

Chipasula

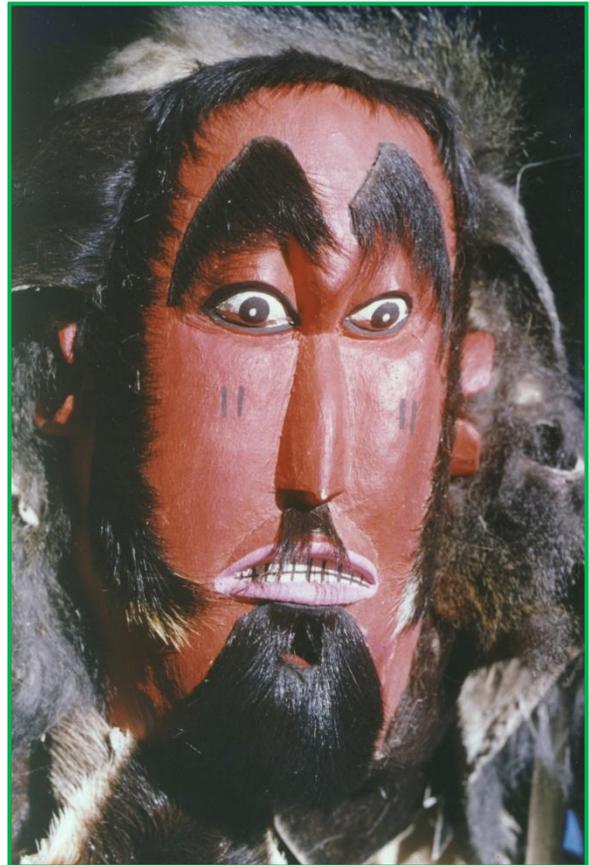
(A red day mask from the Dedza area)

Themes

- 1) Justice prevails
- 2) Lies, trickery & deception
- 3) Recent politics
- 4) Selfishness/self-centredness
- 5) Unity & harmony

Etymology

Chipasula means, 'the destroyer', suggesting someone who breeds mistrust and discord.



Description

The red mask (30 cm.) features an evil and quarrelsome Chewa. He has tribal marks, arched bushy eyebrows, long shaggy sideburns, austere goatee and cube-like moustache. The mask has an aquiline nose, which resembles the beak of a scavenging bird. The mouth is turned down in a grimace, and shows clenched teeth. **Chipasula**'s headgear is made of wild animal skins. His general expression is intense; it reveals suspicion and appears condescending. **Chipasula** wears a black shirt with long white sleeves and a pair of black trousers to emphasise that he is involved in dark deeds hidden behind an appearance of honesty. **Chipasula** performs for funeral and commemoration rites. He carries a long whip into the *bwalo*, which he 'uses' on spectators. His dancing style resembles that of Chadzunda, the head of the spirit world and the chief of the village. He jumps and swerves his feet with great vehemence and passion. He keeps repeating this succession of movements while the male members sing: "*Here he comes, **Chipasula** (the destroyer), the person without love, he is evil, **Chipasula**. The destroyer! He speaks what he has not seen (lies). He is evil, **Chipasula**! (One day) he will end up in the village court because his people know (him) and he will be put to shame, **Chipasula**! He will meet his match, **Chipasula**, because he will meet his rivals! **Chipasula** has done wrong!*" The song emphasises **Chipasula**'s deceitfulness and his ability to set people against each other. He instigates quarrels and chaos. He is a troublemaker who enjoys leaving disharmony and destruction behind him. **Chipasula** is

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

arrogant and conceited. The song predicts that one day justice will prevail and **Chipasula** will meet his match. He will be taken to the village court and will have to pay a very heavy fine.

Through the character of **Chipasula** the Chewa around Dedza emphasise the importance of harmony and unity among them. **Chipasula**'s self-centredness has left him an enemy of the *mwambo* and a stranger (red) to his own community. The character of **Chipasula** originated in the Mitundu area and has spread to Dedza since the 1930s. **Chipasula**'s role is to reaffirm the *mwambo* in the reversed Chewa style. One thing is performed but something opposite is understood by the audience. He makes the case against deceit and takes a strong stand for justice. In the course of time, life will teach **Chipasula** a lesson: he will experience the consequences of his actions. The ancestors, who act through the authority of the chief as judge, will make sure that justice and the *mwambo* prevail in the village. A character like **Chipasula** discretely comments on colonial interference and later the divide and rule policy of Kamuzu Banda.

Song

*"Akudza a **Chipasula** tate, anthu osakondana tate, oipa a **Chipasula**. A **Chipasula** ae ae anena chosaona tate, oipa a **Chipasula**. A **Chipasula** dede adzalipira kubwalo chifukwa anzawo adziwa tate achita manyazi a **Chipasula** chifukwa akomana ndi anzawo tate, olakwa a **Chipasula**."*

Source

Interview in 1992