

**PEASANT REVOLTS DURING THE FRENCH WARS OF
RELIGION
(A SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPARATIVE STUDY)**

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis examines three waves of the peasant revolts in France, during the French Wars of Religion. The first wave of the peasant revolts happened in southwest France in Provence, Dauphiné, and Languedoc: the second wave happened in northern France in Normandy, Brittany and Burgundy and the last one happened in western France Périgord, Limousin, Saintonge, Angoumois, Poitou, Agenais, Marche and Quercy and the whole of Guyenne.

The thesis argues that the main reason for happening the widespread peasant revolts during the civil wars was due to the fundamental destruction of the countryside and the devastation of the peasant economy. The destruction of the peasant economy meant the everyday life of the peasants blocked to continue. It also keeps in the background the relationship between the incomprehensive gradual changing in the world economy in the course of the sixteenth century.

In order to answer the question, I narrate the three waves of the peasant revolts with details in order to provide sufficient reasons to show that the foundation of all of the peasant revolts was the economic issues which after disruption were disguised or oriented by the religious affiliations, anti-noble, anti-military, anti-town aspects. The comparative analyses of these three waves show that the peasantry took arms when their resources, property, and production devastated by the wars. These three waves, particularly the Croquants movement, were important because the peasant revolts which had been started from the mid-sixteenth century and continued until the end of the seventeenth century never achieved such widespread well-organized structure with these fundamental aims.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: From Farm to Market	5
1.1. Peasant Economy	5
1.2. Peasantry as a Class.....	8
1.3. Age of Transition and Modern World System	11
Chapter II: Society and economy	15
2.1. Medieval Prelude.....	15
2.2. Three Stages of Economy	16
2.3. Social classes.....	21
2.3.1. Nobility	21
2.3.2. Bourgeoisie.....	27
2.3.3. Peasantry.....	30
2.4. Religion	34
2.3.5. The Pitauts, a Model Revolt	37
Chapter III: Southern France.....	43
3.1. Provence	43
3.2. Vivarais and Dauphiné	46
3.3. Languedoc	56
3.4. Conclusion.....	62
Chapter IV: Northern and Eastern France.....	69
4.1. Normandy	69
4.2. Brittany	76
4.3. Champagne -Burgundy	83
4.4. Conclusion.....	86
Chapter V: The Croquants of <i>Tard- Avisés</i>	91
5.1. The first Croquants (<i>Tard- avisés</i>)	91
5.2. Conclusion.....	100
Conclusion	106
Appendices.....	114
Table of the Peasant Revolts	115
Glossary of Terms	116

Bibliography	120
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TABLE OF FIGURES

Map 1. France during the Wars of Religion	41
Map 2. Principal areas controlled by the Huguenots and Catholic during the Wars of Religion.	42
Map 3. The peasant revolts in the southwest	67
Map 4. Vivarais.....	68
Map 5. Pyrenees.....	68
Map 6. The peasant revolts in Normandy and Brittany	90
Map 7. Normandy during the Wars	90
Map 8. Tthe Croquants and Bonnets Rouges.....	104
Map 9. The areas of the Croquants	105

Introduction

Liberté! Liberté! Vive le Tiers Estat

Chronique de Jean Tard

“On the 27th of April, farmers assembled at Limeil, on the 22nd of May, at Mompazier and at the end of May, in the plain of the Boule, between Bragerac and St. Naissens, there were about twenty thousand men, all of whom put their hats at the end of their arms, shouting aloud: "Liberty! Liberty! Long live the Third Estate! ".¹ The chronicler, theologian and vicar of the Sarlat diocese, Jean Tard, began his account of the Croquant revolts in Périgord with these words.² The Croquants of *Tard-avisés* was the greatest peasant revolt of the sixteenth century, which swamped many regions of France and afterwards became an archetype for peasant revolts of the seventeenth century. In a territory that was overwhelmingly rural, this kind of social disorder could easily spread everywhere and could burst out from time to time. In the course of the French Wars of Religion, peasant revolts occurred in three separate waves, each with its own ideological coloring:

¹ Jean Tarde, Gaston de Gérard, and Gabriel Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde, chanoine théologal et vicaire général de Sarlat: contenant l'histoire religieuse et politique de la ville et du diocèse de Sarlat, depuis les origines jusqu'aux premières années du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: H. Oudin, 1887), 327.

² The definition of the term Croquant is definitely important. In one of the contemporary dictionaries, the Croquant(s) were defined as follows:

“A Croquant is an impoverished beggar with no possession to his name who has only a hook to defend himself with it in time of war. Peasants who revolt are just poor Croquants.”

Antoine Furetière, Abbé Brillant, and John Adams, *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin : vulgairement appelé dictionnaire de Trévoux, contenant la signification & la définition des mots de l'une & de l'autre langue, avec leurs différens usages; les termes propres de chaque état & de chaque profession : la description de toutes les choses naturelles & artificielles; leurs figures, leurs espèces, leurs propriétés: L'explication de tout ce que renferment les sciences & les arts, soit libéraux, soit mécaniques, &c. Avec des remarques d'érudition et de critique; Le tout tiré des plus excellens auteurs, des meilleurs lexicographes, etymologistes & glossaires, qui ont paru jusqu'ici en différentes langues*, Vol 2 (Paris: Par la Compagnie des libraires associés, 1771), 38.

from those in favor of the Reformation to those against it and finally the more radical variety desirous of a new order.³

My research focuses on these three waves during the French Wars of Religion. It is argued that at the heart of these widespread peasant revolts lay socioeconomic changes connected to the peasant economic weakening. The main socioeconomic changes both on the local and national levels are depicted in order to establish the basic reasons for the peasants' rage and demands. Moreover, these socioeconomic changes with two micro and macro approaches are contextualized. The former as an immediate trigger, and the latter as a background reason. The peasant revolts of France, particularly the Croquants, are important because they were a widespread form of social unrest and were directed particularly against the landlords. We should not forget that in *Ancien Régime* society it was intra-elites conflicts that usually set the terms of historical development; by extension, peasant revolts were poorly understood and were never considered as something important. And yet, a social revolution in an agrarian society could only happen through the peasants given that peasant revolts alone were capable of destroying the old agrarian class relations and of weakening the socioeconomic and political foundations of the old regimes, which it never happened in the course of the sixteenth century.⁴

Peasant revolts during the French wars of Religion have some in-built shared characteristics. They tended to occur in response to external thrusts (e.g. the Wars, land fragmentation, commercialization of the peasant economy and etc.), were frequently triggered by and focused around very specific irritants (e.g. the introduction of a new tax, foreign soldiers,

³ Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood Civil Wars in Sixteenth Century France* (Montreal [Que.]: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 133.

⁴ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 112-113.

seigneurial violence and religious issues) and were typically guided by unambitious objectives. Hannah Arendt has argued that these characteristics differentiate the "revolt" from revolution as a type of political violence.⁵ For these reasons they never achieved a successful and widespread assault on the property or claims of landlords. Indeed, in the sixteenth century, peasant revolts never went beyond the idea of restoration of a pre-existing order.⁶

Instead of seeking to overthrow the ruling class and put an end to exploitation and transformation to the new system, the peasant revolts only ever tried to adjust the mode and degree of exploitation. Admittedly, pre-modern peasant revolt may have had some utopian goals, but rather than set their eyes towards the creation of an independent future, these goals were oriented towards the recreation of a utopian past, in other words, the new past. Restoration took the place of the transformation in their idea and practice. Nevertheless, hierarchy and inequality, privilege and subordination were assumed to constitute an unalterable part of the world. Peasants perceived oppression, but considered it as the "natural" order of things. In other words, visions of radical change played no part in peasant violence.⁷

Political violence by peasants typically resulted from specific grievances connected to elite violations of their traditional obligations. In protesting against the violation, the peasants demanded a return to the status quo ante. Peasant grievances are full of articles which usually were framed in a religious rhetoric. The extraordinary growth of the kingdom's fiscal demands that grew out of state centralization and the growth of the foreign wars conferred a significance on the revolts

⁵ She famously stated that "the end of rebellion is liberation, while the end of revolution is the foundation of freedom." Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 140.

⁶ Raj Desai and Harry Eckstein. 1990. "Insurgency: The Transformation of Peasant Rebellion", *World Politics*. (42, no. 441-465), 444-45.

⁷ Ibid, 447.

of the peasantry. It is not surprising that many peasant revolts in early modern France fitted an anti-tax and anti-fiscal model.⁸

In the first chapter, I describe the theoretical and methodological considerations of the thesis. The theories which I use in order to analyze my research questions range from the micro- to the macro-, from the peasant economy to the world system. The second chapter will cover the economic and social history of France during the sixteenth century. In this chapter, I try to show the changes in the nation as a whole as well as in the local economy in connection with the birth of capitalism. Another part of the chapter is about social classes. The third chapter analyzes the first wave of peasant revolts which happened in southern France. The second wave is investigated in the fourth chapter. The last and most important peasant revolt of the century is covered in the fifth and the last chapter.

⁸ Y. M. Bercé, *Revolt and revolution in early modern Europe: An essay on the history of political violence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 164

Chapter I: From Farm to Market

Theoretical Framework

The main question of this thesis concerns the relationship between socio-economic changes and the peasant revolts during the French Wars of Religion. I will here provide a context and background for this topic. Before we set about trying to understand the causes of the peasant revolts, we need to look at the economic and social conditions of the French peasantry in the late sixteenth century. Early modern Europe was an overwhelmingly agrarian society whose dominant mode of production was embodied by the peasant household economy. Understanding the peasant economy is the first step in our explanation of the peasant revolts.

1.1. Peasant Economy

The common economic characteristics of peasant production were the ways by which peasant families made use of the resources at their disposal, for production, for family survival, and for improving the quality of their lives.⁹ The family farm was the basic unit of peasant ownership, production, consumption, and social life and the labor and agricultural output were the all of their wealth.¹⁰ According to Alexander Chayanov, the household, labor, and consumption are the three main pillars of the peasant economy with the household at its center.¹¹ Other important factors in determining the nature of production were: integration with the market, the available

⁹ Frank Ellis, *Peasant Economics: Farm Households and Agrarian Development* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xii.

¹⁰ Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies; Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 241.

¹¹ He introduced the new type of mode of production as the peasant economy, which had not been recognized by Marx. He rejected the idea of the peasant economy as incipient capitalism. A.V. Chayanov et al., *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Homewood, Ill: Published for the American Economic Association, by R.D. Irwin, 1966), 1-5.

means of production, the size of landholdings, and their productivity. Furthermore, family composition was a vital issue because the amount of available labor was mainly determined by the size of the family and the age of its members.¹² The balance of the consumer-laborer ratio was in direct relation to the composition of the household unit, shaping its output, consumption, and the rest for investment or saving.¹³ Household productivity was based on a balance between the increase of production and the disutility of increased labor because household members were both laborers and consumers.¹⁴ All these factors depended on their least need for survival and the rest for saving or investment to increase the family's productive potential. As has already been mentioned, the peasant household depended on agricultural production for its survival. This conservative morality caused the resistance against all kinds of changes that would have threatened or weakened their survival.

In his famous book “*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*”, Karl Marx characterized the peasant economy as a mode of production among the peasants which instead of bringing them together, isolated them from one another. This was down to the atomizing effects of self-sufficient, household-based production. Peasants were able to satisfy their needs through a direct exchange with nature rather than a social labor process. The economy of a village had the same features because the combination of peasant families made a village. He saw the lack of division of labor in the cultivation of the field, the small holding, lack of applicable science and absence of proper social relationship as the backwardness of the peasant economy. He added that the peasant economic conditions of existence separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of other classes. The interconnection among them just came from their attempt

¹² Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, 5-7, 53.

¹³ Ibid, 60.

¹⁴ Ibid, 90.

to maintain themselves. Their interest begets no community, no national and no political bond. They did not form a class for itself, but only a class in itself. Consequently, they needed to be represented in their political life.¹⁵ For Marx and Engels, the peasants were a fossil representative of an old and reactionary social order and they had no doubt that the peasantry would have to be replaced in the future society.¹⁶ This duality is definitely important because it simultaneously includes and excludes the peasantry as a class.¹⁷

Teodor Shanin integrated Marxian and Chayanovan aspects in his conception of the peasantry. "The peasantry consists of small agricultural producers," he wrote, "who, with the help of simple equipment and the labor of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfillment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power."¹⁸ A step further than the family farm there is the village as the peasant's world. The village was a society of small producers who had been dominated and exploited by alien, *i.e.* political hierarchies, because in an agrarian society, the taxes, in cash or kind, were the source of life for the whole

¹⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶ Engels also had the same idea with differences in details. He points out "the isolation of the peasant in a secluded village with a small population that changes only with the generations, the arduous and monotonous work that binds him to the soil more than any serfdom and that always stays the same from father unto son, the fixity and sameness of all conditions existence, the limited horizon in which the family becomes the most important and decisive relationship for him-all this reduces the peasant's range of vision to the narrowest limits possible in modern society generally. The great movements of history pass over his head, from time to time carrying him away but without his having any idea of the nature of the motive force or its origin or end." Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol II* (New York: NYU Press, 1981), 337, 341.

¹⁷ "Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class. They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power which subordinates society to itself." Karl Marx, "*18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. VII," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed October 26, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm>.

¹⁸ Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies; Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 240.

apparatus of power. Property relations and nuclear units of social interaction were two major indicators of the economic and social development of a village.¹⁹ In the setting of the village community or peasant commune, the peasants enjoyed a remarkable degree of social self-sufficiency. The commune was the heart of peasants' activities like land division, marriage, social and religious needs.²⁰ So do peasants form a social class or not?

1.2. Peasantry as a Class

A society is layered by class domination and the dialectics of inter-class conflict and unity. The position of a class basically is based on its social interrelationship with other classes. There are several definitions for it. Marx and Engels defined the idea of class as "a collective position vis-à-vis the means of production and the production process".²¹ In his definition of class, Max Weber put market relationships at the heart of his explanation with less emphasis on class domination. He describes a class based on sharing similar interests among one group in terms of economic status and under the representation of the labor markets. Ralf Dahrendorf, in his memorial work, *Class, and class conflict in industrial society*²², refers to "classes, understood as conflict groups arising out of the authority structure of imperatively coordinated associations, and [that] are in conflict".²³ According to Shanin, social class is a unity of interest, expressed in group sub-cultures, group consciousness, and group action, shaped in turn by the conflict and relationship

¹⁹ Ibid, 246.

²⁰ Ibid, 244.

²¹ William I. Robinson and Jerry Harris, "Towards A Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class," *Science & Society* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40403824>.

²² *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*," Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine, accessed March 17, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/classclassconfli00dahr#page/8/mode/2up>.

²³ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1959), 206.

with other classes.²⁴ In a continuation of his definition, Shanin asserts that the peasantry as a social entity possesses low ‘classness’ that undermines its political impact. This low classness materializes because of the constant fragmentation of the peasantry into small local segments and the diversity and vagueness of their political aims.²⁵ With these descriptions, the peasants form a (weak) social class in a dialectical connection to other classes (class for themselves). Alongside their technological, communicational, and educational backwardness, the vertical segmentation of peasants into local communities and groups, and horizontal differences and varieties of interests within these communities constituted a weak base for their socio-political unification. However, we should not exaggerate their weakness because their vital role in food production, and their numerous and dispersed population, gave them a point of strength. They were not impotent, but simultaneously not significant.²⁶ With all these descriptions, we should ask were peasants a political factor?

In general, most political thinkers have considered peasants a relatively apolitical social group. For Marx and Engels, the peasants were the representative of barbarism - as a stage of civilizational development - without any or with very weak agency in the political life of their society, at least in the macro perspective.²⁷ According to Eric Wolf, “peasants are especially handicapped in passing from passive recognition of wrongs to political participation as a means for setting them right.”²⁸ In pre-industrial peasant communities, peasant unrest showed itself in two kinds of political actions: the first of these being a fully spontaneous kind of political action

²⁴ Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies; Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 252.

²⁵ Ibid, 253.

²⁶ Ibid, 255.

²⁷ Engels in one pessimistic statement says “The peasants were revolutionary ... just until their property rights were made secure on the soil. ... once this ends were attained, they turned with all the rage of their blindly grasping nature against the movement in the big cities ...” Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol II* (New York: NYU Press, 1981), 341.

²⁸ Sam C Sarkesian, *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare* (Chicago: Precedent Pub, 1975), 291.

such as local riots and another embodied in their passivity in the process of production. It was just the local riots which suddenly appear as short outbursts of accumulated frustration and rebellious feeling. These riots could act as a check on central policy and stimulate change. At times of crisis, it was more probable that a peasant revolt expanded into a nationwide movement which was capable of determining major political development.²⁹ In these kinds of political actions, usually external uniting elite-power used the peasantry to help the group to achieve its goals. The peasants' interests and attitudes were only one of the factors that would have been taken into account by such political brokers.

The peasants of the early modern age were not a homogenous entity but rather a conglomeration of different groups. On the one hand there were the rich (or wealthier) peasants who usually had similar interests to the upper classes due to their enterprises or their roles as employers, money-lenders and rural notables. In fact, the rich peasants exercised local power in collaboration with external power holders. However in stark contrast, the poor peasants and the landless laborers who depended on a landlord for their livelihood, both partially or completely, had no tactical power because they were completely within the power domain of their employers without sufficient personal resources to serve them in a power struggle. Furthermore, the peasants worked together and needed each other to work on land, at the same time, despite this cooperation, they were inevitably competitors by reason of the limited resources in their commune. Agrarian work shaped the peasant's life and his/her individuality as a member of the commune and formed

²⁹ Ibid, 258.

his identity. The only thing that could trigger a revolt from the peasants was an external thrust.³⁰

Why then did these peasant revolts occur in this period?

1.3. Age of Transition and Modern World System

The particular peasants revolts discussed in this thesis took place in a socio-economic transitional period. A number of historians, such as Maurice Dobb, Erik Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill and Rodney Hilton, coined this period with the term “transition” due to the socio-economic shift from feudalism to capitalism which occurred from around mid-fifteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. The debate surrounding the notion of a transitional period was a hot one in the mid-twentieth century, mostly amongst the British historians. Marx stated that the feudal economy could not reproduce itself anymore but a capitalist society also could not have evolved from it because self-sufficiency and the new high-wage regime had not provided the possibility of capitalist wealth.³¹ In Marx's writings, the transition is an ambivalent notion. In his earlier work, he initially stressed the corrosive influence of mercantile activity, and in his later works there was emphasis on the changing relation of production.³² This idea was further developed in the 20th century by historians and sociologists. For Hobsbawm, the contradiction of sixteenth-century feudalism lay in the fact that this was a period when primitive accumulation became necessary for the capital's future expansive growth. Nevertheless, the classic economists marked this period of transition with one important characteristic, that of primitive or previous accumulation which

³⁰ Eric R. Wolf, “on Peasant Rebellions,” in Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant societies* (Harmondsworth, 1971), 268.

³¹ Karl Marx et al., *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (London: W. Glasher, 1909), 789.

³² Joel Mokyr, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History, Vol. 4* (The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History. Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 2003), 465.

concerned the origin of capital and the division of labor. Adam Smith, James Steuart and Marx, all used this term. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith depicted the accumulation as a peaceful process.³³ Marx used this “so-called” primitive accumulation³⁴ to show that wealth by itself is not “capital”.³⁵ As the prior presupposes of the capitalistic system, the capital was the accumulation of the socially produced wealth.³⁶ During the transition, the process of peasant class formation and disintegration created the conditions under which the primitive accumulation of capital became both necessary and possible.³⁷ In this period, the collapse of feudal class relations and the lack of any alternative replacement for it, provided grounds for the emergence of capitalist private ownership of the means of production and wage labor.³⁸ Moreover, the basic economic unit was no longer the manor and the peasants’ surplus was no longer channeled to uphold a warrior class of noblemen. Focus shifted from the manor to the local market town and its hinterland. Ultimately, the social and occupational mobility happened both among the nobility and the bourgeoisie.³⁹

The late sixteenth-century European economy consisted of hundreds of towns and their hinterlands. In the transition period, there was a relatively slow process of pauperization of the peasantry, smallholders, and day-laborers in the countryside in France. The process of subdivision

³³ Phillip Anthony O'Hara, *Encyclopedia of Political Economy* (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 905.

³⁴ In the German version of *Das Kapital*, he used the term *ursprünglich* which means original, initial, and primal. <http://www.duden.de/>

³⁵ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2002), 36.

³⁶ Claudio J Katz, *From Feudalism to Capitalism: Marxian Theories of Class Struggle and Social Change* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 365.

³⁷ The moral of this story, which may also be deduced from other observations in agriculture, is that the capitalist system works against a rational agriculture, or that a rational agriculture is irreconcilable with the capitalist system, although technical improvements in agriculture are promoted by capitalism. But under this system, agriculture needs either the hands of the self-employed small farmer, or the control of associated producers. Karl Marx and Ernest Mandel, *Capital: a critique of political economy*. Vol. 3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with New Left Review, 1981), 144. Marxists Internet Archive, accessed March 17, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-III.pdf>.

³⁸ Claudio J Katz, *From Feudalism to Capitalism: Marxian Theories of Class Struggle and Social*, 365.

³⁹ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 159.

and fragmentation of the land, which happened due to agrarian overpopulation, falling per capita income and increasing misery changed the situation of the many free farmer. It also increased unemployment and simultaneously the middle peasants were absorbed into the competition of the market society.⁴⁰ The competition with large-scale and capital-intensive agriculture gradually destroyed the small farms and this concentration of land ownership was followed by the concentration of production.⁴¹ But was there any response to this crisis?

The world economy was a response to the feudal crisis of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁴² Wallerstein argues that Europe moved towards the establishment of a capitalist world economy, which for the first time now encompassed much of the world, in order to ensure the continuation of economic growth. The world system became one large economic system that was in turn built upon a number of smaller nation-state centers.⁴³ The new capitalist world system was based on two key foundations. Firstly an international division of labor that determined relationships between different regions as well as the types of labor conditions within each region and secondly bureaucratic state machinery in England, France and the Netherlands.⁴⁴ The crisis created a situation in which farmers were divided into two groups. On the one hand, it encouraged the rise of independent farmers (yeoman) but, on the other hand, it squeezed many other peasants and drove them off the land. Moreover, a large and landless rural population became a cheap wage labor force for farms and manufacturing industries.⁴⁵ The economic expansion of

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Alan Sheridan, *The French Peasantry 1450-1660* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1987), 12-13.

⁴¹ Ibid, 330.

⁴² Saroj Kumar Pal, *Lexicon on Geography of Development* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2005), 283.

⁴³ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 63.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 108.

the sixteenth century, the rise of pastoralism, improved farm technology and the growing domination of the commercially oriented independent farmer increased agricultural productivity.⁴⁶

Even during its early stages, the nascent capitalist economy sought to subsume the peasant economy to its wider system of accumulation, production, distribution, and exchange. However, we should not forget that the peasant population occupied the margins of the modern world economy and they were partly integrated into this newly emerged incomplete market. The peasants remained constrained by a complicated network that meant on the one hand they were part of the modern world economy but on the other hand they remained bound to a need for subsistence.⁴⁷ Based on this theory, France experienced both the social-economic situations of core and semi-periphery. Northern France enjoyed the facilities of the core such as a predominating role in international trade however southern France, as a semi-periphery based region, experienced tensions between the central government and a strong local landed class. This weak capitalist rural economy led southern France to sharecropping agriculture.⁴⁸

In the following chapters, I will contextualize the peasant revolts in this context of transition with regards to the local and worldwide economic system.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 102.

⁴⁷ Frank Ellis, *Peasant Economics: Farm Households and Agrarian Development* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4-5.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 123, 287.

Chapter II: Society and economy

A Large scale perspective

2.1. Medieval Prelude

In a feudal society, the social, economic, and legal relationships between men were based on military services and land. In the theoretical model, society was stratified into three layers: those who fought, those who labored, and those who prayed.⁴⁹ The seigneurial system, by which land was exploited, was linked to the feudal structure by which political power was exercised.⁵⁰ In France, the Hundred Years' War destabilized this system and marked the beginning of the separation of *féodalité* (*feudalism*), the political unit, from *seigneurie* (*manorialism*), the socio-economic unit, which lasted until The Wars of Religion. This resulted in the disappearance of the feudal authority and the emergence of a new relationship between the crown and people.⁵¹ Through this process, the rural society of the early 14th century, which had been seigneurial and somewhat feudal, turned into a society with a dominant “land-owing class” without seigniorship by the 16th century.⁵² In the mid-sixteenth century, the feudal relationship was no longer related to landed dominion and military potentiality.

⁴⁹ Marc Bloch, *Feudal society, Vol II* (London: Routledge, 1993), 395.

⁵⁰ Frederic J Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 47.

⁵¹ J. H. M Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 19-20.

⁵² Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 231-232.

2.2. Three Stages of Economy

From the end of the Hundred Years' War until the end of the wars of religion, the economy of France can be divided into three periods.⁵³

The period from 1484 to 1530 was an economically prosperous time in France. During this time, serfdom disappeared as a result of the fundamental changes at late middle ages. However, tenants still paid rents of some kind, either in the form of cash or labor. The period from 1450 to 1500 was the heyday of the peasant life because the labor was well awarded, due to its scarcity, and rent and food expenses were cheap. Also, taxes took a significant downward trend from 1484 to 1510.⁵⁴ In 1500 there were serious imbalances between the growth of population and food.⁵⁵ Sometime between 1500 and around 1520, wages fell behind and taxes soared up again.

From 1530 to 1562, France was the most overpopulated country in Europe. By 1530, all arable land was under cultivation without introducing any new agricultural techniques or new crops. In doing so, grain production reached its highest output levels in 1530. This population growth increased the pressure on grain production and subsequently caused grain and bread prices to rise. The price of wheat doubled from 1510 to 1540, but other grains and product prices lagged behind.⁵⁶ Moreover, the cheap price of other grains in France in comparison to Spain caused an increase in exports to Spain, despite several bans several by the French crown. As a result, exports remained as the primary method to afford gold and silver imports into France.⁵⁷ This trend was a double-edged sword because it reduced the volume of agricultural products produced that followed

⁵³ I used here the model which has been proposed by Baumgartner.

⁵⁴ Frederic J Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 66-67.

⁵⁵ Harry A Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 69.

⁵⁶ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 163.

⁵⁷ Frank C Spooner, *The International Economy and Monetary Movements in France, 1493-1725* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 173.

the rise of prices, and simultaneously the increased money supply into society initiated more liquidity.⁵⁸ As already mentioned, as a result of the population growth and the greater availability of labor, wages were reduced or stayed stagnant. The changes in land tenancy were also due to this economic development. The subdivision of seigneurial and peasant lands, and the extinction of old noble families due to the wars and other reasons, resulted in increased numbers of beggars, vagabonds, and highwaymen.⁵⁹

The fragmentation of land in the countryside aggrandized and reconstituted a few great estates. This process degraded many landholding peasants to day-laborers rank.⁶⁰ Land accumulation in the hands of urban elites was supported by the increasingly widespread application of the Roman law at the expense of traditions.⁶¹ At the same time, fragmentation of land through inheritance reduced land size and its ability to yield crop (*i.e.* land productivity), therefore, the farmers had to mortgage their lands in order to gain more money for paying the taxes. Moreover,

⁵⁸ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600*, 152.

⁵⁹ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 164.

⁶⁰ In France, 80 to 90 percent of land which was owned by peasants, was less than 5 hectares. Paolo Malanima, *Pre-Modern European Economy: One Thousand Years (10th-19th Centuries)* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 110.

⁶¹ According to the Frankish law (*Lex Salica*), the egalitarian division of land (*patria potestas*) executed among all sons of one yeoman household and even leaving something as girls' dowries. This old tradition remained very vital among the peasantry, but among the nobility, it had lost its importance. In Quercy, Auvergne, Périgord, Limousin, upper Provence, Languedoc, and Dauphiné a kind of patriarchy was common which brought all family members together under one roof and prevented land segregation. North and south of France had the different developments in this case. The nobility of Northern Province already left this tradition at the end of the middle ages, but it still practiced in the south. In the south, the Roman law, which was common, threatened the land consolidation both among the nobility and peasantry. The *retrait lignager* was common among the nobility from the fifteenth century, but the peasantry could not use it. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the peasant tenures in the south underwent considerable fragmentation (*morcellement*). In Languedoc, the middling peasant owners or yeomen lost more than everyone. They decreased in numbers and their lands divided among poor peasants. Simultaneously, the non-noble owners resisted the pressure for subdivision and expanded their property via consolidation (*rassemblement*). In the south-west, a counter concentration and entrepreneurial trend of land exploitation happened in the sixteenth century. In the north also the *morcellement* happened due to the population explosion. Bois believes that in Normandy also the population growth and land fragmentation happened, but with less erosion in comparison to Languedoc. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 33-34. T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 157- 158, 226, 236, 304.

the conversion of common land to private use, even more than before, exposed the smallholder to the vagaries of the marketplace and the extortion of the French fiscal system.⁶²

The urban merchant class benefited more than other classes from the higher prices, followed by tenants and sharecroppers with large lands. However, it would be a mistake to think the countrymen were destitute by the price increase. There was an increase of demand, particularly by the English, for wine and brandy.⁶³ The viability of cheap labor allowed for vineyards to expand and this prevented the price of wine from increasing as high as grain. The silk industry also expanded, as it was a luxury product in Nimes and Lyon that not only merchants but also many other lower urban classes benefited from through the jobs that the industry brought. A similar trend occurred in the countryside with woad.⁶⁴

The enormous growth in the number of merchant magnates was due to their fortunes from new commodities or through the changes in the trading patterns of old commodities. In Rouen and Bordeaux, the spice merchants benefited more than anyone. In Toulouse, the woad merchants gained incredible wealth and dominated the city. The growth of the silk industry in Lyon and Nimes led to the appearance of the silk magnates. The changes in the coastal cities' trade, however, did not impact Lyon as it did the commercial centers in France. Banks in Lyon from the Italians' banking business provided a source for loans to the kings.⁶⁵ Redistribution of wealth among the urban élites was accelerated by the high interest rates of the loans given to the king.⁶⁶

⁶² The heavy taxation by the monarchical state, the squeezing of peasant tenants (leaseholder) by the landlords and the subdivision of holdings by the peasants themselves were forces that discourage agricultural investment and development. Aston and Philpin, *The Brenner Debate*, 29. Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe*, 69-70.

