

Chimkwinya

(A red day mask from the Dedza area)

Themes

- 1) Gluttony
- 2) Choice of marriage partner (choice of *mkwamwini*)
- 3) Responsible parenthood
- 4) Selfishness/self-centredness

Etymology

Chimkwinya means, 'a big frown'.



Description

The red mask (30 cm.) represents a stranger, a husband living in the village of his wife. His bloated face displays Chewa tribal marks and tells us he comes from perhaps only a kilometre or two down the road. The two black curved horns indicate that he has fathered two children to his wife, Chinkhombé (refer to that entry), but does not provide for them, since the horns lie flat against his hair. The aquiline nose and the over-emphasised swollen cheeks daubed with two black spots portray his sexual organs and testify to his potency as the progenitor of children. **Chimkwinya** displays no forehead. The black hairline made of goatskin meets with the thick eyebrows. His fiery red eyes suggest aggression and are set in a scowl. His minute ears suggest deafness to others. His large mouth full of teeth dominates the face and emphasises that he is a glutton who protests against sharing his food with others. 'Mr. Big frown' is a modern man, and he displays a thick moustache, two long sideburns and black hairstyle (made of dyed sisal), which imitate those of a European. He wears a tatter suit, armlets, leglets and he carries a long whip to show castigation.

Chimkwinya has married Chinkhombé, the mistress of initiation. He dances with her during the puberty ritual and at funeral rites that incorporate the initiation. He swerves his feet with passion, while his wife puts all her energy into moving her hips in order to entice him. She meets with some

www.kasiyamaliro.org

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

success, since **Chimkwinya** gave her two children. Her song to the *chisamba* rhythm explains the reason for her disappointment: “*Oh, do you see him, the big frown, eating alone! In someone else’s village, one does not do that, no! He will go (back to his mother) even if he wants to stay, Chimkwinya! What you are used to do at home, forget about it!*” Chinkhombe bemoans the gluttony of her husband, since he refuses to share his food with her and deprives his own children. As a husband, **Chimkwinya** is expected to share meals with members of the wife’s family group occasionally, and on a regular basis with his own male children. He should share whatever food or drink is available. **Chimkwinya** refuses, and keeps frowning over their presence. His greed has turned him into a stingy and selfish stranger who deprives his own children. Chinkhombe and her family are ready to send him back to his own mother. They remind him of the well known proverb: “*Chakwanu uleke – What you are used to do at home, forget about it, leave it behind!*” Chinkhombe’s high position as a sexual initiator cannot be tainted by a husband who is an irresponsible father. The husband cannot enjoy sex without the responsibility that comes with it. If he brings children into this world, he must look after them. **Chimkwinya** is a selfish husband, who only thinks about himself. He should neither have married nor have produced children. He is a big mouth and large stomach. His large cheeks and nose reinforce his heightened sexual appetite. His teenage hairstyle suggests that he cannot assume responsibility and that he should never have married. When **Chimkwinya** performs together with his wife Chinkhombe during initiation rituals, they warn the initiates to be cautious in the choice of their future husbands. They should never marry a glutton whose love does not go beyond his own stomach.

Song

“A **Chimkwinya** o o e tate m’kuona ali kudya okha o o o tate de! Satero pa m’dzi pa eni ake toto de! Achoka apafuna a **Chimkwinya** tate de. Chakwanu taleka... taleka!”

Source

Interview in 1992