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Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Tripos, Part IA

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Monday 30 May 2016      09.00 – 12.00

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**Paper MES6**

**Introduction to the history and culture of the Middle East**

Answer **three** questions. All questions carry **equal** marks.

Answer **each** question in a **separate** answer booklet.

Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** answer booklet.

**STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS**

8 page answer booklet x 3

Rough Work Pad

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED FOR THIS EXAMINATION**

None

**You may not start to read the questions printed on the subsequent pages of this question paper until instructed to do so.**

Answer **three** of the following questions.

1. <sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut. <sup>2</sup> "I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. <sup>3</sup> I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. <sup>4</sup> For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. <sup>5</sup> I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, <sup>6</sup> so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. <sup>7</sup> I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things." (Isaiah 45:1-7)

Discuss this passage from the point of view of its conception of the Deity as well as the relationship between the Deity and Israel that it envisages.

2. Explain how the Jewish (and later Christian) Messianic idea is rooted in the history of the Davidic dynasty.

3. How does the Qur'an engage with earlier scriptures? How important is the notion of abrogation for explaining this relationship?

4. Was the construction of the Dome of the Rock the greatest achievement of the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik? Give reasons for your answer.

5. "Jahiz ... emerged from [a] wealthy, intellectually and scientifically curious culture; he emerged from the streets of Basra and Baghdad" (R. Stott). Discuss.

6. What are the factors that led to the flowering of Jewish cultural and economic life in Egypt of the eleventh and twelfth centuries?

7. To what extent can the Timurid period be considered as a continuation of Mongol rule in Iran and in what ways was it distinct from the Ilkhanid period?

8. Examine the shifting balance between secular and religious authority in the Safavid period and account for the evolution of clerical power in Iran.

**END OF PAPER**

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