

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04

Paper 1F

Islam

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## Paper Introduction

### General introduction

1. It was fundamentally important to examine the passage itself. All the level descriptors in the indicative mark scheme for AO1 begin with reference to the passage. There are a variety of ways this may be done. Some candidates presented a detailed exposition of the passage. This has much to commend it, including those who used this technique to explore the context of the wider source. One possible drawback was that this could become a simple comprehension exercise. This can be overcome by placing the passage in a context and showing an understanding of a detailed analysis of the more important terms and ideas. Another popular method was to present an overview of the whole source from which the passage was derived in order to examine the key points from within the passage. This method was useful in enabling candidates to show their understanding of the ethos of the passage. However, a potential weakness was that such an overview may be completed without sufficient focus on the passage itself.

2. Similarly, it was essential to answer the full demands of the AO2 part of the question:

do you agree with the idea(s) expressed

justify your point of view

discuss its implications for understanding religion

discuss its implications for understanding human experience.

It was important that these demands were addressed in an explicit manner rather than implicitly.

3. This unit is the synoptic part of the GCE RS course. In that respect candidates are expected to link their answers to related parts of their studies. Sometimes this may be achieved by relating work to one or more of the other sources in the anthology and also by drawing on material from any of the other three units. This enabled some candidates to compare and contrast a variety of possible responses.

Question Introduction  
AO1 features of good quality

Candidates:

- presented well-informed answers focused on the passage. Those candidates who referred to the source as a whole or to related ideas managed their answers in such a way as to demonstrate their understanding of the passage. There was effective use of scholarship.
- structured their answers in a coherent manner, with evidence of analytical thought across the answer.
- were clear about the synoptic features of this unit relating their answers to other sources and related material in other units.

AO2 features of good quality

Candidates:

- displayed effective use of argument
- referred to scholarly opinion
- displayed a thoughtful evaluation of alternative views
- were explicit in their material on implications for understanding of religion and human experience
- constructed well-justified arguments leading to a coherent conclusion.

AO1 features that require improvement

Candidates:

- tended to present a basic examination of some ideas but the answers were not well-focused on the passage. Some treated the passage like a simple comprehension exercise.
- sometimes had a problem with unsatisfactory allocation of time, related to the two parts of the question. For example, some candidates spent too much time on part (b) in spite of the mark allocation. There were a few candidates who combined (a) and (b) but with those who did there was a tendency to have insufficient material given the range of demands in AO2.

- presented a generic account of the whole source from the anthology or a general account of related teachings at the expense of a focus on the selected passage.

#### AO2 features that require improvement

##### Candidates:

- presented basic points of view with limited use of argument.
- displayed limited explicit focus on implications.

##### Observations from the scripts:

There were a number of candidates who did not pay sufficient attention to the passage. Some presented a broad outline of Islamic teachings with a few ideas in general about ethics. Others recounted a summary of Nanji's full article with little, if any, specific attention to the selected passage. Having said that, there were some examples of good quality work.

Good work displayed the candidates' ability to analyse key terms and significant themes in the passage. This included an examination of beliefs about revelation, divine command and the difference between right and wrong. Some candidates presented fuller answers by their analysis of themes such as jurisprudence. These high quality answers linked material to related anthologies such as Smart and his ethical dimension and to a range of Islamic thinkers. Few candidates picked up the idea raised towards the end of the passage about grounding a moral code in divine will as a means of creating a rational awareness that sustains the validity of revelation.

The better quality answers in AO2 commented on a range of issues such as schools of Islamic thought and their influence on ethics, the relationship between morality and life after death and debates about the relationship between religion and morality.

## Exemplar

This is an example of a script gaining marks in the highest levels for both AO1 and AO2. In part (a) the candidate selected key Islamic themes related to ethics and illustrated important ideas in the passage in the light of this overall context. For example, this was achieved by means of an examination of related ideas and teachings in the Quran. The candidate could have focused more explicitly on the passage itself but nevertheless this was a good standard of work.

This good quality continued into part (b). The candidate selected important themes including the role of women and jihad to discuss some of the implications of this passage. The candidate included some scholars and was able to consider alternative points of view.

PLAN

interpretation  
~~later~~ define ethics;

Quran meaning & Sunnah.

Adam + Iblis

Adhab

Jaqua.

Part b) Women } AGREE  
Zakah } misinterpreted.  
Jihad }

need Quran to understand.

Impact Muslims as gain confidence,  
Respect Quran more.

Disagree: Taq, Ramadan,  
different situations.

Overall: Agree

28001a

18001b

(a) The interpretation in this passage, according to Nanji, mainly concerns Islamic ethics. Ethics are the acceptable and unacceptable attitudes, behaviours and actions of an individual, which is later translated in society. In this passage, Nanji explains that Islamic ethics come from the Quran, which according to Armstrong in "Islam: A Short History" was revealed to Muhammad in 610 CE, on Mt. Nur. Muslims describe the Quran as the final, inerrant words of Allah to the whole of mankind. Also, ~~the~~ to understand what the Quran Here, Allah, al-Khalig, is revealing how ~~proph~~ humanity should live. However, to understand this, the practice of the Quran is needed, which is the Sunnah. The Sunnah is the sayings and actions of the seal of the prophets - Muhammad. Aisha describes Muhammad as the "Walking, talking Quran".

