

Maliro andikola

(A night and day mask from the Ngodzi area)

Themes

- 1) Protection against evil spells & wishes
- 2) Witchcraft

Etymology

Maliro andikola means, 'I am tired of funerals.'



(day version)

Description

The small black mask (20 cm.) represents a creature deformed by greed, thirst for power and witchcraft. The face resembles that of an indeterminate animal, probably carnivorous, possibly a leopard. It is made of jute, painted black and stretched on a wire or bamboo frame. It has high eyebrows, round fearsome eyes, wide open mouth and sharp teeth on both jaws. The ears droop, and the chin slants down. The mane of the mask is made of white plastic strips. The white colour contrasts with the blackness of the mask to show that the person is involved in nocturnal activities (witchcraft) but pretends to be a person of virtue. The character wears a jute shirt and trousers, to which a long tail is attached. He carries a long stick. He moves forward and backward while shaking the tail.

Maliro andikola dances only at funerals and commemoration rites of those who are known for their propensity to greed and who have a reputation of being a witch. As he performs he sings, "*Nyalugwe (Leopard), avert the spell, as well as you can!*" The song describes the reaction of a person who is suffering from a long illness. He becomes convinced that his sickness is caused by the hatred of an enemy or by the jealousy of a family member. The patient decides to consult a diviner to seek protection for himself and to cast a more powerful spell on the person responsible for his illness. The witch, who was motivated by greed and ambition, meets a brutal end. He is defeated by more powerful medicine than his own.

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The character of **Maliro andikola** simultaneously portrays the patient and the witch responsible for his sickness. **Maliro andikola**'s function is to unveil the witch and to discourage further spells being cast on other members of the family group.

Song

"Aipherere nyanga nyalugwe (2x), chifukwa cha khama!"

Source

Interview in 1993