

BANGLADESH STUDIES: HISTORY AND CULTURE OF BANGLADESH

Paper 7094/01

Paper 1

General comments

In this first year of the examination it was very encouraging to see a large number of strong scripts showing a sound grasp of historical concepts, such as causation, and an ability to select relevant factual information to support arguments being put forward in answers. Whilst it was inevitable that some flaws in examination technique were seen in the new examination, in general, performance was impressive.

Perhaps the most significant flaw in technique was the amount of time devoted to individual questions. Although only a few candidates failed to finish the paper, there was some evidence of rushing and occasions when the more highly-rewarded part (c) questions were explained less thoroughly than the lower-tariff questions set in part (b).

In this first year of the examination, it may prove of value to Centres to receive guidance on how to use time more effectively.

- Candidates are asked to **answer 3** questions in 1 hour and 30 minutes. They must, therefore, ensure that they divide their time equally between the questions. Two very full answers and one half-finished answer is almost certain to produce lower marks than 3 completed answers – even if the candidate could have written more on each question.
- Candidates need to pay particular attention to the mark allocation given after the questions. For example, in the compulsory **Question 1**, part (c) with twelve marks makes up almost 50% of the marks available for **Question 1** and therefore calls for a much more developed response than the eight-mark part (b). Equally in **Questions 2-4**, part (c) questions are worth the same marks as the two part (b) questions added together, thus giving an indication of the relative suggested length of answer required.
- There are several other ways in which candidates can save time and thus give themselves more scope for developing answers.
 - (i) On part (a) questions, there is no need for answers to be in full sentences. The Examiners are looking for no more than the letter of the correct alternative (in **Question 1**), or a brief (one word, if possible) answer in **Questions 2-4**.
 - (ii) In part b(i) of **Questions 2-4**, one mark is awarded for each explained fact up to a maximum of five marks. Full marks can, therefore, be gained by writing five sentences each explaining a single fact.
 - (iii) In part b(ii) of **Questions 2-4**, candidates are asked to provide reasons for an event. To reach the top level candidates have to explain more than one reason. In other words, full marks can be awarded if just two reasons are well explained. Candidates may like to explain, perhaps, three reasons, but an answer of around half a side stating '*The first reason for the Afghans establishing control over Bengal was.... A second reason for their success was...*' is both focused and showing good technique. If the reasons are valid and explained, then full marks would be awarded. Time has not been wasted giving unnecessary explanations of who the Afghans were or why they were trying to extend their control into Bengal. Instead, the candidate has gone straight into the answer.

- (iv) A similar direct approach is needed on part (c) questions. Here candidates are asked to compare the comparative importance or contributions of people or events. If we take this year's Question 1(c) as an example, there are lessons to be learned about how time might be saved. The question asked was about the relative importance of three figures in the cultural history of Bangladesh. More guidance will be given on how to answer this type of question later in the report, but it is worth noting here that considerable time can be saved by avoiding unnecessary biographical detail (dates of birth, early childhood etc. do not explain importance) and by beginning with a direct answer to the question. Answers which began *Kazi Nazrul Islam played a very important part in shaping the culture of Bangladesh because...* were unlikely to fall into the trap of wasting time by providing irrelevant factual information.

Individual Questions

Question 1

This question seemed to present few difficulties for candidates. Part (a) was very well known, with many candidates scoring full marks. Whilst a minority of candidates wrote at length on examples of folk culture and religious festivals and neglected to comment on their importance, most candidates scored well by explaining the vital role such events play in promoting national unity and providing opportunities for social interaction. As mentioned above, some candidates provided unnecessary biographical detail on part (c), but almost all candidates were able to explain the importance of the individuals. What only a minority were able to do, however, was to compare the relative importance of the three choices listed. To score full marks, candidates need to conclude by looking at the work of three individuals and explaining why what one achieved was more important in shaping the culture of Bangladesh than the others. For example, it could be argued that whilst Aloal made a significant contribution in songs and poetry and Kazi Nazrul Islam revolutionised the style of Bangla music and literature, Begum Rokeya was the most important because she paved the way for women to play a greater part in society. There is not necessarily a 'correct' choice in this type of question and candidates may even explain that the contributions were of equal importance. What is necessary to gain full marks, however, is for the comparison to be made.

