

Meekulu Mwadinohmo
the Queen in slippers



The Queen of the Okwanyama, in the Ovambo area, Omhedi village.

Ovambo is the biggest ethny in Namibia.

She wears her official clothes, made of a real lion skin.

Her husband is dead, she has 4 kids.

Her name « Meekulu Mwadinohmo » mean « don't undermine the Ostrich ». The ostrich is being undermined by many yet again, it has a very important role e.g if there is a wild fire, an ostrich will use its water that it carries in its wings, flip them and put the fire out especially if there is its egg nest, according to the local belief.

Her grand mother was linked to Mandume, the last king of the Okwanyama, and the hero of Namibia, killed in 1917. She was born in the royal family, she became Queen in 2005, replacing her uncle. The King or Queen is chosen by elders.

Yesterday, she fired men from the Board: too lazy people she said.



The Queen lives in a palace, surrounded by concentric wooden fences that design a labyrinth. Before entering the Palace, the visitor must announce himself by shouting, as people are sensitive to privacy.



Only the familiars know the way to enter inside the palace. It was built to make lose the invaders. On the outside of the palace live the strong men, in the middle, the women, and in the center, the Queen.



Going inside the Palace is not simple! First you go to is the room ' Ondunda yo mudimbi' this is where you are greeted if its hot or raining before taken to the 'Ofifilwa' the 2nd greeting room. This second hut is in the middle of the homestead with many opening gates. Visitors are not supposed to proceed beyond this hut without being directed where to go.



The Queen on her throne. She insisted to make this picture that could become her official portrait as she did not have any yet. She dreams to meet Queen Elisabeth one day.



The Queen and her adviser. His name in english means « Go Away / Good Talk ». If she had a magic wand, she would just love to « see people dressed with peace and love. »



The wooden fences (olugumbo) made of Mopane wood, are not only to protect from the enemies but also from the elephants which tries to enter the villages and eat the food not so long time ago in the area.



'Olupale' place. It is a friendly area in every village where men use to tell stories at night while having some drinks. People put on the fence the skulls of the cows killed during the reign of the Queen. Cows are slaughtered for weddings or funerals. They can be also slaughtered to obtain income or in exchange with Mahangu millet if production was bad from the field. Once the Queen dead, everything will be burnt.



Anyone can live in the Palace if the rules are followed. 32 people live inside right now. The Queen rules over 55 villages.



Last year the Queen welcomed in her Palace an HIV kid. Close to 20% of Namibia's children under the age of 18 are orphaned by at least one parent, mostly due to HIV...



The Queen says « i'm impressed by modernity and welcoming to the changes ». She even wants to create a museum, everything is ready, including the 3D map, only money is lacking.



The Queen says she loves to visit the elder in the villages around and the sick people in the hospital. She invites Queen Elisabeth 2 to visit her area. « Anyone can enter my palace, the Queen of England should to take lessons from our traditions ».



The local alcohol called ombike is made with eembe fruits. From November to March, the activity of the kingdom is low, as all the people drink a lot during the rainy season. The Queen advisor: « we forget everything, we just enjoy our drinks » . It is forbidden to have weapons. « if you commit any crime during this time, the penalty will be doubled » says the Queen...



During the rainy season, lot of frogs are caught by the kids to be sold and eaten. A delicious food if you cook them alive with salt once you scratched them with sand to remove the mucus.



Once grilled, the Mopane worm (emperor moth) is one of the highlights of the Ovambo gastronomy...



Ovambo people are turned on agriculture. They grow a lot of mil (mahango) that they use to make a kind of polenta.



When women pound, they encourage each others by mocking the weakest « i'm strongest than you, work harder! »



People believe that if it is a young girl that will plant the seeds in the fields, the harvest will be better...



The men always eat first at home, as in case of conflict, they will leave first the village and the women will remain inside.



Every peasant pays a tax to the Queen with a part of his harvest. The stock will be kept in granaries (omaada)and will be used during hard times like it took place last year,Namibia's worst drought for 30 years...



People have a lot of funny superstitions: if your feet scratches below, it means you will have a visit soon...If your hand palms scratches, it means you will receive something.



If your upper eyelid flickers, it means you will see something very nice.
If your lower eyelid flickers, it means you will see something very bad.



If the Queen had something to save in the Ovambo culture, she replied « the dress ».





The Name of the Necklace is 'Onyoka' its made from sea shells,
Before, to obtain the necklace, you had to be very wealthy. People went to the river and slaughtered a cow. Once done the wastes that came from the oval of intestines and stripes were left at the river site to attract the shells. The next day you could collect the shells and make your necklace.
That is why it was only worn by wealthy women who owned cows,

Nowadays everybody wears one as its easier to obtain and its a sign of woman-hood and that you are part of the Owambo culture.





The area is very clean and people have a great sense of recycling and protection of the nature where they live for centuries, like for this shower made of cans in a village.



The Queen says it was difficult to convince the people to come back to royalty after Namibia independence, as many thought it was retrograde, mostly in the young people.

