

Dziko lidayani?

(A pink day mask from the Dedza and Diamphwi areas)

Themes

- 1) Opposing Kamuzu Banda (supporting political change)
- 2) Murder
- 3) Recent politics

Etymology

Dziko lidayani? means, 'On whom has the country turned its back?'



Description

The large 40 centimetre mask portrays an old man who is frail and emaciated. His face is bony, the neck meagre and the skull bald. A bit of grey hair borders the exaggerated ears, which protrude as if a continuation of the eyes. The large ears show eagerness to gather rumour and gossip. The broad forehead displays three parallel v-shaped lines to express a frown, and to show anger and disapproval. The deep set eyes manifest cruelty, ruthlessness and sadistic tendencies. The triangular nose protrudes from the flat face and highlights the spiteful, vengeful mouth. The clenched teeth amplify the expression of a heartless person. Two cube-like moustaches sit atop the disdainful mouth. A triangular goatee gives the character a condescending look. The face carries no tribal marks to show that **Dziko lidayani?**'s behaviour is unworthy of Chewa status. The skin has a pinkish tone and labels him as a stranger, denying him a Malawian identity. Tatters of various colours border the mask and form the headgear. **Dziko lidayani?** wears a pair of smart trousers, a white shirt, a jacket and a tie, and he carries a staff. His noble appearance suggests that he is a man of high status and position.

Dziko lidayani?'s entry into *gule* dates back to the beginning of the 1990s. His presence in the arena is not tied to any particular kind of ritual. He has been observed performing at party meetings. In the *bwalo*, **Dziko lidayani?** swerves his feet with great energy. He jumps with self-assurance, behaving as

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if the entire ground is his, like Chadzunda himself, the head of the spirit world. The men's song introduces him with these comments: *"There is a problem, my friend! Some of your companions claim that the land (the country) has turned against them. (Especially) for those who say that it is their own property, (it is true that) it has turned against them. Why should it not turn against them, since they have murdered its own citizens, as if the land belonged to them? Some have revolted, oh! (This is the reason why) the country has turned against them. They are the very people, the very people."* The song describes a chief or a person in a position of authority who has no respect for his collaborators or employees. He is harsh and unjust with them and treats them unfairly. As fortune turns against him, this chief finds himself in difficulty, and none of his subjects or employees will support him. Because of his poor and reckless treatment of his colleagues they are reluctant to help him.

The riddle of this chief or person in authority is analogous to the political scene of Malawi at the beginning of the 1990s. One can make this conclusion because the song mentions the land or the country. After the Pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops in March 1992 and the events that followed, Dr Kamuzu Banda's popularity began to decline. In 1993, Kamuzu Banda was forced into a referendum that led to the adoption of the multiparty system. In 1994, Kamuzu Banda lost the general election and the presidency after 30 years of dictatorship. He, the Liberator, the Saviour, the Father of the Nation, was now portrayed as a stranger. He was stripped of his Chewa status as people realised that they had been robbed of their freedom and dignity. Kamuzu Banda had spilt the blood of many innocent people who had been assassinated or who had died in prisons under his rule. The brothers/sisters and relatives of the victims were throwing back the question to Kamuzu Banda: "On whom has the country turned its back?" Would the victims have chosen to live instead of going prematurely to the grave? **Dziko lidayani?** questions what has been gained since Malawi's independence and the so-called 30 years of freedom and prosperity. By 1994, the positive aspects of independence were not commensurate with the pain that people had endured. Kamuzu Banda's adulation was over! Following the ancestors' wisdom, a rule of terror has no place in the development of a nation.

Song

"Chovuta chilipo, anzanganu tate ye tate! Anzanu tate ye dziko lada ena! Ena tate amati n'lawolawo, lawada tate. Lipanda kuwada koma achita kupha anzawo, ngati n'lawo dziko? Anakana ogo de dziko lida ena. Tate omwewa, omwewa."

Source

Interview in 1993