

# Mangulenje

(A brown day mask from Mitundu)



## Themes

1) Aggressiveness 2) Deafness to advice/stubbornness 3) Evil reaps its just desserts (*choipa chitsata mwini*) 4) No one is above the law 5) Troublemaking

## Etymology

**Mangulenje** means, 'a troublemaker'.

## Description

This large brown mask (60 cm.) portrays a senior man with tribal marks. His forehead protrudes and is covered with wrinkles; otherwise the head is bald. The nose is elongated. The ears protrude from the head, and are pierced and decorated with Ngoni rings. The mouth is prominent with ostentatious widely spaced teeth. The chin is heavy with no beard. A long moustache made of sisal gives him a dishonest look. The headgear is made of wild animal skins to show that he belongs to the bush. He wears a *gule* tatter suit and carries a flywhisk. **Mangulenje** likes to dance with the women. He spins around like a whirlwind. He does not swerve his feet, but his spinning movements demonstrate tremendous skill, which attracts women. He waves his flywhisk and then

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chases the audience with aggression and speed. The men sing for him: *“Some have gone (died) as a result of this... Through stubbornness like this he went (died), Mr. Troublemaker! This one, Mr. Troublemaker, was it through character, through stubbornness, through impudence, perhaps through excessive power, through too heavy build, through too great height? He went (died), Mr. Troublemaker. This is the law. It disregards height and power. He went (died), Mr. Troublemaker!”*

**Mangulenje** represents a troublemaker who is as wild as the animal skin he wears. He relies on his strength and knows no approach other than fighting. He goes about looking for trouble and for an occasion to quarrel and to fight. He takes a sadistic pleasure in accosting people. He is completely deaf to others. Nobody can reason with him and he refuses advice. He inspires fear and is intensely disliked, so people avoid his company. The song shows that the troublemaker was taken by the police and went to prison. The law is above strength. Whether one is strong or weak, one does not challenge the law. **Mangulenje** is forced for the first time to listen and to obey.

The character is very old and must go back to colonial days. It is seldom performed today because of the very special skill the performance requires. In the Chewa morality, the ancestors reward the virtuous behaviour of their descendants by showering blessings, health and good fortune on them. Likewise, they punish evil behaviour with misfortune and bad luck. **Mangulenje**'s imprisonment by the police and the colonial government is the ancestors' retribution.

### Song

*“Ena anapita nawo tate... Makani otero ede de anapita a **Mangulenje**! Yawa n'kukhala kwawo, ndi makani wawo, ndi chipongwe chawo tate, kaya n'kukula mphamvu, nkukula thupi, n'kukula msinkhu tate? Apita a **Mangulenje** edede. Ili n'lamulo: liposa msinkhu ndi mphamvu tate! Apita a **Mangulenje**.”*

### Source

Interview in 1992