⁶³ After 1550, brandy expanded rapidly in France due to its easy production and easy shipping to England.

⁶⁴ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 165.

⁶⁵ A. D Liublinskaia, *French Absolutism: the Crucial Phase 1620-1629* (London: Cambridge U.P., 1968), 233.

⁶⁶ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 167.

Another form of wealth redistribution for the urban dominant class was the venality of offices. These new royal officers, who came from the well-off bourgeois class, were easily able to accumulate wealth in and outside the towns, and they also ascended to the peak of socio-political structure of the towns. The venality of offices increased the costs of government and added salary burdens to the royal expenditures, thereby reducing government revenue through an increase in tax exemptions for officeholders.⁶⁷

The third stage was the period of harsh decline of the French economy. In the beginning, the nobility did not predict the negative side effects of the Religious Wars, only to quickly find it very cumbersome. The wars of religion reduced their incomes and increased their expenses drastically. Many noble houses died out during the wars, either due to the death of their last noble heir in the battles or due to complete bankruptcy. However, the nobility as a whole was not devastated by the wars. The wars were even profitable for some of them and opened the offices to them, in addition to the wealth that they gained through criminal activities during the wars.⁶⁸

The religious wars devastated many towns and villages, and killed many noncombatants throughout France. Inflation and plundering were two factors that deteriorated the life of peasants.⁶⁹ The military plundering disrupted transportation networks, trampled crops, and pillaged granaries, which put a lot of pressure on grain supply from 1562 to 1598. During the last stage of the wars in the 1590s, the entire country, and especially in the south (Poitou, Aquitaine,

⁶⁷ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600*, 170.

⁶⁸ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 257.

⁶⁹ Troops usually plundered granaries and killed and robe village's animals on their way. The rebuilding animal herds took much longer than growing new crops. Frederic J Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 265-66.

Languedoc, and Provence) and the north (Normandy, Picardy, the Paris region, and Champagne), were harshly damaged by the wars.

From 1562, the inflationary impact of the grain shortage influenced the other commodities, not only foodstuff.⁷⁰ The year 1589 was the peak of the crisis and pushed prices up sharply. Wages did not rise as rapidly as inflation. The debasement by the crown was played a role, as merchants increased the prices after being informed of this event while the wages of laborers stayed the same wages as before debasement.⁷¹ For ordinary people, the concept of inflation was a totally foreign thing. Therefore, they blamed the merchants and high bourgeoisie for price fluctuations.⁷²

In most of the regions, the income from the tithe did not collapse until 1570 or 1580, or even until 1585.⁷³ The reason for the collapse was the fall in agricultural production than the tithe struck, which reached its peak in 1590. In Burgundy, the fall of the net product of the tithe reached its peak from 1585 to 1588, then continued the fall until 1600. The fall began with the outbreak of the wars around 1563 to 1566.⁷⁴ In Languedoc, agricultural products took a dramatic fall at the outbreak of the war in 1560 then became worse by the famine of 1571, and by the political and military crises of 1577. During 1583 to 1596, the tithe reached its lowest level.⁷⁵ Toulouse's woad

⁷⁰ During the last year of Henri III the price of wheat was 3 times more expensive than the last years of his father's reign. In Paris year 1587 and after the siege time (1590) were the time of the worse crop failures. In most of France 1586 was the year of the crop failure. The price of the rye, barley, oats and wheat reached four times more than their prices in 1559. Olive oil and egg increased 1.5 times and meat and wine 3 times. In Languedoc, the year 1586 was the worse because of the complete crop failure and the outbreak of the one of the harshest plague. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 66.

⁷¹ Jehan de Malestroit completely rejected the idea of inflation and asked for the adjustment of currency debasement and prices. Unlike him, Jean Bodin, not only did not reject the debasement but also counted it as one of the reasons for inflation in addition to the influx of the gold and silver, war, the luxurious lives of the kings, princes, and monopolies over trade and etc. Harry A Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 36.

⁷² Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 268.

⁷³ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 258.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 262.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 263.

production declined between 1560 and 1600. In Bordeaux and Charente, wine production collapsed after 1572.⁷⁶

Needless to say, peasants had a very difficult life during the wars. The concentration of land by the nobility and bourgeoisie and taxation soared during the wars. The taxes, which almost doubled from 1560 to 1619 and was exacted by the monarchy and by both royalists and the league, was a heavy burden on the peasantry. These increases put peasants in permanent debt to moneylenders. The purchase of the land by the tax-exempted burghers and nobles not only was one reason for the increase of the taxes, but also helped land to become concentrated in the hands of a circle of elites. Many peasants became the day laborers in their former fields or became totally property-less.⁷⁷ The peasants developed several strategies for survival. One such strategy was by working seasonally in Spain, where they were able to gain more money.⁷⁸ Another way was by working in industrial production, which continued constantly from 1562 until the end of the century. While still present, industrial productivity did reduce drastically. By the end of the century, the cloth industry almost was a rural production rather than an urban production.⁷⁹

2.3. Social classes

2.3.1. Nobility

The ascendancy of nobility at the beginning and the end of the sixteenth century combined and ushered with a series of two wars, the Italian Wars and French Wars of Religion.⁸⁰ The right of

⁷⁶Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV: The Struggle for Stability* (London: Longman, 1984), 174.

⁷⁷ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 269.

⁷⁸ Fernand Braudel and Sian Reynolds, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 55.

⁷⁹ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 269.

⁸⁰ Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France*, 4.

nobles in accessing to land remained intact during the sixteenth century, but the monarchy recognized the possibility of non-nobles (*roturier*) in acquiring a seigneurie by reimbursing its fee (*droit de franc-fief*).⁸¹ The franc-fief provided access to noble status for significant numbers of bourgeois families. At least, they had to pay fees for forty years or held a fief for three generations. The second method for acquiring noble status was by means of making an immense payment for buying a noble rank. These new noble (*anoblis*) were called *noblesse de robe* for differentiating them from the *noblesse de race* or *noblesse d'épée*. Although, all nobles legally and almost socially were the same, but their wealth was quite varied.⁸² In the course of sixteenth century, the rise of notables and the bourgeoisie into nobility was not something new for the nobility, it occurred from some centuries ago.⁸³

The most important social aspect of French history at the end of the sixteenth century was the impact of the inflationary trend on the seigneurie.⁸⁴ In the Late Middle Ages, the basic economic unit was the seigneurie, however it was gradually separated from the military activities of the

⁸¹ According to Ganshof, from the 13th century onwards, the men of bourgeois origin were acquiring fiefs side by side of the nobility. François Louis Ganshof, *Feudalism* (New York: Harperc, 1964), 168.

⁸² Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 49-50.

⁸³ François l'Alouëte was a lawyer and an officer, then bailli of Vertus, who became the conseiller du Roi in the end. In his book "*traité des nobles*", he rejected the idea of the ennoblement of the bourgeoisie because he saw the nobility due to virtue than blood. Unlike him, a bourgeois *gentilshomme* named David de Flurance Rivault, after recognizing the nobility as superior to the third estate, recommended that the noble class needed to recruit progressively people from the bourgeoisie (for him the third estate) in order to renew itself. Like him another person, Pierre Constant, in his book, "*La cause des guerres civiles en France*", blamed all social classes as the participators in the civil war, however; he reproached the middle class, artisans, and commoners, more than others one because they sought, as he believed, to undermine the monarchy and reduce it to a popular state. Unlike his generosity to the urban middle class, he had a strict view about the peasantry. According to Constant, the peasants should be completely obedient to their superiors and any kind of disobedient must be punished, as God was doing it. For him, peasant revolt is a kind of disease. Pierre Charron's "*De la Sagesse*" had the most negative viewpoint about the third estate and considered them as vulgar, and the enemy of men of substance and many other deleterious epithets. Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France*, 4, 137, 140. Ellery Schalk, *From Valor to Pedigree: Ideas of Nobility in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 10, 73.

⁸⁴ During the 16th century, unlike one century before it, it was very hard to find a coherent definition for the seigneurie based on their holdings. There were the different kinds of the seigneuries, some were large seigneuries consisted several villages, some other very small, some. Many were simple fiefs without any rights of feudal justice, other were *arrière* -fiefs. In the 16th century, the holding of a fief was not just regarded as the privilege of the *noblesse de race*. Many *roturiers* had the right to purchase a fief just by paying the tax of franc-fief.

J Salmon, *Society in Crisis*,

feudal in feudalism. In the sixteenth century, the seigneurie was no longer a coherent economic unit and it was therefore scattered into fragments with little relationship to defensive and economic viability. The profession of arms was the principal function of the seigneurs and by this military obligation, they were exempted from paying the *taille*, except in southern France where the *taille réelle*⁸⁵ was common.⁸⁶

There were two kinds of the royal revenues, one which drew directly from the king's land comprised the feudal rents, and the second was comprised of three main taxes, the *taille* (*taille réelle* and *taille personnelle*), the *gabelle* (a tax on salt) and the *aides* (a tax on various commodities sold regularly such as wine and livestock). Many people, not only in the nobility and the clergy, but many urban populations and groups, such as the entire population of Paris, were exempted from paying the *taille* and the peasantry had to hold the burden of this heavy task.⁸⁷

The Seigneurie was an accepted economic and social standard unit which united the feudal rights upon men and land together.⁸⁸ The seigneurial lands were divided into two parts, *domaine proche* and *domaine utile*. *Domaine proche* was the immediate land of the seigneur and the subject of his direct exploit by hiring laborers, leasing to sharecroppers or farming it out to someone

⁸⁵ Unlike other parts of the kingdom, the nobles of Languedoc were subject to the *taille réelle*. They had to pay the *taille réelle* due to the land they held or acquired (like *roturier*). Thereby, the commoners were able to appeal to the courts for the redress. In Languedoc, the *taille réelle* was common from the late middle ages, but in Provence, it became common just after 1552 and in Dauphiné from the 17th century. The *taille réelle* was taxes levied upon the land rather than a person. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 22. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 39.

⁸⁶ At the late 16th century, Claude de Seyssel defined noble rights as “the exemption from the *taille* and other taxes, the right to carry a weapon in all places and at all times and serving the king in the gendarmerie and royal offices.” Frederic J Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 47. But it was not the idea of all political thinkers. For example, in his book ‘*La juste plainte et remontrance*’ Claude Delagrangé asked why the nobility should not pay the *taille*, although they paid it two centuries before. Jean Vincent and Antoine Rambaud also had the same idea even with more emphasis on the nobles’ obligation to pay the taxes. Donna Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 110.

⁸⁷ R. J Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598* (Harlow, Essex, England: Longman, 2000), 20.

⁸⁸ This idea also criticized by some historians such as Susan Reynolds. She casts doubt about the precise definition of feudalism and its function, as to whether it is a useful concept for understanding medieval society.

depends on his interests. The *domaine utile* was occupied by tenants.⁸⁹ The principle of *nulle terre sans seigneur* still was a widely accepted idea.⁹⁰ In most of the regions throughout France the right of *mainmorte* was not practiced anymore, however, it remained commonplace in some areas in the central, southern, and eastern regions in the sixteenth century.⁹¹ The seigneurial revenues were the *banalités* or fees on mills and barns for the storage of cereals, *corvées* or labor service owed to the seigneurs as dues on seigneurial grounds and forests, lakes, jurisdictional incomes and the *péages* or tolls on markets. All tenants had to pay dues in cash (*cens*) or kind, which did not depend on their social status. The peasantry had to pay the ecclesiastical tithe or dime, which was a fixed proportion of a peasant grain harvest.⁹²

Since the end of the hundred years' war, the seigneurie lost their economic domination over their lands and were obliged to offer tenures in favorable terms to the tenure farmers. They preferred to offer low *accensement* to attract the peasantry because hundred years war had largely destroyed northern France and in addition to the lack of agricultural laborers, signifying the end of serfdom for many regions in France.⁹³ Because not only their profits diminished, but also the costs of management rose. The decline of population, scarcity of labor, and demand for agricultural and

⁸⁹ John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords, and Legislators in the French Revolution* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 44. Michael S Kimmel, *Absolutism and Its Discontents: State and Society in Seventeenth Century France and England* (New Brunswick, N.J., USA: Transaction Books, 1988), 34.

⁹⁰ In the south, and even in some regions in the north such as in Burgundy, Champagne, Ile de France, there was *alleux* or free land without seigneurial rights.

⁹¹ *Mainmorte* bounded peasants to the land. If a peasant died without an heir, the lord could confiscate his properties. A *mainmortable* peasant had to pay fees for his marriage, inheritance (*rachat* or annual revenue or tax upon a direct heir who inherited a land), any kind of trade (*lods et vents*). There were two seigneurial and ecclesiastical *mainmortes*. Janet Coleman, *The Individual in Political Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 183. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 350.

⁹² Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 39-40, 343, 346, 349.

⁹³ In the sixteenth, century there was still the remnants of serfdom in Burgundy, and Champagne. Attichy in Champagne was the center of the freedom movement at the beginning of the century. Not only the Bourg oligarchs but also the peasant militia, which had been formed to protect the runaway serfs, supported the refugees. Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France*, 16.

industrial goods raised prices and reduced the fixed rents.⁹⁴ Altogether, it was called by Marc Bloch as “momentary impoverishment of the seigniorial class”.⁹⁵ One century before, during the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII, peasants were master of the soil which accompanied by the expansion of agricultural markets. Nonetheless, the economic power of the noble seigneurs declined, but it did not mean they lost their economic dominance.

During *the crise de classe* of the late sixteen century and seventeenth century, the problems became acute. From the 1550s the nobility experienced severe discomfort. Economic crisis, mostly in the second half of the century, brought huge dislocation.⁹⁶ Many noble houses bankrupted throughout France not only due to the economic difficulties and extravagant lifestyle, but also because of the Italian Wars which uprooted many noble houses and detached the nobles from their lands and involved them in the expenses of military equipment. This trend also helped in the replacement of the some old noble houses by new noble-bourgeois, who were successful in the expansion of the *métairies* or the sharecropping system over the most of the lands.⁹⁷ The massive investment in the rural areas and the invasion on the seigneurie by the urban middle class was widespread in the early sixteenth century. However, despite the wiping out of many old noble households, the new parvenu *seigneurs* (out of the bourgeoisie) still could not compete with the

⁹⁴ Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 78.

⁹⁵ “*L'appauvrissement momentané de la classe seigneuriale*“. Marc Bloch and Robert Marie Dauvergne, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (Paris: A. Colin, 1952), 122.

⁹⁶ In his book “*Des affaires d'etat, des finances, du prince et de sa noblesse*”, François l'Alouète targeted the peasants and commoners as the main reason for the disasters happening during the religious war and the declining of the power of the nobility. For this old nobleman, the avarice of the new incomers (new nobles) who already were bourgeoisies was the sign of the destruction of the old social order and the honor of the nobility. Davis Bitton, *The French Nobility in Crisis 1560-1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 103-104.

⁹⁷ It should not seem that the métayage only practiced by the parvenu creditors, but also many middle noble houses instead of losing their land to the *rentiers* reconstituted their *domaine proche* with this new system, of course with loosening the nature of the rural *rentes*. The example of this event happened in Poitou, where the nobility used métayage system more than the bourgeoisie. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 41. Marc Bloch, *Feudal society*, Vol I, 122-24.

old noble houses. The sixteenth century brought about a huge transformation in the structure of the dominant class, but the transformation needed two more centuries for its ultimate completion.

Peasants were the first victims of this transformation. According to Bloch, the spread of métayage was the result of the gradual process of slipping back from the few freedoms and liberations of the Late Middle Ages. For seigneurs who were not able to bring back the coerced cash-crop labor, the semi-serf métayer were the best option when the labor was plentiful.⁹⁸ In the early sixteenth century, there was the equal distinction of land between the métayer and the owner. The métayer was obliged to pay his rent, the tithe, the seigneurial dues, and the taille. But gradually, he was forced to liquidate his debts owed to his creditors in the towns.⁹⁹ Many peasants were displaced by this new seigneurial design. The gradual diminishing of the size of their fields coupled with the decline of its productivity, led the peasants to leave their fields after which they became agricultural laborers, wage laborers, and vagabonds.

The capitalist development had different developments in France. In the North the process of sharecropping had come to a halt and the seigneurial land shrank to a very significant degree. Unlike it, in the south the process of the concentration of lands, and the reconstruction of seigneurial *domaine* occurred along with the métayage system. Due to this process, many rural nobles lost their lands and their economic power due to the subdivision of inheritance and new economic conditions. Unlike the rural nobles, a new class of the *roturiers* (bourgeois nobles) emerged who were capable of entering the seigneurial class via huge investment on peasant

⁹⁸ Bloch and Dauvergne, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, 137. Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 104.

⁹⁹ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 45.

tenures.¹⁰⁰ It was not surprising when Monluc lamented that the nobles "having let the municipal offices fall to townsmen so that we have to bow and scrape before them".¹⁰¹

2.3.2. Bourgeoisie

In France, the Commoners were separated into two groups; the plebeians who lived in the fortified towns, and the peasants, who lived in the small towns and villages. As of the sixteenth century, the changing of the structure in the towns made them the dominant economic and administrative power by process of applying direct coercion over the surrounding bourgs and villages.¹⁰² The post- Hundred Years' War helped the recovery of commerce, agriculture and the growth of manufacturing and contributed to the increase of wealth in the towns and upper bourgeois class.¹⁰³ Through the new mechanism of the private rural rents, the urban bourgeoisie extended their influence and interest in the countryside.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, in the rural regions, the increase of coercion shaped hidden agitation and unrest among the peasantry against the seigneurial and ecclesiastical dues and élites' rule provoked the peasantry to find a way to relieve them.¹⁰⁵

By and large, the merchants and manufacturers were organized into guilds which worked under a royal license (*métiers jurés*) or the municipal authorities (*métiers libre*). The masters of the guilds were able to claim rights to interfere in urban affairs. Municipal constitutions were very diverse. In the northern towns, there was usually a *maire* and a group of elected *échevins* who

¹⁰⁰ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 46.

¹⁰¹ Davis Bitton, *The French Nobility in Crisis 1560-1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 46.

¹⁰² Fernand Braudel pointed out this idea in the last days of his life in his book "*L'identité de la France: Espace et histoire*".

¹⁰³ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 55.

¹⁰⁴ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 56

¹⁰⁵ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 34.

worked under his command. In the southern towns, there was generally a collegiate group without an executive head who controlled the urban affairs, such as the consuls in Lyons, the *jurats* in Bordeaux, and the *capitouls* in Toulouse.¹⁰⁶

By protecting the free trade, like his father Louis XI extended the system of trade fairs in urban centers (Picardy, Champagne, Lyons) and developed the French markets.¹⁰⁷ From the 1450s, Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and Nantes, had become the center of the wine trade and Rouen turned to be the most important maritime city of Northern France.¹⁰⁸ Marseille (directly from Alexandria) and Lyons were the main ports for importing the eastern spices, and through them the spices went their way to the northern towns.¹⁰⁹ The development of La Rochelle was mainly due to the Spanish wools and alum, the manufacturers of western Poitou and the merchants of Lyons.¹¹⁰ One of the fastest expansions in sixteenth century France, was in Forez and the area surrounding Lyons.¹¹¹ Lyons was the Antwerp of the south. After less than one century, in the mid-sixteenth century, Lyons became the center of the press. Moreover, silk manufactures gradually penetrated into Lyons in 1536, after it had been founded by Louis XI in 1466 at Tours.¹¹² Moreover, the silk and printing industries, Lyons became the center of banking activities and international fairs. Hence, the most of the famous banker families had branches in Lyons.¹¹³ This city had a close relation to the north Italian cities and there were some branches of their firms in the town. In Lyons, the

¹⁰⁶ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 56

¹⁰⁷ For Louis XI, the towns were the fourth power in the kingdom along with the king, the church and the nobility. R. J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 28.

¹⁰⁸ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 217.

¹¹⁰ Judith Chandler Pugh Meyer, *Reformation in La Rochelle: Tradition and Change in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1568* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1996), 46.

¹¹¹ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe*, 112.

¹¹² Ibid, 113.

¹¹³ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 29-30.

wealthy foreign merchants entered the rank of municipal oligarchy and invested in the noble lands. But by changing the important commercial trade routes in the sixteenth century, the northern ports gradually found a much important place than the southern towns such as Rouen, where there was one important redistribution center in the north.¹¹⁴ From the beginning of the Italian wars in 1494, the *haut-bourgeoisie* were the main creditors of the Crown who lend money to the French kings. In addition, the venality of offices and the expansion of the *rentes* on the Hotel de Ville there were two other sources for bringing the capital of the urban bourgeoisie into the government.

The manufacture also expanded by the crown's protection from the middle of the fifteenth century and cloth-making became the most important industry of France. Historically, the textile industry (linen of Normandy and canvas of Brittany) was centered in the north of Rouen and some other towns such as Amiens, Saint-Quentin, Beauvais, Chaumont, and Noyon although it was becoming entrenched in the other areas, such as Languedoc.¹¹⁵ Unlike the North Western provinces which were useful for the cheap fabric, the southern towns like Lyons were the center of luxury goods. Languedoc was an active producer of inexpensive cloth for the market of southern Europe and the Mediterranean regions.¹¹⁶ In the southern towns such as Nimes, Montpellier, Narbonne, Aurillac, Ales, and Carcassonne drapery was reestablished by the crown.¹¹⁷ Nimes and Montpellier had good Velvet industries as well. Senlis was the center of lace production and by the turn of the century Velay joined it.¹¹⁸ Moreover, glassware was produced in Nevers, and from 1583 its

¹¹⁴ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 52-59.

¹¹⁵ Many towns enjoyed so much by their industries because the crown exempted them from the *taille* and their notables from the various levies. For example, Rouen was exempted from the *taille* due to her vital role in cloth-making. Stephanie Annette Finley-Crowwhite, *Henry IV and the Towns: Royal Authority and Municipal Autonomy, 1589-1610* (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI, 1991), 140. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 30.

¹¹⁶ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe*, 114

¹¹⁷ David Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City, 1300-1500* (London: Longman, 1997), 33.

¹¹⁸ Under Henri IV, Senlis bade fair to rival their Flemish rivals. Georges François Renard, Georges Weulersse, and Margaret Richards, *Life and Work in Modern Europe (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd, 1926), 171. Henry Heller, *Labour, Science, and Technology in France, 1500-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 124.

production also expanded in Mâcon. Rouen was the center of porcelain production as well.¹¹⁹ In pursuing his mercantilist policies, Henri II protected the textile industry and imposed heavy tariffs over foreign cloth, especially silk, which aided this industry.¹²⁰

Nearly all of the cities suffered during the religious war, but some of them subsequently emerged with better economies; cities such as Paris, Dijon, and Montpellier. It happened due to the centralization of the royal offices and bureaucratization of these cities which helped in the redistribution and shifting of wealth from the countryside to the cities. Urban elites invested so much in *rentes* and profited conspicuously from the loans to the crown. In 1600, the income of most of the middle class population of Paris was above the pace of inflation.¹²¹

2.3.3. Peasantry

The peasantry in France constituted an enormous part of the population in three geographical zones. The premiere zone stretched from the Loire River in the south to Flanders in the north, from upper Normandy in the west to Burgundy in the east and covered all of northern France. This zone was very heavily populated, and grains and wheat were its main agricultural products. The next zone constituted lower Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, and Maine in western France which were covered by the isolated *bocages* and villages. The third zone was the Mediterranean part of France constituted Languedoc, Provence, and Guyenne. In this zone, diverse and suitable climate allowed the farmers to produce olives, fruits, and silk worms.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Heller, *Labour, Science, and Technology in France, 1500-1620*, 124. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 51

¹²⁰ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 277.

¹²¹ Ibid, 271.

¹²² Tom Scott, *The Peasantries of Europe: From the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Longman, 1998), 22-23.

The peasantry as a class stratified into different layers. The lowest layer belonged to the wage laborers and rural/agricultural laborers (the *manouvriers and laboueurs*) who were the most marginalized people in society without any supporting institutes in the countryside.¹²³ Above them, there were tenant farmers and sharecroppers (*métayer*), who constituted the majority of the peasants. Among the tenant farmers some were barely able to produce enough and were therefore forced to work for daily wage most of the time, some others were able to rent their lands out and hire day-laborers.

During the demise of feudalism, most of the land belonged to seigneurial lords, although real possession belonged to the tenants who held land from the lords. With the beginning of the sixteenth century, the conditions were radically altered.¹²⁴ Initially, the seigneurs found that the direct control of land might be preferable to the collection of permanently fixed feudal rents, secondly, the number and wealth of royal officials rose who were eager to invest so much on the land. On the contrary, economic pressures such as the inflation and the rise of prices, the growth of population, and the egalitarian inheritance division, which itself tended to produce holdings that had lesser productivity, might have forced villagers to sell or mortgage their lands. The increase of taxes coupled with the reduced productivity of their lands drove most of the peasants into the claws of the moneylenders- sooner or later their debts to the moneylenders typically led to an outright loss.¹²⁵ This day-laborer, who migrated to and worked in the towns, had close ties to the countryside and this connection showed itself in the popular revolts of the late sixteenth century.¹²⁶

¹²³ The *manouvriers* or the cultivator of a few acres were the poor peasant who lacked the sufficient resources to muster a plow team, and *laboueurs*, were the peasant farmers with a plow team and land sufficient to support their household. De Vries, *Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750*, 68.

¹²⁴ Scott, *The Peasantries of Europe*, 27.

¹²⁵ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe*, 69-70.

¹²⁶ Mostly due to the temporary nature of their works which were usually seasonal and their stagnant wages which more and more pushed them to the margins of the society. 166

Apart from those mentioned above, there was the freeholder yeoman¹²⁷ (big tenants farmers or *gros fermiers* and medium-sized owners or *grands laboureurs*) as surplus-producing farmers who were able greatly to make money because they were not a part of the feudal system and had to only pay the tithe and the *taille*.¹²⁸ They were the rivals of the land-hungry bourgeoisie, nevertheless, by money lending or farming of the royal taxes or the tithe of religious institutions, they were able to rise to large landowners.¹²⁹

The social structure and the land organization of the villages were also quite varied. In the north, the tenant farmers worked on the seigneurial-domain which were more productive than other areas. In eastern and central regions, lords used both sharecroppers and tenant farmers and paid them in fixed quantities of agricultural commodities. In western France and the Midi, *métayage* became the common method of management of seigneurial domains.¹³⁰ Northern France had a more developed agriculture than the Midi and the south.¹³¹

The villages had extremely different sizes, they could be very big with more than one thousand inhabitants that made them similar to towns or there were very small with fifty inhabitants, but then again the taxes were also an important issue which distinguished the towns and big villages.¹³² The *communautés d'habitants* (nearly coincided with the parish) were the focal

¹²⁷ Le Roy Ladurie used “*frérèches*” or “yeomen” for the first time and defined it as “a middling holding is put within the range of 3.6 to 15 hectares”. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 250.

¹²⁸ Scott, *The Peasantries of Europe*, 29.

¹²⁹ This trend had been started since the 1530s and caused the concentration of the lands in the hands of the small number of landowners who were out of the seigneurial class. 68

¹³⁰ *Métayage* was a system of sharecropping in which the producers often took as much as half of the production, largely in the form of an annual rent called the *cens*. Sharecropping was a lucrative agricultural activity in times of rising grain prices. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 66-67. For Marx, the sharecropping was a transitional form, from the original form of rent to capitalist rent. Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 107.

¹³¹ James Lowth Goldsmith, *Lordship in France, 1500-1789* (New York: P. Lang, 2005), 23.

¹³² Villages had to pay the *taille* but towns and cities were exempted and they had to pay the sales taxes. The most important thing which separated a villager from a person who lived in a town was the citizenship right, which made a

point of every aspect of peasant life from the public duties such as the controlling of meadows, and the waste land to more everyday life ceremonies, marriages, and festivals.¹³³ In western and southern France, the *Bocage* system was common and the parish was the focus of peasant life. This system, which later was known as the *plat pays*, was composed of scattered and isolated homesteads and small hamlets of individual plots marked by hedgerows in which the working land was immediately adjacent to peasant homes.¹³⁴ The *communautés* was the basic unit of the tax system. The *élu* of the district informed the syndic of each village about the *taille*. The tax collectors, who had been chosen by the villagers, received the *taille* and conveyed it. The syndic and church wardens (*fabriqueurs* or *marguilliers*) were chosen by the heads of the household, including the widows, and had the ability to engage litigation against almost everyone. Typically, the *fabrique* (parochial land) and its churchwardens were in charge of raising taxes and collecting tithes, which mostly caused confusion between the secular and spiritual domains.¹³⁵

One source of peasant income was from their agricultural products. Among ‘*bled*’ (or bread cereal), Rye was the most common grain while wheat was a rare and luxury product. Among ‘*menus grains*’ (lesser cereals), barley, oats, buckwheat, millet were widely consumed.¹³⁶ Peasant households consumed most of the grains and only sold a tiny part of it in the market. The granaries of landlords and the clergy, which were kept by the taxes, the rent and the tithe, were the main providers of the town markets. But only larger holdings were able to produce cash crops, such as

bourgeois (a member of the commune that governed the bourg). Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 171-173.

