

Kuitana

(An orange day mask from the Dedza area)

Themes

- 1) Adultery & rape
- 2) Promiscuity
- 3) Sexual taboos (*mdulo*)

Etymology

Kuitana means, 'to call' or 'the caller'.



Description

This mask (30 cm.) portrays 'the caller' with the face of a senior man, bald, fat and with abundant wrinkles on the forehead. The shape of the mask is that of a figure eight. In the top loop of the figure eight, deep set eyes express surprise. The long vertical nose points to the bottom loop of the figure eight, in which a broad mouth evokes the action of calling. The top jaw bears two rabbit-like flat teeth; normal teeth line the bottom jaw. **Kuitana's** face bears a thin, clean moustache and short sideburns, but no beard. His large ears suggest that he is so busy calling that he has no time to listen. **Kuitana's** headgear is made of tatters. A cowlick of feathers stands at the back of the head. He wears a jute vest and jute trousers full of holes stitched with rags. He brandishes a flywhisk, affecting a status he does not have, and a handkerchief that he uses to mop the sweat from his forehead.

The character dances on the occasion of funerals and commemoration ceremonies. In the arena **Kuitana** dances erotically and tries to grab women. **Kuitana** represents an adulterer who forces his partner to have sex at forbidden times. In the song sung for him by the men, he says, "**Kuitana, the women are waving at (you). But today he goes for them! What is this behaviour, Kuitana?** (The partner replies:) **No! No! Kuitana. I am having my menses. Kuitana, if it had been yesterday, I would have said yes, (I would have accepted you,) Kuitana.**" The infringement of such rules leads to a mystical disease (*mdulo*), and even death. The black warts on his face are symptoms of this

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sickness. The bald caricature is ironic, as the common belief is that an adulterer will never grow old. Such persons will meet a premature death.

Kuitana discourages adultery. He mocks irresponsible people who lure young girls with promises that will remain unfulfilled. Above all, he mocks the foolishness and naivety of those who fall into their trap.

Song

*“**Kuitana** tate (2x) akazi achita kukodola. Koma lero achita kubwandidira. Kodi n’kutani kutero ede **Kuitana** ai ai. **Kuitana** de (2x) ndili n’masinda. **Kuitana** de. Chikhala dzulo sindidakatero de, ndakuyankhani de, **Kuitana**.”*

Source

Interview in 1991