



History

Paper 1B (AS) Additional Specimen Question
Paper

Question 02 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 26/02/16

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 1B (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

02 'Ferdinand and Isabella destroyed the power of the nobility in Spain.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

Ferdinand and Isabella did not destroy the power of the nobility as this would imply that their power was completely eroded, which it was not. Ferdinand, King of Aragon, 1479-1516, and Isabelle, Queen of Castile, 1474-1504, attempted to curb noble power in a number of areas, the biggest of which was economically where landownership was drastically reduced. However, the nobles gained wealth in other ways. Other areas include political power, religious power, and military power where the extent of the erosion of noble power was not as great.

The largest area where Ferdinand and Isabella eroded the power of the nobility was economically where reductions in land ownership curbed the nobility's potential to make money. The nobility lost large amounts of land at the Cortes of Toledo in 1480 when all land lost by the crown since 1464 was returned. The Cortes also stopped nobles from making Private War and building new castles which reduced opportunities to extend their land. Potential for trade was also reduced at Toledo as the coastal cities of Curtayena and Cadiz were taken by the crown. Ferdinand's ayraricen settlement of 1486 in Catalonia effectively gave possession of the farm land to the peasants, curbing the amount of money the nobility could make from it. Furthermore, following the Castilian War of Succession, troublesome members of the nobility were arrested, their castles burnt, and their property taken, reducing the economic power of the crown's enemies. Not only this, claims to Mercedes and land were reviewed which had the potential to erode the nobilities' land ownership and wealth. However, economic power was not completely destroyed to the concessions made by the crown and the fact that the nobility was already exempt from taxation and had their own castles. Despite arresting troublesome nobles after the War, Isabella gave others new grants of land and reaffirmed their rights to collect grants collected since 1464. Those who lost land to the crown were given compensation of land in Granada so it is clear the nobles retained large shuthes of land and could make more money from this. Those who had the right to collect the alcabala tax in their jurisdictions retained that right and nobles were helped by the crown in their attempts to remain economically viable. The nobility were also encouraged to use the mayorazgo which enabled nobles to pass down land without it being divided. Furthermore, towns under noble control stayed outside royal justice and administration, leaving the nobles in control of large amounts of land. They also received more Mercedes than they started with by bribing officials. The biggest symbol of the nobilitis remaining economic power was Juros Enourmous loans, such as the 17 million muravedis from the Duke of Medina Sidonia, for the war in Granada, were converted into government bonds which paid the creditor a 10% annual return. These left the crown heavily indebted to the nobility and cost them 112 million muravedis in 1504 alone. The nobility still had huge economic influence 90 years after the

recession of Ferdinand and Isabella, demonstrated by the Duke of Infantado who was Lord of 90 villages and 90,000 vassals. Therefore, it is clear the crown did not destroy the economic power of the nobility due to the huge influence they retained.

The second biggest area of power erosion was in political power where Ferdinand and Isabella attempted to reduce noble power in government. Corregidores were appointed in major towns in an attempt to stop royal policies being interfered with by the nobility, and Ferdinand introduced a lottery system for public office into the generalitat and Government of Barcelona to stop the formation of *clivues*. Furthermore, hereditary grants of office were reduced at the cortes of Toledo in 1480, ensuring government positions did not stay in the same noble family. Royal authority was also increased with the use of 5 chambers in the Royal Council of Castile and the insistence of the use of *Letrados*. This excluded nobles who could not only advise the monarchs. Isabella also dispensed much royal justice personally from Madrid, ensuring she did not have to appoint others to do this for her and she established a permanent audience in Valladolid in 1489, consisting of a president and 8 *Lletrados*. These reforms were aimed at reducing the political influence of the nobility, however as previously mentioned concessions had to be made by the crown to keep the nobility onside. Isabella allowed new grants of titles and offices and encouraged the nobility to spend their time at court and at the heart of the castles' cultural life. Considering this, it is clear the nobility retained a reduced form of political power despite the reforms made.

The third biggest area where noble power was eroded is their religious power. Knights tied to the three religious orders received large amounts of wealth, owned large estates and were extremely powerful. They could amass large numbers of troops, some of which fought against Isabella in the civil war. In order to bring them under the control of the crown, Ferdinand became the Grand Master of each of them; Santiago, 1476; Calatrava, 1487; Alcázar 1494. Furthermore, in 1459 a council was set up dedicated to the orders bringing them under the direct control of the Monarchy. Not only this, the crown tried to ensure that bishop appointments were of non-noble background and were therefore less likely to make private war against the crown or others. In conclusion, whilst Ferdinand and Isabella did make less reforms to religious power, it was not completely destroyed due to the large wealth and military power still held by the orders.

In terms of military power, the nobility retained a large amount of power as it was not eroded by the crown. Although the conquest of Granada kept the nobility occupied and loyal to the crown, it enabled them to expand their land because, as mentioned, compensation of land in Granada was given to them. Furthermore, the nobility in Andalusia played a key role in the victory as they had experience fighting the Moors. Their intelligence is also notable in material terms, for example, Cardinal Mendoza supplied 1,000 horses and 1,000 soldiers in 1489. Opportunities were also made for the nobility to serve in foreign wars and therefore claim more land. Ferdinand and Isabella made no attempt to destroy the military power of the nobility, as demonstrated by the Duke of Medina Sidonia who offered Phillip of Burgundy 2,000 cavalry and 50,000 Ducats to keep Ferdinand out of Castile following Isabella's death.

In conclusion, the power of the nobility was not destroyed by Ferdinand and Isabella. Despite large economic reforms such as the reclaiming of land which eroded the power to make wealth, restrictions of governmental positions and the erosion of religious power especially with the military orders, the nobility still held a large amount of power. They were exempt from taxation, still held powerful positions and the crown were heavily influenced by them therefore their power was not destroyed.

Commentary – Level 5

This is an excellent answer, with range, balance and clear supporting evidence. It is consistently relevant, focused and analytical in approach and demonstrates clear judgements.

It is an example of an AS answer which, whilst not 'perfect', is a top Level 5.