

# Mwathandizadi

(A black day mask from the Dedza and the Kaphuka areas)



## Themes

1) Abuse of power 2) Opposing Kamuzu Banda (supporting political change) 3) Hypocrisy/Split personality/Duplicity 4) Recent politics

## Etymology

**Mwathandizadi** means, 'You have really helped.'

## Description

This is another political character of *gule* that originated in 1993, during Malawi's transition to democracy. **Mwathandizadi** appeared primarily at political rallies. The mask (30 cm.) caricatures Kamuzu Banda and his claim to be the only leader for tomorrow: wise, dynamic and enlightened. The mask is black to portray a person of the land and, in irony, a person of dark deeds. It is bald and has white eyebrows and a goatee to indicate old age and the pretence of wisdom. The mouth has a naïve smile, which blossoms into white lips, symbolising that he broadcasts his words as truth and that lies never pass his lips. **Mwathandizadi** wears spotless Western clothes to emphasise his high position, but this reveals his hypocrisy. The paragon of mockery, **Mwathandizadi** carries a flashlight, simulating the leading of his people righteously toward a bright future.

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In the *bwalo*, **Mwathandizadi**'s dancing resembles that of Am'na achamba, the drug addict. He is unpredictable and uncoordinated. As he appears, people worship him, and he leads them with his flashlight. His movements are clown-like, and he keeps changing direction, beat and mood while swerving his feet. Though his face is all smiles, he displays aggressiveness toward the women. He raises his arms and threatens them. He collapses but without hurting himself. The drummers beat a rhythm that is syncopated, while the senior men sing with sarcasm, *"You have really helped, my friend! Yes, yes, yes, it is true! We were in a precarious situation and you have helped us! We, the victims! You my friend, some should be ashamed because they were terrorising others and even murdering them. You my friend, you have helped, you have really helped a lot! You have helped, you have really helped!"*

The ironic song exposes Kamuzu Banda's selfishness and lack of concern for the population. He should be ashamed of his tyranny and of the unexplained deaths that he bears on his conscience. Kamuzu Banda should not be surprised that the population now deserts him and wishes to choose another president. People look forward to finding someone who will finally listen to their plight and put an end to their suffering. The character of **Mwathandizadi** is richly sarcastic in its refrain, *"You have really helped us,"* meaning quite the opposite. Though Kamuzu Banda posed as the patron of the *Nyau* secret society, the *Nyau* members could see through his ruse. He was a supporter only of himself.

### Song

*"Mwathandiza anzathunu tate eee! Zoono! Tinali pa mkwichi de eee **Mwathandizadi!** Ovutikafe! Anzathunu tate ye eee ena achita manyazi de ozunza anzawo aja, ndikupha komwe. Anzathu tate ye **Mwathandizadi**, eee tate ye mwathandiza koposa tate ye! Mwathandiza, **Mwathandizadi!**"*

### Source

Interview in 1993