The early modern period is crucial for the development of modern structures of political organization and their legitimation: this seems to be a truism after so much research emphasis on national history, and rather less on comparative research. In nearly all political units the power of the centre was enhanced, marginalizing the regions and localities. Although there were specific differences within each 'national' development, there were also a great number of similarities in the processes of historical change. Indeed, by viewing historical change as a series of processes which do not fit a tidy model of periodization we can study parallel historical phenomena which interrelated in the process of change. Such an approach facilitates comparative research, even if the separate 'national' cases retain their own chronological distinctiveness.

The creation of 'national' states in the later Middle Ages and early modern period clearly drew upon trends going back far into the Middle Ages and even to the history of feudal organization. There were significant disparities between the pace of change in western Europe (principally Burgundy, France and England) as compared to central, east–central and southern Europe, where the central organization of state power developed more slowly. Whereas the pace of centralization must be seen as a long-term consequence of divergent feudal systems, the growth of fiscal power must be seen as a process of less divergent change. Indeed, we might speak of a 'first European world system' in the sense of an interlinked system of monetary interchange which was not totally uniform but meant that states tended to experience comparable problems at about the same period in time. Though there may be different rates of development for modern financial institutions in Europe—as Webber and Wildavsky observed—similarities outweighed the differences.1 There was also a comparable economic

1 Webber and Wildavsky (1986), 229. The author wishes to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Team for their helpful discussions but especially Richard Bonney not only for his
background and fiscal requirement. When the English king wanted to recruit German mercenaries in the mid-sixteenth century he had to pay roughly the same money to the soldiers as his German or French competitors. He could obtain this money from a Europe-wide money market dominated by German, Genoese, Florentine and Lyonnais bankers. If he did not need to borrow money, the ruler still had to extract the necessary money from a comparable economic system, though there were differences between purely agrarian-based economies and those which benefited from urban economic activity or from the European flow of commodities such as the Baltic trade taxed by the king of Denmark by means of the Sound tolls. Even if a kingdom wanted to avoid international commitments, its money went abroad if it had a balance of payments deficit. It could not avoid some degree of participation in European trade: Gresham’s law was a contemporary formulation of this principle.

When at the end of the sixteenth century Zacharias Geizkofler, the Imperial treasurer, and also a man with wide experience in helping to manage the Fugger enterprises, wrote a preparatory memorandum for the Imperial diet, he looked at other countries for guidance on methods of taxation which did not harm the economy but guaranteed huge sums of money: Venice and France were taken as the models. Trying to explain the lamentable state of the currency in the Holy Roman Empire, his insights into the workings of the European money and currency system may be considered comparable to the views of Sir Thomas Gresham. For Geizkofler, there was no doubt that the Empire gave away too much of its good money for foreign commodities and armies in Hungary. This clearly weakened its balance of payments, although this was a technical term not yet known to him. Observations of this kind were close to the discourse on what we call today the ‘price revolution’ and may be observed in the work of Jean Bodin published in 1568 in refutation of that by Malestroit (Chapter 6.i). Europe was conceived of as an entity much earlier in financial and economic treatises than in other types of political theory.

8.1 The Conceptual Debate on the Growth of the Fiscal State in the Sixteenth Century

Historical research on the process of state making in the sixteenth century has tended to concentrate on the question of sovereignty, its theoretical foundation difficult task in leading and encouraging the Team but also for valuable help with data and bibliographical support.

and the extent to which it was capable of realization in different European countries: to what extent were the ideas developed by Jean Bodin put into practice? Another approach, exemplified by the volume edited by Charles Tilly on the formation of nation states in western Europe, was more functional, taking into consideration in its various articles the stimulus of military forces and tax collection. For our purpose it seems adequate to return to a concept of periodization developed by Gerhard Oestreich. He tried to establish three phases of state formation: firstly, a prototype of a dualistic political system in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; then the first move towards the early modern state, which he called the 'finance state'; thirdly, there was a further development of the early modern state in the later seventeenth century, which he called the 'military, administrative and bureaucratic state'. Although Oestreich's periodization drew upon his observation of the development of the German states in the late medieval and early modern period, his term 'finance state' remains applicable to the situation in western Europe in the later sixteenth century. It tries to depict the changing functions of the state in the sixteenth century and is more precise than the concept of 'dynastic state' which has found some acceptance elsewhere.

