Rite Of Passage In Hamar Tribe

Out of all the tribes, the tribe that stood out most was the Hamar tribe. The Hamar Tribe is a group of people who originated from the Omo Valley, which extends to Lake Chew Bahir in Southwest Ethiopia. They speak the Hamar-Banna language. The Hamar people are a mixture of Caucasian and Negroid. They are all known to be cattle breeders and produce a lot of livestock. As a rite of passage, Hamar men and women have to go through the pain and hard tasks to be initiated into adulthood. To become respected members of their tribe, Hamar boys are expected to jump over bulls, while women are whipped to show loyalty, respect, and love to the boys who were being initiated.

The boy's rite of passage includes jumping over eight bulls' backs which prepares them to face adulthood and considers the boys marriageable. Before the ceremony takes place the father gives his son a short stick called a "Boko" and the boy must go to his relatives' house and invite them to the ceremony. To start off the ceremony, the eldest child in the family has to go through the rite of passage before any younger siblings could follow. The boy must jump over the bulls and if he falls four or more times, he must try again the following year. This task helps them face their fears and gain courage. The ceremony takes place in either October or November. In order for the boy to do this, they must get a father's or uncle's approval to be put into the rite of passage. When the boy passes the rite of passage and becomes a man, the family sets a date for the boy's big day and prepares to hold the traditional feast.

There is also a rite of passage for girls to transition into becoming a woman. In this rite of passage, girls are whipped to show their love, respect, and loyalty to the men being initiated or to their kinsmen. Girls must beg to be whipped and during the process, they are not allowed to scream or show pain. Girls are whipped to get scars, which show their capacity for love and loyalty. The ceremony stops when their backs are all bloody. During the ceremony, the women also sing to "Jumper." They wear colorful beads, polished iron jewelry, and many piercings. The ceremony is known as Ukuli Bala for both girls as well as boys. In the future, if needed a girl will be provided with assistance, from the man who was marked for the role during the ceremony. As a result of completing very painful tasks, the girls are finally granted their acceptance as women.

For both boys and girls, these rites of passage are not simple tasks. They are actually very painful and fearful, which tests girls' and boys' courage, love, and strength. Boys face challenges in crossing from one bull to the other on the bulls' backs, and girls are whipped to show that they could handle pain. As future men and women of the tribe, these challenges are given to them as a test. The tribe members look for their resistance to pain, which determines whether they are good enough for their tribe. Besides the test of pain, it is expected to be strong and caring in Hamar culture. The Hamar girls and boys rites of passage might seem shocking to many people, but for them, it is just another test of skill.