3.15 Sunni and Shia Islam: The Historical Origins of the Split: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions. Short-answer responses may be phrases; the evaluation question requires full sentences. Time guidance: 30 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Evaluate the claim that the succession dispute immediately after Muhammad's death was the most important cause of the Sunni-Shia divide. In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, and reach a justified conclusion.

(Total for Question 1 is 15 marks)

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2 Explain two contrasting Muslim interpretations of the Quranic instruction to obey those in authority among the believers, in relation to the historical dispute over leadership after Muhammad. Refer to a source of wisdom and authority in your answer.

(Total for Question 2 is 5 marks)

3 Explain the importance of the Battle of Karbala and Husayn's martyrdom for Shia Muslims today.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

4 Give three ways the historical split over leadership has been remembered or expressed in Muslim communities, naming each way briefly.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.15 Sunni and Shia Islam: The Historical Origins of the Split: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A balanced and well-developed evaluation that analyses arguments for and against the claim, refers to religious and historical evidence, considers alternative causes, and reaches a supported and justified conclusion. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation that gives arguments on both sides with some supporting evidence, and a conclusion that is supported though not fully developed. **7-9**

Level 2 An argument that addresses both sides but with limited support or development, and a conclusion that is attempted but not fully justified. **4-6**

Level 1 A basic or one-sided response with little development and no real judgement or conclusion. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Arguments supporting the claim: the immediate succession dispute determined competing claims to leadership, setting the pattern for Sunni acceptance of elected or consultative caliphs and Shia insistence on leadership from the Prophet's family.
- The dispute created rival communities that developed different religious institutions and authority structures, making it a clear origin point for the divide.
- Arguments against the claim: later events such as the Battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Husayn had a profound emotional and theological impact that deepened and ritualised the split.
- Social, political and regional factors, including power struggles, tribal alliances and the development of different legal and theological schools, also contributed to long-term separation.
- Religious arguments might note that interpretations of scripture and hadith, and the role of Imamate theology, evolved after the initial dispute, so the split was a process rather than a single cause.
- A balanced conclusion might argue that the succession dispute was a necessary and foundational cause but not the only or always the most important factor, since later events and institutional development also played major roles.

Question 2

view 1: Sunni Muslims have traditionally understood 'those in authority' to include the wider community's chosen leaders, supporting the legitimacy of the elected caliphs, oe **B1**

development: this reading supports the view that the community's own choice of a qualified leader carries real religious authority, oe **B1**

view 2: Shia Muslims have traditionally understood 'those in authority' to refer specifically to divinely appointed leaders from the Prophet's own family, supporting the legitimacy of Ali and his descendants as Imams instead, oe **B1**

development: this reading supports the view that true religious authority could only ever belong to the Prophet's appointed successors, not to any leader the community happened to choose, oe **B1**

reference to a source of wisdom and authority made accurately, e.g. Surah 4:59, which instructs believers to obey Allah, the Messenger and those in authority among them, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast: 'those in authority' read as the community's chosen leaders (supporting the caliphs) versus read as the Prophet's divinely appointed family line (supporting the Imams).

Question 3

Level 3 A detailed, well-organised answer that explains several reasons why Karbala and Husayn are important to Shia Muslims, supported by accurate reference to historical events and practice, with clear links made between the reasons given. **5-6**

Level 2 An answer that explains some reasons for the importance, with some supporting detail, though links between points may be limited. **3-4**

Level 1 One or two isolated relevant points are made about the significance, with little supporting detail or explanation. **1-2**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Husayn's martyrdom is a central example of sacrifice and standing against tyranny, forming a model of moral courage for Shia Muslims.
- The event is commemorated annually during Ashura, which strengthens communal identity and reminds communities of suffering and resistance.
- Karbala shapes ideas about suffering, justice and leadership, reinforcing the view that true authority includes moral and spiritual qualities.
- Stories and rituals about Karbala encourage charity, remembrance and loyalty to the Ahl al-Bayt, the family of the Prophet, in many Shia communities.
- The symbolism of Karbala has political and social influence, sometimes inspiring movements that oppose perceived oppression.
- For many Shia individuals it provides a lived, emotional connection to history, theology and community practice.

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Question 4

way 1: commemorations such as Ashura mourning rituals in Shia communities, oe **B1**

way 2: differing religious leadership structures, like caliphs and imams, oe **B1**

way 3: historical writings and hadith collections emphasising different events or sayings, oe **B1**

Answer: Ashura mourning rituals; different leadership structures (caliphs versus imams); different emphases in historical writings and hadith collections.

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