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MHI-103

Historiography and Research Method

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& Various Central, State & Other Open Universities

By: Gaurav Sahni



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**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
Papers**

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Sample
QUESTION PAPER - 1

(Solved)

**HISTORIOGRAPHY AND
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Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Note: Answer any five of the following questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. What are the main trends in the Marxist historiography in the West? Discuss with reference to some of the important Marxist historians.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 40, Q. No. 3.

Q. 2. What were the aims of historians discussed for writing history in Greek and Roman Traditions?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 3, Q. No. 2.

Q. 3. Discuss the postmodernist views on history. On what grounds these have been criticized.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 60, Q. No. 4.

Q. 4. Why have women been generally absent in the traditional historiography?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-21, Page No. 130, Q. No. 3.

Q. 5. Discuss the differences between the colonial and nationalist historiography.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 93, Q. No. 1.

Q. 6. Discuss the changing concept of time during the middle ages in the west. How did it influence the writing of history?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 14, Q. No. 1.

Q. 7. How did the Cambridge School emerge? Discuss the basic constituents of its interpretation of Indian history.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 111, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. Write a detailed note on the historical writings on Indian religion and culture.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-24, Page No. 150, Q. No. 2.

Q. 9. Discuss the connection between truthfulness and historians' ethics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-32, Page No. 193, Q. No. 1.

Q. 10. Write short notes on any two of the following:

(a) Persian Historiography.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 18, 'Persian Historiography'.

(b) Social and Intellectual Context.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 43, 'Social and Intellectual Context'.

(c) Race and Science.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 133, 'Race and Science'.

(d) Cultural Relativism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-31, Page No. 189, Q. No. 4 (a).



Sample
QUESTION PAPER - 2

(Solved)

**HISTORIOGRAPHY AND
RESEARCH METHOD**

MHI-103

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Note: Answer any five of the following questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. How did Confucianism influence the writing history in ancient China?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 8, Q. No. 1.

Q. 2. Do you think that oral history can come under the category of proper history? Give your answer with example.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 51, Q. No. 2.

Q. 3. Discuss the views of various authors on the economic history of pre-colonial India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-26, Page No. 158, Q. No. 1.

Q. 4. Discuss the method followed in history for establishing the causality and explaining the occurrence of an event.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-30, Page No. 183, Q. No. 3.

Q. 5. Discuss the tradition of Puranic genealogies.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 75, Q. No. 2.

Q. 6. How did the idea of race originate in India?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 137, Q. No. 3.

Q. 7. Who was Leopold von Ranke? Discuss his views on history.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 25, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. What is History from Below? Discuss its beginning and growth.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 118, Q. No. 1.

Q. 9. Write a note on the conflicting views on Indian Renaissance.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 107, Q. No. 3.

Q. 10. Write short notes on any two of the following:

(a) Christian Historiography.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 12, 'Christian Historiography'.

(b) Environmental History-Writing in India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 63, 'Environmental History-Writing in India'.

(c) Labour History.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-23, Page No. 141, 'Labour History'.

(d) Truthfulness and Historians Ethics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-32, Page No. 193, Q. No. 1.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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HISTORIOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH METHOD

Greek and Roman Traditions

1

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of history-writing was started in the ancient Greece and the first known author who used the term 'history' was Herodotus. The works of Herodotus, regarded as the father of history, and his successors have been considered as the measuring yardsticks for other historical works. And the features of their works are important for understanding history-writing.

In this chapter, we will discuss about some historians from ancient Greece and Rome, including their objectives, sources, style and perspectives.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

THE CONTEXTS OF HISTORY-WRITING

Understanding the context of history-writing is important for readers as well as historians to know the circumstances and basis of a historical work. And as it is discussed in the previous chapters, the historical account is the past and the present of a writer. To understand this, some historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, who lived in 5th century BC, and Livy and Tacitus, who lived during the Augustan era of the Roman Empire in 1st century BC can be taken for study. The 5th century BC is regarded as a classical period of Greece, while the Augustan era is termed as golden period of Roman Empire.

