

MARKSCHEME

May 2004

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

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1. How does the sevusevu serve as an affirmation of Fijian identity? [6 marks]

This question seeks to elicit from candidates a description of how Fijians portray themselves through the sevusevu ritual or are perceived by others who witness the ritual, without necessarily making reference to who these Fijians are. The sevusevu is clear evidence that Fijian culture is ritualized and performative: it is associated with highly visible forms of action that one can characterize as “cultural” in the everyday sense of the term (which responses should distinguish from the anthropological sense). Furthermore, these customary actions make explicit reference to a cosmology grounded in a timeless past, and thus Fijian identity rests on an elaboration of a mythological past. The sociality embedded in the sevusevu (*e.g.* the requirement that everyone involved stay until the end) demonstrates the important role that community and a community orientation play in Fijian identity. This role is also explicitly embedded in assertions, made by orators during the sevusevu, that Fijians are a family united through the worship of the Lord. The passage implies in several ways that Fijians define their identity through the sevusevu in contrast to a modernity characterized by individualism, self-centredness, and an interest in profit.

These remarks may be gleaned from the various parts of the passage, and candidates may arrange them as they wish, but they must present them in their own words. Good answers will be organized analytically and will demonstrate explicitly why the characteristics of the sevusevu ritual affirm each aspect of Fijian identity.

2. How do rural Fijians use the sevusevu to claim that they are the proper guardians of Fijian identity? [7 marks]

This question shifts the focus from the characteristics of Fijian identity to the people who claim to embody these characteristics. Claiming the guardianship of an identity can be accomplished simultaneously in two ways: by directing claims of ownership to potential competitors, and by demonstrating to complete outsiders that one is the proper owner of the identity. Rural Fijians are in tacit competition for the guardianship of Fijian identity principally with other Fijians, *i.e.* urban-based and overseas-residing indigenous Fijians. The outside audience in this case are tourists from overseas, while Indo-Fijians sit somewhere in between the status of local competitor and that of outsider. When performing sevusevu before their urban and overseas-based relatives on the occasion of church fund-raising events, rural Fijians highlight the fact that, contrary to their relatives’ image of them as demanding ne’er-do-wells, they are in charge of timeless traditions and sacred ceremonies, without which Fijian identity and the Fijian nation would collapse. Rural Fijians thus claim to hold the essence of Fijian identity in more important ways than their money-earning modern relatives, and this claim is precisely what the sevusevu articulates explicitly. Tourists from overseas represent a useful opportunity for villagers to strengthen claims of guardianship. Villagers are the ones who perform sevusevu rituals before tourists, who come to see Fijians are friendly, generous, and steeped in crowd-pleasing ritual. As far as tourists are concerned, these qualities are associated with the representatives of Fiji they see in front of them, namely villagers.

Again, candidates may present these materials in various ways, but their answers must highlight, in the candidates’ own words, the fact that both guardianship and identity are always constructed and negotiated, rather than given. Particularly well-informed responses may refer to relevant literature on the construction of ethnicity as elaboration of difference, or on the constructed nature of tradition in contrast to modernity. Such references to theoretical materials should be rewarded generously.

- 3. Compare the effect of external forces on the meaning of the sevusevu in rural Fiji with the effect of external forces on a ritual, object, or symbol found in another society you have studied. [7 marks]**

This question provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their comparative skills and their understanding of the interface between local and external dynamics from an anthropological perspective. A broad variety of comparative situations can be used here. Judicious comparisons will explore the differential effects that external forces often have on society, providing new meanings to old actions in people's struggles to survive and to do so with dignity. The best answers will address the differences and similarities between the two situations, and the generalizations that can be drawn from the comparison. To receive more than **[4 marks]**, responses must be explicitly designed as comparisons, and clearly identify the name, location, ethnographer and ethnographic present of the comparative material.
