

**ISLAMIC HISTORY
HIGHER LEVEL AND STANDARD LEVEL
PAPER 1**

Tuesday 13 May 2003 (afternoon)

1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Answer Section A or Section B.

SECTION A

PRESCRIBED SUBJECT 1 Pre-Islamic Arabia

DOCUMENT A *Extract from: **The Mu'allaqat of Amr**, translated by A J Arberry in **The Seven Odes**, Edinburgh (1957), p. 209.*

Ours is the world, and all who dwell upon it,
and when we assault, we assault with power.
When kings deal with their peoples unjustly
we refuse to allow injustice among us.
We are called oppressors; we never oppressed yet,
but shortly we shall be starting oppression!
When any boy of ours reaches his weaning
the tyrants fall down before him prostrating.
We have filled the land till it's too strait for us,
and we are filling the sea back with our vessels.
So let no man act foolishly against us,
or we shall exceed the folly of the foolhardiest

DOCUMENT B *Extract from: **The Arabs in History** by Bernard Lewis, London (1977), p. 29.*

The political organization of the tribe was rudimentary. Its head was the Sayyid or Sheikh, an elected leader who was rarely more than a first among equals. He followed rather than led tribal opinion. He could neither impose duties nor inflict penalties. Rights and obligations attached to individual families within the tribe but to no one outside. The function of the Sheikh's "government" was arbitration rather than command. He possessed no coercive powers and the very concepts of authority, kingship, public penalties, etc., were abhorrent to Arab nomad society.

The Sheikh was elected by the elders of the tribe, usually from among members of a single family, a sort of Sheikhly house known as the *Ahl al bait*, "the people of the house." He was advised by a council of elders called the *majlis*, consisting of the heads of the families and representatives of clans within the tribe. The *majlis* was the mouthpiece of public opinion. A distinction seems to have been recognized between certain clans regarded as aristocratic and the rest.

DOCUMENT C *Extract from: **The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates** by Hugh Kennedy, London (1991), p. 19.*

Power within the tribe was invested in the hands of chiefs. Leadership in traditional Arab society was both hereditary and elective. Leaders were chosen from a leading kin or lineage within the tribe but among the members of the lineage, power was exercised by the most able and effective, rather than by the eldest son of the previous holder of power. The powers of the chief were very limited and were dependent on his abilities for their maintenance. His functions were to arbitrate in disputes, to find adequate grazing for his followers, and to defend their wells and beasts against the attacks of rivals. He was also expected to be generous, to entertain visitors and his followers, and to this end he was sometimes allowed to collect contributions from the tribe.

DOCUMENT D *Extract from: **History of the Arabs** by Philip Hitti, London (1981), p. 95.*

Besides being oracle, guide, orator and spokesman of his community the poet was its historian and scientist, in so far as it had a scientist. Bedouins measured intelligence by poetry. “Who dares dispute my tribe [...] its pre-eminence in horsemen, poets and numbers?” exclaims a bard in *al-Aghani*. In these three elements, military power, intelligence and numbers, lay the superiority of a tribe. As the historian and scientist of the tribe the poet was well versed in its genealogy and folklore, aware of the attainments and past achievements of its members, familiar with their rights, pasture-lands and border lines. Furthermore, as a student of the psychological weaknesses and historical failures of the rival tribes it was his business to expose these shortcomings and hold them up to ridicule.

1. From the evidence of Document A and your own knowledge, what qualities were glorified in Pre-Islamic Arabia? [6 marks]

2. From the evidence of Documents B and C and your own knowledge, what were the responsibilities of the head of the tribe in Pre-Islamic Arabia? [6 marks]

3. Compare and contrast the role of poets in pre-Islamic Arabia as expressed in Documents A and D. [6 marks]

4. From the evidence of Documents B and C and your own knowledge, how were leaders selected in Pre-Islamic Arabia? [7 marks]

SECTION B

PRESCRIBED SUBJECT 2 Islamic Dynasties AH 41-247 / AD 661-861

DOCUMENT A *Extract from: Kitab al-Buldan by Ibn al-Faqih, trans. B Lewis, Toronto (1974), p. 315.*

Muhammad b. Ali b. Abd Allah said to his emissaries when he was dispatching them to the various provinces, “In Kufa and its regions they are the partisans [Shia] of Ali and his descendants. In Basra and its region they are Uthmaniyya who believe in abstention. In Mesopotamia they are fractious Kharijites and Bedouin-like infidel barbarians. In Syria they know of nothing but obedience to the Umayyads, fierce hatred to others, and massive ignorance. In Mecca and Medina they are obsessed with Abu Bakr and Umar. Give your attention to the people of Khurasan, for they are numerous and steadfast. I take good omen from the East, where the light of the world and the lamp of mankind rises.”

