

## Tsoka lideranji?

(An orange-red day mask from the Dedza area)

### Themes

- 1) Opposing Kamuzu Banda (supporting political change)
- 2) Evil reaps its just desserts (*choipa chitsata mwini*)
- 3) Recent politics
- 4) Responsibility for one's own actions/life

### Etymology

**Tsoka lideranji?** means, 'Why is bad luck darkening me?'



### Description

The tall oval mask (40 cm.) in red- orange tones features an old man whose mind is troubled and who is broken by disappointment. The tribal marks show that he is a Chewa, but the reddish colour manifests that he has become an outcast and a stranger. This is emphasised by the narrow pointed forehead furnished by a bit of hair on the temples. The character is filled with defeat and anxiety. This is highlighted by the emaciated face, the staring lost eyes, the long narrow angular nose, the wide open mouth showing teeth on both jaws, the drooping moustache and goatee, and the deep labial lines framing the mouth. The large ears suggest that he cannot believe the news of his failure. Guinea fowl feathers form a drooping cowlick, which suggests that his time is over. The headgear of the mask, the smart suit made of tatters and the flywhisk he carries, all give the appearance that he is still in control, but in fact the game is over. The old man has met his match.

**Tsoka lideranji?** appeared in 1992 after the Pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops had been read in churches. This was the beginning of a series of changes that brought about political awareness and unrest leading up to multiparty democracy. **Tsoka lideranji?** was initially created for political rallies and not for village rituals. In the *bwalo*, **Tsoka lideranji?** behaves like Am'na a chamba, the husband who takes drugs. He swerves his feet like a mad man and collapses near the drummers. In his rage, he

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forbids them to beat the drums. He staggers toward the women and interrupts their singing and dancing because he has lost his status and reputation. During his pantomime, the male singers explain the reasons for his madness: "(The old man complains:) *Even if I am clean (well dressed)... I have bad luck! (2x)* (The villagers answer:) *Bad luck befalls the one who is not on good terms with his neighbour, the one who can quench the fire from your beard and rescue you out of the frying pan. You say no! Bad luck. Some are responsible for their own bad luck... Go away! Go away!*" The song is a fictive dialogue between Kamuzu Banda and the population. The old man realises that his political dominance is over, but he still carries the look of an honourable person. He will be told to depart and relinquish the presidency. The people suggest that Kamuzu Banda should look to his own actions for the cause of his decline and 'bad luck'. He has oppressed the people, which is the root of his problem. The message of **Tsoka lideranji?** is similar to Tsoka lidaya and teaches that one should reflect and meditate in order to see clearly what can bring about bad luck... one's own behaviour. The song quotes the well known Chewa proverb about reciprocity of service between a leader and his community: "*Mzako akapsya ndevu, uzimire – When your friend's beard has caught fire, extinguish it.*" (He will extinguish yours tomorrow!) Without reciprocity one is in no position to rule and lead the country.

### **Song**

*"Ndingasambe, tsoka langa tate! Ndingasambe, tsoka langa tate! Tsoka lida yemwe wapanda kukhala bwino ndi anzake tate, omwe angakuzimire ndevu nakuphula pa moto tate. Iwe ukuti: Iyayi tate! Tsoka, tsoka loliyamba dala wena, tate! Choka! Choka!"*

### **Source**

Interview in 1993