We may conveniently combine the concept of the 'finance state' with the older ideas of Schmoller and Schumpeter. Schmoller distinguished between a financial organization based on natural goods and the modern economic system based on money. Following these lines, Schumpeter made an important observation on the significant step from the medieval 'domain state' to the modern form of 'tax state', the first phase of which may be seen as identical with Oestreich's 'finance state'. Schumpeter considered the concept of the 'tax state' to be a pleonasm, but though the concept may be somewhat anachronistic for the sixteenth century, Petersen has used it to help explain the development of Danish state finance in the period (Chapter 4.6). In a country such as France, the budget contained an insignificant and declining proportion of domain revenues (3.5 per cent of the total in 1523); but, as late as 1630, states such as Sweden and Denmark still derived respectively some 44.8 per cent and 36.9 per cent of their total revenues from the domain. An apparently 'modern' German state such as

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4 Tilly (1975).
6 The most recent example is Bonney (1991b), though he discussed the term 'finance state' ibid. 352; the term 'dynastic state' was used earlier by Gerhard (1981), 88.
8 Schmoller (1909). Schmoller's is perhaps the first comparative approach to European state finance.
9 Schumpeter (1954b).
10 Petersen (1975).
Prussia could still obtain nearly half of its revenues from domain income as late as 1778–9 (Chapter 13.3).\textsuperscript{12} Notwithstanding the continuing importance of the domain, the concept of the 'tax state' underlines the crucial aspect of state building in the sixteenth century: the 'fiscal state' sought to develop itself simultaneously on several fronts (in the realms of ideas, action and institutional structure).\textsuperscript{13}

At the end of the fifteenth century it might have seemed an open question whether the political structure would be controlled by a 'national' or territorial ruler or whether it would be decentralized under the control of great nobles or regional structures. The sixteenth century witnessed the triumph of the 'national' or territorial ruler: noble landowners had to compete with the central state for the limited surplus of money produced in peasant-based economies. This was a decisive stage in overcoming traditional power structures and inaugurating the modern tax state. Marc Bloch observed that the French provincial indendants of the seventeenth century were expected 'to protect rural communities, ripe material for taxation, from intemperate exploitation by their landlords'. We may interpret this trend towards protection of the peasantry by the state as a 'struggle between taxes and rents'.\textsuperscript{14} This perspective has the advantage of linking the tensions between princes and their estates, between peasants and their landlords and between peasants and princes, various aspects of which may be seen at work in the frequent rebellions against taxation.

8.2 Prerequisites of European State Formation in the Sixteenth Century

Historians of the sixteenth century tend to agree that the period saw a decisive strengthening of political power in the hands of the ruler, who had finally emerged from a competing group of noble families in the late medieval period. The rules of succession were fixed, in France by the establishment of the \textit{lois fondamentales}, in Germany by the Golden Bull in 1356, in England after the ending of the Wars of the Roses. Such rules could not guarantee a smooth process of transition in every case but the succession became more orderly: the succession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England in 1603 was clearly much smoother than the change of dynasty in 1485 or earlier in the fifteenth century. In Germany most territorial rulers established ordinances for the succession which aimed at establishing a secure and wealthy state by prohibiting partition and the alienation

\textsuperscript{12} Mann (1937), 45.

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Bonney (1995) for the importance of 16th-cent. developments for a number of European countries.

of territory. The growing costs of government were a strong argument in favour of this tendency, and indeed there was an increasing regulation of government during the period.\textsuperscript{15} Strong governments capable of action were what was needed: the idea of universal monarchy waned in importance in the course of the century.

Part of the process was a growing territorial cohesion in the state, which was not personal and corporate—\textit{Personenverbandsstaat}, as the German medievalist Theodor Mayer once put it—but now had a much more clearly defined territory without interspersed patches belonging to another prince. With the French recapture of Calais in 1558, a long tradition of English territories within the realm of the king of France came to an end: in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the French national state found its definitive hexagonal form when several provinces were reintegrated in the realm.\textsuperscript{16} Even so, there remained enclaves such as Orange until the end of the seventeenth century and the Comtat Venaissin at Avignon until the end of the ancien régime.

