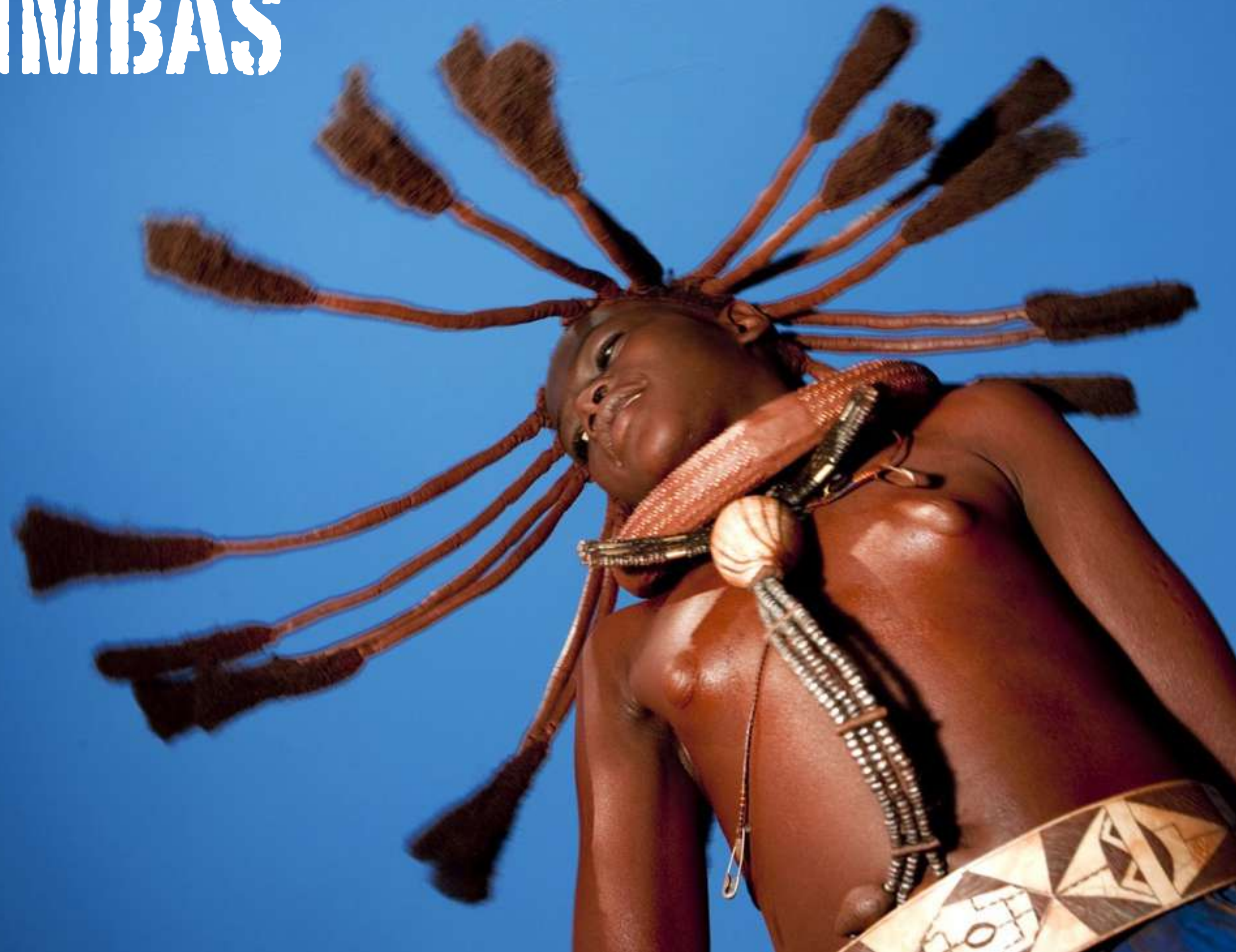
