



Forgotten Angola

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Region of Lubango, the tribes area. A few houses in ruins are dotted about, after 30 years of civil war. Some of the walls are still covered in paintings depicting Fidel Castro, Marx, Engels, Lenin and even Leonid Brejnev.



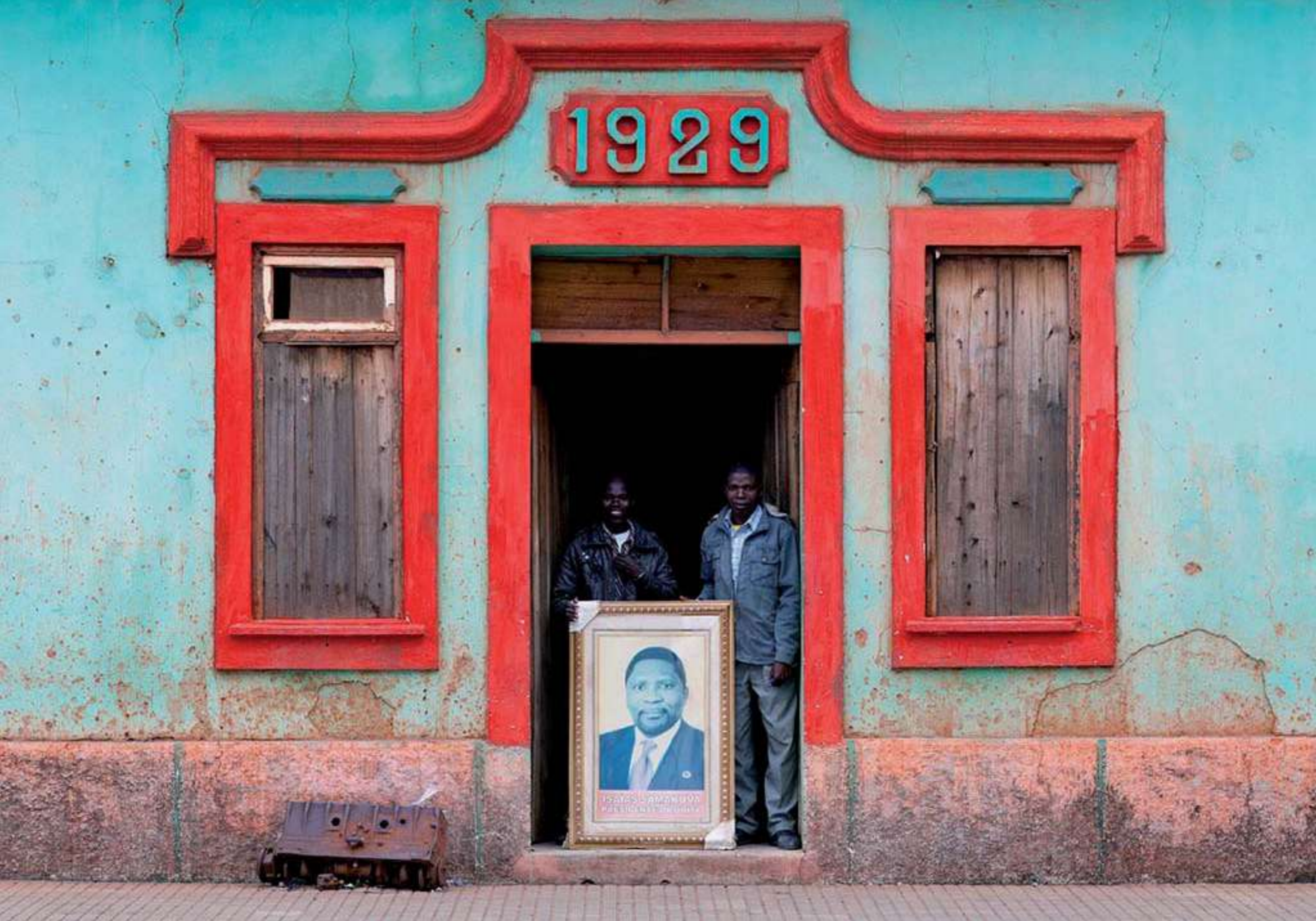
The Che on a giant wall painting in Sumbe.