¹³³ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 171.

¹³⁴ In Bocage system, the extended families provided their own need by using the two-crop rotation method. Michael S Kimmel, *Absolutism and Its Discontents: State and Society in Seventeenth Century France and England* (New Brunswick, N.J., USA: Transaction Books, 1988), 34.

¹³⁵ Fernand Braudel, Ernest Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, Volume 1 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France. 1980), p.827

¹³⁶ Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, 110.

hemp, woad, flax, and madder.¹³⁷ The wine was the main export of France, which spread throughout the country in The Middle Ages. At the end of the middle ages, due to the climatic changes, viticulture was limited to the south. It was a beneficial product not only because the market always needed it, but also because its production was relatively easy. Another source of income was a rural industry which consisted of numbers of artisans, millers, blacksmith and so forth. By the late fifteenth century, they mostly came under the “putting out” system in order to produce goods for market.¹³⁸

2.4. Religion

The “protestant crescent” began in La Rochelle, stretched through Guyenne and Languedoc, and ended in the most urbanized Franco-Provençal areas such as the valleys of Dauphine, the Rhône, the Garonne, and Lower Languedoc.¹³⁹ The relationship between the nobility and the religious division was very complicated. There is no clear reason why, in the mid-century, significant members of the nobility became involved with the new faith. Nonetheless, the bulk of Huguenots’ nobility did not know much about the depth of Calvinism.¹⁴⁰ Many of Huguenots’ leaders more or less converted to the new religion (just) because of influence from their mothers, wives, sisters, or influential women in the patronage network.¹⁴¹ Material interest, anticlerical attitude, political ambition, and familial impact among the high noble contributed to

¹³⁷ Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600*, 69.

¹³⁸ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 171-173.

¹³⁹ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 252. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Glenn S. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism: The Development of Huguenot Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1557-1572* (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2003), 21.

¹⁴¹ Among the noble women, there were many from the royal family to old noble houses who converted to Calvinism or at least supported the new faith without public conversion. Louise de Montpensier, Michelle de Saubonne, Jean d’Albert, Madeleine de Mailly, Françoise de Senninghem, Isabeau d’Albert, and so forth. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*, 22. Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598*, 15.

their conversions.¹⁴² Among the petty nobles, one-third of them converted to the new faith just before the wars, though this varied from one region to another one. For instance, in two neighbor provinces, Dauphiné and Provence, the majority of the gentry in the former converted to Calvinism while in the latter they kept with Catholicism.¹⁴³ In contrast to the Genevan version, French Calvinism turned out to be an organization of the nobility, in which nobility played the most prominent roles. Consequently, the merchants and bourgeois office-holders ceased to play important role in the new faith.¹⁴⁴

Calvinism was very attractive for the urban artisan journeymen more than for the peasants in the countryside. In 1559, a large number of journeymen converted to Calvinism and afterwards their masters adopted the reformed church tenets as well. The contrast between agrarian northern France with a majority of Catholics, and the predominantly Calvinist urban classes of the commercial towns in the south played an important role in the life of France in the 16th century.¹⁴⁵ In the Midi, merchants and town officials were mostly Calvinist. In some small towns in the Midi and in bigger ones in Nimes, protestant republics were established.

The catholic peasantry and petty bourgeois did not change their religion, but they also refused to pay the tithe and they confiscated the churches' properties.¹⁴⁶ Protestantism was an

¹⁴² Apart from the Huguenot nobles, even the catholic nobles and estates criticized the abuses of the church and its enormous wealth. Even baron de Rochefort, saw the acquisition of this wealth as a process which was at the expense of the decline of nobility. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*, 21.

¹⁴³ One century ago, Henri Hauser argued that this mass conversion of the nobility to Calvinism was due to the economic crisis of the 1540s. Recently, Natalie Zemon Davis showed that there was little correlation between these two phenomena. In contrast, Henry Heller argued that the conversion to Protestantism in France was a religious response to the extreme economic uncertainties in the 1540s. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ Mack P Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30.

¹⁴⁶ In the great alienation movement of the second half of the 16th century, peasants unlike rich yeomen, who managed to join the upper classes in their conquest of church lands, took no part in the undertaking. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 170. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 250.

urban phenomenon, but it was grasped by some peasant communities as well. From 1560 to 1570 the peasants in rural Cevennes converted to Calvinism under the influence of the urban elites (rich, young, and educated bourgeoisie), and artisans (cobblers, blacksmiths and etc.).¹⁴⁷ At Meaux, the same forces helped the expansion of Protestantism.¹⁴⁸ In Normandy around Cherbourg, people were highly influenced by the Huguenots.¹⁴⁹ In the western Languedoc, the Huguenots remained the minority. However, apart from these exceptions, the majority of the peasantry adhered to the old religion, and occasionally defended it enthusiastically.¹⁵⁰

Calvinism did not change the social structure but was a catalyst for social violence. According to Ladurie's thesis, the distribution of Calvinism in towns and among the remaining Catholic, laboring classes and peasantry was mainly due to the literacy level of urban people and pre-reform activities in towns.¹⁵¹ Moreover, by grasping the reformed faith, the weak urban class was enabled to break the restrictions of the social structure. Besides, according to Weber, Calvinist ethic fostered the growth of capitalism, via specialized vocation, and altered the structure of economic life.¹⁵² Besides the urban middle and lower classes, there was a considerable population of Calvinist peasants in Agenais, Périgord, Quercy, Gévaudan, Rouergue, Vivarais, Dauphiné, Forez, and Provence.¹⁵³ However, there was no pattern of conversion among the peasants in these

¹⁴⁷ Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 236.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 235.

¹⁵⁰ As the baron de Fourquevaux, the catholic governor of Narbonne observed it the religious wars here was the fight between town/non-peasants (Huguenots) and country/peasants (papism). Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 236. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*, 18.

¹⁵¹ Most of the notable bourgeois families in Lyons who provided loans to the crown were Huguenots. Interestingly, they were more prudent than zealous in their faith. There was the same example in Rouen, Caen, Nîmes and so forth. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 135.

¹⁵² Ibid, 131-132.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 138.

regions. In some of them, their conversion occurred because of the conversion of their seigneurs. In other cases, conversion was used as political action in opposition to the seigneurs.¹⁵⁴

2.3.5. The Pitauts, a Model Revolt¹⁵⁵

The largest popular revolt before the religious wars was in response to the heavy royal taxation, enacted in 1547 by the notables in the towns.¹⁵⁶ The Pitauts revolt was in reaction to the abolishment of local privileges after the introduction of the salt tax (*gabelle*) by the central government.¹⁵⁷ In the villages, the revolt was a coalition of ploughmen and local priests who had a shared interest in the rural area. The clerical elites (priests) were mediators between the rural community and society. They also were the intellectuals and leaders of the rural community.¹⁵⁸ Besides the lower classes in the towns, there was a third group of in-between people, which included the weak gentry and bankrupt nobles, who also joined the revolt.¹⁵⁹ The organization of the revolt was based on a federation of parishes or communes, which became a model that was

¹⁵⁴ A good example is the revolt of the peasants of Fumel against their cruel and oppressive catholic baron in 1561. The consequence was the murdering of the Baron in own home by his peasants in the course of night attack to his castle by the protestant and catholic mob. Accompany of catholic peasant shows that the social discontents due to seigneurial oppression were the reason of the attack, rather than the religious differences. Kevin Gould, *Catholic Activism in South-West France, 1540–1570* (London: Routledge, 2016), 51-52.

¹⁵⁵ I gave a short description of the Pitauts revolt because not only it was the biggest and first widespread peasant revolt before the French Wars of Religion, but also because it had some achievements which were repeated by the different peasant revolt during the Wars particularly the Croquants. Additionally, I compared the revolts with the Pitauts from time to time, hence, it makes easier for the reader to follow the story of the events.

¹⁵⁶ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 35. According to Zagorin, the rebel of Guyenne was the biggest agrarian rebellion of the century. Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers, 1500-1660, volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 126.

¹⁵⁷ The Pitauts or or Piteaux, different versions of the movement's name.

¹⁵⁸ In the usual time in the peasant community or commune, the *fabriqueurs* or *marguilliers* (churchwardens) of the *fabrique* (parochial land) were in charge of raising taxes and collecting tithes. It was one reason which caused mostly confusion between the secular and spiritual domains. Fernand Braudel, Ernest Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, Volume 1 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France. 1980), p.827

¹⁵⁹ The local notables of Baignes, Saintes and Cognac sympathized the revolt. The nobility, except one, did not do anything against them. The consuls of Angouleme, Sarlat and Cahors sent some deputies because they were afraid of the scale of the pillages by the rebels. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 372. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 36.

repeated later on during the Croquants revolt. Each commune had a joint village captain and all together they formed a great “commune,” like the commune of Angoumois.¹⁶⁰ The revolt of the *Pitauts* was a backward-looking revolt, which never attacked either the tithe or their manorial obligations. Even they were not against monarchy and frequently showed their fidelity to the king.¹⁶¹ An important aspect of this revolt was that their memoir stayed alive among the peasantry, particularly in the lands of the Croquants. Secondly, the Pitauts was an anti-tax revolt, which happened in response to either the fiscal policies of the central power or to the economic changes. Apart from its organizational features in the union of the town and countryside, the revolt successfully resulted in influencing the peasant revolt of the late sixteenth century for a short period of time.

In 1542, King Francois I mandated a large increase in the gabelle for the provinces of the southwest, which had previously been nearly exempt from it.¹⁶² The increase of the salt prices led a riot led by the inhabitants of La Rochelle in the countryside where one century before, the people had enjoyed vast autonomy from the English supremacy. The pressure of the revolt forced the king to cancel the salt price increases. After a while, he issued an edict and introduced a new gabelle, which was levied by his son Henri II. An uprising spread quickly through Saintonge and Angoumois, and north to Poitou, south to Agenais and Gascony, and east to Périgord and

¹⁶⁰A bourgeois origin man from Blanzac named Bois-Ménier with the title of “colonel of Angoumois, Périgord, and Saintonge” was the initial leader of the Pitauts in Poitou. Antoine Bouchard, seigneur de Puymoreau directed the rebels in Angoumois and Saintonge. Tallemagne with the title of “High colonel of Guyenne by the people’s will” and unknown origin, led the peasant army against Bordeaux. They were the leaders of Pitauts at the assembly of Baignes in which more than 40000 gathered. Ilja Mieck, *Die Entstehung des modernen Frankreich, 1450-1610: Strukturen, Institutionen, Entwicklungen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982), 85. Pierre Dubourg-Noves, *Histoire d'Angoulême et de ses alentours* (Toulouse: Privat, 1990), 130-131. Yves Marie Bercé, *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence* (Manchester, Manchester University Press., 1987), 164. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 36.

¹⁶¹ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 36.

¹⁶² The increase of the royal expenses due to the expansion of the central authority and the foreign wars caused the financial demands. Rodriguez-Salgado, Maria J.. “*The Habsburg–Valois wars*”, *The New Cambridge Modern History*. Ed. G. R. Elton. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Limousin.¹⁶³ In Angoumois, the *métayage* was common. Therefore, based on the seigneurie system lords extracted an ample portion of their products and used the rest to feed the peasants' families or to convert into cash by selling their products. This small addition of money to the peasants' income was also the subject of the *gabelleurs* demands. The first aim of the men of the commune was to destroy the *metairies* and salt warehouses (*greniers à sel*) that belonged to the merchant-gabelleurs in the towns.¹⁶⁴ At this crucial moment, the intervention by the military forces of the crown became necessary in order to retain the interests of the upper class.¹⁶⁵ This direct political and military intervention enabled lords and states to exact rents, taxes, or tributes directly from producers.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, at the time of the revolt of Bordeaux, which was the climax of the uprising, by order of the king, the Dukes of Aumale and Anne de Montmorency were dispatched to punish rebels from two directions. The rebels already killed Tristan de Moneins, Henri d'Albert's lieutenant governor of Guyenne, in the course of the negotiation.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, many nobles, wealthy merchants, and towns' people were murdered during the uprising.¹⁶⁸ But the royal forces first suppressed the urban revolt before turning to the peasants. The peasant revolt was suffocated harshly and its leaders, like Puymoreau, were savagely executed.¹⁶⁹ In October, the

¹⁶³ Before it, the outbreak of the plague in 1547 to 1548 deteriorated harshly the life of the peasants of these regions and made them ready to react against every kind of changes. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 165. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 36.

¹⁶⁴ In mid-16th century, the tax collectors or gabelleurs were usually recruited from the wealthy lawyers and bourgeois merchants who were salt traders or merchants of the other commodities. The anger of the peasants were mostly towards these bourgeois merchants and tax collectors which forced them to go everywhere in a group of the armed men. Towns were the subject of the communes hate because the tax-collectors or gabelleurs and their relatives, and even the local officials and the lawyers lived in the cities. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 369. However, a number of small towns which hatred the gabelle, joined the movement. Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers*, 239. After the occupation of the town of Blaye, they proclaimed the aim of their movement as the destruction of "*les méchants inventeurs chargés du fait de gabelle*". Gérard Walter, *Histoire des paysans de France* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), 181. The peasant army of Puymoreau cried "*Mort aux gabelleurs*" at entering the town of Cognac. Henri Martin, *Histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789, Volume 8* (Paris: Furne, 1860), 381.

¹⁶⁵ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 371.

¹⁶⁶ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital*. (New York City: Verso. 2003), p.3.

¹⁶⁷ André Thevet, Edward Benson, and Roger Schlesinger, *Portraits from the French Renaissance and the Wars of Religion* (Kirkville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2010), 26.

¹⁶⁸ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 165.

¹⁶⁹ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 371

monarch's troops imposed repression on the rebellious peasants and town. Bordeaux was heavily punished, and the city lost its urban privileges.¹⁷⁰ Unlike in Bordeaux, the punishments were relatively light in Angoumois. In 1550, after the payment of a hefty fine, the salt tax was abolished. For a very long time, Angoumois and Guyenne were re-taxed as far as salt was concerned. But the peasants freed themselves from this fiscal pressure. According to Ladurie "By rejecting the salt tax, the rural communes defeated a political centralization, an administrative 'modernization' and a financial uniformity whose only injustice was, in their eyes, that it fell on the backs of the peasants."¹⁷¹Inherently, the Pitauts became an uprising against the fiscal policies of the seigniorial class and nobility, but it was not a revolution against the general entity of the ruling class.¹⁷² The social classes in towns had different attitudes towards the Pitauts: the lower classes and people with inferior status were on the side of the peasants and against the upper bourgeois class and nobility.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 166.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 375.

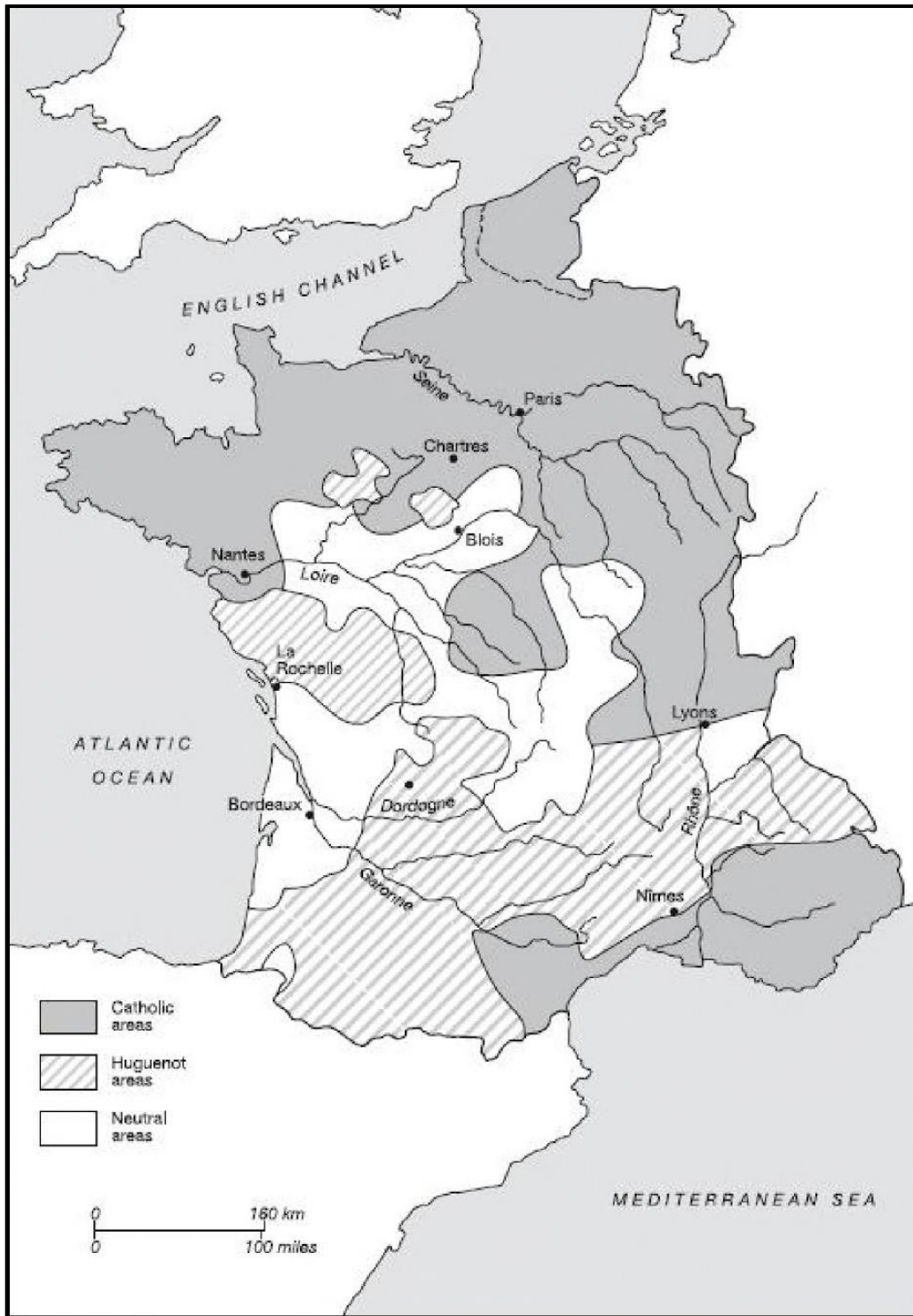
¹⁷² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Volume 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1995), 739.

¹⁷³ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 374.



Map 1. France during the Wars of Religion

Source: Holt, Mack P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



Map 2. Principal areas controlled by the Huguenots and Catholic during the Wars of Religion
 Source: Knecht, R. J. *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598*. Harlow, Essex, England: Longman, 2000.

Chapter III: Southern France

(First wave)

“The poor people want nothing but a good peace, and if it cannot be accomplished they will be their own worst enemy. War is their ruin.”¹⁷⁴

Raymond de Saléon

The first wave of peasant revolts during the Wars of Religion took place in the southwest in Provence, Vivarais, Dauphiné and Languedoc.¹⁷⁵ The revolts began in Vivarais and reached a climax in Dauphiné before gradually shifting to the south and then to the eastern regions. The chapter has kept to this sequence. It is started off with the accounts of revolts in Provence, then is looked at the famous peasant revolts of Vivarais and Dauphiné, and is finished with the Croquants of Languedoc and Campanelle in the 1590s.

3.1. Provence

The first peasant revolt during the religious wars, known as the Cabans revolt, happened in Aix, Manosque, Sisteron, Valensole, Arles, and Marseilles in 1561. In Provence, the majority of the country gentry remained Catholic, whereas Protestants dominated in towns such as Montauban, Nîmes, Montpellier, and Castres.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, many Huguenots were murdered

¹⁷⁴ He was a Calvinist jurist and financier from the town of Saint-Fortunat on the Eyrieux, Leyris. Albin Mazon, *Notes et documents historiques sur les Huguenots du Vivarais, volume 3* (Valence: Ed. de la Bouquinerie, 1994), 70.

¹⁷⁵ Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 192.

¹⁷⁶ Montauban was the stronghold of the Protestantism in south-west France which was surrounded with the Catholic towns and chateaux. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 254. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 128.

on the charge of conspiracy against their towns and the whole province devastated by the infamous Porcellets forces.¹⁷⁷ The Catholic peasants, known as the Cabans¹⁷⁸, who had most to suffer amid this chaos, rose in turn and made relentless war on the nobility, both Huguenots and Catholics.¹⁷⁹ In the beginning, the revolt had a mainly anti-seigniorial direction, but later strong religious affiliations orientated their hatred toward the Protestants.¹⁸⁰

In 1578, the peasants of Provence rebelled against Jean de Pontevès, count de Carsès and the lieutenant-governor of Provence, and the ravages of his noble clients (Carsistes or Carcistes¹⁸¹) who had terrorized Provence for years.¹⁸² The rebels called themselves the Razats (Ragas¹⁸³ or Rasats¹⁸⁴ - those with half-shaven beard) because, unlike the Carcistes who had a long beards, they were clean shaven.¹⁸⁵ Unlike the Carsistes, who were overwhelmingly aristocrats supported by the inhabitants of important local towns, the bands of Razats were made up of peasants, artisans, lawyers, and merchants, both Catholics and Protestants.¹⁸⁶ According to the contemporary historian, Mézeray, the peasants raised arms indifferent to the faith of their comrades to defend

¹⁷⁷ Eugène Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants de Provence, du comtat Venaissin et de la principauté d'Orange : avec une carte de l'ancienne Provence Volume 1* (Paris: Grassart, 1884), 128. Jean-Claude Fermaud, *Le Protestantisme en Provence en Avignon, dans le Comtat, la principauté d'Orange et le comté de Nice au XVI^e siècle jusqu'à l'Edit de Nantes* (Carrières-sous-Poissy: La Cause, 1999), 124.

¹⁷⁸ They were called Cabans because they wore large Chapeau-Shaped coats.¹⁷⁸ Jean-François de Gaufridi, *Histoire de Provence, Volume 2* (Aix: Charles David, 1694), 499.

¹⁷⁹ According to one contemporary witness, they swarmed towns and went house by house, looking for the Huguenots and pillaging their properties. Gaufridi, *Histoire de Provence, Volume 2*, 499. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 139.

¹⁸⁰ César de Nostredame and Simon Rigaud, *L'Histoire et chronique de Provence où passent de tems en tems et en bel ordre les anciens poètes, personnages et familles illustres qui y ont fleury depuis 600 ans, outre plusieurs races de France, d'Italie, Hespagne, etc* (Lyon: Sim. Rigaud, 1614), 786-788. Gustave Lambert, *Histoire des guerres de religion en Provence (1530-1598), Volume 1* (Toulon: J. Laurent, 1870), 118-125. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 278.

¹⁸¹ François Eudes de Mézeray, *Abregé chronologique de l'histoire de France, part 3, Volume 5* (Amsterdam: Antoine Schelte, 1696), 204.

¹⁸² They were conservative Catholics and supporters of the old religious and political order. They were also called *marabouts*, because they let their beard grow. Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants de Provence*, 221.

¹⁸³ Jules Berger de Xivrey, *Recueil des lettres missives de Henri IV. Volume 1* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1843), 372.

¹⁸⁴ Mézeray, *Abregé chronologique de l'histoire de France*, 204. François Eudes de Mézeray, *Histoire de France depuis Faramond jusqu'à maintenant, Volume 3* (Paris: Mathieu Guillemot, 1651), 206.

¹⁸⁵ Joseph de Verneilh-Puyraseau, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'Aquitaine, Volume 3* (Paris: A. Guyot and Ponthieu, 1827), 24. Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants de Provence*, 221.

¹⁸⁶ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 89.

themselves and their properties against the Catholic and Protestant *gens de guerre*, tax-collectors, and the illegal exactions of the local seigneurs.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the villagers revolted once their resources destroyed by the armies, and their production were robbed by the soldiers, and the peasant economy failed to continue.

The revolt began when the inhabitants of the some Provençal bailliages in Guillaumes, Vigueries de Grasse, and St Paul de Vence attacked the Carcites in April. Similarly, the people of d'Hières, la Valette, Souliers, Toulon, Olliotes, and the surrounding villages attacked a camp of six or seven hundred Carsistes at Cuers.¹⁸⁸ This enabled the peasants to occupy Pirrefeu, Le Cannet, and the castles of Bregançon and Cogolin which itself oriented the revolt towards the castles.¹⁸⁹ At the same time, the villagers of Callas sacked the castle of Jean Baptiste de Pontevès and put him into the cellar with his family, murdering one of his sons who had attempted to escape.¹⁹⁰ The anti-nobility and anti-military spirit of the revolt, which itself rooted in the destruction of the peasants' everyday life, displayed in war against the castles. The “*guerre aux châteaux*” forced many nobles to leave their castles and escape.¹⁹¹ At the same time, some nobles took the advantage of the rivalries between two faiths among the peasants and brought the Razats under their control in favor of their interests.¹⁹² The commander of the Carcites De Vins attempted to take revenge by besieging Hières but the commoners of Hières and the peasant militias defeated him and killed one hundred of his men.¹⁹³ While some bands of the Razats were dispersed or

¹⁸⁷ Mézeray, *Histoire de France depuis Faramond jusqu'à maintenant*, Volume 3, 206.

¹⁸⁸ Gaufredi, *Histoire de Provence*, Volume 2, 583.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 578.

¹⁹⁰ Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants de Provence*, 239-240.

¹⁹¹ Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 113. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 209-211.

¹⁹² Their leaders were from the nobles but it did not deviate their anti-seigneurial reactions. Among their leaders there were names of the some nobles such as the maréchal de Retz, barons of Allemagne, Oraison (Oraison), Lourmarin, Riez, Seine and des Arcs, Sieurs de Stoblon and de Verdaches some others. Honoré Bouche, *La chorographie ou description de Provence et l'histoire chronologique du même pays*, Volume 2 (Aix: Charles David, 1664), 667.

¹⁹³ Charles-François Bouche, *Essai sur l'histoire de Provence, suivi d'une notice des provençaux célèbres*. Volume 2 (Marseille: Jean Mossy, 1785), 109-110. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 89. Bouche, *La chorographie ou description de*

massacred by the Carcites, a group of them attacked Cabasse and killed three or four hundred of the Carcites who had attacked the castle of Trans.¹⁹⁴ The conflict between the two parties ended with the intervention of the Queen Mother. At La Bastide-de-Beauvoisin, a meeting was held in which the Carcites participated with a contingent of five hundred men and the Razats attended with a smaller contingent under the command of the vicomte de Cadenet, and Baron d'Oraison. Under the guidance of Catherine de Medici, they signed an agreement and swore oaths to the king.¹⁹⁵

Both the Cabans and the Razats revolts contained the anti-seigneurial aspects but their strong religious affiliation ultimately brought them under the sway of the aristocratic parties. With the *jacquerie* of the Razats brought to an end, the peasant revolts reached their conclusion in Provence in the sixteenth century.

3.2. Vivarais and Dauphiné

In Vivarais, peasant resistance began from the summer of 1575 when the peasants refused to pay all kinds of impositions and new taxes, which had been imposed on the Catholic peasants in the west of Largentière to supply the garrisons.¹⁹⁶ One decade after the beginning of the Civil war in France, the famine and brigandage of soldiers of both political factions had worsened the living conditions in the southwest province. One local witness, André Lafaisse, described how

Provence et l'histoire chronologique du même pays, 667. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 126-130. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 89.

¹⁹⁴ Nostredame and Rigaud, *L'Histoire et chronique de Provence*, 825. Bouche, *Essai sur l'histoire de Provence*, 110.

¹⁹⁵ Gaufridi, *Histoire de Provence, Volume 2*, 586-587. Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants de Provence*, 242-243.

¹⁹⁶ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 89.

peasants were forced to sell or burn tiles and beams of their houses in order to stay alive during the war.¹⁹⁷

Moreover, most of the upper Vivarais had been under the temporal administration of the bishop of Viviers. In addition, there were twelve important barons (*barons de tour*) who ruled the province with their *baillis* and their petty lords. The need of these barons for the cash instead of crops was one reason for the frustration of the peasantry during the religious war.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, the lack of sufficient payment for the garrisons caused some recently disbanded soldiers to transition to brigandage. In 1576, both the Catholic and Protestant factions attempted to end the disturbances with a local peace treaty at the chateau of La Borie de Balazuc. However, it did not hinder the peasant resistance to the taxes.¹⁹⁹ In June 1577, the peasants of six parishes of Sablières and the region around it revolted and massacred the local garrison.²⁰⁰ This was the first flames that began the formation of the Catholic and Protestant federations in the region.²⁰¹ In Vivarais, most of the rural communes, except some in the upper basin of Doux and Eyrieux, were Catholic villages.²⁰²

In 1579, at the sound of an alarm bell, the peasants and the neglected petty bourgeoisie of the small towns gathered under the command of a certain Jean (la) Rouvière de Mercouer.²⁰³ In

¹⁹⁷ Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 217.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 214-215.

¹⁹⁹ Samuel Mours, *Le Vivarais et le Velay Protestants: notices paroissiales* (Le Cheylard: Ed. Dolmazon, 2003), 109-110. Eugène Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants du Vivarais et du Velay: pays de Languedoc, de la Réforme à la Révolution. Volume I* (Paris: Grassart, 1888), 148-151.

