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Social and cultural anthropology
Standard level
Paper 1

Thursday 12 November 2020 (afternoon)

1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage and answer questions 1 and 2. Choose either question 3 or 4. Answer question 5.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[30 marks]**.

Read the passage.

Passage adapted from Devlieger, C., (2018) “Contractual Dependencies: Disability and the bureaucracy of begging in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo”. *American Ethnologist*, 45(4): 455–469.

Begging is a prominent economic activity pursued by physically disabled people in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Beggars identify three different kinds of begging. Some beggars sit, usually alone, because they cannot walk. Others walk alone or in pairs; on holy days they seek charity from mosques and businesses belonging to Muslims.

- 5 The defining practice of disabled beggars in central Kinshasa today formed the third category: those who “do documents” also known as *documentaires*. In contrast to other beggars, they formed groups of up to 15 people. While most beggars approached potential donors with pleading looks, extended hands and gestures expressing hunger, *documentaires* took a different track: they presented a potential donor with a photocopied document requesting
- 10 contributions for a specific purpose. *Documentaires* described the system to me as an arrangement or “contract” between beggar and donor. Donors who “bought” such a document kept it as a receipt and hung it on display. It showed that the giver had donated to disabled people and was not obliged to give to other groups. In exchange, the group of beggars would not return for another year. However, once when I went out with *documentaire* women and
- 15 shopkeepers told them they had already given, they replied that they had given to men but also needed to give to women.

- In many descriptions of begging, the obligation to give is framed in terms of religious charity. For *documentaires*, in contrast, religious charity was not significant. The system instead deliberately evoked non-governmental organization (NGO) fund-raising and government tax-collection.
- 20 Adapting to Kinshasa’s multicultural makeup, *documentaires* chose to persuade people to give by speaking the secular language of the state and that of international humanitarianism.

- Begging can be described as an interaction that challenges ordinary systems of exchange, since beggars bargain from a position of weakness, making claims based not on reciprocity but on what they lack. The practice of the *documentaires* shows the reality of this challenge.
- 25 Thus, *documentaires* try to present their relationship with “donors” as reciprocal. Presenting themselves as an NGO, the “receipt” beggars give is meant to represent an understanding between the beggars, the donor, and (implicitly) the government. This legitimizes the act of begging by imitating the practices of state bureaucracy. The *documentaires’* system rests on the idea of state social support, which is in tension with a moral logic of dignity derived from
- 30 personal independence and “honest” work. This clashes with perceptions of disabled beggars as suspect and aggressive.

Because begging is controversial, beggars present a dependent relationship as “contractual” and spread such relationships over wide networks. These are strategies to manage a stigmatized occupation and maintain a degree of desired autonomy.

- 35 In many societies one becomes a person through multiple attachments to others rather than by conceptualizing the self as an independent individual. When personhood is shaped by valuing (in)dependence, perceptions of disability are affected. In cultures that place strong emphasis on independence, such as the Euro-American West, the dependency of disabled people attracts discrimination and stigma. But disability in other cultures can be more associated
- 40 with the “socio-centric” value of being part of social networks of dependencies rather than individual work capacity, appearance or ability. Dependencies on others, in this perspective, is not negative but a valued achievement and a route towards social mobility. If disabled people cannot fulfil the ideals of “independent” labor, they may still be able to find value as persons through dependent relations with others.

- 45 Like other *documentaires*, Claude made a strong distinction between ordinary beggars and himself: “See this paper? This is a contract we sign with them once a year. It’s a document you give like a tax of the disabled. You give me money and I leave you the paper. But when an individual beggar puts out their hand like this, you give him money, but he won’t give you a paper. Our paper is the convention we sign with business owners. Even though we also receive
50 money, we give a paper receipt and it is only once a year. The difference is large.”

For Claude, it was a more responsible and organized type of begging, upholding good relationships bound by contract. The document symbolized their agreement and formalized their dependent relationship.

Answer question 1 **and** question 2

1. Define the term **exchange** and describe how it can be understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]
2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **identity**. [6]

Answer **either** question 3 **or** question 4.

3. Compare and contrast the way in which the key concept of **culture** or **symbolism** is evident in this passage and how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. [10]

OR

4. Compare and contrast the approaches to research adopted by the anthropologist in this passage to the approaches to research used by **one** other anthropologist you have studied. Make reference to concepts and ethnographic material in your answer. [10]

Answer question 5.

5. What does it mean to live in society? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material and examples from the passage. [10]
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References:

Devlieger, C., 2018. 'Contractual Dependencies: Disability and the bureaucracy of begging in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo'. *American Ethnologist*, 45(4), pp. 455–469. © Wiley 2018; <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/amet.12701> Open Access – CC BY 4.0; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.