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HYMNS IN PRAISE OF FAMOUS CHIEFS.

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HYMNS IN PRAISE OF FAMOUS CHIEFS.

By Rev. JOHANNES AUGUST WINTER.

As the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt engraved in stone the hieroglyphs of their doings, so the old native chiefs also, during their lifetime, made hymns in praise of all their own brave deeds in hunting and fighting. In many cases the words and sentences used are abbreviated. I, although knowing Sesuto well, could not understand most of these words. The great *indunas*, when sitting round the Council fires in the evening, drinking beer, or together eating their most excellently cooked beef, used to half-sing these hymns of praise, or rather, speak them in a sing-song voice, all the rest quietly listening.

I could only write down fragments of them, with the assistance of one who would slowly repeat them over to me word by word. What a pity that these hymns have not been collected! They are the history of the people, and I believe trustworthy, for they would not have allowed untruths to be solemnly declaimed before so many witnesses of the very facts. Indeed, I think that they are more trustworthy than *post-mortem* history. The Government is anxious to preserve the old Bushman pictures; it ought to collect and preserve these old Chief-hymns, like that of Tulare which are a hundred times more valuable. The old grey-heads are dying out, so that it must be done quickly, and I have neither the time nor the means to record the old Moshesh-hymns.

I. HYMN OF MAMPURU (SON OF MOUKANGOE).

Kgola magata-ditoto
Lekoto o 'labiloe la gara Káau ea Tebile
Methepa ka tlase metsi le se ke la noa
Tuhu ea Manaka a Tebele e inne mosela metsin
Tubats ka tlase metsi ga a nooc
Letsiku la Ba-kuena
Tse di mafsi oa di tseba
O tsamaca oa di nyakorela mekaka
Se'labana se'le 'labiloe
Moato a 'labiloe ole
Magorong a banna.

(TRANSLATION.)

The great, steps upon corpses of men—
Although wounded he still fights in the midst of the sons of Tebele.

Girls! Downwards the water must not be drunk.

The Tuhu¹ of Manaka² of Tebele has put its tail into the water.³

¹ A fierce wild animal.

² His sister.

³ I have spoilt the Steelpoort-water by my killing so many.

Steelport downwards is not to be drunk—
 The husband of Ba-Kuena⁴
 He knows the good milk-cows—
 He goes and looks at the udders—
 He fights, when wounded,
 All the feet wounded—
 In front of the Council-fire-places of men.

II. PART OF HYMN OF MOROAMOTSHE, SON OF MOHUBE.

Mathung-thung a Motsha
Marole a Marotha
A matsosha phefo, Tsuane,
A Mako, moloka-bathu.

(TRANSLATION.)

The destroyer of kraal from Motsha (Ba-Kgatla)
 The dusts of the Impis of the Masotha (Bapedi)
 Stirs up whirlwind of flying people, he Tsoane (Moroa motsha)
 Of the Mako (circumcision-year), safe-keeper of men.

III. PARTS OF THE HYMN TO TULARE.

Tulare o itse: Thu! Le-Palakata
Kgomo di tshabela Madikadikane
Di tshabela Moselela tlou Linana
La g'abo Mankepeng.
Dinthoa a re tsebe ka dinaken di sele
Monu gare ki alotse ka Mongana Sepitla.
Kgogonope ea ga Ma'lodi
Tladi ea ga Moroamotshe ekhubedu
E 'loile e tima nthoa se mollo
Moitlotledi oa ga Ra-Kaau
Ka molamo oa gago oa tsiipi
Ka molamo o sa 'latloga Lolu
O bona Sethele Moletlane—
Mosa-tena Matima Mpa'lele—
Mutla o la oa tatagoe
Le ga'lane nao kgaditse
Le Kgomo Moncpenepeng
Mpya tsa ka tsa go raka tsa go fatela lerole
Tsa gu tsenya molcten kgaditse
Kopyana la ona ki le le hubetsana
Mpya tsa ka tsa go tsela lerole
Methepa ea Makibane
Ea Makibane a Sha'leng
Ea Makibane le moganeng
Le re: Re isa kae motho o bidiketse

⁴ Sc:Ba-bina kuena-ba Mongatana.

