

Ndalama zakale

(A black day mask from Kasumbu and Dedza area)

Themes

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

Etymology

Ndalama zakale means 'old money', the currency of former days.



Description

This black mask (30 cm.) portrays the face of an old Malawian, with wrinkles, painted white goatee and a moustache. He is heavily tattooed like a person of the older generations. His eyes and ears are small to show that he can neither see nor hear well because of his advanced age. These details may also stress that he is an egocentric person who cannot understand others or see their needs. He has no remaining teeth. The headgear attached to his mask is made of tatters, signifying that he belongs almost already to the world of the dead. In his nostrils, he has a nose plug, which characterises the older generation. Instead of being made of ivory, it is made of an old coin (*ndalama zakale*). He wears a black hat representing a bowler and a dirty dark suit caricaturing the dress code of the former President, Kamuzu Banda. He carries a walking stick and a flywhisk.

As he enters the *bwalo*, he is immediately surrounded by a group of women who simulate Kamuzu Banda's *mbumba*. He waves his flywhisk to both men and women. He dances feebly with his stick, slowly moving his feet to the rhythm of the *chisamba*. He points at his nose plug and shows the coin to the women and to the rest of the audience. Their reaction is to run from him. The men sing for him, "Mr. Currency of former days, this belongs to former days... let us see a new (currency)! Indeed, let us see the currency of former days vanish, my friends! Mr. Currency of former days, let him vanish, let him vanish! Now we are tired of seeing him, Mr. Currency, Mr. Currency of former days! Oh, oh, oh! Let it vanish, let it vanish!" Frustrated, **Ndalama zakale** leaves the *bwalo*, removes his nose plug, and throws the coin at the crowd.

This character, who performed on any occasion, including political rallies, was created after 1993 when the Kamuzu Banda regime was about to crumble. At the beginning of 1993, Kamuzu Banda had formed a referendum commission. On 14 June 1993, the Malawi nation voted in the referendum. 63% of the population was in favour of the multiparty system. On 17 May 1994, the general election took place and Bakili Muluzi, leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF) party, won Malawi's first democratic presidential election with 85 seats against 56 for the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and 36 for the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD). The old currency had featured Kamuzu Banda. The new currency featuring the portrait of Bakili Muluzi, the new president, did not appear until June 1995. The change of currency evoked in the song is taken as a popular request for a change of rule and a change of government. The consciousness of being oppressed under the MCP appeared in *gule wamkulu* quite early during the Kamuzu Banda regime. Several masks dating from 1964 attest to this.

Ndalama zakale advocates a new rule and a change of government, which should give Malawi the freedom deserved, a freedom based on respect for the Chewa moral code and on respect for their ancestral spirits' way of life.

Song

"Ndalama zakale tate de zakale, tate de....tione zatsopano! Tione ndalama zakale izi zipite de, indedi, anzanganu! A Ndalama zakale apite, apite de! Chikhala tatopa nazo kuzionako tate, a ndalama, ndalama tate de zakale, zakale! Oh oh oh! Zipite, zipite!"

Source

Interview in 1993

Reference

Schoffeleers, M. (1999). *In Search of Truth and Justice*. Kachere Book. CLAIM: Blantyre. pp. 249 – 294