²⁰⁰ Mazon, *Notes et documents historiques sur les Huguenots du Vivarais*, 51.

²⁰¹ Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 218. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 89. Mazon, *Notes et documents historiques sur les Huguenots du Vivarais*, 51.

²⁰² Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 215.

²⁰³ However, this area was covered with the Huguenot churches but the Catholic peasants were the harbinger of the revolt in Vivarais. From the beginning of the revolt the religious denomination had the second place after the anti-seigniorial and anti-war elements. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 113-114. Joseph Roman, *La guerre des paysans en Dauphiné (1579-1580) : récit contemporain* (Impr. de Chennevier (Valence), 1877), 4.

February, Jean (la) Rouvière²⁰⁴ drew up a petition to the king to make him aware of the peasants' grievances. In this petition, after describing the atrocities of nobilities, *gens de guerre*, and the harsh condition of the peasants, Jean Rouvière demanded the king stop the atrocities and asked him to force the nobles to start executing justice in their manors. The economic complaints were as follows: First, it was about the *taille* and its amount; the petition asked for the remission of the *taille* and all non-customary impositions for ten years. Second, he discussed the corruption of tax-collectors and their fraud. He asked the king for more honest agents who could be chosen out of the local people and their salary would be paid by the government, not by the peasants. Third, the proper priests should be appointed and the tithe used only for their upkeep. Fourth, there was the issue of debt, ransom, and the problem parishes faced for reimbursing it. Fifth, there was the issue of the illegal exactions of the nobles and seigneurs, both in seizing their property and forced labor. Not surprisingly, the mission was completely unsuccessful.²⁰⁵ If we trust this petition as the short version of the problems in the countryside, it is obvious the peasant economy stopped to work due to the ruining of the resources and products. Another time, the peasantry revolted when the everyday life failed to continue under the pressure.

In November, a new peasant revolt took place at Boutières in the mountains of southwest of Saint-Agrève at the provocation of two Huguenot captains²⁰⁶ who had exempted the peasants

²⁰⁴ He was a notary or maybe a lesser merchant from a small town (bourgades) to the west of Aubenas.

²⁰⁵ In the main text, Jean (la) Rouvière, asserted that the amount of the *taille* that the peasant had paid in one year to the Catholic and then to Protestant factions exceeded the total amount of *taille* in the previous 30 years. This document is important because, not only it consists of the grievances but also it has some practical requests for the reforming of the bad conditions. Nevertheless, like most of his predecessors and even the future leaders, Jean (la) Rouvière had never went beyond the real reasons of peasant problems. He never addressed the seigneurial system as such. He only criticized the local gentry because they allowed their chateaux to become a base for the war bands and brigands. Mazon, *Notes et documents historiques sur les Huguenots du Vivarais*, 54-67. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 91. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 221-223.

²⁰⁶ Fornier (Fournier) de Privas and the sieur de Lachesserie were two captains who used the peasants for their aims. Pierre Hippolyte Mamarot, *Inventaire-sommaire des Archives départementales antérieures à 1790, Ardèche: archives civiles : séries A, B, C, D, Volume 1* (Ardèche: Impr. et librairie administratives de P. Dupont, 1877), 259.

from paying taxes and promised to help them in their uprising.²⁰⁷ Another time, the destructions of the wars and vague political aims of the peasants made the interclass coalition possible in favor of the nobility's interest. Meanwhile, the revolt spread throughout Vivarais, causing the government to ask old Guillaume de Joyeuse, the lieutenant-general of Languedoc, to suppress 'this corruption and lawlessness'.²⁰⁸ On the 30th of January and the 9th of February, at the first and second meetings in Largentière, la Rouvière and other delegates in the assemblies of nobles, clergy, and representatives of the towns accepted to pay the taille, the tithe, and the seigniorial dues to prevent war. Also the nobles promised that they would bring back order and destroy the banditry.²⁰⁹ Whereof, in Vivarais, most of the towns took their charters and independence from their seigneurs; hence, there was a cordial relation between the nobility and urban upper class. Another time, inefficiency in the disbandment of the garrisons forced the peasants to set up militia bands under the command of François de Barjac, the Huguenot seigneur de Pierregourde, and Sieur de Saint-Sierge.²¹⁰ One of their first action was against the Catholic castle of Crussol that overlooking the Rhône. The united army of five hundred Catholic and Huguenot peasants attacked this castle and swept away all the marauders. Gradually afterwards, the army of the peasants in the lower Vivarais faded away.²¹¹ However, La Rouvière attempted to keep the peasants from both religions close together because brigandage still was a problem. In May 1579, the Catholic

²⁰⁷ Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 227.

²⁰⁸ In his letter to the Queen Mother, he expressed his desire to disperse those people, who refused to pay taille to the king, and to kill the king's *receveurs* and agents. He even called the representatives of syndics or deputies of pays as "ruffians" who remonstrated the frivolous requests and encouraged the peasants to not pay the taxes. For the complete original text see Jean Loutchitzky, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la réforme et de la ligue: matériaux pour "l'histoire de la réaction féodale en France au 16 et 17 s."* (Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1875), 152-153. The English excerpt is in Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 228-229.

²⁰⁹ Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 230.

²¹⁰ This Protestant noble had a pro-peasantry attitude, however, in his correspondences to Jacques Reynier, former *receveur* and *juge* (judge) of Vivarais, he disapproved of the revolt by the peasants.²¹⁰ Joseph Roman, *La guerre des paysans en Dauphiné (1579-1580) : récit contemporain* (Impr. de Chennevier (Valence), 1877), 5. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 227.

²¹¹ Michel Riou and Michel Rissoan, *Ardèche, terre de châteaux* (Montmélian: La Fontaine de Siloé, 2002), 65. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 92.

peasants assembled at Largentière, while simultaneously the Protestant peasants met at Ailhon. At a meeting at Choumerac on the 11th of May, the two federations (Protestants being in the majority) agreed to be united against the nobility and *gens de guerre* regardless of their religious affiliations.²¹² The purpose of these meetings probably was the approval of the assembly at Largentière.²¹³

In Dauphiné, peasants to the east of the Rhône rose up almost simultaneously in Montélimar, Valence, and Romans-sur-Isère.²¹⁴ At first, the revolt, which became famous as the Chaperons-sans-cordon (Hats-without-strings), occurred in some Protestant villages of Marsas and Chantemerle due to forcible extraction of the *taille* for the third time in one year in 1578.²¹⁵ In fact, the distribution of the tax-payers was not uniform in the province; the burden of the taxes was on the poor commoners because the rich commoners (by being a judges, professors, or having ennoblement), as well as the ecclesiastical ranks and nobles, were exempted from paying the *taille*. By 1548, the bourgeoisie of the towns was able to avoid to paying the *taille*, but by the new laws

²¹² Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 209. Samuel Mours, *Le Vivarais et le Velay Protestants: notices paroissiales* (Le Cheylard: Ed. Dolmazon, 2003), 116.

²¹³ Salmon believes these two meetings had a more conciliatory approach between nobles, towns and peasants. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt*, 231.

²¹⁴ The economic changes of the late middle ages hit these towns especially. Romans was one of the four principal centers and one of the "Ten Cities" of Dauphiné. By Its specific location as a transit town and an entrepôt for the international trade, beside the Rhône and Alpine passes, Romans had an outstanding prosperous period during the Late Middle Ages. Trade channels connecting Northern Italian traffic with the southern and central French markets. To the north and west, the plains of Dauphiné and the Rhône valley had served in the transport of German and Burgundian goods southward to the Mediterranean ports. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, as a result of the papal departure from Avignon to Rome this trend changed. The concessions of Louis XI and Francis I changed the axis of the Rhône traffic from the alpine route to Marseille-Lyon axis. In the sixteenth century, the city was still important as the local commercial market and center of the leather, paper, and woolen textile industries. By the sixteenth century, one of three important roads for importing cloths to France passed through Montélimar. In the course of fifteenth century, Montélimar, one of the commercial centers, gradually lost its centrality as an international market. By shifting the commercial centers from the north to south to Avignon from the last decade of 14th century, the decline of Mont Cenis traffic began. Montélimar was one of the first towns to come out on the losing end of this shift. Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 79-80, doi:10.2307/2539588.

²¹⁵ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 209. There is good description of the changes in *taille* in this book. Louis Comby, *Histoire des Dauphinois des origines à nos jours* (Paris: F. Nathan, 1978), 75.

that took effect the following year, they had to pay it. This brought them closer to the villagers and united the peasantry and bourgeoisies in their joined assemblies. Furthermore, in Dauphiné, the greater part of the nobles had accepted Calvinism and with it the idea of Swiss democracy and Anabaptism penetrated among the urban plebeians and their thinkers.²¹⁶ For example, Pellegrin Gamot, leader of the Plebeian of Grenoble and advisor of François de Bonne, duc de Lesdiguières, implicitly used the Swiss democratic ideas and symbolic elements such as the Swiss horns instead of the tocsin. Another example was Bastien, a lawyer and surgeon, who threatened to massacre the local nobles like what had happened in the Swiss cantons.²¹⁷ In May 1578, the peasant uprising forced Bouvier, a Protestant captain and brigand who already had been expelled by the inhabitants of Pont-en-Roians (Royans), to leave the chateau du Pont.²¹⁸ Once again, the peasantry attempted to bring back the order by eradicating the forces (i.e. Nobles) that had disturbed the peasant economy.

During the fall, the impact of another anti-fiscal movement that had been started by the urban bourgeois in Montélimar spread into the countryside.²¹⁹ The rebels of Montélimar (*Ligue de Montélimar*)²²⁰ under command of Jean Faure (Barletier), refused to pay new taxes which had been

²¹⁶ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 11.

²¹⁷ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 100-101.

²¹⁸ According to Eustache Piémond, he was an intelligent captain who hate the war and wanted to have a secure retirement. In fulfilling that, he had already occupied Châteaudouble and then the chateau Le Pont. This policy increased the peasants' rage which led to his expulsion from the chateau du Pont. Eustache Piémond and Justin Brun-Durand, *Mémoires de Eustache Piémond, notaire royal-delphinal de la ville de Saint-Antoine en Dauphiné (1572-1608)* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973), 58-59. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans* (New York: G. Braziller, 1979), 80. Eugène Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants du Dauphiné aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, volume I* (Paris: Grassart, 1875), 362.

²¹⁹ According to Piémond, the royal tailles was the principal cause of the "union" or "league" movement in Montélimar. Andre Lacroix, *L'Arrondissement de Montélimar, géographie, histoire et statistique, VI*, (Valence: Librairies Combiér et Nivoche, 1873), 173.

²²⁰ Gustave Fagniez, Gustave Fagniez. *L'Économie sociale de la France sous Henri IV, 1589-1610* (Paris: Hachette, 1897), 10.

imposed by the estate of Dauphiné.²²¹ In November, at the general assembly of Montélimar, in which Faure participated as the representative of the town, a certain Coste, as the representative of the peasant league, accused the military forces of both sides, especially emphasizing the Protestant soldiers as the main reason for their calamities. However, he did not declare any kind of radical plan and just asked the Parlement of Grenoble to accept the submission of the peasant league. With the support of the moderate plebeians of Montélimar, Jacques Colas, Catholic vice-sénéchal of the town, brought the popular uprising under his control.²²² In February 1579, he directed twelve hundred peasants against the chateau de Roussas where had recently been held by the Protestant noble brigand, Baron de La Roche.²²³ After four days, La Roche ended the resistance and took flight.²²⁴ The attacking the Huguenots obliged Lesdiguières to march against the baron to protect his faction, and it led to several bloody struggles between the seigneurs.²²⁵ On the other hand, a friend and confidant of Lesdiguières, Innocent Gentillet encouraged the peasants of Valloire and Viennese to revolt and pushed them against the Catholics. The attacks to the castles happened frequently because for the peasants, who did not recognize the impact of the long term changes on the economic life of their villages, the nobility and gentry were the first reason for the destruction of the village economy. Furthermore, the increase in tensions warned the nobility about the

²²¹ In 1578, the immediate cause of the "league" movement in the vicinity of Montelimar and Valence and the expenses of the garrison soared so high that the lieutenant governor and procureurs généraux of Dauphiné imposed the interim taille three times (from 16,000 ecus, over 58,000 ecus). Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 77-78, doi:10.2307/2539588.

²²² Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 95. Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, 100-101.

²²³ Gay, *Mémoires des frères Gay*, 164.

²²⁴ This act of Colas was criticized harshly by Catherine de Medici because it had worsened the social uprisings of commoners against the privileged class. Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, 105. Gay, *Mémoires des frères Gay*, 164.

²²⁵ Joseph Roman, *La guerre des paysans en Dauphiné (1579-1580) : récit contemporain* (Impr. de Chennevier (Valence), 1877), 5.

probability of a social subversion. In her report to the king, Catherine de Medici pointed out there was intense hostility between the nobility and peasants.²²⁶

Valence revolted on the fifteenth of February and then in five days Romans followed. At Valence, despite the tension between the moderates and radicals, the expulsion of the royal forces had not continued after the expulsion of the oligarchy.²²⁷ In Romans, an insolent soldier and textile worker or a manufacturer from Montmiral, Jean Serve, also known as captain Paumier or Paulmier (Handballer),²²⁸ was elected during the celebration of Mardi Gras as the chief of the armed artisans of Romans.²²⁹ His election signaled a fundamental step from local peasant uprising to a kind of united government between urban lower classes and the countryside because very soon he united the hopeless poor artisans and lesser merchants of Romans with the forces of the Chaperons-sans-cordon.²³⁰ On the 1st of March, Jean Paumier, who was inspired by Colas, sent a strike force of 4000 peasants (*Ligue des Villains*) against the Châteaudouble in the east of Valence where the noble Huguenot brigand Félix Vallet de Livron, known in the annals of the province as Laprade, had taken residence.²³¹ By the late 1578 and early 1579, Laprade fixed himself in the Valence and lower Vienne regions and with his activities, such as taking merchants hostage for ransom,

²²⁶ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 216.

²²⁷ A short time after his election, he removed all local notables and replaced them with the peasants and petty-artisan. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 96.

²²⁸ He gained his reputation in a skirmish with the Protestants in which he had been wounded. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 193. Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 80, doi:10.2307/2539588.

²²⁹ Gay, *Mémoires des frères Gay*, 162.

²³⁰ In the beginning there was anti-noble approach among them and Jean de Bourellon, seigneur de Mures and governor of Embrun, and Henri d'Angoulême Grand Prieur de France were two of the first victims of peasant rage. Thomas Gay et al., *Mémoires des frères Gay de Die pour servir à l'histoire des guerres de religion en Dauphiné et spécialement dans le Diois* (Impr. P. Hoffmann, 1888), 162. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 96.

²³¹ According to Tomas Gay, the act of Jean Paumier imitated Colas with the hope of extracting the same benefits. Gay, *Mémoires des frères Gay*, 164. Humbert Terrebasse, *Histoire et généalogie de la famille de Maugiron, en Viennois, 1257-1767* (Lyon: L. Brun, 1905), 127.

completely disrupted trade and order in the area.²³² With the purpose of take control of the movement, Maugiron marched to aid the peasants and after several weeks they forced Laprade to capitulate.²³³ Even Guérin who was a harsh critic of the peasant movement appreciated this act of Jean Serve. But the peasant agitation did not abate there. After the destruction of this castle, angry peasants attacked the manors and castles of other minor seigneurs.²³⁴ The continuation of disorder in the region provoked the towns such as Grenoble and Vienne to join the rebellions of Romans and Valence.²³⁵ These attacks, particularly in the parishes around Romans and the ongoing refusal to pay the taille, the tithe and the quitrents, three pillars of the traditional order, frightened the nobility and they claimed that the rebellious peasants under Jean Serve's leadership wished to demolish the existing social order.²³⁶

²³² In some sources his name is Captain Antoine de La Salle, called La Prade. He was ally of Bouvier and supported him in his depredations. He seized Châteaudouble in 1578 by order of the Huguenot commander, but very soon he turned became o a brigand and made this château as his base. One time, he tried to bring the Calvinist peasants under his control to use them against the Catholic nobles but when his offer was rejected, he massacred 100 to 120 defenseless peasant women and children in their villages. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 210. These attacks, particularly in the parishes around Romans and their refusal to pay the taille, the tithe, and the quitrents, three pillars of the traditional order, frightened the nobles and they claimed that the rebellious peasants under Jean Serve's leadership wish to demolish the social order. Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, 117. Stéphane Gal, *Grenoble au temps de la Ligue: étude politique, sociale et religieuse d'une cité en crise, vers 1562-vers 1598* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2000), 65.

²³³ Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants du Dauphiné aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 362-366. Auguste Prudhomme, *Histoire de Grenoble* (Grenoble: A. Gratier, 1888), 396-397. Terrebasse, *Histoire et généalogie de la famille de Maugiron, en Viennois*, 127.

²³⁴ Moreover Laprade, Bouvier was a captain at Pont-en-Royans and Antoine Faure, called La Cloche, was a captain at Roussas who had the similars bands. About 9 January 1579, the leaguers of the Pont- en-Royans was ousted Bouvier and at the end of February, Captain La Cloche was expelled from his chateau. In the latter, Vice-Seneschal of Montélimar, Jacques Colas was the leader of peasants. Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 83.

²³⁵ In mid-February 1579, the bailli of Vienne in his letter says:" The common people is so angered by burdens and tailles and new impositions that they have had in the past, and even more by those which have been made and levied not very long ago, that they have united and resolved to pay no more." Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 78, doi:10.2307/2539588.

²³⁶ At meeting with Catherine de Medici, Jean Serve stated that his aim was not against the king but rather he was a royal service in preserving and supporting the poor against the tyranny of the nobles. He even refused to kneel before the Queen Mother. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 210. Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 90-91, doi:10.2307/2539588. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 193.

In April, as the spokesman and ideologue of the third estate, Jean du Bourg presented the commoners' cahier of grievances at the estates of Dauphiné. The main article was about the *taille* and they demanded it be imposed on the privileged people who held the commoners' land.²³⁷ The demolition of useless castles, prohibition of the hunt on the farms and vineyards of farmers, and the return of the common lands where had already usurped by the nobles were other demands in this document. In addition, the spokesman asked the meeting to allow the third-estate to have its own *procureur* in the estate-general which was outnumbered by the upper classes.²³⁸ On the matter of the taxes, the nobility obstinately refused all kinds of concessions. However, both the nobility and clergy were prepared to accept the election of an advisor from the third estate. Nonetheless, Du Bourg had not been disappointed and called for a strike against the tax payment and the privileged classes. During this time, the peasants and Protestant artisans in the Valloire, north of Romans, revolted and killed and injured some nobles and destroyed their manors.²³⁹ Meanwhile, Colas attempted to unite all peasants and the bourgeoisie at one assembly. In mid-July, Catherine de Medici arrived in Dauphiné. She aimed to restore order to the region, however, she failed completely in her plan because she entirely sided with the nobility.²⁴⁰ In November, the peasants offered the excuse of a bad harvest and refused to pay the *taille*. From this event onwards, the nobility started to prepare themselves to put down the revolt of the commoners.

Early in 1580, during the carnival in Romans, the royal judge, Antoine Guérin, and the local bourgeoisie committed a successful coup against '*tyranny of the peasants and the leagues*'

²³⁷ This idea was not new. Many contemporary thinkers asked the same thing. As an example, Epernay demanded in 1560, *Que les gentilzhommes oyseuz et sans service au Roy payet tailles comme les roturiers*.

²³⁸ As Le Roy Ladurie suggested, these demands for fundamental changing could only be a product of a powerful social movement. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 98.

²³⁹ According to Chorier, the suppression of the people and pressure by Lesdiguières provoked the rebellion. For the rebels, the joint enemies (Nobles and clergy) were the reason for the union. Chorier, *Histoire générale de Dauphiné*, 697. Auguste Prudhomme, *Histoire de Grenoble* (Grenoble: A. Gratier, 1888), 402.

²⁴⁰ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 100.

under the command of Jean Serve's old friend La Roche.²⁴¹ Jean Serve was killed at the beginning of the fight and many other peasants lost their lives in the street. A group of them could escape but the others who stayed were executed by the judicial authorities in Grenoble. By the sound of the tocsin, a larger peasant group marched to the town to rescue their leader, but they found all gates shut against them and they were ambushed by the royal army and massacred in the course of three days.²⁴² Then one hundred and forty *gentlehommes* attacked villages, killing the peasants "like pigs". Jean Serve's murder was the end of the threat of social inversion and signaled the return of the dominant class.²⁴³ The rest of the army retreated to the valley of the Isere. After that, for several months, the peasants and their Protestant allies resisted the royal army. On the 26th of March 1580, at Moirans the last peasant army was entrapped and massacred by the royal troops. In September, the last stronghold of the peasant league (*Ligue des Vilains*), the fort of Bouvoin, surrendered to Duke of Mayenne and with it, the revolt came to an end in Dauphiné.²⁴⁴

3.3. Languedoc

The suppression of the Romans revolt was not the end of peasant revolts. Very soon, it started again in the mountainous districts of Languedoc, Auvergne, and the Massif Central which

²⁴¹ Joseph Roman, *La guerre des paysans en Dauphiné (1579-1580) : récit contemporain* (Impr. de Chennevier (Valence), 1877), 107.

²⁴² Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 193.

²⁴³ It was the end of an uprising for people who had just wanted "peace, an attack upon those who were the cause of their oppressions and burdens . . . [and] the rendering of accounts by those who managed the funds that they had supplied." Quoted from the manuscript of Guérin in Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 81.

²⁴⁴ Afterwards, some small and insignificant uprisings happened. To exemplify, in 1592, the anti-fiscal movement continued in Saint-Fortunat and Saint-Michel-de-Chabrillanoux. In 1594, Saint Alban, Fay and Chaneac were the centers of the anti-fiscal popular resistance. In 1595, Boutières, Saint-Fortunat, and Montagne refused to pay the taille. In the latter, the inhabitants killed the tax collectors. In some areas like Saint Fortunat and Petit-Paris the popular unrest continued as late as 1596. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 209-211. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 101. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 106-107. Nicolas Chorier, *Histoire générale de Dauphiné, Volume 2* (Lyon: P. Charvys, 1672), 698-700. François Eudes de Mézeray, *Histoire de France depuis Faramond jusqu'à maintenant, Volume 3*, 422. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 101.

had already been heavily affected by the war and brigands.²⁴⁵ Here, like the peasant revolts of Romans and Vivarais, the villagers agitated when the continuation of the religious war and the seigneurial oppressions destroyed the effectiveness of their economy.

The most important peasant revolt of Languedoc during the religious wars was the peasant uprising of Campanelle, but before it, the region experienced unrest for one decade. In 1580 famine ravaged throughout the Massif Central and northern Languedoc. The anti-tax revolts in the hinterlands of Haute-Uzège lasted from 1582 to 1592. In this region, the inhabitants targeted the tax-collectors and beat them to death everywhere they found them.²⁴⁶ One decade later, the decline of production and rise of prices set off the new wave of peasant revolts against the taxes.²⁴⁷ In 1593-95 the entire south, both in the Royalists and the League regions, had been affected by the fiscal strikes and violence. In the Royalist regions such as Gévaudan and Vivarais, soldiers committed severe crimes against the villagers who constantly refused to pay taxes to the tax-collector. In the Haut-Biterrois, twenty-four towns and nearby villages formed a self-defense league and refused to pay the *taille*.²⁴⁸

In Velay under the control of the League, the peasant who lived in difficult conditions showed the same lack of interest in paying the *taille*.²⁴⁹ The revolt happened in 1594 and in one

²⁴⁵ All the same, peasant resistance had a long history in these regions from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. As an example, in 1561, during forbidden (by the Calvinist authorities) popular May rites, the Catholic peasants in the countryside of Montpellier revolted against the Calvinist bourgeoisie and working class citizens of the town. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 160.

²⁴⁶ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 102.

²⁴⁷ The good weather in 1578 and crop abundance caused the price of grain to dip to the lowest point in 1579 since 1570. The market price of food in 1580 did not rise above a level that had been considered "moderate" in 1575. In Dauphiné and Languedoc peasants had to purchase grain because their land holdings were too small to yield enough to meet their needs. In the 1570s, the majority of peasants could afford the food prices. Among the well-to-do peasants who could produce a surplus for sale in local marketplaces, the decrease of prices was not the main reason for the revolt. Liewain S. Doren, "Revolt and Reaction in the City of Romans, Dauphine; 1579-1580," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 1 (1974): 72-73, doi:10.2307/2539588. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 198.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 126-127.

²⁴⁹ Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 198-199. Jean Burel in his *memoires* described the misery of the peasants as the *grande povreté*. He narrated how the poor people came from the countryside to the town and begged

year it (called *compagnies de croquants*) became similar to the Croquant of Guyenne, having the same solidarity among the peasants without any religious exclusivity or as Jean Burel, the chronicler of Le Puy, called them the Croquants of “another religion”.²⁵⁰ In the beginning, the nobility showed sympathy to the peasant and attempted to direct revolt for their benefits.²⁵¹ In May, the Governor Jacques Mitte de Miolans, seigneur de Chevrières, allowed the inhabitants to take arms and fortify themselves. He also encouraged them to refuse to pay the taille to the League, especially, after the massacre of St. Gilles which had greatly weakened the Royalist nobles.²⁵²

In May, twelve to fifteen hundred peasants of Saint-Didier, Dunières, and Sainte-Sigolène in the east of Velay under command of the two Royalist nobles, Hector de Fay (or de Maubourg), seigneur de Verchières, and Jean de Chaste, seigneur de Saint-Juste²⁵³, attacked the towns of Monistrol and Chamblas, and sacked these League towns and the surrounding countryside.²⁵⁴ Later, during the siege of Roche-en-Regnier by the Croquants (of Velay), the Vicomte of l'Estrange, Leaguer sénéchal of Le Puy, who had marched to help the Leaguers, suddenly fell upon them and killed several of the Croquants and took almost eighty prisoners.²⁵⁵ After this event, the rest of the Croquants' bands marched to the chateau of Breux and ransacked it.²⁵⁶ Pillaging of the Royalist castles and the increase of the peasant threat turned the Royalist nobles against the

for a piece of bread. “Pour Dieu! laissez m'en sortir un(g) pain ou un(g) demy-carton de blé pour nourrir mes povres enfans.” Jean Burel and Augustin Chassaing, *Mémoires de Jean Burel, bourgeois du Puy* (Le Puy-en-Velay: M.-P. Marchessov, 1875), 429.

²⁵⁰ Jean Burel narrated that in the beginning they consisted of two hundreds men who came together to protect themselves against the soldiers of both sides and refused to pay the taille. Jean Burel and Augustin Chassaing, *Mémoires de Jean Burel, bourgeois du Puy* (Le Puy-en-Velay: M.-P. Marchessov, 1875), 430. Francisque Mandet, *Histoire du Velay, Volume 5* (Velay: M.P. Marchessou, 1862), 414.

²⁵¹ Jean-Arnaud-Michel Arnaud, *Histoire du Velay, jusqu'à la fin du règne de Louis XV, Volume 2* (Le Puy: La Combe, 1816), 42.

²⁵² The massacre of Saint-Gilles happened when L'Estrange ambushed a group of the Royalist nobles and their knight and killed all (around 150 *gentilhommes*) Mandet, *Histoire du Velay*, 401-404. Arnaud, *Histoire du Velay*, 42.

²⁵³ Both nobles lost some of their relative in the massacre of Saint-Gilles.

²⁵⁴ Arnaud, *Histoire du Velay*, 43. Mandet, *Histoire du Velay*, 414-415.

²⁵⁵ Mandet, *Histoire du Velay*, 415.

²⁵⁶ Arnaud, *Histoire du Velay*, 46.

peasants. By the autumn of 1595, the seigneur de Chevières suppressed the revolt completely.²⁵⁷ The Croquants of Languedoc refused to pay the taille, and all kinds of the taxes, and there was solidarity among them against the nobility but they had never questioned the established order. They attacked the castles because they had hoped to restore the former order by removing the local oppressor seigneurs.

At the beginning of 1591, the peasants federation of the Campanelle in Comminges and Nébouzan, in the far southwest of Languedoc and along the foothills of the Pyrenees,²⁵⁸ organized their *campenères* or conferences.²⁵⁹ The burden of taxes especially, its unequal character, the devastation of wars and brigandage, and the suppression by the nobility reactivated the rural league of Comminges for self-defense.²⁶⁰ In May 1591, the Parlement of Toulouse recorded that Frontignac, Sauveterre, Pointis, and the countryside around these towns had formed a league that threatened all towns which had refused to join them. In October, we read that the people of Céadous, Charlas, Montgailhard, Lespugue, St. Pierre du Bois, Saint-Loup, Anizan and other villages formed a syndicate.²⁶¹ The roots of this movement were coming back to the past because the rural league of Comminges was active from mid-century.²⁶² However, the Marquis de Villars and the Parliament of Toulouse approved these confederations (23 October and 4 September.

²⁵⁷ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 131 Mandet, *Histoire du Velay*, 416-417.

²⁵⁸ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 277.

²⁵⁹ According to a document from the archive of Muret, the self-defense and lack of the natural barriers against the enemies were the reason for the formation of the Campanère League. Loutchitzky, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la réforme et de la ligue*, 204.

²⁶⁰ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 127.

²⁶¹ Jean Lestrade, *Les Huguenots en Comminges : documents inédits / publiés pour la Société historique de Gascogne* (Paris: H. Champion, 1900), 205.

