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FISCAL THEORY AND PRACTICE IN YORKIST ENGLAND: THE REGRESSION FROM A «TAX» TO A «DOMAIN» STATE

*Teoría y práctica fiscal en la Inglaterra de los York:
el retroceso del «impuesto» a un estado «domanial»*

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ABSTRACT: This work scrutinises B. P. Wolffe's influential argument that the Yorkist «land revenue experiment» transformed the English crown's finances. It pioneers quantitative estimates of the Yorkist royal budget which emphasise the limited net gains derived from the crown's resumption of alienated lands. This demonstrates that Sir John Fortescue's concept of the king «living of his own» did not afford a realistic blueprint for how a fifteenth-century government should manage its finances. Fortescue's fiscal writings instead seem to constitute an ideological treatise in favour of a low tax regime on behalf of a county squirarchy which had been faced with a relatively heavy lay tax burden across the recession of the mid-fifteenth century. These themes demonstrate the intellectual rigour of the «Bonney-Ormrod model of fiscal change», which accounts for cases of historical fiscal systemic regression from «tax» to «domain» states, as occurred in Yorkist England, just as much as it does cases of systemic fiscal advancement characteristic of much of early modern Western Europe.

Keywords: fiscal; yorkist; tax; domain; England; fifteenth century.

RESUMEN: Este trabajo analiza la influyente idea de B. P. Wolffe de que el «experimento de ingresos de la tierra» de la dinastía York transformó las finanzas de la corona inglesa. Sus estimaciones pioneras sobre el presupuesto real bajo la dinastía de los York enfatizaron las limitadas ganancias procedentes de la reactivación de las cargas sobre tierras enajenadas. Se demuestra así que el concepto de sir John Fortescue de un rey «viviendo por su cuenta» no representaba una visión realista de cómo un gobierno del siglo xv debería administrar sus finanzas. En cambio, los escritos sobre fiscalidad de Fortescue parecen constituir un tratado ideológico para apoyar un régimen de bajos impuestos bajos en nombre de una baja nobleza

local, que se había enfrentado a una carga fiscal relativamente pesada durante la recesión de mediados del siglo xv. Se demuestra así el rigor intelectual del «modelo Bonney-Ormrod de cambio fiscal», que da cuenta de los casos de regresión histórica del sistema fiscal de estados basados en «impuestos» a estados basados en «dominios», como ocurrió en la Inglaterra de York, una situación que también se detecta en otros casos de la Europa Occidental en la época moderna en los que se produjo un avance del sistema fiscal.

Palabras clave: fiscalidad; dinastía York; impuesto; dominio; Inglaterra; siglo xv.

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0 INTRODUCTION

The present article is structured into two parts. The first seeks to scrutinise the influential British historiographical claims associated with the classic work of B. P. Wolffe¹. Wolffe claimed that the «land revenue experiment» of the Yorkist monarchy which diverted patrimonial receipts from the administratively cumbersome public exchequer to the more versatile royal chamber across the 1460s and 1470s, was necessary in order to quantitatively boost royal income from recently resumed crown lands and, more importantly, to qualitatively transform the finances of the English state at the dawn of the early modern era. Wolffe's suggestions are shown to be based on an uncritical historiographical acceptance of Yorkist fiscal theory which emanated from the work of the contemporary jurist Sir John Fortescue. Fortescue's advocacy of the resumption of royal lands and offices as a means of allowing the crown to «live of its own» did not offer a realistic solution to mid-fifteenth century fiscal problems, which had little to do with cash flow issues pertaining to the royal demesne and owed instead to a sharp drop in revenue from parliamentary taxation. Fortescue's fiscal ideas constituted little more than propaganda on behalf of the parliamentary and political classes, who sought a further reduction in the lay tax burden at a time of agrarian and commercial recession at the close of the Lancastrian era. Unsurprisingly, then, an examination of fiscal practice in Yorkist England shows that in vigorously adopting a Fortescuean fiscal policy on seizing the throne in 1461 as a means of currying political favour with the elite, Edward IV severely inhibited the financial prospects of his dynasty. Thanks to the «land revenue experiment», demesne income does appear to have increased. Crucially, however, this in no way compensated for the sharp decline in taxation, which was the hallmark of a marked contraction in total royal revenues. Consequently, a substantial structural deficit

¹ Wolffe, «Crown Lands», *Crown Lands and Royal Demesne*.

emerged in the crown's finances which despite being papered over for a time by Edward IV's French Pension, created a perfect fiscal storm for Edward IV's ill-fated successor Richard III.

The second part of this article considers the historiographical implications which the foregoing lines of investigation have for our broader understanding of systemic fiscal change in pre-modern Europe. The Yorkist experience is shown to substantiate a key aspect of the «new fiscal historiography» pioneered by R. J. Bonney and W. M. Ormrod². These writers postulated a transition from low yield medieval «domain states» predicated primarily on patrimonial income from rulers' estates and lands, to «tax states» based on high yield tax impositions capable of sustaining increasingly sophisticated credit systems managed through public accounting departments across most of Western Europe by the early modern era. The so-called «Bonney-Ormrod model of historic fiscal change» has often been criticised for supposedly suggesting that the transition towards the bureaucratically advanced «early modern tax state» and its ultimate successor, the modern «fiscal state» was inevitable over time and space in a teleological, Weberian sense. Yet these writers in fact always recognised that «tax states» did not develop in a uniform manner everywhere. Bonney and Ormrod, both in their collaborative work and in sole-authored articles, stressed that political crisis and/or economic recession could, in certain circumstances, result in tax based fiscal systems regressing—for a time at least—to more primitive fiscal systems based on feudal and/or patrimonial expedients³. The current article demonstrates that such an episode of structural «fiscal regression» occurred in Yorkist England. This case study, viewed in the context of the divergent experience of various continental West European fiscal systems, is shown to demonstrate the thematic potential of the Bonney-Ormrod model in explaining a range of fiscal-systemic outcomes, as well as in contributing to key historiographical questions of political economy at the outset of the early modern era. The article closes by considering the scope for investigating further case studies of comparatively atypical fiscal outcomes and «fiscal regression» over time and place, as part of a renewed engagement with the Bonney-Ormrod model.

1 FISCAL THEORY AND PRACTICE IN YORKIST ENGLAND

1.1 *Fiscal Theory in Yorkist England: Ideological Context and Background*

The theoretical underpinnings of Yorkist royal finance were provided by the writings of Sir John Fortescue, a late Lancastrian era Chief Justice whose fiscal ideas were forged in response to the collapse of the royal finances which occurred under Henry VI, particularly across the 1440s. For all that the origins of Fortescue's broader juridical and governmental writings have been discussed at length by a range of writers from E.

² Bonney and Ormrod, «Introduction», 1-23.

³ See, for example. Bonney, «Introduction», 1-18; Bonney, «New French Fiscal History», 639-67; Ormrod, «West European Monarchies», 123-60.

F. Jacob and S. B. Chrimes through to J. H. Burns and J. L. Watts, the background of the Chief Justice's fiscal policy proposals has not been scrutinised to anything like the same extent⁴. Thus Wolffe, the standalone historian of Yorkist royal finance, uncritically accepted Fortescue's diagnosis of late Lancastrian fiscal problems in his specialist work on the crown lands as well as in his general work on the reign of Henry VI⁵. Other important writers who touched upon issues of Yorkist government finance as part of broader works on Yorkist government, e.g., C. D. Ross and J. R. Lander, echoed Wolffe in accepting Fortescue's explanation of why Yorkist financial methods were allegedly necessary in response to the royal liquidity crisis of the late Lancastrian era⁶. It is therefore important that we begin by critically appraising Fortescue's assessment of the financial crisis of the late Lancastrian state.