These historians wrote many things on political and cultural fields. These historians not only justify or eulogise the contemporary political changes but they also were critical of their contemporary political situations.

Herodotus, born in a Greek colony, had travelled most parts of the West Asia including Palestine and Babylon and North Africa and Egypt. He has deep regard for Athens. And for that reason, he wrote high on the victory of Greece over Persians and he viewed it as war between civilisation and barbarism.

Thucydides was a general and fought for Athens in Peloponnesian War against Sparta, which last for about 30 years. But he was exiled from Athens to other hostile state after he failed as a general. In his writing, Thucydides narrated vividly about the war and the loopholes in that.

The works of Herodotus and Thucydides were rich in details but their focus was extremely narrow. That was also the age of philosophers such as Socrates and playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The works of the historians do not, however, reflect all these cultural developments.

Livy and Tacitus narrated their account of the history within the context of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire, which spanned parts of three continents—Asia, Europe and Africa—was a unique institution and lasted for nearly five centuries. It was also known for its ruling elite.

Livy, a contemporary of Augustus, was not a member of the ruling elite and not directly associated with politics, wrote a monumental history of Rome, in 142 books. More than 100 of them were lost and some survive only in summaries written by later authors. His writing traced the history of Rome from its legendary origin to 9th century B.C.

Tacitus, who was closely associated with the imperial administration, gave an account of the concerns of the administrative/military elite, the questions of the successions and the role of the army in political affairs. Although he was an insider, he was often critical of the imperial policies.

The works of these historians were shaped by their contemporary political situation and included significant incidents like wars.

THE OBJECTIVES OF HISTORY-WRITING

It is evident from the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus that their aim was preserve memories of the past, mainly great and spectacular events.

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For Herodotus, the purpose of writing history was to preserve what men have done and let the great and wonderful actions of Greeks and the barbarians get their share of glory and keep on records what were the grounds of conflict. Thus, he praised the victory of the Greeks and recognized the heroism of the Persians and the Spartans in his writings.

Thucydides said he wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, believing that it would be a great war. He wanted to present the event as precise and clear as possible.

The works of Livy and Tacitus were also focus on warfare. But their account of the history is distinguished by the tone of moral concern.

Tacitus remarked that he intended to write about the war and the heroes and provide a critique of the contemporary situation. He also said that he was concerned with what he documented might seem insignificant.

Both Livy and Tacitus regarded their works as educative. Livy said the study of history has advantage as history has a record of the infinite variety of human experiences with examples and warnings. He said people in future could get lessons from the historical accounts what was right and what was wrong.

DEFINING AND DRAWING ON SOURCES

Historians like Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus presented their first hand observations as well as derived information from other sources like tradition, religious centres, chronicles, interviews and documentary.

Shrines, archives and traditions were some of the important sources for these historians. For example, the shrine of Delphi, whose oracle was invariably consulted by rulers and states before any major events. Herodotus recorded several of the predictions of the oracle.

Herodotus, who used to travel a lot, also narrated his first hand accounts. For example, when he described the agriculture in Mesopotamia, he gave first hand observation. He also narrated his first hand accounts when he described greeting practiced by the Persians.

Herodotus appears to have drawn on an Ionian tradition of story-telling, collecting and interpreting the oral histories he chanced upon in his travels. For example, his mention about a long conversation between Croesus, a king, and Solon, one of the founding fathers of the Athenian Constitution.

Herodotus also evolved strategies to resolve situations when there are conflicting versions about a particular event. For example, on the history of the Persian ruler Cyrus, Herodotus found three other sources which were different from his narrative.

Thucydides confined himself to factual reports of contemporary political and military events, based on first-hand, eye-witness accounts, although, unlike Herodotus, he did not reveal his sources.

Tacitus used a variety of historical and literary sources. He used the official sources of the Roman state: the *acta senatus*, the minutes of the session of the Senate, and the *acta diurna populi Romani*, a collection of the acts of the government and news of the court and capital.

Tacitus cites some of his sources directly, among them Cluvius Rufus, Fabius Rusticus and Pliny the Elder, who had written *Bella Germaniae* and a historical work which was the continuation of that of Aufidius Bassus. Tacitus used some collections of letters (*epistolarium*) and various notes.

