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General Certificate of Education

Archaeology 1011
Specification

Unit ARCH1

Report on the Examination
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Unit ARCH1

The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

General Comments

It is clear that centres have identified the requirements for answering questions on this paper successfully, and many candidates appear to be doing themselves justice. The paper allows well-prepared, able candidates to demonstrate what they know and understand, while at the same time allowing weaker candidates access to the questions. Able candidates are able to maintain their standard across most of the paper, while weaker candidates can usually perform quite well on at least some questions.

Teachers should be congratulated on coming to terms with the demands of this specification so quickly, but inevitably there is some further work to be done. For example:

- Time management for this paper is critical and needs careful practice in class. For candidates to be fully rewarded they must be able to devote sufficient time to complete the three 'essay' questions in Sections B and C.
- All of the definitions in Section A should be learnt in tandem with site examples if candidates are to gain full marks. Some current responses seem far from secure.
- Use of vague references in Section A to 'modern' religious contexts such as 'Christianity', 'Islam' or 'Hinduism' should be avoided unless firmly grounded in clearly archaeological contexts and evidence.
- Higher levels can only be accessed in Section B if the specified site forms the centre of the discussion.
- Candidates studying the Roman World must be reminded that this is an Archaeology paper, and little credit can be given for lengthy discussion of 'historical' / textual evidence of the types that might be studied in Classical Civilisation.

Centres should be aware that examiners may repeat definition terms in Section A and prescribed sites in Section B when setting the paper. Advance notification will be given prior to a change of prescribed terms and sites.

Section A

In Section A too many candidates are still ignoring advice to employ a tripartite approach. A full answer should comprise:

- Actual definition of term
- Accurate context of use
- Actual named piece of evidence and site.

Section A answers should be dealt with quickly and efficiently on the basis of effective learning – do not write at huge length! Do prepare answers for definition of terms that fall outside your main period of study by learning examples from another context/period. This will enable candidates to construct tripartite answers even if exemplars do not exist within their main period of study.

Two specific observations:

- Liminal required not only the concept of a boundary, but that it could be crossed in both directions.
- Providing tripartite answers to shamanism caused some problems. Candidates appeared to be unaware of suitable examples; obvious ones to use here would have been the 'Birdman' of Lascaux, the 'Deerman' at Les Trois Freres or possibly Maya kings shown bloodletting at Yaxchilan.

Section B

In Section B there were many good responses but, surprisingly, many candidates did not display secure knowledge of the prescribed site. Teachers and candidates are urged to prepare for this section and, in answering questions, they should deploy evidence about the site that is clearly relevant to the theme of religion and ritual, and which also is derived from the site itself. Some fail to do so, for example, candidates who wrote about cave art in general, with only limited reference to Lascaux, only accessed the lower levels. In Section B we are looking for evidence of a detailed study of the specified site.

Also candidates should be reminded that this is an Archaeology paper, and therefore (as in the case of the Temple of Vesta) we are seeking answers which are firmly based on physical evidence and to which textual, secondary sources may only be briefly and tangentially relevant – remember this is not a Classical Civilisation paper! The over-reliance on non-archaeological evidence has been a problem for some 'Roman World' answers on all the ARCH1 papers to date.

Section C

In Section C where candidates failed to access the top levels, it was largely through omission of key points and/or crucial themes, or through inadequate exemplification - both aspects must be present to reach top levels.

Question 5

Most responses addressed the main interpretations of the ritual functions of causewayed enclosures, but relatively few were able to contextualise these ideas through reference to actual sites with detailed evidence.

Question 6

Henges seem to be a well known class, but surprisingly few answers included a formal definition of the type in terms of salient features with many concentrating on relatively few famous examples. It should be noted that 'Seahenge' is not, in fact, a 'henge' – this is a nickname given by the press!

Question 7

Many generic types of grave goods were adduced here, but few candidates were able to discuss particular prehistoric culture or specific sites – Section B is not the only area of the paper where specificity is required.

Question 8

There were some good rehearsals of the evidence for the existence of 'priests' in prehistory, but very few candidates were able to produce accurate evidence for actual 'Druids' who are an Iron Age phenomenon *stricto sensu*. A few responses bordered on the silly, with simplistic and lurid descriptions more akin to the cartoon character 'Getafix'.

Question 9

Most answers concentrated on cult temples in general rather than specifically discussing smaller local cult centres such as Satet on Elephantine Island or the cat goddess Bastet.

Question 10

There were many good answers here with lots of sound detail about the religious ideas behind the festival and the practical aspects of ritual in ancestor worship.

Question 11

Most answers focussed on royal ancestors and offerings being made to them, but some candidates were able to take a wider view and also included the Heb Nefer and Aker worship in individual homes such as in the model village of Deir el Medina.

Question 12

Responses tended to concentrate on the ideas behind the concept of Ma'at, but few were able to adduce a range of examples of Ma'at in action in terms of objects and buildings like Narmer's Palette and the pylons at Medinet Habu with their smiting scenes.

Question 13

Defixiones seemed familiar to candidates for this section and were well described and explained with some responses actually quoting examples in Latin and also able to discuss how they functioned in Roman life. Bath provided most of the examples quoted.

Question 14

Temples of Mithras and their structure formed the basis for responses here, but comparatively few candidates were able to adduce a range of objects like altars and statues to bolster what were sometimes 'classical civilisation' answers based on secondary sources. Carrawburgh and Walbrook featured strongly, but also the prolific site of Ostia which boasts some eighteen Mithraea together with iconography showing the various grades of initiation.

Question 15

Most candidates were able to describe chi-rho symbols and their significance, but the wider range required by the question proved more elusive and the quality and accuracy of case studies was very variable with examples often attributed to the wrong site.

Question 16

The requirement for some awareness of pre-Roman religion proved to be challenging for most candidates, but there were still some good responses based on sites like Bath with the case study of the syncretism of Sulis and Minerva and frequent native gods as statues or the frequent association of religion with water as at Coventina's Well.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.

