurts.

130. È́ de inyí tréeya, ayirwébé́ ená́ géḗ hōhī́ má?

If the elephant is badly wounded on the head, who amongst the other animals could stand in his position?

131. Létā́ í tū́ yeyī́ ní má, ó́ ē pó́ lɛpṓ yī́ yeyī́ ní.

Since the cricket has no blood, it is not interested in listening to cases of blood.

132. Yēhí olibí í ē wáábṓ yī́ ɔlá́ mɛ́ ní.

A blackened cooking pot cannot give up being used for cooking on the fire.

133. Ichákùrɛ́ rɛ́ wɔ́hɛ́ ngmó́ imōrī́ má, abá́ nīí ó́ géḗ che akwá ē
ga má?

If the forest squirell bewitch the vine to death where does it expect to climb from tree to tree?

134. Ṓkrichī́ hé́ wɔ́ma ga, ó́ í hé́ igá́ ní.

An old woman may be above the age of bearing children; but she is not above the age of passing stool.

135. Oligbahi le ɔtūngurangura

A hungry person is endured with angry mood.

136. Olichō jè arī ɔpōpiya ànɛ.

It is the climber on the palm tree who knows the palm fruits are ripe.

137. È ē ka ɔwīyā, ó ē ka obū. È ē ka obū; ó ē ka ɔwīya

When all talk about light, he talks about darkness; When all talk about darkness, he talks about light. He must be a real fool.

138. Àprimāmā ɔmléélā yī ɔlwólé gé ka de ɔlyɛchɛ.

A (secret) spider in the (individual) room which is held responsible for revealing secret talks to individuals outside the environment.

139. Lɛchō yī ɔlwólé ɔlɔjā í gbā umu jóōjé ní.

The owner's grinding stone is not regarded as sharp enough to grind the owner's grain smooth.

140. Eyī má ɔlɔjā de lelā ka la ajajɛ.

With the appearance of the person spoken about, whatever is being said becomes low key.