

The dobe ju 'hoansi



I was particularly interested in two insights Richard Borshay Lee provided from his time spent with the Dobe Ju/' hoansi. The first thing I was fascinated by was their impressive tracking skills they have honed throughout their many years of hunting. According to author, they are able to identify the physical attributes amongst other details of various animals they hunt simply by analyzing the tracks these animals leave behind. They can tell time of day and how long ago it passed by, whether the animal is old or injured, etc.

This simply fascinates me because I have always been fond of detective novels, work, shows, etc. I say this because the Dobe Ju/' hoansi are basically detectives in their own way. They track down their prey the same way an investigator would track down a criminal. Another thing that caught my attention was the Dobe Ju/' hoansi's use of humor. Their way of joking involves various ways of insulting their peers and making sure they are not praised when they have done something appreciative.

They laugh at one another and downplay their own achievements. This interested me because it motivated me to reflect upon my own culture. Furthermore I asked myself an insightful question; is humor a natural condition that all humans can understand equally or is it merely a social condition that varies depending on one's culture? While pondering upon this question, I also asked myself if my own humour was really so different from the Dobe Ju/' hoansi's. I came to the conclusion that no it is not.

I cannot speak on behalf of everyone but when I was a teenager, my friends and I had a similar sense of humour as the Dobe Ju/' hoansi's. We would insult one another, make jokes about ones physical appearance, etc. Although I still seldom submit to this type of humor, I believe I have now

matured enough to know the difference between what is funny and what is simply disrespectful and insensitive. Therefore, humour has to be a social condition that varies depending on one's culture.

I say this because, like the Dobe Ju/' hoansi, I had to alter my sense of humour in order to fit in with the norm of society. The Dobe Ju/' hoansi sense of humour is an important feature as it helps them maintain respect towards one another and it also avoids arrogance within the self. In our culture, my sense of humour must be "matured" in order to avoid hurting other people's feelings. All in all, we as humans adapt to the cultures we are brought up in.