Fortescue's entire fiscal policy blueprint centres on the idea that the crown must «live of its own», primarily from the proceeds of the monarch's landed patrimony or demesne supplemented by other customary revenue sources⁷. This simple fiscal maxim occupied such a central place in Fortescue's *Governance* because Henry VI's regime had spectacularly failed to «live of its own»; that is to say, the final Lancastrian monarch had fecklessly alienated large chunks of crown lands and offices to a whole host of court supplicants. According to Fortescue, this had resulted in serious budgetary problems characterised by a growing deficit and a mounting public debt which culminated in the court regime's effective declaration of bankruptcy in 1450, where ministers brought an exchequer statement before MPs which demonstrated a royal debt of £372,000. Modern British historians' endorsement of Fortescue's account of Henry VI's financial woes owes, firstly, to Wolffe's failure to place his work on the yield of the crown lands in the context of a statistical understanding of the broader royal budget and, secondly, to the apparent unwillingness of subsequent scholars to correct this oversight, which is probably explained by the absence of a vibrant tradition of later medieval English fiscal scholarship⁸. Nevertheless, an important essay by G. L. Harriss on exchequer finance in the years immediately preceding the fiscal crisis of 1450 drew attention to the basic error at the heart of Fortescue's analysis⁹. Harriss acknowledged that the cash yield of the crown lands had fallen across the majority era of Henry VI's rule¹⁰. He argued, however, that the real fiscal problem during the later 1440s was the sharp decline in indirect tax

⁴ Jacob, «Sir John Fortescue», 359-76; Chrimes, *English Constitutional Ideas*, esp. 309-24; Burns, «Fortescue», 777-97; Watts, «New Fundacion», 31-53.

⁵ For Wolffe's fiscal writings, see the work cited in note 1, above. For his biography of Henry VI, see Wolffe, *Henry VI*.

⁶ Ross, *Edward IV*, esp. 375-6; Lander, *Government and Community*.

⁷ The key fiscal analysis provided by Fortescue is to be found in Plummer (ed.). *Governance*, 113-5; 154-5; 274-5; and Chrimes, *De Laudibus*, ch. 35.

⁸ See notes 4 and 6, above. On the relative absence of a robust tradition of late medieval fiscal scholarship, see Brayson, «Deficit Finance», 9-12.

⁹ Harriss, «Marmaduke Lumley», 143-78.

¹⁰ From c. £5,000 in the early 1430s to c. £2,000 by the late 1440s: Harriss, «Marmaduke Lumley», 145.

revenue at a time of commercial recession and, running alongside this, the declining incidence of lay taxes on individuals' moveable property, so-called fifteenths and tenths¹¹.

A. Brayson has recently worked from extant exchequer documentation to build upon Harriss' analysis and extend this to the entire late Lancastrian period, quantifying the scale of public tax income lost out upon across this era¹². He has shown that MPs' reduction in the level of lay supply from three quarters of a fifteenth and tenth per annum during the early 1430s to an annual half a fifteenth and tenth a decade later constituted an annual average loss of *c.* £5,000, whilst total annual indirect tax revenue plummeted from well over £40,000 in the late 1420s to under £30,000 for much of the next two decades. This marked reduction in parliamentary-controlled public income at a time of heavy «extraordinary» special expeditionary expenditures, debt servicing costs and steady domestic expenditures explains why, after incurring around 15 % of abortive assignments to total royal assignments (approximate to the royal deficit), the deficit spiralled to over 25 % across the early 1440s and to an unprecedented 39 % by the mid-1440s¹³. There was no alternative public revenue stream to prevent the growing budgetary imbalance sketched above, which explains the rapid pile up of debt across this period: royal debt grew from £168,000 in 1433 to *c.* £350,000 by *c.* 1444. A programme of budget consolidation at a time of temporary respite in the French War offered minor temporary respite in the late 1440s, when the deficit declined to *c.* 20 %. Yet the resumption of military hostilities in 1449 demonstrated just how unviable this strategy was in the longer term, and royal debt continued to grow. Crucially, no amount of demesne revenue maximisation offered a way out of the crown's deep-seated financial woes¹⁴. Wolffe had argued that

¹¹ Fifteenths and tenths, the standard lay tax on individuals' moveable property in later medieval England, grew out of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century parliamentary tendency to tax individuals in rural areas at a lower proportion of the value of their goods and chattels (*e.g.* agricultural equipment, animals etc.) than their urban equivalents. In 1334, the crown froze the national yield of a fifteenth and tenth and the constituent sums due from individual counties, based on the assessments made as part of the final directly assessed lay subsidy, that of 1332. From this point on, every time that MPs conceded a fifteenth and tenth officials were mandated to bring in the vill and borough totals yielded back in 1332; either by assessing individuals at the sums their ancestors had owed in 1332, or by redistributing the burden of frozen local quotas however they saw fit within communities: Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes*, 123-4. By the later fifteenth century, the national quota rebates of 1433 and 1446 meant that the yield of a fifteenth and tenth had fallen to *c.* £30,000.

¹² For what follows, see Brayson, «English Parishes», 651-72, and Brayson, «Parliamentary subsidy», 41-88, both of which view the deficit of the 1420s-1430s in the context of lay tax experiments which, to varied degrees, were unsuccessful. See Brayson, «Deficit Finance», 9-73, for the 1430s-1440s. See Harriss, «Marmaduke Lumley» for the later 1440s; also Brayson, «Fiscal Constitution», 140-83.

¹³ Assignments constituted the exchequer's administrative mechanism of servicing royal charges at source, that is to say, of paying charges such as the royal household from income as it was received locally by, for example, tax collectors. When revenue was insufficient to service charges upon it, abortive assignments were the result — in other words, creditors attempted to have their debt serviced from local revenue streams, but this failed. Abortive assignments are sometimes referred to as «fictitious loans», since these involved the exchequer creating the fiction of having received a loan in order to push repayment into the future: see Harriss, «Fictitious Loans», 187-99.

¹⁴ The remainder of this paragraph is based on an as yet unpublished forthcoming piece by the present writer on the fiscal politics of resumption in the early 1450s.

the parliamentary-imposed resumptions of 1450 and 1451 witnessed net income from the crown patrimony rise appreciably¹⁵. Recent quantification of increases in demesne cash income across the early-to-mid 1450s demonstrates, however, that increases in patrimonial receipts strikingly failed to compensate for the marked shift away from lay taxation amongst the parliamentary and landed classes¹⁶. Consequently, the deficit rose once more to *c.* 25 % across the early 1450s, at the same time that the crown's landed revenues, alongside other areas of the royal budget, began to disappear from the purview of the exchequer; an early sign that the tax-based fiscal system managed by the exchequer would be replaced by a feudal-oriented fiscal system in the king's private quarters.

