

ORIENTAL STUDIES TRIPOS Part II

South Asian Studies

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Tuesday 2 June 2009      09.00 – 12.00

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**SA.21      SPECIAL SUBJECT IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY**

*Candidates should answer **THREE** questions.*

*All questions carry **equal** weight.*

*Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** Answer Book.*

**STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS**

*20 Page Answer Book x 1*

*Rough Work Pad*

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

1. Is it true to say that most efforts until now at establishing the 'hoary antiquity' of Hinduism through the archaeology of the Indus Civilisation are misdirected?
2. How have the colonialist and nationalist historians of India used the 'aryan invasion' to write their histories? By ignoring the 'aryan question' will we gain a better perspective on the early history of South Asia?
3. Do searches for 'Golden', 'Classical' or 'Dark' ages produce good histories? Justify your answer with examples from South Asian history.
4. Through one or more examples from South Asian history, explain the ways in which historical objects can accrue multiple identities and values.
5. 'Although many foreign accounts of "ancient India" have been judged as being more truthful than the indigenous narratives, we should assess their value with caution'. Discuss.
6. What, in your opinion, has been D.D. Kosambi's contribution to the writing of Indian history?
7. Through one or more examples from the history of South Asia, show the ways in which rigorous and innovative interpretations of textual and archaeological sources can allow for better histories.
8. Why do past schemes of periodisation need continuous re-assessments? Explain with relevant examples.
9. Explain the debate on the origins of the Buddha image and comment upon the significance of this debate for the history writing of South Asia.
10. **Either:** (a) In what ways do the histories of the 1857 rebellion inform us of the different trends in the writing of South Asian history?  
  
**Or:** (b) 'It is simpler, certainly far less controversial, to catalogue the course and extent of the 1857 rebellion, than to analyse its character' (Bose and Jalal). Discuss.
11. Evaluate the contribution of colonial ethnographic surveys to histories of South Asia.
12. Why should we review the histories of South Asia within their contemporary global as well as regional contexts? Explain with examples.

13. 'Myths of descent often serve to integrate diverse groups by providing common origins' (Romila Thapar). Discuss.
14. **Either:** (a) In what ways do histories of state formation inform us of the changing traditions of history writing on South Asia?
- Or:** (b) Describe some of the ways in which the state has been historicised within South Asia.
15. 'For all its magnificent antiquity and historical depth, contemporary India is unequivocally a creation of the modern world' (Sunil Khilnani). Discuss.
16. Can the history of Islam in South Asia be meaningfully studied as the history of an intrusive and imported religion?
17. 'The writing of history should not be a state-controlled enterprise.' Discuss.
18. The temple of Somnath was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026. Yet, those who claim that South Asian history offers evidence of Muslim rulers perpetuating a theology of iconoclasm are wrong. Why is this?
19. Provide an overview of the ways in which a particular period, region or dynasty of pre-colonial South Asia has been historicised over the last hundred and fifty years.
20. 'Ideologies change and so writing of history undergoes constant transformations' (Moses Finley). Discuss with examples from histories of South Asia.

**END OF PAPER**