*A bidiketse dirupe le marago
Tulare o tlotse mothaga molomo
E bile e ke ki kgomo e tsungoane
Tsumo ea dira seaba Mabuka
Bontsi bo lala le tlala.*

(TRANSLATION.)

NOTE: The first knowledge of white men is not included in the Hymn, because the Chief kept this secret for himself alone.

Tulare said: Thu! Le-Palakata^{4a}
The cattle fly to Madikadikani⁵
They fly into the kloof of Mose-tla-tlou Lenana
Of Mankepeng⁶
The wars I do not know are those going on all sides⁷
Here in the midst (I) Sepitla⁸ has driven them asunder by a
Wacht-ee-n-bietje tree—
(I) the cock of the Ma'lodi⁹
(I) the red flash of lightning of Moroamotshe,
Always extinguishing wars like a fire—
Who uses as a walking stick, him of Ra-Kaau¹⁰
A walking stick of iron;
With it he walks up the Lolu Mountains.
He sees Sothele of Zebediela¹¹
You little boy—Matime of Mapahlele—
The hare of his father
We meet each other at Kgaditse
At Kgomo—Monepenepeng—
My dogs hunted you, digging up dust—
Drove you into the hole Kgaditse.
My dogs by making dust round you
The tail of the hare¹² became red
The girls of Makibane¹³
Of Makibane at Sha'leng
Of Makibane, refuse him¹⁴
Say: Where shall we go with a man so big,
Big in the loins and the hind-parts
Tulare besmeared with Witt-clay round his mouth¹⁵
Just as if it was a cow with a white mouth—

^{4a} Thu! The voice of the first gun ever heard.

⁵ Now Riverside.

⁶ His sister, the tree Tenana being called after her.

⁷ His impis going in all directions.

⁸ The Crusher.

⁹ His grandmother.

¹⁰ Motsha.

¹¹ Makes a raid upon him.

¹² The Chief.

¹³ Magakal.

¹⁴ *i.e.* Tulare.

¹⁵ Always on the war-path.

White-mouthed of an army, dividing looted cattle,
Most of them not getting anything.¹⁶

The above is Tulare's Hymn relating to the fighting. The following is his song, after his fighting time was past:—

*Se'lola sa ga Ra-Kaau se tsofetse
Matholo ki Masi'la-Legana—
La g'abo Mankepeng.*

(TRANSLATION.)

The great enemy of Motsha is old,
His knees are wrinkled, the wrinkles of the Lengana¹⁷
The Lengana of Mankepeng's¹⁸ family.

IV. HYMN TO SEKWATI.

*Sekwati-kwati sa Sehulabosego
Sekwati le ba banyane ba mo tseba
Ba re: Ki ena e la oa Kala-puane.
Ki Tshaba'la a Malema.
Mamosidi oa moroba oa tsebe—
Makgale, kea 'laba
Tshukudu ea moroba ea naka lesu
Naka le le tsosago lesolo kgatsoatsoe.
Ea ba-Rantsodi ea Thebe—
Kgoadi e itse mola naka e lemile
Ba na ba e sukulla ba e bea go sele
Ba na ba e bea gare ga phatla ea sefela.
Sa tata-go Moikhoetsi oa Magasa.
Seale motho legonong
Ka sukeng le lesulesu
O sa ile nalo gola la masogana
A tlo uela moetsana, ka uela.
Ka bueletsa ka selepe kgaladi
A Ra-mo'laku a Rapogole.
Mola a napa a ntsiele rure
Ki be ki tlo roma sitsi-moloi.
A difela kiti mosito
Batho rea lelekoa
Re rakoa ki ba-ga-Mogolele
Lerako le sele
Re rakile mosimane emosoana oa metlakana.
A rego a thsaba
A fela a ipekenya
Byalo ka monanedi oa kotse
Bathu ba lefa ba mo utloa monati
Ba re: motho o letseke o bua Kgosin.*

¹⁶ *i.e.*, so many were the warriors, that only a few got looted cattle.