²⁶² In 1568, the syndic of the villages of Comminges gained official status. In 1582, the villagers rose against the tax collectors and conscription by the sénéchal of Toulouse. The high taxes and the outlawing of the soldiers caused some of the villagers to convert to Protestantism and some other actively helped the Huguenots. In 1586, the towns and villages around Toulouse organized a defensive league against the soldiers. Very soon many towns and local nobility joined them. In 1587, the league was completely under the command of the duke of Joyeuse and nobles lost their primary local authority. Lestrade, *Les Huguenots en Comminges*, 245.

1591) but indubitably for the nobility and upper urban bourgeois, as we could see in the description of the *capitouls*²⁶³ of Toulouse, they were warmongers and troublemakers who were determined to destroy the nobility and occupy the fortified towns under the false pretext of repressing banditry.²⁶⁴ The continuation of the wars contributed greatly to the militarization of the rural area and this was the most dangerous issue that could threaten the nobility as a class. Due to the peasant threat, the authorities of the Toulouse municipality changed their conduct in 1592 and asked the Marquis de Villars to suppress the peasants.

From the beginning, the rural leaders of the movement tried to convince the Marquis de Villars and the Parlement of Toulouse that their obedience to the social order and the origin and reason for their league was justified on the basis of self-defense against the brigandage and outlaws.²⁶⁵ As a case in point, the peasants claimed that they would allow the Catholic soldiers to pass through their villages, but if they committed to any illegal act the local rural militia would react against them.²⁶⁶ On the 14th of December 1592, the truce of Languedoc between the dukes of Montmorency and Joyeuse caused the *campanère* League to seek allies among the Huguenots of Foix to resist the Catholic nobility.²⁶⁷ In January 1592, the estates of Commines hastily assembled and issued a decree, banning all pro-Huguenots leagues and country folk militias which had not been approved by the Parlement or by the lieutenant-general.

²⁶³ Arnaud, *Histoire des Protestants du Dauphiné aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 362-366. Auguste Prudhomme, *Histoire de Grenoble* (Grenoble: A. Gratier, 1888), 396-397. Terrebasse, *Histoire et généalogie de la famille de Maugiron, en Viennois*, 127

²⁶⁴ A letter by the *capitoul* of Parlement of Toulouse to the Marquis de Villars. Loutchitzky, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la réforme et de la ligue*, 234-235.

²⁶⁵ The special name of the leagues indicates from which classes they recruited their members. The villages wanted to settle their affairs without the help of leaders of castellanies. Their leaders solely came out of the peasant class. Loutchitzky, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la réforme et de la ligue*, 204.

²⁶⁶ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 128.

²⁶⁷ Loutchitzky, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la réforme et de la ligue*, 212.

Eventually, two currents emerged among the *campanères*. One was the radical peasant-based pro-Royalist and pro-Huguenot faction which persisted in its refusal to pay *taille* up to 1594. In November 1593, the *Croquants et de la Conférence (campanère)*, as were called, jointly with the Huguenots of Isle-Jourdain and Vic-Fezensac and their surrounded villages pillaged the churches and seized the ecclesiastical properties in St. Bernard.²⁶⁸ The other current was a conciliatory pro-League group, with a Spanish ultra-Catholic approach, under the command of Jean (Jehan) Désirat, a rural merchant and delegate of village Céadous. He wished to reduce the peasants' suffering through cooperation with the upper classes.²⁶⁹ From 1593, the *campanère* League gradually came under the sway of the nobility and towns. By Désirat's influence, the *campanère* League joined the estate of Muret and agreed to respect church property and the rights of nobility (*seigneurs justiciers*), and to pay their taxes faithfully.²⁷⁰ Subsequently, they joined the troop of the Holy League under command of the Marquis de Villars.²⁷¹ However, the peasants never abandoned their demands. In March 1594, Désirat demanded, in order to lower the *taille*, that the notables of Muret sign a truce with the Protestants and confiscate the church revenues to pay the troops.²⁷² Meanwhile, he attended the estate of Comminges with a guarantee of safe-conduct to answer why the villagers were still in arms. He complained, asking why the villagers alone had to pay the expenses of the garrisons' maintenance, which were in the towns and protected them.²⁷³ The *Campanère* refusal to pay the *taille* raised the nobles' hostility and the Estates of

²⁶⁸ Corbeyran d'Aure and Adrien d'Aure were two local nobles who organized a united attack between the Huguenots and the Croquants to St. Bertrand. After being well paid by Corbeyran d'Aure, the local notables freed their town from their occupation. Guillaume Mauran and Gaston Balencie, *Sommaire description du pays et comté de Bigorre : chronique inédite* (Paris: H.Champion, 1887), 145-146. Lestrade, *Les Huguenots en Comminges*, 369.

²⁶⁹ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc, Volume 1* (Paris: S. E. V. P. E. N, 1966), 402.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 403.

²⁷¹ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 131.

²⁷² Lestrade, *Les Huguenots en Comminges*, 211.

²⁷³ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 126-130. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 200-202. Lestrade, *Les Huguenots En Comminges*, 283-289.

Muret against this rural militias.²⁷⁴ They issued a decree and decreed punishments for all town magistrates and *gentilhommes* who associated with the *Campanère* League.²⁷⁵ Finally, this pressure forced the *Campanères* to submit to the League and it was the end of their movement.²⁷⁶

3.4. Conclusion

The first wave of the peasant revolts during the religious wars happened in the south. Apart from that, the peasant revolts were all either uprisings by the peasantry or characterized by an urban-countryside union, economic reasons such as the anti-fiscal and anti-taxes issues were the main reasons for all uprisings. The peasants revolted because the peasant economy failed to continue under the wars and seigneurial pressures anymore. To demonstrate, the main body of the documents, such as Jean (la) Rouvière's petition or Jean du Bourg's grievance, were concerned with economic issues and the desire of the peasantry for reducing taxes and seigniorial impositions. Moreover, in Provence we see that the Razats chased down the tax-collectors and the peasants of the Ligue de Montélimar refused to pay the *taille* anymore. The revolts in Languedoc such as the revolt of Haute-Uzège, or the Compagnies de Croquants of Velay, or federations of the Haut-Biterrois and the Campanères of Campanelle all were anti-tax revolts. The common request of all was the remission of the *taille* and the reduction of seigneurial impositions.

The economic and social role of the nobility as the surplus extractor class with military obligations made them the subject of the peasantry's hate and fuelled the anti-noble and anti-military spirit of the revolts. The Cabans revolted against the Porcellets and the Razats against the Carsistes that were both aristocratic bands. In Vivarais we see that the peasants attacked the garrisons and soldiers and had as their declared aim the destruction of the noble castles. The

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 210. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 200.

²⁷⁵ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 278.

²⁷⁶ Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc*, 402-403. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 278.

Chaperons-sans-cordon had the same aims after their meetings at Ailhon and Choumerac, while the Croquants of Languedoc intended to destroy the castles and manors. This trend was mutual and the nobility saw the rebellious peasants as their enemy. To exemplify, the nobility condemned Jean Serve as somebody who wished to destroy the social order, while the *capitouls* of Toulouse declared that the *Campanères* were the enemy of the nobility. In her report about the situation in Dauphiné and Vivarais to the king, Catherine de Medici pointed out that there was an intense hostility between the nobility and the peasants.

The peasant revolts happened with the eruption of the religious wars, but there is no document shows that the religious issues and anticlericalism were the main reasons for the revolts, however; it is possible the religious affiliations disguised or directed the peasant revolts. In Provence, religious issues such as governmental concessions to the Protestants increased tensions but was not a reason for the uprisings of the Cabans and the Razats. They attacked both the Catholic and Protestant nobles. The Chaperons-sans-cordon uprising united the catholic and protestant together or the Compagnies de Croquants of Velay paid less attention to the religious differences. Still, it occasionally happened that one religious affiliation conducted a revolt. As an exemple, at the assembly of Montélimar, Coste blamed the Protestant soldiers as the reason for the misfortune in the countryside; Innocent Gentillet encouraged the peasants of Valloire and Viennese to revolt against the Catholics. Among the *campanère of Campanelle*, there were two currents; the minority were against the church and the clergy, attacking their property, and the majority under the command of Désirat were ultra-Catholics who respected the church property and the rights of nobility.

The relationship between the classes was complicated in the peasant revolts in southern France. In these cases, we can see both hostile and cordial relation between the town and

countryside, between peasants and urban petty bourgeoisies. A peasant revolt is a disruption in the trend of the social order which can alter the urban-country relationship. Even in his analyses, Baron de Fourquevaux, the catholic governor of Narbonne, saw the outbreak of the wars, as clash between Catholicism and Protestantism or between the town (non-peasant) and the countryside (peasant).²⁷⁷ Traces of class struggle in the form of hostility between the oppressors and suppressed is detectable but it is impossible to reduce it to the fight between two specific classes such as between the peasantry and nobility. For example, it is not obvious that the first formations of the peasant leagues in Montélimar or Valence occurred in villages or in cities. In Dauphiné and Vivarais, this relationship had changed so many times, but obviously, the lower classes in towns found more solidarity with peasants than with the upper merchant and oligarch classes. As well, among the Razats representatives were some nobles. The revolts of Vivarais and Dauphiné were the union between the urban artisans and the peasantry, or between the small towns and the countryside, aimed against the upper urban classes and the nobility. Jean Serve united the Chaperon-sans-cordon with the inhabitants of Romans. Jacques Colas did the same in Montélimar while the inhabitants of the Haut-Biterrois formed a self-defense league with the villagers who surrounded them. The revolts of Provence had less anti-urban aspects, but we should not forget that both military-noble bands in the region were supported by the big urban centers.

In short, the revolt of Vivarais was an extreme case of the local union between the urban and countryside elites against the fiscal policies and breakdown of the regional political system. Admittedly, the economic exploitation of the peasants and the long-term debt of their rural commune had a significant influence on the revolt but was not the main driving force. The revolt of Romans saw the reconciliation of the town and countryside to fight against the extra-fiscal

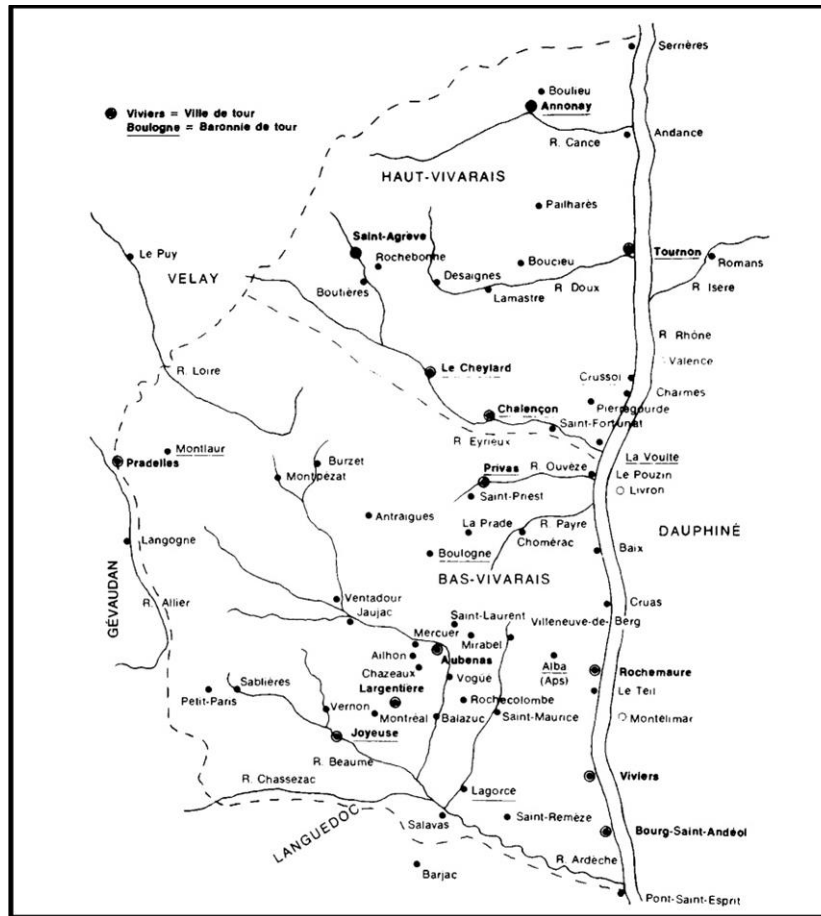
²⁷⁷ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 236.

burdens and their applicators. The Croquants of Velay was mostly a tax-riot against the nobility and bourgeoisie rather than a class war. About the *campanère* League, the decline of the royal authority, the private wars of the noble factions, and the brigandage by the robber barons all caused this social upheaval. However, the aims of the revolt in the Pyrenees never went so far as to raise questions about the foundation of the social hierarchy.



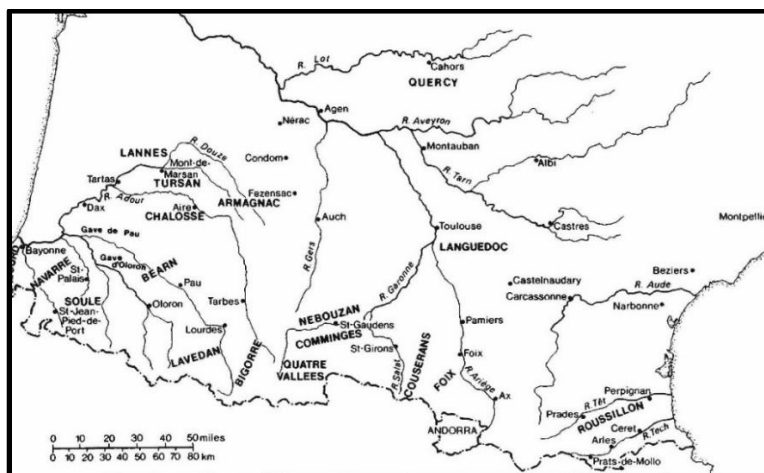
Map 3. The peasant revolts in the southwest

Source: Holt, Mack P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



Map 4. Vivarais

Source: Salmon, J. H. M. *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early Modern France*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1987.



Map 5. Pyrenees

Source: Salmon, J. H. M. *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early Modern France*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Chapter IV: Northern and Eastern France

(Second Wave)

*“If our princes of the League, do not soon vouchsafe to grant peace, everyone will take up arms”*²⁷⁸

Jacques Carorguy

4.1. Normandy

In the late 1570s, Normandy was on the verge of the wide popular uprising.²⁷⁹ In 1579, six hundred angry peasants attacked Caen and refused to pay the *taille* to the *élus*. At the same time in Martragny, a *bailliage* of Caen, peasants revolted and attacked the sergeants, soldiers, and tax collectors.²⁸⁰ A year after, a popular anti-gabelle riot burst in Caen and the peasants joined them and flocked the city and its countryside. Antoine Seguire who had been sent to Normandy for investigation reported that the increase of taxes, deep poverty and atrocities of the *gens de guerre* were the main reasons for agitation of the peasantry.²⁸¹ These riots and revolts paved the way for the famous Gautiers movement.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ “*Mais tout cela ne servoit de rien : qui faiet croire que sy noz princes de la Ligue ne veullent accorder bientost la paix, chascun prandra les armes*” A quote by Jacques Carorguy. Jacques Carorguy and Edmond Bruwaert, *Mémoires de Jacques Carorguy, greffier de Bar-sur-Seine, 1582-1595* (Paris: A. Picard, 1880), 158. The translation in Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 122.

²⁷⁹²⁷⁹ In the west, in Cotentin and Avranches, there was a general wave of anti-fiscal revolts. In 1582, In Abbeville in Picardy, the peasants were arrested by the council of the town because they refused to pay the *gabelle*.

²⁸⁰ Jules Auguste Lair, *Histoire du parlement de Normandie depuis sa translation à Caen, au mois de juin 1589, jusqu'à son retour à Rouen, en avril 1594* (Caen: A. Hardel, 1861), 21. Guy Lemarchand et al., *Féodalisme, société et Révolution française: études d'histoire moderne, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Caen: Comité régional d'histoire de la Révolution (Haute-Normandie), 2000), 143.

²⁸¹ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 88.

²⁸² Gautiers means the men of the forest, the term *gault/gaut* means forest (*bois*), which derived from the Celtic terms like *coillt*, *coët*, *goëd*. Henri Martin, *Histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789, Volume 10* (Paris: Furne, 1860), 149-150. Gaston Le Hardy, *Histoire du protestantisme en Normandie depuis son origine jusqu'à la publication de l'Edit de Nantes* (Caen: E. Le. Gost-Clérissé, 1869), 297. There are different

The Gautiers was the first and foremost rural revolt in the west in the 1580s. The center of this ultra-catholic revolt was in the east of Lisieux, near the towns of Vimoutiers, Bernay, and La Chapelle-Geuthier.²⁸³ In this region, the living condition had gotten worse and peasant economy had been disturbed when the new fiscal policy (the new tax on the salt) of the Royalists, which had been urged by the Caen's merchant, was introduced in the region.²⁸⁴ The angry peasants began to revolt after a woman from the village of La Chapelle-Gautier was raped by soldiers, although contemporary chronicles from the time gave divergent underlying motivations for the revolt. According to Enrico Caterino Davila, the peasants rose against the soldiery to defend themselves.²⁸⁵ Based on the Palma Cayet's²⁸⁶ account they rebelled against the *taille*.²⁸⁷ Whatever their reasons were for the revolt, politically they did not accept the Protestant King and joined eagerly with the forces of the League. Therefore, during 1588-89, the Leaguers encountered little resistance in Normandy due to the cooperation of the villages which saw them as a way to ending the war.²⁸⁸

versions of their names, the *Gottiers* in Simon Goulart and Claude-Pierre Goujet, *Mémoires de la Ligue: contenant les événements les plus remarquables depuis 1576, jusqu'à la paix accordée entre le roi de France & le roi d'Espagne, en 1598, Volume 3* (Amsterdam: Arkstée & Merkus, 1758), 544. The *Gautiers* in Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 686.

²⁸³ The name of the revolt also coined by the name of the main village in this area. Henrico Caterino Davila, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de plus mémorable sous le regne de quatre rois, François 2. Charles 9. Henry 3. & Henry 4. surnommé Le Grand, iusques à la paix de Veruins inclusiuement.*, trans. L. Baudoin (Paris: Rocolet, 1666), 63.

²⁸⁴ Similarly, their organization was like the Croquants. For example, their alarm was the sound of *tocsin*. By hearing it, everyone urged to leave his work and took his weapon and rush to the captain of the village. Amable Floquet, *Histoire du privilège de Saint Romain en vertu duquel le chapitre de la cathédrale de Rouen délivrait anciennement un meurtrier tous les ans, le jour de l'ascension* (Rouen: Le Grand, 1833), 436-437. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 383.

²⁸⁵ He was an Italian diplomat whose "*Historia delle guere civili di Francia*" is one of the best accounts about the religious wars in France.

²⁸⁶ He was a historian and translator who wrote about the wars of Henri IV. His book "*Chronologie novennaire, histoire des guerres de Henri IV de 1589 à 1598*" is one of the first accounts about the revolt of Gautiers.

²⁸⁷ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 278.

²⁸⁸ In his book, Thou gives significant account about the Gautiers and how they were always ready to leave their farms and work with hearing the ring of the *tocsin*. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle de Jacques-Auguste de Thou: avec la suite par Nicolas Rigault; les mémoires de la vie de l'auteur. ; Un recueil de pièces concernant sa personne & ses ouvrages* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1740), 437-438.

In the beginning (from 1587 to 1589), the Gautiers' aim was to protect their villages and properties against the brigandage. Gradually their idea spread into other regions such as Bernay and Vimoutiers.²⁸⁹ The Gautier movement was first initiated by the local big ploughmen, then the local clergies (in this sense the Gautiers were less against the clergies than the Croquants) and finally local pro-League gentry.²⁹⁰ The Gautiers joined the League, because in their opinion the king was to blame for their calamities.²⁹¹

The increase of the Leaguer power in Normandy was dangerous for the Royalists especially after that the Gautiers joined the League, because in their opinion the king was to blame for their calamities.²⁹² In April 1589, Duc de Montpensier, the new governor of Normandy by the Royalist, arrived at Alençon, where he promised to reduce the *taille* to temper the disaffection of the *plat*

²⁸⁹ János M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke, *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Workshop on Peasant Studies*, Univ. of British Columbia, 1982 (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), 112. Based on some contemporary accounts, they were around 16000 farmers, however; modern historian such as Henri Martin believed it should be lesser than it. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle de Jacques-Auguste de Thou: avec la suite par Nicolas Rigault; les mémoires de la vie de l'auteur. ; Un recueil de pièces concernant sa personne & ses ouvrages* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1740), 438. Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 454. Henri Martin, *Histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789, Volume 10* (Paris: Furne, 1860), 149.

²⁹⁰ According to De Thou, despite these nobles who joined the rebellious peasants, the revolt kept its anti-seigneurial element and the nobles of Normandy saw them as main enemies. These nobles were the counts of Brissac, Mouy, Maillot, Pierrecourt, Longchamp, governor of Lisieux and the barons of d'Echauffou, Tubœuf, Roquenval and Beaulieu and many other *gentilhommes* of the League. They gathered troops for the League, around Laigle and Argentan. Parishes such as Saint Sulpice-on-Rille and of Chandeï, in Perche, were among the villages in the league, whose armed inhabitant desolated province. Floquet, *Histoire du privilège de Saint Romain en vertu duquel le chapitre de la cathédrale de Rouen délivrait anciennement un meurtrier tous les ans, le jour de l'ascension*, 437.

²⁹¹ Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 686.

²⁹² Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 686. In the beginning they had just local skirmishes, like their conflicts with Sieur of Plessis-Longuy who was against the rural militia and in one attack he had killed some parishes' captains. Finally, he was murdered with his followers by the angry peasants when he was visiting Chandeï. However, his brother La Manselière attacked the parish and killed and imprisoned some peasants. The rest of the inhabitants had to leave their villages and escaped to Rouen. Floquet, *Histoire du privilège de Saint Romain en vertu duquel le chapitre de la cathédrale de Rouen délivrait anciennement un meurtrier tous les ans, le jour de l'ascension*, 438-39.

pays.²⁹³ It was the policy of the pro-league gentry to use the Gautiers' army, under the command of one local old soldier called Vaumartel²⁹⁴, for their purposes against the Royalists.²⁹⁵ Already, on his way to Alençon, Montpensier learned that the troops of the League, under the command of Comte de Brissac with the groups of rebellious peasants, was marching towards Falaise. Brissac hoped the Royalist army would retreat but instead Montpensier laid siege to Falaise.²⁹⁶ Therefore, the league troops that had gathered around L'Aigle and Argentan marched on Falaise.²⁹⁷ In the battle of Falaise in mid-April, the *ligueurs* were defeated by the army of Montpensier and the Duke decided to crush the peasants who had been encamped in Hiesmois and Argentan.²⁹⁸ Jean d'Hemery Sieur de Villers, marechal de camp of the Royalist army, who knew the peasants did not have military experience, was assigned to the mission.²⁹⁹ The Gautiers' villages fell one after another. Odet de Matignon comte de Thorigny attacked Gautiers' camps in the villages of Pierrefitte-en-Cinglais, Villers, and Commeaux, slaughtering (*grand carnage*) 3000 people and taken prisoner another 1000 of these "inexperienced rag-tag fellows".³⁰⁰ Among the prisoners, there were some thirty *gentilshommes* and many priests. The priests were the enthusiastic supporters of the Gautiers, but unlike them, the nobles had not been loyal to the peasants and soon

²⁹³ Robert Langlois Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie, 1588-1594, avec de nombreux documents inédits* (Paris: A. Aubry, 1862), 19.

²⁹⁴ The head of the Gautiers were Sieur Laviète, and several captains under him, including one named La Planche, a former soldier, and a marshal named Nicolas Eulde. Floquet, *Histoire du privilège de Saint Romain en vertu duquel le chapitre de la cathédrale de Rouen délivrait anciennement un meurtrier tous les ans, le jour de l'ascension*, 438. Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 686.

²⁹⁵ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 278.

²⁹⁶ Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 687.

²⁹⁷ Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 21-22.

²⁹⁸ Gaston Le Hardy, *Histoire du protestantisme en Normandie depuis son origine jusqu'à la publication de l'Edit de Nantes* (Caen: E. Le. Gost-Clérissé, 1869), 316-317.

²⁹⁹ Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle de Jacques-Auguste de Thou: avec la suite par Nicolas Rigault; les mémoires de la vie de l'auteur. ; Un recueil de pièces concernant sa personne & ses ouvrages* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1740), 439.

³⁰⁰ Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 23.

abandoned them. Brissac just watched the battle from a hill close to the battlefield, Longchamp, and other *gentilshommes* left them on the way to Bernay when Montpensier pursued the Gautiers. Vimoutiers' peasants did not resist and the Duke forgave them on the condition that they return to their farms. Bernay, where there was a fortified town, however, was able to resist for a while longer. The first attack against this fortified town was defended by the Gautiers, but with the second attack, the army of the Duke entered the town and sacked and burned half of it.³⁰¹ After the fall of Bernay, Montpensier forgave the rebellious peasants with the mitigation of two priests.³⁰² In the Gautiers uprising, we see the devastation of the farms and production, caused the peasant to revolt against the nobility, however; in the midst of their skirmishes, the Gautiers were came under the control of the nobility and were directed in favor of nobles' interests.

The continuation of the war and the atrocities of the both sides further deteriorated the living condition of Normandy and destroyed its economy. Both the Royalists and the League competed with each other in pulling resources from the peasants. After the wiping out of the Gautiers, Montpensier demanded food and munitions from Lower Normandy, while the League took much of the tax revenues.³⁰³ The over-extraction and the non-ending depredation of the *gens de guerre* meant that most of the parishes could not collect their benefices, laborers, and the *taille* anymore.³⁰⁴ On the other hand, the fate of the Gautiers had a considerable effect on the social

³⁰¹ Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 687.

³⁰² Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 23. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 279. János M. Bak, Gerhard Benecke, *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Workshop on Peasant Studies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 112-113. Enrico Caterino Davila and Baudoin, *Histoire des guerres civiles de France, contenant tout ce qui s'est passé de mémorable en France jusqu'à la paix de Vervins, depuis le règne de François II, Volume 2* (Paris: Rocolet, 1657), 688.

³⁰³ Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 23.

³⁰⁴ To exemplify, the base of the Leaguers was in the chateau de Chantelou where Montgomery's regiments pillaged whole Contentin. After these marauds the royal officials could not collect the *taille* anymore. Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 95-96. Société de l'histoire de Normandie. Auteur du texte, "Extraits d'une Information sur les ravages causés par les gens de guerre dans les paroisses où les Chanoines et les Chapelains de la cathédrale de Rouen

structure, destroying the coalition between the peasants and other classes and triggering new peasant revolts such as the Francs-Museaux and the Châteaux-Verts.³⁰⁵ In 1590, the occupation of Mortagne by the Royalists led to the mobilization of Le Perche's peasantry whose leader, Chenet-Hayot, had organized a peasant militia at Ronnel and converted the village into a fortified camp. In turn, the Royalists attacked the peasant camp with 1500 soldiers and soon crushed the resistance of the villagers. While some of the peasants could escape, most of them were slaughtered by the Royalist and the areas were plundered.³⁰⁶ In this circumstance the peasant movements could not maintain itself and faded away as soon as their emergence. The aforementioned peasant revolts were more radical than the predecessors and they refused to recognize the authority of either the League or the Royalist.³⁰⁷

Furthermore, the remaining factions of Gautiers gathered to form a new peasant band named the Lipans in Essay in the *bailliage* of Alençon.³⁰⁸ Aubigné was the only contemporary

possédaient des bénéfices (1594), " in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Normandie* (Roen: Ch. Métérie, 1880), 287-94. In a letter from a tax collector from Falais, the main reasons for the unrest was due to the resistance against the taxes because of the great misery which had been brought to them by the war. Likewise, he talked about the condition of the peasants around Falais who did have even enough food to eat. Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie*, 94-96.

³⁰⁵ Jean de Lagny, *Satyre Menippée De La Vertu Du Catholicon D'Espagne; Et De La Tenue Des Etats De Paris* [by P. Le Roy, J. Gillot, J. Passerat, N. Rapin, F. Chrestien and P. Pithon]. (Le Supplement Du Catholicon, Ou Nouvelles Des Regions De La Lune, Où Se Voyent Depeints Les ... Faicts D'armes De Feu Jean De Lagny Sur Aucunes Bourgades De La France.) (1593), 24. Société de l'histoire de Normandie. Auteur du texte, " *Documents historiques: pillages de gens de guerre, 1589-93,* " in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Normandie* 10 (Roen: Ch. Métérie, 1909), 95-96.

³⁰⁶ Louis Joseph Fret, *Antiquités et chroniques percheronnes: ou recherches sur l'histoire civile, religieuse, monumentale, politique et littéraire de l'ancienne province du Perche, et pays limitrophes*, Volume 3 (Perche: Glaçon, 1840), 115-116. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 112.

³⁰⁷ For instance, Francs-Museaux who reacted against the hostilities and plundering of the League nobles in Normandy, erupted around Senlis in 1591 and for two years resisted against the League. Adhelm Bernier, *Monuments inédits de l'histoire de France, 1400-1600* (Paris: Joubert, 1835), 2222, 252. Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV*, 168.

