

## Mutu umodzi

(A night structure from the Mua area)



(miniature model)

### Themes

1) Spirit of service to community 2) Cooperation

### Etymology

**Mutu umodzi** means, 'one head'. **Mutu umodzi** is an abbreviation for the proverb, "*Mutu umodzi susenza denga*" (One head alone cannot carry a roof ).

### Description

This night structure resembles a large hat in the shape of a granary roof. One dancer carries it and is completely concealed underneath. The roof-like hat walks slowly, then stops. The dancer lifts the roof painfully as if he cannot carry it alone while the singers sing the well-known Chewa proverb, "*One head, one head alone cannot carry a roof! No, (not) one head (alone)!*"

In the past, this structure was used on the night vigil of the girls' initiation ceremony in order to teach the girls collaboration and community spirit. It is seldom seen today. The roof is a symbol of

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the cooperation that builds up the extended family. It is impossible for one person such as the maternal uncle to carry all the responsibilities for the entire family group. The girls who undergo the initiation rites are in the process of growing up, learning to share some of these responsibilities and helping 'to carry the roof'.

### **Song**

*"Mutu umodzi! Mutu umodzi susenza denga toto, Mutu umodzi!"*

### **Source**

Interview in 1992