

## Kwa Mphonda

(A day or night structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model, day version)

### Themes

1) Adultery & rape 2) Childcare 3) Polygamy

### Etymology

**Kwa Mphonda** means, 'from Mphonda's village'.

### Description

**Kwa Mphonda** is a small oval structure measuring about one and a third metres square. It has an open mouth, with teeth, big eyes, a tuft of hair on top of the head and a short tail. It is activated by one dancer. The animal species represented is unidentified since it has no horns or ears. It is made of a bamboo frame on which palm leaves are woven in a zigzag pattern (night performance) or maize husks (day performance). This white material contrasts with the head and the back, which are smeared with black mud. This colour effect expresses that a person of good reputation can borrow the cover of the night to be involved in devious activities, such as adultery. The open mouth with teeth expresses greed. The absence of ears emphasises deafness to the wife's complaints and the advice of her family group.

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**Kwa Mphonda** enters the bwalo at high speed, showing his powerful sexual urges and propensity for evil deeds. It keeps jumping, moving forward and backward. All these movements suggest a promiscuous character, as is stated in the song: "*He came from far, from Mphonda. (He says:) Young women, open the door!*"

**Kwa Mphonda** is an ancient character of *gule wamkulu*, rarely seen in the area since the 1970s. His teaching suited any occasion and ritual. **Kwa Mphonda** mocks a husband who is not happy with one wife. He spends his nights on the prowl for girlfriends with the intention of finding a second wife. In spite of all his advances, he fails and must return to his first wife, where he suffers the ridicule of her family group for having wasted his time on worthless relationships. **Kwa Mphonda**'s message discourages husbands with adulterous thoughts. Furthermore, **Kwa Mphonda** signifies by the bag that is attached to its back that it is the father's duty just as much as the mother's to look after the needs of their children.

### Song

*"E e wachokera kutali **Kwa Mphonda** (2x) namwali tsegulire!"*

### Source

Interviews in 1992 and 2011