Resources and Power
The present section analyzes some of the main questions concerning State funding, a core element of any comparison between the West and the Islamic and Byzantine worlds. It also deals with the extraction of resources and the development of fiscal systems, and with the institutions that enabled these. The three starting-points are: How was political activity funded? How were political structures influenced by the manner of the funding? What were the social and economic consequences of the circulation of resources activated by politics? Resources are understood in a broad fashion, as the incomes of a given community but also as the procedures, rules and practices regulating the social interactions that determine production, distribution and consumption.

The first three papers in this section deliberately take a broader and more chronologically extended approach than those in the preceding section on Law and Codification. Examining types of States and revenues in the feudal world, the significance of tithe as form of extraction, and the place assigned to tribute and plunder in historiographical models, Carocci and Collavini’s article invites discussion of the extent to which the western models of the relationship between politics and resources are also applicable to the Byzantine or Islamic areas. The question of land-tenure, how Muslims owned land (if they did), and the legal and fiscal status of such land in the early Islamic state, is developed in Kennedy’s article. Focusing on Byzantium, Prigent addresses the impact of taxation on the economy at large, the strategic implications of payments in kind, in cash or in service, the nature of tax-assessment, units and the relationship between the areas of levy, storage and investment of the fiscal product.

In addition, the present section includes an article on Sicily, a point of telling inter-section between Western Christendom, Byzantium, and Islam. Nef’s analysis on Sicily – where the Hauteville dynasty built a quite original State that combined diverse referential systems but whose fiscal heart was of Islamic inspiration – treats the institutions that enabled the extraction of resources. She highlights the actors who carried out the extraction, and analyses the associated practices and representations.