

International Histories of Psychological Assessment

Edited by Sumaya Laher



Educational and Psychological Testing in a Global Context

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108485005

DOI: 10.1017/9781108755078

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First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Laher, Sumaya, editor.

TITLE: International histories of psychological assessment / edited by Sumaya Laher, University of the Witwatersrand.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2021. |

SERIES: Educational and psychological testing in a global context | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2021029079 (print) | LCCN 2021029080 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108485005 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108755078 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Psychodiagnostics. | Psychometrics—Cross-cultural studies. |

BISAC: PSYCHOLOGY / Personality

CLASSIFICATION: LCC RC469 .J54 2021 (print) | LCC RC469 (ebook) | DDC 616.89/075—dc23

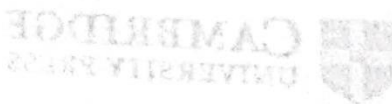
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021029079>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021029080>

ISBN 978-1-108-48500-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-71910-0 Paperback

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History of Psychological Assessment in Southern Asia

Suresh Sundaram, Suresh Arumugam, and Asoke Kumar Saha

12.1 Introduction

The South Asian countries are said to be the psychological storehouse (Srivastava, 2012) in the form of ancient Indian literature that includes *Vedas*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Puranas*. The “Bhagavad Gita,” the most famous section of the great ancient Indian epic the *Mahabharata*, mentions that India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka were kingdoms of the Indian subcontinent. The Indian subcontinent had a rich cultural heritage that is the birthplace of four major world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Unity in diversity is the essence of South Asian culture. The very diverse languages and language families of South Asia have made enormous contributions to world literature from ancient to modern times. As the largest country in South Asia, the historical continuity of India is stretching back thousands of years (Narayanan, 2014).

The chapter narrates the history of psychological assessment, both in ancient and modern times, highlighting how assessment is done in various settings in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. As mentioned in the epics, the South Asian countries, excluding Maldives, were almost together as a single land with diversified kingdoms under the banner of an Indian subcontinent. The political boundaries of South Asia have changed dramatically, at various points, particularly after emergence and withdrawal of the British rule. Hence the principal areas of South Asia show a number of similarities and differences that make various overlapping divisions into social and cultural types (Tichelman, 1980). When compared with developed nations, psychology as a scientific field has underdeveloped in this region. Hence locating the distinctive history of psychological assessment from the general history of psychology was found challenging by the authors. This chapter begins by providing a brief account of assessment in the region during pre-colonialism. Secondly,