

Puludzu

(A pink day mask from the Dowa region)



Themes

1) Divination 2) Support for traditional medicine & *sing'angas* 3) Witchcraft 4) Witchcraft can be eradicated

Etymology

Puludzu stands for *munthu opulupudza*, which means, 'a person of his own mind who does not fear anyone or anyone's opinion and acts accordingly' (even if it is against the rule).

Description

Puludzu's face is fearsome, mature and covered with warts. A tuft of feathers stand on his forehead. His small eyes are set apart and surrounded with wrinkles to show that he is a seer. His nose has a knobbed shape and his mouth is mean. His black sideburns, small moustache in a Charlie Chaplin style and his small goatee emphasise his maleness. His head is bald and the headgear is made with tatters, revealing that his power is derived from the ancestors. The mask (35 cm.) is pink or red, to suggest that he is a stranger to the region where he works. **Puludzu** is a *sing'anga*, a diviner. He wears beads, medicine pouches (*zithumwa*) and a small head cap (*mzuli*) to show that he is well known as a witch hunter. He wears a black robe made of jute or other cloth and a wide sash or belt to which two cow tails are tied, expressing his powers of divination. He carries a small gourd (*nsupa*) filled with medicine.

He comes into the dancing ground like a whirlwind, collapses as if he is possessed by the spirits and starts pointing at the witches with his small divining rod. He is sure of himself and fears no one. The men sing, "A new diviner has erupted (into our midst)! What is his name? **Puludzu**. As you

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may recall, some consulted him yesterday. They say: **Puludzu**. They say: (He is a man) who expels horns (witchcraft), who expels horns, horns, the old man, **Puludzu!** Let us go and see for ourselves, my friends! The witches are petrified! Why do the youth die in this village before their time? **Puludzu** has erupted (into our midst)! That people tear each other apart, this is not for me! What is unknown today will come out into the open, (through the art of) **Puludzu**, the man of no fear!"

This rather recent character (appearing in 1968) portrays the personality of a diviner who knows no fear. He believes that the ancestors have given him the power of divination. The ancestors protect him against witches by giving him the means to counteract their influence and to destroy them.

Song

*"E tate wadza sing'anga e tate! Dzina lake ndani (2x)? E tate (2x) **Puludzu**. Paja ena anapita dzulo tate. Akuti: **Puludzu** dede. Akuti: **Puludzu** tate de n'gochotsa nyanga, n'gochotsa nyanga, nyanga tate de, an'dala, a **Puludzu** dede dede! Tikaone tokha tate, anzanganu. Ziopsya mfiti tate. Pa mudzi panji posalimba anyamata tate e tate? Wadza **Puludzu!** Anthu adane toto ine! Chosadziwika lero chidziwika tate **Puludzu, Puludzu!**"*

Source

Interview in 1992