¹⁷ The thorn-tree, *i.e.*, Tulare.

¹⁸ His great sister.

Ki kgoadi ea bo-kgaitsedi
Ea bo-kgaitsedi ea Lekgolane.
Bathu le sa nthete
Ga le sa nthete ki pelo ensu
Pelo rifadi ea mogatsa sa mme.
Le lebala go reta
Le lebetste nua mogale-Kgaladi
A Makoa
A le ledisa motho
Ka rupu tsa Sekwati ka mo lelekisa
Serupa sa ba-Segolo-moshito
O o tsoago Boroa kgautlele
Mosoelesoele oa Boroa oa lla
O re: Lebellang dinong, masogana
Letlaka le la la ma'lo magolo la kgos:
La gagoe la Mohuba oa Seopela
Ngogola Bopedi le tle morokd
Lo dyela di'latlegeleng
Matlakana a tlo isa melomo
Bomogatsa noanana oa lekgoareng.

(TRANSLATION.)

Sekwati-kwati¹⁹ of Sehula bosigo.²⁰
 Sekwati, even the little ones know him,
 They say: That is he with the white Seala²¹
 I am Malema with many assegais—
 I am Mamosidi. I have a moroba²² in my ear—
 I am a Rhinoceros, I stab—
 A Rhinoceros with a black horn.
 I am Kgatsoatsoe, stirring up dust with my horn—
 Of the Rantsodi with a shield—
 I am Kgoadi,²³ when the horn was all right upside—
 They turned it round to put it elsewhere²⁴
 They put it in the middle of the fore-head of me Sefela²⁵—
 Of the father of Moikhuetse²⁶ of Magasa
 I go with men into the thicket.²⁷
 Into the black-black-desert
 I am legola²⁸ of the young man, going with him²⁹
 When he falls, into a donga, I also fall—

¹⁹ Running and driving away men.

²⁰ Malekut *vs.* Tulare.

²¹ Ornament on hair from springbok skin.

²² The broad flat ear-ornament of copper of warriors.

²³ A white and black bull.

²⁴ They said that I was no Chief and wished to rob me of my Chieftainship.

²⁵ Sefala= scraper, used for curing skins.

²⁶ Daughter of Motodi.

²⁷ *i.e.*, run after the enemy into his stronghold.

²⁸ Open field.

²⁹ *i.e.*, to the enemy.

Again and again I cut into him with the hatchet
 Of Ra-mo'laku of Rapogole³⁰
 If he would, however, manage to run and escape me—
 I would send him a fly to bewitch him—
 I, the praised runner of great velocity.
 Men, we are driven away.
 We are hunted away by those of Mogolele.³¹
 A bad drive-away.
 (They say) : We have driven away the young black one with
 his young men—
 Who, when he flies,
 Is still showing pride
 Just like a white shield
 The people are always pleased with him.
 They say: A proud man, comes from the Chief—
 I am the black and white bull of my sister
 My sister Lekgolane—
 Men, if you do not praise me,
 Your heart is black—
 A dark heart of the wife of my brother—
 You forget to praise me.
 Me, the brave Kgaladi of the Mako—
 I make the man (enemy) cry—
 With the swiftness of Sekwati, I drove him.
 I cut him with the hatchet which could be heard—
 Running with audible steps from Baroa-Kgautlel—
 Modosodesode³² of Boroa cries—
 It says: Young men, look at the big birds.
 The eagle with the great eyes of the Chief³³
 Of Mohuba of Seopela³⁴
 Last year in Bopedi it has eaten (killed) a Moroka—
 It is going to eat him amongst the young men—
 The eagles will bring their beaks
 To eat the men of the girl amongst the stones (dongas).

³⁰ Of the oldest Chiefs.

³¹ Dikotope.

³² A bird.

³³ *i.e.*, himself

³⁴ Malekut.

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