

Chitenje

(A day structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model)

Theme

1) Desire for a child

Etymology

Chitenje is the cloth worn by the women of Malawi as a wrap.

Description

This structure is two metres long and imitates the shape of the zebra. It is called **Chitenje** because of the S-pattern drawn alternately with black and white stripes, resembling a common theme on the widespread garment worn by Malawian women. Two dancers animate the structure, which moves backward and forward following the Chisamba rhythm of the drums. The male singers say, *"Mr Mwale, buy for me a **chitenje** like this one, like our neighbour's **chitenje**!"* The claim for **Chitenje** is in fact a claim for a child. The colour pattern of the animal suggests that there is a harmonious succession of white and black colours without any interference of red (which signifies abstinence). Through this structure, a woman simply tells her husband that she wishes to have a child since the time of her cycle is right.

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Song

*“A Mwale mundigulire (2x) chotere, chotere **Chitenje!**”*

Sources

Interviews in 1991 and 2000