

# Gulugufe

(A day or night structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model, day)



(miniature model, night)

## Themes

1) Faithfulness 2) Modesty 3) Promiscuity 4) Sexual taboos (*mdulo*)

## Etymology

**Gulugufe** means, 'butterfly'.

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## Description

This small one metre high structure portrays a butterfly. A small bamboo frame is built to form the body. It is big enough to accommodate one dancer in a squatting position inside. For the night costume, the frame is woven with palm leaves in a zigzag pattern. For the day costume, maize husks are woven, or a white cloth is stretched over the frame. The wings consist of bows bent in a half moon shape joined together with strings or bamboo. These half moon bows are stretched across with strings. The strings are then stretched across the bow and woven to fill in the frame. Spots on the wings are made with coloured maize husks or black and red mud. The wings are attached to the arms of the dancer, who makes them flap. The day costume often adds more realistic details such as the eyes and the antennae.

This structure is used on the occasion of funeral and commemoration rites. It was introduced to the Mua area from the Dedza hills. It was popular until 1976, when it disappeared. It reappeared in 2000.

The dancer drives the structure into the arena and mimes flying. It spins and spins, goes here and there, but never rapidly, since the dancer squatting inside is in a very uncomfortable position. As the rhythm of the drums reaches its climax, the butterfly flaps its wings with all its grace. During this time the men sing: *"Oh, I thought for myself, let me go and see the butterfly, the butterfly. The butterfly has come!"* The butterfly takes part in a 'beauty contest'. It shows its spots in public. An exhibitionist is interpreted by the Chewa as undressing and showing his secret organs. The presence of black and red spots on the structure's wings refers to the condition of women at the time of menstruation. The butterfly moves here and there, from flower to flower, flapping its wings and behaving like it has no home. This conveys the image of a loose, promiscuous woman. She attracts men with her beautiful spots. She accepts any invitation and strips for anyone. She hides her period from her partners, putting their lives at risk (from *mdulo*). She has no real home since she does not stick to one man. She moves from boyfriend to boyfriend, husband to husband, every day of the week. The structure of **Gulugufe** discourages promiscuity and prostitution among young women and reaffirms the value of marriage, modesty and faithfulness.

## Song

*"Oh ndimati ndikaone **Gulugufe, Gulugufe. Wabwera Gulugufe!"***

## Source

Interviews in 1990 and 2000