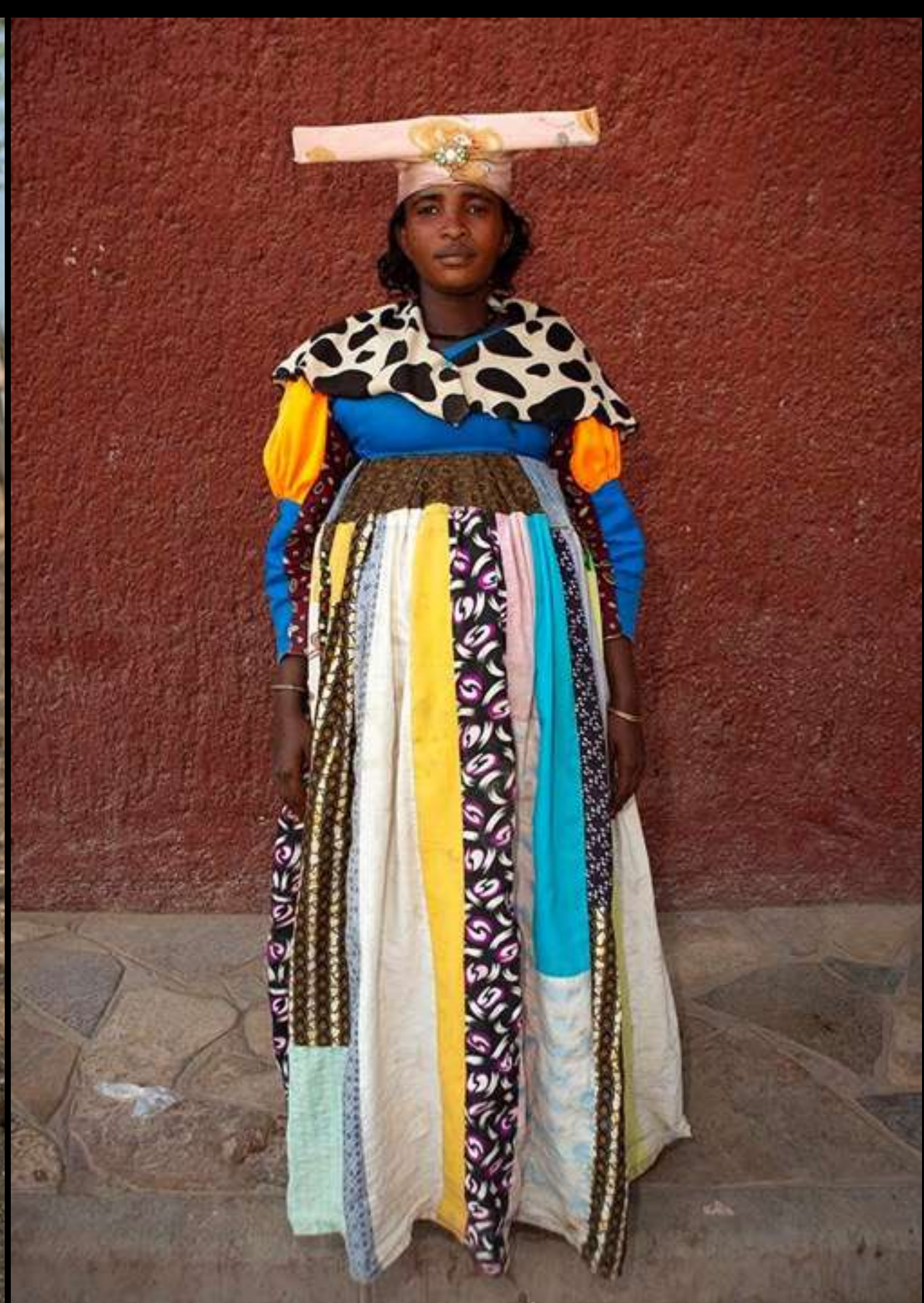


