



MARKSCHEME

November 2007

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

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1. Why do the Vezo stress sex and not gender at birth and death?**[6 marks]**

This question requires candidates to make clear that at birth and death a person's agency is limited (or non-existent). Babies cannot make decisions for themselves or act in a social manner and thus reveal a lack of knowledge of the social practices and values that would make their behaviour meaningful. At death people are, as at birth, unable to act in a social manner. At the extremes of the life course, therefore, we are not fully social actors and at these points an essentialised notion of sex becomes a key or salient feature of the person. During the rest of the life cycle, when people are fully social actors their decisions about how to do things or what jobs to perform render their sex less significant than their actively chosen gendered identity. The physicality of sex is stressed at birth and death over the performance of gender which becomes important during social life.

Candidates may express this in a considerably less abstract manner and describe how at birth the only thing that is known with any certainty about a baby is its sex. At death the funeral rituals serve to deny gender and prioritise sex through ritual practices and decisions about where in the tomb to place a corpse. Some candidates may speculate that at death a social individual is transformed into an anonymised ancestor and for this sex and not gender is sufficient.

Candidates may also describe the difference between sex at birth and death, and gender during life, as one where culturally constructed gender is more important than the biologically given sex for those who are in a position to act. This is shown in the case of the *sarin'ampela* and many examples from the text could be used to support such an approach. Here, again, however, it is the agency of the individual which makes the difference. Those with agency can choose a gendered identity, those without have only their sex.

Better answers will develop an organised and focused response to the question which is supported by relevant selections of materials from the text. Candidates need not present every possible example found in the text but answers do have to be organised and discussed in a reasoned fashion to do well.

2. Discuss the Vezo distinction between women's work and women's ways of doing things.

[6 marks]

Again, there is a good deal of descriptive material in the text for candidates to select but the better answers will develop an understanding that the Vezo do not have rigid distinctions between women's and men's work. Both women and men know the tasks in their specific locality which are usually performed by either women or men (and this varies from locality to locality) but women can and do undertake men's work when this is required and men can do women's work without bringing into question the gender identity of the person performing the task.

However, the focus of Vezo attention in relation to gender identity is not the work that an individual does but the "way of doing things" that a person has. In this latter respect a man who cooks or collects water, both tasks normally associated with women, is not by virtue of this work considered a *sarin'ampela* or "image" of a woman. But a man who both does women's work and also wears his sarong as women do or does *mitohake* with women will be considered a *sarin'ampela*. The crucial element in deciding gender identity for the Vezo is not the nature of the productive labour one undertakes but the accompanying way in which the work is done (for example, carrying water on the head as women do and not the shoulders as men do) and how one presents oneself to the society in dress and demeanour.

In short, candidates should be able to demonstrate that work is not rigidly limited to a particular gender while "ways of doing things" are. This reveals a society that in complex ways allows for flexibility in some spheres and choice for individuals, but no flexibility in the understanding of those choices, in other spheres.

As always, good answers do not need to be fully comprehensive but do need to justify the selections made from the text and develop these into a reasoned, coherent and focused response to the question.

3. Compare Vezo understandings of gender with those found in a society you have studied in detail. [8 marks]

The question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the social and constructed nature of gender and its performance within contexts which will, inevitably, both allow for certain practices and simultaneously constrain others. It also requires candidates to demonstrate their awareness that the way in which gender is understood and its social enactment vary across societies in complex and subtle ways. Gendered ways of being are performed, negotiated and transformed in social interactions with others. They are not everywhere understood as essentialized givens. It may be possible for candidates to show that while members of a particular society consider gender to be an essentialized given, anthropologists may be able to demonstrate the socially constructed nature of gender.

Candidates may, but do not need, to select a group that directly compares with the *sarin'ampela* of the passage, nor do they need to focus on the life cycle as an organising frame for their answer.

However, in order to obtain full marks answers must be organised in a clear manner, highlighting similarities, differences and generalizations.

Candidates must situate the comparative case in terms of group, place, author, and ethnographic context to gain more than [4 marks].
