

## Tikhale nawo

(A yellow day mask from the Diamphwi area)

### Themes

- 1) Opposing Kamuzu Banda (supporting political change)
- 2) Role & powers of the chief
- 3) Recent politics

### Etymology

**Tikhale nawo** means, 'Let me stay with you.'



### Description

The medium sized yellow mask (30 cm.) portrays a young stranger being welcomed into the village. The colour yellow and the absence of tribal marks communicate this. His youthful face is highlighted with bright eyes filled with imagination, a clear-cut curved nose, and a dandy moustache and goatee. The mouth has no teeth and shows no aggression, but reveals surprise. The low hairline is made of black goatskin and runs into long painted sideburns. The affirmative features, supported by a strong neck carved from the same piece of wood, emphasise hope. The headgear of the mask is created using tatters. Two very slender white horns on his head convey power. The circular and pricked ears show attentiveness and the ability to recognise and ascertain the population's feelings regarding his presence in the village. However, **Tikhale nawo** wears a jute suit dyed black, a worn-out outfit that reveals a decline of standards. He also carries a mock insignia of power in the form of a staff and a flywhisk, which, in this instance, represents a loss of authority and popularity. The net effect is one of contrasts: his fine appearance is merely a vulgarity that conceals a total loss of standing in the community.

**Tikhale nawo** is rather recent in *gule* (1992) and is not linked to any specific rituals. He also appears at political rallies. In the *bwalo*, **Tikhale nawo** does not dance with dignity as might be expected but

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behaves in an inappropriate and erotic manner. To the *chisamba* rhythm he wiggles his hips obscenely and runs overtly after all the women. The male choir draws a clearer picture of him: “*Mr. Let me stay with you, Mr. Let me stay with you, today he has taken roots! The people say, What do we do with our findings? The people are surprised that he is behaving strangely (by outstaying his welcome), Mr. Let me stay with you! Today he is their chief, but the chief is full of favouritism. He is partial to his relatives and his father-in-law. The Chewa say, No! We are fed up of enduring Mr. Let me stay with you. Recall that he failed to keep peace. He grabbed at the wrong place. Mr. Let me stay with you has failed. He failed, in his everlasting position, he lost!*”

The song portrays a young man who entered village life a long time ago. He appeared to be honourable but changed his attitude over time. The villagers complain about injustice and favouritism for his own family group and father-in-law. Their leader has failed to achieve peace and the patience of the villagers is at its limit. They preach, using the Chewa proverb, ‘*Tikhale nawo adalanda mudzi – Mr. Let me stay with you! eventually took over the village,*’ that his time is over and that younger men of better standing will soon replace him.

**Tikhale nawo** discusses, under the metaphor of the chief, the political situation of the 1990s. In the context of this period, his horns reveal political power associated with multiparty democracy. He addresses the ruling government of Kamuzu Banda that has enjoyed stability and support from the people but has responded by oppressing the population. This is the meaning of **Tikhale nawo’s** sexually lewd dance and his chasing after the women. Malawians have been cheated and made blind to the nepotism and the favouritism of Kamuzu Banda. He is seen to have developed only the central region and neglected the other parts of the country. The relatives and father-in-law mentioned refer to those in his political inner circle. The closing of the song suggests the political unrest of 1992 and the end of Kamuzu Banda’s life presidency. The last words of the song reveal the forthcoming referendum’s result and predict the triumph of multiparty democracy in June 1993.

**Tikhale nawo** cleverly combines the new and the old political set ups. The youthful mask welcomes the new political parties and multiparty democracy, which ask the Malawi population for the opportunity to prove themselves. The costume and the choreography of the dance emphasise the deprivation of the old order. The song predicts the end of this period and the beginning of a new era. Furthermore, **Tikhale nawo** addresses a word of warning to the new political parties and rulers who are about to take the reigns of power. He insists on their learning from the experience of the previous regime. They should take seriously the requirement to respect the people and to promote their wellbeing instead of pursuing their own self-interest. The wind is about to change for their predecessors, but it can also change very quickly for the new government. People cannot be cheated forever. They can put up with hypocrisy and injustice for a long time but one day they will realise that they have made the wrong choice and that their choice has been crippling them and depriving them of their future.

## Song

*“Tikhale nawo (2x) lero wamera mizu! Eni ake amati atani n’likumbokumbo. Eni ake adabwa kuti kukhala satero tate, Tikhale nawo tate! Lero iwo n’kukhala mfumu, koma ufumu wawo ndi*

*watsankho, akonda kwawo ndi apongozi wawo tate tate ine! Ena, Achewa akuti: Ai! Tatopa ndife kupirira tate de **Tikhale nawo!** Paja, walephera mtendere! Wagwira pachabe tate! **Tikhale nawo** walephera, walephera muyaya tate, waluza!"*

**Source**

Interview in 1993