

## Wafika malimidwe

(A pink day mask from the Golomoti area)



### Themes

1) Cash crops 2) Injustice 3) Manipulation/exploitation 4) Colonial period politics 5) Recent politics

### Etymology

**Wafika malimidwe** means, 'Here comes the agricultural advisor.'

### Description

This pink mask (40 cm.) represents an elderly European with a bald pate and long baboon fur around the sides and back of the shiny head. His broad forehead is wrinkled. He displays shaggy eyebrows and a well-trimmed moustache in the shape of two cubes. His eyes are piercing and look cunning. His mouth is crooked and displays an insincere smile. The nose forms a long narrow bridge. His ears are huge and lie flat against his head, suggesting that he is not listening. His neck is visible and is bordered with black cloth suggesting dishonesty. He wears the usual tatter suit and carries a flywhisk representing the authority of the colonials and a hoe to show his power to implement agricultural policies.

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He dances in the style of the chief's rival (Mfumu yalimbira) and suggests that he is invested with the authority of the British government. He carries the hoe and some seeds in his hands, which he pretends to sow while dancing. During this mime the men sing, *"Here comes the agricultural advisor. (He says:) Grow cotton and you will become rich, my friends! Here comes the agricultural advisor."*

Agricultural advisors appeared in colonial times. The Mua Mission diary mentions Mr. McCall (the official of the area) visiting the crops in May 1916. Cotton seeds seem to have been introduced much earlier. The same diary records the distribution of cotton seeds to the local population in November 1908. Mr. Charlton was the first cotton and tobacco grower in Golomoti in 1914. Through the visit of agricultural advisors, the colonial government encouraged the local population to cultivate cash crops like cotton and tobacco that required artificial fertiliser and crop rotation. Planting in ridges was also introduced at this time.

The new policies were often imposed on the local population. The character of **Wafika malimidwe** quickly became the subject of *gule* satire. Agricultural advisors became even more important after Independence because of the emphasis that Kamuzu Banda gave to agriculture in the development of the country. Banda toured the country, repeating the slogan *"Chuma chili mu nthaka - Wealth is in the ground* (in agriculture)." This slogan seemed credible but as more and more land was passing into the hands of wealthy private individuals, in the form of estates, it became difficult for the village people to obtain a field big enough to feed their own families. Nevertheless, the advice of the agricultural expert continued to be sung as loudly as possible, *"Grow cotton and you will become rich my friends."* The local population remained sceptical to **Wafika malimidwe**'s message and took it with a pinch of salt. In spite of the shortage of land, people had adopted cash crops of various kinds. The Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), was given control over prices for these products, limiting their marketing possibilities.

**Wafika malimidwe** reflects people's thinking: We have cultivated cotton according to the agricultural advisor's wish but, when the time comes to sell, we are robbed of our profit. He says, "You will become rich." Yet in practice this has applied to a select privileged few.

### Song

*"Wafika malimidwe ee! Limani thonje mudzalemera ana inu... (2x) Wafika malimidwe!"*

### Source

Interview in 1997