

# Silo m'tsale nalo!

(A brown day mask from the Pemba and Kaphiriuta areas)

## Themes

- 1) Supporting Kamuzu Banda/MCP
- 2) Recent politics
- 3) Wisdom

## Etymology

**Silo m'tsale nalo** means, 'There it is (the country), stay with it!'



## Description

The mask (25 cm.) portrays an old Chewa man (tribal marks) with a bald head bordered by a crown of white hair. His gaunt face and forehead are wrinkled. His sharp aquiline nose leads to two deep labial lines that frame a drooping mouth with spaced, worn out teeth. A moustache, arched eyebrows and a short goatee, all made of grey animal fur, emphasise his expression of surprise and resentment. His headgear and suit are made of tatters. He wears a black hat, mimicking a bowler, and carries a walking stick and flywhisk.

Accompanied by the women, **Silo m'tsale nalo!** walks around the *bwalo* to the rhythm of the *chisamba*. He looks tired and displays little energy compared to the women.

**Silo m'tsale nalo!**'s introduction in *gule* at Hinda and Kaphiriuta villages in 1993 served to enhance political rallies. The male choir acclaim him with the following song: "**Silo m'tsale nalo!** There it is (the country), stay with it! For me, my time is over. Stay with it! Stay with it, those of you who want it! You say I have grown old! Is it healthy for a village (country) to be without old people, you children? There it is, there it is, stay with it!"

In the context of the events of 1993, the identity of the tired old man in the bowler hat, followed by a few women, is obvious. The song quotes, with nostalgia and sympathy, the monologue of Kamuzu Banda, defeated by his old age and diminished popularity. The villagers greatly value the presence of elders in the community. They wonder how a village can be led by young people

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Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Parish, P. O. Box 41, Mtakatika, Malawi

(children) who lack real experience. The song uses the metaphor of the village scenario to express the political structure of the country in 1993, in which **Silo m'tsale nalo!** expresses Kamuzu Banda's frustration with political change and his eventual loss of the presidency.

The area of Kaphiriuta, where the figure first appeared, is remote. Through the emergence of **Silo m'tsale nalo!** the village signals its conservatism and reluctance to accept the political changes of the time. The commentary on the traditional rule (headmanship) of the village is an expression of sympathy for Banda and his leadership, and shows support for the ruling government and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). The character of **Silo m'tsale nalo!** approves the legitimacy of Kamuzu Banda's rule by comparing it to the wisdom of the elders, and rejects the young activists advocating a multiparty democracy. The song implies that it is wrong to criticise the leadership of old Kamuzu Banda and his life commitment to the cause of the country. On the eve of the referendum on multiparty democracy, the character cautions against change to unproven leaders. To do so is to reject the long-standing wisdom of an elder like Kamuzu Banda, who was styled the 'Saviour' (*Mpulumutsi*) of the country. The song also implies that once the gossip is over, people will remember the great achievements of Kamuzu Banda's reign and his wise leadership as the father of the nation. The old Kamuzu Banda, facing rejection, disappointed and upset, surrenders the country to his opponents.

The wisdom of the ancestors and the Chewa worldview is marked by conservatism that tends to preserve the status quo and to oppose most forms of change.

### **Song**

*"Silo m'tsale nalo tate! Ine kwanga kwatha tate! M'tsale nalo! M'tsale nalo olifunanu! Mukuti ndakalamba! Kodi pa dziko popanda nkhalamba n'pa bwino ana inu tate? Silo, Silo m'tsale nalo!"*

### **Source**

Interview in 1993