

Chikangaide or Chikwangu

(A red day mask from the Tete and Msinja areas)

Themes

- 1) Care of property
- 2) Dishonesty, theft & robbery
- 3) Dangers of modernity

Etymology

Chikangaide means, 'The cut of the razor [metonymy for sing'anga] becomes dark [shows itself false].' Chikanga is also the name of a famous sing'anga. **Chikwangu** means, 'the one who has taken everything' (a thief).



Description

This medium sized, red mask (35 cm.) portrays a stranger who comes with sweet talk. His wide mouth dominates the face and shows protruding teeth that betray his evil intentions. His large, swollen eyes are close-set and convey a suspicious look. A clean moustache and his well-trimmed sideburns give him the appearance of a gentleman. He is balding with hair turning grey on the sides (made of sisal), emphasising that he is a senior man and, therefore, presumed to be wise. He wears a tatter suit and carries an empty bag intended for stealing. The character is not specific for a particular ritual and can appear on any occasion.

As he enters the arena, **Chikangaide** presents himself as a respectable gentleman. He is polite, bows and behaves like someone who is reputable and honest. After a while his behaviour changes and he starts looking among the audience for items he can steal. He mimes, stealing goods from the people and putting them into his large bag. At the end, he grabs one of the drums from the drummers and runs away with it to the *dambwe*. While **Chikangaide** is busy stealing in the arena, the men sing for him, "*Some want to work, others do not. (This is the case of) Chikwangu. The bad luck of the children has fallen on their father, (who keeps saying,) What should I put on? With what will I keep myself warm? What did you do, children? You have taken everything from the house and given it to (a stranger like) this ugly sing'anga who is a thief. But this is a serious theft... Let us bring the case (to the chief)!*"

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The character of **Chikangaide** was conceived in the late 1960s, when theft was increasing in the villages. The traditional morality was crumbling. In earlier days, the villagers did not need to lock their houses. They could leave their home without fear of being robbed. People respected each other's property. At most, one of the children at home might keep an eye on things and anyone who appeared suspicious. **Chikangaide** warns parents that times have changed. They cannot leave their houses unlocked anymore and expect young children to care for them in their absence. The song tells of a fraud and a thief, who hides his dishonesty under the ruse of being a medicine man. People find that their belongings have been stolen, and they may be left without clothes or blankets. They will blame their children for having listened to the sweet talk of a stranger. **Chikangaide** reminds parents to keep a more vigilant eye on their property.

Song

"Ena akufuna ntchito, ena osaifuna ntchito! Koma makwangu (2x) inde tate de tsoka la ana lagwera akulu tate de. Ine ndivalanji? Ndifundanji? Mwachita chiani ana inu? Mwatenga zinthu zonse tate de e mwapatsa Kangaide wofukira. Koma chimenechi n'chikwangu mde mde mde. Tikatule, tikatule!"

Source

Interview in 1992