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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

This year's examination produced several outstanding scripts and a marked decrease in the number of very poor scripts. Less encouraging was the tendency of many candidates to write answers more appropriate to questions set in previous years and to provide little or no comment in part **(b)** of the events described in part **(a)** of each question. The new syllabus awards half the marks for factual description and half for comments on the facts. As a useful general rule, candidates should provide a ten point description of facts in part **(a)**, and five comments on events in part **(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular question, on the tribal system among Arabs before Islam, but often the information given in part **(a)** was more appropriate to **Question 2**. Candidates who concentrated on tribal structure and activities did best. A small amount of credit was given for mention of tribal virtues and vice. Too many candidates wrote almost exclusively about tribal vices.

Candidates often wrote as though the tribal system had totally disappeared by the time of Muhammed's death. It is certainly true that loyalty to Allah, Ummah and Islam became more important than loyalty to Shaykh and tribe. Nevertheless, the tribe still remained important. Convert Muslims in conquered countries became clients of existing tribes. The Muslim army was organised in tribal units. The military virtues of the Arabian tribesmen took the Islamic armies to the borders of China. The social virtues of the tribes were encouraged by the Quranic revelations. The tribal love of poetry and recitation were the means by which the Quran was first preserved. Islam incorporated the best of the tribal values – it did not totally destroy the tribal system.

Question 2

This was another very popular question. Many candidates were able to refer briefly and accurately to many aspects of pre-Islamic religious life. It was quite common for these candidates to receive full marks for factual knowledge. The candidates who received few of the factual marks were those who wrote exclusively about the moral vices of the time.

The majority of candidates were much less successful when it came to commenting on the facts. Some provided no comments and so lost all ten evaluation marks. The Examiners were prepared to accept that the pre-Islamic Arabs might have been very irreligious, partly religious or very religious, provided the candidate argued one of these viewpoints consistently. A simple method of gaining more evaluation marks would have been to have provided a comment about the religious value of every religious fact described.

Question 3

Candidates often displayed a more detailed knowledge of the battle of Uhud than previously. Full marks for part **(a)** were not uncommon.

To obtain full marks in part **(b)**, candidates needed to provide any five plausible comments. For example, it could be argued that Uhud was a military defeat but not a spiritual defeat. Uhud presented Muslims with a crisis of faith. Had Allah deserted Islam? Uhud sifted true Muslims from false and left the community stronger. Defeat brought deeper faith. Muslims learnt important religious lessons – Muslims must avoid greed and be totally obedient to Allah and his Prophet. The better candidates supplied three valid comments; very few supplied five.

Question 4

This question was quite popular and both sections were quite well done. Candidates showed improved knowledge of the events leading up to the conquest of Mecca. Unlike previous years, candidates had a comprehensive knowledge of the Huddabiya. Unfortunately, some wrote almost exclusively about Huddabiya. The well balanced answer made reference to several aspects – for example, the military danger of the Quraysh, the deprivations suffered by the Muslims, the Treaty of Huddabiya, the attack by the Banu Bakr, the Prophet's march to Mecca, the conversion of Abu Sufyan and the taking of Mecca with minimal bloodshed.

In part **(b)**, the Examiners expected candidates to highlight any five consequences of the conquest. The conquest broke the power of the Quraysh; demonstrated the political power of the Prophet; attracted many tribes to Islam; ended the defilement of the Kaba; made full pilgrimage possible; allowed the transmission of Islamic beliefs through Mecca's trading relations with foreign kingdoms; and was an important stepping stone to national unity.

Question 5

In part **(a)**, many more candidates than previously were able to give a credible discussion of Abu Bakr's election. Candidates often noted Abu Bakr's success in preserving all the key aspects of Islam, of putting the Quran into written form and of preserving Islam from false prophets and apostasy. Commonly overlooked was the caliph's success in saving Islam from attack by the Persian and Byzantine empires. Single summary comments on his contribution were also credited wherever they appeared in **(b)**. Abu Bakr 'preserved the fragile unity of Islam at a crucial time', 'prevented Islam from degeneration back into a small tribal religion', 'protected Islam from internal collapse and external attack' and 'saved Islam from destruction by preserving the Quran from corruption'.

