

Sere

(A day structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model)

Themes

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

Etymology

Sere is the Chewa word for aardvark.

Description

This small structure is approximately one metre long. It is made of a bamboo frame on which sacks have been stretched and then painted white with black spots. Surprisingly, the anteater has teeth and a tail of thirty centimetres. Only one dancer activates the structure, walking on his hands and feet to form the four legs of the anteater. The animal is nocturnal and digs burrows. During his performance, the dancer chooses to go to the rubbish pit in order to dig in the ashes. He makes a lot of dust, jumps on the spot and starts digging again. The men sing for him, "*The aardvark has come! It did not come for... (you). The aardvark has come!*" The image of the anteater digging in white ashes and this enigmatic song seem to suggest sexual relations between husband and his wife once her menstruation is over. The dominance of the white and black colour suggests that her cycle is over and that their sexual encounter takes place at night. The actions of

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lifting dust and jumping after digging highlight male impotence. The wording of the song leaves us in suspense (“*It did not come for...*”) and suggests, without actually saying it, that the husband is unable to perform his duty. The structure of **Sere** accentuates the Chewa essential quality of a husband - that of being a progenitor. It mocks infertility.

Song

“*Wabwera **Sere!** Sanabwere... Wabwera **Sere!**”*

Source

Interview in 1991