

# Zambia

(A black and white day mask from the Mua area)

## Themes

- 1) Hypocrisy/split personality/duplicity
- 2) Inequality
- 3) Recent politics

## Etymology

**Zambia** stands for a type of *chitenje* that was popular in the 1960s.



## Description

The long narrow black and white mask (35 cm.) of **Zambia** conveys ignorance or stupidity. It has a narrow forehead, indicating a limited brain. The nose is pointed suggesting an inclination to sex. The eyes squint and the minute ears indicate deafness to criticism. The pink lips blossom and display arrogance. The chin dominates and emphasises pride. His hair is made of white tatters. The dancer wears a tatter kilt, leglets and armlets, also made of white cloth to emphasise self-righteousness.

When **Zambia** enters the arena, he swerves his feet and waves a white handkerchief while the men sing, "You **Zambia**, the cloth in fashion, which is worn even by dogs!" The *Zambian chitenje* cloth that was introduced in the 1960s was never white or a plain colour. It was a type of Javan style print with a busy multicoloured design. After Independence this cloth was introduced to Malawi for fashioning uniforms for members of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Malawi Women's League (MWL). These *chitenje* uniforms helped to build up the popularity of these two political groups and to strengthen the new government in promoting its program. The slogan, 'One country, one nation,' reinforced the idea of everyone being responsible for implementing it. Soon the villagers were to find that not everyone in the country had the same opportunities. Some benefited from the program and were paid for their participation while others were overlooked or had to struggle on their own through self-help schemes. *Zambian chitenje* uniforms were distributed freely in order to promote the MCP and the MWL. The free supplies were not available

[www.kasiyamaliro.org](http://www.kasiyamaliro.org)

Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Parish, P. O. Box 41, Mtakatika, Malawi

for everybody. Others had to buy their own. This inequality provoked jealousy, which became exemplified in the character of **Zambia**. Member of the Party and the Women's League wearing the Zambian cloth became the target of criticism. The white colour of the cloth unveils their hypocrisy and mocks their dishonesty. The backward movements of the dancer suggest that these inequalities were taking the country backward.

The character of **Zambia** was short lived. Members of *Gule* soon had to hide this character in the cupboard. By the beginning of the 1970s, the Kamuzu Banda regime was becoming increasingly despotic and would not tolerate any form of mild criticism, even if it came from the spirit world.

### **Song**

*"Zambia iwe, nsalu yamakono (2x), yovala ndi a galu omwe!"*

### **Source**

Interviews in 1993