

MARKSCHEME

November 2005

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

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1. **What are some of the social and cultural differences associated with the experience of eating at McDonald's in America and in Beijing?** *[6 marks]*

There are many descriptive examples to choose from in the passage and these range from the pragmatic economic differences in the real cost of the meals in different social systems to the less easily quantified, but probably more important, experiential value which is culturally assigned to the foreign, egalitarian and unappetizing mass-produced food of modernity. An ethos of democracy in the manner in which customers are treated in McDonald's is undermined by the knowledge that not everyone in Beijing can afford to eat in McDonald's regularly. The egalitarian nature of the restaurant for those within is in contrast to the status it affords and the distinction made between those who have the means to eat in McDonald's and those who do not. Fast food becomes slow food in Beijing and the meals of the hurried American working-class that of the leisured aspirational Chinese middle-class. Eating at McDonald's is part of a Chinese mother's attempt to educate her daughter for a future in which she is equipped to succeed while eating at McDonald's in the USA is, by comparison, not usually considered a path to social and occupational success. Candidates may choose to highlight and discuss a range of materials from the text and better answers will demonstrate an ability to select and discuss relevant examples in a well-ordered fashion rather than simply providing a checklist.

2. **Discuss how the Chinese McDonald's has developed strategies to cater for local needs and expectations while retaining the global identity which is the source of its transnational appeal.** *[6 marks]*

This question requires candidates to develop answers that move beyond the more descriptive answer of question 1. Here the ability of candidates to show that globalization does not work uniformly in all social and cultural contexts is important. The give and take of McDonald's in China, both maintaining elements which are recognizably those of the parent company in the States, such as the standardized menu, and also adapting to local needs by providing a high level of customer support, with receptionists whose work requires them to enter the private homes of clients, reveals both similarities and key differences in company practice across national boundaries. The Chinese, too, have made McDonald's something that they can positively contrast to the Chinese restaurants they are more traditionally accustomed to and also use as an instrument of modernity. The Chinese McDonald's has consciously developed several localization strategies which are outlined in the passage and which can profitably be discussed by candidates. These include the use of locally produced food; an attempt to foster the culturally positively viewed notion of a multi-generational happy family sitting down to eat together; the leisurely and relaxed atmosphere of a McDonald's in Beijing which is in marked contrast to the economic value of speed in the USA; and the development of personal relationships between staff and key customers through children, who are considered the basis of future success for the parent company. In short, McDonald's success in China is based on its ability to adapt to the local market while maintaining a sense of being a positively viewed foreign and modern organization, which panders to the needs of a fast-growing and western-looking middle-class. The Chinese, for their part, have compelled McDonald's to adapt to local understandings of what is required from a restaurant. Good answers do not have to provide an exhaustive discussion of all elements of globalization and localization covered in the passage but they do have to contextualize their answers within a suitable conceptual framework and select a sufficient range of appropriate examples from the text to justify the discussion of globalization and localization.

- 3. Globalization and localization are two aspects of the same phenomenon. Show how this works in a society you have studied in detail and compare this with the McDonald's case study in the passage above.**

[8 marks]

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. In essence the question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the nature of globalization as a force which does not impact uniformly on all societies. The nature of the pre-existing social and cultural order is crucial for an understanding of the kinds and nature of the local impact globalization will have on any given society. Globalization and localization work in relation to each other and in relation to the host society which finds itself subject, often willingly as in the example of China, to the processes of globalization and localization. Better answers will also be able to demonstrate the variable impacts of globalization and localization on different segments within a given society. In order to obtain full marks answers must be organized in a clear manner, highlighting similarities, differences and generalizations. Candidates must situate the comparative case in terms of group, place, author, and ethnographic context.
