



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

Archaeology

ARCH1

(Specification 2010)

Unit 1 The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

Report on the Examination

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Unit ARCH1

The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

Section A: *The Terminology of Religion and Ritual*

Students seem more aware of how to approach these questions & consequently there were very few incidents of over long answers beyond what was needed for 5 marks. However, the following points should be noted:

- As previously commented, some schools and colleges seem to advise their students to give a ‘modern’ example after their archaeological one, or in some cases in place of one – the question asks for archaeological exemplification and it is this which is credited.
- In question 01, a significant minority of students took ‘focus of attention’ to mean the human action of concentrating on something in general, rather than responding to a specific natural or archaeological feature for ritual/belief purposes at an archaeological site. There were also many references to ‘focus of attention’ as one of Renfrew & Bahn’s ritual indicators, & where this occurred it usually detracted from, or replaced, the use of an archaeological example.
- When using an archaeological example, students should make sure that it relates to ritual/religious practices. In question 02, some students were using the Crusades as an example of bones being excarnated – although ultimately for burial its original use was for practical reasons (less weight) rather than due to some ritual/religious belief. Pleasingly the majority of students were able to define excarnation and provided appropriate archaeological exemplification, even if this required knowledge of a context other than their main one, as was the case for students studying either the Roman or Egyptian options. Only a minority confused it with cremation or inhumation.

Section B: *Religion and Ritual of Prescribed Sites*

This was the final occasion when the ‘old sites’ listed in the Specification at the time of its launch were tested. From January 2013 onwards only the ‘new sites’ will feature in this section of the paper. The current Specification listing these sites is available on the AQA website.

Examiners were surprised that some students knew little about the prescribed site chosen in Section B. This sometimes also had a knock on effect in Section C where knowledge of prescribed sites might be usefully deployed.

However, on the whole, the new Section B sites have clearly been well integrated into the teaching of the unit. There were lots of very detailed and well explained answers on the prescribed sites in this section.

Schools and colleges should be aware of the need to teach the 5 sites in depth & link them to their appropriate context & comparison sites.

Students overwhelmingly rooted their answers in the site-specific evidence and its explanation, with very few incidences of answers that were structured via Renfrew & Bahn's ritual indicators and which were consequently thin. However, a minority of schools and colleges continue to teach this as a standard approach, leading to generic rather than specific & detailed responses. There does seem to be a correlation between this approach in section B & students who only answered one essay in section C, perhaps because a 'ritual indicators' approach to section B is inefficient. There were far fewer incidences of generic reference to Hawke's ladder of inference & consequently answers tended to be more efficient & focussed on the archaeological & ritual details of the site.

04 A significant minority of students confused the location & nature of the sites. For example, discussing Thornborough as part of the same ritual landscape as Stonehenge, Avebury or Maeshowe, leading to several points that were not relevant to the discussion of this site. Also Newgrange is not in Yorkshire.

05 There seemed to be a lack of an overall description of the sites (their architecture) as a good introduction, and jumping straight to the 'main feature' and so some students are missing out on potential marks. There is still some confusion with Medinet Habu with smiting scenes of Rameses II / Battle of Kadesh (they are at Luxor).

06 Students answering on Bath on the whole showed good knowledge of the function, architecture & iconography of the site. However, a significant number, when discussing votives, referred to the presence of miniature limbs & body parts as part of the healing/pilgrimage function of the temple complex. It is important to note that whilst there was a widespread Roman practice using such votives at many sites (e.g. Woodeaton), there are no such finds at Bath. Indeed, they are notable for the absence except for a single piece of ivory carved in the form of breasts. Cunliffe's *Roman Bath Discovered* covers every aspect of Aquae Sulis in detail.

Section C: Religion and Ritual in Cultural Context

Many students responded well to these questions, producing well supported answers within the time available. A minority answered only one question in Section C or alternatively all four in their time period.

There were some incidences of valid sites being mis-attributed to a certain period, or named periods being given the wrong dates e.g. the Neolithic as 20,000 BC.

In general there was over-reliance on sites from section B (although less than in previous series) and consequently a lack of breadth in many answers. Schools and colleges are reminded that it is not the intention to limit the teaching of the unit to the prescribed sites only. Indeed, doing so restricts the flexibility of students in answering section C and students are expected to show significant breadth of case study awareness related to their chosen period as a whole. Breadth is a requirement of high level answers in this section - students are unlikely to achieve more than 10 out of 15 marks if their answer uses only section B prescribed sites.

07 Several responses to this question scored low marks because students did not adhere to the instruction to discuss examples from Britain. Some chose to substantiate their answers with examples such as Vedbaek & Hochdorf. Perhaps a useful approach in

revision would be to work on how popular response topics such as 'grave goods' can be further narrowed down with the addition of terms specifying place & or period.

- 08** West Kennett was widely referenced. Ideally this question needed to be answered using more than one named long barrow. There are still confusions with site types and students thinking that both Maeshowe and Newgrange were long barrows.
- 09** A few students responded well to the focus on 'abstract' in the question, although lots of responses either discussed cave art in general or included abstract art from the Neolithic rather than the Palaeolithic. Many wrote long essays on the animals and their links to hunting etc. at cave sites so missing the key marks for the 'abstract' element.
- 10** Similar chronology problems to question 9 did occur, with students including detailed reference to Neolithic sites such as the Amesbury Archer that they knew well, but which are not Mesolithic. There was excessive reliance on the Section B site Vedbaek as the only site example.
- 11** This question related mainly to sites such as Saqqara and iconography at Karnak. Note however that the use of the boundary stones at Amarna are not part of the Heb Sed Festival.
- 12** Where students were able to concentrate on religious and ritual roles this question was well answered, but in some cases the only data provided was too generalised or related to political aspects, and thus failed to address the question.
- 13** There was a range of responses here. The best provided details about structures, iconography, burials and text from Abydos to make clear why this, the burial place of Osiris, became such an important cult and pilgrimage centre.
- 14** Quite a few students who answered this question failed to pick up on the element 'behaviour of animals' in the question, and so answered just by mentioning where animals feature in Egyptian ritual but without linking it to animal characteristics.
- 15** A significant number of responses to this question cited inhumations such as the 'Lady of Spitalfields'.
- 16** Very many good & detailed responses covering different aspects of sacrifice. These varied from depictions of animal sacrifice to the symbolic 'sacrifice' of 'broken' artefacts as a form of sacrifice to the gods. It is worth noting that the mythical act of tauroctony in Mithraism (as evident in a fragmentary depiction from Carrawburgh) does not count because it was not a ritual as acted by people.
- 17** This question was often well answered with many students referring to a range of examples from polytheistic & Christian contexts & ranging beyond the limits of the section B sites. There was some confusion between Hinton St Mary & Lullingstone, with a significant minority of answers citing the latter as the location of the mosaic of a depiction of 'Christ' with a Chi-rho & pomegranates.
- 18** There was some confusion between the veneration of any deity, such as those worshipped across the empire, at a particular place, & those that are actually 'local' in their origin & ritual nature. For example, Sulis Minerva at Bath can be well related to this

question, as can Nodens at Lydney Park, whereas the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh or Apollo at Pompeii cannot.

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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