

# Etimoti

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

## Themes

- 1) Hypocrisy/split personality/duplicity
- 2) Injustice
- 3) Privacy for parents
- 4) Rivalry for authority

## Etymology

**Etimoti** is a person's name.



## Description

**Etimoti** has a duplicitous personality. He hides an evil heart under a pleasant appearance. There are regional variations in emphasis. The Dedza version stresses his evil heart, while at Mua his good self is emphasised. The mask (35 cm.) from Dedza is ugly. It is elongated and shows large stupid eyes, a disproportionately long nose, a forced smile with ferocious teeth and white lips conveying hypocrisy. He has a moustache and a small goatee beard. The ears are very small and are placed very high on the head. There are wrinkles on the narrow forehead. His headgear is made of skins. The **Etimoti** of Mua originates from Dedza and is rather recent to the Mua area. In contrast, the Mua version portrays a handsome man with fine features and a headgear made of white wool or white fibres. The Dedza character wears a plain sack suit, while the Mua one adds rags to the suit and the trousers are torn. In both versions, the dancer carries a ceremonial axe and a flywhisk. Two songs are common to both areas: 1) "**Etimoti** with white lips, oh, with white lips!" or 2) "**Etimoti**, hide yourself (while having intercourse) for fear of frightening the children, **Etimoti!**" During the songs, **Etimoti** sits down and hides his torn trousers. He then stands up and dances, rather sloppily. The character of both regions is performed at initiation ceremonies.

The two songs focus on two different issues and reinforce the duality of his personality. **Etimoti's** ugly looks, and the weapon he carries, signify his intention of usurping the chief's position. He succeeds in this (the flywhisk in his hand) through devious and immoral means, including intimidation and witchcraft. As a rival of the chief, he hides his evil deeds by playing the role of an

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instructor. In the second song and in the mime of the torn trousers, he instructs the initiates, as future parents, to withdraw into the privacy of their bedroom for sexual relations. His talent and dedication at counselling hide a less pleasant side of his personality. He has white lips, meaning that he is also very gifted in the art of sweet talk, while he pursues his own agenda. As an appointed chief, he is unable to judge his people fairly or to tell the truth. He shows favouritism and injustice. **Etimoti** discourages initiates from following him. As youngsters in a formative stage, they should learn to acquire an integrated personality by following the advice taught to them. They should avoid having a double face.

### **Song**

1) "A **Etimoti** anzanga, woyera (2x)! Woyera milomo."

2) "A **Etimoti** phimbani nyini, musaopsyere tiana tate a **Etimoti!**"

### **Source**

Interview in 1992