

Chim'tu limba

(A red day mask from the Dedza and Mitundu areas)

Themes

- 1) Living off other people (community parasite)
- 2) Greed
- 3) Laziness



Etymology

Chim'tu limba means, 'the big tough head'.

Description

This red mask (60 cm.) represents a person who has become a stranger to his own home. He will work only at someone else's house. His face shows a large mouth with a naïve smile that reveals missing teeth, a heavy nose, mocking eyes and a bushy moustache and beard. Deep wrinkles portray hard work. He wears a jute outfit without rags and carries a stick to symbolise that he is always on the move.

In the arena he shows off, dancing with bravado. The men sing, "**Chim'tu limba** (the big tough head), every morning he is seen with a hoe, as if he is going to the fields, **Chim'tu limba. Chim'tu limba**, are you on the way to the vegetable garden? He keeps going, today, yesterday and the day before yesterday! He must like it, since he comes back with small packages from the product of other people's fields, **Chim'tu limba** (the big tough head)." The song mocks a person who pretends to be hard working but only at someone else's home. At his own home he does nothing. He looks very busy. He leaves early in the morning, day after day, with his hoe, as if he is going to the family

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garden. Instead he hires his services to a neighbour, receiving beer and other goodies in exchange for his hard work, which he refuses to share. Neighbours have a positive image of him because he carries loads. But at home he is known as a lazy good-for-nothing. He is just a useless mouth to feed. He prefers to eat what someone else has cultivated for him. The character of **Chim'tu limba** mocks such a person and suggests he should support himself and his own family. His teaching can be part of any ritual.

Song

"Chim'tu limba ae a Chim'tu limba toto de, angoti m'mawa khasu tate ngati apita ku munda tate de, a Chim'tu limba. A Chim'tu limba kani ndi ulendo wopita ku dimba toto? Angoti lero, dzulo, tate ndi dzana lomwe tate de! M'dzikumukonda poti abwera ndi mitulo yawo tate de yolima ena tate Chim'tu limba."

Source

Interview in 1992