

AS-LEVEL

# Archaeology

ARCH1 The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual  
Report on the Examination

---

2010  
June 2015

---

Version: 1.0

---

---

Further copies of this Report are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2015 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the school or college.

---

## Unit ARCH1: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

### General Comments

Overall students responded well to the majority of questions in this paper, with fewer instances of serious timing issues. Pleasingly, there were far fewer incidents of students drawing extensive and detailed diagrams of ritual landscapes and thereby detracting from the detail of their answers. However, there were responses that still used this as an approach.

There are still some schools and colleges teaching the use of Renfrew and Bahn's ritual indicators as a method for structuring Section B – as noted in previous reports, this often leads to overly general discussions of aspects such as 'focus of attention', detracting from the detail needed to achieve Level 3 or above. It should be noted that this approach often leads to long and less effective answers, and can impact upon the scope and detail of Section C answers. Some responses named sites without any explanation of how they link to the key term covered, eg Saqqara simply named in an Egyptian answer on sacrifice without discussing the animal necropolis, mummies, etc present there.

There were again several instances of pre-prepared or generic definitions of religion and ritual in the Section B and Section C. In some instances, students started each of their three essays with the same general definitions, leading to a lack of depth and focus in both Section B and Section C. Period contextualisation can still be a problem in Section C for the prehistory questions. For example, even if there were direct evidence for exarnation at Seahenge, the site has been dated several centuries into the Bronze Age and is therefore not relevant to Question 8 on the Neolithic era.

There are still some schools and colleges which teach more than one of the three periods in detail. This can lead to responses which often contain either very brief details, or material largely irrelevant to the question predominating responses. This approach can also result in brief Section B answers that struggle to achieve higher than low Level 3.

### Section A: The Terminology of Religion and Ritual

Although fewer than in previous series, there are still responses produced which use a 'modern' or anthropological example as part of these definitions. Schools and colleges are reminded that the paper requires archaeological contextualisation and exemplification. Modern references are a useful teaching aid to develop understanding, but the question asks for archaeological contextualisation and exemplification and it is this which is credited.

There were a significant number of answers which mistook the generic or period contextualisation for archaeological exemplification, and therefore did not provide a site example and associated detail.

There does appear to be an increasing trend of responses trying to make any example work for each term, or to explain that there is no evidence for the practice. Schools and colleges are reminded that the Section A terms have been selected because plausible specific exemplification is possible, and often abundant, from archaeological contexts.

Some general problems this year were:

- Apis bulls used as evidence of sacrifice in Egypt

- use of misapprehensions about Mithraism and Mithraeums, especially the Walbrook Mithraeum in London. Statements which were unsupported included that there was bull sacrifice (chicken bones were found at Walbrook, not bull)
- use of shaman as an implied ritual specialist/priest but without explaining how and why a shaman is such
- Lascaux appearing as an example of a shaman/priest/ritual specialist.

### Question 1

A substantial minority of responses cited grave goods in general. However, given that these are part of the funerary ritual they do not represent the continual veneration of long dead ancestors. Consequently, there were many instances of good Level 1 but irrelevant Level 2 exemplification.

### Question 2

This term was very well understood and defined, although some responses did not achieve the full five marks through not providing the detail from a named site. A small minority of students chose to exemplify through burials that indicate high status, but not ritual specialism, eg Paviland, Hochdorf. The strongest responses to this question were clear that these individuals lead and controlled religious ceremonies, and linked this to examples where this can clearly be inferred from the evidence, for example the robed figure conducting libations represented in the Bridgeness distance slab.

### Question 3

A significant number of responses took the term to mean any form of offering rather than concentrating on killing/destruction, either literal in the case of animal sacrifice, or largely symbolic in the form of bent and broken objects, such as those deposited at Flag Fen. Perhaps in over-reliance on Section B sites, there were many instances of referring to multiple burials as certain evidence of sacrifice, when this is not the case, for example swan's wing burial at Vaedbaek. In some instances examples were used as certain evidence for sacrifice when this is not the case, for example child remains at Woodhenge, and the upturned oak at Seahenge.

