



*Cheiron: The International Journal of
Equine and Equestrian History*
Vol. 3, Issue 2/2023
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<http://trivent-publishing.eu/>

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DOI: 10.22618/TP.Cheiron.20233.2.216003

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Using horses as a historical lens, this study examines four components of ritualistic equestrianism in Tudor coronation ceremonies: the King's Champion, the Gilded Spurs, the Master of the Horse, and the Horse of Honor. These four components remained an essential part of coronation ceremonies during the Tudor era despite significant political, religious, and cultural changes and elevated in status, identity, and symbolism to parallel the rise of horse culture in early modern England. More importantly, these four components underlined the importance of horses and horsemanship to the Crown.

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I. Introduction

Horses played an intricate part in the elaborate coronation ceremonies of Tudor England as a metonym for power and authority. This type of symbolism was also extended and embedded into objects such as saddles and spurs. More than just devices used to control one's horse, they were representations of state and knighthood. The function and role of the Horse of Honor elevated from being merely utilitarian to entirely ceremonial. Positions at Court like the King's Champion established firm family identities through hereditary means and service, while the Master of the Horse gained power in status through continued service in war and in the monarch's household. This elevation of ritualistic equestrianism mirrored the progression and advancements in horse culture that occurred during the Tudor period. Legitimacy remained a vital concern during each of the reigns of the Tudor monarchs, and due to continental developments after 1485, they legitimized their throne by adopting different aspects of European culture including horsemanship, horse management, and horse technology. Using horses as a historical lens, this study

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examines four different components of equestrianism in Tudor coronation ceremonies: the King's Champion, the Gilded Spurs, the Master of the Horse, and the Horse of Honor. Despite the significant political, religious, and cultural changes that occurred during the Tudor era, these four components remained an essential part of coronation ceremonies and elevated in status, identity, and symbolism to parallel the rise of horse culture in early modern England. Moreover, these four components underlined the importance of horses and horsemanship to the Crown.²

Historians have mostly overlooked equestrianism within coronation ceremonies. Peter Edwards's foundational research on the dramatic increase in the use of horses in early modern England provided the groundwork for equine studies through an economic, social, and cultural lens.³ A growing interest in horse culture among scholars led to a panel organized by Treva Tucker for the 2002 meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. This developed into the 2005 collaboration *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, which reintroduced the significance of the horse in the early modern period. These authors emphasize that knowing more about horses allows for a more complete understanding of the many aspects of early modern culture. They reveal the relationship between political power and diplomacy on the one hand and gift-giving on the other. They explore "where and why the idealization of restraint and discipline emerged, whom it targeted, and how it was articulated across arenas as varied as the social, political, and the self; how group and national identity and self-definition were created and enforced, and how these distinctions interfaced with ideas about social, cultural, and even racial differentiation."⁴ The combined collection demonstrates that without knowledge of how the horse fits into these aspects, "no version of political, material, or intellectual culture in the period can be entirely accurate."⁵ This essay seeks to add to that conversation by providing a case study on equestrianism in coronation ceremonies, while also contributing to a broader story about Tudor legitimacy.

² This article is indebted to my M.A. Thesis, "Ritualistic Equestrianism: Status, Identity, and Symbolism in Tudor Coronation Ceremonies," (2020) *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, Paper 3771. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3771>.

³ Peter Edwards, *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁴ Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker, eds., *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*; For more information, see also: Amanda Murray, *All the Kings' Horses: a Celebration of Royal Horses from 1066 to the Present Day* (London: Robson, 2006); Kevin De Ornellas, *The Horse in Early Modern English Culture: Bridled, Curbed, and Tamed* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014); Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017); Pia Cuneo, ed., *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014); Peter Edwards, K. A. E. Enenkel, and Elspeth Graham, eds., *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World* (Boston: Brill, 2012); Peter Edwards, *Horses and the Aristocratic Lifestyle in Early Modern England: William Cavendish, First Earl of Devonshire (1551-1626) and His Horses* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018).

A. Medieval Coronation Ceremonies

Coronation officials used the *Liber Regalis*, or the Royal Book, as their official guide to constructing a formal ceremony. Dating back to 1377, the *Liber Regalis* contains the official guides and procedures to every coronation and lists the proper rhetoric for each service. The guide is also used in conjunction with a program or itinerary known as a Device that is tailored to each individual monarch. Coupled with the *Liber Regalis*, the Device reveals the events, placements, prayers, and songs that occurred during an individual monarch's coronation. Richard II's coronation was the first of its kind to be recorded in 1377, and by the Tudor era, the *Liber Regalis* had reached the fourth and final Recension, or version, of formal procedures for the crowning events.⁶ There were four stages to a medieval and Tudor coronation. The first stage consisted of the monarch traveling by barge up the Thames River to the Tower of London. This was perceived as a symbolic takeover of the city. Once arrived, the monarch generally knighted several Knights of the Bath before spending the night in prayer. The following morning began stage two. The king traveled through the city streets of London by procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Palace so that the people could see him or her. The crowd's cheers for the new monarch meant the approval of the people by election. Stage three took place the next morning with a small, but very formal, procession into Westminster Abbey where the heart of the ceremony took place: the anointing of the new king or queen, sometimes both. After the anointing, the procession was led to Westminster Hall where a great banquet was held to wrap up the events, thereby completing stage four.

Services rendered during a coronation came with great reward. Nobles displayed their status and rank in society by their place in line during the procession. This showcasing was more apparent if the selected noble carried one of the regal objects during the ceremony: St. Edward's chalice, swords, and a pair of golden spurs. After a monarch's death, a committee was formed where officials heard court claims on positions of placement, qualifications, services, and fees for the coronation. Many claims were motivated by hereditary and monetary reasons, and nobles took advantage of the opportunity to be a part of an ancient tradition and to be seen. Furthermore, the rewards that came with having served the crown in such a way were worth the time and expense needed to participate in such a ceremony. As chief of the Herald's College, it was the Earl Marshall's responsibility to oversee the entire operation and ensure that the coronation services went as planned. On the day of the coronation, the Earl Marshall was tasked with keeping order in the king's presence and assisting the ushers in keeping the doors clear.⁷ Also, he went in the processions with the Lord High Constable and accompanied the King's Champion on his entry into the Hall. The Earl Marshall was additionally responsible for carrying the crown in the procession, putting it on the King's head, and supporting it by holding the fleuron on the front of the crown.⁸ For these services in the coronation of Henry V,

⁶ Leopold George Wickham Legg, ed., *English Coronation Records* (Whitehall Gardens, S. W.: Archibald Constable & Co., 1901), 81.