On the basis of the foregoing considerations, we must ask: why did an unviable demesne-centric fiscal strategy emerge at exactly the time that it became clear that a tax-based royal financial policy was badly needed? The answer surely lies in an understanding of the material interests of Fortescue's socio-economic class. Fortescue was a representative of the English county gentry, which had been hard hit by secular economic trends of the 1430s and 1440s, specifically, the intensification of the post-plague low price-high wage economy which badly affected seigniorial finances; and which was exacerbated by rising social unrest amongst the tenancy of many seigniorial estates as well as by monetary contraction and commercial stagnation¹⁷. In these grim socio-economic circumstances, the local gentry's continued payment towards fixed lay tax quotas in many areas was undoubtedly a serious burden. If, moreover, the yeomanry who across the post-plague period leased substantial proportions of manorial demesne land are factored into our considerations, the provincial elite broadly conceived can be seen to have footed up to three quarters of lay tax quotas across different areas of the country¹⁸. Despite the striking burden which this must have posed for the regional English squirearchy, the parliamentary representatives of the gentry and the yeomanry, the latter of which were now also part of the county electorate, had been placed under considerable political pressure to concede the crown a degree of continued lay taxation across the 1430s and 1440s¹⁹. Significantly, the polity manifested an understandable dissatisfaction with

¹⁵ Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne*, ch. 3, neither quantified his suggestion of a marked increase in patrimonial receipts, nor had he placed this in its appropriate fiscal and budgetary context.

¹⁶ In fact, net demesne receipts only increased to *c.* £5,000, the same yield as had characterised earlier decades prior to Henry VI's much-discussed wastage of the demesne via alienations to supplicants: see above, note 10.

¹⁷ Classic accounts of the mid-fifteenth century recession include Hatcher, «Great Slump», 237-72; Britnell, «Economic Context», 41-64; Fryde, *Peasants and Landlords*, esp. chs. 10 and 11, and «Economic Depression», 215-26.

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see Brayson, «Deficit Finance», 38-41. The socio-economic context of the fiscal burden on gentry and yeomen needs to be emphasised, since heavy lay tax contributions, viewed alongside high wage outlays and low market prices, acted as a brake on commercial agrarian development. Quite simply, adverse fiscal and macro-economic circumstances combined meant that these demographic groups could ill afford to make the capital expenditures necessary in order to sustain agrarian commercial progress which had been made in the decades around 1400, hence the move away from short-term more competitive leases to longer-term customary leases during the late Lancastrian era. See Dimmock, *Origin*, 93; Dyer, *Transition*, 201-3.

¹⁹ For this and what follows, see Brayson, «Deficit Finance», 25-35.

the recession-era fiscal burden of these decades through the deployment of scholastic economic theory, which prioritised not the material struggles of taxpayers but rather the relative justification of the cause for which taxation was levied. Hence, the growing parliamentary and extra-parliamentary focus across the 1430s and 1440s on the crown's breaking of the scholastic umbilical cord between lay taxation and a *necessitas regni*, and its increasing deployment of lay tax revenues to fund «ordinary»; that is to say, permanent, expenditures and debt repayment charges. Fortescue's *Governance* should be seen as a further development of these arguments. It marked an end to the late Lancastrian fiscal compromise between crown and Commons: lay taxation was now to be off the agenda, unless a genuine defensive military emergency required a return to fifteenths and tenths. Resumption, meanwhile, was to be the panacea of fiscal stability.

Such a forceful reiteration of scholastic theory—which had been conceived by central medieval churchmen in a distant era when public costs had been far lower than they were by the fifteenth century—in an English polity where lay tax receipts were increasingly needed as a regular feature of an expansive crown budget, was bound to create substantial royal financial problems. Before, however, turning to the practical challenges faced by the Yorkist regime in running the «land revenue experiment», it remains to consider why the Yorkist dynasty both prior to and following on from the Yorkist Revolution of 1461 would have supported such an ill-conceived fiscal strategy for English government. As a key creditor of the crown who had for over a decade struggled to secure payment for his public service as Lieutenant of France and then Governor General of Ireland, Richard, Duke of York, would have been acutely aware that the crown's financial problems had little to nothing to do with the royal demesne and owed primarily to the absence of the requisite level parliamentary taxation to sustain relative royal solvency²⁰. York needed, however, to curry as broad a base of support as possible in his struggles with the late Lancastrian court across the 1450s. J. L. Watts has written of the Yorkist opposition's couching of its opposition to Lancastrian «evil counsellors» and, in time, Henry VI himself, in communitarian, commonwealth terms which could appeal to, and provide cover for, those outside the initial York-Neville nexus to support the Yorkist cause²¹. York's vocal opposition to the supposed prodigality of the late Lancastrian court regime through his voicing of ultra-scholastic Fortescuean rhetoric which would have been well-received by the proportionally heavily taxed squirearchy of the shires ought to be viewed in much the same light. After Richard of York's demise in 1460, Edward of York was in a similar position, which in some ways became even more precarious after his usurpation of 1461, given the early Yorkist regime's limited power base. Hence Edward IV's intention, apparently made on ascending to the throne and then again in a notable declaration before MPs in 1467, to «live of his own»²². It follows that we must now assess Edward's efforts to live up to this lofty intention.

²⁰ For Duke Richard's troubled financial dealings with the late Lancastrian regime and the impact which the exchequer's defaulting of its debts towards the duke had in affecting his increasing opposition to Henry VI's regime, see Bean, «Financial Position», 182-98; Pugh, «Estates, Finances», 71-88; Roesenthal, «Estates and Finances», 115-204.

²¹ Watts, «Polemic and Politics», 3-42.

²² See Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, 146-7. The text of Edward IV's parliamentary speech has now been printed in «Edward IV's Speech to Parliament, 1467». In Cook (ed.), *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 98-9.

1.2 *Yorkist Fiscal Practice from 1461*

The years after 1461 witnessed Edward IV move to quickly build upon earlier and much more tentative moves towards a demesne-centric fiscal system which had been undertaken by the crisis-era regimes of the 1450s. Edward's regime undertook a wholesale transference of resumed landed revenues from the purview of the rigid, bureaucratic exchequer to the royal chamber, which was better equipped to deploy up-to-date methods of estate management to maximise their yield. Wolffe believed that these administrative changes, constitutive of the «land revenue experiment», resulted in the crown's net landed revenues rising dramatically, from under £5,000 during the late Lancastrian period, to over £20,000 at the close of Edward IV's reign²³. In his opinion, this underlay a near revolutionary transformation of the crown's financial position.

Other historians have, however, counselled against drawing this conclusion. Ross noted that Edward's net annual average landed revenues stood, at the very least, at around half of Wolffe's original estimate, owing to the king's need to financially provide for a large family²⁴. If we place *c.* £10,000 worth of annual average landed revenues available for public use alongside *c.* £30,000 worth of annual average income from the other *de facto* permanent source of public income, indirect taxation, which for the most part continued to be administered by the exchequer, we are left with *c.* £40,000 worth of annual average «ordinary» revenues²⁵. This sum falls short of total annual average expenditure on «ordinary»; that is to say, permanent, charges. The crown was faced with annual average payments of *c.* £45,000 on the royal household and permanent defence costs.

²³ Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne*, 188-90.

²⁴ Ross, *Edward IV*, 381. Influenced by the fact that by the close of his reign Edward was apportioning around £5,000 worth of exchequer assignments from the customs and subsidies on overseas trade to his household, a figure as low as *c.* £5,000 has been suggested: see Harriss, «Review of Wolffe», 172. In truth, the absence of detailed financial memorandum pertaining to the chamber from Edward IV's reign means that we will never know the net yield of the crown lands at this time. I have therefore considered it prudent to suggest a sum lower than that earmarked for the royal household, but not one as low as that proposed by Harriss, which has not been accepted by subsequent scholars — hence our adoption of the *c.* £10,000 figure suggested by Ross.

