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B. Yun-Casalilla u.a. (Hrsg.): The Rise of Fiscal States

Recent years have seen a great renewal of interest among historians in the processes of state formation, and in identifying different types of states in terms of their distinctive tax regimes. The states discussed in this way are often described nowadays as fiscal, or fiscal-military (or military-fiscal) states. Hitherto, the focus in this discussion has been on a relatively small number of European states in the early modern, or first global era. This volume of essays - a collection of conference papers - seeks to widen the scope of the discussion in two crucial respects. Firstly, it covers a broader period, extending beyond 1800 - indeed one or two of the essays cover even longer periods, one embracing China between 700 BC and 1911 AD. Secondly, the collection extends its geographical range beyond Europe to Asia - the Ottoman Empire, China, India and Japan - in order to provide a global history. These innovative approaches are part of what might be called a third, in that the collection seeks a new perspective on the phenomenon of the fiscal state.

An invaluable Introduction by Bartolome Yun sets the tone for a collection which emphasises above all diversity, the absence of a single route to fiscal statehood, and which is critical of both Eurocentrism and any idea of the achievement of fiscal statehood representing (progress towards) modernity. In many respects, the volume has a critical focus - or target - in the form of the work of, on the one hand, Joseph Schumpeter, who originally conceptualised a shift from domain to tax state, with the latter being more effectively geared to the common good in that it facilitated economic growth, and on the other hand, Douglas North. Some contributions question the relevance of Schumpeter, not least because the very idea of the domain state is simply not appropriate to China and India. Nevertheless, Schumpeter's model, while not universally applicable, has some value here not least because it obliges us to ask crucial questions. Yun also makes a crucial distinction between fiscal regimes and fiscal states - indeed, by no means all of the contributors use the term fiscal state, which is reserved for states which emerged in the nineteenth century. Yun concludes by suggesting the need to study the "moral economy" on which the social consensus underpinning the fiscal state rested. Finally, while there were common factors behind the elaboration of the fiscal states, these were blended in different proportions.

So much for the Introduction. Part One, North Atlantic Europe comprises essays on the Dutch Republic / Kingdom of the Netherlands (Fritschy, 'T Hart and Horlings), Habsburg Flanders / Belgium, France (Bonney), and Britain (Daunton). Part Two, Central and Eastern Europe has essays on the German states (North), the Austrian Monarchy (Pieper), and Russia (Gatrell). Part Three, South Atlantic Europe and the Mediterranean comprises essays on Portugal (Mata), Spain (Comin Comin and Yun Casalilla), although go too far in making the Spanish Habsburgs dukes of Savoy as well as of Milan and Burgundy (p. 234); the Italian republics and principalities (Pezzolo), the Papal states (Piola Caselli), and the Ottoman Empire (Pamuk). Part Four considers China (Deng, Bin Wong), Japan (Nakabayashi), and Mughal and British India, or rather the East India Company (Richards). As the foregoing suggests, this is still very largely a volume whose core is provided by European experience. Even within Europe, the coverage is patchy. There is nothing on Scandinavia, although there has been much interesting work done on the Scandinavian polities as fiscal states, including that of Ladwig Petersen on Denmark and that of the late Jan Glete on Sweden. As for Italy, the coverage is oddly skewed. Given what Patrick O'Brien says (p. 442, 448) about Venice being regarded in its heyday as a paradigm fiscal state it might have been a better candidate for a focused study than the Papal States. Since the collection is distinguished by its inclusion of the nineteenth century, and the fiscal states then created, it is puzzling that there are no essays devoted to the new

states in South America. There are two essays on China, although Bartolome Yun Casalilla acknowledges (p. 29) that more on southeast Asia might have improved the range of the collections range.

It would be impossible - and invidious - to highlight all of the gems of this important collection. Nevertheless, some of the conclusions of individual essays merit a mention. Portugal remained long a domain state because overseas trade was a part of the royal domain. Nor was it so easy to distinguish fiscal from domain revenues in Japan. There is a much more positive view taken of the early modern Spanish fiscal system than is often the case. And while American silver is very properly situated within the discussion of Spanish finance, it looms large elsewhere, for example in the essay on the Ottoman experience. More generally, in the eighteenth century there were evident shifts in the nature of tax, with the growing importance of trade based taxes, success in this respect typifying most successful fiscal regimes in Europe and Asia (p. 11). In the eighteenth century, too, the European states, now proto-national rather than composite polities, were beginning to pull ahead of the Asian states (p. 12). Everywhere war was clearly a key shaping influence on the development of the fiscal state.