This process of territorial integration—Chaunu called it ‘\textit{la superposition de l’Etat au Royaume}’—which may be clearly observed in the Holy Roman Empire,\textsuperscript{17} must be regarded as the essential precondition for regular taxation. The viable state was increasingly the state which had the capacity to levy taxation within a well-defined territory, to push to one side traditional exemptions (whether secular or ecclesiastical in origin) and to establish a degree of equity among taxpaying ‘subjects’. In many western European countries (though not in the east), this process involved the suppression of noble autonomy. In England and Germany (though not France) noble rebellions came to an end in the sixteenth century (the last examples in the Empire were the \textit{Sickingenfehde} of 1522 and the \textit{Grumbachfehde} of 1567; Denmark had its Counts’ rebellion in 1533, while England had its Northern Rising in 1569). In contrast, in central and eastern Europe the nobility retained its capacity for rebellion: this was true of Poland and Bohemia as well as in Hungary and Transdanubia (Siebenbürgen). Traditional noble service was in general converted into monetary payments to the ruler. Whereas the nobleman of the fifteenth century believed that his duty was to serve ‘with his blood’ and thus that he should be exempt from taxation, this attitude was challenged in the course of the sixteenth century. In Denmark the \textit{rostjeneste} were brought under control; even the German Imperial knights, a difficult group of minor nobles immediately subordinate to the Emperor, had to accept his growing tax demands under the title of \textit{subsidia charitativa}.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} Kunisch (1982) cites the example of several European dynasties.  
\textsuperscript{16} Rowen (1980).  
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Sutter Fichtner (1990).  
\textsuperscript{18} Press (1980).
The suppression of noble autonomy and rebellion resulted in the integration of noble lords within the customary law of the land (Landrecht) and the acceptance of a judicial system directed by the ruler; but it did not mean the end of the traditional bargaining for consensus in the different countries. Almost everywhere in western and central Europe, the late Middle Ages had seen the development of parliamentary assemblies, which had focused their attention on central issues of policy: the revenues of the ruler, and perhaps his 'budget' in a more modern sense; the development of legislation; and the rights of the ruler in these and other areas. There were considerable differences between the various estates in terms of their success. The English Parliament continued to gain authority in the sixteenth century while adhering to its traditional policy that the king had 'to live of his own': the costs of government normally had to be found from the revenues of the royal domain or the grant of customs revenue. Some historians have argued that the English king was weak in comparison with his Continental colleagues in that he failed to obtain a regular income from Parliament (Chapter 5.9). The contrast was clear with France, where the taille was made permanent in 1439 and had become a regular source of income already before the sixteenth century. The continuing distinction between the pays d'états and the pays d'élections (Chapter 13.5) and the sporadic meetings of the Estates General did not create any insurmountable problem for the French king, though a seventeenth-century French tract on taxation still regarded the tailles as 'quasi volontaires en France'. The Spanish kingdoms retained their traditional assemblies but after 1522 these did not seek to enter into sustained opposition to Charles V or his son Philip II. The Cortes of Castile saw their emergency grants, the servicios, converted into regular subsidies. In 1541, the French King Francis I reminded the Venetian ambassador that Maximilian I once said that he was king of kings because no man did his bidding, while the Spanish king was a king of men because his subjects sometimes obeyed and sometimes disobeyed his commands and the French king was a king of beasts because his subjects always obeyed his commands.

In the Holy Roman Empire, the Emperor had to struggle with the difficult machinery of the Imperial diets if he wished to levy extraordinary taxes against Ottoman aggression in Hungary (which was not a part of the Empire, but was linked to the Habsburg dynasty in a loose union), and often found that the Protestants linked any support to satisfaction of their religious demands. In the territorial states, most princes succeeded in requiring their estates to consent to a

21 Bercé in Genet and Le Mené (1987), 163.
22 Alberi (1541) cited by Koenigsberger and Mosse (1968), 230.
semi-regular form of taxation on behalf of the Empire. After a meeting of the Imperial diet the territorial princes used the Emperor's own tax requirements (made manifest in the Imperial recess) as a justification for being granted taxes in their own right. By the end of the sixteenth century, the experience of a dozen or so Imperial diets had scaled down the traditional aversion to taxation, which had been characteristic of earlier noble behaviour. Territorial princes now had a better chance of obtaining the necessary money for their own growing armies, fortifications and diplomatic service or—for writing off their excessive debts. The sixteenth century tended to regard taxation as increasingly necessary and also increasingly feasible in terms of the state's capacity for revenue extraction.

Growing control over ecclesiastical wealth was another basic precondition of the fiscal system of most European states in the sixteenth century (Chapter 15.2). It was not just Protestant rulers who profited from secularizing the church and for a while balanced their budgets as a result; Catholic rulers also did so. The growing control over ecclesiastical wealth helped facilitate the development of a more equitable distribution of the fiscal burden among the ruler's subjects. Ecclesiastical immunities lost their relevance and were encroached upon by the rulers. In Sweden nearly all estates belonging to the church were taken over by the crown as 'a virtually new financial basis of the state was created'.

In Castile, the tercias reales and the cruzada were made permanent taxes. In France, church wealth was also in effect taxed after the Contract of Poissy of 1561. The king succeeded in obtaining an annual grant (don gratuit) for six years, though the amount was smaller for the subsequent ten years.

All discussion of the increase in taxation in sixteenth-century Europe must take into account the fact that it was a 'long century' of demographic and economic growth; there was a clear 'expansion of economic activity'. The nominal increase in revenues discussed below has to be counterbalanced by the growing population and the increased amount of bullion and money in circulation. A growing population was observed everywhere in Europe even though recurrent waves of the plague continued to check the upward demographic trend. The European population may have grown from 69 million in 1500 to about 89 million in 1600, albeit in divergent rhythms in different parts of Europe. However, it was perhaps not until around the middle of the sixteenth century that the number of European inhabitants in c.1300 was surpassed. The silver production of the central European mines and the import of gold and silver

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25 Spooner in Wernham (1971), 42.
26 Spooner (1972).
bullion from America via Spain were essential to the various national tax systems: \(^{27}\) the importation of 181 tonnes of gold and 16,000 tonnes of silver between 1500 and 1650 resulted in an increase in the money supply which eased the growing tax pressure. \(^{28}\) Increased production for the market and growing monetary exchange were related preconditions for higher taxation.

