

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

There seems to be an improvement in the quality of the answers and the candidates' focus in addressing the questions. Part (a) of all questions attempted, was generally well answered. Candidates did less well in part (b).

Candidates need to remember that part (a) and (b) carry ten marks each. Marks are lost if a question is treated as a whole. Writing many pages for one part only will not get more than ten marks. Both parts of a question should be read before attempting to write the answer. Long, time-consuming detailed plans are to be avoided.

Questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 were the most popular. Fewer candidates answered 3, 5, 8 and 12.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This was a popular question on the whole but the least well done. Candidates were asked about the tribal system in Arabia before Islam. Those who read the question properly answered well. However there were a large number who wrote at length about the religious and social attitudes. Good answers included knowledge of the tribal values of *murawah*.
- (b) Candidates who understood the topic in part (a) did not demonstrate a good grasp of how some attitudes and practices changed as Islam spread. Some suggested many immediate changes in the tribal system after Islam came. The message of Islam that the Prophet gave incorporated what was best in the values of *murawah* that the Arabs followed. Equality in the sight of Allah and the idea of brotherhood between all Muslims were added to what they already held dear.

Question 2

- (a) This was a very popular question. The majority of candidates gave accurate and detailed answers. However some candidates did not read the question and wrote at length about the Prophet's early life before the first revelation.
- (b) There were some good answers with thoughtful explanations of why the Meccans felt threatened. Most other answers would have benefitted from a wider understanding of the causes of the opposition such as the economic polarisation of Meccan society, the exploitation of the weak and the fact that the Prophet was an ordinary man.

Question 3

- (a) The Constitution [*sahifa*] of Medina was one of the first formal agreements made by the Prophet involving the tribes. There was some confusion in the answers between this document and the pact of brotherhood which he instituted between the Ansar [Muslims of Medina] and the Muhajiroun [emigrant Muslims from Mecca]. This was not a popular question though the subject is important when reflecting on the life of the Prophet in Medina.

- (b) This part of the question seemed to be too subtle for many candidates to answer. Good answers would include the mention of the vision of the Prophet as a peacemaker, his diplomatic skills and his ability to make tribes and faiths work together for a just society.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates knew the main events leading up to the conquest of Mecca. Better answers developed the description of what happened after the Prophet entered Mecca. Unfortunately weaker candidates described the Treaty of Hudaibiyah in detail.
- (b) Those who performed well in part (a) also gave good responses in part (b). The importance of Mecca to the Prophet and to Islam was usually well explained. It is important to note that he loved the city of his birth and the Quraish were his own people. They were the elite of the Arabs and the heirs to the Abrahamic legacy. It may be recalled that the Prophet did not crush the pride of the Quraish as some candidates suggested. He forgave people and allowed the Quraish to retain many positions that they held.

Question 5

- (a) This was not well answered. Candidates who attempted this mostly began their account with the Prophet's decision to go for Hajj and included a long description of the farewell address. Many points they made were repeated in part (b). It may be pointed out that this was the only Hajj he did. Good answers would include the very hot summer that year, the Tabuk expedition against the Romans, and more tribes accepting Islam. Some candidates limited their answers to describe the Prophet's illness and Abu Bakr leading the prayers.
- (b) In some cases this was a better performance than in part (a) because candidates knew the main contents of the farewell address and therefore could explain its significance. Good answers mentioned the Prophet as a man of vision. He reminded Muslims of the basic tenets of Islam and reiterated that their life now was totally different from what it was during the time of *jahiliyyah*.

Question 6

- (a) This was a very popular question. Candidates who answered this well gave a thorough and accurate description of the main events before the election of Abu Bakr including the fact that the Prophet did not nominate a successor. Weaker candidates were not sure about the role played by Umar and Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah. Some mentioned Uthman and even Ali instead of Umar.
- (b) Candidates who answered confidently in part (a) failed to realise that this question required a response about the political and social period known as the Golden Age, not a description/explanation of the achievements of each individual Caliph. Many answers were brief and sometimes inaccurate. Good answers were those that talked of the qualities that the Rightly Guided Caliphs had in common such as their proximity to the Prophet. They followed the Qur'an and what they remembered him doing in letter and spirit. They led simple lives, and treated the Caliphate as a sacred trust.