The Quran consists of 114 chapters, and in Surah Fuzgan, ~~prophets such~~ the stories of prophets such as Moses and Abraham are mentioned, from which ~~the~~ their actions in their respective societies, show how Muslims should live their lives. Therefore, Islamic ~~ethical~~ ethical thought in Islam emerged from the Quran. Bari Maududi, refers to the era before the first wahy of the Quran was given to Muhammad, as Jahiliyah, "The age of ignorance". This ~~period was~~ pre-Islamic Arabs at the time had no ethical code, instead ~~inflicted~~ injustice and

corruption were rampant. The atrocious act of female infanticide was seen as the ultimate symbol of oppression. Furthermore, gambling, riba and the consumption of alcohol further worsened the society. Hence the need for the revelation of the Quran. Faisal Rahman, an Islamic scholar who was at Chicago university, explains that Islamic ethics began to reform society and instilled a mindset of responsibility and accountability. Muslims ~~are~~ believe in an akhirah, so they are accountable to Allah for all their actions. "We will test you with what we have provided" (5:48).

According to Marshall Hodgson, Islamic civilisation ~~came from~~ emerged from two beginnings. The first is when Muslims shifted their beliefs from the pre-Islamic culture to the values based on the Quran. The second beginning was influenced by Muslim philosophers translating ancient Greek texts into Arabic and classical learning from the Quran during the Abbasid Caliphate. From this intellectual climate emerged 5 categories of actions by God's to standardise acceptable and unacceptable actions: ~~baib~~ fard (compulsory), Mustahab (recommended), Mubah (neither encouraged nor discouraged), Makrooh (discouraged) and haram (forbidden). These categories containing the ethics of Islam were set in a dual framework towards God and humanity, which later led to the formation of shari'ah law.

Another Nanji uses the story of Adam to show the

potential humans have for good and bad. Adam was the first man and was given knowledge, however he was warned not to transgress. This demonstrates that humans must think rationally as well as follow the Quran to truly practice Islamic ethics.

However, Muslims must understand the Quran through falsafa, adhab and kalām to figure out Islamic ethics. To do this, Muslims need to learn Arabic and use their own intelligence, Allah has given everyone, aqul "thinking". Nevertheless, in the current world many Muslims are misinterpreting Islam. Naji states that Islam is the youngest of the monotheistic religions, which began in Makkah 1400 years ago. Since then, Islam has spread to almost every continent. Muslims are ~~in~~ Therefore, there is a need to relate their Islamic heritage to their cultural identity in the country they live in. Also, they are influenced by the dominant culture, language and values, whereby the religious beliefs are compromised. e.g. Muslims struggle to find a place or time to pray salah. Hence the rise in conflict and misinterpretation of Islam in the eyes of the West such as 9/11 and 7/11. Therefore, Naji argues that Muslims need to go back to basics and learn Quran and sunnah again to shape their life in order to reconcile the true Muslim identity and ~~skew~~ portray Islam positively.

~~Maqam, God consciousness according to Naji~~ The state of Adab, is referred to by Naji as good manners, appropriateness and courtesy, which was used during the abbasid caliphate to discuss and debate respectfully. This reformed society of disputing groups from different areas <sup>came</sup> together to discuss customs in order to bring them in line with the teachings of the Quran. Here, human rationale and the Quran are being used to ~~establish~~ form Islamic ethics. For example, when Islam spread to the Indian ~~Sub~~ subcontinent, idol worship was very popular, however this did not comply to the shari'ah. "Do not associate partners with Allah", ~~There~~ and so the inhabitants of the area would be educated and persuaded to change their ways. Whereas, customs that abided by shari'ah were freely practiced. However, if someone still chose to break the shari'ah, they would be subject to punishment. For instance, ~~for~~ someone who committed zina would be sentenced to 80-100 lashes. "The adulteress and adulterer - punish each with 100 lashes" (24:2).

The Quran mentions Muslims as the "community of the middle way" (2:132). This is because they are balancing both their spiritual and material life. Naji stress, these two aspects are not opposing nor is one superior than the other. This can be seen in the practice of the 5 pillars. For example, zakah, purifying oneself from the dependency of material things, is 2.5% profit given to the less fortunate. To give zakah, one must

work and earn halal money - the material aspect, but this is combined with the spiritual aspect of following Allah's commands. "Be steadfast in ~~standing~~ prayer and generous in charity." (2:43) According to Weiss during the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, no one could be found in Medina who needed zakah as everyone was working.

\*

In conclusion, Nasiri explains that the Quran was revealed to mankind to show them how Allah wants them to live. However, the Quran is being misinterpreted today as people are not learning arabic or using falsafa, classical learning and adhab. Therefore, Muslims need to use their own rationale to understand the Quran, ~~but~~ ~~bercepat~~. However, they need to be careful not to live by their own moral values but the values taught by the Quran.

