

# Nyama ya mbuzi

(A day or night structure from the Ntchisi area)



(day version)



(miniature model, night version)

## Themes

1) Reconciliation & mediation 2) Unity & harmony

## Etymology

**Nyama ya mbuzi** means, 'goat meat', or simply designates the animal, the goat.

## Description

The small, one and a half metre structure features a stylised goat, with room inside for a single dancer to activate the character. The bamboo frame forms an oval, convex dome with two horns at the head and a short tail at the back. For the night celebration, the frame is concealed with dry palm leaves woven in a zigzag pattern. For the day event, the bamboo is covered with jute or fertiliser bags. The structure is often highly detailed: paint is used to add realism to the animal, and the horns and the tail are constructed with more refinement.

The structure can be part of any ritual. It enters the *bwalo*, jumping and racing about at great speed. It rotates and spins rapidly, and executes gentle bounces, all to the *chisamba* rhythm. The male choir sings, "A goat is a fine, a goat is a fine, at a feast (a reconciliation ceremony)!" The song explains that every court case that requires a fine (a goat) ends up with a feast and a celebration in which goat meat is served. People recover their unity and reconciliation around a sacrificed animal: in this case,

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the goat. The song thus emphasises that conflict should end in resolution and the renewal of harmony, as embodied in the translation of goat from fine to meal.

**Song**

*“Nyama ya mbuzi idapalamula, Nyama ya mbuzi idapalamula ku phwando!”*

**Source**

Interview in 1991