

# **MARKSCHEME**

**November 2002**

## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Standard Level**

**Paper 1**

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- 1. Explain the difference between Lapame’s account and Rombola’s account of Rombola’s attempt to take a second wife in terms of the different views of marriage held by Kewa women and men.**

*[6 marks]*

The passage is an illustration of the way in which a social institution, far from creating social cohesion, may be the source of difference and conflict. While polygyny is institutionalized amongst the Kewa, it has different meanings for Kewa women and Kewa men, and this question is designed to elicit these different meanings. The question also asks candidates to relate the particulars of an ethnographic story to analytic generalizations; candidates may choose to start with one or the other with equal potential success. However, they must tackle the question in their own words.

Lapame considers herself a good wife by Kewa standards: she had produced five children and worked hard. For her, these characteristics mean that she deserves Rombola’s appreciation. For Lapame, having an affair with another woman, whether or not he intends to take her as a second wife, is no way of showing appreciation. Lapame sees marriage in affective terms, as a union between persons that requires an exchange of signs of appreciation, work and fertility from one party, exclusive sexual and affective attention from the other. Yet she must also resign herself to the reality of polygyny, something that she does not do without resistance. Lapame’s view is typical of Kewa women’s views of marriage (Wata clearly shares the same view), and her reactions are not the manifestation of purely psychological dynamics of jealousy and response to rejection, but are grounded in a social and cultural world of expectations and constraints.

In contrast, Rombola acknowledges that marriage is based on affection and sexual desire but, like other Kewa men, he also sees marriage above all as a prestige-accruing strategy, a way of increasing the economic productivity of the household in order to stage large-scale displays of pig-killing. For him, taking Wata as a second wife is not a withdrawal of his appreciation for Lapame, but a way of adding working hands to the household. His affections are obviously divided: he feels rejected by Lapame’s refusal to cook his meal and the food that Wata prepares for him does not satiate his hunger, yet he steals cuddles with Wata when he thinks that Lapame is not around.

Kewa marriage has many meanings: it is an affective union between persons, an alliance designed to maximize economic production and therefore prestige, and a way of producing children. However, men and women disagree over the relative importance and compatibility of these various meanings, and Lapame and Rombola’s story articulates these disagreements.

- 2. In what ways are women’s views on marriage and men’s views on marriage unequal in Kewa society?** *[6 marks]*

This question shifts candidates’ attention from difference to inequality. Not only do Kewa men and Kewa women disagree over the meaning of marriage, but they are also in different structural positions in society, giving their views unequal weight. Kewa men equate their values and goals with those of the clan: pig-killing rituals benefit both the men who conduct them successfully and the group. Like Rombola, they insist that everyone, including their wives, must work for what is good for the clan and therefore for the men, which in their eyes is the same thing. If women work against the social aspirations of men, by insisting for instance, on monogamous marriage they fail to behave altruistically.

In contrast, women aspire to feel appreciated as persons and as material providers within the bounds of the household (children, labour). The context of their aspirations is therefore more restricted than the context of men’s aspiration, and can easily be described as selfish and thus culturally devalued, even though in fact the fruit of their labour is essential to the entire clan. Women feel an obligation to accept polygyny, even though the practice goes against the grain of what they see as the value of marriage and their own best interest.

Good answers will demonstrate that the unequal status of women’s and men’s views of marriage results from both social and cultural factors (*e.g.*, the cultural evaluation of social acts), and rest on dynamics that reach beyond the confines of marriage as a social institution. Particularly perceptive candidates will discuss that women can resist their disadvantaged position in polygynous marriage, as illustrated by Lapame’s destruction of sugar canes and Wata’s partitioning of household space and possessions. However, the success of these acts of resistance is mitigated, since everyone, including the perpetrators, suffers.

- 3. Identify, in a society that you have studied in detail, an institution or practice that is interpreted or viewed differently by different groups or in different contexts, and compare that situation with conflicting views of marriage among the Kewa.** *[8 marks]*

This question provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their comparative skills and their understanding of the way in which society and culture are heterogeneous entities. The Kewa situation analysed in the passage can be contrasted with many other possible cases. An institution or practice can have different meanings for different groups (*e.g.*, men versus women, working- versus middle-class people, adults versus children or adolescents), or for the same people in different contexts or different states of self-reflection. 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.

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