

Nyasa Folk Songs

By E. T. CHAKANZA

These little songs, in Chinyanja and Chisena, were collected by a headmaster in the Catholic Mission at Port Herald. They are largely sung by boys and girls around the fire at night. Some show the influence of Portuguese East Africa.

I

MACIRA MATATU

Posi, piri, macira matatu,
Kuwerenga,
Namwana ngwapezi,
Ndaona nkhope ndati ncembere,
Kuno bi nchingwangwangwa!
Mbwenye pyako unagona pakadera
Pindula majiga mwendo kangala!

THREE HAMMOCKS

I counted one, two, three hammocks, and I saw that she was nothing. When I saw her face I thought she was a beautiful girl but really she was the ugliest of all. You are lucky because you sleep on a resting chair, turn it up, and put your legs stretched on it!

2

NYAKATAMBALALE

Nyakatambalale!
Waye-waye!
Mboyi, Mboyi pereka,
Pereka ng'ombe za wene,
Zagwa nalumbwana
Alumbwana mbangasi?
Agwa khumi nawili,
Funya mwendo cilalo!
Mkazanga sinja njela
Tende ku Malolo
Ku Malolo kunanjala
Bimbimbi kola-kola
Mkazanga wo!

186

STRETCHERS

Girls and boys sit down and stretch their legs on the floor. One boy or girl walks in front of them and says, as he touches their legs, Stretchers, and they reply, Yes! Yes! (He counts the legs) Mboyi, Mboyi (girl's name), give out somebody's cows that are about tens and units. How many tens and units? There are twelve cows. Bend your leg, chilalo (common name).

My wife pounds maize and makes flour. Let us go to Malolo (name of a country in P. E. Africa) where there is famine. Oh! My wife, make a full basket of flour!

3

TIKAWERENGE

Posi, piri, tikawerenge,
Kawerenga tsanga,
Tsanga mbawala,
Mbawala siyanga
Nja mphalapala
Mphalapala mbidzi
Tacerera,
Cerera Mishoni ali m'kaidi
Kang'oma kamwathu
Katiti go!

LET US GO AND COUNT

One, two, let us go and count the deer in the bush, that is not mine. It belongs to the bush-buck and zebra. We missed Mishoni (man's name) who is in prison. A small drum in our village sounds Go! (a drum beaten once).

4

KAPOSI KANAPINYANGA

Kaposi kaposi kaposi,
Kana pinyanga-pinyanga,
Pinalira ngwengwe
Ngwengwe dzaone!
Kukwata nsupa
Kulemedza Mboyi
Mboyi halipo
Ayenda ku Gombe
Nakabichu kace
Kakuning'a-ning'a
Kuning'ira jegule!
Kamwendo je!

KAPOSI HAS SMALL HORNS

Kaposi, kaposi, kaposi (name of animal) has small horns which make the sound Ngwe-Ngwe. Come and see. And bring a keg of castor-oil before Mboyi (girl's name) in honour of her who is away with her small slave at Zambezi River. Her slave's waist is so small for Jegule (boy's name) and her leg is at ease!

5

GOMBE-GOMBE

Gombe!
 Gombe la muno?
 Ndidzembo?
 Njala njakufa!
 Ngadumbira!
 Nudumbira mbalame za m' Cipanga,
 Zinamala nakundondowa,
 Uku ndo uku ndo!
 Mbadze mkazanga,
 Ponda mwalawo!

DOCK-DOCK!

(This is sung by the children in the harvest fields before they chase the birds)

A girl or boy on one side of the field calls out, Dock (i.e. port), and the other one replies, The dock this side? May I come there! Hunger is dead! Swear! I swear before the birds in Chipanga (name of a place in P. E. Africa) that wander about hopping! Hop this way and hop that way! Come along, my wife, set foot on that stone!

6

AZUNGU MBANA ANG'ONO

Azungu mbana ang'ono,
 Aphera nzowu pagombe,
 Sangiri kwadi sanduka,
 Sanduka khala mwadiya,
 Mwadiya wakulodzweka,
 Lodzweka nang'ombo zene,
 Ndampungira kapepe Sinyara Maria!

EUROPEANS ARE LITTLE CHILDREN

Europeans are little children. They shot an elephant at the river bank and its blood became a drowned canoe which disappeared together with the paddles. I collected wild sorghum for Miss Marial

7

MAI NDICINGE

Mai, mai, ndicinge-ndicinge,
Tikaone mbalame-mbalame,
Mbalame yace njibodzi-njibodzi,
Njakufiira mulomo-mulomo!
Mai, mai, tende,
Tende pa katsanga,
Tikakungudrane,
Tikasiye pfupa
Pfupa kaongole
Kaongole mbuzi,
Mbuzi za Katanda,
Zinadyera pano
Pa kapfuzo kanga
Kakulima ndekha
Na kaphaza kanga
Ndakagula kumba
Kumba kwa Azungu
Kunamera cowa
Tikabale mwana
Tikamchule dzina,
Akakhale Dima!

MOTHER, SHAVE ME

Mother, mother, shave me and let us go to see one red-beaked bird. Mother, mother, let us go into small bush and brush off each other's hair and leave a guide-bone which will lead Katanda's goats that graze in my small field. I cultivated it myself with my hoe which I bought from the European's home where moss grows. We shall bring-forth a child and name him, he shall be called Dima (Darkness)!