²⁵ See Harriss, *King, Parliament*, which pioneered the methodological approach of differentiating between «ordinary» and «extraordinary» revenues and expenditures, which has been subject to sustained, though misplaced, scholarly criticism (for which, see Wolffe, *Crown Lands*, 1-28 and Lander, *Government and Community*, 67, both of whom argue that, whilst contemporaries thought in terms of «certain» and «irregular» revenues and charges, beyond this there was no identifiable ideological framework regarding public revenue and expenditure of the kind which the «ordinary»/«extraordinary» dichotomy suggests. I strongly dispute these arguments. The later medieval parliamentary record clearly, unambiguously demonstrates that royal official, in pleading the crown's wartime «necessity», and parliamentarians, in their tax concessions, recognised that public taxation ought to be reserved for specific and temporary special expeditionary expenditures; an ideological maxim rooted in scholastic economic thought. Historically, it was expected that the vast bulk of public expenditures which related to permanent or «ordinary» costs, including the payment of the royal household as well as of royal officials and of standing defence costs, would be funded from the proceeds of the crown lands. Costly additions to permanent standing charges from the late fourteenth century, however, led MPs to relax their association of indirect taxation with specific royal «necessities»; parliament coming to believe that demesne revenues alongside indirect taxation would suffice in funding permanent or «ordinary» expenditures. On these points, see Harriss, «Thomas Cromwell», 723, note 1.

An additional c. £5-10,000 at the very least would, moreover, have been required to fund miscellaneous charges, including increased diplomatic costs, and the regime's debts²⁶.

A £10-15,000 annual average deficit between «ordinary» revenues and expenditures constituted a very substantial fiscal problem and it seems certain that the first decade or more of Yorkist government was a very hand to mouth and primitive affair. By the mid-1470s, however, Edward was fortunate enough to have a short-to-medium term fiscal solution in the form of a French Pension, secured in 1475 in return for the Yorkist acceptance of peace with France, which totalled £10,000 per annum²⁷. As Figure 1, below, demonstrates, the French Pension went a large way towards papering over a large deficit in the regime's «ordinary» finances which would have signalled a fiscal crisis for any later medieval English regime:

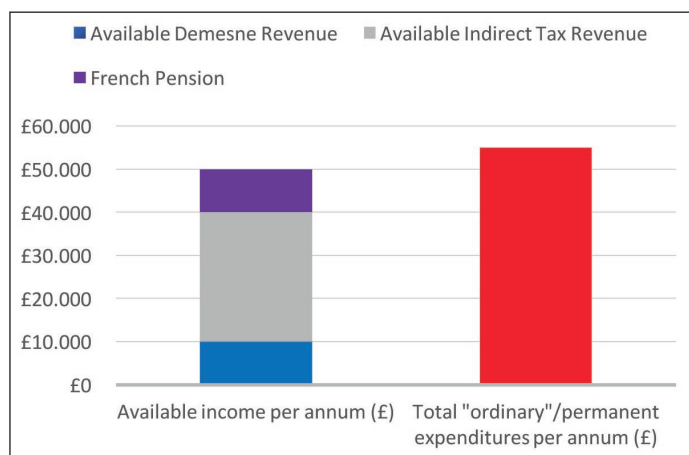


FIGURA 1: The estimated royal «ordinary» budget during the latter years of the reign of Edward IV.

Figure 1 is constructed on the premise that miscellaneous/diplomatic costs stood at the upper end of the range cited above (£10,000), which puts total «ordinary», or permanent, charges at c. £55,000. Consequently, it hypothesises a minimal deficit of c. £5,000, which would surely have been funded either by the benevolences intermittently contracted by the king²⁸, or more likely by leftover proceeds of clerical taxes occasionally

²⁶ It must be stressed that this is something of a conservative estimate, since the cumulative debts of the late Lancastrian regime would have placed a very significant annual debt repayment burden on Edward IV's early regime; possibly well above that suggested by the figure cited above: Lander, «Council, Administration», 192-4. Nevertheless, by the final years of his reign, Edward was said to have paid down most of the debts racked up by his Lancastrian predecessor: Ross, *Edward IV*, 380. This suggests that the annual cost of paying down dated debts would have declined cumulatively, and probably markedly, as the Yorkist period wore on.

²⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, 233.

²⁸ In the Middle Ages a benevolence was a financial gift offered by subjects to the crown in lieu of military service; leviable by royal prerogative for the defence of the realm: Harriss, «Aids», 8-13. During the Yorkist period, however, benevolences became a means by which the crown, which sought to avoid where

secured in convocation²⁹. Significantly, the only parliamentary lay taxes secured by Edward were in the mid-to-late 1460s and mid-1470s; periods when Edward IV was threatened by Lancastrian insurrection and foreign war, respectively³⁰. The income being sought from these lay taxes was therefore aimed at funding (and from what we can tell, did fund) special expeditionary, «extraordinary», expenditures.

It has become commonplace amongst historians to talk of the heavy burden of Edward IV's fifteenths and tenths and his experimental income taxes³¹. Certainly, subsidy bills such as the two and three quarters fifteenths and tenths conceded during the long parliament of 1472-5 were resented in the country by gentlemen and yeomen; many of whom would have paid significant proportions of local lay tax quotas³². This is understandable, given that the feudal and commercial elites were just emerging out of the quarter century long protracted socio-economic crisis sketched above, which began to ease off somewhat during the Yorkist decades³³. Notwithstanding short bouts of unpopular lay taxation required to fund spikes in emergency military expenditures, however, the political community knew that Edward had broadly honoured his dynasty's pledge to fund permanent, «ordinary», expenditures primarily from the proceeds of a well-administered royal demesne supplemented by the customs and subsidies on overseas trade, albeit with the assistance of the invaluable French Pension. Parliament in fact only

possible seeking lay taxation, could tax subjects in all but name; a development which underlay the lay community's dissatisfaction with this fiscal strategy. Political as well as economic dissatisfaction can be seen in the returns of Edward IV's two benevolences of 1474 and 1481. See Gray, «First Benevolence», 90-113; and Virgoe, «Benevolence», 25-45. Nevertheless, the timing of these two levies at times of defensive emergency, against the French and the Scots respectively, suggests that most of their yield would have been expended legitimately on war.

²⁹ Clerical taxes conceded and administered separately by the Northern and the Southern clergy on behalf of the crown, generally ran at either a tenth of clerical income, or a moiety (a half tenth). The northern convocation at York conceded 7 clerical tenths during Edward's reign, whilst the southern convocation at Canterbury conceded 10 clerical tenths throughout the period 1461-83; a total of seventeen tenths with an overall anticipated yield of £50,500 (given that, by the Yorkist period, the yield of a southern tenth had fallen to c. £14,000, and that of a northern tenth had fallen to c. £1,500). Although historically clerical tenths were firmly «extraordinary» subsidies, by the fifteenth century convocations habitually conceded these almost as a matter of course.

³⁰ Parliament conceded 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ fifteenths and tenths during the course of Edward IV's reign; a 25 % tax on crown tenants and annuitants, to be levied on all royal subjects holding lands, annuities, fees or offices worth 10 marks or more, in 1464; and a 10 % income tax on the profits of all temporal lands, tenements, rents, fees, annuities, offices and pensions of all temporal possessions, in 1472: Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, *Lay Taxes*, 109-20.

