

Womuona lero wosayamika

(A women's head cover from the Mua area)



Themes

1) Gratitude 2) Sacredness/joy of pregnancy

Etymology

Womuona lero wosayamika means, 'If you meet a person today, you have no reason to be thankful.'

Description

The women use a variety of visual aids at night during the female initiation (*chinamwali*) to portray a woman expecting a child. The bulging of her padded stomach indicates the pregnancy. A head cover made of a piece of cloth conceals the identity of the female dancer. She dances the *chisamba* with the other women in front of the initiates. They sing the following instruction: "If you meet a person today, you have no reason to be thankful! If today you engage a person in deep intimacy, you do have reason

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to be thankful!" The song quotes a well known proverb to which a few additions have been made: "*Womuona lero sayamika, lero wayamika - If you meet a person today (for the first time), you have no reason to be thankful*" (but with time one becomes thankful). The proverb refers to the need to be patient. Nothing happens in a single day. The message is applied here to the experience of pregnancy. **Womuona lero wosayamika** prepares the young women to become mothers tomorrow, but only after they are married and experience the burden of caring for a husband. They may think they have no reason to be thankful, but they will know how lucky they are once they realise that they are expecting and will give birth to their first child.

Song

*"Lero **Womuona lero wosayamika**. Adamkwata ndi m'kamwa momwe lero wayamika."*

Source

Interview in 1991