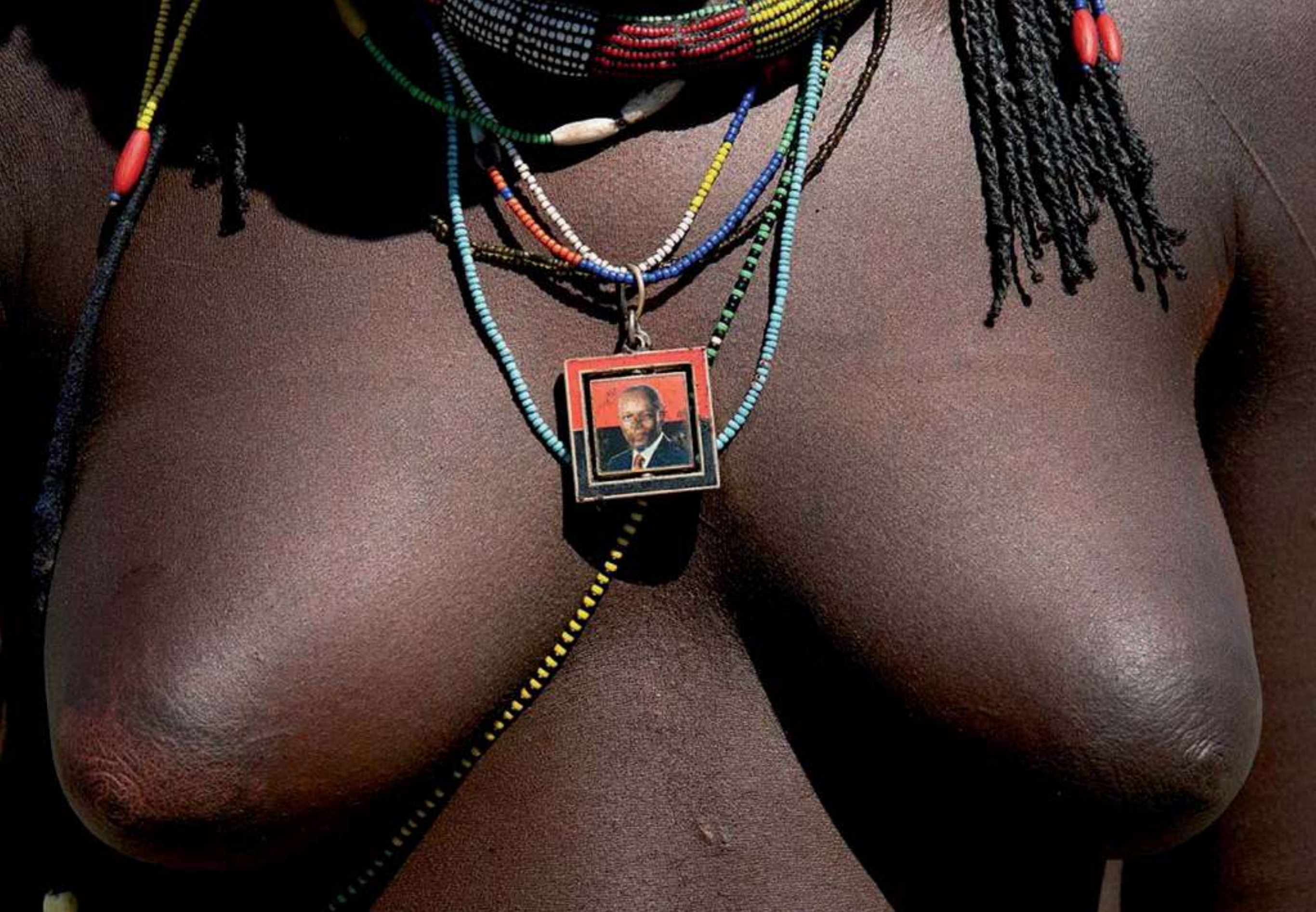
Lenin on an old garage's wall in Namibe.



Marx, Engels and Lenin



Permanent members of UNITA Headquarters in Chinguar, proud to show the portrait Isaias Samakuva, leader of the opposition party since 2003.



The overwhelming propaganda of MPLA leads to distribute pendants with the head of Jose Eduardo Santos, President of the country since 1979, to the tribes of the south of the country.



The country became independent in 1975 after having been under Portuguese rule since the 15th century. A lot of buildings show their long lasting stay, like these abandoned menders houses.



Colonial portuguese architecture : a church in Lubango



warehouse in Lobito



factory in Kuito



cinema theater in Namibe



Luanda is in an economic boom period owing to the oil revenues. The city is already overflowed with thousands of cars, rents are skyrocketing (Luanda being the most expensive city in the world for expatriates), and the city's skyline is filled with cranes. Finding a parking space has become a daily challenge, insomuch that some employees arrive in the city at 4 Am in order to find a space and finish their night in their car.



