

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE O LEVEL

GCE O LEVEL BANGLADESH STUDIES (7038)

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Bangladesh Studies
January 2007 Paper 1

The History and Culture of Bangladesh

Principal Examiner's Report

General Comments

A wide range of questions was attempted by students and it was encouraging to see well informed answers to all sections. However, the most popular sections were 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Candidates are strongly advised that they should pay more attention to the precise wording of the question before beginning their answers. Regrettably, too many responses were incorrectly focused because candidates wrote generally about the topic rather than considering the demands of the question. The main reason for this was that candidates had obviously learned answers by rote and were then unable to adapt them to the demands of the questions.

Specific Comments

Section 1

There were several good responses to Q1 and one that was outstanding. The good responses tended to describe the achievements of the Palas, but the best one focused on changes to Bengal which was the precise demand of the question. Answers to Q2 were poor, with just a few random comments on Sufis. One candidate wrote at length about Bakhtiar Khalji. This was irrelevant.

Section 2

In Q3, candidates knew a considerable amount about Murshid Quli Khan but usually offered nothing about the other bullet points or on any other reasons for the decline of Mughal power. This resulted in limited marks. Q4 usually attracted learnt responses about Shaista Khan which focused on military successes. Credit could only be given if answers focused on the issues listed in the question.

Section 3

Answers to Q5 showed good understanding of the Permanent Settlement and the role of Lord Cornwallis. There were no answers to Q6.

Section 4

There were several excellent answers to Q7, both of which were able to explain the inter-relationship of the bullet points. This is required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded. There were no answers to Q8.

Section 5

Q9 was very popular, but all too often answers focused on events leading up to the Lahore Conference and failed to explain how and why the Conference changed relations between East and West Pakistan. There were, however, several exemplary answers which explained

that the Six Points threatened the break up of Pakistan as it then existed. No credit was given for simply listing the Six Points. Q10 attracted some sound responses. Candidates were able to explain the bullet points and give details of the Agartala Case.

Section 6

Q11 was the most popular on the paper and most candidates were able to offer relevant comments. However, there were also often much irrelevant coverage of events before the war, including detailed accounts of 1970-71, which were not creditworthy. The best answers focused on the key factors in the war from March to December 1971. Q12 attracted only one response which was poorly informed.

Section 7

This was a popular section and produced some encouragingly well informed and well written answers. In Q13, candidates showed good understanding of the role of Bangladesh in the United Nations and the part that it has played in organisations for developing countries. In Q14, there were some excellent comments on education and trade. In particular, there were well written explanations of the attempts by successive governments to develop education for girls.

Section 8

Q15 only attracted one very poor answer, but Q16 was very popular. Most candidates concentrated on the Awami League and Student Protests, but often allowed their answers to become unfocused by writing generally about the Language Movement. Answers on Begum Sufia Kamal usually described her life and work rather than her contribution to the Language Movement.

Bangladesh Studies
January 2007 Paper 2

The Land, People and Economy of Bangladesh

Principal Examiner's Report

Although the size of the candidature for this examination remains small, a significant number of entrants coped well with the demands of the paper. But the downside of a polarised overall performance was evident in the number of seemingly ill-prepared candidates. It is also worth noting that the optional questions on this paper received a fairly even patronage.

Section A

Q.1, the compulsory question, seeks to test the candidate's more general knowledge of Bangladesh. For the first time, a topographic map was included as the main resource. Candidates were familiar with the term 'upazila' in (a)(i), but few attempted to measure its length. In (iii), too many were content to say 'because it contains the district HQ', rather than focusing on the settlement's central location and accessibility. Guesswork was evident in (b)(i), but this was balanced by sound work in (ii) and (iii). Part (c)(i) presented no problems, but in (ii) most candidates compared Dhaka and Chittagong as cities, NOT as divisions.

Section B

A poor knowledge and understanding of Bangladesh's weather and climate was demonstrated in Q.2(a) and (b), but candidates recovered rather in (c). The work in response to Q.3 was significantly better. In (a)(ii) it was interesting that candidates focused on global warming and soil erosion; few showed any awareness of the landslide hazard. There were some good responses to both (b) and (c). However, in the latter part, it should be noted that a handful of candidates did not understand the meaning of 'aquaculture'.

Section C

In Q.4(a)(i), not many used the term 'emigrant' and still fewer noted the temporary status of this migrant. In (ii) there was some confusion between 'push' and 'pull' factors. Candidates coped quite well with (iii). A recurrent weakness in (b)(i) was to think of urbanisation as solely rural-to-urban migration, and to ignore the economic, social and environmental aspects of the process. Likewise in (ii), candidates continued to write about rural-to-urban migration rather than causes such as industrialisation, development and a rising demand for services. The work in (c) was better, but some candidates failed to note the question's restriction to 'urban' problems. In Q.5(a)(i) all candidates noted the general decline in birth rates, but few pointed out the rise between 1950 and 1970. Parts (ii) and (iii) produced some good responses, and candidates had no difficulty in coming up with four consequences in (b). There were some strong explanations in (c), with the majority of candidates focusing on wealth and gender inequalities.

Section D

The responses to Q.6(a) were mainly satisfactory and showed a sound grasp of what the tertiary sector is all about. Even more impressive was the general awareness of the informal sector shown in (b). In (c), possible measures included literacy, per capita GDP and the Human Development Index, and in general were quite well justified. Similarly, in Q.7, candidates coped well with the three parts of (a). An insecure grasp of the concept of 'sustainability' was evident in many of the answers to (b)(ii), but candidates compensated

in (c) and were able to demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of cottage industries.

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