⁷ *Ibid.*, lxx.

⁸ *Ibid.*

John Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, requested that his fee be paid in the form of “the King’s palfrey with its harness, and also, the Queen’s, used when they came to the coronation.”⁹ The palfrey would have been the King’s riding horse instead of a trotting courser, or hunter, but the horses are a testament to the desire of fine horses for oneself.

The King’s Champion played a role of great significance in the coronation and one of great reward; however, it is also an office that has never been anything but part of a pageant. The King’s Champion did not hold political power, nor did he perform these services at other regal functions. The titular role only made an appearance at coronation ceremonies. The knight bestowed the honor of the title was equipped with the second-best horse in the King’s stable, the first being the horse that the King himself rode during the procession.¹⁰ The fee of the King’s Champion was also conditional. If the knight was challenged and had to fight an opponent and won, then, the knight received the armor that he wore, the horse he rode, and also the trappings worn by the horse. If the knight was not challenged and, therefore, did not fight, then, he received the gold cup that the King used to drink to him.¹¹ The role of the King’s Champion is one that was carefully scripted for the theatrical entertainment of the day’s events. For the coronation of Richard II, John Dymoke claimed the right as Champion for hereditary reasons.¹² His claim to service gives insight into how the part of King’s Champion played out during the ceremony. Riding on “one of the best chargers which the king has, with the saddle, and the harness, well covered with mail, together with all the armour belonging to the body of the king, entirely as the king himself would have it if he were to go into mortal combat,” Dymoke was to “come armed with the same armour, and mount the same charger well covered, the day of the coronation, and ride before the king in the procession.”¹³ He, then, cried out to the people three times that whosoever believed that the heir to the throne of England, was not the rightful King “that he is ready with his body to adventure now, or whatsoever day he shall choose, that he lieth as a false traitor.”¹⁴ This act continued into the Tudor reign, and by 1558, the role had been firmly established by the Dymoke family, making their name synonymous with equestrian theatrics on coronation day.

The ancient family of Marmion originally held the office of the King’s Champion, followed by the Dymokes.¹⁵ An *Inquisitio post mortem* dated in the seventh year of King Edward III’s reign (1327-1377) reveals that the office originally was not a hereditary one, nor did the office have to show up for the event. Instead, the office was tied to the property rather than the family.¹⁶ The Dymoke family continued the tradition of serving as King’s Champion for coronation ceremonies in Medieval and Tudor times.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., lxxvi. “This armour and horse are to be the second best in the King’s stable.”

¹¹ Ibid., lxxvi.

¹² Ibid., 160.

¹³ Ibid., 70 & 160.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., lxxvi.

¹⁶ Giles Gossip, *Coronation Anecdotes, or, Select and Interesting Fragments of English Coronation Ceremonies* (London: J. Moyes, 1823), 86.

John Dymoke served as champion at Richard II's coronation and was granted the right based on hereditary reasons. His fee for the service was the horse that was used in the ceremony, revealing that whether the Champion was challenged or not, he was going home with the best horse in the realm, save one- the King's. His descendant, Sir Thomas Dymoke served the crown as Champion at Edward IV's coronation in 1461. Subsequently, Sir Thomas's son, Robert Dymoke, was King's Champion at the coronations of Richard III, Henry VII, and Henry VIII. This was followed by Robert's son, Edward Dymoke, who continued his father's work of serving the Tudors by holding the office of King's Champion at the coronations of Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I.¹⁷

Alongside the office of the King's Champion, the coronation ceremonies displayed another component steeped in equestrian symbolism. The "great gilt spurs," or the Gilded Spurs, were carried in the procession by one of the greater lords and nobles of the realm. The Earls of Pembroke had the original honor of carrying the great gilded spurs. From them, the duty descended to the Greys of Ruthyn and are listed as being carried by the Earl of Rutland at the coronation of Edward VI.¹⁸ The gold Spurs are part of the royal regalia, along with St. Edward's crown and St. Edward's staff, worn by the monarch after anointing. After a monarch was anointed in St Edward's Chapel, the Abbot of Westminster or his deputy dressed the king in the royal vestments, namely the *colobium sindonis* - a tunic shaped like a dalmatic, along with buckskins and sandals. Then, he fitted the gold Spurs onto the king's legs. In the case of a female monarch, the queen touched the Spurs with her hand, after which, they were taken back to the altar.¹⁹ The custom of fitting the Spurs onto the legs rather than have the sovereign wear them is one that arose out of convenience. Walking around with long robes on while wearing spurs is not only impractical but also a safety hazard to the monarch's mobility. After the blessing of the ornaments, the Lord Great Chamberlain disrobed the King of St. Edward's vestments and replaced them with a parliament robe. The items, including the Spurs, were then placed back up on St. Edward's altar.²⁰ Although the Spurs of the Tudor period were not the Spurs of St. Edward himself, their continued existence in coronation ceremonies, even into the services of England's first Queens when spurs would have been unnecessary, reveal the power, through symbolism, the gold riding accessories embodied.

The office of Master of the Horse is one of great significance due to its role in the monarch's household. The Master of the Horse was responsible for the horses of the Royal Stables, studs, mews, coach houses, and the kennels housing the hunting dogs. Originally a "king's yeoman", the office gained recognition for its war efforts and was elevated in name only from *custos equorum regis* to *magister* in the fourteenth

¹⁷ F. C. Westley, "The Champion of England," *The Spectator* 71 (1893): 494-95. The article gives a brief history of the Dymoke family. See also, Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 295.

¹⁸ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, lxxiii.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xli.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

century.²¹ This was due to the Brocas family.²² Their work made the office a higher social standing and politically more important than earlier keepers of the position. As a result, Sir Thomas de Murrieux is the first official “Master of the Horse” in an English coronation ceremony which was held for Richard II in 1377. The position continued to gain status into the Tudor period, and by Edward VI’s coronation, the mere position of the Master of the Horse behind the King beamed with militaristic power and state authority.

The role of the spare horse in the procession of Richard II was strictly utilitarian rather than ceremonial. For the medieval coronation in 1377, the *Liber Regalis* states that “Now the king on the day before his coronation shall ride bareheaded from the Tower of London through the city to his royal palace at Westminster in suitable apparel offering himself to be seen by the people who meet him.”²³ As Richard II made his way through the city streets of London atop his destrier, or warhorse, the coronation also revealed that “a spare horse was led” directly behind the king for his procession.²⁴ The horse was not associated with any specific type or breed, nor was the horse assigned any symbolic meaning. The horse was not “the king’s horse” either. The horse was simply a spare horse led behind the king in the procession as a replacement in the event that something happened to the horse the king himself was riding. Furthermore, the lad leading the spare horse in the procession of Richard II was not even recognized as someone significant, although Sir Thomas de Murrieux was tasked with the responsibilities for the day.

