

# Nalirani

(A yellow day mask from the Dedza area)

## Themes

- 1) Childcare
- 2) Responsible parenthood
- 3) Selfishness/self-centredness

## Etymology

**Nalirani** is a personal name that means, 'Keep crying,' addressed to a child.



## Description

This small, elongate, yellow mask (25 cm.) features the face of a pretty young Chewa woman with tribal marks. Her flighty character is expressed through her bright eyes, ambivalent smiling mouth (with teeth), smallish nose and large earrings. Her black dyed sisal hair is partly covered with an orange or white scarf. She wears a smart dress, bangles and waves a beautiful handkerchief. She is in a hurry. Where is she going? The song tells us: "**Nalirani** (Keep crying) is cunning. She left in a hurry for the beer party, abandoning her sick child. **Nalirani**, you should not have done this... abandoning your sick child and hurrying to the beer party!" **Nalirani** dances the *chisamba* like a bargirl. She moves her hips erotically as if at a beer party.

**Nalirani** is a poor mother. She left a sick child at home. She is looking for entertainment and has no sense of duty. Perhaps this child was unwanted. She may have become pregnant as the result of over-indulgence in beer. **Nalirani** can also be seen as a poor sister, who is unable to care for one of her relative's sick children. She has little compassion and thinks only about herself and her desires. Through the character of **Nalirani**, the ancestors give a warning to villagers that they have to attend to each other's sickness and show compassion, instead of being selfish and looking after their own petty interests. This mask originally came from Mozambique into the Dedza area and is performed only at the time of puberty initiation or at funeral ceremonies that incorporate the puberty initiation. **Nalirani**, who evokes the cry of the baby, warns the initiates not to follow her

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example and teaches them to be unselfish, well behaved and responsible mothers. Good motherhood will calm the baby's cries.

### **Song**

*"Nalirani n'wochenjera. Adasiya mwana ali gada, n'kuthamangira ku mowa (2x) eae. Nalirani, sungachite kutero eae... kusiya mwana ali gada, n'kuthamangira ku mowa!"*

### **Source**

Interview in 1991