8.3 The Rise in Taxation and the Growth of the ‘Public Sector’ in the Sixteenth Century

The cost of armies was a traditional reason for the growth of expenditure and hence taxation. \(^{29}\) Yet while this became a central reason for increased taxation in the seventeenth century (Chapter 9.1), for the sixteenth century it has to be regarded as an argument only partially valid, since few states had standing armies at this date. \(^{30}\) One should not forget other elements of the public sector were increasing at the same time as armies. The Bavarian government had 162 individuals on its pay list at Munich in 1508; 384 by 1552, 485 by 1556 and 866 by 1571. The number of councillors grew from 16 in 1511 to 45 in 1597. The decisive phase of growth took place in the second half of the century, \(^{31}\) when there was a bureaucratic reorganization under the influence of Roman law. In effect a new culture of the written word came into place and, in this respect, the establishment of a central archive in Spain in 1549 might be seen as a decisive symbol for the rest of Europe. For France, it has been estimated that in 1515 about 7,000–8,000 office-holders worked for the king, whereas by 1665 this administrative corps numbered about 80,000. \(^{32}\) A growing public sector, rather than simply the growth of army personnel during the so-called ‘military revolution’, better fits the broad spectrum of duties which was taken over by the early modern state. \(^{33}\)

A more centralized jurisdiction carried with it considerable costs in its own right. Nearly all European countries developed a more centralized jurisdiction, with a codification of penal and civil law that made access to these central courts possible for nearly all subjects. \(^{34}\) The sixteenth century may be seen in retrospect as a period of growing state interference in society. On the Continent, the reception of Roman law resulted in a growing number of trained jurists and

\(^{27}\) Elliott (1970), esp. ch. 3.  
\(^{28}\) Van Cauwenbergh (1989).  
\(^{29}\) Cf. the concluding remarks of Goldsmith (1987), 249.  
\(^{30}\) Cf. Parker (1988), passim.  
\(^{33}\) Figures for military personnel are usually taken from Parker (1979), 96, but cf. the more detailed table in Greengrass (1991), 5.  
\(^{34}\) Cf. Ranieri (1985), which also gives information about other central European courts.
newly established courts and chanceries. In England, the new courts of equity (Star Chamber and Court of Requests) developed at the same time. Newly established universities and quasi-universities, especially in the Holy Roman Empire, prepared the personnel for the growing state machinery but they also resulted in considerable costs. Princes tried to govern by statute law and by ordinances, which can be seen as a reaction to the growing expectations of different levels of society. The society of orders split up into competing interest groups seeking regulation by the state. These regulations could concentrate on domestic affairs (as on the Continent) but they might also concern matters of foreign trade and the currency, too, as in England and in the United Provinces.

The result of these growing costs of running a state in the European context was a general trend towards increased taxation. In his *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (1589), Justus Lipsius followed Jean Bodin in comparing the money needed by the state with human muscles (*pecunia nervus rerum*): just as a man needed his muscles to walk, so the state could not do without its 'muscles', the sinews of finance. Writers all over Europe reformulated this remark and made it one of Europe's most famous political maxims. Princes rapidly appreciated the advantages of a well-organized treasury. In 1611, Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria commented that 'reputation and *grandezza* did not mean spending money'. 'A prince who is not wealthy at times of adversity has neither authority nor reputation; if he loses these, the management of public affairs will collapse.'

The statistical evidence for the sixteenth century is rather patchy, but we can see evidence for the rise in taxation in specific localities such as at Montpellier, where—as elsewhere in the French Midi—the *taille* was réelle. France, England and Spain all seem to have experienced an increase in revenue in real terms, even taking into account the population growth and inflation of the sixteenth century. The Ottoman threat to the south-eastern borders of the Empire necessitated a substantial increase in the grant of Imperial taxes in the second half of the sixteenth century, increasing sixfold compared to the first half of the century, from a total of 4.3 million florins for the period 1521–56 to 23.3 million for the period 1557–1607. The Habsburg territories, including Bohemia and Moravia, carried a fiscal burden that was much heavier than the northern parts of the Empire; yet even the city of Augsburg saw an increase from 12,889 florins in 1498

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35 Cf. Stolleis (1983), 66. 36 Chroust (1903), 51 (15 Jan. 1611). 37 Le Roy Ladurie (1966), ii, 1026. 38 Miskimin (1977), 160, presents a graph of nominal figures, where the rate of growth is charted according to the percentage of the 'regional maximum during the time span for which statistics were available'. But cf. Hendricks (1976), who shows that the Cortes of Castile controlled more taxes than ever before during the reign of Charles V, and that it succeeded in restricting the rate of increase of taxes under its control.
to 71,346 florins in 1618. Data from elsewhere in Europe suggest a similar pattern of increase. Annual average revenues in England rose from £52,000 in the years 1485–90 to £382,000 in the years 1598–1600. Revenues in Castile increased from 1.5 million ducats in 1515 to 13 million by the end of Philip II's reign in 1598. In France, revenues paid to the Treasury increased from about 3.46 million livres around 1500 to 20.3 million in 1608. The revenues of the kingdom of Naples increased from 438,845 ducats in 1507–8 to almost 2.5 million in 1595. The revenues of Venice rose from 1.15 million ducats in 1500 to 2.45 million by 1600. Rome saw an increase from 118,000 ducats at the beginning of the century to 408,000 by the end, while the rest of the Papal States experienced a greater increase (from 236,000 ducats to 687,700 ducats).39