Horses in late Medieval England were bought, sold, and valued for different utilitarian and elite purposes. While horses of a utilitarian or agricultural nature generally sold at market for £1, horses used for elite purposes like destriers and gift horses “almost invariably costs upwards of £5, and regularly eclipsed £50 in the fourteenth century.”²⁵ Wars had caused a depletion in the domestic horse population and a surge in the demand for them. The outrageous prices for horses caused Richard II to issue a proclamation in 1386 that forbid breeders from charging the enormous prices that they demanded. The proclamation was published in prominent horse producing counties like Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and Yorkshire.²⁶ Elite horses also carried value as gift horses for diplomatic and social purposes.²⁷ Jordan Claridge argues that “the social requirements of the medieval aristocracy coupled with their military obligations created a demand for great horses, and this in turn, created a market segment dissimilar from its lower-order agricultural counterpart. For

²¹ M. M. Reese, *The Royal Office of Master of the Horse* (London: Threshold Books Limited, 1976), 53.

²² *Ibid.*, 340. The Brocas family held the title of Master of the Horse during the reign of Edward III; however, Richard II’s coronation procession is the first one in which a Master of the Horse bore the title.

²³ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 113.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

²⁵ Jordan Claridge, “Horses for Work and Horses for War: The Divergent Horse Market in Late Medieval England” (PhD diss., University of Alberta (Canada), 2011), 94, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.iris.etsu.edu:3443/docview/1040882161?accountid=10771>.

²⁶ Sir Walter Gilbey, “Richard II,” in *Horses Past and Present* (London: Vinton & Co., 1900), 16-17.

²⁷ Claridge, “Horses for Work and Horses for War: The Divergent Horse Market in Late Medieval England,” 79-89. See also Murray, *All the King’s Horses*, 21.

medieval aristocrats, when making spending decisions, social obligations arguably came before economic rationality, and very much shaped the exchange and movement of upper-class horses.”²⁸ Due to the weight of their social value, riding horses, known as palfreys, of an elite nature often became a means of currency and gift giving. Furthermore, they were often used as payment for services rendered to the crown, which gives insight into the value placed on both horses and royal duties.²⁹ Business dealings with the King was greatly rewarded and it was often done so with horses.

At the coronation of Richard III in 1483, the ornamental objects, including the Gilded Spurs, took on additional symbolic meanings. The procession into Westminster Abbey on the morning of the coronation reveals the symbolism behind the regal objects held on display. Leading the procession was the Earl of Huntingdon carrying the gold Spurs, which now also signified Knighthood. “Then followed Therle of Bedford bearing St Edward’s Staffe for a relic. After them came therle of Northumberland bareheaded with the Pointless Sword naked in his hand, which signified Mercie.”³⁰ Other objects in the procession symbolized things like “Justice to the Clergy”, “Peace”, “Monarchie”, and “Temporallitee.”³¹ The officers who are holding the ornaments in the procession are nearly all different from the officers who served in previous coronations.³² The War of the Roses undoubtedly contributed to this factor. This significant change in office holders from old families to new men reveals a shift in political power, one that gives insight into how Henry VII intended to rule his realm as he ushered in the dawn of Tudor England.³³

B. Early Tudor Coronation Ceremonies

The symbolic meanings carried over and continued into the coronations of the Tudors. The Little Device used in the coronation of England’s first Tudor monarch, Henry VII, was substantially the same as that of his predecessor Richard III and was used again in the coronation of his son, Henry VIII.³⁴ The procession itself became codified in the Little Device, which gives full instructions of the state entry into London and describes the actions of the coronation inside Westminster Abbey according to the Fourth Recension. The Little Device states that in the procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Palace, there followed behind the king the Dukes of Bedford and Suffolk, followed by seven henchmen on horses decorated with lavish trappings bearing the King’s badges. Bringing up the rear of this group was Sir John Cheyne, Master of the Horse and Knight of the King’s body, leading “a

²⁸ Ibid., 90.

²⁹ Ibid., 94.

³⁰ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 195-6.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 193.

³³ Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013), 1.

³⁴ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 219; see also Anglo, *Spectacle*, 12-14.

spare courser with saddle of estate,”³⁵ the emphasis in symbolism being on the saddle rather than the spare horse itself, for it is the saddle and trappings that are covered with cloth of gold, exactly as the king’s saddle, instead of crimson velvet, that is emphasized. The horse has gone from being a “spare” to one that has met the standards of a courser. Coursers were fast and agile horses with origins in hunting and coursing game, but they were also often used in war and tournaments and, therefore, differed in conformation and physique than that of a palfrey or saddle horse. Not only had the horse been assigned a specific type, but it was also wearing an object of symbolic significance. Draped in white, the horse was tacked in a saddle that contained a title: “saddle of estate.” The object can be compared to that of the “chair of estate” - a chair in which the monarch sits during the ceremony inside Westminster Abbey. By this comparison, the saddle that the spare courser wore signified the throne of England while on horseback. Although the saddle of estate probably first appeared with Richard III, inventory records taken down as things needed for the coronation of Henry VII listed needing reins made of gold cloth for the “horse of estate”: “Item to Pi^rs Briton Sadiller for a Sadille cou[^];ed in clothe of golde for the kinges owne vse price xs and a sadelle cou^{^^}ed in clothe of golde for astate xs xxs” and also “Item a leding Rayne couered in clothe of golde’ for y^o horse of astate ijct..”³⁶ This detail suggests that there was possibly a blend beginning to emerge in the horse’s significance. Again, this “horse of estate” was not the King’s horse ridden during the procession itself, rather it was the spare horse following behind the King. For Henry VII, the spare horse was not only draped in the symbolic emblem of a Saddle of Estate, but the horse itself was the sovereign symbol for power and state.

Sir Robert Dymoke made his grand entrance into the Great Banquet as the rightful King’s Champion to defend any claims against the legitimacy of Henry Tudor. The knight rode into Westminster Hall wearing the King’s armor just as the king would wear it. His horse was illustriously trapped in blue ‘Cadewaladras armes’ and “not the red dragon which was confusedly assigned to Cadwalader by a later age.”³⁷ Dymoke threw down the gauntlet and found no one to answer the call. The medieval ritual symbolized Henry’s power and authority over England, as well as the legitimacy of the Tudor monarchy. The symbolic imagery of the knight was invoked again at the funeral of Henry VII’s eldest son, Prince Arthur, when Lord Gerald FitzGerald, the 8th Earl of Kildale, was brought into the middle of the choir aboard Prince Arthur’s courser and dressed in his armor.³⁸ The purely ceremonious affair was steeped in powerful metaphors that propagated the Tudors as rightful heirs to England.