Section B

Question 7

- (a) On the whole this question was well answered. Some candidates gave good answers writing confidently about Abu Bakr but were vague about what happened during Uthman's Caliphate. Weaker candidates were confused between Umar and Uthman and the chronology of the compilation of the Qur'an.
- (b) Again, as with other part (b) questions most answers were only satisfactory at best. Unexpectedly there was confusion in understanding the importance of the Qur'an and the importance of the Hadith, and how they differ. Acceptable answers mentioned the Qur'an being revelation from Allah and the Hadith as the sayings and actions of the Prophet explaining much of the message of the Qur'an.

Question 8

- (a) Candidates who answered this part gained marks in translation and the explanation of the text. However, a wider understanding of why this Sura was revealed was expected for a good answer, such as this being linked to the previous Sura [Sura 105, Fil]. Allah protected Mecca from invasion [CE 570] and continued to protect them during their journeys. Therefore this was a reminder to them to listen to Allah's message and his Messenger.
- (b) Part (b) was better answered than (a). Good answers referred to the details of Sura Zilzal, the fear of accountability of good and bad deeds. Muslims are reminded that Allah will favourably judge those who strive to be better human beings in this life. Therefore this frightening Sura is also a message of hope.

Question 9

- (a) This was a popular question that candidates enjoyed answering. Some candidates wrote the earlier part of the story about Iblis, the angels and Prophet Adam. Good answers began with Adam and Eve [Hawwa] in Paradise and continued the narrative making both equally to blame for disobeying Allah.
- (b) Many good answers were given here about the lessons Muslims can learn from this story. Sadly few mentioned the fact that Allah made human beings the top of His creation with the power to think and choose the way to go. The ultimate lesson of this story is that of Allah's forgiveness when human beings repent sincerely.

Question 10

- (a) Many candidates chose this question thinking they knew who the recipients of *zakat* were but wrote little on the topic. Answers were given in more general terms of how and why *zakat* is to be paid. Candidates are reminded that apart from the categories mentioned there are numerous *ayats* in the Qur'an about giving what you have to others not just the named recipients.
- (b) The overall performance in part (b) was better than part (a). Weak answers mentioned *zakat* as a 'right' of the poor. Candidates need to be aware that the idea of *zakat* is to remind Muslims that everything they have comes from Allah and therefore Allah expects them to be generous towards others with whatever they have. The Prophet had seen the suffering of the poor throughout his life and wanted to make Muslims generous in whatever way they could be. He suggested the giving of half a date as something that could be counted as charity or even giving a smile.

Question 11

- (a) This was another popular question. For the most part the religious rites performed when a person dies were accurately described. Weaker candidates were not sure of the general procedure that is followed. Some mentioned a 'hole' dug for a grave.
- (b) This part was generally answered well. Most candidates wrote about Prophet Abraham's sacrifice, and what they themselves do that day. Some failed to mention the celebration of Eid ul Adha as a culmination of the Hajj. This Eid is also about obeying Allah's law, spreading happiness by sharing the sacrificial meat, and visiting elderly people in the family.

Question 12

- (a) Some of those who attempted this question wrote only a few lines. Better answers gave a definition of the categories showing some knowledge about what was expected in the chain of narrators. It seemed that candidates had left this question as a last resort and were not too familiar with the subject though it is an important part of the syllabus.
- (b) In this part some answers were satisfactory in explaining the meaning of Hadith 13. Hardly anyone wrote about their personal experiences. The few that did gave superficial examples. As in previous years, candidates need more practice on this style of answer.