³⁰⁸ The reason for this name is not very clear. It is possible it has the same root with the term *Lippé* and *Lippeur* (gourmand, greedy). Association normande, *Annuaire des cinq départements de la Normandie* (Caen: l'Association normande, 1895), 74. Lair, *Histoire du parlement de Normandie*, 110. Pierre Joseph Odolant-Desnos, *Mémoires historiques sur la ville d'Alençon et sur ses seigneurs: Précédés d'une dissertation sur les peuples qui ont habité anciennement le Duché d'Alençon & le Comté du Perche, & sur l'état ancien de ces pays* (Alençon: J. Z. Malassis, 1787), 353.

historian who talked about them as successors of the Gautiers and as outlaw bands who committed to robbery (*les brigandages*).³⁰⁹ Very soon the rebellious peasants came under the command of Jean Mallard, sieur de la Motte and captain of Essey Castle, who was outraged by the League's action in his territory.³¹⁰ Mallard was one of the best lieutenants of Pierre Rouxel de Médavy appointed bailiff of Alençon by the Duke de Mayenne, in 1589.³¹¹ The occupation of his castle, which had belonged to Mallard's family since the time of Charles VII, by René de Saint-Denis baron de Hertré, governor of Alençon by Henri IV, initiated Mallard to rebel.³¹² With his rebellious peasants, he attacked the regions of Conimeaux and Pierrefilte, near Argentan and managed to enter Essay. In the absence of the castle's captain, the residence of the castle who had sympathy for the peasants opened the doors. With the castle as their base, the peasants ravaged throughout the regions of Sées, Alençon, Bellême, and Domfront. These activities determined Montpensier to send Hertré and Jean-Antoine de Saint-Simon, Baron Courtomer, governor of Argentan, to capture the castle.³¹³ Finally, after breaking the resistance of the peasants, Hertré recaptured the castle, pillaged, and razed it to the ground.³¹⁴ Henri IV forgave Mallard and reinstated him as the captain of Essay and Lieutenant Rouxel de Médavy was appointed as the governor to Verneuil. With this event, the Lipans disappeared from the history.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Agrippa d'Aubigné, *L'histoire universelle du sieur d'Aubigné*, Volume 3 (Maille: par Jean Moussat, 1620), 267.

³¹⁰ Estaintot, *La Ligue en Normandie, 1588-1594*, 145.

³¹¹ Jean-Jacques Gautier, *Histoire d'Alençon* (Alençon: Poulet-Malassis, 1805), 104-105.

³¹² Société des antiquaires de Normandie, *Mémoires de la Société des antiquaires de Normandie*, Volume 9 (London: Dulau, 1835), 31.

³¹³ F. Liard, *Histoire de Domfront ou recueil de nombreux documents sur Domfront depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours* (Domfront: F. Liard, 1864), 50.

³¹⁴ Odolant-Desnos, *Mémoires historiques sur la ville d'Alençon et sur ses seigneurs*, 353.

³¹⁵ Association normande, *Annuaire des cinq départements de la Normandie* (Caen: l'Association normande, 1895), 73-75. Odolant-Desnos, *Mémoires historiques sur la ville d'Alençon et sur ses seigneurs*, 352-353. Jean-Jacques Gautier, *Histoire d'Alençon* (Alençon: Poulet-Malassis, 1805), 148-149. Paul Piolin, *Histoire de l'église du Mans, Volume 5* (Lanier: Julien, 1861), 580.

4.2. Brittany

Before the religious war, Brittany had a long prosperous and peaceful period and never had a peasant revolts during the sixteenth century. From the 1590 to 1595, the *bocages* of Cornouaille were the center of the peasant resistance. Destruction of the civil war and the involvements of the foreign armies, noble brigands and partisans, brought up the highly chaotic situation in Brittany that drove the Catholic peasants to retaliatory measures.³¹⁶ Moreover, Brittany had peculiar social and political conditions. The seigneurial system had been less subject to change than in other parts of France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however; the process of reconstruction of the big estates had been begun in Brittany but was not very obvious. The province was so overpopulated with very unevenly wealth distribution. Extremely rich nobles with their big fiefs, like the county of Penthievre, live with the peasant gentlemen who were bankrupted *noblesse du race* with a life like the peasants. In the towns and countryside of Brittany, Calvinism was not successful and the majority of population remained in their old faith.³¹⁷

The revolt of *bocages* of Brittany were a belated reaction and answer to the destruction of their farms and households due to the decades of war. The rebellious Britons were ultra-catholic pro-League peasants and were supported by few gentlemen priests against the supporters of Henri IV. Notwithstanding the peasants forced to support the League, but they detested equally all nobility and towns, both the Royalists and the League, and determined to exterminate the brigandage of the nobles by attacking their castles.³¹⁸ According to Moreau, *conseiller-clerc* at the provincial court of Quimper who witnessed most of the events, the *paysantaille*, as he called them,

³¹⁶ Ibid, 280.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 133.

³¹⁸ According Montmartin, the misery of war forced the peasants to join the League. Louis Gregoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne* (Paris: J.B.Dumoulin, 1856), 284. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 121. Auguste Poirson, *Histoire du regne de Henri IV, Volume 4* (Paris: Hachette et C.ie, 1866), 593. Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, 199, 386. Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV*, 168.

were determined to slaughter both the nobility, particularly the Royalists, and even the military leaders. He also added that the rebellious peasants had aimed to establish a new society with the same dignity for everyone and cleaned their community from any kind of hierarchy.³¹⁹ This attitude even crystalized in their egalitarian slogan, “*Holl Vretonet tud gentil*” that means “all Britons are gentlemen”.³²⁰ Moreover, due to overpopulation in some areas, the size of the peasant tenures reduced to such an extent that the productivity of the farms was often insufficient.³²¹ Additionally, the destruction of the peasant economy partially was due to the military activities of the nobility and their captains. In all, these reasons turned the peasant against the nobility and to lesser degree against the bourgeoisie.

In upper Brittany from 1590, the peasants participated in the war against the Royalists even more than other regions in Brittany. In November 1589, a band of outraged peasants, who lived around Tréguier, attacked this Royalist town and completely ransacked and destroyed it and took all that fell into their hands.³²² Several months later, the peasants attacked the Royalist Chateau of Kerovzère³²³ not far from Saint-Pol-de-Léon, between Sibiril and Cléder, which belonged to a Royalist noble named Pierre de Boiséon de Coetnizan son of Guy de Rieux, sieur de Châteauneuf. Pierre de Boiséon was hated by the peasants because he was a cruel person (*homme vaillant mais cruel*) who frequently pillaged the *plat pays*.³²⁴ On the 19th of November, 1590, the

³¹⁹ Gregoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne*, 168.

³²⁰ Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 174. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 384. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 112. Louis-Guillaume Moreau, *Le Brigand de la Cornouailles, chronique bretonne sous la Ligue, par Louis Moreau, Volume 1* (Paris: Arnauld de Vresse, 1860), 24.

³²¹ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 279.

³²² Croix, *L'âge d'or de la Bretagne, 1532-1675* (Rennes: Éd. Ouest-France, 1993), 64. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 175. Alain Anatole de Barthélemy, *Choix de documents inédits sur l'histoire de la Ligue en Bretagne* (Nantes: Société des bibliophiles bretons et de l'histoire de Bretagne, 1880), 27.

³²³ Kerouzeré in Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 174. Kerouzeré in Louis Gregoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne* (Paris: J.B.Dumoulin, 1856), 165. Kerovzère in Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 112.

³²⁴ The cruelty of nobles showed itself already, when the sieur de Kergommard in union with other Royalist nobles defeated an army of three or four thousands peasants and killed them by hanging the rebellious peasants from the

united bands of peasants from different parishes attacked and captured the castle and killed, expelled and took some nobles as prisoners.³²⁵ A Royalist column under the command of the Calvinist captains Yves du Liscouët and René de Grézille, seigneur de La Tremblaye, marched from Tréguier to save the castle. However, they came too late to save the castle and instead changed course, finding a new aim for attack in the south: the rich town Carhaix with its prosperous market and inns.³²⁶ Carhaix did not have a strong enough garrison to protect itself from these invaders and was subsequently sacked and its citizens massacred. The cruelty of the Royalist and their intention to continue their depredations further agitated peasants in all parishes.³²⁷ Under the leadership of an old noble soldier named Lanridon, peasants from many parishes, who had assembled by the sound of the tocsin bells, took up arms and marched without order and discipline toward Carhaix. The nobles, using the peasant's lack of training to their advantage, the nobles were able to fake a retreat and lure the eager peasants into a trap. When Lanridon, who understood the strategy of the nobles, tried to stop the peasants, but they accused him of cowardice and threatened to kill him.³²⁸ The result of the battle of Carhaix was a massacre of the peasants and

trees. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 210. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 87.

³²⁵ With paying the high ransoms, Duc de Mercœur released some of these nobles. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 86-91.

Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 174-177. Louis Gregoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne* (Paris: J.B.Dumoulin, 1856), 165.

³²⁶ Two months before this event, Liscouët and Tremblaye ransacked the town for the first time. For this reason, they were quite familiar with the geopolitics condition of the town. They choose a special day when there was the wedding of the daughter of the town clerk; all the notables of the area were present, displaying their gems and jewelry they hid since the war. At midnight, the Royalist noble with 500 soldiers attacked the city. The wealthy inhabitants, who hoped to ransom their freedom, were captured, others fled; rich to the nearby cities, the poor to the forests. Carhaix became deserted and uninhabited after it. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 92-94.

Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 177.

³²⁷ As an example, the peasants had an unsuccessful attack to the château de Kergoët, where located in Le Moyne de Trévigny, and belonged to sieur de Kerjolys. However, the lord of the chateau who had already been aware about the attack, repelled it. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 177.

³²⁸ Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 101.

their leader by the Royalist army.³²⁹ An additional band of peasant which arrived a day after the battle fared the same fate. A third band of peasants, when they heard about the fate of their fellows before them, retreated and appeased their fury by killing the nobles who they had in their custody.³³⁰ Carhaix, thus, signaled the end to their utopic aspirations for a community with equality and without seigneurial jurisdiction and power hierarchy.³³¹

In lower Brittany, the peasant uprising was even wider and more violent because the region was the site of a longstanding war. In September 1590, a peasant band trapped and killed sixty local nobles at the Chateau of Roscanou near Quimper, who were gathered there for the wedding celebration of the baron de Kerlec'h.³³² All of the nobles who attended this event were killed, making it the first peasant massacre of the nobility in the sixteenth century Brittany. To restore order in the country, Philippe-Emmanuel de Lorraine, duc de Mercœur, sent out duc Brignou, cadet de Ploeuc, to Carhaix. At dawn, two hundred of his troops raided the villages, searched the houses and killed everyone they met. Then he himself came to lower Brittany to end the siege of Hennebont. The year 1590 ended with a victory for the Leaguers and the supremacy of Mercœur in Brittany.³³³

³²⁹ Louis Grégoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne* (Nantes, 1856), 166. Pierre François Guyot Desfontaines, *Histoire des ducs de Bretagne et des différentes révolutions arrivées dans cette province, Volume 2* (Nion: Clousier, 1739), 407.

³³⁰ The hatred towards the social hierarchy showed itself when the peasants of Châteauneuf-du-Faou who marched to Carhaix, learned about the peasant massacre on their way to the city. They got angry and flocked their leader a certain Penanguer-Kerochent and killed him and threw his body into a pit deep. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 101-103.

³³¹ "Et en faisant de même disaient-ils, ils seront tous égaux sans que l'un n'eût aucun pouvoir ni juridiction sur l'autre." Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 101.

³³² Robert du Chastel de Kerlec'h « l'un des braves et beaux galants de Bretagne » who married to his cousin Claude du Chastel. The bride had the Royalist sentiments which had triggered the peasants to revolt. The alarm of tocsin spread everywhere in the area when the peasants heard an army (who were relatives and friends of the bride) of Royalist came to the region. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les Guerres de la Ligue, et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 108-112. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 180. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 114. *La Ligue en Bretagne* (Paris: J.B.Dumoulin, 1856), 167.

³³³ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 281. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 180-181.

Moreover, the Briton peasants suffered under two other forces. One was the presence of foreign armies in the region such as the Spanish, under the command of Don Juan Del Águila y Arellano, and the English troops of Sir John Norris's army.³³⁴ While the peasants hated both armies, it was only Sir John Norris' who the peasants fought against, while the catholic Spanish army was spared because of their religious affiliation. English army forces, which had occupied the town of Dieppe in Normandy, soon sought to expand to the island of Île-de-Bréhat because Dieppe was not large enough to contain them.³³⁵ However, after landing in the town of Paimpol, the English army was faced with a peasant uprising.³³⁶ Another battle occurred ten months later at Lannion when the joined armies of Norris and Le Tremblaye defeated the mixed forces of the peasants and the league soldiers.³³⁷

In addition to the foreign army, the second force that the Briton peasants suffered under was the two brigand captains of Mercœur army who carried out attacks and pillaging campaigns. One was Anne de Sanzay, comte de la Magnanne, who was a Royalist initially, but then following disagreements with Olivier Pavyc, baron de Keralec, governor of Tréguier, changed to the League and began his destructive activities in 1591. Before joining the League in Brittany, he made the island of Noirmoutier his base for pillaging the villages and towns around it.³³⁸ In December 1593,

³³⁴ The Spanish came to Britany by request of Mercœur to protect him. Henri IV also asked the English forces to help him. Joséphine Bouché Baudry, La Fontenelle, *le Ligueur et le brigandage en Basse-Bretagne pendant La Ligue (1574-1602)* (Nantes: Librairie ancienne et moderne, 1920), 203.

³³⁵ Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 199-200.

³³⁶ After the battle, by order of Sir John Norris, many peasants were hanged from the wings of mills as punishment. Joséphine Bouché Baudry, *La Fontenelle, le Ligueur et le brigandage en Basse-Bretagne pendant La Ligue (1574-1602)* (Nantes: Librairie ancienne et moderne, 1920), 204.

³³⁷ Joséphine Bouché Baudry, *La Fontenelle, le Ligueur et le brigandage en Basse-Bretagne pendant La Ligue (1574-1602)* (Nantes: Librairie ancienne et moderne, 1920), 205-206. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 281

³³⁸ Committing to robberies and killing brought him one year imprisonment at Bastille by order of Henri III. He was released by interceding of one of his friends, Sébastien de Rosmadec, baron de Molac. Joséphine Bouché Baudry, *La Fontenelle, le Ligueur et le brigandage en Basse-Bretagne pendant La Ligue (1574-1602)* (Nantes: Librairie ancienne et moderne, 1920), 48. Jean Du Tillet and Pierre Mettayer, *Recueil des roys de France, leurs couronne et maison.: Ensemble, le rang des grands de France* (A Paris: Chez Pierre Mettayer, 1618), 522.

with his followers, he attacked the small but rich commercial town of Le Faou at the harbor of Brest and pillaged it, house by house, for five days. Consequently, the local villagers were determined recapture the town and take their revenge; but without any weapons and leader, they were easily repelled leading to the massacre of seven hundred peasants.³³⁹ After his victory, lower Cornouaille was open and defenseless against Anne de Sanzay's subsequent pillaging campaigns. He fulfilled the plundering of Châteaulin by deceiving the local clergies and dignities. He was welcomed as a guest, but the next day the entire parishes of Dinéault, Châteaulin, Plomodiern, Plounévez, Quéménéven and Locronan had been plundered by his troops. According to Moreau, his expedition was finished after the killing of numerous peasants and locals.³⁴⁰

Guy or Gonyon Eder baron de la Fontanelle was the cause of another string of agitations and pillages in Brittany. He was from an old noble house from the chateau of Beaumanoir in Leslay, close to le Vieux-Bourg-Quintin, who terrorized the region by engaging in murders, rapes, massacres, and lootings.³⁴¹ He had been imprisoned by the inhabitants of Châteauneuf-du-Faou who rebelled against him in 1592, but was released by Mercœur, who wanted to take him to Craon. Subsequently, he was based at the chateau of Granec, which had already belonged to Vincent de Coëtanezre Comte de Pratmaria, for his assaults against the villages of Cornouaille. Soon after, seven or eight hundred angry peasants besieged the castle in one uprising. After ten days, however, Guy Eder spring an attack during the night, catching the peasants off guard, and attacked and slaughtered all of them within two hours. After reestablishing his base in the castle, he ravaged and devastated all regions around upper Cornouaille and the Léon. After learning about these

³³⁹ Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les guerres de la Ligue et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, 185-186.

³⁴⁰ According to the Moreau's account, 3000 persons were killed there. Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 294-296.

³⁴¹ *ibid*, 297.

events, Mercœur proceeded to attack and take the castle in September 1594 forcing Guy Eder elsewhere. However, he continued his activities in the lower region of Cornouaille ³⁴² by seizing new castles, but could not keep them for any long periods of time. In mid-June 1595, Guy Eder held a castle on the Tristan Island of Douarnenez. The new peasant uprising began when Guy demolished peasant houses in Douarnenez and Pouldavid to fortify the castle. The angry peasants appealed to Coëtanezre comte de Granec son of Comte de Pratmaria, from the local nobility, as their leader.³⁴³ The comte de Granec gathered around 2000 "common" men (peasants from neighboring parishes around Quimper, Douarnenez, Pont l'Abbé, Pont-Croix, Châteaulin, and Châteauneuf) at Plogastel-Saint-Germain.³⁴⁴ This poorly organized and ill-equipped *paysantaille* was surprised by the sudden attack of Guy Eder with his 400 horsemen which resulted in the slaughtering of around 1500 villagers and the imprisonment of the comte.³⁴⁵ In the end, however, a conspiracy which he hatched with the Spanish forces against Mercœur brought him the last days of his career. After the peace of 1598, he was handed to Henri IV and was executed on the wheel in 1602.³⁴⁶

The peasant revolts continued during the last years of the league in Brittany. Due to the influence of the priests among them, the catholic faith inspired them to resist against the Royalist troops. As a case in point, they sang the liturgical chants in the course of occupying the castles and were ready to kill all nobles who had betrayed the church.³⁴⁷ On the other hand, the frequent

³⁴² Ibid, 298-299.

³⁴³ Moreau, *Le Brigand de la Cornouailles*, 153-154.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 156-165

³⁴⁵ Pocquet and La Borderi, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 224, 298.

³⁴⁶ Jacques-Auguste de Thou and Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, Jacques-Auguste de Thou and Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, *Abrégé de l'Histoire Universelle de J. A. de Thou avec des remarques sur le texte de cet auteur, & sur la traduction qu'on a publiée de son ouvrage en 1734, Volume 10* (The Hague 1759), 34-35. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 281.

³⁴⁷ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 385.

massacres and betrayals by the noblesse deepened their hatred of the upper classes among the *paysantailles*.³⁴⁸

4.3. Champagne -Burgundy

During the religious wars, particularly after the collapse of the League authority, the Burgundy countryside had been regularly pillaged and the towns lost their power under fiscal pressure.³⁴⁹ The most organized and significant peasant revolt was the *Bonnets Rouges* which was a rebellion of wine-growers of Burgundy.³⁵⁰³⁵¹ The Bonnets Rouges revolt was a spontaneous uprising of armed peasantry from different villages with mutual cooperation. These Burgundian wine-growers were supported by the network of communal system such as the wine-growers fraternity and the inter-communal system like the chain of villages. They banded together under local leaders, who were rich peasants, to defend themselves and their farms against zealous Catholics who had power over the small towns, and to defend themselves against the remnants of serfdom. The destruction of the fields, either rural resources or production, and peasant households, which were the pillars of the peasant economy, caused the Burgundian winegrowers to revolt against those leading the war. In their fight, the religious affiliations did not play an important role because their noble enemies also were Catholic. The pro-Royalist attitude among the Burgundian peasants was different from Norman and Breton peasants where the league found the support of peasants, however, in Burgundy, Picardy, and Champagne, Calvinism failed to gain

³⁴⁸ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 281.

³⁴⁹ The peasant revolts were coincided with several urban revolts. First citizens of Dijon, Mâcon, Autun, Auxerre and Avallon turned to the king and opposed to the League, then the inhabitants of Beaune, stronghold of Mayenne's troops, rebelled in February, and open the gates to the soldiers of the mareschal de Biron. Next year, in mid-May 1595, Dijon and Beaune revolted in the name of the king. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 124

³⁵⁰ They were called as the Bonnets-Rouges due to their red caps. Henri Drouot, *Mayenne et la Bourgogne; étude sur la Ligue (1587-1596)* (Paris: Auguste Picard, éditeur, 1937), 289.

³⁵¹ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 381.

power. In the course of the sixteenth century and especially during the wars of the Religion, many old noble houses died out which allowed the Burgundian peasantry to buy themselves out of *mortmain*.³⁵² The destruction of the noble houses in Burgundy and their alliance with Henri de Navarre and enmity against the pro-league towns provided them a sphere of influence to demand the reduction in taxes and their emancipation from the remnants of the serfdom. Burgundy was one of the first provinces in which exhausted peasants openly turned to the now-Catholic king, Henri of Navarre, due to the ongoing increase of aristocratic rivalries and urban factions during the supremacy of the League.³⁵³ Another reason that the peasants had for supporting Henri of Navarre was the hope for peace.³⁵⁴ This event highly deteriorated the situation of the League in Burgundy mostly because the civic militia refused to help them and which caused the inhabitants of important towns to oppose them.³⁵⁵

In November 1592, the peasants of the Izier forest mobilized and agreed to co-operate with the Royalist troops.³⁵⁶ In Champagne in 1593, the peasants of Villemorien revolted against the pillaging and the extortion of the league garrison at Bar-sur-Sein to the north. A League Captain Dandenot occupied Villeneuve and began extorting the surrounding villages. An uprising of local artisans occupied his base and forced Dandenot to flee.³⁵⁷ In May 1594, the peasant commune of Bar fought for the king against the League.³⁵⁸ In some regions, such as Châlonnais, all villages became protective against to all foreigners and strangers. In 1593, the *vignerons* (i.e. Bonnets

³⁵² In the sixteenth century, there was still a form of serfdom in these regions. Attichy, in Champagne was the center of the freedom movement at the beginning of the century. Not only the bourg oligarch, but also the peasant militia which had been formed to protect the runaway serfs, supported the refugees. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 16.

³⁵³ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 281.

³⁵⁴ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 131.

³⁵⁵ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 191.

³⁵⁶ Drouot, *Mayenne et la Bourgogne*, 288. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 282.

³⁵⁷ Carorguy and Bruwaert, *Mémoires de Jacques Carorguy*, 158-160.

³⁵⁸ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 282.

Rouges) of Pommard, Volnay, Meursault, Auxey, Santenay, Saint Aulbin, Gamay banded together to organize themselves against the *gens de guerre* of Mayenne.³⁵⁹ One of their first action was against the tax-collectors of the League.³⁶⁰ Early in 1594, the revolt spread both in the northern and southern regions. To the north, the peasants of Dijon and Beaune, who were always the supporters of the city municipals and the League, stopped supporting the towns.³⁶¹ In February and March 1594, the *vignerons* of Beauvais and Châlonne with fortification of their communes prepared to defend themselves.³⁶² Very soon the peasant mobilization spread in Auxey, valley of the Sône, Mâcon, and other regions.³⁶³ The peasants from the neighboring countryside joined the uprising of Mâcon to attack the league soldiers.³⁶⁴ To the south, the twelve or fifteen hundred peasants of Bonnets-Rouges helped Alphonse d'Ornano in his fight against Mayenne near Tournus.³⁶⁵ In 1595, they marched against the league at Auxerre, and at Beaune, during the same year, Bonnets Rouges had a fight against the Royalist who attempted to enter the town. In May, in Dijon, the peasant militia attacked the garrisons.³⁶⁶ The revolt of the Bonnets Rouges came to its end that same year after the League's leaders accepted the authority of the king.

³⁵⁹ Drouot, *Mayenne et la Bourgogne*, 289.

³⁶⁰ They agreed to alarm each other by tocsin by seeing any soldier. Gabriel Breunot and Joseph Garnier, *Journal de Gabriel Breunot, conseiller au Parlement de Dijon: précédé du Livre de souvenance de Pépin, chanoine de la Sainte-chapelle de cette ville, Volume 2* (Dijon: J.-E. Rabutot, 1864), 19. Mack P Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 157.

³⁶¹ In Champagne, the peasant revolts and urban uprisings happened simultaneously. In early February 1594, the people of Reims fought with the League garrison, and this was mirrored by events at Chablis, Vezelay, Saint Florentin and Bar-sur-Seine. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 122. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 157.

³⁶² This coincided with the uprising of the inhabitants of Beauvais against the governance of the League and presence of the foreigners like Spanish garrisons. In February 1594, a riot burst out. In August, another one with anti-league elements was formed against the garrison. During the summer, many people were eager to join Henri of Navarre. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 122.

³⁶³ Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 157.

³⁶⁴ Léonce Lenormand, Charles Pellorce, and Adrien Arcelin, *Annales de l'Académie de Mâcon : société des arts, sciences, belles-lettres et d'agriculture* (Macon: Protat Freres, 1903), 51-52. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 282.

³⁶⁵ Drouot, *Mayenne et la Bourgogne*, 289. Carorguy and Bruwaert, *Mémoires de Jacques Carorguy*, 191.

³⁶⁶ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 282.

4.4. Conclusion

The second wave of peasant revolts happened in northern France, coinciding with the expansion of the wars in Normandy, Brittany, and Burgundy. Generally, the whole of the demands of the peasants are classified into three parts as follows: those related to taxes and illegal impositions, those related to military issues such as conscription, supplying the garrison, brigandage etc., and those related to the social life of the rural communities, such as having a syndic or a representative.

Most of the peasant revolts in the second wave were anti-tax and anti-noble movements caused by the destruction of the peasant economy. The issue itself was triggered through the ruining the countryside due to the passage of armies, brigandage, new heavy taxes, tolls, and illegal impositions. In addition, conscription threatened the balance of the households and the ratio of labor-consumption. Moreover, the impact of inflation and debasement should also be seen as adding to it. The incitement for all peasant revolts was owing to their refusal to pay the *taille*, the *gabelle* or the *tithe*. Contemporary histories, such as Palma Cayet's chronicle and Seguire's account, in a similar way attributed these causes to the peasant revolts, such as the Gautiers' uprising, and Duc de Montpensier's act in promising to reduce the *taille* was to temper the disaffection of the *plat pays*. The reduction of taxes was one of the first demands of the *Paysantailles* and the Bonnets Rouges as well.

Over more than thirty years wars, the destruction of rural fields by the troops and compulsory conscription created high anti-military attitudes among the peasantry. Davila points out that the Gautiers' uprising was at first a reaction against brigandage. Moreau had the same idea about the uprising of the hamlets of Cornouaille. Likewise, the Bonnets Rouges took up arms when their fields were destroyed by the increase in military depredations. The military duty was still a

seigneurial duty, so the military activities of the seigniors, moreover their fiscal demands, caused significant anti-nobility tendencies among the peasantry. The chronicler, Thou, indicated the Gautiers had an anti-noble attitude. Similarly, Moreau stated the peasants of Cornouaille were determined to destroy the nobility entirely. In Brittany, we see that not only for the first time did the peasants massacre the nobles on a large scale, but they also pursued them like a “hungry wolf” everywhere.³⁶⁷ The Bonnets Rouges were less anti-nobility because they were well-to-do peasants who sought more to gain their complete freedom and to maintain their fields. Nonetheless, the animosity was mutual, because the nobility also considered the peasant rebels as their enemies. Both aforementioned historians indicated that the nobles of Normandy and their equals in Brittany saw the peasants as their enemies. The numerous accounts of the peasant massacres imply this as well such as the case of sieur de Kergommard.

Their revolts happened due to the harsh living conditions and destruction of the peasant economy. Since there was religious pressure on them, their revolts became disguised with a religious orientation. In these peasant revolts, religious affiliation was still important and peasants could not go beyond it to achieve more solidarity – something which nonetheless later happened among them in the Croquants movement. On the other hand, anticlericalism was an urban issue that stemmed from the Huguenots and nobility attacks the church. For example, the Gautiers had good connections with the local priests, and the Breton peasants were even more enthusiastic and claimed to exterminate all the enemy of the Church. In the same way, the Bonnets Rouges did not show any enmity against the clergy. Apart from their attitude toward the clergy, the peasants showed different religious approaches. First of all, Calvinism failed to find the support of bulk of population in Normandy, Brittany, Burgundy, Champagne and Picardy. The Norman and the

³⁶⁷ Gregoire, *La Ligue en Bretagne*, 163.

