

Pusi

(A night structure from the Mua and Khwidzi areas)

Theme

- 1) Adultery & rape
- 2) Dishonesty, theft & robbery

Etymology

Pusi is the Chewa word for monkey.



(miniature model)

Description

The **Pusi** structure is one metre and thirty centimetres long and sixty centimetres high and represents a monkey. One dancer crawls on his hands and feet while carrying the small frame on his back to animate it. The bamboo frame is covered with grass and woven with dry palm leaves in a zigzag pattern. The dancer wears a jute shirt and trousers to conceal his hands and feet. His head sticks out of the structure and is camouflaged in a cover made from jute or goatskin on which the eyes and the mouth of a monkey are painted. The structure appears only at night time during a variety of rituals, and caricatures the monkey's behaviour.

In the *bwalo*, the **Pusi** structure dances to the *chisamba* rhythm. It roams around the arena, looking in all directions, races about and chases the women. The men sing: "*The monkey. You too are a monkey! The monkey peeps sideways!*"

The chasing of the women copies the behaviour of the monkey in the fields. The monkey is fearless and indifferent to the presence of the womenfolk, and persists in stealing the crops. The song

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emphasises the attitude of the monkey that it is always looking sideways. He expects to pillage with impunity. **Pusi** teaches that people should not imitate the monkey's behaviour and steal each other's property, crops and even women, pretending that it is the monkey's doing.

Song

*"Tate **Pusi** e! (2x) Nawe **Pusi! Pusi** wacheuka!"*

Source

Interview in 1992