DOCUMENT B *Extract from: A History of Islamic Societies by I M Lapidus, Cambridge (1991), p.67.*

The Abbasid revolt was supported largely by Arabs, mainly the aggrieved settlers of Marw, with the addition of the Yemeni faction and their mawali. Further support came from Shi’i factions that were confused as to the identity of the Abbasid leadership and took up the cause as their own.

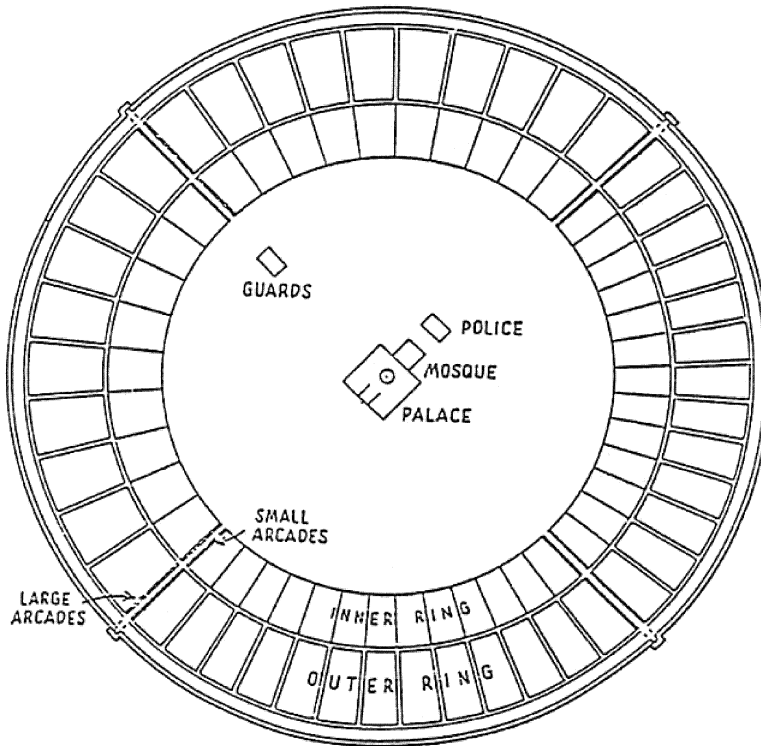
At first the Abbasids represented no more than one of a number of factions which had competed for the office. On coming to power, they would again have to face the Umayyad problem of translating the title of Caliph into institutions of effective dynastic rule. Almost the first venture of the new regime was the creation of a new capital.

DOCUMENT C *Extract from: The Abbasid Revolution by M A Shaban, Cambridge (1979), p. 168.*

The one solid achievement of the Abbasid Revolution which did not suffer any diminution was the complete assimilation of all members of the Muslim community. This in itself resulted in the remarkably rapid spread of Islam among the non-Arab subjects in the empire, especially in the east. It seems that the ideas of Umar II had finally won through, but only at the price of a revolution which brought about the downfall of his House.

DOCUMENT D

The Round City of Baghdad according to Lassner in: Islamic History Handbook by C Hillenbrand, Edinburgh (2001), p. 49.



The Round City

5. From the evidence of Documents A and B and your own knowledge, what groups of people did the Abbasids seek to attract to their cause? [6 marks]

6. From the evidence of Documents B and C and your own knowledge, why did the Abbasids adopt the policy of integrating various Muslim groups into the Abbasid Empire? [6 marks]

7. From the evidence of Document D and your own knowledge, how did the city of Baghdad promote Abbasid authority? [6 marks]

8. Using all the documents and your own knowledge, how successful were the early Abbasids in uniting all the Muslims into the Ummah? [7 marks]