Question 2

This question was less well answered. Part (a) caused few difficulties (though only a minority knew that Asoka established Maurya rule in north Bengal), but there was some confusion in part b(i). Some candidates did not write about the independent kingdoms (e.g. Vanga, Khadga and Deva), but instead wrote on the Pala and Sena dynasties. On reaching part (c) such candidates should have realised their error. The Examiners do not ask two extended questions on the same topic.

As in Question 1, part (c) was well answered, but only the very best commented on the relative importance of the kingdoms.

Question 3

Candidates seemed to know the Mughal period well and this question presented few difficulties. Knowledge of the Baro Bhuiyans was impressive, though the establishment of Mughal authority over Bengal was less known. Candidates knew significant amounts about the work of Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb, though it was sometimes surprising to see a list of negatives provided about Aurangzeb to prove his importance! Candidates seemed to find it easier to make comparisons on this question, with Akbar often selected for his role in extending Mughal control into Bengal.

Question 4

This was the least popular of the optional questions and tended to produce lower scores than Questions 2 and 3. One reason for this was the confusion on the part (b) questions. Part (a) proved very straightforward for the candidates, but a number of them did not heed the dates given in Question b(i). What Examiners hoped to see was an account of events in Bengal from, perhaps, the time of the Faraizi Movement, through the War of Independence to early 1905. Some candidates wrote on a much earlier period. In the same way, part b(ii), on the reasons for the partition of Bengal, often saw a detailed explanation on why partition was reversed. This was not rewardable. Part (c) produced better answers, though the communal tension at the time was less well known.

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Paper 2

General comments

This was the first year of examination of this syllabus, and teachers and candidates are to be commended for their thorough preparation, as well as their courage and ability to tackle a new subject in the curriculum. The questions answered were generally of a good standard exhibiting a satisfactory all-round knowledge.

The main downfall in some questions was a lack of in-depth knowledge. This was evidenced by the tendency of some candidates to write in lists and bullet points with no explanation given.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was quite a popular question with it making up 19% of all questions answered.

- (a) (i) There were many accurate descriptions of the causes of the summer monsoons, some including sketch maps to illustrate the candidates' text. Answers not worthy of full credit just referred to winds moving from high pressure to low pressure with no explanation of why or where there were areas of high and low pressure. The weaker candidates described the monsoon rains but did not explain how they had originated.
- (ii) The stronger candidates answered this part of the question in great detail and scored highly. Unfortunately, there was a tendency for some to write a long list of effects with no description – e.g. houses destroyed, crops destroyed, roads destroyed, animals killed, people killed. The higher scoring candidates would relate the effect of flooding to the lives of the people – e.g. loss of crops therefore a loss of earnings or a lack of food; houses destroyed and so the people were homeless. The question asked for the effects on the lives of the people and not how the floods affected the economy or GDP.
- (b) Again, this part was quite well answered but some candidates just wrote 'earthquakes' or 'global warming' without relating these comments to flooding.
- (c) (i) There was a common misunderstanding of measures used to control flooding with descriptions of measures taken to reduce the effect of floods on the people. For example, many wrote about improved weather forecasts and warning systems so that evacuation could be organised. However, the candidates usually also described flood control measures, often very well.
- (ii) This proved the most difficult part of the question. The main point of this question (i.e. the effectiveness of the flood control measures) was often missed and candidates tended to repeat the answers to (c)(i) without giving any indication of effectiveness. The expense of the measures was usually referred to and the difficulties this posed for the government. But there were many vague answers like 'not effective' without giving an explanation as to why they were not effective.

Question 2

This was the second most popular question making up 22% of all questions answered.

