



AET1

Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Tripos, Part IB

Monday 11 June 2018 1.30 to 4.30 pm

Paper MES17

The Formation of Islam

*Candidates should answer **three** questions, **two** from section A and **the one (comprising three commentaries)** in section B. All questions carry **equal** marks.*

*Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** answer booklet.*

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

20 page answer booklet

Rough Work Pad

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED FOR THIS EXAMINATION

None

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

SECTION A: Essay Questions

Answer **two** of the following eight questions.

1. Assess the prospects for historical explanations of Muhammad's success during his own lifetime.
2. What caused conflict within the Islamic polity between 632 and 700 CE?
3. How and to whom did the Marwanid dynasty (684–750) seek to legitimate their power?
4. How did the situation of Christians living in the central lands of the Caliphate change between c.650 and c.950?
5. How and why were the military, political and religious elites of the Muslim Empire transformed between c.700 and c.900?
6. Compare and contrast the role of Islam in legitimating the elites of **two** of the tenth- or eleventh-century "successor states" that emerged with the decline of the Abbasid Empire.
7. How can we best account for the transformations that took place in the urban life of the Middle East during the first four centuries of Islam?
8. What was the significance of the translation movement for the medieval Islamic World and for medieval Latin Christendom?

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SECTION B: Set text commentary question

All candidates **must** answer this question.

1. Comment on **three** of the following ten primary source extracts (a-j)
 - a. This war was by no means a contemptible one, although conducted by a woman. The Romans, it is said, considered it so arduous and so perilous, that the general of the Phoenician troops applied for assistance to the general of the entire cavalry and infantry of the East. This latter ridiculed the summons, and undertook to give battle alone. He accordingly attacked Mania, who commanded her own troops in person; and he was rescued with difficulty by the general of the troops of Palestine and Phoenicia ... This occurrence [the Roman retreat] is still held in remembrance among the people of the country, and is celebrated in songs by the Saracens.

Sozomen (d.c.448/9). "Ecclesiastical History." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Volume 2*, edited by P. Schaff. "Christian Classics Ethereal Library." VI.xxxviii [=p.836].
 - b. Although from the offerings there had been left no treasure, either of gold or of silver, there was one of a more efficacious substance that was dedicated once and for all to God, namely the all-holy relics of the victorious martyr Sergius which lay in one of the oblong coffins which is covered in silver. But when Chosroes, convinced by this, released his whole army on the city, suddenly myriad shields appeared on the circuit wall to defend the city; on seeing this those sent by Chosroes turned back, astounded at the number and describing the armament.

Evagrius Scholasticus (fl. c.593). *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*. Trans. and ann. M. Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000, 228 (Bk 4.28).
 - c. God, may he be blessed and glorified, said: "Then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto earth: Come both of you, willingly or loth." They said: "We come, obedient." God, may the utterance of His name be glorified, also said, "And when

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thy Lord said unto the angels: 'Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth,' they said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee?' He said: 'Surely I know that which ye know not.'"

Letter on behalf of al-Walīd II (d. 744), in al-Ṭabarī (d. 923). *The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume XXVI. The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate*. Trans. and ann. C. Hillenbrand. Albany: SUNY, 1989, 108–9.

- d. Let your Eminence sagely ask and enquire whether there is some commentary or scholia by anyone, whether in Syriac or not, to this book, the *Topika*, or to the *Refutation of the Sophists*, or to the *Rhetorika*, or to the *Poetika*; and if there is, find out by whom and for whom (it was made), and where it is. Enquiries on this should be directed to the Monastery of Mar Mattai - but the enquiries should not be made too eagerly, lest the information, (the purpose of the enquiry) being perceived, be kept hidden, rather than disclosed.

Letter 43 of the Patriarch Timothy (d. 823 CE). Translated in: Sebastian P. Brock. "Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations from the Greek." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999): 235-236.

