

ORIENTAL STUDIES TRIPOS Part II

South Asian Studies

Tuesday 3 June 2008 13.30 – 16.30

SA.21 SPECIAL SUBJECT IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

*Candidates should answer **three** questions.*

*All questions are of **equal** value.*

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

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. How are the archaeological finds from 'Harappan' sites used for historicising a primordial Hindu India? Do such efforts offer us any valuable insights into the history of South Asia's multi-cultural traditions?
2. 'Ideologies change and so writing of history undergoes constant transformations' (Moses Finley). Discuss with examples from histories of South Asia.
3. Highlight some of the ways in which the 'Aryan Problem' manifests itself as a 'red herring' within the historical narratives of South Asia.
4. In what ways were D.D. Kosambi's historical analyses different from those of his predecessors?
5. Why is it important to adopt a regional and global focus in our approach to South Asian history?
6. **Either:** (a) Do searches for 'Golden', 'Classical' or 'Dark' ages produce good histories? Justify your answer with examples from South Asian history.

Or: (b) In what ways have the periodisation of an 'Indian' history into 'Hindu', 'Muslim' and 'British' led to flawed reconstructions of South Asia's past?
7. Explain the debate on the origins of the Buddha image, and comment upon the significance of this debate within the historiography of South Asia.
8. How has the 'Yakshi' figure from Didarganj accrued multiple identities and historical values?
9. **Either:** (a) Discuss the contributions of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ethnographic surveys to histories of South Asia.

Or: (b) Can we suggest that twentieth-century histories of South Asia have benefitted significantly from anthropological theories of state and religion?
10. Demonstrate the ways in which histories of South Asian art and architecture can inform us of shifting trends within historiography.
11. Give 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.
12. 'The spectre of foreign invasions and influences has been foundational for histories of India written during much of the twentieth century.' Do you agree?

13. **Either:** (a) 'Myths of descent often serve to integrate diverse groups by providing common origins' (Romila Thapar). Discuss.
- Or:** (b) How have notions of caste and race shaped historical narratives of India?
14. '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.
15. In what ways do the various histories of the 1857 uprisings inform us of debates and transformations within the wider historiography of South Asia?
16. Is Nationalism a 'derivative discourse' within South Asia? Discuss.
17. Explain, through one or more examples from the history of South Asia, the ways in which rigorous and innovative interpretations of textual and archaeological sources allow for better histories.
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. Can the history of Islam in South Asia be meaningfully studied as the history of an intrusive and imported religion?
20. Do you agree with the statement that 'the writing of histories should not, as a rule, be directly subsidised by the state' (Mohammad Habib)? Explain your answer.

END OF PAPER