Inevitably, there is some variety in terms of the approach and focus. Some essays focus more (narrowly) on the fiscal state structure than do others. Pamuk, for example, touches on the broader political economy and institutional framework of Ottoman empire, Some contributors address the issue of debt more than do others. Inevitably, too, there is a great deal of synthesis. This can be problematic - and revealing. Thus, Pezzolo's reliance on secondary materials relating to the fiscal history of Piedmont (surely one of the most striking examples of a fiscal state in the eighteenth century) in his Italian survey omits the work of Matthew Vester for the earlier period but also exposes just how little work has been done on Piedmontese finance since that of Luigi Eunaudi (on the years around 1700) at the start of the twentieth century and that of Guido Quazza in the 1950s (and which only covered the period to c. 1740) and the need to publish Norsa's still wideranging unpublished typescript on the finances of the kingdom of Sardinia to c. 1860.

What emerges from this wide-ranging collection? In his Introduction, Bartolome Yun sees the essays which follow as offering case studies for an ambitious programme whose ultimate achievement will be the elaboration of theories, typologies (or models?) of development of the fiscal state. In the meantime, he sketches some possible lines of interpretation: (1) centralisation as a crucial accompaniment, even in those states not usually thought of as "absolute" - city states, republics and constitutional regimes. However, and in accordance with the new understanding of absolutism everywhere in the last generation, centralisation is here seen as achieved through (often fierce) negotiation which underpinned a variously understood and articulated "trust" in the central authority on the part of elites, merchants and other moneyed men. (2) War was generally a stimulus to the development of the fiscal state, but this was not invariably the case and - more important perhaps - the process was not the same everywhere. Yun notes that the greatest advances towards fiscal state status in nineteenth century Europe occurred in the decades of peace after 1815 (although this might be thought of as in part at least the legacy - in Europe - of intense warfare in the decades before 1815). These observations throw into relief the fact that (3) there were varied routes to fiscal state status, although there may have been greater convergence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Finally (4) there was the problem of information.

It has long been a commonplace that early modern governments were poorly informed about the details of their finances, what was coming in, what was going out, an issue confirmed by many of the case studies, not least that on Spain. This problem underlines the importance of the work of the French historian, Anne Dubet who is painstakingly reconstructing the systems of receipt, payment and accounting established in early eighteenth century Spain (and now Piedmont). Since this is a "global" collection, while there is a proper recognition of national frameworks, there is a welcome emphasis on the international or transnational in the emergence of the fiscal state. Much of this is familiar, but Bartolome Yun notes some new points, including the real constraints on what have often been thought of as bankrupticies in which foreign bankers were merely victims. (But Asian states may have been less dependent on these, p. 20). Evident, too, is the importance of the communication of processes (national banks, other techniques) across state boundaries. Equally, the emergence of the fiscal state created new relations between different territories within the same polity, privileging Cuba for example within the Spanish Monarchy (p. 22) - with important economic consequences. Whether larger states were best placed to achieve fiscal state status is not easy to resolve. It is possible to cite examples both small and large states achieving this (p. 23-4). The fiscal state also appears as a relatively recent development, not least because the state and its agents were rather weak in the face of their rivals and competitors (p. 31). Similarly, the fragility of the nine-

teenth century fiscal state is noted, but also its capacity for rapid growth. The collection demonstrates the value of taking a global perspective, not least in the possibilities of nuance, and of alternative models and patterns - not least to that of North with its emphasis on the importance of the fiscal state to economic development (p. 32-3).

In a concluding "Afterword: Reflections on fiscal foundations and contexts for the formation of economically effective Eurasian states from the rise of Venice to the Opium War", Patrick O'Brien seeks to identify ways in which "a book which is designed to encourage…research into the comparative history of political economy" (p. 443) can be carried forwards. For O'Brien, states only looked to promoting economic development when their own security or geopolitical concerns were assured. Accepting the near impossibility of establishing the data (figures) which would allow conclusions to be drawn and comparisons to be made (a) within individual states (% of revenues, proportion of GDP etc) and (b) between different states, O'Brien identifies a "second best" range of possible comparative studies of and generalisations about processes. In commenting on the preceding essays in "this exercise in collaborative fiscal history", the emphasis is again on the variety of routes to fiscal statehood. This is surely correct and a wise conclusion - albeit in some respects unsatisfactory in being subject to so many variables - to an invaluable collection, one which synthesises much existing but also some new data and one which is both thoughtful and thought- provoking.

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