



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 1C (A-level)
Question 03 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1C (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 'Rebellions in the years 1549-1571 stemmed from the weakness of central government'

Assess the validity of this view

[25 marks]

Student response

The Western Rebellion and the Northern Rebellion resulted from attempts made by central government to impose religious settlements. Kett's Rebellion and the wider commotions of 1549 were a response to social and economic changes, linked to longer term government policies. The Rebellions of 1549 and the Northern Rebellion of 1569/70 placed severe strains on the resources of central government and demonstrated the difficulty of controlling areas which were a considerable distance from London. The rebellions were the result of the strength of concerns in the localities set against the weakness of central government in being able to impose their wills.

Central government could not act independently in imposing its policies in the localities. Central government could promote policies and was responsible for legislation passed through Parliament, but the implementation of policies was dependent on the authority of the nobility in the localities. Support of the voluntary network of JPs and minor officials, often linked to the nobility, was also critical for the successful conduct of government. Central government could only govern effectively with this support. This was an inherent weakness of the system of government; strong government was dependent, not only on a strong central government but the support of a strong nobility in the localities.

The rebellions of 1549 are seen as part of the Mid Tudor Crisis, when central government is viewed as being inadequate, leadership by the 'sickly' minor Edward was seen to be ineffectual. Edward's government in 1549 was weakened by the demands placed on it through foreign involvement in France and Scotland. The Duke of Somerset's authority was stretched and his military resources compromised both by the demands placed upon them and by the lack of financial resources available. The legacy of Henry VIII was both foreign invasion and an impoverished exchequer. More significantly, central government was weakened by Somerset's approach, which alienated the nobility within the Privy Council. Paget remarked that Somerset's negotiations with the rebels weakened government as 'the foote hath become the head'. Somerset struggled to put down Kett's rebellion due to limited military resources and had to resort to the use of mercenaries.

The Northern Rebellion of 1569/70 had its origins in the divisions within the Privy Council as to the succession and the presence of Mary Queen of Scots in England. Elizabeth did procrastinate and did not send a fellow Queen back to Scotland. The rebellion also exposed the weakness of central government in attempting to control the localities. Bowes was hated for his loyalty to Westminster's demands. Despite the centralisation of Thomas Cromwell in the removal of franchises and liberties, central government was still dependent on the local

authority of the nobility, particularly in the Northern Marches. Policies enacted by central government needed to be implemented by the nobility in the localities. In 1549 the noble presence in Devon and Cornwall was weak, in 1569/70 the nobility in the north was hostile to the demands of central government.

The rebellions in both 1549 and 1569/70 had religious causes. The Western Rebellion of 1549 was a direct response to the protestant policies of Edward's government in the attack on religious practices and beliefs, and the attempt to remove wealth from the Church. The articles of the Western rebellion focus on the hostility to the 1549 Prayer book with services in English, 'like a Christmas game' and the attack on purgatory, prayers for the dead, the ceremony of Catholicism and the impact on local guilds. In 1549 one of the first acts of the Revolt of the Northern Earls was to hold a Catholic Mass in Durham Cathedral in defiance of the attempts by Elizabeth's government to impose the religious settlement agreed by parliament ten years earlier. In 1566 two thirds of northern JPs were catholic.

Rebellions in the years 1549 – 1571 had social and economic causes. The Sheep tax introduced by Somerset hit communities in the south west very hard. Conversely the movement for enclosure was resisted by Kett's rebels with the tearing down of hedges. Both in 1549 and 1571 rebellions had social causes. In 1549 the Western rebels questioned the number of servants kept by the gentry; Kett's rebels and those of the wider commotions challenged the greed of new land owners, in some cases destroying rabbit warrens. In the south and east of England, the Henrician policy of dissolving the monasteries had created a profit economy in which those who could afford to buy and sell land following the Statute of Wills used land, not for the good of the commonwealth but for individual wealth. In the socially more conservative north The Revolt of the Northern Earls was made possible due to semi feudal relationships and land holdings.

In both 1549 and 1569/70 the rebellions did not stem directly from the weakness of central government, they were caused by strong opposition in the localities to government policies. In 1549 legislation passed in parliament was opposed by men in the localities. William Body was killed when he attempted to impose a protestant settlement in Cornwall. In 1569/70 Pilkington did not have sufficient authority to carry through religious changes in the face of local opposition. In 1549 and in 1569/70 central government was forced to use its ultimate power, military forces external to the locality, to assert its authority.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer does have range in its assessment of the causes of rebellion in these years and provides some impressive supporting information to corroborate what is argued in the answer. There is effective assessment of the relationship between central and local government and the dependency of the crown on support from local officials. The importance of both religious motivations and social grievances is also explored. The conclusion is weak as it does not offer an explicit overarching judgement, although it suggests one and the Wyatt's Rebellion is not considered at all. It is a good Level 4 answer.