HIMIBAS





Himbas pastoralists live in the Kaokoland, an extensive territory in the North West of Namibia sharing a common boundary with Angola in the North. The Atlantic Ocean and the Skeleton coast form its Western boundary.



Some Himbas were evangelized by german missionaries and started to wear clothes of victorian style, called Hererotracht.



Himbas are related to the Herero people. About 10 000 Himbas live in Kaokoland area in Namibia and about 3000 others live in Angola.



Himbans live in small villages which welcome most of the time just one family. Enclosures for the cattle (the krall) are always located in the centre of the Himba camp, surrounded by a circle of huts. A fence of Mopane wood, strong and very durable surrounds the village.



Each Himba village has a Holy Fire (the Okoruwo). It is always located between the entrance of the kraal and the door of the leader's house. The sacred fire represents the ancestors of the Himba's, and is kept burning 24 hours a day. It is a great taboo to cross this invisible line.



The house is made with mud and cow dungs. It keep the freshness in daytime as it hot, and the heat during the night as it is very cold in north Namibia. In summer, temperatures reach 45 degrees, in winter, it is freezing!



The Himbas move from place to place to find better graze for the goats, but use to come back in the same villages.



Inside the house, just cow skins as bed, and on the wall, the goat and cow skins for daily life and celebrations clothes.



Himba use wooden pillows to sleep, to make sure that all the work they made to their hair will not spoiled in the night.



Every morning the women take the milk of the goats. According to a proverb « A Himba is nothing without his cattle ». They breed herds of cows and goats, and live almost exclusively from them, as their cattle provides meat and milk.



In Himba society women tend to make the most difficult daily tasks, like gardening, milking the animals, building houses, caring for the cattle, or carrying water and wood, whereas men handle the political tasks and legal trials.



Women removing ticks from a goat foot. Despite the fact they are living in little villages, Himbas are rich people: owing to their herds, which can reach 100 to 200 cows. They will never say how many cows they have as they keep it secret to avoid thieves...



Cattle is a symbol of social status. A man without cattle, or that owns really few of it, is not worthy of respect. The word Tijmba, which means « Himba without cattle », is an insult. In the Himba culture a sign of wealth is not the beauty of a grave, but the cattle you had owned during your lifetime, represented by the horns.



The Himba women take several hours each morning for beauty care. The first task is to take care of their dreadlocks.



A legend says the Himbas never wash. This is wrong. If they have access to water, they'll take a bath, but as they live in arid places, it is a luxury. When they have water, they share it. It leads to huge problems like tuberculosis which is the second most common cause of death in Namibia .



Himbas use smoke to purify themselves and also the clothes they put on this basket where burns inside some incense (Otjizumba that they find on *Commiphora multijuga* tree).



The diet of the Himba consists mainly of porridge mixed with milk. Meat is sometimes eaten, usually at a ceremony, when cattle may be slaughtered. Men in the village who are married eat meat specially kept apart for them.



Lunch is not a social thing in Himbas, kids eat when the food is ready or when they are hungry. Do not try to explain them that putting elbows on the table is rude!



Himbas have a lot of traditions about music and dances. This man was spotted in the bush while he was keeping his goats. For his pleasure he was playing music with his Ohuta, a musical bow.



Witchdoctor is called as bad things have happened in the village. Nobody wants to tell what, it is taboo. The man will purify with magic sentences everybody, from the babies to the elders all day long until the sunset.



If the grazing is poor, the entire village will move to a place where there is better grazing. When they move in group, Himbas always walk in line, to avoid snakes bites.



The Himba have a system of dual descent where every person is linked to two distinct groups of relatives: one through the line of the mother and the other through the father. Authority is organized according to the patrilineal principles, economic issues and wealth is under the control of the matrilineal principle.



Hairstyle indicates the status of people. Single men are recognizable by the plait on the back of their head (called an « ondatu ») with the rest of the head being shaved.



This boy is not yet a teen.



When a man has a turban style, it means he is married.



They use this tool to scratch their hair wrapped in the turban they never remove.



For all Himba women, the day starts when they cover themselves completely with a mixture of ground red rock and fat, called otjize, it acts as a sunscreen and insect repellent. If they do not have enough cow butter, they use petroleum jelly nowadays. The red color of the skin is considered a sign of beauty.



