

Namng'omba

(A day or night structure from the Mua area)



(night)

Themes

1) Childcare 2) Respect for parents

Etymology

Namng'omba is the ground hornbill.

Description

The structure resembles Nthiwatiwa, the ostrich, but is slightly smaller (one metre long) and represents a ground hornbill. Its construction consists of a bamboo frame forming the shape of the bird with a long, rigid neck and a pronounced beak. The wings are not mobile, but fixed and folded on the body. There is a small tail. The night presentation utilises woven palm leaves to create the

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Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Parish, P. O. Box 41, Mtakatika, Malawi

feathers on the body. The day structure is covered with jute and white woven maize husks. In the *bwalo*, **Namng'omba** behaves like the ostrich. It moves forward and backward or swings around and scratches the ground with its feet, seeking food for its children. **Namng'omba** voices a low sound similar to a ground hornbill, an extended "ee". Both male and female choirs answer back with the following song: "*The ground hornbill has little ones. Your mother has taken a lot of pain (to bring you up)!*" (2x) The song teaches about the role that parents' play in caring for their children. The second part of the song reverses the roles and emphasises that children also have the duty to look after their parents when they grow old. The structure focuses on the need for health care, food security and the education of children. It equally stresses the importance of caring for the elderly, and respect for one's parents and authority (the chief). This focus on caring seems to be the meaning of the white colour of the structure.

Namng'omba used to be part of any ritual in the past. It vanished in the 1970s, owing to shortage of the labour force required for its construction. This has been a common fate for many structures. Sadly, its message remains as crucial today as ever, as **Namng'omba** has disappeared from the arena of *gule*.

Song

"Namng'omba ali n'ana. Mai wako wasauka! (2x)"

Source

Interviews in 1991 and 2007