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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

6 pages

1. Describe the way in which Igloolik Inuit wayfinding has changed as a result of the increasing use of technology. ***[6 marks]***

This question requires a primarily descriptive answer. Candidates are required to give an account of how the use of GPS units and other technologies (snowmobiles in particular) have changed the way in which Igloolik Inuit orient themselves on land and at sea.

GPS use enables less experienced and knowledgeable Igloolik Inuit to travel with relative ease, even when the weather is inclement and more traditional wayfinding techniques are difficult to utilize. It makes walrus hunting safer and less expensive. For Inuit elders it represents a complement to the traditional forms of wayfinding. In addition snowmobiles make travelling faster and hunting less time-consuming, enabling some Inuit to hunt part-time. More successful answers will note that all of these changes go hand-in-hand with other structural changes, such as the introduction of formal education and wage labour.

At the same time, the excessive reliance on GPS units creates situations in which travelling in fact becomes more dangerous for Inuit who do not have traditional wayfinding knowledge as a backup because GPS units do not take into account such factors as the topography or the thickness of the ice. They also break easily in Arctic conditions.

Better answers will include a general statement about the fact that the introduction of new technologies has had both positive and negative consequences, which have been unevenly distributed across members of a society and increased differences between people.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is an attempt to organize the response and identify relevant points or examples, but the response relies too heavily on quotations from the text *and/or* limited generalizations are offered.
3–4	The response is organized, identifies and explains relevant points or examples, and offers generalizations.
5–6	The response is organized, identifies and explains detailed relevant points or examples, and links them to generalizations, demonstrating good anthropological understanding.

2. Using theoretical perspectives, explain the consequences of the increasing use of technology on social relations and culture among the Igloolik Inuit. ***[6 marks]***

There are several points in the text which can be drawn on to answer this question, but stronger answers will incorporate concepts and knowledge from social and cultural anthropology that are relevant to the analysis and interpretation of the passage.

The relationship between technological changes on the one hand and, on the other, social relations and culture can be explained in many ways. Candidates may approach this question from general anthropological concepts and terms related to different themes (individuals, groups and society; societies and cultures in contact; economic organization and the environment and systems of knowledge). Socialization has become less straightforward, the socialization of younger Inuit has become more difficult, for the simple reason that travelling has become noisy, curtailing conversation. The apparent simplicity of the use of GPS has led to the potential devaluation of local environmental knowledge by younger hunters. Better candidates may surmise that this devaluation may be extended to the guardians of this knowledge, *ie* the elders.

Culture is also affected by the increased use of technology. More straight forwardly, GPS units are endangering an entire system of knowledge that continues to be indispensible in cases where technology fails. It modifies the relationship with the physical land and the symbolic environment. Better responses will point out that these changes are occurring in the context of changing relationships to learning and to forms of activities such as work and leisure. Better responses will also explain that not all Inuit are of the same mind, with some embracing the GPS as amplification of human ability, while others are seeing it as a catalyst for a rift between generations. New technologies thus increase the diversification of culture.

Candidates may recognize the point of view of the anthropologists which does not take sides. The authors highlight the local categories and understand them not as a separate domain but in their relation to the social structure.

The question can be approached from different theoretical perspectives. The social production of knowledge can be analysed taking a conflict-centred perspective that gives account of the potential differences that arise between people. Also, a diachronic perspective may inform the authors' argument that a historical dimension is key to understanding the dynamic between technology and changing relationships to the environment. The use of a particularistic perspective is also a possible choice of explanation, in that the authors shy away from a universalistic technological determinism.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response is mainly descriptive and relies on quotations, but may demonstrate limited understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts.
3–4	The response demonstrates some understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts or theory, *or* the response recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist, *but* not all of these.
5–6	The response demonstrates a critical understanding of relevant anthropological issues, concepts and theory, *and* recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist.

3. Compare and contrast how modernity and tradition co-exist among the Igloolik Inuit with how modernity and tradition co-exist in *one* society that you have studied in detail. ***[8 marks]***

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. The question requires candidates to demonstrate that they understand that modernity and tradition are always intertwined in any society. The relationship between modernity and tradition may take many forms, allowing candidates to make comparisons of different kinds. The answers need not revolve around technology, but may focus on modernity and tradition in systems of knowledge, generational differences, the environment, or other dynamics.

The measure of this answer lies in the way in which candidates compare and contrast and harness ethnographic knowledge, rather than it being a test of knowledge of a similar case study.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail and its relevance is only partly established. It is not identified in terms of place, author or historical context. The response may not be structured as a comparison.
3–4	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail but its relevance is established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, *or* the response is clearly structured as a comparison.
5–6	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, *and* the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Either similarities *or* differences are discussed in detail, *but* not both.
7–8	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, *and* the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Similarities *and* differences are discussed in detail. The response demonstrates good anthropological understanding.