

Markscheme

November 2025

Social and cultural anthropology

Higher level

Paper 1

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The following interpretation of the markscheme is offered as an example of the types of responses we may expect, however it is not prescriptive or exhaustive, and other possible answers should be appropriately rewarded if relevant.

Section A

1. Define the term **status** and describe how it can be understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]

Possible ways of defining the term status:

This question requires candidates to demonstrate conceptual knowledge and understanding of the term **status** and apply it in relation to the text. Candidates may write in terms of any of the following guidelines, but other definitions or applications will also be acceptable if made relevant to the context of the passage. Stronger responses may also develop a critical discussion of the concept.

- Status as a socially defined aspect of a person, which entails certain rights and duties in relation to others, making clear how statuses are embedded in systems of stratification or inequality
- Status as a position in a social system, relating it to the closely linked notion of role.
- Distinction between ascribed and achieved statuses
- Status as a synonym for social honour or prestige (utilizing Weber)
- The notion of embodied status
- The concept of master status.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples of description and application:

- assumptions about the differential status of persons based on inferred race
- whitening as status enhancing when this is applied by police officers to individuals
- differential treatment of arrested persons based on (moral etc.) assumptions of their status dependent on ideas about race (e.g., of the pizza-eater and ticket-thief)
- assumed status of victims when deciding whether or not to arrest police officers for killing innocent civilians
- status of the policemen
- assumptions about White fathers as workers who contribute to the maintenance of the institution of the family and to capitalism / economic productivity.

Other appropriate applications should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response demonstrates a basic knowledge and understanding of the concept. There is a partial application of the concept in relation to the text.
3–4	The response demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of the concept; the concept is described in detail. The concept is clearly applied in relation to the text.

2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **power**. [6]

This question requires candidates to develop an analysis and explanation of the ethnographic text using the key concept of **power** to help make sense of the ethnographic data. In order to do this, candidates are required to demonstrate an understanding of the key concept and use it to discuss relevant issues within the context of the passage, developing an analysis with reference to the ethnographic data of the extract.

Possible ways of defining the key concept:

- As an essential part of social relations, as a person's or group's capacity to influence, manipulate or control others and resources
- Involving distinctions and inequalities between members of a social group
- In relation to its capacity to produce subjectivities
- In relation to hegemony and resistance
- In relation to authority and legitimacy
- In relation to race, class, and social positions
- Terms such as discourse, ideology, social control, structural power, symbolic power, discipline, symbolic violence, habitus, and agency, may be utilized in the response.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples and ways of analysing:

- Power illustrated through structural violence of the police system (e.g., treating those arrested differently based on assumptions of “race” and the moral associations linked to these sending the Black teenager to detention centre but releasing the White father with no penalty)
- Racist and classist biases of the police officers in positions of power resulting in lethal violence against innocent individuals (the couple shot by the police because the latter assumed they were Black, unemployed, and therefore criminal)
- Tension between agency and structure (e.g., difficulties experienced by the detective in deciding whether or not to arrest police officers for killing an innocent couple)
- Knowledge and power
- Structural inequality of Brazilian society (e.g., processes of cultural exclusion, unequal access to justice)
- Symbolic violence
- Power as innate in Whiteness.

Other appropriate examples and ways of analysing should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response offers a common-sense or superficial understanding of the key concept. There is an attempt to relate the key concept to the text, and some ethnographic examples are presented but these are only partially relevant.
3–4	The response demonstrates an understanding of the key concept and establishes its relevance to the text. There is an analysis of the text using the key concept, although there are some inconsistencies. Relevant ethnographic examples from the text are presented to support the analysis.
5–6	The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the key concept, discussing this in the context of the text. There is a clearly explained analysis of the text using the key concept and a detailed interpretation of the ethnographic data. Clear and explicit ethnographic examples from the text support the analysis.

3. Compare and contrast the ways in which the key concept of **society** or **identity** is evident in this passage with how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. Make reference to theory in your answer. [10]

Candidates are expected to show an ability to think about the text in relation to other contexts and to draw explicit comparisons. In order to do this, responses must demonstrate an understanding of how either the key concept of **society** or **identity** relates to this ethnographic context. The key concept on which such comparison may be drawn should be made explicit and clearly linked to any anthropological issues raised by the text.

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. Candidates should be able to establish a relevant comparison with one other group or society based on the key concepts in the question. The response should be structured as a comparison, highlighting similarities and differences. Candidates must situate the comparative case in terms of place, author, and fieldwork context.

For society, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- the way in which humans organize themselves in groups and networks.
- as created and sustained by social relationships among persons and groups.
- a human group that exhibits some internal coherence and distinguishes itself from other such groups.
- a group or network that may share common interests and have a distinctive culture and institutions.