- (a) (i) Candidates found it difficult to explain 'natural resources' without using those same words and then proceeded to mention renewable and non-renewable.
- (ii) 'Sustainable development' was very well explained, and candidates often scored 3 of the 4 marks available for part (a).
- (b) (i) The distribution of the Sunderbans was very well understood and answered correctly.
- (ii) The question was related to the forests, as the map (Figure 2) and the stem of the question indicated. Alongside some good descriptions of the trees, there were many descriptions about the wildlife found in the area.
- (c) There were some excellent answers to this question. Many wasted time, and did not score marks, by extending the question too far and described the importance of the forests to the environment and wildlife. The key word here was 'people' and the importance of the forests to them. There was a tendency for some candidates to just produce a list of the uses and not to explain their importance.
- (d) (i) This was a well-answered question with knowledge of why the population increase was causing the deforestation.
- (ii) A wide knowledge of the measures taken to decrease deforestation was evident in the answers. Where the majority failed was in ascertaining the effectiveness of such measures. Once again, vague and unsubstantiated remarks – e.g. 'effective' – spoil the last part of the question.

Question 3

This was the least popular and lowest scoring of the questions. It represented only 9% of all questions answered.

- (a) (i) The districts for wheat growing were not well known.
- (ii) Despite the quote in Figure 3 giving some hints on the time of year that wheat was grown, very few answers were correct and tended to describe the rainfall.
- (iii) This was generally a well-answered part of the question. The weaker answers just tended to say 'rich soil' or 'some rainfall'.
- (b) (i) The inputs of the Green Revolution were well known but the weakness came in the explanation of how they had led to an increase in yields. Examples of HYV seeds and their properties, the minerals added to the soil by fertilisers, how machines cut down on the loss of grains, the prevention of disease or pest infestation by the use of chemicals were needed to gain higher marks. This approach would fulfil the key command word 'explain'.
- (ii) Despite a good knowledge of the benefits of the Green Revolution, there was very little on the problems it could cause. Most knew about the pollution of rivers caused by the chemicals but missed comments on unemployment because of the use of machinery, the debt caused by the expensive inputs.
- (c) (i) There appeared to be an equal number choosing sugar cane and jute, both of which were answered well.
- (ii) A good knowledge was exhibited of the importance of these two cash crops to Bangladesh's economy, particularly their value as an export commodity.

Question 4

This was a popular question, making up 20% of all questions answered.

- (a) (i) Many good examples of the informal sector were given to this question.
- (ii) This section often earned full marks as the candidates wrote extensively on the characteristics of the informal sector.
- (iii) Well-balanced answers, addressing the importance of the informal sector to both the people and the economy, were a strong feature of the answers to this question.
- (b) This question appeared to have been misinterpreted by some candidates. Answers included descriptions of how to overcome the obstacles to industrialisation (e.g. descriptions of how to improve the literacy rate) rather than explaining the obstacles that existed (e.g. the lack of skilled labour).
- (c) Good answers relating to the various types of loans (from long-term to micro-credit) were given but there was very little on ways other than financial help. Comments could have been made on, for example, technical assistance, suitable projects suggested, payments for imports and exports, to give a more balanced answer.

Question 5

This was by far the most popular question, with it making up 30% of all questions answered.

- (a) (i) Overall, there were good descriptions of the trends in the death rate. However, some candidates misread the question and described the birth rate trends. There were no marks given for those answers that merely quoted the figures for each year or section as this did not describe the trends.
- (ii) This part of the question was usually well answered, with health, nutrition and hygiene all well explained.
- (iii) The vast majority could see that the highest decrease was between 1996 and 1997. Some, however, chose a two-year gap (i.e. 1996 and 1998).
- (iv) The answers were generally on the right lines but some were lacking in detail – e.g. an explanation of how education or the empowerment of women led to a decrease in birth rates.
- (v) The majority of candidates worked out the correct calculation.
- (b) (i) The explanation of international migration always scored a mark. Unfortunately, the vast majority of candidates did not refer to villages/countryside and towns/cities but only used the phraseology of the question – i.e. rural and urban areas.
- (ii) A wide range of reasons were given for the causes of migration. Some candidates described the pull and push factors and thus often repeated themselves unnecessarily. Only one mark was given for one concept, the converse of that was not given another mark. Once again, the idea of just a list of reasons, with no detail, was given by the weaker candidates.
- (iii) Well balanced answers were usually given, describing both the benefits to the area and the problems caused.