Question 6

Questions on Ali are never well answered by the vast majority of those who attempt them. This year was no exception.

In part **(a)**, it was sufficient to state that Mu'awiya was a nephew of Uthman and regarded him as a saintly Muslim. He felt that Ali's sons had given insufficient protection to Uthman and that Ali had made insufficient efforts to punish the killers. Most of Mu'awiya's family refused to pledge loyalty to Ali and leading Uthman supporters gathered in Syria where Mu'awiya was governor. He resented the fact that Ali had moved the caliphate to Iraq and he wanted to protect the interests of the Syrians against the Iraqis. He also resented Ali's attempts to remove him from the governorship of Syria and he wanted to be caliph.

In part **(b)**, candidates rightly mentioned the tragic battle of Siffin in which Muslim fought Muslim and the bitter arbitration over the caliph question. More was needed – for example, disgust with the arbitration process produced the Kharijite movement, which was a radically divisive tendency within Islam. The Kharijite problem diverted Ali from the Mu'awiya problem. Ali beat the Kharijites at Narwan but his tired troops refused to move against Mu'awiya, who captured Egypt. A Kharijite assassinated Ali. Mu'awiya was able to found the Umayyad dynasty. The friends of Ali became the foes of the Umayyads. Ali's death left Muslims more deeply divided than Uthman's death did.

Question 7

This question about the compilation of the Quran was very popular and well answered. Candidates often received full or nearly full marks for section **(a)**. The Examiners looked for five reasons why a written Quran was thought necessary. The average candidate produced three reasons.

Question 8

Candidates usually displayed a very good knowledge of Sura Fateha, as well as the ability to provide five relevant comments on any five verses of the sura. Some candidates ignored **(b)** completely, but the majority produced at least two reasons for the sura's importance and a few produced five.

Question 9

The story of Musa was very well known by many candidates, and full marks for part (a) were common. The best candidates made brief but clear reference to a variety of incidents in the life of Musa. The weakest wrote at huge length about 'the baby in the basket' incident.

Answers to part (b) tended to be barely satisfactory rather than very good. The Examiners were looking for any five ways in which the Musa story inspired the early Muslims. An example of what was required might read as follows: 'Pharaoh was defeated at the Red Sea and the Quraysh were defeated at Badr. God will defend his people against powerful enemies'.

Question 10

The question about Salat was well done. In part (a), candidates normally showed a good knowledge of what is required of Muslims before prayer can begin. In part (b), candidates were expected to identify five benefits of Salat. At least two benefits had to be personal benefits and at least two community benefits. A satisfactory statement of a community benefit might read as follows: 'Peace is the parting prayer of each Muslim to his neighbours and this promotes community peace'. A satisfactory statement of a personal benefit might be: 'Salat is one of the five pillars required by God and brings the Muslim closer to his Maker'.

Question 11

The question, on what Islam teaches about forgiveness and generosity, was seldom attempted and almost always poorly answered. Candidates made little reference to the Quran or the set Hadith. This meant that most of the factual marks were lost and that comments tended to be vague and not particularly Islamic.

Question 12

The few candidates who answered this question well tended to make a couple of brief historical references to Hadith collectors and then give equal space to the Matn tests and the Isnad tests. There were two main reasons why many candidates did not do well in part (a). Either they wrote a long historical account of a single collector with little mention of the tests he applied, or alternatively they wrote about the Isnad tests and ignored the Matn tests.

In part (b), credit was allowed for saying why the Hadith have always been important to Muslims. Credit was also given for a detailed example of how a Hadith may explain a text in the Quran. Extra credit was given to statements which clearly showed the relevance of the Hadith to today's Muslims – for example, 'Some problems of the first Muslims are still problems for today's Muslims e.g. divorce, alcohol, inheritance etc'; 'The Prophet was infallible in all his teachings but modern Muslims are not'; 'In a very confused world the Muslim of today needs the Prophet's hadith to keep himself fully Muslim'.