Possible examples from the text about society may include:

- the police may be said to constitute a “society” within the larger society as a group that exhibits some internal coherence, and distinguishes itself from other groups
- differences in power / status and agency between groups in a society which is demonstrated by differences in how they are treated by the police (preferential treatment for White fathers, assumptions of criminality for those assumed to be Black)
- _the state power to classify and create social identities within hierarchical categorizations
- absence of society (common interests/internal coherence/networks) for persons of different races when arrested and/or in police custody.

Possible examples of theory in relation to society may include:

- Symbolic theories
- Structural theories
- Postmodern theories
- Marxist / post-Marxist theories
- Agency and structure-centred approaches
- Critical Race Theory.

Any other relevant theory.

At HL, candidates need to use theory in the response in order to achieve more than **[4]** marks.

For identity, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- either the individual’s private and personal view of the self—this is sometimes referred to as the “*moi*”—or the view of an individual in the eyes of the social group
- group/collective identity, which may take the form of religious identity, ethnic identity, or national identity for example

- the identification with one's own culture and self-reflection of the way one is to live in a given socio-cultural environment
- considered as a source of both cohesion and conflict, and can alternately represent sameness or difference, be an imposition or a choice, singular or fractured, and static or fluid
- the tension between the idea of an innate, stable identity and the “postmodern” construction of identity as an amalgam of multiple incoherent and unstable selves
- “hybrid” identities, in which the idea of rigid group boundaries has given way to the sense of movement between multiple identities
- identities which may be invented, challenged, denied, or sustained for political and other purposes
- identity-based violence, xenophobia, multiculturalism, and social movements known as “identity politics,” in which groups advocate legal recognition of their identities.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples from the text about identity may include:

- as dynamic and subject to change, “whitening” is possible (e.g., the couple shot by police whitened when it became clear that they were both employed and parents)
- as the justification for how a person is treated by the police / institutions (e.g., absentee but White father / Black teenager)
- as likely to increase the risk of violence, including lethal violence used against particular individuals based on their assumed identity (e.g., couple shot by police)
- as a protection from arrest (e.g., in the case of police officers – with a professional identity of law officer - who might not be arrested even when they have committed crimes against innocent citizens).

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Possible examples of theory in relation to identity may include:

- Symbolic theories
- Structural theories
- Postmodern theories
- Critical Race Theory
- Agency and structure-centred approaches.

Any other relevant theory.

At HL, candidates need to use theory in the response in order to achieve more than **[4]** marks.

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, ethnographic material, and theory in your answer. **[10]**

Here, candidates are expected to show an ability to think about the text with emphasis on the methodological and theoretical perspectives of the ethnographer as the focus on which such comparisons should be established.

By “approaches to research” the question essentially refers to the research methods used by the anthropologist to gather data. However, as theory is required for level 5–6 and above, it is expected that candidates will also discuss theory with reference to approaches.

Possible comparative examples regarding approaches may include:

- participant observation
- informal/ethnographic interviews
- qualitative methods
- insider/outsider; emic/etic; local categories/analytical categories
- access to the field
- positionality
- field relationships; power dynamics
- representation.

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Possible examples of theory in relation to approaches may include:

- Interpretive or symbolic theories
- Structure-centered theories or agency-focused theories
- Engaged Anthropology
- Postmodern theories

Any other relevant theory.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented but in limited detail; relevance is only partially established. The response is not structured as a compare and contrast. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3–4	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented and although this is in limited detail, its relevance is established. The response is structured as a compare and contrast, but this is not balanced and lacks detail. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5–6	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is established and explained. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast; however, either comparison (similarities) or contrasts (differences) are explained in detail, but not both. Anthropological theory has been identified although this may not be relevant or the application is limited. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7–8	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and explained in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) being discussed in detail, although this is not balanced. Relevant anthropological theory has been identified and used as part of the analysis although there are some inconsistencies. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s), group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9–10	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and discussed in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) discussed critically. Relevant anthropological theory has been identified and used as part of the analysis. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of the ethnographic material is complete.

5. What does it mean to be a person? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material **and** examples from the passage.

[10]

This question requires candidates to develop an argument that is built on an understanding of the following “big anthropological question”: **What does it mean to be a person?** This response should develop discussion and analysis and should be supported by making reference to the passage and by relevant, detailed ethnographic material that gives evidence of the understanding of this big question in different cultural contexts. This big anthropological question should be the very backbone of the response.

In the development of their response, candidates may make reference to a number of ideas or propositions connected to the question. Listed below are some points that may appear in candidates’ responses. However, any other relevant lines of thought should be rewarded.

Possible issues to develop an argument may be:

There are many different ways that candidates can approach this question, and any valid discussions of the strengths and limitations of anthropological endeavour is acceptable. While it is not possible to predict how candidates will use any additional ethnographies, in relation to the passage they may focus on:

- different types of personhood
- materiality / physical aspects of the body
- relations of different types of person to/in official institutions
- nature of personhood as malleable (shifting) and context-dependent
- the cultural construction of the individual human being, the “self”
- person as a subject of rights, legal position, and status
- in relation to dignity and respect
- as the embodiment of set social relationships
- experiences of violence / exclusion of categories of persons in society.
- as a culturally and historically constituted notion and subject to change regarding what constitutes a “person” (as opposed to a non-person) / or types of persons (human, non-human) / or degrees of personhood (disabilities, impaired personhoods).