The spare horse and its handler appeared at the coronation ceremony of Henry VII’s wife, Elizabeth of York, and was distinguished as a palfrey. The Queen was not

³⁵ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 222; see also William Jerden, ed., *Rutland Papers, Documents Illustrative of the Courts and Times of Henry VII* (London: Camden Society, 1842), 5.

³⁶ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 211. The spelling is original.

³⁷ Anglo, *Spectacle*, 45.

³⁸ Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2016), see chapter six.

married to Henry VII at the time of his coronation, and instead, was anointed two years later in 1487 after the birth of their son, Prince Arthur. The Little Device, however, reads for the coronation of a king and queen consort on the same day. This was because Richard III was crowned together with his Queen consort, Anne Neville- the first joint crowning in 175 years.³⁹ The Little Device lists that the queen was to be paraded through the streets in an open litter with a “palfrey with a saddle of estate” following directly behind her.⁴⁰ Sydney Anglo writes, “The order of this procession has little worthy of remark apart from the fact that the henchmen, who followed the royal litter, rode after the Master of the Queen’s Horse and the courser of estate, and not before, as at Henry’s coronation – an alteration which gave rise to some difference of opinion amongst the heralds.”⁴¹ As previously noted, one’s position in the coronation procession was one of great significance, as it denoted wealth and status. The fact that the henchmen have been moved behind the Yeoman of the Queen’s Horse and palfrey with the saddle of estate indicates a slight elevation in the status and position of the yeoman and spare horse. Furthermore, for the Queen, the horse has been assigned a different type than that of the king. A courser and a palfrey are two distinct types of horses commonly found in horse markets and fairs. Although small riding horses, or palfreys, appeared in war and tournament settings, they were more commonly used for long distance travel and by women, and therefore, more closely adhered to the feminine image of a king’s wife. When it comes to horse breeds and types, gendered use of them is not always distinct; however, this paper will reveal that for Tudor coronation ceremonies, palfreys were specifically assigned to queen consorts and regnants, while coursers were assigned to kings. The spare palfrey was also led by the Yeoman of the Queen’s horses, a member of the Queen’s royal bodyguard whose position was higher than that of a Knight. Although the Yeoman’s place was one of significance, his position was not to be confused with that of Master of the Horse.

Using the Device of his predecessors, Henry VIII’s coronation procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Palace looked very similar to that of Richard III and Henry VII. Henry VIII was crowned with Katherine of Aragon in 1509 after the death of his father. The ceremonies shifted from expected aggrandizement, traditional of European ceremonies, to one of a general policy of ostentation and pomp for display that usually enhanced great diplomatic occasions or discussed international situations contemporary of the period.⁴² This expectation of what a coronation was supposed to look like reflected the wealth and grandeur of the period. Even the costumes for both humans and horses reflected the magnificence of a Renaissance king. Expenses from the Great Wardrobe alone totaled £4,748 6s 3d, extravagant compared to his father, Henry VII’s, coronation in which the Great Wardrobe expenses amounted to £1506 18s 10 3/4d.⁴³ Most of the necessities were

³⁹ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 219.

⁴⁰ Jerdan, *Rutland Papers*, 7.

⁴¹ Anglo, *Spectacle*, 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 122-3.

⁴³ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 199-218; Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 145.

saddlery consisting of bridles, saddles, and trappings.⁴⁴ By 1509, that royal attire had grown richer. The king's chronicler and eulogist, Edward Hall, wrote that Henry VIII wore 'a robe of Crimosyn velvet, furred with armyns, his jacket or cote of raised gold, the Placard embrowdered with Diamondes, Rubies, Emeraudes, greate Pearles, and other riche Stones, a greate Bauderike aboute his necke, of greate Balasses.'⁴⁵ The King rode on horseback through the streets of London while Katherine rode in an open litter pulled by horses draped in white and gold cloth. Hall even takes note of the trappings that adorned the different types of horses, observing that 'what payn, labour, and diligence, the Taylors, Embrouderours, and Golde Smithes tooke, bothe to make and devise garentes, for Lordes, Ladies, Knightes, and Esquiers, and also for decking, trappyng, and adorning of Coursers, Jenetes, and Palffries.'⁴⁶ Making his traditional appearance directly behind the King was Master of the Horse, Sir Thomas Brandon, leading the spare courser with the Saddle of Estate, but what kind of courser? Several types and landraces of horse, including Scottish Galloways, Hobbies, and Barbs, were believed to be good coursers.

Henry VIII endeavored to improve the quality of horses in both his own stables and his realm. He expected nobles to exhibit certain characteristics befitting someone of that status, and he expected their horses to reflect that standard as well. Between 1535 and 1542, the king presented three Acts of Parliament concerning the breeding of English horses. These acts encouraged nobles to begin their own breeding operation by keeping stallions and breeding to them specifically. Henry also attempted to improve the overall size of the horse by fixing a standard height of 15 hands for stallions and 13 hands for mares; however, Peter Edwards's meticulous research into the toll books of the Tudor and Stuart era show that many horses were found wanting in standard height.⁴⁷ In order to prevent a relapse in the quality of English horseflesh, Henry also decreed that no stallion over the age of two was permitted to run or feed with mares on any moors, forests, or commons. Although this practice was not new and is in fact endorsed in Jordanus Rufus's *De Medicina Equorum* (1250), the legislation passed to control it *was* new and demonstrates Henry VIII's commitment to improving the quality of horses in England.⁴⁸ This also correlates with Emily Abrehart's findings of fluctuation in bone size and shape of horses. Conducting an osteometric analysis, Abrehart found that the greatest increase in size and shape were in phases 1450-1600, 1600-1700, and 1700-1800, but also found that there was an unexpected decrease during the phase 1340-1500.⁴⁹ Conflicts

⁴⁴ Ibid., 144-145.

⁴⁵ Edward Hall, d. 1547, *Hall's Chronicle: Containing the History of England, During the Reign of Henry the Fourth, And the Succeeding Monarchs, to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth, In Which Are Particularly Described the Manners And Customs of Those Periods* (London: Printed for J. Johnson [etc.], 1809), 508.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Horses are measured from the withers to the ground in hands, and there are four inches in a hand; for more information, see Edwards, *Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England*, 68.