Casinos, 6 stars hotels, foreign companies, especially chinese and korean ones, share a juicy market.

Prices are outrageous, as a bottle of mineral water costs 10 US dollars in a downtown hotel. Luxury and dire poverty are next to each other : a lot of buildings are squatted by poor families for years, whereas the municipality plants palm trees from Miami, costing thousands of dollars each, just under their windows.





About 30,000 to 50,000 Chinese workers are supposed to work in Luanda. A lot of signs are written in Chinese. China invested billions of dollars in local economy, in return for a long term supply of crude oil. In 2010, Angola became China's first oil supplier overtaking Saudi Arabia.





Entrance of a chinese district



Civil War stopped in 2002, after 27 years of fights which are still visible in cities like Huambo. Angolan people yearn for lasting peace, even if they are often angry with corruption which is a plague for the country.



In east Angola area, this tank has become a giant toy for children. About half of the casualties of landmines are children.



The country suffered from north to south like here in Huambo, or in Chitido, a ghost town of the south in which now live the Mudimba tribe.



Young girl squatting with her family in Lobito's former commando base. When not demolished or renovated, the old colonial buildings are invaded by poor families.

Rock art on Chidundo Hulo site



Pink sand of Namibe Desert



Beach in Lobito



The country has a lot of assets, but there is no touristic visa to date, and going there involves lots of red tape. However the country is safe on the whole from now on and people are very welcoming. The only drawback is a finicky administration and the frequent police checks at the entrance of big cities with the only purpose of having your wallet pinched from a few dozens of dollars for some obscure reasons...