The mixture is not only smeared on to their skin and hair but also their clothes and jewellery. Himba women are fiercely proud of their traditional dresses.



Himba dress codes and hairstyle rules are very complex. Himba hairstyles are really meaningful as they enable to identify their social status.



Himbas woman secret of their dreadlocks: they use a lot of different things to build them before covering with Otchize.



They use all kind of things, from hair to straw! Some Hhimbwas even start to buy some indian hair extensions in the little towns!



A young girl typically has two plaits (*ozondato*) of braided hair, the form being determined by the *oruzo* membership (patrilineal descent group)



Many strands hanging all over the head means the girl is in her puberty period. She tends to hide her face to the men.



When she has been married for about a year or has had a child, the woman wears the « erembe » headdress made from animal skin.



This woman wears dreadlocks, so she is married.



Wedding dress in Himba tribe. Weddings are arranged when boys are about 19 and girls around 13, usually to ensure that wealth is accumulated. Women move to their husband's villages after marriage and assume their new customs and taboos. Himbas marry each other from another clan to avoid consanguinity. The clans are called lion, sun, wind...

Marriage is important in Himba culture, but extra marital relations are encouraged. Polygamy is the rule for men and women also, who can have other partners in addition of their husband.



Himba men are often not monogamous and may have children in several villages. For women too it is not unusual to have other partners. New problems are affecting the Himba. AIDS is a major threat because the Himba do not use condom, it is not in their traditions.



Young children tend to have shaved heads. This kid has a special haircut on the top of the head that the clan he belongs cannot take care go the mutton with small ears, and must not eat their meat, too!



On the left: a twin girl (as she has 1 plait) , and on a the right, a girl not yet pubere as she has 2 plaits.



Back decoration of a young girl



Young Himba children leave their parents huts to live with other village children at about the age of 3. They play, stay together during the day and look after the cattle and goats.



Toddlers are very self sufficient at a young age and it is common to see children as young as 1 year walking, running, feeding and totally independent of their mothers.



The large white shell worn on the breast by Himba is called the *ohumba*. The shell comes from the atlantic which is hundreds of kilometers away. In the family it goes from the mother to the daughters.



Himbas use the wires of the electric fences to make their jewelry.



Adult married women wear copper or iron necklaces who are very heavy.



The keys and the bullets are used as decoration, as most of the houses do not have lockers in the bush...



The women also sell jewelry made with beads, PVC pipes, and seeds to raise money to buy extra food during droughts and touristic season.



Adult women wear heavy iron or copper necklaces, that can weigh several kilos



The new ones are made with PVC tubes or given by tourists!



Himba women use Omani seeds as decoration. They enjoy the noise they make when they walk.



When kids get pens from the tourists, they like to put pen ink on their feet nails!



Omohanga, the Himba purse made from beaded anklets that only wear the adult women, it is also to protect their legs from venomous animal bites.



Only when they are mourning the Himbas men let their hair visible.



Himbas graves. The number of horns reflects the wealth and standing of the person being buried. The horns are turned upside down on the grave of a woman. Cows are killed on the day of the funerals but are not eaten. They give the meat to another clan.



Epupa falls on Cunene river. there are projects to build huge dam which would cover the tombs of the Himbas....In exchange the government promises to build schools and clinics. The negotiations are on.



More and more the Himbas who live near the villages tend to use modern stuff. The next step will be the when they'll stop using their traditional clothes.



There are several initiatives for Primary education. If teens wish to continue with a secondary education they have to leave their villages and board at a school usually in Windhoek. Many of the young never return to their villages as they find work elsewhere.



Modernity is coming in Himba tribe, some forgive the traditions, some mix them like this man who kept his huge necklace!

Western civilisation has a huge influence on Himbas. Everywhere tradition is giving way under the pressure of modern practices and new ideas. Himba women especially seem to want to keep the traditions, especially of dress and they more than men are currently resisting change.



Even the football shirts have arrived in the deep bush but this Himbas man did not know anything about Brazil football team or the football world cup as TV and electricity did not arrive in his village...





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