8.4 Types of Fiscal System in Sixteenth-Century Europe

In the sixteenth century Europe continued to have a variety of revenue systems.40 There was not usually an overall annual budget; instead, different sources of revenues were dedicated to different sorts of expenditure (Chapter 13.2). As a general rule, the costs of peacetime government were laid upon the income of a prince from his domain, from customs and from regalian rights. Only in times of an external threat to the country might the prince ask his estates 'to grant him advice and help' in terms of cash. Whereas the English fiscal system at the end of the fifteenth century was still based on a mixture of 'domain-type' income with casual parliamentary grants, Spain and France already were remarkably developed 'tax states' (Chapter 5.9). In the German territorial states, in northern and central–eastern Europe, the fiscal state was still relatively underdeveloped: it was in these areas that the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century marks a decisive turning-point.

Krüger has shown, for example, that Hesse was a well-organized 'domain state' with a relatively efficient method of collecting at the Ämter the surplus produced from forest lands, salt production and trade. But this well-organized 'domain state' reached the limits of its fiscal capacity when Hesse tried to take part in wars. The debts of the country reached a million florins in the 1550s, that is, about ten times the income of the central Treasury. This crisis could only be


40 Cf. the overview in Koenigsberger and Mosse (1968), 226–31.
overcome by embarking upon a transition towards the ‘tax state’, requiring more and more money to be granted by the estates. Repartition taxes on personal wealth were established, and it was something of a triumph that the noble subjects of the prince were taxed together with non-nobles as a single cohesive group of equitably taxed subjects. This was a significant move towards a modern system of taxation. The other achievement was to establish a tax on wine and beer which was usually granted for a number of years and thus provided the prince with a secure income. Excises would prove particularly profitable as a source of revenue in the future.41

Much creative skill can be observed in the fiscal innovations of the sixteenth century, the central purpose of which was to seek out the most profitable forms of taxation, those which could guarantee the largest sums of money quickly and safely to the treasury. Three main ways of acquiring revenue were at hand. The first was revenue from direct taxes paid by the king’s subjects: this could be of various types, such as taxation of the individual and his wealth (as with the ‘common penny’ in Germany), hearth taxes, taxes on landed and urban property, taxes on certain specific types of wealth, and taxes on livestock (Chapter 13.5). Secondly, there were indirect taxes on foodstuffs, on wine, beer and salt (Chapter 13.6). This form of taxation was later called the ‘excise’. Technically, such taxes had to be granted in the same way as direct taxes but they tended to remain in force once granted. The third possibility was to borrow money. This became increasingly necessary as the sixteenth century advanced, since the fiscal systems of most states were unable to guarantee large sums just when money was urgently needed for a campaign or for other purposes. The deficit could only be bridged by short- and long-term borrowing (Chapter 14).42 Large burdens of debt were a characteristic phenomenon of the fiscal systems of the sixteenth century, the model of which seem to have been the Monti of the Papacy.43 The frequent recourse to borrowing has led to the hypothesis that state finance played a crucial role in the creation of capitalism.44 Since the state’s own credit resources were limited, different categories of moneylenders had to be asked for money. A first possibility was to ask for loans from private individuals. In Germany, there was a large range of moneylenders, from rich peasants and artisans up to the higher ranks of court officials. Ecclesiastical institutions lent money, as did cities and merchants or groups of merchants. Government bonds were usually guaranteed


42 Cf. the relevant section in Bonney (1991b), 357–8; Webber and Wildavsky (1986), 251–2.


44 See e.g. the German historian of the Fugger dynasty, Strieder (1932). Bauer asserted that without the system of Papal finance there could have been no emergence of capitalism: Bauer (1928), 475.
by local sources of income, whether from domains, from customs or other regalian rights. In France, the king developed a consolidated debt in the form of *rentes sur l'hôtel de ville*. These were interest-bearing obligations originally secured by the revenues of the municipality of Paris. Whereas these *rentes* did not exceed a million *livres* during the reign of Francis I, his successor Henri II sold about 6.8 million and by 1574 more than 25.9 million of *rentes* had been offered to the public. By the end of the century, the total sum of debts reached the enormous figure of 297 million *livres*, about fifteen times the annual revenue of the crown, which was insufficient to cover the costs of debt service. Under such circumstances it is no surprise that France developed an alternative strategy for coping with this financial problem. The systematic sale of offices began to form a second system of public debt. Judicial and financial offices were sold to wealthy competitors who could regard their annual salaries as a form of interest on the capital paid into the royal coffers.

