

Munda udagona tsala or Chimbandanga

(A pink day mask from Mua and Kapiri)



Themes

1) Dishonesty, theft & robbery 2) Drought, famine & food security 3) Evil reaps its just desserts (*choipa chitsata mwini*) 4) Laziness

Etymology

Munda udagona tsala means, 'The field remained fallow' (because I left it uncultivated).

Chimbandanga means, 'A robber' (who lies in wait for his victims along the road).

Description

This pink mask (30 cm.) represents a fat *mkamwini* (husband living among the wife's family) who is ridiculed because of his laziness. The face is that of a senior man with no tribal marks because he is an outsider who married into his wife's village. His growing old there depends very much on his behaviour. The bald head has a bit of hair (made of baboon fur) that forms a crown around his baldness. It comes down at the back of the head to the neck. There is no headgear, but he has a fringe of white fertiliser laces around his neck. The face is comical, exposing the stupidity of a lazy person. The eyes squint. The slender, long nose ends with pig-like nostrils. The smiling mouth is crooked. The disproportionately large ears reveal his deafness to the advice of his wife's family

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group. The character wears the usual tattered suit. He carries a pumpkin and a hoe on his way to the arena to demonstrate that he is both hungry and lazy.

In the *bwalo*, he swerves his feet energetically, then falls on his knees and scratches his head. He should be working hard in the field and concerned about food security. The men sing for him, "*The field remained fallow! Alas, the field remained fallow! (I left it uncultivated.)*"

This character performs at any kind of ritual but particularly at funerals and commemoration rites. His appearance and behaviour warn lazy husbands that if they do not cultivate, they will grow hungry, especially if they sell the last food for buying beer. When hunger seizes them they will be forced to steal from another farmer's field or even do violence to its owner (**Chimbandanga**, the robber). If that field has been protected with powerful medicine, they will become crippled (the distortion of the mask). The curse of a reputed medicine man on this stolen crop may bring death to them. They will not have time to grow bald. As husbands within the *chikamwini* system, they will not last long, as their wife's relatives will end the marriage and chase them away, not allowing them to grow old in married life. As the Chewa proverb says, "*Puse puse, ulandira mpeni – Stupidity brings the knife (bad luck).*"

Song

"Munda udagona ogo tate e! (3x) Munda udagona tsala!"

Source

Interview in 1997