

Between 1525 and 1789, peasant riots and rebellions rose drastically, resulting in severe violence. These rebellions were the result of the upper class controlling and altering both economic factors and the rising power in government state. These peasants were also treated undemocratically by their seigniors, which forced the peasants to revolt against the upper class. Economic factors, the growing power in state and the poor treatment of the peasants were the main causes of the rebellions and riots during the middle ages in Europe.

Another major cause, which led the peasants to rebel against the noble class and the aristocratic peoples, were economic issues. Food prices and trade were the two main economic problems that pushed the peasants to revolt against the upper class. The first threat that the peasants faced was economic in nature. The economy of the west was becoming more economically driven by exchange on international markets and industrial capitalism (DWP, 318). The late medieval economic crisis that was in part the result of the bubonic plague had a major impact on the population in Europe (DWP, 319). The growth of population following the bubonic plague effected the economy, which in turn effected the status of the peasants in society (DWP, 319). Increased labour supplies drove wages downward, while the massive growth in population increased the demand for food and therefore increased its price. Since peasants were poor and high prices meant that they could not afford the food and would starve. Agriculture was another major economic factor, which led to the riots and rebellions during the middle ages in Europe. In the article, "*The German Peasants' Revolt of 1525: The Twelve*," the author states in the tenth article that "we are aggrieved by the appropriation by individuals of meadows and field, which at one time belonged to a community. These we will take again into our

own hands.” This is saying that the seigniors took the free land from the peasants, which they used for cattle and livestock and forced them to pay a fee on the land that they used. Not only good the peasants not afford food, but eventually the peasants could not afford to pay for their own land, which was stolen from them. The peasant had to give the lord a percentage of the annual harvest, pay a fine to marry someone from outside the lord’s estate and pay a fine, usually the best sheep or cow owned, to inherit property (HWS, 369). A main point to think about would be that at this time the lords are in control over the peasants. The peasant serve the lords, but in fact they cheque each other because if the peasant some how disappeared, the lord would make no profit. In fact, the peasant is in control because the peasant earns all of the money for the lord and if the peasant did not exist, the lord would not exist. Consequently, the peasants fought back against the upper class to gain back their land and to go back to the old way of society.

One of the main causes during the modern period, which resulted in rebellions and riots, was the growing power of the state and government. Although very necessary, taxation was strongly opposed by the peasants during the Middle Ages in Europe (DWP, 318). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many wars occurred throughout Europe and every state sought to increase its tax revenue to sustain the costs of war. This meant that central bureaucracies had to be established because of the large revenue demands on the peasants (DWP, 318). The main cause of the French rebellions was the rising tax burden imposed on the peasants and the way in which it was collected (DWP, 324). These taxes increased during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because France was frequently at war and royal revenues had to rise to meet military costs and therefore high taxes needed to be imposed. Peasant taxpayers were well aware

of this system and were disrespectful to their collectors, gabelleurs, who put a tax-farmed fee on salt sales (DWP, 324). In addition, tax issues were the main cause of the Croquants of Anguomois and Saintonge Revolt (DWP, 324). This rebellion occurred because the officials attempted to collect taxes in the month of April and the peasants did not approve of that. Most peasants argued against the new royal taxes. They believed that the taxes were the work of corrupt royal officials and that the King would grant peasants tax relief if he only knew about the dishonesty within the governmental system (DWP, 325). The main purpose of the protestant rebellions was not to change the government or state, but rather to go back to the old ways of lower taxes (DWP, 325). This was an important argument proposed by the peasants because the taxes became so high that they could not afford to pay them. It is very clear that the taxation issue became a common problem among the peasant society.

One of the main issues among the Middle Ages was the way in which the peasants were being treated. Many of the authors in the article, "*Peasant Violence: Rebellion and Riot in Early Modern Europe*," believed that the collective violence was predominantly carried out by the lowest class of peasants. Others believed that the upper class and the noble class aggravated the peasants (DWP, 319). Although the peasants were not slaves, they were treated very poorly with little say among their communities. In the article, "*Revolt of 1525: The Twelve*," the first article of twelve states that, "In the future we should have power and authority so that each community should choose and appoint a pastor, and that we should have the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly (DWP, 334)." These peasants are stating that they should have the power to appoint their own pastor, rather than having a pastor who has been appointed by

another individual and who is corrupt. This allows them to depose of him if he ever acts out improperly. Peasants were required to pay double for wood because they are poor and only the upper class should have to pay low cost for lumber. Most peasants lived in extremely poor conditions. During the Middle Age period in Europe, agriculture was very vulnerable to weather conditions, blights, and pests. As a result, peasants endured a great deal of suffering from their destroyed crops (DWP, 320). These poor conditions were a direct result of the German Peasants Revolt in 1525 because peasant communities refused to work until they received better working conditions (DWP, 321). In the article, *“Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Conditions of the Peasants to the Council of State in Vienna, June 1769,”* the author states that “the peasants live in a condition of real slavery and that they become savage and brutalized, and cultivate the lands in their charge badly (DWP, 343).” The parents sleep on straw, the children naked on the wide shelves of earthenware stoves; they never was, which promotes the spread of diseases and are no doctors to take care of them (DWP, 343). These rebellions and riots are a direct result of the poor treatment that these people received from their lords. If the peasants owned a good, strong horse, the lord would force them to sell the horse and compensate them with a horse that was injured, or not very healthy (DWP, 343). This was because the upper class believed that they deserved the best of everything and that the lower class deserved the worst. Although not a direct cause to the rebellion during the early modern period in Europe, the poor treatment that the peasants underwent was unnecessary and inappropriate. Therefore, how are people supposed to live a normal life if they live in conditions, such as the one that the peasants lived in? The answer is that they could not and that was why they rebelled against the upper class.

During the modern period in Europe, the peasants rebelled against the aristocrats, and the noble class as a result of three main causes. The first cause was economic issues, which included, increased food prices, increased agricultural prices, and trade. The second cause was the rising state in power, which included the rising cost in taxes in order to compensate for the war costs. Finally, the last cause was treatment, which includes, living in impossible conditions, along with poor labour conditions and low wages. These main causes, which the upper class created, became the main causes, which forced the peasants to take violent action. In the end, the peasants never accomplished any revolutionary goals since they never had any revolutionary ideas. Early modern peasant rebellions and riots aimed not a creating something new, but rather to go back to the way society was before the chaotic period.