When in 1581 Nicolas Froumenteau dedicated to Henri III his tract *Le secret des finances de France*, he wanted to ‘discover the legitimate and necessary measures to rid the king of his debts, to discharge his subjects from taxes levied during the previous thirty-one years, and to recover all the money taken from His Majesty’. What Froumenteau attempted for France, Georg Obrecht, Jacob Bornitz and Christoph Besold tried to do within the Holy Roman Empire. These jurists emphasized that in the case of necessity the prince could do whatever was needed to rescue the state from invasion: *necessitas legem non habet*. Yet all taxation had to be justified by the *salus publica*, the public good. There had to be a just reason for extraordinary taxation; without this, the prince could and should be opposed. Jean Bodin had argued that extraordinary taxation should be the last and not the first resort of the prince (Chapter 6.1), and had justified his interpretation by the wording of the last will and testament of Louis XI that *tailles* and *aides* should not be levied on his subjects except for reasons of urgent necessity and evident utility as well as just cause, otherwise his successor would not be considered a king but a tyrant. But a generation after Bodin the German jurist Jacob Bornitz complained that extraordinary taxes had become commonplace.45 How best to eliminate the royal debts or discharge his subjects from excessive taxes were crucial areas of discussion within the ruler’s *arcana imperii*.46

Even if tax collection at the local level still remained a duty of the village community,47 the obvious problems posed by the related duties of tax collection and the transmission of money from the periphery to the centre led to the establishment of a new group of officials who specialized in such matters. This

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45 Bornitz (1612), 61.  
46 Froumenteau (1581).  
47 Cf. Villain (1952), 22.
process of specialization is evident in France at a relatively early date. In 1523, the office of trésorier de l’epargne was established: this new official was responsible for all the revenues of the crown, including those from domains and from taxation; at first he was to be assisted by two intendants des finances and a trésorier, but in 1547 two contrôleurs généraux were also appointed. This was an important early step towards revenue unification, which demonstrated the relative homogeneity of the realm. In 1542, Francis I created sixteen généralités, administrative units in which a receveur général collected all the king’s direct taxes. In 1577, the process was consolidated by the establishment of a bureau des finances in each généralité. Through the acquisition of such offices, merchant and bourgeois families could enter royal service and become financial experts, with a strong tendency for the office to be seen as part of the family’s property rights: office, indeed, was regarded as an ‘irremovable status (dignité) with a public function’ attached to it. Financial administration and the judicial offices within the regional Parlements were open to recruits from the bourgeoisie at least during the sixteenth century. In the Holy Roman Empire, the Exchequer was established in 1566 as a permanent office, whereas previously taxes had been collected by specially commissioned treasurers.

8.5 Rebellions against Taxation

One of the common features of European history is that modernizing processes were accompanied by strong resistance based on arguments of traditional law. Feudalism was in its deepest sense a system of mutual obligation. From the point of view of the lords, the taxation of their peasants at the same time as increased financial obligations on themselves was deeply unsettling. It threatened to undermine the traditional lord–peasant relationship by which the lord protected his peasants, who in return paid rents and provided labour services. It is true that there was a basic obligation on all subjects to save the country from an invading enemy, but this was not seen as a justification for regular taxation. Thus resistance to taxation in the sixteenth century could be legitimized with arguments concerned with the defence of the traditional order. Resistance was not

48 These observations by Gaston Zeller are cited in Lloyd (1983), 65, who has much information about 16th-cent. French financial policy and administration.
50 For the complicated history of the French financial system in the 16th cent.: Mieck (1982); Wolfe (1972).
restricted just to the political classes within a *dominium politicum et regale* but was also a traditional form of opposition used by peasants.

The tension between rents and taxes created certain structural conditions in which rebellions might take place. In virtually all European states the peasants comprised an overwhelming proportion of the population and their production formed the core of the national economy. Their taxes and dues financed a large proportion of the noble estates and the national budget. During the sixteenth century (although this phenomenon was not restricted to this century alone) all European states were, to varying degrees, in a transitional phase between a subsistence and a market economy. This accounts for the fact that competition for taxation paid in money was fierce. During this century all European states experienced a degree of rivalry between autonomous feudal lords and centralized or centralizing monarchies. Both competed for control of the peasants. The process of 'state building' advanced very unevenly and in none of the European states was the peasant–landlord relationship as such a decisive factor. In all cases, the national monarchies emerged, to a greater or lesser extent, as the centre of power as a result of the state's increased fiscal capacity. Thus, a triangular relationship developed between peasants, feudal lords and central state authorities. In view of the growth of monetary exchange and generally favourable agrarian market conditions caused by the rise in population levels, feudal lords were eager to make the best possible use of obligatory dues and services. They opposed central taxation because it lessened the capacity of their peasants to pay rents and dues. The peasants were interested in securing as far as possible their individual and collective claims to land, their rights of inheritance and their rights to use or sell their products under favourable conditions. Only in this way could they achieve their exploitation of land for profit and gain a share in the market surplus which would enable them to pay their taxes. The central monarchies (or in the Empire, the territorial states) had an interest in fostering a prosperous population which was able to pay taxes. This enabled the rulers to assert themselves abroad and to stabilize their regimes at home.