³¹ This is a key theme of Jurkowski, «Parliamentary and Prerogative», 271-90; see also Kleineke, *Edward IV*, 172-6.

³² See above, note 18.

³³ In short, prices began to increase; and wages dropped off, which helped gentlemen and yeomen engaged in agrarian commercial practices centred around capital inputs in production and market profit. Consequently, the late fifteenth century saw a return to shorter term commercial leases. On these crucial macro-economic changes, see Britnell, *Closing*, 208-47 and *Commercialisation*, 102-27; Dyer, *Transition*, 126-72; Fryde, *Peasants and Landlords*, 256-78; Hilton, *Economic Development*, 15-30, 131-48 and «Rent and Capital», 174-214.

conceded 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ fifteenths and tenths across the entire reign of Edward IV; a lower level of lay supply than that which had been secured by any of his later medieval predecessors.

The key point to derive from the above discussion is that the «land revenue experiment» failed to afford the government any breathing space if royal expenditures rose markedly or the French Pension was withdrawn. Luckily for Edward, he never had to seriously address either of these dilemmas, which would have forced his government to face up to fiscal reality in such a way which would have risked seriously tarnishing the king's standing; but it was inevitable that just such a reckoning would be necessary at some point. This occurred sooner rather than later³⁴. In the final year of Edward IV's reign, the French state withdrew its pension at the same time that royal expenditures rose due to the need for the crown to finance the annual upkeep of the garrison town of Berwick which had fallen under English control. The complex crisis of 1483-4 which saw Richard III seize the throne from his nephew, the late king's child Edward V, subsequently placed a huge additional financial pressure on the throne, owing to Richard's huge special expeditionary expenditures and emergency patronage outlays³⁵. An unprecedented c. £43,000 fiscal deficit was the result, as depicted by Figure 2 below; this was a larger structural fiscal imbalance than any to have characterised the late Lancastrian era. This required a return to liberal lay taxation to address the «ordinary» as well as the «extraordinary» side of the royal budget, however, MPs at the parliament of 1484 were unwilling to respond favourably to Chancellor Russell's fiscal overtures, thus leaving the Ricardian regime effectively bankrupt on the eve of the Tudor invasion.

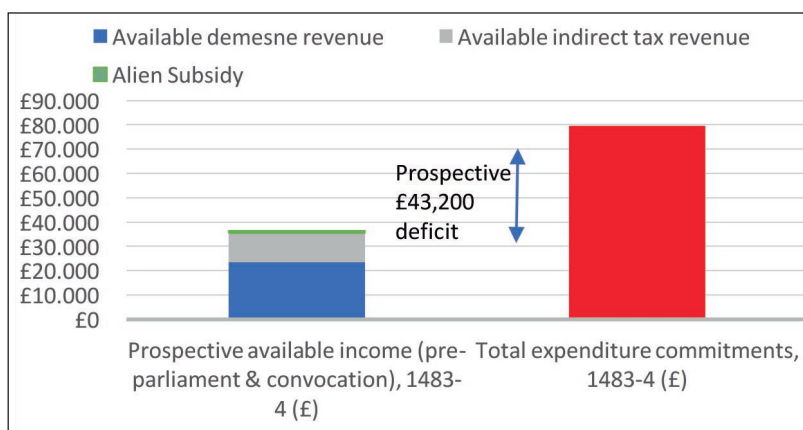


FIGURA 2: The deficit between estimated prospective royal income and total expenditure commitments, 1483-4.

³⁴ What follows is based upon the analysis, and the referenced figures, provided by Brayson, «Fiscal Policy», esp. 151-60.

³⁵ This was exacerbated by Edward IV's lifetime grant of the *maltolt* and tonnage and poundage running out on the death of that monarch, and therefore the administration having to desist from collecting the subsidies on overseas trade until a fresh parliament mandated fresh concessions.

Clearly, then, two decades of Fortescuean fiscal policy had created a powerful and dangerous false impression amongst the political elite that the «land revenue experiment» was not simply a transitory phase in crown finance, but rather the new norm. In particular, the presence of the French Pension for the latter phase of Edward IV's reign had papered over the fiscal reality that domanial and customary receipts alone did not—and could not—cater for royal financial stability. Even had he attempted to, Edward IV would unlikely have been able to overcome the deep-rooted fiscal myth that the crown could «live of its own», since as we have seen he had in no small part staked his monarchical reputation on upholding this mantra. The events of 1483-4, meanwhile, proved that such a task was well beyond Richard III, since Richard was a usurper accused of regicide who had zero political capital across most of the midland and southern lowland English polity. In any case, the recessionary conditions of the mid-century economy were probably too fresh in many citizens' minds during these decades for there to be any real chance of a return to a more regularised lay tax regime during the Yorkist era. By the early Tudor era, however, the economic recovery which had begun across the third quarter of the fifteenth century had gathered pace³⁶. Perhaps more importantly, Henry VII and his progeny made no rash promises to «live of their own»³⁷. These inter-related developments provided the early Tudors with the opportunity, at a time of increased political stability after the Wars of the Roses, to slowly increase the incidence of lay supply, which appears to have been deployed across the royal budget³⁸. At a time of increased indirect tax receipts which owed to a continued recovery in overseas trade, a tax based fiscal system re-emerged which was firmly within the purview of a reformed exchequer capable of also managing the increase in patrimonial receipts which continued to characterise the early Tudor era.

2 THE YORKIST-ERA REGRESSION FROM A «TAX» TO A «DOMAIN» STATE, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BONNEY-ORMROD MODEL OF SYSTEMIC FISCAL CHANGE

2.1 *Yorkist Royal Finance, in the Context of the Bonney-Ormrod Model of Fiscal Change*

The lines of enquiry pursued above are in part intended as a historiographical intervention in a long-dormant debate amongst British historians regarding the relative viability of the Yorkist «land revenue experiment»³⁹. They are, however, also highly relevant to ongoing debates within the international community of fiscal historians.

³⁶ See the works cited in note 33, above.

³⁷ Wolffe, «Henry VII's Land Revenues», 225-54; Grummitt, «Henry VII, Chamber Finance», 229-43.

³⁸ The remainder of this paragraph is based on O'Brien, and Hunt, «Rise of a Fiscal State», 165-9.

³⁹ See, in particular, the works of Wolffe, cited above in note 1, for the argument that the «Yorkist land revenue experiment» was successful. The works of Ross and Lander, cited above in note 6, believed that Yorkist fiscal expedients were needed—but did not work. There is, however, a trend of scholarship which questions the need for—let alone the viability of—the Yorkist focus on augmenting demesne revenues: see Harriss, «A revolution», Ormrod «West European Monarchies», 149-50, and more recently Brayson, «Fiscal Policy».

In 1999, Bonney and Ormrod adapted the classic work of J. A. Schumpeter and later reiterations of Schumpeter's work by writers such as K. Krüger in their formulation of a ground-breaking new model of systemic historic fiscal change⁴⁰. Bonney and Ormrod offered a typology of historic and contemporary fiscal systems ranging from the «tribute states» of ancient times, through the «domain states» of medieval Europe, to the «tax states» of early modern Europe and, particularly in the core economies of the capitalist world, modern «fiscal states». They mapped out how the increased costs or «revenue imperative» associated with growing governmental structures and particularly war over the historical *longue durée* often provided the impetus for systemic fiscal transitions from one of these systems to another.