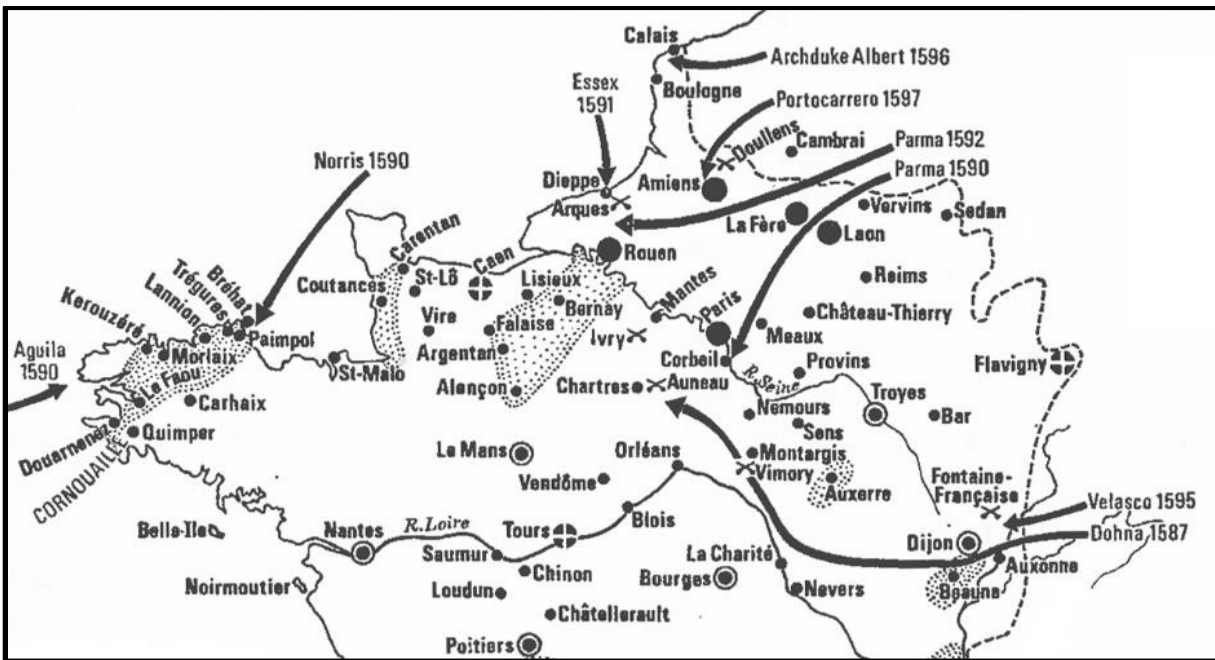
Briton peasants were inspired by their Catholic zeal with their struggle against the seigneurs and *gens de guerre*. For example, the Gautiers rejected obeying the king just because of his Calvinist background, but unlike them, the Burgundian peasants turned to the king to defend themselves against the Catholic fanatics in the towns and the tyranny of the league. In Brittany, the isolation and peculiar aspects of the peasantry pushed them to a kind of religious conservatism and ultra-Catholicism.

Tate once referred to the peasant revolts at the end of the century as a case of animosity between the walled-towns and the countryside. Regarding the peasant revolts of northern France, this idea is not completely applicable. Perhaps the revolts of these regions were not like the revolts of Vivarais and Dauphiné as the union of the towns and the countryside, but it is also recognizable that the even the commoners, at least lower classes in the towns, showed sympathy to the peasantry. Nonetheless, the peasants of Brittany detested both the towns and the nobility to an extent, while the Bonnets Rouges were against the Catholic bourgeoisie of the great towns rather than nobility.

Politically, the peasantry of Normandy and Brittany were pro-League, whereas the Burgundian peasants were against the League. In the western provinces, the fiscal policy of the Royalists, perhaps rather than their religious affiliations, caused the peasantry to adhere to the League. In eastern provinces the same happened as a consequence of the behavior of the league nobility. The radicalization of the peasant revolts in Normandy is tangible. The Gautiers adhered to the League and Catholicism but the Franc-Museaux of Senlis, the Châteaux-Verts, and the Lipans rejected the authority of any political parties. Despite the Franc-Museaux and the Châteaux-Verts, which were entirely peasant revolts, the Gautiers and the Lipans were conducted under the leadership of the local gentry. The peasants in Brittany achieved a better class solidarity due to

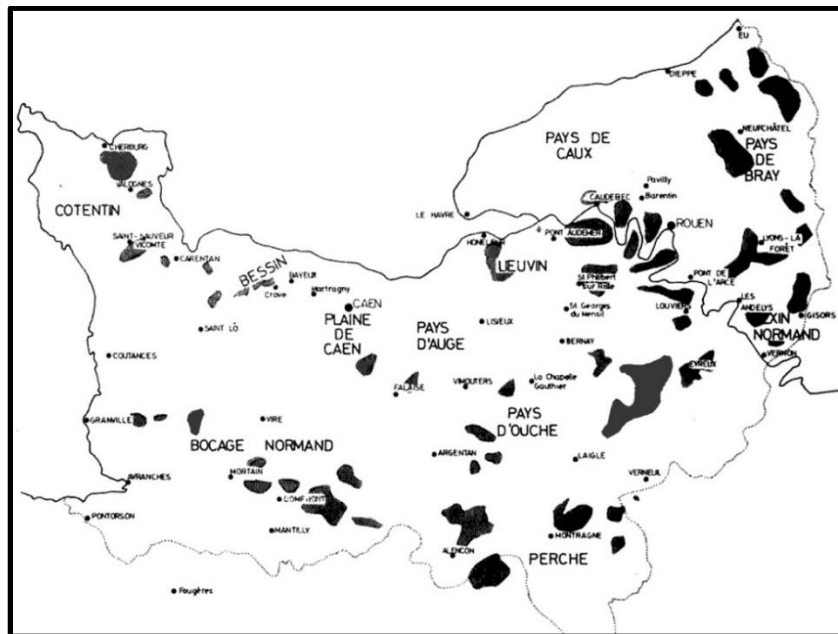
their particular conditions such as their language, isolation, and religious enthusiasm. Their aims also went further than those of the Gautiers, and they formed a utopian vision for making a better society, at least on the very local scale. The collapse of League authority and the destruction of the countryside in Burgundy led to the formation of one of the well-organized peasant revolts of the 1580s.

The peasant revolts could be a type of class antagonism in a society which had been formed on the basis of social and economic hierarchy. It is impossible to say these revolts were exactly the struggle between two specific classes, because it happened that petty-bourgeois or even local gentry helped the peasantry, while the nobility cooperated with haut-bourgeois. Nonetheless, it is evident and apparent that the nobility tried to maintain their privileges while the peasantry tried to preserve their basic conditions and rights or to regain them. In the next chapter, we see the highpoint of these efforts.



Map 6. Peasant revolts in Normandy and Brittany

Salmon, J. H. M. *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.



Map 7. Normandy during the Wars

Source: Bak, János M., and Gerhard Benecke. *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Workshop on Peasant Studies*, Univ. of British Columbia, 1982. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984.

Chapter V: The Croquants of *Tard- Avisés*

(Third Wave)

“If he was not what he is and had a little spare time, he would gladly become a Croquant.”³⁶⁸

Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal du règne d'Henri IV*

5.1. The first Croquants (*Tard- avisés*)

The greatest peasant revolt of the sixteenth century, the Croquants of Tard-Avisés³⁶⁹, was the third wave of the peasant revolts during the French Wars of Religion which swamped many regions, including Périgord, Limousin, Saintonge, Angoumois, Poitou, Agenais, Marche and Quercy and the whole of Guyenne.³⁷⁰ The Croquants was the first mass uprising of the sixteenth century with anti-noble and anti-fiscal elements.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ “que s'il n'eut point esté ce qu'il estait, et qu'il eut eu un peu plus de loisir, il se fut fait volontiers Crocan”. Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal du règne de Henri IV, roi de France et de Navarre, Volume 2* (The Hague: Vaillant, 1741), 78.

³⁶⁹ They called themselves as Tard-Avisés (out-of-dates/ slow-to-catch-on), but were called the Croquants by their enemies. The term Croquant was an offensive term which had been used by the nobility and bourgeoisie to make fun of the peasants. They never referred to themselves with this term. The chroniclers tried in vain to justify this term by a constructed etymology. Jean Sarlat says: they were called the Croquants because their revolt began in a place named Croq in Limousin. Jean Tarde, Gaston de Gérard, and Gabriel Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde, chanoine théologal et vicaire général de Sarlat: contenant l'histoire religieuse et politique de la ville et du diocèse de Sarlat, depuis les origines jusqu'aux premières années du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: H. Oudin, 1887), 325. Likewise, D'Aubigné had the same idea. Théodore Agrippa D' Aubigné, *L'histoire universelle du sieur d'Aubigne'. Première partie* (Leiden: Iean Moussat, 1626), 582. According to Palma-Cayet, they called themselves Tard-Avisés because they believed that they took up arms against the nobility very late, but the nobles called them the *croquans* in order to degrade them. Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire, Volume 5* (Paris: 1790), 142-143. Monsieur de Thou, also gave a detailed description of the terms, Tard-avisés and the Croquants which is the same with the description of Palma-Cayet. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle de Jacques-Auguste de Thou: avec la suite par Nicolas Rigault; les memoires de la vie de l'auteur. ; Un recueil de pieces concernant sa personne & ses ouvrages, Volume 8* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1740), 338. On the other hand this term is so close to the word Tard-Venus (latecomers) which was implied to the companies of mercenaries who had roamed France in the mid-fourteenth century. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 593.

³⁷⁰ According to Sénéchal of Périgord, the Croquants were one hundred thousand villagers, artisans, and petty-bourgeoisies at the height of their revolt. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 135.

³⁷¹ An overview of the fiscal condition of these regions is useful. The levies were wholly arbitrary; however, soldiers always tried to conceal it and justified it under the disguise of the military needs. Each faction levied taxes upon the territory under its controlled. Consequently, it is not surprising that with the occupation of territories of each other,

This peasant revolt happened when the region of southwest France gradually rallied to the king.³⁷² The first trace of peasant mobilization can be traced back to 1593, when the Parlement of Bordeaux asked the nobility and authority to suppress the armed peasant assemblies in Limousin, the so-called the “*Chasse-Voleurs*”.³⁷³ The Croquants movement first broke out in the woods of the Limousin, in the viscounty of Turenne, when the local peasants were gathered at their first assembly to wage war against the brigands and soldiers who roamed their villages and farms.³⁷⁴ Traditionally they would wait for the permission of their feudal overlords, but they decided to assemble without anyone’s permission.³⁷⁵ Eventually, many villagers of Bas-Limousin joined

peasants had to pay new range of taxes to the occupying faction. The collecting of the taxes was completely a military operation which had been done by soldiers. For example, Bas-Périgord was covered with many royal strongholds, but Bourdeille had no money to pay them. The lack of money encouraged soldiers to pillage the surrounding countryside. One reason for the annual increase of the taxes in the viscounty of Turenne was the expense of the maintaining and supplying two of the Viscount’s chateaux. In 1594, the Count of Clermont instituted a series of levies throughout Marche which were intended to maintain his garrisons. In Agenais and Quercy the Count of Montpezat raised taxes on behalf of the Catholic League, where the people had to pay previously these taxes to Monluc to support the Royalists.

³⁷² At the end of July 1593, the abjuration of Henri of Navarre from Calvinism and the conclusion of a truce with the Duke of Mayenne at La Villette opened the field of general peace in the kingdom. At the beginning of 1594, in Guyenne then in Périgord, Agenais and Quercy the general truce brought the sénéchals, nobles, and towns to rally to the king except some stubborn nobles like the Marquis de Villars and the Baron de Gimel who refused it. Yves-Marie Bercé, *Histoire des croquants: étude des soulèvements populaire au XVII. siècle dans le sud-ouest de la France, volume 1* (Genève: Droz, 1974), 257.

³⁷³ This term refers to the peasant efforts to prevent the theft of their livestock by the noble captains. In the beginning, they called themselves by this term ‘*Messieurs les chasse-voleurs*’ because in these regions peasants highly depended on the pastoral agriculture and had to protect their properties (e.g. livestock) against the robbers. In Limousin and Périgord, *métayage* had long been widespread, but the majority of peasants enjoyed their independent holdings and advantages of the depreciation of the value of cash obligations they owed to their seigneurs. Later, they changed their name to Tard-avisés. Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV*, 169. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 400. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 282.

³⁷⁴ Generally, the assemblies of the Croquants mostly had been held in the open field or the low-lying meadowland. The peasants from all parishes were able to attend, but the last decision was always taken by the core of local notables and authorities and there was not any kind of vote or general agreement. According to Bercé, twenty one assemblies had been held by them from 1593 to 1595. The heartlands of the revolt were the great theater of the War of Religion. Matignon, Royalist governor of Guyenne, had several fights against the Leaguers nobles; however, the pillaging of the *plat pays* continued after his leaving by the local nobles. The Leaguer governors, Louis Vicomte de Pompadour, Lieutenant General of the Limousin and Montpézat in Périgord, were two examples of the terror among the peasantry who were imitated by the local lords and captains.

³⁷⁵ This area was covered with hedges and woods without any important town. Inhabitants of Turenne and the region around it such as Xaintrie were exempted from paying the taxes by the permission of the kings. The Catholic League garrisons stationed in Miremont and Saint-Chamant which treated these regions constantly. The people of Xaintrie were ready to defend their privileges against all kinds of threats. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 270.

them at the meetings of Lubersac and Magnac in the autumn of 1593.³⁷⁶ Near the town of Dognon, at the third and biggest assembly, 12,000 armed peasants decided to send two representatives to present their grievances to the king.³⁷⁷ Very soon, the movement spread across the isolated hamlets of Périgord Noir.³⁷⁸

At an assembly in the forest of Abzac near Limeuil on the 23rd of April, two different thoughts were expressed by the leaders of the movement.³⁷⁹ Papus or Paulliac,³⁸⁰ who was the advocate of a radical militant attitude, targeted the corrupted tax-collectors and mismanagement of the nobility (in his speech “cattle-thieves”) as the reasons for the ruin of the villages, and proposed a syndic for all *plat-pays*, the destruction of all manors and keeping the Croquant army in the name of the king.³⁸¹ The second approach was a moderate attitude by Porquéry³⁸² who asked for sending deputies to the king and sénéchal to represent the peasant grievances. On the 22nd of May, before the *Conseil d’Etat*, Porquéry as the representative of the peasants asked for the elimination of the corruption of the tax-collectors, the prosecution of those nobles who had killed peasants, the suppression of unnecessary offices and the reduction of the *taille*. He also asked for

³⁷⁶ Bas-Limousin consisted of the scattered villages under the sway of the Catholic League that frequently raided these villages. The defenseless peasants had no chance to find a way to defend themselves. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 375.

³⁷⁷ Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 259.

³⁷⁸ In the south bank of Dordogne, the Protestant towns were surrounded with the catholic countryside. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 375.

³⁷⁹ According to Bercé, the names of 26 persons as the leaders are known to us. But we do not know more than their names. They were mostly attorneys, clerks, notaries, lawyers and impoverished gentlemen. In general they were from the local notables. It is obvious none of them were the peasants or the local bandits. According to Marx, the peasant interest begets no community, no national and no political organization bond and they do not form a class: for this reason for their political life, they need to be represented. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 267.

³⁸⁰ According to Palma-Cayet, he was the *Procureur fiscal* of the châtellenie d’Ans who took the control of the peasants. The chronicler described him ‘a little man dressed just like a craftsman’. Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire*, 225-226.

³⁸¹ Their demand for the election of permanent deputies came from their anxiety for ensuring the implication of the higher standard of justice. The Croquants wanted to form the party of the countryside, even without the participation of the towns. It means they were hesitant to form the *Quatrième état* or the third estate without the towns.

³⁸² A lawyer of the Parlement of Bordeaux and syndic of Monpazier. Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire*, 224.

an elected syndic as a tribune for the peasant rights and for permission to keep the Croquants army under the command of the king.³⁸³

Before the arrival of the peasant representatives, the increase of threat by the rebels caused the king to intervene by offering an appeasement policy and by issuing a general pardon with the condition of disarmament of the peasant army. Henri IV desired to put down the rebels with gentle means, hence, he ordered to remit the *arrears* of the *taille* and sent *conseiller d'état*, Jean de Thumery, baron de Boissize, to inquire into complaints of the peasants in Périgord and other regions.³⁸⁴ The king also ordered Bourdeille to raise troops to put down the uprising in case the Croquants failed to response the policy.³⁸⁵ When Porquéry came to Paris, Henri IV had already left the city for Picardy. During the negotiation period, the movement spread in Haut-Limousin, Angoumois, Saintonge, and by May it had spread across Quercy, Agenais, the left bank of the Garonne, and then Marche and the Croquants successfully held two other assemblies: at Atur (15 May); and Monpazier (22 May).³⁸⁶ By the 2nd of June, they were more than fifty thousand rebellious peasants under the name of the Croquant movement in six provinces.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ Porquéry requested the king to endorse the movement and allow the peasants to keep their army. “*courir sus aux ennemis du Roi et les contraindre à se soumettre à son obéissance*”. It meant the people of the countryside would have had this ability to react against the bandits or soldiers without the permission of the magistrates and authorities; something that could threaten the whole entity of the aristocratic society. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 288. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 276.

³⁸⁴ In his letter to Bourdeille, Henri IV said: “*J'envoie le sieur de Boissize, conseiller en mon conseil d'Estat, en mes pays de Limosin, Périgord et Xainconage, avec charge et commission d'ouïr le plaintes et doléances des peuples soublevez esdicts pays, et d'y pourveoir par la voie de justice... Je désire, s'il est possible, que ce remuement et désordre se compose par la douceur; que les soublevez se recognoissent et posent les armes.*” Jules Berger de Xivrey, *Recueil des lettres missives de Henri IV. Volume 1* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1843), 111-112. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 326. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 596.

³⁸⁵ “*Mes subjects ne peuvent souffrir aucune ruine qui ne retombe sur moy, comme redondant à l'affoiblissement de l'état.*” Xivrey, *Recueil des lettres missives de Henri IV*, 191. *Society in Crisis*, 288.

³⁸⁶ Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire*, 222. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 326.

³⁸⁷ Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 599.

The radicalization of the movement continued while they marched in the south of Périgord under the command of La Saigne.³⁸⁸ He asked all peasants of the movement to put aside their religious differences for more solidarity against nobles and walled-towns. According to Sarlat's chronicle, after declaring themselves, each parish organized itself and appointed a captain, then sent messages to other parishes to invite them to join the uprising.³⁸⁹ All kinds of refusal might lead to a harsh reaction by the Croquants, and it happened to many towns, castles, and even villages. The garrisons were the first victims of the militarization of the movement.³⁹⁰ The marching of the Croquants in the Bas-Limousin and destruction of parishes made the authorities worried. Hence, Chasteigner d'Abain at Marche and Jean de Beaumanoir seigneur de Malicorne at Saintonge dispersed the army of the Croquants.³⁹¹ In Angoumois Massèt, the king's lieutenant instead of Duc d'Epèrnon attacked an assembly of some 2000 Croquants and killed more than 100 of them.³⁹² In Agenais, where the Croquants penetrated through Bas-Périgord, Jean Blaise de Monluc and the authorities of Agen successfully convinced the assembly of the peasants in the town of Ledat to leave the siege of the chateau of Penne.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ He was a notary from the town of La Douze in the forest of Vergt.

³⁸⁹ Parish was the basic unit of the Croquants movement and most of the peasant revolts. Usually peasants of one parish represented by a local notable as their syndic or captain. The Croquants happened when all parishes in a very broad scale accepted to work in unity. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 263-264. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 400.

³⁹⁰ In Limousin, they drove out the garrisons of Chalus and Isle, particularly the latter one which belonged to one captain who was a man of evil life based on the Croquants sources. In Périgord, the soldiers of Excideuil, Grignols, Lisle and some other chateaux were forced to leave the region. Bourdeille was afraid of the garrison at Lisle, but the inhabitants of Périgueux particularly were against the notorious castle of Grignols which was the dungeon for many peasants. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 260, 279-80.

³⁹¹ D'Aubigné, *L'histoire universelle du sieur d'Aubigné*, 383-384.

³⁹² Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire*, 223.

³⁹³ The château was the main focus of resentment in Agenais because of the daily attacks of the soldiers on the towns and countryside, robbing the livestock of peasants and other kinds of depredation. The count of Montpezat, head of the Catholic League in the region, who attacked the Royalist towns and pillaged the countryside regularly. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 261, 282.

In Limousin, Chambéret, who received troops from d'Abain and Messillac, barred the Croquants from marching to Limoges. Finally, the war took place at the village of Pousses close to Saint-Priest-Ligoure on the 24th of June in which perhaps 2000 peasants were killed.³⁹⁴ The main reason for the defeat was the religious separation of the peasant army into the Catholics and Huguenots due to some rumors.³⁹⁵ After the rejection of their request to the Protestant assembly of Sainte-Foy (May 1594), the Huguenot Croquants rejoined the Catholic bands and marched to Agenais.³⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the Croquants still had power in Périgord, Quercy, and Agenais

At the end of May 1594, between 20000 and 40000 Croquants participated at an assembly in La Boule near Bergerac, in which the movement reached beyond a local or regional movement and took the shape of a struggle between the oppressed and oppressors which covered all the third estate.³⁹⁷ They issued a manifesto in the name of “*the third estate*” of all rebellious regions and asked the inhabitants of the neighboring areas to join them within three days to take up arms against the enemies of the king and his people, by which they meant the nobility.³⁹⁸ At this point, the Croquants addressed the nobility, that “exploits the countryside and bring disorder to the kingdom”, as the main enemy of the society.³⁹⁹ This was enough to convince the nobles of Périgord

³⁹⁴ The number of the casualties are different among the historical sources. According to Poirson the peasants lost 4000 men at this battle. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 604. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 260.

³⁹⁵ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 289. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 264.

³⁹⁶ Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 609.

³⁹⁷ There are different accounts of their numbers. According to Jean Tarde they were 20000 and by the chronicler of Palma Cayet, they were 40000. According to Poirson they were 34000 or 35000 that 3000 of them were soldiers. Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet, *Mémoires de Victor Palma Cayet ou Chronologie novénaire, Volume 5* (Paris:1790), 152. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 606-607.

³⁹⁸ At La Boule, all peasants cried « *Liberté! Liberté! Vive le Tiers Etat!* » and elected La Saigne as the “*général du Tiers Etat*” Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 326.

³⁹⁹ Albeit, not all nobility were their enemies, but all their enemies were out of the noble class. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 287.

and Bergerac and some other areas that the Croquants had been determined to destroy the order of the society by refusing to pay the *taille* and the *tithe* and held enmity against their *seigneurs*.⁴⁰⁰

Chambéret, who had been already dismissed the Croquants army in Limousin, also urged to help Bourdeille in his mission. On the 12th of June, the Croquants held another assembly at Limeuil and again declared their grievances against “*tyrannies de la noblesse*”⁴⁰¹ and demanded the punishment of the noble League. By their insistence and the attempts of Bourdeille, their deputies met with the nobility and the representatives of Périgueux, Bergerac, Sarlat, and some other towns, at Montignac. A group of the Croquants left their arms after knowing that about the remission of the *taille* and arrears, but some radicals did not surrender to it. In July and September, the peasants held two other assemblies at Trémolac and Beaumont.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰By June 1594, a group of noblemen of Périgord and Sarlat who associated to Jean-Guy de Beyac, seigneur de Tayac, formed a League against the overgrowing threat of the Croquants against their chateaux in Tayac, Saint-Martial and Penne. In an article was issue by them, as the proclamation of their noble League against those people who have risen arms against the all divine and human law, the Croquants movement had been called as a treason for destruction of the monarchy “*renverser la monarchie*” (by refusing to pay the *taille*) and church (by refusing to pay the *tithe*), and an attempt to establish a democracy based on the Swiss fashion “*une démocratie à l'exemple des Suisses*”. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 601. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 288. A person such as Guyon de Maleville, went so far that declared, the Croquants of Tard-avisés wanted to ‘dictate to God in heaven’ about lifting the religion and the *tithe*. « *régler le Dieu du Ciel auquel ils enjoignent de souffrir libre carrière de toute religion et d'admettre modification de la levée de ses dîmes* ». The consuls of Périgord declared that the Croquants movement was an assault on the general tranquility of France and the whole world. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 283, 285-286.

⁴⁰¹Tyranny is an important term in this context. The Croquants claimed that they should protect themselves and their properties against tyranny. This term had negative connotation to the mad Roman emperors who used their power and authority in a wicked and horrifying manner. For Tard-Avisés the tyranny meant the ruthless soldiers’ demands for the taxes and levies (*tailles et subsides*). Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 274. In a broader context tyranny and tyrannicide were two controversial concepts in the early modern France. Henri III and then Henri IV were killed, because their killers thought they were tyrants. Lay Dominican Jacques Clément, who stabbed Henri III (which led to the king’s death), was declared as a martyr because he had delivered the kingdom from tyranny. R. J Knecht, *Hero or Tyrant? Henry III, King of France, 1574-89* (London: Routledge, 2016), 307. In late December 1594, Jean Chastel made an attempt to kill Henri IV as a tyrant because the king had not received papal absolution. Frederic J Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 229. His act had been justified by Jean Boucher in his book “*Apologie pour Jean Chastel, 1595*”, with the same reference. J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie, *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 230, 240. Juan de Mariana's book “*De rege et regis institutione, 1598*” was popular among the Jesuits when François Ravaillac stabbed Henri IV to death on the 14th of May 1610. Roland Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton University Press, 1984), 60. John Patrick Donnelly, *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2006), 211.

⁴⁰²Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 326.

For a while, the Croquants movement appeased due to the harvest time until October, when the new assemblies were held in Périgord. At the end of 1594, the Croquant movement absorbed into the Royalist activities in destroying the last strongholds of the League. Matignon in Guyenne, Thémines in Quercy, and Chambéret in Limousin all called the local communes to help them against the Catholic League nobles. Early in August, Boissize convened an assembly at Brive in which the delegates of the towns and the rebellious peasants asked for the punishment of the Baron of Gimel. With permission of Boissize, the joint army of the Croquants of Limousin and communes of Tulle and Brive besieged the chateau of Baron of Gimel.⁴⁰³ From December of 1594 to March 1595, under the command of their leader Doctor Boissonade, “*Colonel du Tiers Etat*”, the Croquants of Agenais ravaged the lands of the marquis de Cauzac, seneschal of Agenais by the Catholic League.⁴⁰⁴

In February 1595, another time the Croquants of Périgord assembled at Périgueux in the name of “*Tiers Estat du plat pays*” during the great famine in Périgord.⁴⁰⁵ They issued the previous manifestos another time with some new demands.⁴⁰⁶ Thousands of the impoverished peasants from Limousin and other areas who had gathered behind the gates of Périgueux to find food plundered the grain carts which brought food to the city.⁴⁰⁷ These demands indicated that the peasants

⁴⁰³ He was one of the Liguers who set terror and rapine among the peasantry of Tulle. He seized the properties of peasants and exacted the seigneurial dues two or three times annually. His soldiers always were pillaging. He was so hated by the peasants that Boissize could not prevent them from attacking his chateau. The baron rescued himself with negotiation and escaped to Auvergne, and the Croquants army gradually disbanded after the occupation of the chateau. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 289. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 605.

⁴⁰⁴ Balthazar de Thoiras, Seigneur de Cauzac was appointed by Mayenne. Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, 605.

⁴⁰⁵ Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 326.

⁴⁰⁶ They complained about the nobility and ecclesiastical authorities, asked for the syndic as a tribune of the people to keep their liberties and privileges. They demanded that the nobles should give back the lands that they seized during the wars, a ban on acquiring noble titles for other people except those old noble houses, the abolition of all new taxes and the return of the level of the taille to its status before the wars, and the substitution of the local judge for the *élu* and tax-collectors. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 327.

⁴⁰⁷ Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 285.

consciously engaged in war with nobility to modify the power balance or recast the social structure, however they did not want to commit any revolutionary act.⁴⁰⁸ Another time, La Saigne became the leader of the movement. After the rejection of their demands by the estate of Périgord, he summoned a mass assembly at Beaumont. The Croquants attempted to occupy two castles (Saint Martial and Tayac-sur-Vézère)⁴⁰⁹ but they failed.⁴¹⁰ Then they marched to Agenais and came back with more forces to blockade Périgueux to force the city authorities to negotiate with him at the chateau of Rognac.⁴¹¹ By this meeting, La Saigne aimed to elect an officer or syndic to provide permanent redress against the oppression. Finally, he agreed to sign the truce and pay the remainder of the taille due for 1594 if they reduced the new taille by a quarter. Ten days later, in some skirmishes at Negrondes (19 August), at Saint-Créspin-d'Auberoche (24 and 25 August) and at Condat-sur-Vézère (4 September) the Croquants finally lost to the army of nobles under Bourdeille.⁴¹² As a final point, the weak army of the Croquants accepted to disarm while Bourdeille led his army around their strongholds.⁴¹³ After two battles of Pousses in Limousin and Saint-Créspin in Périgord, the Croquants disintegrated abruptly and all peasants scattered.

At the same period, in other regions, the Croquants were still active and had assemblies in Saintonge and Angoumois. But the last breath of the movement was destroyed by the Marquis de Pisani at the end of October.⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁸ Even among the peasants there was the idea of the destruction of all noble houses for creating a society free of any kind of subjection.

⁴⁰⁹ The former belonged to the château of Jean de Calvimont, seigneur de Saint-Martial and La Benechie, and the latter pertained to François de Beynac, seigneur de la Roque des Péagers. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 328.

⁴¹⁰ Palma Cayet ou *Chronologie novénaire*, 229.

⁴¹¹ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 290.

⁴¹² Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 262. Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 329.

⁴¹³ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 291.

⁴¹⁴ Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 262.

