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Oxford Cambridge and RSA

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A2 GCE HISTORY B

F985/01 Historical Controversies – British History

Candidates answer on the Answer Booklet.

OCR supplied materials:

- 12 page Answer Booklet (OCR 12)
(sent with general stationery)

Other materials required:

None

Duration: 3 hours



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Write your name, centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the Answer Booklet. Please write clearly and in capital letters.
- Use black ink.
- Answer **both sub-questions** from **one** Study Topic.
- Read each question carefully. Make sure you know what you have to do before starting your answer.
- Do **not** write in the bar codes.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.
- The total number of marks for this paper is **60**.
- This paper contains questions on the following four Study Topics:
 - The Debate over the Impact of the Norman Conquest, 1066–1216 (page 2)
 - The Debate over Britain's 17th Century Crises, 1629–1689 (page 3)
 - Different Interpretations of British Imperialism c.1850–c.1950 (page 4)
 - The Debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s (page 5)
- You should write in continuous prose and are reminded of the need for clear and accurate writing, including structure of argument, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The time permitted allows for reading the extract in the one Study Topic you have studied.
- In answering these questions, you are expected to use your knowledge of the topic to help you understand and interpret the extract as well as to inform your answers.
- **You may refer to your class notes and textbooks during the examination.**
- This document consists of **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Answer **both sub-questions** from **one** Study Topic.

1 The Debate over the Impact of the Norman Conquest, 1066-1216

Read the following extract about the impact of the Norman Conquest and then answer the questions that follow.

The administrative units of the Roman world, neatly arranged and clearly defined, had been submerged in the Dark Ages by haphazard groupings of private family estates which respected neither ancient frontiers nor geographical barriers. Real states almost disappeared from western Europe. Boundaries were well nigh impossible to define. The fiefs of the Norman and Angevin kings of England sprawled uncertainly across western France; even the kingdom of England, which developed many features of a coherent unit, was blurred at the edges; and within the Norman and Angevin 'empires' there was a confused jumble of fiefs. Yet in 1216, as in 1042, the kingdom of England was a unit in the contemporary sense; and in 1216 it was larger than it had been at the beginning. The king of Scots had been pushed back beyond the Tweed; most of Wales had been added; and part of Ireland had been conquered; while all the rulers in the British Isles acknowledged the overlordship of the English king.

But even in 1216 it might easily have been imagined that at some moment a king of Scots might have faced a king of France across the River Trent. Unity was still lacking. The England known to the kings was only Wessex and Mercia, which John circled so carefully, the area bound by trade to Normandy, Flanders and Aquitaine. Beyond were the more loosely attached members, like the earldom of Chester and the honour of Lancaster; then the border regions, disputed by almost autonomous barons with Anglo-Celtic princes. Dover was more closely connected with Boulogne, London with Rouen, Southampton with Bordeaux and Bristol with Dublin than any one of them with York or Carlisle.

In 1042 there were Norwegian, Danish, Anglo-Norman and West Saxon claimants to the English throne. In 1216 an Angevin and a Frenchman were disputing the crown. For two centuries the kingdom of England had been ruled by men of foreign race who had not regarded the island as their real home. Throughout this period most of the lay and ecclesiastical aristocracy had been of foreign extraction and habits. At no time had the kings pursued a policy based on purely insular considerations. The interests of Denmark, Normandy, Anjou or Aquitaine had always come first.

Yet from the beginning to the end the kingdom was the richest and most important unit in the continental groupings of which it formed part; and by 1216 it is apparent that the weight of purely English interests was beginning to tell again. Moreover, although Frankish feudalism had been imported wholesale in the years after 1066, so that England became the most perfectly feudal kingdom in the West, particular characteristics due to the power of the crown and local peculiarities resulting from the influence of native institutions had always been apparent.

The most striking feature of the whole period is, undoubtedly, the unusual power of the crown. Hence an ambitious and energetic king was inevitably a tyrant. The arbitrary power of the king was probably at its greatest under the two sons of the Conqueror. Edward the Confessor had been constrained by local magnates stronger than he; William the Bastard had had to act with care. And Richard and John, despite their authoritarian natures, were limited by a routine which their father had confirmed.

- (a) What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation, approaches and methods of the historian? Refer to the extract and your own knowledge to explain your answer. **[30]**
- (b) In their work on the impact of the Norman Conquest, some historians have focused on changes introduced from Normandy after 1066. Explain how this approach has added to our understanding of the impact of the Norman Conquest. Has this approach any disadvantages or shortcomings? **[30]**

2 The Debate over Britain's 17th Century Crises, 1629-1689

Read the following extract about Britain's 17th century crises and then answer the questions that follow.

Ship money, like so many other aspects of Charles I's policy of centralization, was new and thus an affront to popular as well as elite notions of law and good rule. In 1638 the Somerset grand jury complained of 'the great and heavy taxations by new invented ways upon the county'. This defence of local rights and interests was only one aspect of a general defence of ancient custom. Long usage, custom, traditional rights: the common people had their own version of the 'ancient constitution' to which their superiors in Parliament were so constantly appealing. The connection between local and national liberties was becoming all too clear. The clique of courtiers who had ridden roughshod over the rights of the western foresters, was the same clique that was advising Charles I to violate the country's liberties in such matters as arbitrary imprisonment and Ship Money. Whether it was local or national liberties that were in question, the instinctive reaction was the same: the appeal to ancient law. The rhetoric of MPs about the ancient rights and liberties of Englishmen was thus directly echoed by their inferiors.

