

EXAMINATION IN ORIENTAL STUDIES FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

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Friday 6 June 2008      09.00 – 12.00

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**IS.2 MIDDLE EASTERN LITERATURE**

Answer *three* of the following questions.

All questions carry *equal* value.

**STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS**

*20 Page Answer Book x 1*

*Rough Work Pad*

**You may not start to read the questions  
printed on the subsequent pages of this  
question paper until instructed that you may  
do so by the Invigilator.**

1. Explore the development of the concept of sainthood in Islam, and its doctrinal roots.
2. How do writers of saints' lives establish the authority of their narratives?
3. What elements in a saint's life are emphasised in their biographies and to what extent do these reveal the didactic intentions of the writer?
4. Compare the lives of two of the saints you have studied, and the way they are portrayed.
5. How important was the ability to perform 'miracles' as an attribute of sainthood?
6. What role did the composition of a hagiography have in helping the formation of the sufi orders (*tariqas*)?
7. How do you account for the increasing prominence of the Sufi sheikhs in political life in Iran and Central Asia after the Mongol conquests?
8. Identify and discuss the similarities and differences between the hagiographical literature and the role of saints in mediæval Islam and Christianity.
9. What do the lives of the mediæval Iranian saints tell us about the societies in which they flourished?

**END OF PAPER**