

(VERY) FAT IS BEAUTIFUL IN BODI TRIBE



The Bodi tribe's new year, also known as "Kael", is an important ceremony celebrated in Ethiopia's remote Omo Valley every June.

Over the last 6 months, certain men from the tribe have sustained themselves strictly on fresh milk and cow blood.

They are forbidden to have sex, as having sex would put a curse on their cows, their treasure. They also cannot leave their huts. Everybody takes care of them, the girls from the family bring fresh milk every morning in clay or bamboo pots.

The winner is the fattest man. His prize is just fame.

Normally, tourists are not allowed to access this area, therefore the tribal traditions are very well-preserved.



6 months before the Kael ceremony, the future Fat Men drink milk and blood all day long. At sunrise, they drink the first bowls of blood (1 to 2 liters). With flies swarming everywhere, the skinny men must drink quickly before it coagulates.



6 months later, these men have put on a lot of pounds. After hours of walking in the bush, all of them gather in the village where the ceremony takes place. A very tiring trip as they can hardly walk with their heavy weights.



Once in the ceremonial place, these Fat Men take a rest bathing in the river. Since the temperature is very hot, more than 35 degrees, and the ceremony will last all afternoon.



While the men are enjoying the baths, on the other side of the bush, the Bodi girls are busy putting some special ochre on their faces as makeup. The Kael is a good opportunity to show off their charms. The beauty signs in Bodi culture include impressive scarifications.



The Fat Men love wearing huge earrings. Some are made from plastic cut in yellow jerrycans, some in metal. With the large-sized earrings, the men believe they look like their cows.



The luckiest Fat Man got to wear a DVD as earrings. A prestigious decoration for the ceremony. Since it is something very difficult to find in this remote area. You only do the Kael once in your life, so even if you do not win, you must show your best face to the spectators.



The women from the Fat Men's families tie some self-designed belts to help them look more attractive. The more belts he gets, the more he is loved.



Aside from the weight, the look is also very crucial to attract the elders who select the Fat Man of the year. The Fat Men love fresh cow dungs on their bodies, because they give a fresh sensation and make the body look shining under the sun. They do not find it disgusting or dirty, as cows are sacred.



When everybody is ready, the Fat Men start to dance, sing, and jump for hours.



On each man's back, you will see a piece of cow skin, which is the only costume of the day. They are totally naked apart from this decoration.



They are running two by two for hours around the village. Some are so heavy that when they move their huge bodies, they look like babies learning to walk!



The butts are one of the most important body parts during the ceremony. The belts made by the women help to make them look more beautiful.



The women take care of the Fat Men from their own families, wiping away sweat, and singing to keep them awake as some are so tired that they start to fall asleep.



In the late afternoon, some Fat Men are so exhausted that they can't walk anymore. The more you walk, jump and dance, the better chance to win. It feels like the movie "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" ...



To become a Fat Man is every Bodi kid's dream. Many try to join the circle of the Fat Men and dance with them, but the elders do not accept and chase them away with a whip!



Under the tree, teens of the same age are staying all together. In a few years, they'll own some cows, and they'll be able to become fat and take part in the ceremony.



The Fat Men are so happy to see so many women during the ceremony. As for the past 6 months, they were forbidden to have sex! Having sex during the preparation would put a curse on their cows, and the cattle would die immediately, they believe.



Some Fat Men drink until the last minute before the jury's decision. In a secret place of the forest, where only the Fat Men and the jury can access, an elder will measure each Fat Man's neck + thigh + belly + arm.

The one who has got the biggest number is the winner.



Before announcing the result, the leaders from other clans deliver speeches for the new year. Most of the time, they are speaking about the conflicts. Since the land of the Bodi is rich, that's why many want to take it for themselves, including the government, who intends to sell it to foreign companies to grow sugarcanes.



The winner is the one with the blue earrings. In a few weeks he will go back to his normal physique, as he will stop drinking blood and milk. However, his fame will last a lifetime, and he will have great success with the women of his tribe too.



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