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The National songs of my country and of other
parts of the British Empire

There are many songs which are sung for various purposes in every country.

Some are sung for the sake of pleasure and recreation and others are occasionally sung; especially when there is a great custom, ceremony or performance such as the enstoolment of a chief, the funeral custom of a chief or an old experienced man of a place.

When a chief dies or destooled he is immediately succeeded by another. When this happens, the elders of the town meet together and select, secretly, a young man who is fit to be enthroned. After this has ~~has~~ been fully decided upon, a group of the candidates' play-fellows go to his house, seize him and make a procession through the town. Then the person is carried to the chief's house where all the chiefs of the state are already met. Here a sheep is killed and the blood is poured on the feet of the new chief who sits on the skin of an animal. The swearing of oaths and the calling down of blessings upon him follow this custom. After many customary performances the people feast and dance in honour of the new chief, and it is here that national songs come into play. The chief sometimes shows reluctance and even tries to run away if possible, but as the oath is sworn, the law of the custom must be carried out. A particular song, whose wording refers to the laws, is sung very loudly and more effort is put in the skill of the dancers. In such performance some old songs are sung.

Those songs which are not common are war songs. They are not sung by everybody. They are old songs and because of this fact great importance is attached to them. They are sung by old men, to recall or remind them of the past. These sometimes make the people

P.T.O.

wild when they remember the olden days of war. In Africa at the installation of a chief, old women are expected to sing such songs and perform all the necessary customs.

One day when the people of my country were celebrating a funeral custom of a great man, who was the leader in a war, there was singing and dancing. An executioner with a cutlas in his hand was dancing. He lifted his cutlas and made signs with it. He was an experienced old man. He uttered a cry, leaped into the air and before people knew what he was about he had cut a young boy to death. Of course the Government stepped in here. If this country had no ruler then each of the ~~so~~ several divisions would have its own sacret songs for various ~~perpo~~ purposes and there would have been no common national songs for the country as a whole. In fact it was so before the English came.

In the British Empire we have one King and as everything is well organised we have common national songs which are sung only on very important occasions. The two well known ones are: Rule Britannia, and God save The King. The latter is greatly respected. It marks the Birth day, of one of the English Queens (Victoria) which falls on the 24th day of May in every year. It is always sung upon the visit of any representative of the King. When this is being sung everybody present stands at attention, with hats off the heads.

In Africa we have songs which we sing strictly when collecting our new yams. The yam festival is strictly observed in Avatime, Awudome, Peki and some other places. In the ninth month of each year this celebration is enjoyed by everybody because most of the people like yams. A fortnight before the day of the celebration the chief of the town

gives an official information through a gong-gong-man, to the public. Three announcements are given on the eve of the grand day. All the people in the village gather in the chiefs house. The spokes-man gives a short lecture, the end of which is marked by a chorus sung by the whole assembly:

:- "O - obio woe O - obio woe",

Wò bóbò gowoe medui te wò a, Kuda gua nava ke lo,
te baka - baka. ||:

After the meeting, everybody runs through the town with a burning torch and throws it on a rubbish heap prepared at the other end of the town. The next morning all the inhabitants gather at the public square. Everybody carries his gam and the whole mob moves through the town in a long, noisy, and disorderly procession, singing. It is then that national songs ring unceasingly through the air. The rejoicings of the day end in drumming and national native dances of all sorts.

Many of our national songs and customs are, however, going to ruin because we find no need for the celebration of the occasions on which they come. The British have stepped in to change our minds towards modern civilization. There was a day, my grandfather was telling me, which was set aside for plunder. On that day all the young men assembled early in the morning dressed as fantastically as possible and then sing about the town attacking hawkers and seizing their wares from them. The chiefs encouraged the celebration of this day. When the British came, this was stopped, but there are still many good customs and songs which our rulers are helping us greatly to preserve.

One drawback in the preservation of our

P.T.O.

national songs is that we find it very hard to record them. Most of the notes cannot be easily made out on the organ and piano and most parts are spoken according to a rhythm which is difficult to write down for future reference. As a result; songs which are not in frequent use are dying out.

We need very good musicians to come to our aid. We have no tribal wars & songs now, but our inspiring war songs should not be forgotten. We need trained musicians to make good copies of these for us. We also need a more improved piano with quarter tones as most of our tones or notes are not found on the modern piano: I am sure if we can attain these ends our songs will bring a great improvement to the musical world.