

Markscheme

May 2015

Social and cultural anthropology

Higher level

Paper 1

5 pages

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1. Describe why female Ghanaian migrants may decide to consult an anti-witchcraft shrine priest.

[6]

This primarily descriptive question requires candidates to give an account of how female Ghanaian migrants come to understand and experience their illnesses, from the seemingly innocuous cough to the visions of evil spirits, as something socially and economically evil, namely witchcraft.

The author presents the case of Grace, a young migrant who suffers a repeated sore throat and flu-like symptoms and eventually comes to believe she is a victim of witchcraft. As a consequence, she decides to travel to Paris and consult Abe.

Better answers will make explicit reference to the complex relationship between the Ghanaian migrants' socio-economic situation and their experience and understanding of illness. They give meaning to their social suffering through the interpretive frame of witchcraft. As a causation theory, witchcraft explains physical distress, uncertainty and moral disquiet.

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 why Abe’s anti-witchcraft shrine is successful in solving illness and misfortune.**

[6]

Several points in the text can be drawn on to answer this question and answers will incorporate relevant concepts and knowledge from social and cultural anthropology.

The question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of how Ghanaian witchcraft constitutes an epistemological and moral framework for making sense of reality. Witchcraft beliefs about good, evil, causation, divination and healing can provide coherent ideologies for making sense of personal and social experiences and their ties to moral systems. Successful answers may demonstrate an awareness of how individuals are embedded in social structures and cultural dynamics that shape identity, actions and meanings.

Abe is successful in treating illness and misfortune because his practices may be understood as a quest for meaning in the context of migration. As the author puts it, these practices situate “social suffering in its widest social, economic and political context”. Abe reinvents traditional and modern divination techniques, incorporating non-prescription cold medicine and popular psychology. His healing practices revolve around the client’s personal relationships rather than abstract knowledge independent of the client’s social context. This is clearly illustrated in his use of the “road map”. As Grace’s case shows, Abe’s approach to healing is dynamic and contextual and articulates with its modern setting.

For Grace, the anti-witchcraft shrines represent legitimate forms of knowledge which provide healing. Candidates may make reference to the author’s critique of the view that witchcraft is ineffective and no longer relevant to the modern world. In her view, witchcraft practices are one manifestation of modernity, and incorporate new objects, such as biomedical knowledge and street maps. Candidates may also recognize the author’s attention to local categories, as illustrated in her analysis of witchcraft in relation to socio-economic transformation and the actors’ understanding of modernity. Some candidates may point out that the author approaches the issue from the perspective of medical anthropology, and can make reference to globalization theories, modernity studies and symbolic and post-colonial perspectives. They may also refer to earlier ethnographic work on witchcraft, such as Evans-Pritchard’s.

Some approaches to this question may analyse witchcraft as a general discourse about morality and sociality, identifying these elements in how Abe considers Grace’s obligations to her social network as a key aspect of the treatment. Candidates can link witchcraft to concepts such as social control and change, referring to kinship obligations and the migrant condition.

The question can be approached from different theoretical perspectives: structure-centred, idealist, or particularistic. Other perspectives may also provide appropriate ways to frame this question. Answers may draw on general anthropological concepts and terms related to syllabus themes (individuals, groups and society, systems of knowledge, belief systems and practices, and moral systems). Core terms and ideas such as culture, meaning and agency can be used effectively.

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 Ghanaian immigrants' approaches to suffering to those of *one other* group or society you have studied in detail.** [8]

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. The question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of suffering as present in any society or group. The experience of suffering may take many forms, allowing candidates to draw relevant comparisons.

The measure of this answer depends on how candidates compare and incorporate 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.