As an early modernist and a late medievalist, respectively, Bonney and Ormrod understandably devoted substantial attention to the transition between the «domain states» of medieval Western Europe and the early modern «tax states» which supplanted them. At the centre of their thematic model was therefore a detailed discussion of the move from low yield fiscal regimes of the central-to-later Middle Ages, centred as these were on patrimonial receipts and customary or feudal impositions which were incapable of sustaining heavy military expenditures and debt obligations across France, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy and elsewhere, to high yield tax systems capable of sustaining ballooning outlays through new and dynamic tax and credit structures across the centuries from *c.* 1450 to *c.* 1800. Several initial review articles and subsequent analyses criticised Bonney and Ormrod on the basis that their model was allegedly predicated upon a proscriptive Weberian teleology which emphasised the *inevitability* of the «tax state» in early modern Europe⁴¹. In fact, an explicit founding principle of the Bonney-Ormrod model had been that «there can be no teleology in fiscal history»⁴². These writers had always recognised that aberrations from epochal fiscal systemic norms can be found; thus, they paid particular attention to Ormrod's original postulation of a medieval English «tax state» in a mid-fourteenth century Europe dominated by «domain states»⁴³.

Edward III's regime achieved what in the terms of the Bonney-Ormrod model would be considered a «fiscal revolution». At a time when contemporary continental governments were attempting to fund warfare through fiscal expedients characteristic of a classic «domain state» such as prerogative feudal levies and currency manipulation, the English crown instead negotiated a continuous series of parliamentary lay and indirect subsidies across the middle decades of the fourteenth century. The fiscal limitations of prerogative imposts and coinage debasements undertaken by states such as Valois France were evidenced by these states' general inability to levy sustainable levels of serviceable credit and to affect anything more than short-term, rather unsustainable, spikes in public income. The qualitative fiscal benefits of Edward III's parliamentary subsidies were, on

⁴⁰ See Bonney and Ormrod, «Introduction»; Krüger, «Public Finance», 49-62. For the scholastic postulation of the rise of the tax state, see Schumpeter, «Crisis», 99-140.

⁴¹ Harriss, «Review of Bonney», 143-5; Hoffman, «Review of Bonney», 282-3.

⁴² Bonney and Ormrod, «Introduction», 12.

⁴³ For discussions of the early English «tax state», see Ormrod, «State-Building», esp. 34-5; Ormrod, «England», 101-22. For comparisons with continental European domain states in the fourteenth century, see Ormrod. «West European Monarchies», 123-60.

the other hand, immense. By their nature, Edward's fifteenths and tenths and the *maltolt* tax on wool exports were underwritten by the political community in parliament, which meant that MPs and their constituents were endorsing a public, tax-based solution to the government's heavy expenditures⁴⁴. Significantly, after the close of the first phase of the Hundred Years' War in 1360, parliament consented to the continued concession of the *maltolt* and tonnage and poundage on imports of wine and exports of general merchandise, which meant that these charges effectively become *de facto* permanent subsidies⁴⁵. Combined, these fiscal political developments provided the crown with a sufficient public income base to inspire the confidence of domestic creditors, who extended a serviceable level of loans. By the close of Edward III's reign, tax and credit combined dwarfed demesne and prerogative sources; a sure sign that a potent «tax state», which brought in considerably in excess of 50 % of revenues from «publicly controlled» income sources as opposed to regalian/feudal receipts, had replaced the earlier «domain state».

Nevertheless, the fact that there was a «fiscal revolution» in mid-fourteenth century England is less important, in and of itself, than the relative sustainability and longevity of the parliamentary fiscal settlement achieved by Edward III. As overseas trade contracted in the wake of the complex monetary and commercial crisis of the late fourteenth century onwards, the viability of an indirect tax-centric funding solution to the crown's continued heavy financial expenditures receded, thus raising the prospect that alternative public funding would be needed to ensure relative royal solvency. In the terms of the Bonney-Ormrod model, the scene was set for a fifteenth-century «crisis of the tax state», which according to neo-Schumpeterian logic could either be overcome by the political negotiation of the requisite tax-based solutions to the crown's financial problems or it could result in the development of politically insoluble tensions, terminal budgetary problems, and the consequent collapse of a tax-based fiscal system and its replacement by a feudal, demesne-based royal financial system. As discussed in the recent works referenced in section 1.1, above, the late Lancastrian experience serves as evidence of the politically insurmountable fiscal problems of the second quarter of the fifteenth century. MPs deployment of scholastic rhetoric to stand in the way of the incidence of the lay taxes required to offset nosediving indirect tax receipts worked to the material advantage of cash-strapped gentry and yeomen taxpayers faced with agrarian and commercial recession. The state, however, was effectively bankrupted by its acceptance, from *c.* 1450 onwards, of the elite's favoured alternative fiscal strategy of resumption, which increased net demesne income at the expense of a marked overall contraction in total public revenue. This constituted a systemic «fiscal regression» to a low yield «domain state» which paved the way for protracted, severe and worsening fiscal problems across the Yorkist period culminating in the crisis of 1483-5.

An advantage of viewing Yorkist royal financial developments through the conceptual lens of the Bonney-Ormrod model is that this invites comparison with the fiscal systems

⁴⁴ Harriss, *King, Parliament*.

⁴⁵ For the remainder of this paragraph, see Ormrod, «Finance and Trade», 155-86 and «Origins», 209-27.

of other West European powers at the close of the Middle Ages. The impermanent nature of England's medieval «tax state» and its supersession by a «domain state» at the outset of the early modern era contrasts markedly with the transition to «tax states» across the fifteenth century in many hitherto less fiscally developed continental powers. Whereas, as we have seen, the parliamentary representatives of the fiscally-burdened English agrarian elite (including, increasingly, politically enfranchised «middling sorts») stood in the way of the political normalisation of lay taxes towards which they contributed substantial sums, contemporary elites in societies as diverse as France, the Italian City States and Portugal, to name but a few, consented to the increasingly frequent levying of a range of hitherto «extraordinary» subsidies including, importantly, direct taxes. A rich tradition of literature on these national case studies including classic work such as that of J. B. Henneman for France and, most recently, the revisionist accounts of A. Castro-Henriques for Portugal and G. Alfani and M. Di Tullio for Venice/Italy, has made much of the socio-economic context of direct subsidies such as the French *taille*, the Portuguese *direitos*, and the Italian direct levies based on the regional *estimo* and *cesi*, from the middle decades of the fifteenth century onwards⁴⁶. A key theme of this scholarship is the negligible impact of these subsidies on continental elites, many of whom secured blanket exemptions, which explains their relative lack of concern with the impact of direct imposts on taxpayers from the politically disenfranchised middling sorts and in particular the agrarian poor. The fiscal politics of many early modern «tax states» can therefore be seen to have contributed to the secular economic stagnation which characterised the post-medieval era across many continental European polities. In contrast, by shielding many lesser nobles and acquisitive former peasant yeomen from hitherto regular lay subsidies towards which they had contributed, the Yorkist-era regression from «tax» to «domain state» can be seen to have assisted in the secular economic and commercial recovery which occurred in late fifteenth century England, and therefore to have played a role in facilitating the «mini divergence» between England and much of Western continental Europe from this time onwards⁴⁷.

