

Fotseke

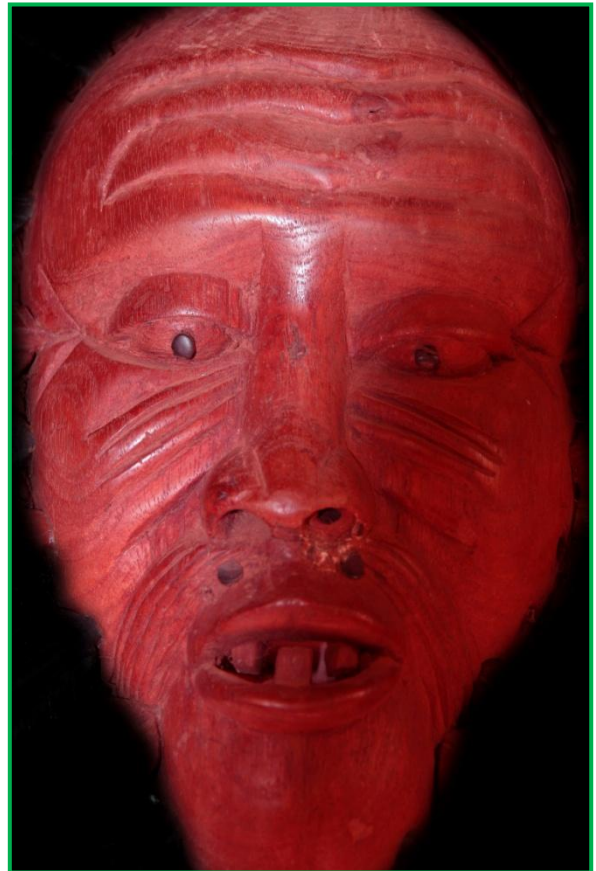
(A red mask from the Fonte Boa area of Mozambique)

Themes

- 1) Mozambique
- 2) Unity & harmony

Etymology

Fotseke comes from the South African Afrikaans, 'Voort Zak,' which means literally, 'Go forward, horse.' Its real meaning here is, 'Go away, get lost, liar!'



Description

The red mask (25 cm.) portrays a senior man with wrinkled forehead, baggy eyes, moustaches and missing teeth. The nose is that of an African. He has no ears to emphasise that he is deaf to others. The rounded chin divides into two lobes. The headgear of the mask is made of feathers. **Fotseke** wears a heavy army coat to show his important position. His outfit is completed with armlets and leglets. He carries an axe to signify that he needs to defend himself.

Fotseke was introduced into Malawian *gule* in 1978. His story relates to the Mozambican political scene of the 1970s. He joins in any kind of ritual. When he enters the *bwalo*, he swerves his feet with great impudence, but after this impressive performance, he chases everyone from the arena at the end of his dance. The male choir sings, "Come with it, **Fotseke!**" The song can refer to two things: his axe or his lies. **Fotseke** is the secretary of the village, who calls people to party meetings. **Fotseke** seems to have made a reputation for himself. He is known as 'Mr. Go away, get lost, liar'. His biases for a particular party are obvious. **Fotseke's** position, as village secretary, is to call people to meetings and to remain neutral. But **Fotseke's** allegiance is to the Renamo political party, supported by South Africa, and this infuriates the villagers, who seem to support the Frelimo party, the local communists.

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Tired of his biased nonsense, the villagers tell him to 'get lost'. Facing their opposition, **Fotseke** loses his temper and chases them with the axe. **Fotseke** reprimands village leaders who use their position for their own political agenda. Their role should have been to work for the unity of the group.

Song

*"Bwera nayo, **Fotseke!**"*

Source

Interviews in 1992 and 2007