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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

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Extract (pp. 205-208) of Lisette Josephides, “Replacing Cultural Markers: Symbolic Analysis and Political Action in Melanesia,” in Cosmos and Society in Oceania. Daniel de Coppet and André Iteanu, eds. pp. 189-211 (Oxford: Berg, 1995)

- 1. Demonstrate how the conflict between Lapame and Rombola can be understood in terms of power and resistance. [6 marks]**

Lapame and Rombola are not merely engaged in a marital dispute. Their conflict articulates society-wide tensions over the meaning of marriage, the relative social status of women and men, and the interests of persons and groups. Whatever perspective one takes, what causes these tensions is not the juxtaposition of merely *different* elements, but the co-existence of *different and unequal* elements and the possibility that their unequal status can be contested. This question gives candidates the freedom to choose which aspect of the situation is an instance of the practice of power and resistance. For example, they can focus on the unequal status that the Kewa attribute to the different meanings of marriage, which in turn creates inequality between those who are associated with these different meanings. They can also begin with the unequal status of women and men and demonstrate how this inequality is created and supported by marriage rules. The question can prompt alternative approaches, many of which will lend themselves to successful answers.

Required of good answers is a clear demonstration of the link between Lapame and Rombola’s situation and general dynamics of power and resistance. To obtain more than an average mark, candidates must also ensure that they tackle both the power dimension and the resistance dimension of the situation. Good answers will also invoke a relevant theoretical model of power, from a very wide choice of possibilities (from Rosaldo’s model of gender inequality to Scott’s weapons of the weak). The best answers will attempt to evaluate, on the basis of the limited data presented in the passage, the extent to which resistant action (*e.g.*, chopping down sugar canes, creating havoc in the household, fleeing back to one’s natal clan of origin) renders the exercise of power difficult or ineffectual.

- 2. Explain how marriage practices amongst the Kewa expose the uneasy relationship between material and ideal (or symbolic) aspects of life. [6 marks]**

Here again, the question affords candidates wide latitude. As long as the answer clearly demonstrates that the candidate understands the meaning of materialism and idealism, and the fact that the two realms can conflict, it matters little which illustrations candidates choose to focus on appropriately and how they employ these illustrations to answer the question. For example, a candidate may choose to contrast economic aspects of marriage with emotional aspects of marriage, demonstrating how one belongs to the material sphere, the other to the ideal sphere, and showing that emphasis on one or the other calls for divergent social action. Alternatively, a candidate may show that the production of pigs for prestige accrual and the maintenance of household economics and a smoothly functioning household are both material concerns, but that their symbolic associations and valuations give them different meanings in the eyes of Kewa men and women.

Good answers will clearly demonstrate the candidate’s understanding of the difference between material and ideal spheres of life, and of the way in which marriage is grounded in both. The best answers will make use of appropriate analytic terminology in capturing the dynamics at play.

- 3. Identify, in a society that you have studied in detail, an institution or practice that is subject to the interplay of power and resistance, and compare that situation with the way in which Kewa marriage is subject to the same dynamics.**

[8 marks]

This question provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their comparative skills and their understanding of the workings of power and resistance. A broad variety of comparative situations can be used here. The best answers will touch on both differences and similarities between the two situations. To receive more than *[4 marks]*, candidates must explicitly design their answers as comparisons, and clearly identify the name, location, ethnographer and ethnographic present of the comparative material.
