



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

HISTORY APTITUDE TEST

November 2022

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.

A separate 8-page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

Read the instructions on the answer booklet and complete the information requested in the spaces provided. Please write very clearly in black or dark blue pen.

Applicants for:

- **History**
- **Ancient and Modern History**
- **History and English**
- **History and Modern Languages**
- **History and Politics**
- **History and Economics**

You have **one hour** for this test. We recommend that you read the paper more than once before beginning to write your answers. Spend about a third of your time on reading, thinking and planning, and the rest of the time writing.

If you find the text difficult and unfamiliar, don't worry: the exercise is intended to be challenging, but we hope you will also find it thought-provoking. There is no 'right' answer to the question: you will be judged on the quality of your argument, how clearly you make it and how effectively you support it. You should use your own words in answering the question.

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NOTE: This test consists of one question based on a passage from a primary source. You do not need to know anything about the author of the passage or the context in which it was written beyond the information given here to answer the question. Candidates will not be rewarded for making use of outside knowledge.

Extract from the Tarikh-i Barangavi (1914)

This text is by a Tatar Muslim religious teacher (imam or mullah) called Ahmad Hafiz al-Din Barangavi, from a town called Baranga, north of Kazan in what is now the Russian Federation. Originally written in Turkic, this portion of the text describes the summer of 1905 which he spent among the Qazaqs, a nomadic, Turkic-speaking people, near Bukhara in what is today Uzbekistan. Ahmad Hafiz al-Din Barangavi was a student of Islamic law in Bukhara at the time. Although he spoke a very similar language to the Qazaqs, their nomadic way of life was new to him.

Question: What does this text tell us about religion, culture, education and everyday life among the Qazaqs?

“The next day we went there with five or six horses and camels. So that sand would not enter their mouths, the Qazaqs wrapped French scarves over their mouths, and after an hour we reached that place. Those [Qazaqs] who were in fact rich had felt *yurts* [a type of round tent on a wooden frame] and had good and large herds of sheep and camels. The community was blessed, that is, a lot of people could be seen. We entered the *yurt* our host indicated. However, the owner of the household we entered was also involved in the fuel business and often went to Bukhara. He had a young wife there and a beautiful daughter.

We rested and drank tea. It was time for the afternoon prayer. The Qazaqs spread one or two canvas cloths and stood up to pray. We performed the ablutions and joined them. The *imam* [religious teacher] came out of a felt yurt that was the school (*maktab*) and met with us. This person, Imam Afandi, was from among the Qazaqs’ authoritative men and had studied in Bukhara [...]. It was a patient, humble and decent assembly. We performed the prayer, and the litany was begun. It finished after an hour or so, and in the Bukharan fashion there was bread and raisins, and then they brought *pilaf* [a dish made with rice and meat]. After that we came to the assembly. As for that, it was a Qazaq-style feast. Before the food [came] the owner of the house began to speak. ‘I convened this assembly to perform the marriage ceremony [to marry] my daughter so-and so, to so and-so, the son of so-and-so. However, my daughter is pregnant. Her groom has declared he willingly accepts responsibility. Here is his father.’ And he added this after the *imam*’s prayer. After a pause, the *mullah* said, ‘I cannot perform the marriage ritual for a pregnant woman.’ The host and other people all said, ‘of course you will perform it. Otherwise will we deprive the child of his ancestry? Numerous voices were raised [saying this]. However, some of the Qazaqs were saying, ‘Wait, brother, let’s ask for a legal opinion on this matter from these students.’ When we had said we agreed, they asked us, ‘Is it incorrect to

perform the marriage ritual for a pregnant woman?' [...] Imam Afandi looked at me. I said, 'Although the marriage ceremony is permitted as long as the birth has not taken place, the consummation is not permitted.' Imam Afandi said, 'The marriage ceremony is all right, they won't wait until the [wedding] night for its consummation.'

After that the ceremony was performed, and they paid a few Bukharan coins. After the prayer sheep's heads, intestines, and lungs were set out in large bowls, and they brought soup, and one knife. Each person took one slice, and slicing with the knife in their belts, began to eat. I started to eat too. My companion took a slice of meat, and he put it in my mouth.

When I looked, everyone was doing it the same way, feeding each other. If you looked, it seemed clownish. My companion said, 'Your honour, sitting and being hosted by the Qazaqs is always very much like this.' We left the assembly and Imam Afandi brought us into the school [*yurt*]. The *imam* had his own felt *yurt* that was also called the mosque. After that his 15-year-old daughter brought tea, and we sat down and started to drink it. Imam Afandi said, 'Stay with us as guests for a week. I will accompany you myself.' There was no concealment among Qazaq women and girls. They spoke openly and laughed. However the *imam's* wife, while she did not conceal herself, did not speak after having greeted us.

That night two young Qazaq fellows came. They went from camp to camp performing songs. They strummed and played *dombras* [a type of stringed instrument] in their hands and began singing songs. They were also preaching, and everyone, young and old, men and women, assembled to observe and hear the sermon. We also went to listen. It was a moonlit night. However, it was understood that among the young men and the girls in the isolated empty places there were various secrets. The next day there were horse races. First of all they assembled and bought a ram. They cut its head off and without gutting it, all of the young men mounted their horses, and they were tearing this ram from each other's hands. A snow-white lather fell from the horses. They did this for five or six hours. [...]

Our time there was very pleasant. Every day we drank *kumiss* [fermented mare's milk] and we gained weight, however we also became quite afflicted with lice. They even gathered in the folds of [our] trousers. Every day during afternoon prayers there would be a fierce sandstorm. At that time everyone would disappear and no one would go out. At that time Imam Afandi would give lessons twice a day every day to 20 or 30 children. Since the *yurt* where we stayed was the school, 15- or 16-year-old girls would assemble there. The lessons would start after eight o'clock in the morning until the advent of the sandstorm. The later lesson would be given from when people woke up until the afternoon prayer. Imam Afandi gave lessons very diligently. Although he did not teach syllables, grammar was according to the new method. He sat in one place cross-legged, holding a whip in his hand. Putting the children in a circle, they were arranged in pairs, and they recited with the books and Qur'ans in their hands."

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