

# Kalija

(A yellow day mask from the Salima area)

## Themes

- 1) Infertility – impotence
- 2) Desire for a child
- 3) Caution against infertility in marriage/infertile people should not marry

## Etymology

**Kalija** means, 'since a long time'. The word is a euphemism for infertility.



## Description

The yellow mask (40 cm.) has a narrow face with a sour smile. It shows tribal marks, wrinkles, a long narrow nose and a smart thin moustache. The headgear of the mask is made of tatters, dyed sisal and a big bunch of feathers (a hair lock), which keeps moving in various directions during the dance. This signifies impotency. The dancer wears a sack shirt stitched with rags and a loin cloth to show that he comes from the bedroom. He carries a club to demonstrate his male power and the frustration of being infertile.

**Kalija** dances the *chisamba*, moving his hips wildly while the men sing: 1) *“Having sex, young initiate, (sounds like) a tack tack sewing machine, a choo choo train! But Kalija is lamenting that there is no child in (his) home. The problem is with me in my private life! Sex I found, but they say that Kalija is (still) lamenting (because he has no child)!”* The women emphasise the same theme within their own song: 2) *“In his private life Kalija is lamenting, (saying) Forgive me, lady! They say that Kalija is (still) lamenting... (he wishes to have) a child. What can he do? The problem is potency but sex he enjoys. Kalija is lamenting his infertility.”*

**Kalija** is longing for a child, but his infertility prevents him from having one. His failure puts him to shame. His performance in the *bwalo* expresses his frustration. He mimes his sexual efforts and his failure, and feels rejected by everyone. This rejection is reflected in the mask's yellow colour. He knows that his marriage is about to end. He will have to go back to his mother and his village or

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disappear into the anonymity of the crowd. **Kalija** is another victim of infertility who expresses the hopelessness of this situation.

### **Songs**

- 1) *“Ku gule, mwana wa namwali, makina khetekhete, sitima gudjugudju! A **Kalija** akudandaula m’nyumba mwana (4x). Zingovuta ine m’nyumbamo. Gule ndam’peza a **Kalija** akuti akudandaula.”*
- 2) *“A **Kalija** akudandaula m’nyumbamo: Ndapota nanu mai, tate de. A **Kalija** akuti akudandaula... mwana e. Nanga atani? Yavuta ntchitoyo koma gule adam’peza. A **Kalija** akudandaula tate de uchimbwira.”*

### **Source**

Interview in 1992