

Chiyanjawo or Malindawo

(A day or night mask from the Mua area)



(day)



(night)

Themes

1) Communion with the ancestors 2) Sexual taboos for funerals 3) Assisting transition of deceased to spirit world

Etymology

Chiyanjawo means, 'reunion' or 'reconciliation'.

Malindawo means, 'You wait with them,' or 'You keep sexual taboos.'

Description

This character features a form of head cover made of cloth for the day or, for the night, woven with palm leaves and a circular ring like a 'hula-hoop' made of the same material. The dancer holds the hoop around his waist and shakes it downward continuously to the rhythm of the *chisamba* dance. This is an ancient mask, rarely seen today. It is used only at funerals and commemoration ceremonies. The song delivered by the women for the day character consists in incomprehensible sounds, expressing compassion and sorrow for the deceased, which are

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probably a distorted version of the following: “*Today **Chiyanjawo**, today reconciliation, today **Chiyanjawo!**”*

Death is a tragedy, and no words can express the loss of a loved one. People show their grief by taking part in the burial and the commemoration rites that follow. This implies solidarity with the deceased (*kuyanjana nawo – **chiyanjawo***). Sexual abstinence is required on such occasions (*mwalinda nawo – **malindawo***). **Chiyanjawo** embodies this compassion of the living with the deceased and the closeness of the spirit world to him/her. During these ceremonies the people and the spirit world accompany the deceased to the graveyard, the last home. They want the deceased to find peace and to settle quickly in the spirit world. This is expressed by the movement of the hula-hoop that **Chiyanjawo** activates in the name of the spirit world and the village community. **Chiyanjawo** is like a mother ancestor who puts the spirit of the deceased at peace and quietens it like a baby. She shakes a kind of basket fan and invites the spirit to settle nicely, and to abandon the idea of coming back to the village and troubling the people. The fan used for this rite resembles the broken baskets (*kachipapa*) that are used for digging the graves and which are not returned to the village but stay at the grave as the property of the dead. **Chiyanjawo** represents the communion of the ancestors and of the living. The movement of the hula-hoop reminds us that the dead have left the world of the living, characterised by sex and reproduction, for good. In the process of accompanying the dead to the spirit world and facilitating their settlement, the bereaved have to introduce the deceased into this new world of coolness by abstaining from sexual activity for a period of time (**malindawo**, ‘You wait with them’, ‘You keep sexual taboos’).

Song

“***Chiyanjawo lero, Chiyanjawo lero, Chiyanjawo lero!**”*

Source

Interviews in 1986, 1995 and 2000