Other appropriate discussion and arguments should be credited.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is limited understanding of the big anthropological question. The response refers to ethnographic material; relevance to the question is superficial or not established. There is no reference to the passage. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3–4	There is partial understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents some ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question, but this lacks detail. There is no or limited reference to the passage. There is an attempt to analyse and interpret the ethnographic material in relation to the big anthropological question, but this lacks clarity and coherence. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5–6	There is an understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents a range of relevant ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is some reference to the passage. There is some analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage in relation to the big anthropological question but there is a limited or an undeveloped argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7–8	There is clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. The analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage support the development of an argument; however minor inconsistencies hinder from the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s), group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9–10	There is clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. The analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage in relation to the big anthropological question support the development of a reasoned argument; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder from the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is complete.

Section B

6. With reference to **either** stimulus A **or** stimulus B, **and** your own knowledge, discuss the defining features of anthropological ethics.

[10]

This question requires candidates to develop a response in which they demonstrate an understanding of the anthropological ethical issues raised by the stimulus material, and an ability to engage in a critical discussion applying their own knowledge.

If stimulus A is used:

This extract is based on an academic paper in which an anthropologist comments on ethical issues that arose post-fieldwork regarding the description, analysis, and publication of fieldwork. More specifically, it relates to the nature of the interaction between fieldworker and research participants agreed to before fieldwork began (prior consent etc.) and ethical issues raised in the decision to publish *against* the wishes of the research participants. Candidates are expected to relate the stimulus to the ethical issues that may arise while doing participant observation as a research method. The stimulus allows for a wide range of responses.

Candidates may develop a discussion based on:

- the ethical issues related to the methodological decisions taken by the ethnographer, for example, the decision to publish potentially harmful (in the view of the research participants) materials and the interpretation of the knowledge gained
- the nature of interaction between fieldworkers and research participants, for example: empathy, honesty, informed consent, right to privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, credits/references and necessary permissions, power asymmetries (studying up), positionality
- local cultural sensibilities, gender, age or other status differences between the researcher and participants
- any relevant principle of anthropological codes of ethics
- the dignity of the members of the group being studied
- the methodological and epistemological problems that stem from ethical decisions.

Other possible relevant lines of thought should be credited.

If stimulus B is used:

In 2022 the Horniman Museum's Board of Trustees (UK) agreed to return to the Nigerian Government 72 ethnographic objects forcibly removed from Benin City during the British military incursion in 1897.

In this case, it is likely that candidates will discuss anthropological ethics stressing the importance of the display and ownership of material objects in particular.

Candidates may develop a discussion based on:

- the nature of the storage and presentation of material objects looted from colonized countries
- issues of representation, translation and interpretation, positionality and reflexivity, epistemic violence, de-colonization of knowledge, selectivity of data
- the ethics and practice of the repatriation of objects collected as a consequence of colonial violence
- an analysis from any relevant principle of anthropological codes of ethics
- local and international cultural and political sensibilities between institutions housing material objects in Western museums and the countries the objects came from
- the moral dilemmas associated with the tensions between the responsibility of the anthropologist and the material objects of study, to the discipline and the broader public good, the regulatory bodies governing research, or the ethical principles of the community studied
- The issue of how objects are stored/valued in different contexts.

Other possible relevant lines of thought should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response identifies one or more ethical concerns but their relevance to anthropology is not established. There is little or no reference to the stimulus.
3–4	The response identifies one or more ethical concerns and partially establishes their relevance to anthropology. There is an attempt to engage with the stimulus, but understanding of the ethical issue presented is superficial or limited.
5–6	The response develops an analysis of one or more ethical concerns and establishes their relevance to anthropology. There is clear understanding of the ethical issues presented in the stimulus. An argument is presented that indicates the student’s perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice, but this is only partially developed.
7–8	The response discusses one or more ethical concerns, is anthropologically informed, and incorporates the student’s own knowledge of the defining features of anthropological ethics. There is clear and relevant engagement with the stimulus, and the ethical issues presented are explained demonstrating sound understanding. An argument is presented that indicates the student’s perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice; however, there are inconsistencies that hinder the overall strength of the argument.
9–10	The response critically discusses one or more ethical concerns, is anthropologically informed, and integrates the student’s own knowledge of the defining features of anthropological ethics. There is relevant and thorough engagement with the stimulus, and the ethical issue(s) presented are fully explained demonstrating excellent understanding. A reasoned argument is presented that indicates the student’s perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the overall strength of the argument.
