

Achisale Nyirenda

(A yellow day mask from the Dedza area)

Themes

- 1) Adultery & rape
- 2) Hypocrisy/split personality/duplicity
- 3) Infertility – impotence

Etymology

Achisale and **Nyirenda** are two clan names. The first is Chewa and comes from the central region of Malawi. The second is Tumbuka and is linked to the northern region.



Description

Our man has a double clan name in order to hide his real identity. His head is bald. His remaining hair is made of black goatskin, forming his headdress. Local Chewa tribal marks appear on his face. There are wrinkles all over his forehead and chin. His features are severe and suspicious. His protruding eyes are fearsome and set close to each other. His square nose is split into two segments in order to demonstrate his double identity. Two black protrusions, like swellings, stand on each cheek. His mouth is broad, austere and shows widely spaced teeth on both jaws. He has a thick black moustache. He wears a jute shirt and trousers, without rags or white overalls, to show that no guilt can be attached to him. He has a wide belt and carries flywhisks, to show he is a man of status or education. In the arena, he keeps a distance from the women. He is reserved and concentrates on the swerving of his feet. He is popular and acclaimed by the crowd but shows no familiarity with anyone. His reputation is clean. Only the song, sung by the men, betrays him: 1) *“When the penis held you responsible for a case you cannot deny it. Remember, remember that you had intercourse with a young woman yesterday... **Achisale**, don't deny it.”* To this song, the women answer: 2) *“**Achisale Nyirenda** is impotent, **Achisale Nyirenda!**”*

This character originated from Lilongwe and was later adopted in the Dedza district. His double clan name stresses the duality of his personality. He is sexually hot and involved with many women but is incapable of begetting children (expressed by his yellow colour). When he is charged with a case of adultery, he denies his guilt, because there is no pregnancy. The features of the mask indicate his inability to produce offspring. The split, flat nose and two small black spots on

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his cheeks represent inadequate sexual organs. **Achisale Nyirenda** is one of the many characters that mock infertility. Dressed in smart clothes, **Achisale Nyirenda** hides the drama of those who cannot have a normal sex life. They try to convince themselves that there is nothing wrong with them. Partners are blamed. **Achisale Nyirenda** plays his drama whenever *gule* is performed. Above all, he is easy entertainment at the time of funerals, when the villagers need to let off steam and forget about the dread of death.

Songs

1) "*Mbolo ikapalamula sungaikanire (2x). Paja wakwata mwana dzulo eee sungaikanire e, **Achisale musaikanire.***"

2) "***Achisale Nyirenda (2x) dede sadziwa kukwata dede, **Achisale Nyirenda!*****"

Source

Interviews in 1973 and 1991