⁴⁸ Carly Ameen, et al, "Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Medieval Warhorse," *Cheiron* 1(1) (2021): 99-119; Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 8.

⁴⁹ Emily Abrehart, "New Perspectives on Horse Breeding in Medieval and Early-Modern England: An Osteometric Analysis of Horses from London," Academia, accessed June 12, 2019. https://www.academia.edu/11782140/New_perspectives_on_horse_breeding_in_medieval_and_early-modern_England_An_osteometric_analysis_of_horses_from_London.

such as the War of the Roses indubitably contributed to this factor.⁵⁰ Additionally, Nicholas Russell's work *Like Engend'ring Like: Heredity and Animal Breeding in Early Modern England* draws from published findings of both biologists and archeologists to conclude that there, indeed, was an increase in the size of some horses from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.⁵¹

Henry's elaborate image as a legitimate ruler also extended to his royal stables and is evident in the money spent on building materials used for its design. Stables built at New Hall, Essex, in 1517-21, were 145ft. long, and those built at the royal palace at Reading in 1570 were 162ft. long and cost £1,000.⁵² The greatest of all the royal stables, those at the Royal Mews at Charing Cross, where the 'Great Stable, garnetts, barns and hay lofts' were built in 1550-56, cost £6,516 12s 6d, "the price of a very substantial country house."⁵³ Built in 1537-38 at a cost of £130 by the king's Master Bricklayer, Christopher Dickenson, the stables at Hampton Court were set apart by their distinguished red brick and tile that was approached through an impressive stone arch. Building projects such as these reminded everyone of the wealth and power of the King and helped solidify the Tudor's permanence as a Dynasty.

The king also saw fit to establish fifty new Gentlemen Pensioners to maintain the royal stud. These highly skilled horsemen were well paid aristocrats and elite bodyguards, both on the battlefield and at court, to the king. Their status was distinguished by the servants they kept and the formidable appearance that they maintained, occasionally wearing cloth of gold. A number of Gentlemen Pensioners, like Sir Nicholas Arnold, contributed to the King's horse breeding efforts, and even went on to produce manuscripts. Sir Arnold was said to have bred the best horses in England, and written of the manner of their production: "would to God his compass of ground were like to that of Pella in Syria, wherein the king of that nation had usually a studdery of 30,000 mares and 300 stallions, as Strabo doth remember, lib."⁵⁴ The king's undertaking to improve the standard of living and breeding, albeit unsuccessfully, of royal horses reflects the increasing significance of horse breeding, horsemanship, and horse care in early modern England.

After Henry and Katherine's anointing, guests made their way to the traditional banquet held in the Great Hall where Sir Robert Dymoke made his grand appearance on horseback. The King's Champion was an embodiment of the king's power as a military figurehead and was also a reflection of the lavish pageantry that came to embody the Tudor era. Prior to the late fifteenth century, Knights participated in jousting and tournaments to exercise skills used in combat, but established tournament rules began to create a more sportsman-like atmosphere with

⁵⁰ For more information on the War of the Roses, see Penn, *Winter King*, 1.

⁵¹ Nicholas Russell, *Like Engend'ring Like: Heredity and Animal Breeding in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2. See also Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 10-11. The increase in horse size is due in part to the drive for larger horses in which native breeds were crossbred with larger Northern European ones.

⁵² Giles Worsley, *The British Stable* (New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre BA, 2005), 21.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ William Harrison, *Description of Elizabethan England, 1577* (Generic NL Freebook Publisher), 59.

consideration taken for the horses involved.⁵⁵ During the Tudor period, the competitions became grandiose settings of aristocratic showman who wore elaborate armor with symbolic meanings, displayed sharp athleticism, and impressed onlookers with their magnificent displays of horsemanship.⁵⁶ Max Merideth Reese writes that “by the time of Henry VIII the original military and sporting objects of the tournament had given way to a rich and formalized entertainment that was artistic rather than athletic.”⁵⁷ In 1510, the king received horse armor from the Emperor Maximilian I. The scrolling tendrils bear the pomegranate badge of the House of Aragon, commemorating his marriage to Katherine in 1509. Additionally, the king felt the need to record these lavish occasions to further cement his place in the history books. Depictions of Henry VIII jousting while Katherine and her ladies watch can still be seen in the form of a pictorial record that survives today.⁵⁸ Written on a continuous 60ft long roll, the “Roll of Honor” is an illuminated manuscript that narrates the beginning, middle and end of the great tournament. It further reveals the king’s royal black and gold colors on both the servants and Henry’s horse’s barding, demonstrating that the horse reflected the king’s image and even extended to the servants.

Aside from tournaments and jousting, general displays of horsemanship skills were an elaborate demonstration of culture and refinement among the elite, and nobles adopted these skills as part of their courtly education. Published originally in Italian in 1528 and translated to English in 1561, Baldassarre Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* provides contemporary thought on the perfect Courtier and his knowledge and display of the horse— “Even in time of peace, weapons are often used in various exercises, and gentlemen appear in public shows before the people and ladies and great lords.”⁵⁹ Castiglione then states that “For this reason, I would have our Courtier a perfect horseman in every kind of seat; and besides understanding horses and what pertains to riding, I would have him use all possible care and diligence to lift himself a little beyond the rest in everything, so that he may be ever recognized as eminent above all others.”⁶⁰ The Courtier was above all else a horseman. His education as a courtier reflected the ideal horseman himself. From the clothes he wore, to the spurs he wore, to the way he danced, to the way he treated a lady, to the way he presented himself as a political and authority figure, to the way he negotiated with noble figures- all are aspects seen in the skills of a well-trained horseman. The ability to govern a horse, the embodiment of beastly masculinity, was

⁵⁵ Reese, *Master of the Horse*, 79. In 1466, tournament code rules attributed to John Tiptoft were put in place for protection of both the exhibitor and his horse. Of note is the rule that a jousting, while tilting, could no longer strike an opponent’s horse. See also Richard Barber and Juliet Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (The Boydell Press, 1989), 13-28. For more information of the origins of the tournament, see David Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon and Continuum, 2005), 2-16.

⁵⁶ Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, 107-138. For more information on jousting becoming a spectacle in Europe, see Noel Fallows, *Jousting in Medieval and Renaissance Iberia* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 267-304.