Arco site



Pediva hot springs



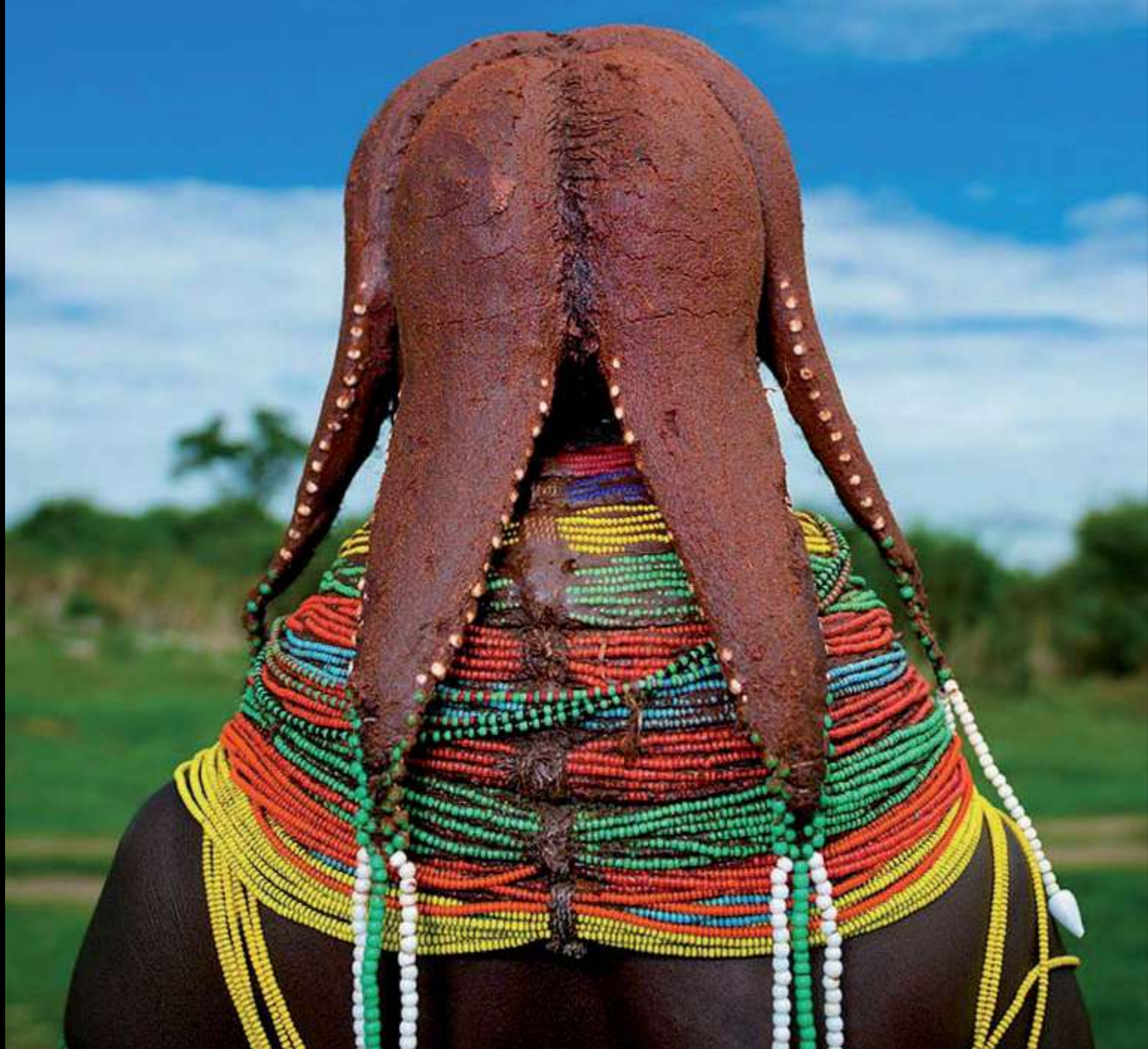
Miradoura da Lua viewpoint



seaside in Namibe.



Kalandula waterfalls, near Malanje, seen from the room number one of the hotel in ruins that should be renovated. These falls are 105 meters high.



The Mwilas tribe are part of the Nyaneka group. It's hard to find recent information; the last anthropological studies date back to the 1930s. The world seems to have forgotten this population, and their unique hairstyles.



All the Mwilas women, no matter what age, wear collars: the tradition goes that when a girl is pre-pubescent, she wears a massive red collar which will later become a yellow one, the Vikeka, that she is given when she gets her first period, then, once married, she will never take off the Vilanda. As usual, to document my visit, I ask the people I take photos of for their name. Ill at ease, they chide me and explain that Mwilas never pronounce their names in public!



The secret of the Mwila headgear: they prepare a paste made from a red stone called “oncula”. Then they mix it with oil, butter, tree bark and herbs, and for some cow dung, and then apply it to their dreadlocks.

Some girls have incorporated to their headdresses multi-coloured plastic seashells, mirrors, clips and broaches, all “made in china”! Adventurous Chinese merchants, who exchange them for livestock, sell these junk items to the tribes. At over 1000 euros for a cow in Luanda, the deal is juicy. The entrepreneurial spirit has even brought some of them to sell PVC pipes to the tribes, who cut them into rings to make bracelets.



It's impossible to take off the collar; the women must even sleep with it on. They protect it by sleeping with their heads on a wooden headrest, often the only thing passed down through generations.



Mwila bury their deads close to a road. When somebody passes by he has to stop in front of the grave and leave a bottle and a plate in sign of respect. The grave is made of simple branches and decorated with three calabashes, that have a symbolic meaning : one to pump the milk, another to keep it and the last one to drink it.



Mugambue girls, they leave near the towns,so they are all wearing the latest fashions, except one.She just turned 16, and for 2 months she should be dressed, in this way.



Muhimbas, the Himbas' cousins. The women cover their bodies in otijze, a mixture of ash, butter and ochre that gives them the unique copper colour.



The Mucabal tribe Soba brags about having swapped one of his wives for two cows with a friend, a real deal! The women wear very large square hats, called Ompotas, their naked breasts covered by a rope, the Oyonduthi.



Mucabal man with his two wives.



A Mucubal woman removes her headdress and takes out the framework: 12 cows' tails sown together, and decorated with seashells. The Mucubals are a subgroup of the Hereros, they are said to be descendants of the Massais who came over from Kenya.



A wooden talisman, the Ombeleketha, protects the Mucuabl babies from curses. Later they will never walk without the long knife.



In the centre of the Mucawana tribe villages are giant baskets, which are used to store the harvest.



The charming smiles of the Mucubal and Muwawana tribes show their lack of lower incisors. Children are told that at night, these teeth leave their mouths, to return dirty in the morning. They thus must be removed. By hitting them with stones.



A little Mucuwana girl shows me her toy: a little doll with white skin and blue eyes. She's taken the liberty of making her a traditional headdress, and the doll now has the same pretty braids as her owner.

Married women wear aluminium dreadlocks, the Kapapo.



Most of the Mundimbas are wearing bras, a leftover from the missionary days. Ironically, this gives them a bit of a Jean-Paul Gaultier-era Madonna air about them, with their crucifixes dangling over their coloured underwear.



A young Mundimba christian girl in a traditional garment and whose face is almost entirely covered by yellow, blue and red dreadlocks: miss Ena has just passed the Efico, has reached puberty and is ready to find a husband.



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