### Section B: Religion and Ritual and Prescribed Sites

There were lots of very detailed and well-explained answers on the prescribed sites in this section. Schools and colleges should be aware of the need to teach the five sites in depth and link to their appropriate context and comparison sites. In a small minority of responses students did not seem to know the sites beyond their general category.

In all three questions, the best responses established the date, location and scope of evidence from the site early in their answers and then proceeded to substantiate this with numerous explained details. Where answers made comparisons to other sites at an early stage this overwhelmingly detracted from the site-specific detail of the answers, making them more generic. Often, comparisons were either to very different site categories, or sites at a great chronological distance from the one in the question. Schools and colleges are reminded that comparison needs to be relevant and constructive in explaining the significance of the prescribed site, and whilst comparison to other sites can indeed raise the level of an answer, does not replace detailed knowledge and understanding of the site on which the question is set. Many comments on sites implied links to religion and ritual but did not explain these links, for example, comments mentioning the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony depicted in the Tomb of Tutankhamen but not then explaining how this is evidence of religion and ritual and Egyptian religion in general.

Answers often discussed issues that were not relevant to religion and ritual or the general archaeology of the site, for example extensive discussion of whether the Tomb of Tutankhamen was meant for him or Ay. Such answers tended to include a great deal of description without any analysis or evaluation of the evidence present for religion and ritual, or links between physical evidence at the site and religion and ritual.

In some responses there was no reference to religion and ritual, or a couple of words. This was the case in many answers on Hochdorf where some students wrote all about the man's status, his wealth and trade connections but did not tie any of these to religion and ritual, or in some cases their only reference to religion and ritual was to state that there were grave goods for use in the afterlife but with no development of this concept. Such responses did not address the question set and so could not access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Some answers simply stated purported evidence linked to Renfrew and Bahn classifications without any development, context, etc, for example stating 'there were pictures of gods which shows presence of the deity' without any further development. Some responses simply ran through a list of points without development, for example when addressing the question on Hochdorf stating 'he was buried so he had undergone a rite of passage' without further detail.

In response to the question on the Lady of Spitalfields, some answers identified the rope and scallop designs on the lead coffin as Celtic; both are standard Roman funerary practice and are linked to Venus and rebirth. These are not Christian symbols either. Furthermore other answers stated certain elements were Christian without any development or explanation of why they felt this was the case. Students should explain statements, and support statements with evidence.

#### **Question 4**

This question was generally very well answered, with many responses rooting the site in the appropriate period and geographical context, supported by a wide range of specific details from the site. A minority of answers referred repeatedly to the importance of the grave goods without specific exemplification, eg the precise contents and layout of this particular grave, such as the couch, cauldron and drinking horns.

#### **Question 5**

Whilst there were some very detailed and specific responses, there was a tendency to over rely upon generic discussions of Egyptian burial practices in general, with a consequent lack of discussion of the unique features of this site, eg animal headed canopic jars rather than four sons of Horus. A small minority of answers discussed Carter's excavation and the subsequent popular interest in Egyptology, both of which were irrelevant to this question.

#### **Question 6**

The vast majority of responses demonstrated good knowledge of the evidence from this burial, with a significant minority detailing the location, topography and symbolism and establishing clear links to religion and ritual. There were relatively few generic responses that did not appear to know this site. However, there was some confusion over prominent details. For example, there was a decorated lead coffin found within a stone sarcophagus, not a sarcophagus with scallop shell and rope work design.

