

## Chatuluka (Mua)

(An orange day mask from the Mua area)



### Themes

1) Decentralisation 2) Thirst for power 3) Rivalry for authority 4) Witchcraft to maintain/enhance one's position (*kukhwima*)

### Etymology

**Chatuluka** means, 'He has gone out (of office),' referring to retirement.

### Description

**Chatuluka** was created in Mua in 2000 for funerals and commemoration rites. The large red or orange mask (60 cm.) has a mane made of tatters and portrays a man involved in witchcraft. The face is fearsome, with eight striped horns emerging from his forehead representing the multiple people who have been his victims. **Chatuluka** features a senior person who has kept his position of leadership in the village by inspiring fear and his reputation of being a witch. His wrinkled face is stern, and his eyes are fierce and full of pride. His angry mouth expresses surprise about being dethroned. His large, pricked ears show his readiness to gather any rumours. A heavy drooping moustache and a dimple in his chin give him a severe look. **Chatuluka** wears a funeral band around his head to show that he is mourning over his lost position rather than the death of someone dear to him. **Chatuluka**'s costume is the usual tatter suit with a large belt. He carries a club, showing his fury at having been dethroned, and he shakes a rattle to draw people's attention to his presence.

[www.kasiyamaliro.org](http://www.kasiyamaliro.org)

Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Parish, P. O. Box 41, Mtakatika, Malawi

In the *bwalo*, **Chatuluka** is arrogant and aggressive. He swerves his feet with unsurpassed energy to protest against the senior women who have taken away his chiefly position. The men express this in the mocking tone of their song, “*Today Chatuluka has come to pay a visit to his children (villagers). He came today to witness the ceremony that people have prepared for him.*” The ceremony referred to is the coronation of a younger chief who will take his place. When the chief retires he abandons the name of the chieftainship and is called by the name of **Chatuluka**, ‘He has gone out (of office).’

As a retired chief, he benefits from the honour of sharing his wisdom with the new incumbent but has no responsibility or authority to rule the village. He was the chief of the village for many years but he was under constant scrutiny as his bloodline did not allow him to qualify fully for the position. The sudden death of a younger man (earmarked as his successor) was interpreted by the villagers as being caused by his evil powers and his desire to retain the chieftainship. He was accused of using witchcraft in order to eliminate his rivals. The senior women of the village decided that he should take early retirement and they would proceed with choosing his successor. The character of **Chatuluka** teaches the community that an aged leader should know when to step down and to pass the responsibility to one who is younger. **Chatuluka** also teaches that it is wrong to manipulate people, keeping them in fear of witchcraft in order to achieve one’s own ambitions. The character fits well with the policy of decentralisation and consequent multiplication of chiefs that was introduced at the same period.

There is also a **Chatuluka** from Salima, who presents succession in a far more positive light.

### **Song**

*“Ee abwera lero a Chatuluka kudzayendera ana. Abwera lero kuti adzaone mwambo umene anawapatsa.”*

### **Source**

Interview in 2001