



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Archaeology

ARCH1

(Specification 2010)

Unit 1 The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

Report on the Examination

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Section A: *The Terminology of Religion and Ritual*

It is noticeable that, generally, students performed well in this section. There were very few incidents of over long answers beyond what was needed for 5 marks. However, the following points should be noted:

- As has been observed previously, some students give a 'modern' example after their archaeological one, or in some cases in place of one – this usually results in unduly brief archaeological exemplification. Modern exemplification is a useful teaching aid to develop understanding, but should not be relied upon in the exam (the question asks for archaeological exemplification).
- A significant minority of students took monotheism to mean worship of any particular deity e.g. one of the Roman pantheon within a polytheistic system. Students need to be clear about an overall monotheistic worldview, e.g. Christianity in the Roman period and link it to a specific example e.g. the Water Newton treasure.
- In defining propitiation/votives, a significant number of students cited miniature body parts such as arms and legs at Aquae Sulis (Bath). Whilst there was a widespread Roman practice using such votives at many sites (e.g. Woodeaton), there were no such finds at Bath. They are indeed notable by their absence. This misuse of Bath also affected comparisons drawn to Uley and answers to votives in question 6.
- Explanations were not always fully developed. In Section A, each term should be illustrated by reference to at least one specific example from within a clear archaeological context. It is not necessary, however, to mention all of the highlighted key words and phrases in the Mark Scheme to gain full marks.

General Comments relating to Sections B and C

There were far fewer incidences of generic reference to Hawke's ladder of inference & consequently answers tended to be more efficient and focussed on the archaeological and ritual details of the site. In Sections B and C students are best steered away from ending essays with 'however, religion is difficult to understand...'

Some schools and colleges seem to encourage their students to draw diagrams as part of answers to Sections B & C – for example a simplified plan of Flag Fen or the Stonehenge landscape. Such diagrams rarely add to the depth and scope of the answer. This practice is not recommended – time is limited, and students would be better advised to focus on the specific point at issue.

Section B: *Religion and Ritual of Prescribed Sites*

The questions in Section B were often, but not invariably, very well answered. This was the first time that the new Section B sites have been tested – clearly many teachers have thoroughly prepared their students for this new challenge. Those centres still teaching the 'old sites' are reminded that they will be tested for the final time this summer. There is a helpful guide to the new sites in the AQA Archaeology Teacher Resource Bank.

Centres should bear in mind the following points:

- The need to allocate enough time to teaching this Section – it carries 25% of the marks and a fully prepared candidate can score well. The sites in this Section are identified in advance and examiners expect students to make reference to several specific features in explaining the religious and ritual significance of the site. It is important to stress that a description of the site will only receive limited credit – explanation of the significance of key features is needed to achieve the higher levels. The use of PowerPoint presentations might be advantageous when teaching this topic, combining pictorial reminders with bullet point facts related to their ritual significance.
- Centres should be aware of the need to teach the 5 sites in depth, clearly linked to their appropriate context.
- Reference to comparison sites is necessary for the highest marks.

- Answers structured via Renfrew & Bahn's ritual indicators will tend to be thin.
- In Question 4, when discussing the outgoing site of Stonehenge, many students gave significant coverage of some of the more bizarre explanations for the site (aliens etc). Whilst students correctly dismissed these theories, the time spent on them only served to limit discussion of the genuine archaeological evidence.

Section C: Religion and Ritual in Cultural Context

Many students responded well to these questions, producing well supported answers within the time available. A small minority answered only one question in Section C.

However there were still quite a few students, although a diminishing proportion, who were not able to think beyond their Section B sites or alternatively mention sites at all. Reliance on Section B sites leads to a lack of breadth. Centres are reminded that it is not the intention to limit the teaching of this unit to the prescribed sites only. Indeed, doing so may restrict student choice in Section C. Students are rewarded for their breadth of case study awareness. Students will struggle to achieve Level 4 in Section C if their answers use only the prescribed sites.

Question 7 – this question was often answered quite well although in some instances there was not really much of a breadth of content. Many students gave too much prominence to the written accounts by classical writers on aspects of prehistoric ritual, overlooking the breadth and depth of relevant archaeology. The weaker students focused on the idea of religious leaders being around, either to organise the building of large monuments or because there was restricted access to them. Better answers considered a range of monuments/depictions in art/regalia/shamen burials.

Question 8 – there was a real lack of knowledge on henges as an archaeological feature. Many students either jumped straight into the Bronze Age stone circles of Stonehenge or wrote about any site with 'henge' in its name i.e. Seahenge (which, is not a henge). The better students did start with the definition of the feature as a Neolithic banked/ditched enclosure with one or more entrances.

Question 9 – many answers to this question discussed prehistoric burials in general and from periods other than the Palaeolithic, some exclusively so, and where responding to the period focus of the question, used examples such as Upton Lovell as Palaeolithic. Other examples used ranged from Newgrange and West Kennet to Hochdorf and bog bodies. In some cases it was misread as burial through time with a focus on Mesolithic Vedbaek. When done well the question was done very well. Chronology can be a particular stumbling block and given the scope of the prehistory option perhaps this should be a focus in revision.

Question 10 – there was real confusion as to what a causewayed enclosure is – many students described them either as a 'cursus' (Stonehenge Cursus) or a causeway (Flag Fen) – a few even tried to use Maeshowe as an example.

Question 11 – this question attracted relatively few responses, but there were some good accounts of a range of shaft burials such as Maya, Meryruka and Hau-Nefer at Sakkara.

Question 12 – as well as some excellent mummification explanations there were some surprisingly weak ones, many not knowing/identifying the Gods/technical names and terms. Some went off track and veered towards post-mummification and burial.

Question 13 – many students seemed to have misunderstood this question, either focusing on the pharaoh alone as the religious leader or just the pharaoh as a leader (ignoring the religious).

Question 14 – there were some good answers but it was strange, given good KV9 answers for Section B, that detailed elements of the Book of the Dead then failed to figure in the same level of detail in Section C.

Question 15 – a significant number of responses to this question cited the Temple of Vesta and the Vestal Virgins as an example of 'mystery religion' and seemed to think that mystery meant the same as mysterious when in fact this group of religions is tied together by the presence of initiation into sacred rites or information.

Question 16 – this produced many good answers focussing largely on the evidence of priests in action such as the distance slab from Bridgeness with its detailed depiction of a sacrifice led by a priest, but also utilising more indirect approaches which relied on inference such as the Water Newton material or the frescoes at Lullingstone.

Question 17 – some good answers; typically students discussed curse tablets, votives and prayers to lares and penates.

Question 18 – responses to this question relied largely on discussion of water and its role at Bath, Coventina's Well and Lullingstone. Students also included reference to spirit of place and the role of animals as representatives of deities and in symbolic contexts.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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