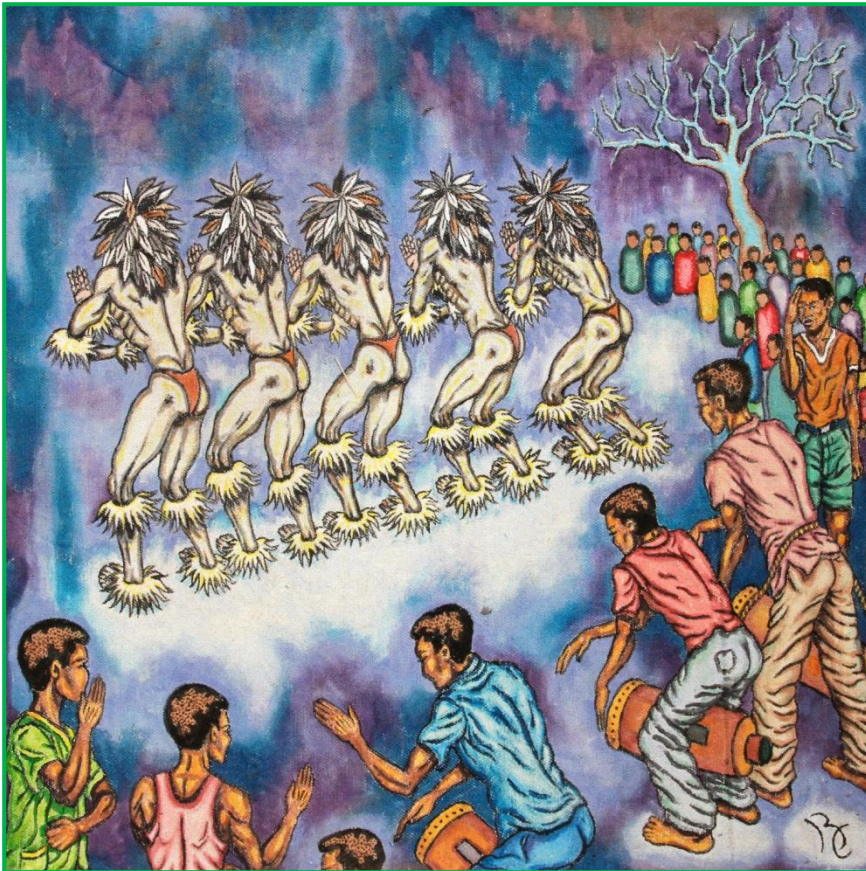


# Wopanda mbolo asalankhule

(A day or night feather head cover from the Mua area)



(night)



(day)

## Themes

1) Impotence can be cured 2) Infertility – impotence 3) Caution against infertility in marriage/infertile people should not marry

## Etymology

**Wopanda mbolo asalankhule** means, 'The one who has no penis should not talk.' This implies that an impotent man should not make an official demand of marriage.

## Description

The mask consists of a feather head cover (*chipatula*) like that of Kapoli. The dancers do not wear a kilt, but instead a small loincloth; or they remain completely naked for their performance. Armllets

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and leglets are added to complete the costume. **Wopanda mbolo asalankhule** moves to the arena at night time in a group of four or five dancers. They perform for any kind of ritual, though in the past they seem to have been more prominent in a puberty context. They do not sing for themselves or talk but simply clap their hands and slap their chests with their hands.

To their mute call the women answer with the following insults, *“The one who has no penis should not ask for me in marriage.”* As the women scold them, the drum starts and they swerve their feet with great vigour demonstrating their virility, and then move forward as if they were on their way to make an official demand of marriage. The insult conveys that a person who suffers from impotence should not be involved in marriage. This piece of advice is a warning to the young maidens, who are contemplating married life after the completion of their initiation. They should avoid marriage to a person who suffers from infertility. They will not be able to have children of their own.

**Wopanda mbolo asalankhule** also advises the boys, who intend to marry, that they should assess their own sexual ability before taking any steps leading to a marriage engagement. No advice is given as to how they might do so. If suffering from impotence, they should first consult a medicine man to investigate if their handicap is curable, before getting involved in a friendship that could lead to marriage. This would save them a lot of hassles and would prevent them from becoming known as *gocho* (impotent) in public. If there is no solution to their handicap, then they are simply told not to marry. Eventually they will disappear into the anonymity of the town where their social stigma will be ignored.

### **Song**

*“Wopanda mbolo asalankhule... ine... (xx).”*

### **Source**

Interviews in 1991, 2000 and 2008