STYLE

These historians were writing for an elite, literary audience and every sentence was carefully crafted keeping in mind the reader and the facts they were writing about.

Herodotus employed a deceptively simple, narrative style, in which the original Greek was Ionian in dialect. Herodotus compiled everything in an entertaining style and format.

Thucydides appears to be more self-conscious in his writing. He assumed a tone of deliberate solemnity which was often combined with exemplary precision. For example, Thucydides' graphic description of the plague that hits Athens during the second year of the war. His depiction of the war clear and precise. Thucydides also incorporates speeches which are interesting and seductive.

Livy's description of events are succinct. The example of this is found when he describes the conflict between the common people and the senators.

Tacitus's writings are known for their dense and deep-cutting prose, seldom glossy. In most of his writings, Tacitus keeps to a chronological narrative order, only seldom outlining the bigger picture, and leaves the reader to construct that picture for himself. Nonetheless, where he does sketch the bigger picture. For example, in the opening paragraphs of the *Annals*, summarizing the situation at the end of the reign of Augustus – he used a few condensed phrases to take the reader to the heart of the story.

UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL EVENTS AND PROCESSES

These early historians were concerned about narrating the detail of what they regarded as central events. They rarely ask or inquire to know why the incident occurred and hardly speculate about the course of any event.

In their descriptions, events are carefully located in space and time. The perspectives that shaped their narration of events are also clear. Besides the immediate milieu and its political exigencies, these historians employ a range of ideas that were probably shared by literary men of their times. Their narratives are occasionally accepted the fickleness of human fortune and acceptance of fate.

Omen and their implications are also found in their narratives. The example of this is found in the narrative of Herodotus—a prodigy that was evidently seen by the troops of the Persian ruler Xerxes as he marched towards Greece.

Other historians like Thucydides narrate spectacular happenings without any comment. The example of this is found in his narration of the eruption of volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily, but does not correlate this with any contemporary incident.

These historians also mention the divine wraths in their writing. The example of this is evident when Livy records how a man named Appius instructed public slaves to perform certain ritual functions.

The human agent with all his failings and triumphs is also acknowledged in their narration. The example of this is when Herodotus wrote about the Athenian attempts to resist the Persian invasion acknowledging that “Athenians were the saviours of Greece”.

Thucydides’s narration and explanation of the war was precise and clear. Thucydides provides an interesting assessment of the past in his narrative. He said fertile lands were more prone to invasion as he cited the example of Attica. He said Attica was free from invasion because of its infertile soil.

Tacitus was also concerned about the narrative and rarely made any speculation about any event. He speculated on fate and its influence on human fortunes.

EXERCISES

Q. 1. Discuss the differences between the histories written by Herodotus and Thucydides?

Ans. Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived in the 5th century, is regarded as the father of history. He is almost exclusively known for writing The Histories,

a historical account of the places and peoples he encountered during his wide-ranging travels around the Mediterranean littoral and into Mesopotamia. The theme for this work was the conflict between the ancient Greeks and the Persians. Thucydides, also a Greek historian from Alimos and author of the History of the Peloponnesian War, recounts the 5th century B.C. war between Sparta and Athens to the year 411 B.C.

Both the historians were objective in their writing and their quest was the same what a historian wants today to present the fact as it is.

It is evident from their works, Herodotus and Thucydides were concerned about narrating the details of the events keeping in mind the facts as well as the readers in mind. Besides the first hand account, they derived information from various sources like tradition, folklores, shrines and official documents.

Herodotus said his objective was to preserve “What men have done” and preventing the great and wonderful actions of Greeks and the barbarians from losing their share of glory and put on records what were the grounds of feud. He eulogised the victory of the Greeks, at the same time he also recognised the heroism of the Persians and the Spartans.

Thucydides had also the same aim. He said he wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, believing that it would be a great war and more significant than any that had preceded it.

But Herodotus was fascinated by what he considered to be extraordinary events as he realised that it is against credibility. His accounts of India were especially marked by elements of fantasy. For example, his story about gold-digging ants. Herodotus had never visited India and got the past account about the country from other writers.