\* For Muslims to create a rational awareness, they need taqwa, God consciousness. According to Nasiri, taqwa is a mindset which combines both the spiritual and material aspects of life.

(b) Nanji's ideas expressed are agreeable as he encourages Muslims to use the Quran as the 'measuring sticks' for right and wrong actions. This portrays Islam positively.

Currently, Islam is gravely misunderstood e.g. Women are either discouraged or not allowed to go to school or work. Most modern Islamic states, such as Saudi Arabia do not allow women to vote nor drive - this is seen as oppression by non-Muslims. However, the Quran states "O, Lord increase me in knowledge" (20: 114). Therefore, women have the right to gain an education and seek knowledge. During, the time of the prophet, his wife Khadijah owned a successful business, employing many men including Muhammad. Furthermore, another wife, Aisha, was one of the youngest scholars in Islam and ~~many~~ narrated many hadiths. Hence, this concept that Islam does not give rights to women is a misconception that Muslims are creating. The teachings of the Quran are contradicting the implementation of the Quran by Muslims.

Furthermore, ~~women~~ Zakah is a compulsory act of worship in Islam. Abu Bakr, fought against Muslims who refused to give zakah in the Ridda wars. However, many Muslims today do not give zakah and even if they do, the Muslim state does not collect nor distribute the money correctly. & Zakah, is a right of the less fortunate, if they are not getting money, the poor will stay in poverty and the rich will get richer.

In addition, during the time of Muhammad, Jihad was relevant as the Makkans were taking the Muslims land. Therefore, Jihad was declared during the battle of Badr, ~~the verse~~ "Fight ~~the~~ against those who fight you, but do not transgress" (2:189). Also, "Do not harm women, children or even a tree" (Hadith), ~~Therefore,~~ so innocent ~~civilian~~ civilians cannot be killed. However, ~~this~~ this has been re-interpreted by imams during the crusade wars and even today such as the killing in Woodlith, which has given a negative stereotypical perception of Islam to the West.

Therefore, ~~by~~ to solve this Norji recommends going back to basics. This is agreeable, as Islam is being mispractised at the moment, and Muslims need to rediscover the true meanings of Islam so that women are not mistreated, the ~~less~~ less fortunate are helped and that Muslims that do terrible things in God's name will stop.

~~By~~ Norji's ideas will impact Muslims, Quran and Islam in the following ways: firstly, ~~the Quran will be~~ there will be a clearer meaning of the Quran so less confusion. Secondly, the Quran will be given more importance and the belief that it is the ~~final~~ final words of Allah will be more widely accepted. This is because, in the past, some ~~Muslims have done the atrocious deed~~ such as Jihad, have been misinterpreted which creates doubt as to whether Allah would command of such a thing. Thirdly, ~~to~~ Muslims would not solely rely on the interpretations of others, but attempt to understand the Quran themselves through falsafa, classical learning and kalam like

the Muslim philosophers of the past. From this, Muslims will regain their confidence in Islam and consequently will be able to explain the religion to non-Muslims with pride. Lastly, the relationship between Muslims and Allah will strengthen as Muslims are practicing actual Islam. Therefore, the misrepresentation Islam has in the West will be removed.

Furthermore, by the Quran and Sunnah abolished pre-Islamic practices that were causing injustice in society. Practices such as infanticide was made forbidden, "do not kill except for a just cause" and the status of women was elevated. In a similar way, by learning and applying Quran and Sunnah, Muslims today will practice true Islam and their wrong-doings that they claim to be from Islam will stop.

On the other hand, some may disagree with the ideas expressed by Nasiri, as the climate, situation and intellectual mindset that created Islamic ethics in the past cannot be applied today as new situations are appearing. Muslims need to understand the ethics of where they live. For example, practising shari'ah law in Britain would be difficult as they are already living according to British laws.

Tariq Ramadan claims that Islamic ethics need to be reformed and re-interpreted to gain a clearer understanding for Muslims living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century rather than living by rules made by the Qadis in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. Also, Muslims hold different views regarding some laws. For instance, the law of munta is accepted.

by ~~for~~ shi'ar but is rejected by sunnis; asking shi'ar to change their ways may further divide the ummah.

In conclusion, Najji's ideas are agreeable, as the Quran has been revealed to mankind to determine acceptable and unacceptable actions. ~~Humans are~~ However, humans must use their own intellect to understand the Quran. If Muslims do go back to basics, learn arabic and do not rely on the interpretations of others, the misconceptions the west have on Islam will be removed.

### Paper Summary

There are four aims in the Religious Specification. This paper encourages students to:

- Develop their interest in a rigorous study of religion and relate it to the wider world. To succeed in this paper candidates must show evidence of a thorough study of the selected passage and fulfil the demands of A02.
- Treat the subject as an academic discipline and this paper requires specialist study, drawing on their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Adopt an enquiring and critical approach whereby they may reflect on all their previous units.
- Develop their own values and views in the light of their learning. A02 in particular enables candidates to engage in this creative process.

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