

Kalulu msanga

(A brown day mask from Dedza)



Themes

1) Dishonesty, theft & robbery 2) Lies, trickery & deception 3) Troublemaking

Etymology

Kalulu msanga means, 'Hare, hurry!' but could also be a play on words meaning a hare with bad luck.

Description

The hare mask (25 cm.) is scarcely bigger than a human head and is painted in tones of brown. It has two long outstretched ears like those of rabbits and hares. The insides of the ears are white. The eyes are hollowed out. The mouth has a cunning smile and shows two front teeth on the lower jaw. The nose is flattened in order to represent both a rabbit and a human. The headgear of the mask is made of monkey or baboon skins. His costume is stitched with sisal dyed brown to resemble the fur of the hare. He carries a club and a whip to the *bwalo*. However, he dances without the weapons, and claps hands to invite the women to interact with him. He imitates the behaviour of the hare. He moves swiftly, circling the *bwalo* several times and then squatting. He

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will beat his palms on the ground while running. His feet swerve sideways to the beat of the *chisamba*. The women sing for him a rather obscene song: *"The hare, by your anus and by your arse hole, and by your mother's!"*

Kalulu msanga imitates the behaviour of the hare. This character dances at funerals and on the occasion of shaving ceremonies. In Malawian lore, **Kalulu** is reputed to be clever (*wochenjera*), well camouflaged, deceptive, a trickster and to sleep with his eyes open. This can have a positive interpretation in the character Kalulu (see that entry), but here, the message is negative. This *gule wamkulu* mask, like the tales, is meant to correct the behaviour of people who resemble it. These people are called *akalulu* because they are cunning and lack honesty, causing trouble for others. People of such behaviour have no real friends. In the end, they are whipped and hunted with a club like the hare.

Song

"Kaluluwe (2x) pa nyo pako, pa ntumbopo ndi amako omwe!"

Source

Interview in 1991