Thucydides, however, was different and very conscious about his writing. For this he is dubbed the father of “scientific history” because of his strict standards of evidence-gathering and analysis in terms of cause and effect without reference to intervention by the gods, as outlined in his introduction to his work.

Q. 2. What were the aims of historians discussed in this chapter for writing history?

Ans. Historians have stated that the objective of history-writing is to preserve memories of the past, mainly important events. Most of the early history-writings have been invariably dominated by warfare and battles. Historians have articulated their goals in their works.

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Herodotus said his objective was to preserve “what men have done” and preventing the great and wonderful actions of Greeks and the barbarians from losing their share of glory and put on records what were the grounds of feud. He eulogised the victory of the Greeks, at the same time he also recognised the heroism of the Persians and the Spartans. He was concerned with providing a narrative that was full, interesting and included ethnographic accounts that often bordered on the realm of fantasy.

Thucydides had also the same perspective. He stated that he wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, believing that it would be a great war and more significant than any that had preceded it.

The works of Livy and Tacitus were also focus on warfare. But their account of the history is distinguished by the tone of moral concern. Even as the Augustan age is regarded as the golden period, these historians voice a sense of discomfort and even agony at what was perceived to be a state of decline. Livy says that when Rome destroyed the ancient education system, the end of the Roman Empire started with the decline of morality.

Tacitus said he was not only writing about the war and valourizing the martial heroes but also concerned with offering a critique of the contemporary situation. He was also conscious that what he documented might seem insignificant.

Both Livy and Tacitus regarded their works as educative. Livy says the study of history has advantage as history has a record of the infinite variety of human experiences with examples and warnings. People in future can get lessons from the historical accounts what is right and what is wrong. Tacitus said history was instructive and the historical accounts “enchain and refresh” a reader’s mind.

These historians, however, did not venture into the world of fantasy while narrating the past events in their works. But Herodotus was an exception. He was fascinated by what he considered to be extraordinary even as he realized that it is against credibility. His accounts of India are especially marked by elements of fantasy. Herodotus had never visited India and got the past account about the country from other writers.

Q. 3. Write a note on the style adopted by these historians in their histories.

Ans. Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus were writing for an elite, literary audience and every

sentence was carefully crafted keeping in mind the reader and the facts they were writing about.

Herodotus employed a deceptively simple, narrative style, in which the original Greek is Ionian in dialect. Herodotus compiled everything in an entertaining style and format. For example, when he described the forms of greetings practised by Persians: “When they meet each other in the streets, you may know if the persons meeting are of equal rank by the following token; if they are, instead of speaking, they kiss each other on the lips.”

Thucydides appeared to be more self-conscious in his writing. He assumed a tone of deliberate solemnity which was often combined with exemplary precision. Thucydides’ graphic description of the plague that hits Athens during the second year of the war.

His depiction of the war also clear and precise. Thucydides also incorporated speeches which are interesting and seductive.

Livy’s narrations of historical events are succinct. This is evident from his writing about the clash between the common people and the senators.

Tacitus’s writings are known for their dense and deep-cutting prose, seldom glossy. Describing a near defeat of the Roman army in Ann. He does apply some gloss, but does so rather by the brevity with which he describes the end of the hostilities than by embellishing phrases.

Most of Tacitus’s works keeps a chronological narrative order. His writings also seldom outline the bigger picture and leave the reader to build that picture for himself. He uses a few condensed phrases to take the reader to the heart of the story.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q. 1. What is the meaning of the Greek term ‘istoria’?

- (a) Inquiry
- (b) Knowledge
- (c) Record
- (d) Philosophy

Ans. (a) Inquiry.

Q. 2. Who is recognized as the father of history?

- (a) Livy
- (b) Herodotus
- (c) Tacitus
- (d) Thucydides

Ans. (b) Herodotus.

Q. 3. What was the primary focus of Thucydides’ historical work?

- (a) Persian Wars
- (b) Peloponnesian War
- (c) Roman conquests
- (d) Egyptian culture

Ans. (b) Peloponnesian War.