

Msaka m'dzinja

(A red day mask from Dedza)

Themes

- 1) Faithfulness
- 2) Infertility – impotence
- 3) Laziness
- 4) Intimacy & consideration in marriage
- 5) Irresponsibility in marriage
- 6) Promiscuity



Etymology

Msaka m'dzinja means, 'the one who hunts during the rainy season'.

Description

This character originates from the Dowa country. The mask (35 cm.) has long cow horns, a very narrow forehead, small red eyes, heavy nose, fearsome mouth with two sharp canines and a black beard. The headgear of the mask is made of various wild animal skins to depict a hunter. He wears a tattered jute suit with a broad belt in which he has stuck many small hunting clubs. He carries also a massive club and a long sharp knife. Roaming around the arena with his weapons, he dances energetically, jumping high to demonstrate his strength. However the group of women mocks him in singing: 1) *"You ladies, Msaka m'dzinja (He who hunts in the rainy season), no! Others hunt during the dry season. You who hunt during the rainy season, you are lazy! Early in the morning, he is on a journey! In the afternoon, he is on a journey! Is he on a journey even in the evening? You lazy husband! Be gone (3x), Mr. He who hunts during the rainy season!"* **Msaka m'dzinja** is lazy! He spends his time hunting or doing other hobbies instead of working in the fields like others. He always has an excuse and his wife has to cultivate alone. His wife's complaints are voiced in the following men's song: 2) *"What kind of husband is that? Who spends his time hunting, does not cultivate and remains idle? For me, no! no! This is what he does, this one! Let him go away, since he doesn't want to eat, this husband of mine! I have been fed up with him for a*

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*long time! For me, no! no! **Msaka m'dzinja**, Mr. He who hunts during the rainy season, shall I have to eat ndiwo (relish) without nsima (maize)? He has stopped cultivating. He prefers to hunt during the rainy season! I am the one who is really fed up, Mr. He who hunts during the rainy season! Oh, oh, oh!"*

Msaka m'dzinja is an irresponsible husband, a useless and hopeless companion. Instead of listening to his wife's complaints and helping her, he shows his angry red face, his sharp teeth and his two long horns (his weapons) in order to silence her. The song sung by men suggests that he goes about at night time to hunt after other women. The women sing that he is useless. **Msaka m'dzinja** mocks husbands who are lazy and have no compassion for their wives and children, as well as raising the spectre of promiscuity and marital infidelity.

Songs

1) *"Amayi, a **Msaka m'dzinja**, toto! (2x) Anzanu asaka chilimwe. Inu m'saka m'dzinja, ndiwo mtima waulesi! Ku m'mawa, ulendo. Ku masana, ulendo! Kodi ku madzulo komwe, ulendo? E tate e tate abambo ulesi! Kwawo kwawo kwawo a **Msaka m'dzinja**."*

2) *"E tate. Wamuna anji osaka, kosalima, kuli khale? Toto! Ine kaya? (3x) Zomwe achita awa tate! Angochoka, ngati sadzafuna kudya bambowa! Ndatopa ndine! Awa, kuyambira kale! Toto ine a **Msaka m'dzinja**. A **Msaka m'dzinja** kodi ndidzachita kutsinkha ndiwoyo? Analeka kulima, nam'yanja kusaka dzinja ili tate! Ndatopa ndine, a **Msaka m'dzinja**! Oh oh oh!"*

Source

Interview in 1992