

Nguluwe

(A day structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model)



Themes

1) Infertility – impotence 2) Sexual taboos (*mdulo*) 3) Witchcraft

Etymology

Nguluwe is the Chewa word for the bush pig, a wild pig rarely seen today.

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

Description

Nguluwe is a medium sized structure, one and a half metres high, with an arched back. It is usually made of maize leaves or of soft grass imitating its fur, and the head is moulded with black goatskins. The details are very realistic, with tail, ears and red tongue. It is carried by one dancer.

Nguluwe moves around the arena backward and forward, swinging around in an aggressive manner and chasing people so that the crowd disperses. The song states: 1) *“Run away, the bush pig will hurt you! The bush pig!”* The bush pig is usually active at night and rarely seen, and has the reputation of damaging fields and injuring people. Among the Chewa the bush pig is well appreciated for its meat but it is feared in the hunt. When it comes out of the bush, the hunters climb trees in order not to escape emasculation and seek to spear it from above. The bush pig is also considered to be powerful medicine against witchcraft. Its nocturnal activity and ability to cause injury and damage have likened him to a witch (*mfiti*). **Nguluwe**'s message is to caution relatives who profit from the cover of night to damage properties, or harm and kill their relatives. One has to protect oneself against such an evil person with powerful medicine that is made from the bush pig itself. The wounding of people here is applied to sexual contact at forbidden times when a woman is menstruating or after childbirth (the red tongue symbolises this). The song, *“Run away, the bush pig will hurt you!”* takes a new meaning in this context, namely ‘Do not have sexual relations at the time it is prohibited,’ as stated in the song of the women: 2) *“The bush pig, the bush pig, the one you talk about, the beast has come out. Let us play with it! Oh.”* The woman in such a condition is likened to the bush pig, who can harm her husband. The Chewa believe that sexual relations at this time result in serious sickness (*nkhumano* or *mbisa*) and can even bring death.

Songs

1) *“Thawa **Nguluwe**, ikupweteka e! (2x) **Nguluwe!**”*

2) *“**Nguluwe** ede, **Nguluwe** ede! (2x) Uja umanena ede tate, waturuka nyama ede tate! Tisewere nayo ede tate! Oh.”*

Source

Interviews in 1987 and 2000

Reference

Morris, B. (1998). *The Power of Animals: an Ethnography*. Berg: Oxford/New York. pp. 209 – 234