The chronological sequence of peasant revolts in western Europe makes it clear that in the case of France and England the revolts came in relatively clearly defined cycles. In France, the period from 1548 (the uprising of the *Pitauds* against the *gabelle* in Guyenne) to 1675 (the *papier timbré* uprising in Brittany) witnessed a cycle of what may be regarded as classic peasant revolts. The revolt of 1548 itself was the archetype, a rising against taxation epitomized by the rebels' slogan 'Long live the King, but without the *gabelle*'. The year 1675 may well not

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51 Koenigsberger (1986), 1–25.
52 The author here follows his general remarks in Blickle, Rublack and Schulze (1984), 61–98.
53 A good survey is offered by Kamen (1984), 258–91.
have been the definitive end of this type of revolt, but Le Roy Ladurie argues that between 1675 and 1685 the absolutist system was consolidated: taxation, in real terms, decreased; the confessional conflict was forcibly resolved with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; and the intendants were able more effectively to defend the interests of the peasants. In England a comparable cycle can be observed extending from the revolts in Cornwall of 1497 to the agrarian revolts between 1628 and 1632. There were three distinct types of revolt: rebellions against taxation (which were characteristic of the early sixteenth century), revolts against the Reformation (chiefly a consequence of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536) and anti-seigneurial revolts, such as occurred in 1549, 1607 and 1628-32. These revolts were obviously reactions to the three fundamental processes of modernization—the extension of fiscal policy, the Reformation and what we today regard as the early 'agrarian revolution'.

No comparable phenomena can be found in central, southern and eastern Europe. The great wave of peasant wars in this area in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were not the end of a cycle. At the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century a new wave of revolts occurred in the upper German and Habsburg regions; indeed, it may be argued that we find an almost continuous series of resistance movements of considerable variety which can be classified only in terms of the different territories in which they occurred. The same is true of east-central and south-eastern Europe, where revolts against the feudal system predominated, although there were also some revolts against taxation. Even the Ottoman empire saw tax rebellions between 1590 and 1607. Viktor Buganov has referred to a 'relative delay' in Russia, where peasant uprisings did not reach their peak until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This can be explained by the 'delayed' capitalist development in Russia, and the late emergence of absolutism there. Josef Petran argues that peasant risings in Poland and Bohemia did not reach their climax until the second half of the eighteenth century.

The different chronology of the revolts suggests that these movements should be seen in the context of the process of European state formation. This process involved the development of a centralized administration, a comprehensive taxation system, a predominant if not an exclusive religious denomination within the state, and clearly defined relations of power between parliaments and princes. This new stage in state organization was associated with strong resistance from the estates and with peasant revolts. In this broader perspective, the revolts were an important indicator of the extent, duration and success of the

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process of modernization, and peasant resistance also helped to determine the direction of this development. Revolts against the process of state modernization had far greater scope than anti-seigneurial revolts. Resistance to fiscal policy or to reform 'from above' naturally extended further than the specific problems of individual landlords. Feudal disputes did not become really serious unless there was a generalized assault on the position of the peasantry, which rarely happened except perhaps in the case of the English enclosure movement or the Bohemian compulsory labour policy. Generally, however, anti-seigneurial movements were organized on a local or manorial or (at most) regional level, while the scope of the anti-state or anti-fiscal revolts was much broader.

8.6 Conclusion: The Success of Taxation in the Sixteenth Century

There can be no doubt that the sixteenth century witnessed the success of 'modern' taxation. If we compare the state of things at the dawn of the sixteenth century with the early seventeenth century, the achievements become quite obvious: pecunia nervus rerum had become the norm in states. Braudel argued that the state was 'increasingly emerging as the great collector and redistributor of revenue'; even if no more than 1 ducat per head was collected in Europe c.1600, this money was collected from the surplus production of a largely agrarian economy with uneven regional patterns of monetary circulation. What had been strongly opposed at the beginning of the century (in Hungary, in the revolt of the Comuneros, and in the German Peasants' War) was accepted as necessary and inevitable by the end of the century. This was a revolution in political organization and perceptions. Within three generations, a total renversement des mentalités had taken place, even if there remain doubts as to whether the full impact of this revolution had occurred in the sixteenth century. Leviathan now stood alongside the remaining seigneurial obligations as a second extractor of surplus peasant wealth.

