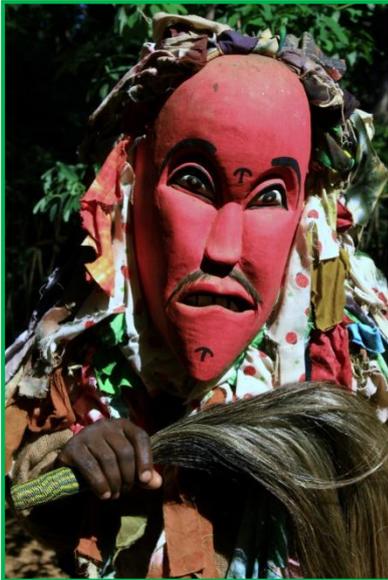


Kathako wali

(A pink day mask from the Salima area)



Themes

- 1) HIV/AIDS & sexual diseases
- 2) Promiscuity
- 3) Sexual obsession

Etymology

Kathako wali means, 'shining buttocks'.

Description

This pink mask (40 cm.) portrays the face of a man who has surprise in his eyes and disgust in his mouth. His long moustache, tribal marks and missing teeth show that he is an adult male, approaching old age. He wears a plain suit made of sackcloth without rags, and carries a flywhisk. His dancing is lewd, and he shows no manners with women. He runs after them, and tries to grab their bottoms. **Kathako wali** appears at puberty rituals, at funerals and commemorations that incorporate these initiations. As he dances the *chisamba*, the men sing for him: 1) *"To be addicted to sex! Some have died from it, from the shining buttocks! It is better to listen! It is my uncle, the old man who went (died)... It is my brother who went (died)... the shining buttocks."*

Kathako wali suggests that he is stupid, promiscuous and obsessed with sex. His only pleasure and interest in life is sex. He has no self-control, and he is not afraid of the consequences of sexual abuse. He is concerned neither about sickness nor death. The ancestors display his vice in public in order to inculcate the fear of promiscuity and the danger of its consequence in the initiates.

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Immorality leads to infertility, to sexual disease and death. No one can guard his own life except his owner.

Kathako wali is rarely performed today owing to the stringent sexual taboos that the dancer has to follow. In the past, it was danced by senior men judged able to abstain from sex. Young people are not chosen because they are thought of being incapable of meeting these ascetic demands. In the Mua region, **Kathako wali** is not a character of its own. A song mentioning this name is sung for the character of Kamkutera. The men sing: 2) *"The beads glitter, the shining buttocks!"* The women respond: 3) *"You are the one who went to see!"* The song conveys the same message, deterring promiscuity and obsession with sex.

Songs

- 1) *"Kukwatakwatakotu tate ena ananka nako tate **Kathako wali!** Chikhala kwabwino kumvera tate! Ndajomba tate e adanka nazo... achimwenewa tate... **Kathako wali!**"*
- 2) *"Kamkanda mbuu **Kathako wali!**"*
- 3) *"Wakaona ndiwe!"*

Source

Interviews in 1992 and 1999