⁵⁷ Reese, *Master of the Horse*, 81.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁹ Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2003), 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

to say that one can control its subjects. Horsemanship became a vital element in the education of young men, and many were sent abroad to acquire the skills: in Italy at first but by the end of the sixteenth century, France.⁶¹ The new Italian equestrian art of *manège*, the precursor to modern day dressage, and the *haute école*, or high school style of riding, was founded in Naples by Federico Grisone. His school attracted gentlemen from all over Europe, including Robert Alexander, who returned to England to become Henry VIII's riding master at Hampton Court. Indeed, it was Alexander who introduced England to the art of the *manège* under Henry VIII.⁶² The art required complete synchronization of horse and rider while projecting the image of a centaur, and according to Sir Thomas Elyot in 1531, Alexander's horsemanship was 'the most honourable exercise' that one could practice.⁶³

Henry VIII adopted more than just horsemanship from the European continent. The King of England also kept up appearances by acquiring exquisitely bred horses from abroad through diplomatic exchanges and trapping them in the most up to date fashion. In 1515, He received two Spanish horses valued at 100,000 ducats from his father-in-law King Ferdinand of Aragon. In 1517 and 1518, the King expanded the scope of his search and sent agents to Italy to purchase more horses. The following year, he sent agents to both Italy and Spain. This was the most any English monarch had done to improve the bloodline and princes were, indeed, only happy to acquiesce Henry's request. He also received as gifts broodmares, Barbary stallions, and Spanish jennets from Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua – an accomplished horse breeder and equestrian whose passion for horses was shared by his entire family. Andrea Tonni's extensive research into the Renaissance studs of the Gonzagas of Mantua in the Mantuan Archives reveals the vast breeding operation of the Gonzaga family as among the best in Renaissance Europe. The family conducted numerous diplomatic exchanges with foreign dignitaries, including Henry VIII.⁶⁴ Indeed, it was a magnificent bay-colored Mantuan stallion from the Gonzaga stud that Francis I of France rode at the Field of the Cloth of Gold ceremony in 1520.⁶⁵ Composed of horses imported directly from Sicily, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Turkey, the studs produced the sought after qualities that befitted a Palio horse.⁶⁶ The "Royal Mares" that Henry VIII received from Mantua contributed to the breeding of running horses, or coursers, and the rise of horse racing in England. Miriam Bibby

⁶¹ Treva Tucker, "Early Modern French Noble Identity and the Equestrian 'Airs above the Ground,'" in *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, edited by Karen Raber and Treva Tucker (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 281.

⁶² Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 82.

⁶³ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1531); For more information on becoming centaur, see Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 1.

⁶⁴ Andrea Tonni, "The Renaissance Studs of the Gonzagas of Mantua," in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World*, Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture, ed. Peter Edwards, K A E. Enenkel, and Elspeth Graham (Boston: Brill, 2012), 261.

⁶⁵ Reese, *Master of the Horse*, 122; Sarah Duncan, *Privileged Horses: The Italian Renaissance Court Stable* (London: Stephen Morris, 2020), 26.

⁶⁶ Tonni, "Renaissance Studs of the Gonzagas of Mantua," 266; Elizabeth Tobey, "The Palio Horse in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy," in *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline and Identity in the Early Modern World*, ed. Karen Raber and Treva Tucker (Basingstoke: 2005) 71-75.

suggests that the high status that success in the Palio races offered was motivation for the development of the racehorses in England.⁶⁷ Henry not only imported horses from the Gonzaga studs; he also exported them back to Francesco. He later sent consignments of hobby, hackney, and Galloway horses to the Marquis of Mantua for use in the famous Palio races.⁶⁸ The Gonzagas considered the “cavalli corridori di Scotia,” or Scottish runner, as being the best runners on the island of Britain and both Miriam Bibby and Andrea Tonni agree that it is most likely the Scottish Galloway that is being referenced.⁶⁹ In terms of fashion, Margaret Hayward writes “The styles of saddle and horse harness were influenced by style and national taste. For example, on April 9, 1519, Alfonso d’ Este wrote to Henry VIII about horses, and added that he had sent him ‘200 patterns of bridles.’”⁷⁰ This attempt to improve the breeding and fashion of equines by importing and exporting quality horses abroad only enhanced the King’s image as a legitimate and cultured ruler who was worthy of the exchange.

Horses and equipment played an expensive role in the coronation for Anne Boleyn in 1533, whose procession was a magnificent grandiose event bigger than that for Charles V in 1522 and larger than Katherine of Aragon’s in 1501.⁷¹ The elaborate pageantry showcased horses that Henry expected to reflect the monarchy, and measures were taken to see that everything in the realm was prepared and that everyone contributed to the big day. Lady Cobham, a distant cousin to the queen by marriage, found herself allocated as attendant horsewoman for the day and was tasked with finding white palfreys for herself and her own ladies to ride during the festivities. Although Lady Cobham was provided with her own robes and the long cloth of gold (or perhaps red velvet) trapper for her horse, she was expected to equip her attendants herself.⁷² As Queen, Anne’s first gift to her ladies were palfreys and saddles. For the hunt or the progress, a set of elaborate decorations for the queen’s own saddle cost 4*l.* 10*s.*, and a further 53*s.* 4*d.* for the four tassels of gold, silver and black silk that adorned it.⁷³ Anne’s closest attendants complemented their mistress too, and the provision of a saddle and harness decorations for Lady Margaret Douglas, the king’s niece, cost 4*l.* 13*s.* 7 1/2*d.*⁷⁴ Extravagant, considering a horse of this period cost an average of 4*l.*⁷⁵

The boy king, Edward VI, ascended the throne after his father’s death at the age of nine in 1547. His coronation procession was like that of his predecessors, however the coronation itself was England’s first Protestant one due to Henry VIII’s break

⁶⁷ Miriam Bibby, “The Royal Mares: Imagining a Race (Part One),” *Cheiron* 3(1) (2023): 69.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Bibby, “Royal Mares,” 69.

⁷⁰ Maria Hayward, ed., *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds, UK: Maney Pub., 2007), 338.

