

## Luwanika

(A red-pink day mask from the Chatewa area)



### Themes

1) Hard work 2) Marriage for money 3) Generation gap in marriage 4) Positive aspects of modernity 5) Pride/arrogance

### Etymology

**Luwanika** is the name of a person.

### Description

This medium sized mask (35 cm.) in reddish tones has the face of a mature man. He is balding with a broad forehead, long straight nose, heavy mustache, large ears, pointed chin and a smiling mouth with no teeth. Wild animal fur completes his headgear. **Luwanika** wears a tattered jute outfit, and he carries a flywhisk or a ceremonial axe. He appears as a proud European with high status. He injects tremendous energy into his dancing, swerving his feet while the men sing: 1) "**Luwanika, the baldhead!**" The women answer: 2) "**Luwanika, the remedy to baldness is a hat, Luwanika!**" The character of **Luwanika** seems to have been introduced at the end of the 1950s or the beginning of the 1960s. It was danced on the occasion of funeral rites and commemoration

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ceremonies. Because the name **Luwanika** resembles Lewanika, King of the Lozi in Zambia, one wonders if our character might have Zambian origin. Many Chewa were employed in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) at that period. Under the tone of mockery, our character seems to portray modernity and the attraction for a foreign life-style. He could have been brought back by Malawians from their labour migration. **Luwanika** is well behaved and does not show any excessive pride or selfish behaviour. The character seems to praise the *mkamwini* who comes back from work with wealth, good manners and self-discipline while resettling into the village of his wife. The character emphasises that it is wrong for a person of means to be condescending towards those who are less fortunate. **Luwanika's** baldness, however, suggests that he is older than his young wife. This detail carries with it a tone of mockery for girls of the new generation who easily fall in love with older men because they are attracted by wealth. This type of marriage promises trouble. The women's song suggests that the remedy to baldness is a hat, meaning wealth derives not from old age but from hard work. If determined at his work, a young man can emulate **Luwanika** and follow his path to success.

### Songs

1) "**Luwanika**, ee am'na adazi **Luwanika!**"

2) "**Luwanika**, e a e mankhwala adazi n'chipewa, **Luwanika** e a e **Luwanika!**"

### Source

Interviews in 1991, 2000 and 2001