

## Mbuzi ikadula

(A day or night structure from the Khwidzi area).



(miniature model, night version)

### Themes

1) Evil reaps its just desserts (*choipa chitsata mwini*) 2) Faithfulness 3) Choice of marriage partner (choice of *mkwamwini*)

### Etymology

**Mbuzi ikadula** means, 'when the goat breaks the string'. The image of the goat is here applied to the family set-up.

### Description

The structure of the goat appears in both a night and a day version. It is two metres long and high. It portrays a he- or she- goat but also, somewhat incongruously, displays features of an insect or a bird. The creature has a long neck, a small head and a protruding snout or a beak, with tongue extended.

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The creature has a hump at the back and two wings that resemble those of a butterfly or a chicken. For the night version, the bamboo frame is covered with dry banana leaves and few details are observable. The day costume is made with a white cloth stretched on the frame and a goat skin for the head. The eyes are defined with silver paper and the tongue is painted red. Another cloth is stretched on the span of the wings and ornamented with red and black spots symbolising menses and child-birth. The combination of these colours, in a context of initiation, anticipates marriage.

**Mbuzi ikadula** appears on the occasion of funeral rites, particularly the night vigil of the burial, when young initiates undergo the *mpindira* initiation to puberty. At the rhythm of the *chisamba*, the structure moves around the arena like a butterfly or a bird and chases the women. As the animal stops in the centre of the *bwalo*, the blindfolded maidens come to touch the creature's tongue (as they would do with the tusks of the elephant (Njovu)). The meaning of this gesture symbolises the forthcoming wedding night and the maiden's first contact with her future husband. The male choir sings: "*When the goat breaks the string, (there is a case for) the judges at the village court.*" The cryptic song suggests that the goat has escaped from its owner and caused damage in a neighbour's field. The offended party takes the case to court. A chicken or a goat will be demanded as a fine. This parable addresses the husband and wife relationship where one partner has clandestinely betrayed the other and committed adultery. In the context of puberty rites, the girls are warned to choose the right marriage partner for fear of being left alone, pregnant and without support. This advice applies also to boys. In short, not all boyfriends or girlfriends are potential partners in family life. Some people are like butterflies or birds; they cannot stick to one flower or one nest. They cause great pain for their partners and families. The song reveals the outcome: a court case, and the chief and his court await them all for the payment of a fine in the form of chicken or of a goat. This punishment should be sufficient to deter them both from immaturity, and to consolidate their determination in marriage and their promise of mutual faithfulness.

### Song

"*Tate Mbuzi ikadula, akubwaloko (2x) ku bwaloko.*"

### Source

Interview in 1991