

Viktori

(A black day mask from the Mua area)



Themes

- 1) Limits and restrictions of *chikamwini* system
- 2) Choice of marriage partner (choice of *mkwamwini*)
- 3) Forced/arranged marriage

Etymology

Viktori is used as a personal name. It is a corruption of the English 'victory'. In our case, it means the opposite, 'defeat'.

Description

This black mask (25 cm.) portrays a middle aged Chewa with a repulsive face. Sometimes he is presented as a stranger, and then the mask is orange or red. The squashed head protrudes toward the forehead forming a pointed forelock of black with some greyish hair. The nose is slender but the nostrils resemble a pig's snout. The thick red lips frame a toothless mouth that protrudes in an attitude of surprise. The staring eyes are disproportionately large, expressing shock or trauma. The large, standing ears convey astonishment. A greyish moustache hangs down from the corners of his mouth, giving him a certain standing. A Samango monkey skin goatee covers his round chin. The salient cheeks contrast with his slim face. The headgear of the mask is made of tatters and a variety of domestic animal skins, which symbolise his wish to marry and to become a husband. His kilt, armbands and leglets are made of baobab fibre or fertiliser bag laces. He carries a stick, a spear, a long knife or a club to represent his manhood. Sometimes he carries a chair to the *bwalo* and sits on it. At times he puts his chair close to the chief. He wants to show that he has come to his village to stay and to settle. When he sits on the chair, he starts singing his own song and the women continue, "He was not welcomed, **Viktori!** He was not welcomed, **Viktori!** She fancies another man." **Viktori** stands up and swerves his feet with discontent and arrogance. He runs about, and curses the women, protesting the fact that he has been sent away. His fury makes him the laughing stock of the crowd.

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Viktori was performed at the occasion of important funerals and commemoration ceremonies. Today, he is rarely seen. The last time he was recorded in the Mua area was 1975. **Viktori's** mimicry depicts the husband who moves from his village to join the family in which he wants to marry. He carries the symbol of his manhood and his luggage (the chair), ready to settle in his wife's village. **Viktori** is refused by his notional partner because he is ugly and lewd. **Viktori's** pride is hurt and he protests. **Viktori** met no victory but failure instead. The parents of both partners responsible for arranging the marriage are humiliated and furious.

Viktori's story conveys several messages. Firstly, it is wrong to choose a partner based on outside appearances. One should look at personal qualities. Secondly, it reminds the newcomer who wishes to become a husband of the well known proverb, "*Kwa eni kulibe mkuwe – One doesn't make noise (impose one's will) at someone else's home.*" Thirdly, **Viktori** teaches parents that it is old fashioned for them to arrange the marriage of their children against their will.

Song

*"Adamkana **Viktori!** (2x) Am'na ali ku mtima."*

Source

Interviews in 1990, 1993 and 2000