

Dzira

(A night structure from the Ntchisi area)



(miniature model)

Themes

1) Reciprocity 2) Selfishness/self-centredness

Etymology

Dzira is the Chichewa word for an egg.

Description

This night structure consists of a bamboo frame built in the shape of a giant egg and measures one metre across. The frame is covered with grass and decorated with dry palm leaves woven in a zigzag pattern. A single dancer animates the structure. It shakes and moves forward and backward across the *bwalo*. The male choir chants, “*Where did you see the Bateleur eagle’s egg?*” The song refers specifically to the Bateleur eagle’s egg, which is rarely seen. The Bateleur (*mphungu*) is known in Chewa culture for being a miser. There is a proverb: “*Mphungu sataya nthenga – The Bateleur does not waste a feather.*” Moreover, the Bateleur is known for laying only one egg and typically does not build its own nest, but uses the nests of other birds. Ornithologists have documented this unique behaviour and the bateleur’s reputation as a miser is well earned. Using the structure of the Bateleur’s egg, the Chewa comment on people who are stingy and who do not easily part with their own possessions. They wish to be well treated by others, but they do not share with others and show proper reciprocity. They are self-centred and expect others to go out of their way for them, while they

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themselves have no time for others. They use their neighbours possessions and talents, but are never forthcoming with their own.

Song

*“Waliona kuti **Dzira**(2x) la mphungu? Waliona kuti **Dzira** (2x) la mphungu?”*

Source

Interviews in 1991 and 2007