2.2 *The Systemic Fiscal Regression of Yorkist England in a Geo-Historic Perspective*

Based on the foregoing discussion, scholarly re-engagement with the Bonney-Ormrod model of historic fiscal change seems needed in order to understand, respectively, national fiscal developments, and how these fit into broader continent-wide public finance outcomes and more general questions of political economy. In defending this key proposition of the «new» fiscal historians of the 1990s, however, one key question in particular presents itself: how much of an outlier was Yorkist England in the early

⁴⁶ Alfani and Di Tullio, *The Lion's Share*; Castro-Henriques, «State Finance» and «Rise of a Tax State», 49-66; Henneman, «Nobility, Privilege», 1-17.

⁴⁷ See Brenner, «Agrarian class structure», 10-63. Critics have vocally disagreed with Brenner's Marxian analysis. Yet recent statistical work has confirmed that English growth overtook the hitherto more advanced continental European economies by the close of the fifteenth century; see, for example, Allen, «Economic structure», esp. 20; Brenner, «Property and progress», esp. 108-9.

modern era? And, following on from this more generally, just how rare are «atypical» fiscal systems across the historical *longue durée*, *i.e.*, how infrequent has it been, both historically and in the present, for individual fiscal regimes to deviate from epochal fiscal-systemic norms? These are big questions, but a few preliminary comments can be made which may serve as the basis for future scholarship. The unviability of the Yorkist «domain state» and its supersession by a renewed English «tax state», albeit a «tax state» with a strong demesne element across the Tudor era, ought not to lead us to deny the existence of «domain states» elsewhere on the continent or beyond in the early modern era. Bonney and Ormrod themselves commented that the «tax states» characteristic of early modern Western Europe were an epochal norm rather than an inevitability; furthermore, they suggested that there was a proportionately greater likelihood of non-tax based early modern fiscal systems elsewhere in the continent. In this context, Bonney and Ormrod cited the German principality of Prussia, which as late as the nineteenth century sustained a revenue base constitutive of over 50 % demesne and prerogative receipts⁴⁸.

Detailed empirical research has identified further Germanic states across the late fifteenth to early nineteenth centuries which were largely funded by demesne-centric expedients and prerogative measures, including feudal monopolies exploited for fiscal purposes. Authors such as Spoerer have argued that these «domain states» undermine the Bonney-Ormrod model on the basis that they demonstrate the prevalence of non-tax based fiscal systems in central-eastern Europe hence, so the argument runs, there can have been no «natural» growth of the early modern «tax state»⁴⁹. Once again, this is to seriously misunderstand the Bonney-Ormrod model; it is worth repeating that the explanatory centrality which Bonney and Ormrod accorded to the transition from «domain» to «tax state» from the fifteenth century onwards did *not* owe to an in-built historiographical teleology. Rather, this owes to specifically Western European developments where the revenue imperative of inter-state warfare between comparatively centralised nation states ultimately prompted tax-centric fiscal regimes —even in England where we have seen the political and socio-economic context of taxation differed from many other states, hence the Yorkist «fiscal regression» discussed in this article. Across Germany, geo-politically fragmented state structures predominated which sustained proportionately lower «extraordinary» expenditures than West European states owing to the smaller scale, more localised nature of inter-state Germanic conflicts⁵⁰. The «revenue imperative» was thus lower across many German states, therefore the need for increasingly regularised imposts such as those negotiated with elites across Western Europe was far lower and prerogative fiscal expedients were consequently proportionally more significant in budgetary terms. Credit markets were limited and short term, however, the proportionately smaller size of

⁴⁸ Bonney and Ormrod, «Introduction», 15.

⁴⁹ Spoerer, «Revenue Structures», 781-91. Also see the more general comments of Yun-Casalilla, «Introduction», 33; Cardoso and Lains, «Introduction: Paying for the liberal state», 1-26; Neale, «Conclusion», 279-302.

⁵⁰ The remainder of this paragraph is based on a reading of Kruger, «Public Finance», 40-62; Schremmer, «Taxation and Public Finance», 315-494; Henderson, *Studies*. A fuller body of German literature is referenced and discussed by Spoerer, «Revenue Structures».

early modern Germanic state budgets permitted relative solvency to a surprising degree—with the key caveat that this was overturned, along with many of these principalities themselves, during the Napoleonic Wars.

Nevertheless, from the nineteenth century onwards—certainly after the mid-to-later nineteenth century—the Germanic fiscal experience begins to follow a pattern reminiscent of much of Western Europe across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries⁵¹. Political centralisation and emergence as a European power resulted in an exponential growth in public expenditures which required the political negotiation of a heavier tax load which transformed the revenue base of a geo-politically expansive German polity, which in turn facilitated an explosion in credit. This constituted a «fiscal revolution» of the kind envisaged by the Bonney-Ormrod model, just as West European continental developments had done centuries earlier, and it was a remarkably sustainable one at that, particularly since the industrialisation and financial growth of an economically fast-growing Prussia allowed Germany to secure a credit base characteristic, not merely of a «tax state», but of a modern «fiscal state» by the time of the First World War. The German case is important in that it emphatically demonstrates that the systemic fiscal change envisaged by Bonney and Ormrod occurred in different geo-political spaces at different times. Fiscal history, in other words, is a great deal more complex than many political and economic historians alike often consider it to be, and it consequently requires careful thematic analysis.

It remains for us to briefly consider the Yorkist phenomenon of systemic fiscal regression in comparative terms. The systemic reversion of the early English «tax state» to a demesne-centric fiscal formation in the late fifteenth century seems remarkably unusual in a Western European context; the «revenue imperative» of war, the financial demands incurred by the need to service credit and the day-to-day costs of government from the outset of the early modern era meant that the primary Western European powers could hardly function across even the short-to-medium term without an expansive tax and credit centric revenue structure. The fact that this regression nevertheless occurred across a generation and more of course brings us back to the English elite's aversion to direct imposts towards which, unusually, they contributed substantial sums across the mid-century seigniorial and commercial recession. What, though of the possibility of systemic fiscal regressions elsewhere? Here, one could look again at early modern «domain states» such as Prussia where, by all accounts, the proportion of tax per total treasury receipts fluctuated above 50 % at varied points across the early modern era only to then drop again, the final time of which was potentially as late as the centralising era of Bismarck⁵². This could be taken to denote several «crises» of nascent Germanic «tax states» which resulted in intermittent systemic fiscal regression.

Careful application of the Bonney-Ormrod model would, however, prompt historiographical caution in this assessment since, as we have seen, a «systemic fiscal crisis» requires a «revenue imperative» for marked increases in taxation which is successfully opposed by politically co-ordinated elites. Prior to the nineteenth century,

⁵¹ For what follows, see Spoerer, «The Evolution», 103-31; Spoerer, «Political Economy», 51-65.

⁵² See the literature cited in note 50, above.

this seems to have been lacking across much of Germany, for the simple reason that public outlays could broadly be managed by the entrepreneurial public deployment of an enlarged demesne. Short-term bursts in taxation therefore probably constituted nothing more than brief, medieval-style levies required to fund transitory emergencies, after which there would presumably have been a government-elite consensus in favour of returning to a demesne-prerogative based fiscal system. As for the recent claim that, since Bismark's demesne revenues outstripped his regime's income tax levies, pre-World War One Germany should be considered a «domain state», this must be approached with caution⁵³. This hinges on the view that the financial proceeds of the nationalised railways constituted demesne receipts. Given, however, that nationalisation was approved by parliament, in tandem with MPs' concession of a raft of direct tax levies and an explosion in publicly mandated credit within a fast-growing economy, pre-unification Germany exhibits more characteristics of Bonney and Ormrod's depiction of an advanced «tax state», or even a modern «fiscal state», rather than a medieval-style demesne-based system. Eventually, then, faced with the «revenue imperative» of inter-state competition in the age of capital, the Germanic «domain state» proved unviable and required systemic «fiscal revolution», as dictated by the Bonney-Ormrod model.

