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History 7042  
Additional Specimen Question Paper 1A (A-level)  
Question 2 Student 2  
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

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## **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.

### **Additional Specimen QP:**

**02 'The military skill of Western Christians was key to their successes against their Muslim opponents'.**

**Assess the validity of this view with reference to the years 1095 to 1119.**

**[25 marks]**

The Crusaders had a number of notable successes against various Muslim opponents in the years 1095 to 1119, and often this was the result of their military skills. However, this was not always the case and this essay will seek to argue that Muslim disunity was, overall, the most important factor in these victories.

There were obviously a number of military successes on the First Crusade itself, culminating in the 1099 capture of Jerusalem. Here it can be seen that the siege warfare conducted by Godfrey of Bouillon and Raymond of Toulouse was important in getting the crusaders over Jerusalem's high, and well defended, walls. The crusaders were vastly outnumbered by the summer of 1099 and needed to mastermind a way into the city before a relief force on its way from Egypt could arrive. This they did by building huge siege towers which Godfrey moved in the middle of the night to a less defended section of the wall. Further evidence of military skill can be seen in the terrifying cavalry charge which won the day at Ascalon in August 1099. Furthermore, at Dorylaeum in 1097, Bohemond and Robert of Normandy managed to avoid a complete annihilation by quick thinking and using their baggage carts to create a defensive line so that their portion of the army could hold out until reinforcements came under the command of Raymond and Adhemar. The Seljuk Turks certainly under-estimated the military skills of these first crusaders, perhaps assuming that they were nothing more than a Byzantine mercenary force or even a second wave of poorly behaved peasants like the Peasants' Crusade had been, and this worked to the advantage of the First Crusaders. The Turks were not used to the style of cavalry warfare adopted by the Westerners and it often terrified them into retreating.

After the capture of Jerusalem, and the establishment of Outremer, military skills were once again important in leading the Franks to success against Muslim opponents. This is perhaps most notable in King Baldwin's identification of the ports as a prime military target from an early stage. Baldwin used his own skill and a series of carefully arranged alliances with the Italian City States in order to be able to effectively blockade and take numerous important ports in a short space of time; for example Arsuf, Caesarea and Acre. In the north of Outremer, probably the most blinding example of skill and bravery came from Prince Roger, who defeated Bursuq's army in 1115, despite being outnumbered. Similarly, in 1105 Tancred had won a famous defeat against Aleppo at the Battle of Artah, despite a seemingly desperate situation.

The Western Christians also demonstrated political skills, as well as military ones. Their siege of Antioch saw the deployment of a great deal of their military capabilities and yet the Crusaders still could not manage to breach the walls. It was, in fact, a cunning plot led by Bohemond which gained the army access in 1098. He negotiated with a disaffected tower guard, called Firouz, for the tower to be betrayed and this allowed access into the city. Similarly, King Baldwin made political agreements with the Pisans and Genoese for the naval assistance that would be so vital in capturing the coast. He also negotiated the surrender of certain cities with the Muslim inhabitants; if they would cede the city peacefully then he allowed them free passage. This was seen at Arsuf in 1101. The early settlers recognised that they were vastly outnumbered and so did not look to fight every single Muslim they came into contact with, they generally chose their targets carefully. They also utilised castles, with the first phase of building beginning around 1115, and when reinforcements did arrive from the West these were used in targeted campaigns.

However, despite their obvious military capabilities, the Franks also suffered some crushing defeats at the hands of their Muslim opponents, most famously at the Battle of the Field of Blood in 1119 and the

disaster at Harran in 1104 which led to the capture of Bohemond and the decimation of Antioch's lands. On some occasions the Franks were victorious, but this was largely down to chance, such as Baldwin I's lucky escape from Ramla in 1102, which saw most of his army killed. This, added to the fact that the Second Crusade would be such a disaster, suggests that other factors were involved in ensuring Christian victories. Indeed, contemporaries would have suggested that victories against the 'infidel' were the result of divine intervention. The battle cry at Dorylaeum was 'God Wills It' and before the successful assault on Jerusalem, the army marched around the city barefoot, singing hymns. The importance of religious focus and zeal during the years of the crusade should not be underestimated. Much of the journey to Jerusalem involved little actual fighting and more crusaders died from diseases and starvation rather than Muslim attack. It was zeal and a desire to gain the Indulgence which kept many focused on their goal of Jerusalem when all seemed lost. Indeed, when the Crusaders were trapped by Kerbogha's coalition army inside Antioch, it was reportedly the finding of the Holy Lance which gave them the courage to charge out of the city despite the fact that they were starving and outnumbered. Yet, this can be challenged; Tom Asbridge has discovered in the text of Matthew of Edessa that the Crusaders attempted a surrender which was refused by Kerbogha and thus we can conclude that the charge from Antioch was one of desperation rather than one inspired by religious confidence.

Perhaps, therefore, it should be considered that it was not Crusader military strengths which were responsible for their victories, but instead that it was the internal weaknesses of their enemies. At Antioch in 1098, Kerbogha's coalition shattered extremely easily. This was probably due to the inherent fragility within his force; his allies Duqaq of Damascus and Ridwan of Aleppo did not trust his intentions and so ran away at the first sign of the crusader charge. Similarly, Sultan Kilij Arslan made the Crusaders' job much easier at Nicaea as he was away fighting a Seljuk neighbour over land when they first arrived and besieged his capital in 1097.

The fledgling states which made up Outremer were incredibly fortunate that the Muslim world was so divided in 1099. The Muslim concept of 'jihad', or struggle against the non-believers, had largely been forgotten and the early years of the Crusader States saw the Franks ally with Muslims against other Muslims on numerous occasions. The most famous example came in 1115 when a huge coalition between Antioch, Edessa, Aleppo and Damascus led to the retreat of the Sultan of Baghdad's army. The Sultan of Baghdad was an extremely remote figure, who had limited control over his emirs. These men preferred to ally with the Franks, rather than risk losing territory to each other. The Sunni and Shi'a doctrinal and political divide also helped the Franks. This meant that attacks in the south on Jerusalem tended to come from Egypt and had no support in the north from the Sunni Turks. The Egyptian forces tended to be large but badly organised, as demonstrated at the Third Battle of Ramla. The relative weakness of Egypt can be seen in Baldwin I's confidence in attacking there in 1118, although this ultimately did fail and led to the King's own death.

It is difficult to argue that any one factor led to the Western victories over Muslim opponents. Certainly, the Western Christians showed numerous examples of military skill, both in offensive attacks to take territory and defensive actions to defend any gains. However, by 1119 serious cracks were beginning to be revealed, most notably the death of the King in 1118 and the crushing defeat suffered by Antioch at the hands of Il-Ghazi in 1119. This was in a period when the Muslim world was beginning to strengthen and work together and also after a period of adaptation to Western techniques of fighting. It can be seen that often the Western Franks were helped enormously by lack of preparation or lack of unity in their opponents, and thus this was really the key to the scale of their successes in the period 1095-1119.

### **Commentary - level 5**

The answer is consistently focused on the question and contains full supporting detail for the analysis and assessment presented. It is well structured, examining the validity of the question's proposition first and then assessing other reasons for the success of the Crusader States in the period. The only minor weakness is that 'military skill' is largely assessed descriptively via reference to military encounters. The answer would have been even more effective had it explained more fully the expertise in siege warfare and cavalry warfare. It is, however, a Level 5 answer.

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