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?

(Exam continues on page 3)
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.


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.


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

(SECTION B, QUESTION 1, CONTINUES ON PAGE 4)
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

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.

(SECTION B, QUESTION 1, CONTINUES ON PAGE 5)
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 Khālid ibn ‘Abdallāh [al-Qasrī] … of the
Bajilah for his mother, who was a Christian. Khālid built shops, dug
the canal called al-Jāmi’, and erected the Qaṣr Khālid …

al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā (d. c. 900). *The Origins of the
Islamic State (Futūḥ al-Buldān)*. Trans. P. K. Hitti. 2 Vols. New

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
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 Muhammad, 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-فز, 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.

(SECTION B, QUESTION 1, CONTINUES ON PAGE 6)
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.


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.


END OF PAPER