- e. We do not gainsay that 'Abd Shams was himself noble, but there are degrees of nobility; and God gave 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib during his lifetime such privileges, enabled him to perform such deeds of valour, and showed him such generosity, that the like could be found only in a prophet sent by God. His words to Abraha, the elephant man, his threat to him invoking the Lord of the Ka'ba, God's fulfilment of his word ... all that is the most wonderful of miracles and the most prodigious of signs. But all that was only preparing the way for Muḥammad's prophethood ... Again, who can be likened to or vie with the men who begat Muḥammad?

al-Jahiz (d. 868/9). "Superiority of the Banū Hāshim to the 'Abd Shams." In *The Life and Works of al-Jahiz*, edited and translated by C. Pellat and translated from French by D. M. Hawke. London: Routledge, 1969, 58.

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- f. Places of interest and the persons after whom they are named ...
 The cathedral mosque in al-Kūfa was built with material taken from the ruins of the castles in al-Hīra that belonged to the al-Mundhir clan, the price of that material constituting a part of the tax paid by the people of al-Hīra. Sikkat al-Barīd [post-office] in al-Kūfa was once a church built by Khālīd ibn ‘Abdallāh [al-Qasrī] ... of the Bajilah for his mother, who was a Christian. Khālīd built shops, dug the canal called al-Jāmi‘, and erected the Qaṣr Khālīd ...
 al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā (d. c. 900). *The Origins of the Islamic State (Futūḥ al-Buldān)*. Trans. P. K. Hitti. 2 Vols. New York: Columbia University, 1916, I: 442, 444–5.
- g. The Syrians appeared in greater number than people had ever seen, so that upon beholding them the Khurasānīs were awed and spoke openly to this effect. This reached Qaḥṭabah, and he addressed them saying, “Men of Khurāsān, this land belonged to your forefathers before you, and they were given victory over their enemies because they were just and behaved rightly ... Thus God has empowered you against them [the Syrians] in order that revenge be enacted through you ... The Imām has sworn to me that you would encounter them in numbers as great as these, but that God would give you victory over them ...”
 al-Ṭabarī (d. 923). *The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume XXVII: The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*. Trans. J. A. Williams. Albany: SUNY, 1985, 110-111.
- h. O Commanders of the Believers, O you two caliphs of the Lord of the Universe ... O father, O grandfather, O sons of Muḥammad, the messenger of God! ... I am not in doubt as to the choice of God, the Blessed and Glorious, for you and His transporting you to the abode of His favour and residence of His mercy, which provides accommodations for Muḥammad, His messenger, upon him be peace, your grandfather, as well as the Commander of the Believers, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, your father, and Fāṭima, the radiant virgin, your mother ... So I am God’s and to Him I will return.
 “*Khuṭba* of al-Manṣūr on the ‘Īd al-fiṭr, 336 (14 April 948), at al-Mahdiyya.” In P. Walker, *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009, p.115.

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- i. The rival sect (the Sunnah) wanted to do something to match this on their own account, in the same quarters and streets, and so pretended that the day [one] week after the Day of the Pond [*Ghadir Khumm*] was that whereon the Prophet with Abu Bakr entered the Cave. They performed similar ceremonies to those performed by the Shi'ah on the Day of the Pond, and to match 'Ashura Day they selected the following week as the day whereon Mus'ab b. Zubayr was killed; this day they visited his tomb in Maskan as that of Husayn b. 'Ali in Ha'ir is visited.
al-Ṣābī, Hilāl b. Muḥassin (d. 1056), "Continuation of the Experiences of the Nations." In *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*, ed. H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth, VI, 364-5. Oxford: Blackwell, 1921.
- j. We shall not build, in our cities or in their neighbourhood, new monasteries, churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.
We shall keep our gates open wide for passersby and travellers. We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way for three days. We shall not give shelter in our churches or in our dwellings to any spy, nor hide him from the Muslims.
Shurūṭ 'Umar ('Pact of 'Umar'). In al-Turṭūshī (d. 1126 CE), *Sirāj al-mulūk*, as translated by B. Lewis with additions by M. Levy-Rubin (numbers and letters removed). In M. Levy-Rubin. *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 171.

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