

Adametameta adasiya m'chonjo

(A black day mask from the Mua area)



Themes

1) Hygiene in marriage 2) Intimacy & consideration in marriage

Etymology

Adametameta adasiya m'chonjo means, 'That which is shaved everywhere but leaving a line unshaved.'

Description

The mask (37 cm. long) in black portrays a senior hunter (bald head) with a crest of hair running from the forehead to the back of the skull. The face of the hunter is aggressive and betrays his determination. The headgear of the mask is made of tatters or fertiliser bag laces and shows he is familiar with the teachings of the ancestors. The dancer wears a plain loincloth, leglets and armlets and brandishes a spear like a hunter of old. His aggressive movements are similar to those of Kherere. He takes a few steps forward and lifts one leg and then the other. With that movement repeated, he crosses the arena, brandishing his spear and manifesting anger. The male choir poses

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the riddle: *“That which is shaved everywhere but leaving a line unshaved. (The answer is:) The lizard.”*

This cryptic song is presented in the form of a riddle and talks about the intimacy of married people. The character shares this advice with the young maidens who have been instructed by the mistress of initiation during their puberty ritual. The character reinforces this message, which is difficult for the young initiates to comprehend fully. The mistress of initiates told the girls about hygiene and about the necessity of shaving their pubic hair from time to time in order not to cause discomfort to their husband. When the Chewa talk about intimacy in marriage, they use a hidden and figurative language, which substitutes the lizard for the female sexual organs. The mask that features the female genitals takes the appearance of a fierce hunter’s head. A spear replaces the male organ. The shaving is suggested by the alternate lifting of the legs. The lizard shows light markings bordered by dark ones that suggest the shaved and unshaved surfaces. To highlight the importance of this teaching, the dancer has to abstain from sex before performing. The Chewa spiritual world portrays the ancestors as custodians of intimacy and consideration within married life. The ritual of shaving is an obligation for the married couple, and if fully observed, ensures a more harmonious relationship.

Song

“Adametameta adasiya m’chonjo? Buluzi.”

Source

Interviews in 2000 and 2007