



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 1B (A-level)
Question 01 Student 01
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 1B (A-level): Additional specimen question paper

01 Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to Philip I and the development of government in Spain.

[30 marks]

Student response

The argument put forward in Extract A is that 'personal monarchy' was the 'mainspring' of Spanish government under Philip II. The extract argues that although this did not make the government any more 'absolute' than it had been before, the old councils were completely controlled by Philip and the realms were administered through direct communication between Philip and his officials whose actions were entirely controlled by the monarch

In many ways this argument is convincing. Philip is known for his obsessive concern for detail, reading every report and insisting on initialling all documents. He worked hard but failed to see the difference between trivial detail and important matters. He acted as his own first minister and did not delegate power to favourites, trying to live up to his motto, 'it is as well to think of everything'. The extract refers to Philip's unwillingness to share information with anyone, which was certainly an aspect of his character. However, as the extract acknowledges, Philip inherited a system of councils, including the Council of State. However, the use of these councils was actually much greater than the argument put forward in Extract A. For example, Philip created three new regional councils, for Italy, Portugal and Flanders between 1555 and 1559. He also supplemented his councils with special committees such as 'La Junta de la Noche' which met daily and helped to coordinate government. The extract is therefore incorrect in suggesting that Philip shared information with 'no one'. Although it rightly points out that conciliar government was 'still an essential feature of the administration', it rather underplays its importance.

In contrast with Extract A, Extract B argues that the system of government under Philip II was 'essentially conciliar in character'. This extract stresses the bureaucratisation of government and suggests that the councillors had enormous power and that the King usually acted on their advice. This extract exaggerates equally in the opposite direction from Extract A. It is true that there were many councils with specific powers but only the Council of State and the Junta de la Noche had a broad control beyond a limited area. Whilst Philip's secretaries were powerful (largely thanks to their direct access to the monarch), they were always under Philip's control. So, factions came and went, for example, Alba and the Eboli faction in the 1560s but in 1570 Perez was arrested and Cardinal Granvelle came to the fore. In fact Philip relied heavily on trained lawyers, known as letrados in his councils and constant faction disputes weakened the power of individual councillors. The Extract's argument that bureaucratisation was important is convincing but the suggestion that this made councillors enormously important is not.

Extract C offers a more balanced argument that under Philip II, Spain was 'in transition' and it had a combination of personal rule and bureaucratisation. Its argument that the King was more an absolute monarch in theory than reality is certainly the case. Whilst he was the source of authority and law in Castile, Castile and Aragon remained separate kingdoms with differing

rights. When Perez escaped to Aragon and Philip wanted to have him tried as a heretic in 1590, Perez was able to appeal to the Justiciar in Aragon for protection. The fears of the Aragonese that Philip was trying to remove their liberties led to the Aragonese revolt of 1590-91 and ended in Philip confirming the privileges of the kingdom. Thus the argument of Extract C that 'outside Castile the power of the King was restricted' is entirely accurate.

Extract C is also correct to suggest that the power of the king was 'regulated by a contract between Crown and subjects'. The privileges of the aristocracy were a limitation to royal power - particularly in Castile where Philip needed the support and cooperation of this group to rule. Furthermore, Philip inherited a system of law courts which operated without royal interference (although he could demand justice, as was the case when the Baron de Montigny was publicly executed in 1570). So Extract C gets the balance about right when it argues that Philip II's government was neither run by an absolute monarch nor an entirely bureaucratic one. The arguments put forward here are convincing.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a very effective answer. The broad interpretations and supporting arguments are clearly identified for each extract and judgment is made as to how convincing the arguments in each extract are. Knowledge of context is deployed effectively to interrogate the interpretations and to support the conclusions reached. It is very clearly a strong Level 5 answer.