5.2. Conclusion

The third wave of the peasant revolts was the biggest and most radical one that spread in all western and southwestern provinces. Earlier than other regions, southern France came under the command of Henri IV, who was, at least in the last ten years of the wars, under a heavy financial burden. The heavy royal taxation caused an anti-tax and anti-noble spirit among the Croquants.⁴¹⁵ Both Porquéry and Paulliac asked for the reduction of taxes and the elimination of the corrupted tax collectors. In their manifestos, the Croquants, implicitly used the words tyranny (ten instances) and robbers (fourteen instance) respectively for the taxes (fourteen instances) and tax collectors who ruined (nine instances) the countryside and peasant economy with the excessive exactions.⁴¹⁶ The peasant army of Puymoreau cried “*Mort aux gabeleurs*” at entering the town of Cognac. Even when Henri IV tried to appease the revolt, he remitted the *arrears* of the taille. The anti-tax spirit crystalized in attacks against the tax-collectors. Refusing to pay the taille, had the risk of the imprisonment by the officials. Active solidarity and supporting with these imprisoned peasants was one amazing aspect of the Croquant movement.⁴¹⁷

The anti-noble spirit was stronger among them because instead of protecting their tenants, seigneurs contributed to the destruction of the countryside by their regular pillages, arbitrary taxes, and stealing the peasants’ productions and ransoming. The term *Chasse-Voleurs*, by which the Croquants called themselves, derived from their aim to chase down the robber nobles. Paulliac called the nobility “cattle-thieves” and proposed to destroy all manors with the Croquants army. Porquéry asked for the prosecution of those nobles who had killed peasants. Likewise, La Saigne showed the same approach against the nobility and requested all peasants of the movement to put

⁴¹⁵ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 275.

⁴¹⁶ Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 377.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 377.

aside their religious differences for more solidarity against nobles and walled-towns. At assemblies of Limeul and La Boule, the Croquants called their uprising an action against the *tyrannies de la noblesse* or the uprising of the third estate against the nobility. Subsequently, in the eyes of the local nobility of Périgord, the Croquants were the advocates of a society without taxes, tithe, and order, therefore the main enemy of the nobility. They called the movement a treason against God, nature and monarchy and an attempt to establish a democracy based on the Swiss fashion. On several occasions even the nobles of Périgord massacred the Croquants. However, the Croquants were not against the crown and supported Henri IV against the Catholic League.

The anti-urban act of the Croquants was another important aspect of this movement. The inflation of the 1590s was the result of the black market prices that increased during the religious war. But in the popular consciousness, inflation was an urban phenomenon created by the merchants to increase profits. Moreover, the royal concessions to the walled-towns by the king, mostly in respect of the taxes, increased this assumption among the peasants that they had to pay instead of the bourgeois.⁴¹⁸ The new bourgeoisie (merchants, tax-collectors and all war-profiteers and so forth) were hated in the villages because for peasants they were people who had made their fortunes and profits out of others' misfortunes.⁴¹⁹ The walled towns had the same picture in the peasant mind because they believed that they suffered most by the bourgeoisie who become richer at the expense of ruining the countryside.⁴²⁰ "*Les cavernes de voleurs*" or "dens of thieves" was the name by which the Croquants called the towns because most tax-collectors and merchants lived

⁴¹⁸ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 275.

⁴¹⁹ In the documents of Tard-Avisés, The parvenus and nouveau riches who 'se sont faits riches aux dépens du Roy et du peuple' and 'qui naguères estoient belitres' were hated by the Croquants because they believed they became rich by robbing the king and his subjects. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 274.

⁴²⁰ "*Les villes ne se soucient pas de la ruine du peuple parce que notre ruine est leur richesse.*" In their grievances, the name of some tax-collectors, merchants and their relatives, who were hated by the Croquants, are traceable. A merchant named Ogier de Gourgues, one of the wealthiest merchants in the south, is a good example of these nouveaux riches. Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 274, 281.

there.⁴²¹ It was the typical rage against the high layer of the bourgeoisie who had participated in the war and could inflame it again.⁴²² Jean Tarde says the Croquants attacked at many towns and castles. After the occupation of the town of Blaye, the Croquants proclaimed the aim of their movement as the destruction of “*les méchants inventeurs chargés du fait de gabelle*”.

In comparison to other peasant revolts during the religious wars, religious affiliations played a weak role in the Croquants movement. To exemplify, we see La Saigne led the movement with disregarding the religious differences for more solidarity against nobles and walled-towns. In their marching in Agenais, the Croquants army united once more after the rejection of the Protestant peasants by the assembly of Sainte-Foy. At the same time, the Croquants movement was accompanied by the peasantry's demand for more participation in the political and their everyday lives. Paulliac proposed a syndic for all *plat-pays*, the destruction of all manors and keeping the Croquant army in the name of the king. Similarly, Porquéry asked for an elected syndic as a tribune for the peasant rights and for a permission to keep the Croquants army.

The Croquant revolt was more than a sheer peasant revolt, because in addition to the farmers and artisans, members of the small towns and rural notables had also participated in the rebellion.⁴²³ Social mobility, either new parvenu ennobled bourgeois or the commercialization of farms, was something that caused massive changes in rural society and the revolutionary acts of

⁴²¹ The Croquants wanted a remission of the arrears, reduction of the *taille* to its level before the war and abolition of all new taxes or exemption from a part of them which had been levied during the war. In their assemblies they emphasized that they only pay the *taille* due to their king and the *taillon*. A step after the taxes, were the tax-collector who worked under each *élection*. The post of *élu* was subject to their opposition because they saw it as an unnecessary position whose function could be done by lieutenants of the *sénéchaussée*. Their utopian proposal was that they could pay the *taille* directly to the king, away from all these dishonest officials. Bercé, *Histoire des croquants*, 276. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 135. Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 290. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, 379.

⁴²² Ibid, 380.

⁴²³ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 133.

the rebels represented their rage against this social mobility.⁴²⁴ The Croquants uprising convinced Henry IV and the nobility that the end to the civil wars was urgently required.⁴²⁵ The Croquants partially achieved some of their lesser demands such as the cancellation of the *arrears* of 1589-93 and the reduction of the *taille* of the next four years, but they entirely failed to defend themselves against the upper dominant noble class. The peasant revolts of the next century lost their radical aspects which had been reached at its peak during the Croquants of *Tard-Avisés*.

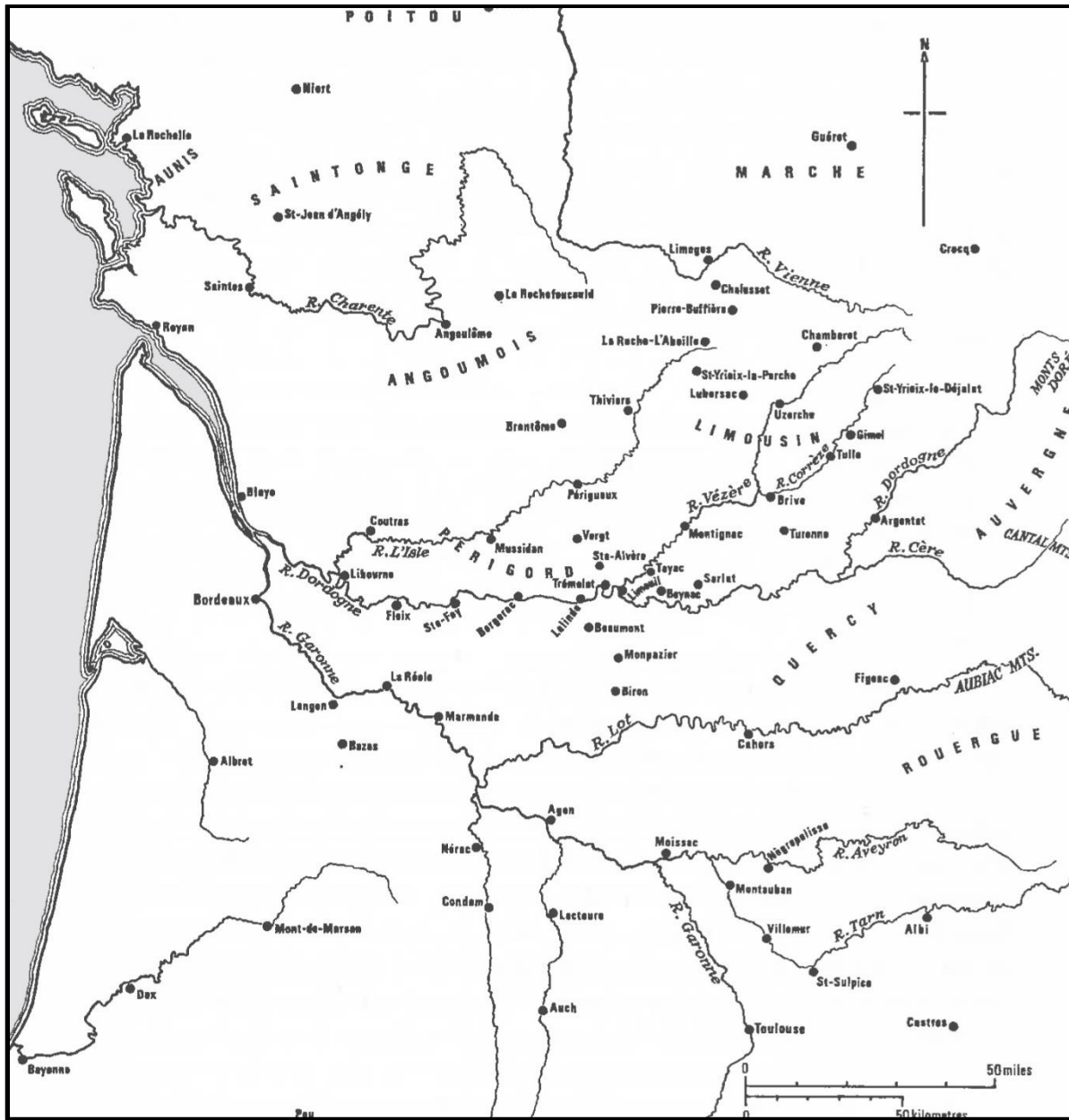
⁴²⁴ In early modern France, due to several reasons, many local old noble families disappeared and were replaced by the new bourgeoisie, something that is called by Porshnev the economic move or the flight of the bourgeoisie into the nobility. The peasants were also against these new land buyers who lived mostly in the towns because they had this ability to make fine *métairies* cheaply and then to charge rent at double or triple. Boris Porshnev, *Les soulèvements populaires en France de 1623 à 1648* (Paris, 1963), 378

⁴²⁵ Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 161.



Map 8. The Croquants and Bonnets Rouges

Source: Holt, Mack P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



Map 9. The areas of the Croquants

Source: Salmon, J. H. M. *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.

Conclusion

After the investigation of each wave of the peasant revolts we can contextualize them in a broader context and based on the hypotheses described at the outset.

On the micro level, the peasant revolts were a reaction to the destruction of the peasant economy by the French civil war. As already mentioned in the first chapter, the village economy was formed on the basis of the household as an economic unit. This means that the destruction of one would ruin others. The farm was the basic unit of peasant ownership, production, consumption, and social life. The peasant household depended on agricultural production for survival, and therefore, the maintenance of sufficient production was the reason for their survival. Here we can highlight one micro reason for the peasant revolts because, as we saw, all communes revolted when the Religious wars blocked the continuation of their everyday life. Even contemporary witnesses understood it such, like Claude Delagrance who, in his pamphlet *La juste plainte et remontrance* (1597), pointed out that in the course of the religious wars the majority of the noblemen were involved in the act of pillaging the properties of the third estate – something which had never happened before. Raymond de Saléon also asserted that the continuation of the wars caused the uprising of the peasants against the nobility.⁴²⁶ The wars destroyed the villages, and farmers were killed or robbed by soldiers and brigands for a variety of reasons. This was catastrophic for the farmers because the productivity and the balance of the consumer-laborer ratio was in direct relation to the demographic basis of the household.

⁴²⁶ Albin Mazon, *Notes et documents historiques sur les Huguenots du Vivarais, volume 3* (Valence: Ed. de la Bouquinerie, 1994), 70.

The destruction of resources and the devastation of peasant production were two other consequences of the Religious wars on the peasant economy. The passages of armies through the agricultural fields, the destruction of the landscape by brigands, and natural disasters (such as the famine in the 1580s) destroyed the resources of the peasant production. Moreover, the extra-impositions by the seigneurs devastated the agrarian production by driving many cultivators from the land. In various recorded peasant grievances and demands we see reflections of these issues, such as their complaints about conscription, brigandage and the destruction of the fields. For example, the bandit Gimel provoked the uprising of the Croquants, Bouvier did the same in Valence, La Roche in Dauphiné, Laprade in lower Vienne, Anne de Sanzay and Guy Eder in Brittany, and the Porcellets and the Carsistes in Provence. Correspondingly, Antoine Rambaud and Jean Vincent saw what damage had been done to the economic stability of the villages by the continuing acquisitions of the noblemen and their sons.⁴²⁷ In order to end the peasant revolts, the royal policy aimed at reducing the heavy financial burden on the peasants. As a case in point, a royal edict belonging to 1595 forbade the seizure of tools, animals and the products of the peasants. In addition, legal changes were not only aimed at the remission of the arrears and the taille, but also a gradual lowering of the amount of the levy and reforming the structure of direct taxation, along with seeing its redistribution.⁴²⁸

On the macro level, the peasant uprising appeared when the traditional and existing legal framework of the social order was destroyed by the French War of religion. This destruction allowed and even provoked the peasants to demonstrate their rage.

⁴²⁷ Donna Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 110.

⁴²⁸ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 309.

As already mentioned, the peasantry as a social entity in sixteenth century France had comparatively low ‘classness’ that directly undermined their political impact.⁴²⁹ However, after the long period of revolt, the peasants in the Croquants movement did achieve a better understanding of themselves. At the assembly of Boule, they shouted “*Liberté! Liberté! Vive le tiers état!*”; The Croquants of Périgord assembled in Périgueux in the name of “*Tiers état du plat pays*”. Correspondingly, the statement “*Holl Vretonet tud gentil*” of the Breton peasants shows their egalitarian ideas and their rejection of the hierarchy.

One demand of the peasant leaders – if they reflected the general desire of the peasantry – from the upper dominant classes was more opportunity to play active roles in their sociopolitical lives.⁴³⁰ The sociopolitical aims of the three waves of the peasant revolts were very varied, but it is possible to divide them between the peasant revolts in southern and northern France, because the former requested changes at a more fundamental level, and the latter less so. In the first wave, only the Croquants of Comminges asked for a representative, but in the second wave, in the north, none of them asked for anything of the kind. In the Croquants movement, their political maturity was higher than that seen in other revolts, and they asked for representatives. As an illustration, La Saigne aimed to elect an officer or syndic to provide permanent redress against oppression, Paulliac proposed a syndic for all *plat-pays*, Porquéry asked for an elected syndic as a tribune for the peasant’s appeals, and the Croquants of Périgord requested a permanent syndic to defend peasants against seigneurial oppression.⁴³¹ Porquéry even proposed to the king to that the Croquants be allowed to keep their army under his (the king’s) command. On the other hand,

⁴²⁹ Due to the vertical stratification to different social inter-class layers which prevented the emergence of a non-bifurcated class consciousness.

⁴³⁰ At different levels, they demanded it differently, sometimes, at the level of the towns and the countryside they asked it from the upper bourgeoisie, at the provincial level, they asked it from the nobility. In semi-nation-wide Croquants movement, they demanded the king for the more political opportunity.

⁴³¹ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 290.

because the peasant's interests and political life instilled no national and political bond, they needed to be represented. In all peasant revolts during the Religious wars, we see that they were represented by the bourgeoisie or nobility. For example, the Razats of Provence were represented by some nobles, Jean Rouvière in Vivarais, Jean Serve in Romans, Coste in Montélimar, Jean du Bourg in Dauphiné, Jean (Jehan) Désirat in Commines, Sieur Laviète among the Gautiers, Mallard among the Lipans of Le Perche, or Paulliac, Porquéry, Boissonade, and La Saigne among the Croquants did the same.

During the crisis of civil war, it tended to be the case that a peasant revolt expanded into a region-wide or nation-wide movement which was capable of determining major political developments. In these cases, an external uniting elite-power would usually use the peasantry to achieve its goals. By way of illustration, in Vivarais and Dauphiné, the Huguenot or Catholic noble captains several times brought the rebellious peasants under their commands or, in Languedoc, the local seigneurs used the peasants in support of their interests; even the Marquis de Villars approved the Croquants of Commines for a short time. In the north, the rebellious peasants came under the direction of the nobility and in favor of their interest more than the south. Except for very local peasant revolts such as the Franc-museaux of Senlis, or the Chateau-verts who rejected any political authority, the Gautiers, the Lipans, and the peasants of Cornouaille were led by the local nobles and seigneurs from time to time. In the Croquant movement of Limousin and Périgord, this control by the upper classes became minimal, but the Croquants were still swayed in favor of the upper classes' interests by the nobles from time to time, such as we see with the case of the baron Gimel.

The peasantry were economically much more important as a class than socially and politically. Villages formed a society of small producers which had to support the entire apparatus of the

executive power for taxation, both in cash and kind. Therefore, we see that they became most important once they refused to pay taxes. For this reason, the nobility accused Jean Serve of being someone who wished to demolish the social order when he encouraged the peasants not to pay taxes. The Croquant movement was seen as treasonous to god, nature, and monarchy for refusing to pay the taxes. Moreover, France as an agricultural country was dependent on agricultural production and this determined the prosperity or calamity of the country. It happened several times, that the rebellious peasants were forgiven by the nobility when they agreed to return to their fields. Such as was the case with Montpensier, who forgave the Gautiers, or the similar case with the Croquants movement in 1594.

The Religious wars drew in the involvement of all social classes or estates to participate in the conflict. The walled towns and peasantry were both important in the wars. The fortified towns were less directly affected, and at the same time, by introducing their civic militia, mercenaries, and urban captains, became a counterpart in the military activities of the nobility. The militarization of both the urban and rural areas was the result of the religious wars, although the peasantry were the main sufferers in the conflict. In peasant economy, the labor and agricultural output were the capital, and the destruction of each of them by conscription, massacres, pillage and so forth meant the destruction of the peasant household and village. Hence, all peasant movements in the late sixteenth century were against the nobility rather than other classes. As Heller states, the violence of the nobility against the peasantry was a fact in the countryside.⁴³² Antoine du Verdier said “*Le laboureur foule deteste la noblesse*”⁴³³ or, as François l'Alouëte also pointed out, tenants were directly challenging seigneurial rights and jurisdiction; everyone was

⁴³² Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 17.

⁴³³ Antoine Du Verdier, *Les omonimes: satyre des moeurs corrompues* (Lyon: Antoine Gryphius, 1572), 9.

ready to take arms against the nobility. At another point he added, “They [peasants] are seeking extermination [of the nobles] every day by means of pillages, cruelties, tyrannical acts and murder”.⁴³⁴ For l'Alouëte, the peasants and commoners were the main reason for the disasters of the Religious war because they sought the destruction of the old social order by declining the power of the nobility. Pierre Charron's “*De la Sagesse*” describes the peasant revolt as a violent movement of the masses against the prince or magistrate. From below, at assemblies of Limeuil and La Boule, the Croquants called their uprising an action against the *tyrannies de la noblesse*. In the second article in their grievance to the provincial estates at Périgueux, the Croquants asked for the ending of the unjust oppression of the nobility. The numerous accounts about the peasant attacks to the castles of the nobles shows this rage and animosity in practice.

France experienced a varied kind of early capitalist development. As northern France was gradually drawn to the modern world economy core, southern France, where tensions existed between the central government and a strong local landed class, was absorbed to the semi-periphery of the world system. In the south, the peasants were stuck in a complicated network because, on the one hand, they were a part of the modern world economy and, on the other hand, they needed to provide their own subsistence.⁴³⁵ Furthermore, the emergence of capital coincided with the process of peasant class formation, the subdivision and fragmentation of the land, bureaucratization, and investments in the countryside. One of the complaints of the Croquants was against the new offices such as objections of Porquéry about the unnecessary offices. Competition with large-scale and capital-intensive agriculture gradually destroyed small farms. With the

⁴³⁴ “*Et ne void-on pas qu'on ne cherche que de les exterminer tous les iours? pour les pillages cruautez et tyranniques deportemens et deprauation de vie qui leur ofte et suffoque et la lumiere et splendeur dont itls souloyent auoir estime et reputation par le merite de leur vertu.*” Francois de L'Alouëte, *Des affaires d'estat: des finances, du prince et de sa noblesse* (A Mets: Par Iean d'Arras, 1597), 165. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 139

⁴³⁵ Frank Ellis, *Peasant Economics: Farm Households and Agrarian Development* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4-5.

collapsing of feudal class relations and wiping out of the manor as an economic unit, the peasants' surplus shifted from the manor to the local market town and its hinterland. During the wars, the provincial office-holders were enabled to take most of the land under their control.⁴³⁶ Simultaneously, the concentration of the land ownership was followed by the concentration of production and the emergence of the sharecropping (*métayage*) system in the south. It is not surprising that the process of the transition to sharecropping reached its peak during the religious war, in the 1570s and 1580s. In the chronicle of Jean Tarde, we see that the peasants complained about the *metairies* and how they became poor after being forced to pay double of the ordinary rent.⁴³⁷ Another effect was the slow process of pauperization of the peasantry, smallholders, and day-laborer, in the countryside. In his "*Memoires*", Jean Burel wrote about the flow of the poor people who came from the countryside to the town and begged for a piece of bread.⁴³⁸ André Lafaisse described how peasants were forced to sell the tiles and beams of their houses to stay alive. Similarly, Segulier reported that poverty was at the root of the problem in Normandy. In his classification of the people, Biron called people of the countryside as "*le peuple maigre*"; those who were subject of extraction by the nobility and towns.⁴³⁹

French society in 1560 was in a state of crisis, which reached its peak by the 1590s. The popular revolts were alarming for the nobility and brought the nobles together at times. Evidently, the peasant revolts were an immediate reaction to the destruction of the peasant economy, to the oppression by the nobility, and to the fiscal policy of the nascent absolutist government. Furthermore, the peasant revolts were a reaction to the lesser comprehensible gradual long-term

⁴³⁶ Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 310.

⁴³⁷ Tarde, Gérard, and Tarde, *Les chroniques de Jean Tarde*, 396.

⁴³⁸ "*Pour Dieu! laissez m'en sortir un(g) pain ou un(g) demy-carton de blé pour nourrir mes povres enfans.*" Jean Burel and Augustin Chassaing, *Mémoires de Jean Burel, bourgeois du Puy* (Le Puy-en-Velay: M.-P. Marchessov, 1875), 429.

⁴³⁹ Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 69.

socio-economic transition. The outcome of the revolt was that the French peasants appeared for the first time as a class enemy of the nobility.

Appendices

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Table of the peasant revolt

Appendix 2 – Glossary of terms

Appendix 1

Table of the Peasant Revolts

Region / Name	Geography	Year(s)	Type	Reasons	Class(es)
Cabans	Provence	1561	peasant revolt	Taxation, Extortion	Peasantry
Razats	Provence	1578	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion	Peasantry – Local gentry
Ligue de Montélimar	Dauphiné	1578-1580	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion	Peasantry, Petty-bourgeoisie
Vivaraïs	Vivaraïs	1579	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion	Peasantry, Petty-bourgeoisie
Chaperons-sans-cordon	Dauphiné	1579-1578	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion	Peasantry, Petty-bourgeoisie
Martragny	Normandy	1579	peasant revolt	Taxation, Brigandage	Peasantry
Caen	Normandy	1580	Riot	Taxation Brigandage	Peasantry, Petty-bourgeoisie
Haute-Uzège	Languedoc - Gard	1582-1592	peasant revolt – fiscal strike	Taxation	Peasantry
La Chapelle-Geuthier	Normandy	1587-1589	peasant revolt	Taxation Brigandage, Continuation of war	Peasantry, Local priests, Local Gentry
Le Perch	Normandy	1590	peasant revolt	Continuation of war	Peasantry
The Lipans	Normandy - Alençon	1590	peasant revolt	Continuation of war	Peasantry – Local Gentry
Cornouaille	Brittany	1590 - 1595	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion, Continuation of war	Peasantry – Local Gentry
Croquants of campenères in Campanelle	Languedoc – Comminges	1591-1594	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion, Continuation of war	Peasantry
Francs-Museaux	Normandy - Senlis	1591-1592	peasant revolt	Taxation Brigandage, Continuation of war	Peasantry
Châteaux-Verts	Normandy	1591-1592	peasant revolt	Taxation Brigandage, Continuation of war	Peasantry
Izier	Burgundy	1592	peasant revolt	Continuation of war, suppression,	Peasantry
Villemorien	Champagne	1593	peasant revolt	Pillage, extortion	Peasantry
Bonnets Rouges	Burgundy	1593-1595	peasant revolt	Pillage, extortion, Continuation of war	Peasantry
Croquants of Velay	Languedoc - Velay	1594-1595	peasant revolt	Taxation, Pillage, Extortion, Continuation of war	Peasantry

Table 1. Table of the peasant revolt

Appendix 2

Glossary of Terms⁴⁴⁰

- *Accensement*: the assessment of nominal money dues owed by a peasant to his seigneur.
- *Affrèment*: A legal association of brothers holding property in common to avoid subdivision.
- *Aides*: Sales taxes.
- *Alleux*: Land which was privately owned without feudal obligation.
- *Anobli*: Recently ennobled.
- *Arrêt*: Decree or judgment pronounced by a court.
- *Arrière-Ban*: The summoning of the full feudal array, involving the holders of minor fiefs created by subinfeudation.
- *Arrière-Fief*: A minor fief, the result of subinfeudation.
- *Bailli*: The king's representative in a *bailliage* usually appointed from the hereditary nobility of the sword, primarily responsible for military matters and keeping order. The former duties of the *bailli* in justice and the administration of the royal domain were exercised by other officials.
- *Ban*: The summoning of the feudal array.
- *Banalités*: Minor obligations of peasants within a seigneurie to use the seigneur's mill, barn, etc.
- *Bureau de ville*: The executive of a municipal government, usually consisting of mayor, aldermen and officials.

⁴⁴⁰ All Glossary list is borrowed from Salmon, J. H. M. *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.

- *Capitouls*: The aldermen of Toulouse.
- *Cens*: Nominal money dues, more important as proof of a tenant's obligations to the seigneurs than as a contribution to seigneurial revenue.
- *Champart*: The system existing in some districts whereby a proportion of the harvest was passed to the seigneurs.
- *Châtellenie*: An administrative and judicial jurisdiction below the level of bailliage. Also known as prévôté, vicomté or viguerie.
- *Communauté*: a corporation of local inhabitants with communal property interests.
- *Corvée*: labor service owed to the seigneur.
- *Cour des aides*: a sovereign court whose main responsibility was to hear appeals from the taxpayers.
- *Cour de monnaies*: a high court concerned with currency.
- *Cour du trésor*: Responsible for the royal domain. Absorbed by the Parlement of Paris.
- *Crues*: Direct taxes additional to the normal taille and *taillon*.
- *Dîme*: contribution paid by the peasantry to the church.
- *Domaine*: The royal domain comprised the king's ordinary revenues. The *domaine proche* was the seigneurial reserve, while the *domaine utile* was occupied by tenants.
- *Droit écrit*: Roman law, upon which private law in southern France was based.
- *Échevin*: An alderman in the municipal government.
- *Élection*: A fiscal administrative court below the level of the *généralité*. The officials of an *Élection* were known as *élus*.
- *Enquêtes*: The intermediary chamber of the *parlement*.
- *Fermage*: In agriculture, farming through tenants. In finance, tax farming.

- *Fief*: Feud. Territory held in vassalage in return for military service.
- *Franc-fief*: The fee paid to the crown by the possessor of a fief who was not of noble status.
- *Gabelle*: The salt tax, which took various forms in different provinces.
- *Gabeleurs*: it was used pejoratively to refer to other fiscal officers as well as those concerned with the gabelle.
- *Généralité*: The reforms of François I and Henri II divided France into seventeenth regions (apart from the pays d'état), in each of which there was a treasury (*recette-générale*). The magistrates in the bureau of each *généralité* were known as *trésoriers généraux*.
- *Greniers à sel*: Depots for storing the salt under the regime of the gabelle.
- *Guet et garde*: An obligation for the peasantry to contribute to the securities and defenses of the seigneur's manor or château.
- *Jurats*: A corporative sworn guild regulated by the crown.
- *Laboureur*: A comparatively well-off peasant.
- *Lods et ventes*: Sales taxes levied under the seigneurial system.
- *Mainmorte*: the right of a seigneur to confiscate the property of a peasant who died without a direct heir.
- *Menu Peuple* : The ignorant masses.
- *Métayage*: Sharecropping.
- *Métiers jurés*: Trades organized into *jurandes*, or sworn guilds. Those not so organized were termed *métier libres* and were regulated by municipal authorities.
- *Morcellement* : The fragmentation of the land into uneconomic parcels.
- *Péage* : Tolls.

- *Prévôt* : By the sixteenth century, they were officer who represented jurisdictions inferior to the *bailliage*.
- *Procureur*: Solicitor.
- *Quint*: The requirement that the seller of a fief pay one-fifth of the price to the overlord.
- *Rachat*: The obligation to pay one year's revenue upon the inheritance of a tenure.
- *Receveur*: Generally, a receiver of revenue.
- *Rente*: Private *rentes* were originally annuities established on the income of landed property.

As usury laws were liberalized in the sixteenth century the *rentes* became a source of the rural credit under terms more similar to those of a mortgage. A *rentier* was a person living off such investments.

- *Roturiers*: The unprivileged.
- *Sénéchaussée*: another name, used mainly in the south of France, for a *bailliage*. The equivalent of a *bailli* was a *sénéchal*.
- *Taille*: The poll tax, levied on the person of the unprivileged in the north (*taille personnelle*) and on non-noble land in the south (*taille réelle*). *Taillon* was the special addition to the *taille* by Henri II.
- *Traites*: Customs dues, levied internally as well as externally.
- *Vigneron* : Vine-grower

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