

Zonsezi

(A black day mask from the Diamphwi area)

Themes

- 1) Opposing Kamuzu Banda (supporting political change)
- 2) Inevitability of death
- 3) Recent politics
- 4) Pride/arrogance

Etymology

Zonsezi is an abbreviation of the famous phrase popularised by the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Band in the 1970s: "*Zonse n'za Kamuzu Banda – Everything belongs to Kamuzu Banda.*"



Description

This black mask (30 cm.) portrays a very old Malawian, senior in status. His bald head has painted white wrinkles on its brow. The grey moustache, goatee and sideburns are made of monkey skin. The mask shows large ears expressing deafness. The mouth is wide open showing teeth and manifesting pride. The headgear of the mask is made of tatters. He wears a winter coat over jute trousers.

Parading with his walking stick and flywhisk on his way to the *bwalo*, **Zonsezi** follows the rhythm of the *chisamba*. He can barely dance and shows little energy, but he waves his flywhisk as a supreme king. This recent character (1991) reveals the population's uneasiness about the slogan, "*Everything belongs to Kamuzu Banda.*" **Zonsezi** performs exclusively for political rallies. Superficially, he appears to be a supporter of Kamuzu Banda. Contrary to appearances, however, **Zonsezi** expresses a critical and satirical approach to Kamuzu Banda evident in the men's song, "*Today, he failed! Recall that he said that he was 'unending' like a rock, you, my friends! Today, he failed. He met his match, who shook his 'unending' foundation! Today, the wall has been demolished! Today, he has been demolished, Zonsezi, Mr. Everything! Shame, shame on you! The only 'eternal' one is God (himself) and not this (imposter)! Shame, shame on you! Old man, shame!*"

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The song is a protest against the arrogance of people whose education, wealth and high position make them believe that they are superior to others, even above God Himself. They refuse to share their wealth and responsibility. They have no ears to listen to the population. Their paranoia pushes them to control everything around them. They assume ownership of what is not theirs and have power over life and death. Kamuzu Banda's slogan reveals that such people forget that only God is the owner of everything and everyone.

The character of **Zonsezi** attacks the title with which Kamuzu Banda invested himself in 1972, that of 'Life President', translated into Chichewa as 'wamuyaya', meaning eternal. **Zonsezi** reminds the Chewa that God alone is eternal and that it is blasphemous for anyone to put himself above Chauta and the spiritual order. One must pray and plead to God that one's days may stretch longer, but one must also live with the awareness that death is inevitable. Kamuzu Banda's pride and self-centredness made him and others believe that his power was eternal and that he would 'never die'. For a Chewa, for whom death is an omnipresent reality, Kamuzu Banda's attitude was an insult to the ancestors and the nation.

Song

*"Lero alephera tate de! Paja amati n'gachikhalire ngati mwala, anzanganu! Lero walephera tate de! Akomana ndi eni tate owalepheretsa maziko achikhalire! Lero apasula khoma! Lero apasula a **Zonsezi** tate! Manyazi, manyazi tate! Wamuyaya n'Chauta, osakhala izo tate! Manyazi, manyazi tate, andala tate manyazi!"*

Source

Interviews in 1993