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HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION

WRITING BOOKLET

Examination

History Extension
The Crusades

Section	Part	Question Number
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The Crusades, a series of ideological and political conflicts from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries are a series of events that may never be fully understood; indeed, even a complete reconstruction would not allow a complete understanding of the motivations and origins of the events. The motivation of the Crusaders cannot be entirely understood, as human motivations are indeed far too complex to fully comprehend; in this sense, any historian seeking to explore the motivations of the Crusaders are indeed 'chasing shadows'. For such a large event, historians frequently tend to get trapped into 'groupthink' in which large groups of people are attributed as one; it is thus impossible, even given a thoroughly comprehensive series of documents or evidence, to have the empathic capacity to understand the motivations of all of them. In the debate of the motivations ~~of the~~ ^{and origins} Crusaders, Schama's statement is almost entirely correct and relevant; however historians are not always aware of this fact. This forms a core area of debate between historians constructing a cross-section of the belligerents of the Crusades, and their understanding of what brought them into conflict.

The Crusades were, until Sir Steven Runciman's 'A History of the Crusades' relegated to the realm of literature and Romantic fiction; from Sir Walter Scott's Crusades novels such as 'Ivanhoe'. Runciman's greatest contribution to the Crusades

was turning them into a separate ~~stage~~ ^{field} for academic study. Runciman's narrative history of the Crusades is comprehensive and exhaustive. It is very close to a 'reconstruction' of the 'dead world' as it covers the events from the 7th Century, with the fall of the Muslim empire through to the 14th Century; however, it still examines the motivations of the Crusades in an analytical way. "Whether you view them as the chivalrous, romantic adventure of the Christians or the last barbarians, the Crusades forms an important part of history." Runciman, who was influenced by Marxist concepts of economics and 'forces' of history, applied the economic and political factors into the Crusades; essentially stating that it was greed and desire for monetary gain that drove the Crusaders, as in Islamic journalist Tariq Ali's terms: "It was all about money." 'Unabashedly pro-Byzantine,' Runciman's works have drawn criticism for his sympathetic portrayal of the Byzantines and derisive portrayal of the Latin soldiers, calling them 'naughty children' and attributing them to being the last 'barbarians' who destroyed the Roman Empire. However, his contribution to the academic study of the Crusades, and in particular, the motivations of the Crusaders, is still valued, despite the fact that he is ultimately unable to 'reconstruct a dead world' in its entirety.

Prior to Runciman's work on the ~~the~~ Crusades, historians

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of them consisted of the chronicles of William of Tyre, and a mention in Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'. ~~That~~ Tyre lived in Jerusalem, and was indeed the Archbishop of Jerusalem after the First Crusade; thus, ~~this~~ his history is not necessarily 'chasing shadows' as Schama suggests: he is living during the times, and has no need to reconstruct Jerusalem. However, his perspective offered on the *causae belli* was the divine force of God and the "abominations and misery the unclean races had wrought on the holy city." To understand the context of Tyre, one must understand the views on time; that time was linear, beginning with God's creation of Earth, ending when "the world was Christian again". This is in stark contrast to Gibbon, whose anti-Catholic writings neglected great detail on the Crusades, but merely attributed them to the failures of the Holy Roman Empire. His idea for the origins of the Crusades was the fact that the corruption in the Church had led them to this point; Pope Urban II's speech had only been the catalyst. More modern writings, such as those by Johnathan Riley-Smith corroborate this view that religion, and failure of religion drove these events and the Crusades. Riley-Smith argues against Runciman, stating that the monetary gains from invading the Levant was minimal compared to the cost of going - in particular, he points to Richard's army from England which nearly bankrupted

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the nation. This is, however, a very good example of how historians 'chase shadows'. Riley-Smith, writing for a post 9/11 world of rationalism and ~~economic~~ capitalism, cannot grasp the 'zeitgeist' or mentality of the times, just as Runciman cannot. It is possible that if ~~it~~ occurred for other reasons than money or religion; power, politics or psychology - we will never know for sure.

The origins of the Crusades are linked directly to the motivations. However, Carole Hillenbrand offers an important perspective, the Islamic perspective. She notes the split between Occidental and Oriental history and importantly culture, also noting the importance of religious symbolism; both 'crusader' and the Islamic equivalent 'al-Salibiyyun' come from the word 'cross', 'cruz' in Latin and 'salib' in Arabic. Islamic sources, she notes come 'through a prism of faith', and also that despite this symbolism the terms Crusader and 'al-Salibiyyun' did not come into usage until after the Third Crusade. This shows the motivations of the Crusades could be tied to the symbolism and religious appeal of 'taking up the cross'. Similarly, historians such as Riley-Smith see the importance of religion in the Crusades, in both the origins and the motivations of the Crusaders. Unlike Runciman, who attributed the 'casus belli' to the economic and political factors in ~~the~~ Europe (Norman princes invading down

to Sicily, Saracens pushing into Europe from Turkey) which motivated Alexius to request help, they believe that it was for religious purposes that the Crusades began and for religious purposes that they were fought. John France, a military historian who analysed the ways in which the wars were fought, noted the size of the army, at 50-60000 in the first Crusade it was unheard of in Europe... William the Conqueror defeated England with 14000, thus concluding that it would have been for very powerful political reasons if not entirely religious reasons. Again, as Schama notes, it is entirely impossible to 'reconstruct a dead world in its completeness', despite the comprehensive nature of modern investigation, the motivations of an army that size is impossible to quantify or to comprehend, as is the degree of religious involvement.

The historical debate surrounding the motivations and the origins of the Crusades can essentially be summed up by Carr: "There is no such thing as objective history." This supports Schama's statement that historians are chasing shadows, and in light of the increasingly post-modern world of history, this statement can be seen as extremely relevant. However, ~~the~~ for the Crusades, where some sources have been written in the past, it is not entirely true. Historians are not, at times,

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'painfully aware' of this fact. Historians can make judgements on why Pope Urban delivered the speech to call forth Crusaders, and why the number of people who came came, but historians will always debate with each other over the origins and the motivations of the Crusades due to the fact that they are often not aware that they will never be entirely correct, and that there are, for 50-60000 Crusaders, at least twice that number of motivations, and for the origins of the Crusades, countless more unquantifiable numbers.

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