⁷¹ E. W. Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: ‘the Most Happy’* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 173.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England*, 68; see also Ian Mortimer, *The Time Traveler’s Guide to Elizabethan England* (New York, New York: Viking, 2012), 173.

with the Universal Church after his marriage to Anne Boleyn.⁷⁶ On February 19, 1547, the King made his way through the city of London with a plethora of horses and nobles in route with him to Westminster Palace. In preparation for the parade, the streets were laid with gravel to keep the horses from sliding and to protect the onlookers.⁷⁷ Edward was dressed to impress despite his age, and his attire reflected the extravagance that embodied the Tudor era. The young king was appareled “with a riche gowne of clothe of silver all over embroidered with damaske gold, with a girzyn of white velvet, wrought with Venyce silver, garnished with precious stones, as rubies and diamonds, with true-loves of pearles, a doblet of white velvet according to the same, with like precious stones and perles, a white velvet cappe garnished with lyke stones and perles, and a pere of buskenes of white velvet. His horse caparison of crymoysyn sattyn, imbrodered with perles and damske gold.”⁷⁸ This is extravagant compared to Edward’s grandfather, Henry VII, who paraded in his procession while arrayed “in a doublet of Grene ‘or white’ clothe of gold a long gowne of purple velvet furred w Ermyns w a riche Sarple.”⁷⁹ A 1787 engraving by Samuel Hieronymous survives today from the coronation procession. The engraving was made from a tracing of a mural that was commissioned by Sir Anthony Browne after the ceremony. Browne was Master of the Horse during Edward’s reign and had the honor of “leading the King’s Spare Horse” during the coronation procession.⁸⁰ The original mural was destroyed in a house fire, but the approved of engraving still survives as an insightful source of imagery for the parade of events that occurred that day. The engraving shows a massive panoply of people and horses making their way through the city streets of London. The King is riding atop a white horse covered with a canopy and surrounded by his henchmen. Although the *Liber Regalis* states that the King was to ride bareheaded, Edward is illustrated wearing a cap.⁸¹ In a manuscript drawn from the College of Arms, directly behind the King was Sir Anthony Browne “leadynge a goodly courser of honor very richly trapped” during the procession.⁸² It is here for the time that a reference is made to the spare horse being not just a Horse of Estate, but a horse of honor. The post-mortem Inventory of Henry VIII in 1547 shows that the royal stables indeed housed more coursers than any other type of horse, perhaps a reflection of both Henry and Edward’s love of hunting.⁸³ The great charger appeared imperious behind the boy king as it strutted

⁷⁶ For more information on the effects of the Reformation in England, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C.1400-C.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁷⁷ John Nichols, *Literary Remains of King Edward the Sixth: Edited from His Autograph Manuscripts, with Historical Notes, and a Biographical Memoir* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1857), 310.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 222.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Nichols, *Literary Remains of King Edward the Sixth*, 310.

⁸³ D. Starkey and P. Ward, eds., *The Inventory of Henry VIII: The Transcript, Society of Antiquaries Research Report 56* (1988), 163-5, in Julian Munby, “Horse and Coach in the Royal Stables of Queen Elizabeth and James I,” in *Las Caballerizas Reales y el Mundo del Caballo*, edited by Juan Aranda Concel and José Martínez Millán (Córdoba: Edita: Instituto Universitario, 2016), 304.

before the crowds.⁸⁴ Although just a child, Edward's coronation beamed with masculine authority and militaristic power. Unfortunately, the young king died while still a boy, and in 1553, England embraced a new form of leadership – a woman.

C. Late Tudor Coronation Ceremonies

On the morning of September 30, 1553, Master of the Horse, Sir Edward Hastings, awoke with a specific task to carry out before the coronation procession from the Tower of London began. That day, he was preparing horses not for a King, nor a Queen Consort, but for England's first Queen Regnant - Mary I. Indeed, it was women that ruled England for the remainder of the Tudor dynasty, and not men. The ceremonies for both Mary I and her half-sister, Elizabeth I, were unprecedented in England, and both monarchs chose to blend attributes of both a king and a queen consort's coronation for their big day. Unlike former Masters of the Horse who were responsible for preparing the occasional four finest horses in the King's stable for the procession (the best horse - the King's horse, the second-best- The King's Champion's horse, the third best- the spare courser of estate tacked with the saddle of estate, and the fourth best- the Queen's palfrey), Hastings only had to focus on two: the finest horse in the stable- The Queen's own horse and the second-best that was to be ridden by the King's Champion, Sir Edward Dymoke. Generally, the king rode his horse, "the King's horse", through the city with a spare courser wearing the Saddle of Estate following behind. For Mary's coronation, the titles, ornaments, and symbolic meanings of the King's horse, the spare courser of estate with the saddle of estate, and the Queen's horse have been combined to reside in one horse. Mary's own horse was led through the streets of London by the Master of the Horse, Sir Edward Hastings, bearing the title of the *monarch's* horse, while also parading in the long cloths and Saddle of Estate that had previously been denied to preceding horses ridden by the head monarch in former coronation processions.

The pageantry and spectacle that England put on for the coronation of their queen displayed all the splendor and ostentation that befitted a daughter of Henry VIII. Mary rode through the streets of London in an open litter rather than on horseback as kings had previously done. Instead of sending a message of powerful masculinity, Mary maintained tradition and chose to portray the virtuous and feminine image of a queen, just as her mother Katherine of Aragon had done nearly half a century before her. Mary "rode through the Citie of London towards Westminster, sitting in a chariot of cloth of tissue drawn by sixe horses, all trapped with the like cloth of tissue."⁸⁵ The Queen was adorned "in a gowne of purple velvet furred with powdered ermine, having on her head a caule of cloth of tinsell, beset with pearle and stone, and above the same upon her head, a round circlet of gold beset so richly with precious stones, that the value thereof was inestimable, the same caule and circlet being so masste and ponderous, that she was faine to beare up her

⁸⁴ Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 281. Illustration of Edward's coronation procession; see also Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 283.

⁸⁵ John Stow, *Annals of England to 1603* ([S.l. : s.n.], 1603), 1041.

head with her hand,” while the traditional canopy covered her chariot.⁸⁶ The event even resembled the ceremonial processions of the Venetian Doges as both laymen and ecclesiastical alike were included in the ritual.⁸⁷ Just in front of Mary, there “rode a number of gentlemen and knights, then judges, then doctors, then bishops, then lords, then the councillor: after whom followed the knights of the Bath, thirteene in number, in their robes, the bishop of Winchester lord Chancellor, and the marquisse of Winchester lorde high treasurer...”⁸⁸ The nobles followed bearing the regal ornaments, including the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Oxford, and the Mayor of London.⁸⁹ Directly behind the Queen’s litter in the procession was Master of the Horse, Sir Edward Hastings, leading “the Queen’s horse” dressed in the traditional gold cloth and Saddle of Estate.⁹⁰ For Mary’s coronation, a spare horse was not needed. The Queen was not riding a horse in the day’s festivities, and therefore, would not have needed one, yet the horse still made an appearance. The horse parading behind Mary’s litter made a powerful statement. Mary’s horse was not only the head monarch of England’s horse, but it was also the Horse of Estate, and it was adorned with the Saddle of Estate. The horse parading behind Mary’s litter now suddenly becomes a very powerful image of authority, masculinity, and sovereignty in a new era of feminine rule.