This success of taxation must also have appeared surprising to governments. Royal councillors tended to think in terms of the likely discontent and even rebellion which their new fiscal measures might provoke. Whenever a tax measure was debated in a political context there was less argument about its economic feasibility than the potential reaction of the ruler's subjects. Comments on the avoidance of unrest, rebellion or sedition in the European political literature of the late sixteenth century are commonplace. Indeed, one cannot avoid the impression that contemporary discussions of taxation remained

57 Cf. Braudel in Earle (1974), 26–8; Braudel (1973), i, 449; ibid. i, 451; 'the “fast-flowing blood” of the circulation of metal currencies...'

The king or prince was still held to have to 'live of his own'; his treasury must be strictly managed; the income from the domain was to be increased. A new tax remained an extraordinary event, which had to be justified by a legitimate reason or the lack of other financial resources. Subjects had to be asked for their consent before the tax was imposed and with the end of the emergency its levy had to cease. There was little by way of a general authorization for kings to levy taxes. Indeed, the reverse was held to be true: just as in the Middle Ages, taxes were seen as a significant encroachment on the private property of the citizen and lawful only under very strict conditions (Chapter 1.4).

Most of these comments were written by jurists who were well aware of the legal problems of encroachment on individual rights. Their cautious comments on taxation and attempts to rein in a voracious state were founded on the central argument of *necessitas*, which remained the only just reason for a tax. *Necessitas* changed its nature from a real and controllable danger (for example the incursion of an enemy) to a general argument which could be defined by the prince himself. Referring to Livy, Georg Obrecht stated in 1597: 'It is most just because these taxes are a necessity and a duty without which the state is destined to perish utterly.' What had been once understood by Jean Bodin as a fundamental threat to the security of the country was interpreted quite differently, as a relative phenomenon which included the duties of government as defined by itself. Few comments by European princes on their principles of taxation survive. Charles Emmanuel I of Savoy told Henri IV that the distinction between Savoy and Piedmont in terms of their fiscal capacity was that in the former he obtained what he could, whereas in the latter he levied what he required ('Je tire de Savoie ce que je peux et de Piemont ce que je veux'). When, in 1632, the Bavarian Elector Maximilian I—a prince whose attitude to fiscal matters was relatively 'modern'—recalled the remarkable growth of taxation during his reign, especially in those regions occupied by enemy armies, he wondered that this had been possible at all. Thirty years earlier, no one would have imagined that such sums could have been collected, and only the use of force had made it possible. This remark might be taken as a *post facto* legitimation of the 'modern' tax policy of European rulers from the mid-sixteenth century.

Among the lower levels of society, peasants naturally wanted to restrict their

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59 Stolleis (1983), 123–4; Schulz (1982), 28–9. These works deal with both the rich German literature and also the relevant European tracts.
60 Schögl (1988), 208.
63 Cf. Stumpo (1979), 4.
They did not accept the new scheme of things which made taxation a perpetual and ordinary burden, as in the Empire where peasants were burdened with an increasing number of Römermonate (‘Roman months’). When, in 1598, a Swabian peasant community was confronted with a new set of about eighty ‘Roman months’ to pay within four years, the peasants wanted to return to their ‘good old German months’ (that is, to twelve annual payments instead of twenty). The official who tried to explain the system to the peasants had his doubts whether they were able to understand it.65 One might conclude that they were indeed able to understand the new fiscal system, but that they refused to do so because they opposed the increased levy on principle.

There was a degree of solidarity between feudal lords and their subjects against the voracious centralized state. Such coalitions between nobles and peasants against the fiscal burden are evident in Bavaria and in France. Central taxation became an increasing danger for landlords who were dependent on their seigneurial income, as may be seen from the example of about fifty peasant estates under different landlords in the Bavarian Rentamt of Burghausen between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth century.66 There was a growing gap between the stagnation of rents paid in kind and the slow growth of rents paid in money on the one hand and the rapid increase in taxes on the other. The landlord was the loser in the course of this century, while the state emerged as the victor. Here again taxation has to be seen in relation to the interests of landlords and peasants.

By the end of the sixteenth century, more money was being collected on a more regular basis than ever before in the form of taxation. Taxation had been established as the only mechanism for running the state and paying for a bureaucracy and an army. Fiscal theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depicted a circular model of taxation: money was taken away from the ruler’s subjects only to return to society via charitable action.67 In reality, the proceeds from taxation in the sixteenth century disappeared in expenditure on the bureaucracy and the armed forces, since the share of expenditure for education or the infrastructure was trivial in most states. Taxation thus only redistributed wealth among those strata of society which participated prominently in the business and financial affairs of the state: lawyers, soldiers, manufacturers of military goods, monopolists and financiers. Gerald Aylmer has called this the ‘court—country’ model: ‘If all the material advantages of office-holding are included, as well as taxes in the narrower sense, then the “court—country”

The fiscal hypothesis may seem to fit the facts more closely than any other, at least for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe and perhaps for parts of the Third World today.\footnote{Aylmer in Burke (1972), 169.}