It may be that a more meaningful example of systemic fiscal regression to place alongside the case study of Yorkist England is provided by the extra-European world. The fiscal case study of early modern Japan, which has been the subject of several recent studies is interesting⁵⁴. Japan constituted a fifteenth-century «tax state» in crisis which, in some respects at least, echoes the fiscal crisis which we have seen occurred in mid-to-late fifteenth century England. Across the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Japan had developed a centralised fiscal system constitutive of nationally co-ordinated public taxes to fund increased expenditures, which extended beyond merely short-term transitory «extraordinary» outlays to encompass bureaucracy, patronage and debt repayment. Unlike in the Germanic states, then, the Japanese need for taxation was permanent, as in fifteenth-century England. Another similarity with England at the very close of the Middle Ages was the Japanese elite's politically co-ordinated opposition to near-permanent state levies, however, the underlying dynamics of fiscal conflict differed markedly in the two polities. Whilst in Yorkist England the centralised character of the state was not in question, which facilitated a return to a tax-based fiscal system once socio-economic and political conditions improved during the early Tudor era, in Japan the central state, along with its fiscal capabilities, collapsed amidst sustained regional civil conflict which emanated from a decentralised imperial socio-political structure characterised by highly autonomous regional warlords. Thus, across the era of so-called «Onin Wars» of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and beyond, a weakened Japanese imperial state, faced with heavy continued expenditures owing both to war and to the patronage demands of warlords, was compelled to oversee a devolved fiscal system in which regional self-financing «domains» (feudatories) played a key budgetary role across the early modern era and beyond.

⁵³ See, for example, the work of Spoerer cited in notes 49 and 51, above.

⁵⁴ Brown, «Early modern Japan», 429-68; Nakabayashi, «Japanese Fiscal State», 378-409.

The Japanese case study is important because it once again demonstrates the capacity of the Bonney-Ormrod model to explain divergent fiscal outcomes over time and place. Here, systemic fiscal regression seems to have led *not* to a classic Western-style demesne-based structure along the lines of Yorkist England or the Germanic territories across the early modern era. Rather, the decentralisation of public power to autonomous localities characteristic of early modern Japan resulted in the emergence of a devolved fiscal system where the primary means of financing emanated from officially mandated regional warlords' levying of a regularised compulsory payment. These payments were referred to as land taxes, however, their compulsory and localised nature, being expressly assessed and administered within seignorial structures, sharply differentiated them from the public levies negotiated between central authorities and elites in, for example, Western European «tax states». It is therefore not meaningful to follow some writers in referring to early modern Japan as a «tax state» or an advanced fiscal structure in Western terms⁵⁵. Rather, taken together, the regional «domains» constitutive of early modern Japan appear to denote a highly devolved oriental «domain state» in which the compulsory payments described above formed part of regional rulers' broader rental and prerogative incomes, which the state itself had very limited control over — hence the relative absence of state budgeting capacity right up to the nineteenth century. This kind of fiscal structure could not sustain advanced credit structures nor fund heavy public expenditures during the era that the Japanese state sought to industrialise and grow economically, hence the rapid nineteenth centralisation of the state, the deployment of a national parliament in which public taxes could be negotiated, and the establishment of a national Bank and the rapid growth of credit markets. In other words, the early modern systemic regression of Japan to an oriental style «domain state» needed, eventually, to be overturned in order to a re-emergent «tax state» and, in time, an advanced «fiscal state» sustained through a funded public debt to finance the modern Japanese state structure.

3 CONCLUSIONS

To draw the foregoing lines of investigation together, two key conclusions emerge. One relates specifically to British historiographical debate surrounding the so-called «land revenue experiment» of the Yorkist government in England. Rather insularly looking at the Yorkists' harnessing of increased net yields from the crown patrimony, the late B. P. Wolffe and a tradition of scholarship discussed at the outset of this article applauded Edward IV's attempt to «live of his own». By placing an empirical analysis of mid-to-late fifteenth-century royal patrimonial receipts in the context of a broader quantitative reconstruction of the Yorkist-era royal budget, however, we have demonstrated the marked contraction in the royal budget which occurred as a result of the relative absence of lay taxation. Following on from this, we have traced the worsening fiscal strains attendant upon the Yorkist state's attempts to make a «domain state» work. Hamstrung by the political circumstances of Edward IV's usurpation of the throne, the Yorkists were unable

⁵⁵ Brown, «Early modern Japan».

to break free from the unviable Fortsecuean mantra of fiscal self-sufficiency, to which appealed to a heavily taxed political society was attached following on from the lengthy fiscal and socio-economic crises of the late Lancastrian era. This resulted in Richard III's desperate attempts to resurrect a tax-based fiscal system in 1483-4 which, primarily owing to his own low political standing following on from his suspected regicide, further contributed to the severe crisis of 1484-5 and resulted in Richard's demise on the battlefield 1485. It was left to the Tudors, acting in more stable political and socio-economic conditions from the 1490s onwards, to restore a tax-based fiscal system managed by a reformed royal exchequer.

The second, and more wide-ranging, conclusion to emerge from this study relates to the historiographical relevance of mid-to-late fifteenth century English fiscal developments to broader questions of fiscal crisis and change over time and place. A central plank of revisionist fiscal scholarship of the 1990s was the idea, best expressed by Bonney and Ormrod, that fiscal history is not merely an adjunct of economic or political history; rather, it is a separate discipline which ought to be studied through its own methodological framework. As influential as the so-called Bonney-Ormrod model which they proposed, centred on a re-structuring of Schumpeter's «rise of the tax state», has been, it has faced sustained criticism on the grounds that it is allegedly predicated on a Weberian teleology which views early modern «tax states» and their more advanced successor, the modern «fiscal state» centred on sovereign regimes' entrance into advanced credit markets to fund the unprecedented expenditures of democratic state structures, as historically inevitable, thus papering over a broader range of diverse fiscal outcomes which have occurred over the *longue durée* of the historical experience. It is hoped that this paper provides a case study in the viability of the Bonney-Ormrod model which, used judiciously, can in fact embrace a diversity of historical-fiscal experiences. The Yorkist «land revenue experiment» and its supersession by a renewed «tax state» by the sixteenth century demonstrates that there is ample scope for the Bonney-Ormrod model to explain an epochal fiscal-systemic aberration in Western Europe at the dawn of the early modern area. A judicious analysis of this has much, moreover, to tell us about divergent fiscal and economic outcomes in England and her neighbours. In assessing, for comparative purposes, the scope for further aberrations from the West European fiscal-systemic norm, which seem to have been more common both in central-eastern Europe and further afield, we have found that, as in the case of Yorkist England, these can also be explained by the Bonney-Ormrod model. We end, then, with a plea for fiscal historians not to retreat into distinct national historiographies which all too often do not look at the bigger picture, or alternatively to employ thematic terms so vague that they have limited meaning (such as the recent tendency of some historians to speak vaguely of «different kinds of fiscal state») and instead to engage in detailed, inter-related studies which are conversant with the Bonney-Ormrod model, and with the renewed promise of a «new fiscal history».

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