

Sitiopa mame

(A large red mask from the Kapiri area)



Themes

1) Alcoholism/alcohol does not solve problems 2) Determination 3) Drought, famine & food security 4) Endurance 5) Hard work 6) Laziness

Etymology

Sitiopa mame means, 'We do not fear the dew,' but indicates the opposite.

Description

This large (60 centimetre) red mask features a middle aged man with grotesque features. His eyes are made from silver paper and appear to pop out of his head. He has a monstrous nose, ugly drooping lips and protruding teeth. His face is wrinkled and rough. He has no beard but has two large moustaches at the corner of the lips. A black circle is painted on top of his half-bald head. The headgear of the mask is made of rags. **Sitiopa mame** appears in a tatter suit (well dressed) and carries a long knife or club used for 'removing the dew'. He puts all his heart into swerving his feet while the male choir sings, "*We do not fear the dew. To be successful is to get up early!*" The song, following the pedagogy of *gule*, which is often based on reversal, describes a lazy person who gets up late when the sun is already high (the colour red) and spends his time drinking beer,

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which has been brewed from the maize which should have provided food for his family (the drooping lips).

Early in the morning the countryside is cold and wet with dew. One has to show courage and face the dew. A lazy person waits for the sun to be high and for the dew to vanish. The song stresses that success depends on promptness and hard work. Courage and the capacity for endurance are expressed by the numerous scars and bumps on **Sitiopa mame's** face.

The character was introduced in the Kapiri area around 1997 and performs at any ritual to teach perseverance and determination in one's own purpose. One should be fearless and fight laziness by waking up early to go the fields. At the period that **Sitiopa mame** was born, the rains were poor around the Lake and the area was affected by famine. The character of **Sitiopa mame** blames people who do not have the courage to wake up early in order to go the fields and then complain about hunger. The character teaches the villagers to take seriously the issue of food security. Moreover, he invites them to preserve the little that they have harvested for feeding their family and not to fall into the trap of converting their maize into cash which will be used for luxury products or spent on beer drinking. A man of steadfastness and perseverance will reach old age (baldness) and be blessed by the ancestors.

Song

"Sitiopa mame. (2x) Kuyenda n'kulawira!"

Source

Interview in 1999