Gentlemen like Sir Richard Grosvenor assumed that the middling sort shared the same attachment as the gentry to the laws, the Protestant religion, and the rightful place of Parliament in the constitution. The gentry who in county after county returned the same answer to the request for the 'Free Gift' of 1626 – that they would assist the King only in 'a parliamentary way' – were not speaking only for themselves. When in 1636 the Beckington churchwardens were told to rail in their communion table as an altar, they complained to Bishop Piers that: 'they thought they could not answer it to a Parliament'.

There was then, a right and proper way of doing things, and there was a wrong, and hence tyrannical way. How far down the social scale this rough consensus went is less clear. But the behaviour of the poor in grain and enclosure riots suggests such people did indeed have their own notions of political right and wrong. These notions were often expressed in nostalgic yearnings for a vanished past, as in the opinion of the Essex labourer that 'it was a merry England when there was better government'.

By these standards early Stuart government was found wanting. The very word 'courtier' was becoming a term of abuse. Court corruption and extravagance became increasingly conspicuous. A general dislike of the Court and its policies was present in all parts of England, and we do not need to involve regional cultural differences to explain it. The full extent of 'Country' suspicions that Charles I's Court was deeply infected with popery, and that a connection existed between this fact and the prevailing threat to English liberties, was to be strikingly apparent in 1640. The speed with which these suspicions then erupted suggests how far they had been spreading subterraneously during the previous decade. The popular religious mood of the 1630s was conservative, and there was little sign of any widespread demand for a radical reconstruction. All that most people seem to have wanted was the reversal of Arminian innovations.

All this was common to the whole kingdom, and makes it easier to understand the virtually unanimous demand for reformation of both church and state of 1640. The unanimity, however, while conspicuous in political matters, was less profound in matters of religion. So when the political atmosphere was transformed by the meeting of Parliament in 1640 there was a surface unity among all sorts of Englishmen. But religious differences of long standing ensured that the potential for future strife still existed.

- (a) What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation, approaches and methods of the historian? Refer to the extract and your knowledge to explain your answer. **[30]**
- (b) In their work on Britain's seventeenth-century crises some historians have focused on a 'Three Kingdoms' approach. Explain how this approach has contributed to our understanding of Britain's seventeenth-century crises. Has this approach any disadvantages or shortcomings? **[30]**

3 Different Interpretations of British Imperialism c. 1850-c.1950

Read the following extract about British imperialism and then answer the questions that follow.

Our understanding of decolonisation can be usefully deepened by reference to the opinions of the officials. Civil servants were uniquely well placed by their experience and access to information to grasp the dynamics of what was happening, at least in terms of the immediate reasons and context for decisions taken. The reasons they gave for the speeding up of the process were always about external influences, usually nationalist, but also, in later phases, international pressure. Saville Garner believed that the British empire came to an end 'because other people's empires were crumbling all around'.

In the final analysis, centre and periphery were equally important. The metropolitan side, with the decision-making power, was the one which holds the explanatory key. Colonies which demanded self-government usually got it, but we cannot say that they thereby determined the outcome. The really significant historical question to ask is how the imperial power had got psychologically to the point where it was prepared to open the door to self-rule when nationalist leaders knocked and asked. By the mid-1950s, Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on a number of occasions was told privately by colonial politicians not to take their public requests too seriously; they had, they explained, to make demands in order to keep their local support, but they realised that they needed more time and to be better prepared.

The Labour government theory of the late 1940s was that prestige would be more likely to accrue by timely transfers of power to moderate nationalists; Attlee and his ministers accepted the Colonial Office proposition that 'the transfer of power is not a sign of weakness, but it is, in fact, a sign and source of strength'. In any case they did not want to be found in the last colonial ditch, vilified internationally along with the bad guys like the Portuguese. Britain did not take the initiative in the decolonisation of Africa. Great power rivalry - in the shape of the Cold War and a competition for international respectability - induced the British twentieth-century scramble to get out of Africa.

The British empire flourished and declined in a particular set of international contexts. The way it operated depended not only on favourable external and geopolitical circumstances, but also on the feasibility of imperial control, in terms both of the acquiescence of peoples ruled, and of the ability to match available resources to the maintenance and defence of a far-flung system. All these preconditions were under threat in the period after 1918. Although the empire was impressively mobilised on behalf of the British war effort after 1939, the overall trend towards an increasingly unmanageable and dysfunctional imperial system was not reversed. What happened in the international sphere after the Second World War gradually but decisively reinforced the sense that a global empire was not only beyond Britain's means, but was also threatening its prestige and reputation, and becoming a liability.

The Cold War determined the main outlines of British policy. Because of it, Britain had to satisfy the nationalists, side with the USA, strengthen the Commonwealth and square the United Nations. Because of it, the whole thrust of decolonisation was to proceed in such a way as to encourage the emergence of pro-Western nationalist states. What the British people really cared about in the twenty years after the end of the Second World War was not the future of the empire, but how to avert the probability of what Hugh Dalton called 'the Third World War'. The words of Clement Attlee have an insistent resonance: 'An attempt to maintain the old colonialism would, I am sure, have immensely aided communism.'

- (a) What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation, approaches and methods of the historian? Refer to the extract and your knowledge to explain your answer. **[30]**
- (b) In their work on British imperialism some historians have focused on the concept of 'new imperialism'. Explain how this approach has contributed to our understanding of British imperialism. Has this approach any disadvantages or shortcomings? **[30]**

4 The Debate over British Appeasement in the 1930s

Read the following extract about appeasement and then answer the questions that follow.

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- (a) What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation, approaches and methods of the historian? Refer to the extract and your knowledge to explain your answer. **[30]**
- (b) In their work on British appeasement some historians have focused on public opinion in Britain at the time. Explain how this approach has contributed to our understanding of appeasement. Has this approach any disadvantages or shortcomings? **[30]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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