**Section C: Religion and Ritual in Cultural Context**

For the most part, there was a clear division between those responses that did well and those that lacked scope to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme. This was generally due to how the question was approached. Students ideally need to consider the question from a concept-led perspective, so finding the key idea and developing from there, linking each of the key elements to a range of named archaeological sites. The less successful method is the site-led approach, whereby students start by naming an archaeological site and then thinking of all the different ways the key concept could fit in. With this approach there is usually an over-reliance on the prescribed sites from section B, which demonstrates a lack of range of archaeological sites that could be used as examples.

**Question 7**

The majority of answers were able to contextualise the phenomenon in the Iron Age and were able to cite at least one relevant example, although some answers took bog bodies to mean any Iron Age burial, or in rare cases any example of an unusual burial tradition. It should be noted that there are no bog bodies from Yorkshire despite the firm assertions of many students. Also some of the bog bodies answers were purely limited to the evidence but with no clear links to religion or explanation of how it might be religious in nature.

**Question 8**

This was often a securely answered question, although a significant minority of responses used examples outside of the Neolithic and/or where the link to excarnation is tenuous at best. For example, many answers cited Seahenge as an example – as this site is Bronze Age it was irrelevant, causing some responses to not be able to access marks for exemplification. Where responses discussed well known examples such as West Kennet and Hambledon Hill they were generally much more successful.

**Question 9**

Many of the students who answered this question tended to steer towards answering this as if it were just about 'ritual landscapes' and so focused on key landscapes such as Stonehenge or Avebury. The more successful answers looked at landscapes and broke it down into different aspects that may play significant roles within religion, such as water, topography and celestial symbolism.

**Question 10**

This was a generally well answered question, although some answers did refer to artefacts and individual burials that cannot be considered as 'monuments'.

**Question 11**

There were some good responses here, although many tended to state the generic rituals that occurred at the Festival but made little attempt to link back to the actual archaeological evidence.

**Question 12**

There were some excellent answers to this question with students working through the different types of temple but also the architecture and what different elements symbolised, what they were

used for and by whom. Less successful responses tended to rely on broad structural elements and did not positively link these to archaeological sites.

### **Question 13**

This question comprised of two parts – to examine the archaeological evidence for the roles of Horus **and** Seth. Unfortunately, the majority of the students focused either on just Horus and briefly mentioned Seth, or relied too heavily on the Temple of Horus at Edfu, which is one of the prescribed sites in Section B. This meant that many of the answers did not reach the higher levels of the mark scheme as they did not show enough breadth of knowledge.

### **Question 14**

Many responses were appropriately detailed and well-argued, although some did rely too heavily on generic details of the mummification process rather than explaining why it took place. Some responses made very good use of how Osiris and mummification can be inferred from iconography.

### **Question 15**

There were many very good responses that were able to refer in detail to depictions and symbolism in several examples, ranging across pagan and Christian examples. Some answers confused the details from sites, for example referring to the depiction of Christ in a toga as being from Lullingstone rather than Hinton St Mary.

### **Question 16**

Many of the answers on Mithraism were very weak, showing little knowledge of the religion or the evidence extant. Many answers contained very generalised points about incense burning, some conflated Coventina's Well with the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh/Broccolitia. It is advised for this topic that more about tauroctonies, cautes and cautopates, evidence of grades/ranks of worship (eg Ostia Mithraeum), etc, is covered in teaching. Those students who attempted this more successfully, pleasingly were able to refer in detail to examples other than Carrawburgh and Walbrook.

### **Question 17**

A large proportion of responses lacked understanding of what a genius loci was. There were lots of generalised points about rivers and specific locales without really applying the concept to them. Some answers managed to show the possible localised worship of Coventina to one well or Sulis to one spring, although this was relying heavily on the prescribed sites from section B. Others relied upon vague discussions of household gods without appealing to any archaeological sites.

### **Question 18**

This was a generally well answered question, with responses that managed to show structure in their answers, by looking at the different types of burial and grave goods interred and then being able to link them to a few named archaeological sites. Due to nature of the question, those responses that mentioned the pre-burial mortuary rituals, which led to the styles of burial, were also rewarded.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

## **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)