
Beauty Across Cultures: Traditions of African Tribal Aesthetics

(Paragraph 1)

Beauty is not universal—it changes from culture to culture. In many African tribes, beauty is not only about appearance but also about tradition, identity, and community. Tribal beauty standards often reflect social roles, age, and spiritual beliefs. From hair and jewelry to body painting and scarification, physical appearance becomes a visual language used to express belonging, status, and pride.



[photo01] *African women applying body paint and traditional accessories*

(Paragraph 2)

In Namibia, the Himba people are famous for their red skin and hair, covered in a special paste called *otjize*. Made of butterfat and red ochre, this paste protects them from the sun and dust while also symbolizing beauty and cultural pride. Women's hairstyles reflect their age and marital status, and red is seen as a sacred color, representing life and the earth.



[photo02] *Himba woman with otjize and braided hair in red tones*

(Paragraph 3)

In Ethiopia, the Mursi tribe is well-known for the lip plates worn by women. Girls have their lower lips pierced and stretched, eventually inserting clay plates. While this may seem shocking to outsiders, in Mursi society it is a mark of maturity, strength, and beauty. The size of the lip plate can also indicate social standing and readiness for marriage.



[photo03] *Mursi woman adjusting a large lip plate*

(Paragraph 4)

The Wodaabe people of Niger celebrate beauty in a very different way—through the men. During the Gerewol festival, young men decorate themselves with face paint, feathers, and beads to compete in beauty contests. They dance and smile to show off their white teeth and eyes, features considered very attractive. Unlike many cultures, Wodaabe women are the judges of male beauty.



[photo04] *Wodaabe men in traditional dress dancing at Gerewol*

(Paragraph 5)

In Kenya and Tanzania, the Maasai express beauty through brightly colored beads, stretched earlobes, and clean-shaven heads. Jewelry is not just decoration—it tells a story. The color and pattern of beads reveal a person's age, marital status, and social role. For Maasai women, elegance is shown through posture, balance, and grace, especially when carrying water or walking long distances.



[photo05] *Maasai woman with colorful beadwork and traditional earrings*

(Paragraph 6)

These diverse traditions show that beauty is deeply cultural. Whether it's a lip plate, a red hairstyle, or a bead necklace, each tradition reflects what the community values. In modern times, many African youths mix traditional styles with global fashion, showing pride in their roots. By learning about these beauty standards, we can better understand not only other cultures, but also the values that shape our own.



[photo06] *Young African women blending traditional and modern fashion*



Vocabulary List

(発音記号＋簡潔な英語定義)

- **Adornment** (ə'dɔːnmənt) — something added to enhance appearance or beauty
- **Ochre** ('ɒkər) — a natural earth pigment, usually red or yellow, used in traditional body paint
- **Scarification** (ˌskærəfɪ'keɪʃən) — intentional scarring of the skin for cultural or aesthetic purposes
- **Maturity** (mə'tʊrəti) — the state of being fully grown or developed, often marked by rituals
- **Masculinity** (ˌmæskjə'lnəti) — qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men
- **Symbolize** ('sɪmbəlaɪz) — to represent something else using a sign or image
- **Contest** ('kɒntɛst) — a competition between people to win or be the best
- **Beadwork** ('biːdwɜːrk) — the art of sewing or stringing beads to make jewelry or decoration
- **Perception** (pə'rɛpʃən) — the way something is understood or interpreted
- **Tradition** (trə'dɪʃən) — beliefs or customs passed from generation to generation



Day 1 Questions

(語彙理解・概要)

1. Fill in the blank

The red paste called *otjize*, used by the Himba, is made of butterfat and _____.

2. Choose the correct definition: **Scarification**

- A) A method of painting walls
 - B) A form of traditional music
 - C) Creating intentional marks on the skin as a cultural practice
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3. Multiple Choice

In which tribe do men compete in beauty contests judged by women?

- A) Himba
 - B) Wodaabe
 - C) Mursi
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4. Matching — *Match the tribe to its beauty practice (shuffled)*

- | A. Maasai | 1. Red ochre and braided hairstyles
 - | B. Mursi | 2. Lip plates and social maturity
 - | C. Wodaabe | 3. Beadwork and stretched earlobes
 - | D. Himba | 4. Men dancing in beauty contests
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5. True or False

The Maasai use jewelry only for decoration and fashion.

- ☐ True ☐ False



Day 2 Questions

(詳細理解・比較・順序)

1. Short Answer

Why are lip plates important in Mursi society?

2. Fill in the blank

During the Gerewol festival, Wodaabe men decorate their faces to highlight their _____ and _____.

3. Matching — *Match the word with its meaning (shuffled)*

- | A. Adornment | 1. Qualities seen as traditionally male
 - | B. Masculinity | 2. Decoration used to enhance appearance
 - | C. Contest | 3. Competition to decide who is best
 - | D. Symbolize | 4. To represent something using an image or sign
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4. Multiple Choice

What idea is emphasized in the final paragraph of the text?

- A) That global beauty trends are replacing tribal customs
 - B) That African tribes are trying to erase old traditions
 - C) That beauty reflects cultural values and continues to evolve
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5. Chronological Order — *Put the tribes in the order they are discussed in the text*

1. Mursi
 2. Wodaabe
 3. Himba
 4. Maasai
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Discussion Prompts

1. How is the idea of beauty different in tribal cultures compared to modern global culture?
 2. Do you think beauty practices should be preserved even if they seem strange to outsiders? Why or why not?
 3. What beauty standards exist in your culture? Are they changing?
 4. Which tribe's view of beauty did you find most surprising or interesting?
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