The spare horse in the coronation procession elevated to a Palfrey of Honor in Elizabethan England. On November 17, 1558, the day that Queen Mary I died, Robert Dudley, future Earl of Leicester, “being well skilled in a managed horse” galloped on a solid white stallion to Hatfield House to inform Princess Elizabeth that she was now Queen, and the first act of her reign was to make him Master of the Horse.⁹¹ Elizabeth Tudor, the only daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, was crowned Queen of England in January 1558 following the death of her older half-sister, Mary I.⁹² After Mary’s death, William Cecil worked quickly to put together a committee to coordinate Elizabeth’s coronation. A plan for the procession was drawn up for the College of Arms and lists all the officers that were to participate.⁹³ Surviving illustrations of the exact position and place in the procession reveal Elizabeth being carried in a litter pulled by two white horses underneath a canopy. Directly following her is Robert Dudley, perhaps one of the most influential and powerful figures in Elizabeth’s court as Master of the Horse, leading the Palfrey of Honor – the Queen’s own horse.⁹⁴ The drawings were studied and approved of by

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 189.

⁸⁸ Stow, *Annals of England*, 1041.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Reese, *Master of the Horse*, 154.

⁹² The new calendar year began on March 25th.

⁹³ “Queen Elizabeth in Procession the Day Before her Coronation in 1558,” in *College of Arms* MS M.6, f.41v.; see also “Drawing of the Coronation Procession of Elizabeth I of England, 1559, from a Document in the College of Arms,” Wikimedia Commons, accessed March 2, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coronation_Procession_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England_1559.jpg.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the coronation's officials and the Queen herself.⁹⁵ By 1558's coronation, the horse was indubitably distinguished and illustrated for the record as not just a Horse of Estate, but a Palfrey of Honor.

Unlike other royally domesticated pets such as dogs and cats, horses were set apart in status and image. Historian Keith Thomas notes that horses were a "privileged species" whose relationships with mankind should be considered differently.⁹⁶ A saddle horse distinctly recognized in the queen's name is evident of the superior status that the Tudor horse had over other royal pets. Elizabeth's horse was an extension of her and, therefore, royalty itself. Moreover, this endorsement of the Queen's horse provides insight into the relationships between humans and animals in the early modern period. For it is, indeed, William Shakespeare, the Elizabethan playwright, whose writings reveal 'Know us by our horses.'⁹⁷ Jennifer Flaherty's research "'Know Us by Our Horses': Equine Imagery in Shakespeare's *Henriad*" in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World* suggests that horses of the *Henriad* function as characters and symbols and that to know men by their horses was to truly know them. In Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the grand war horse Barbary is a "symbolic representation of kingship" as the throne is passed from Richard II to Henry of Bolingbroke.⁹⁸

In London streets, that coronation-day,
 ... Bolingbroke rode on roan Barbary,
 That horse that thou so often has bestrid,
 That horse that I so carefully have dress'd!⁹⁹

This description of the coronation procession in which a horse is symbolically being used to represent the throne of England and the transfer of power illuminates the type of symbolism that the horse came to culturally embody in sixteenth century literature.

Elizabeth I's parade along the city streets of London resembled Mary I's coronation, and accounts of the day provide insight into how the procession looked. A description of the events was written up by the Anglican priest, Richard Mulcaster, and printed on January 23, 1558, in *The Quene's Majestie's passage through the citie of London*, and a second edition published before March 25, 1559.¹⁰⁰ The work allowed

⁹⁵ A. L. Rowse, "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *History Today* 53(5) (May 2003): 18-24.

⁹⁶ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁹⁷ Jennifer Flaherty, "'Know Us by Our Horses': Equine Imagery in Shakespeare's *Henriad*," in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World*, Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture, ed. Peter Edwards, K. A. E. Enenkel, and Elspeth Graham (Boston: Brill, 2012), 313.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ 5.5.76-80.

¹⁰⁰ Germaine Wakentin, ed., *The Queen's Majesty's Passage and Related Documents* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004); see also Claire Ridgway, "14 January 1559 – Elizabeth I's Coronation Procession," The Tudor Society, accessed December 28, 2019, https://www.tudorsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Coronation_Procession_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England_1559.jpg.

people who were not in attendance to relive the event through print. This not only helped solidify Elizabeth's right to rule in the public's eyes but was also a powerful instrument in the distribution of the Queen's image both at home and abroad. The procession went as planned and was the last royal entry of a Tudor into the city of London. The exuberant number of horses trapped in magnificent colors and coats of arms was an impressive logistics operation. Il Schifanoja, a Venetian living in London and riding in the procession, wrote in 1559 that the parade to Westminster numbered in all a thousand horses.¹⁰¹ He even reported back to the doge that the procession by barge to the Tower of London reminded him of Ascension Day at Venice, when the Signory goes to espouse the Sea.¹⁰² Accounts of the procession to Westminster palace seem to match up similarly to that of the illustrations. However, there is a discrepancy between the accounts and the illustrations for the College of Arms with concern over the two white mules pulling Elizabeth's litter. Il Schifanoja wrote that the litter was pulled by "two very handsome mules," but the horses depicted in the illustrated and approved-of College of Arms procession all match in size and conformation.¹⁰³ This is contradictory because mules have physical features that make them obviously discernable from horses. Perhaps white horses were intended for the ceremony in the original plans but were unable to be located, and, instead, a pair of matching white mules were substituted in place of horses.

Elizabeth's choice to follow Mary's example and ride in a litter once again expressed the virtuous feminism that befitted a lady. Women were expected to project certain virtues that defined a lady of class and nobility. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* also spoke of attributes that befitted a perfect Court Lady. "For I believe that many faculties of the mind are as necessary to women as are to man; likewise gentle birth, to avoid affectation, to be naturally graceful in all her doings, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not quarrelsome, not silly, to know how to win and keep the favor of her mistress and of all others, to practice well and gracefully the exercises that befit women."¹⁰⁴ A reflection of these virtues is most evident in the increased popularity of the side-saddle.¹⁰⁵ Rather than sit astride with one leg on each side of the horse, the side-

¹⁰¹ "Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice: 1558-80" in *Volume 7 of Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice: And in Other Libraries of Northern Italy* (Great Britain, Public Records Office: Longman Green, 1869), 10.

¹⁰² Susan Ronald, *Heretic Queen: Queen Elizabeth I and the Wars of Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 3; see also Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 1.

¹⁰³ Calendar of State Papers, *Venice, 1558-80*, 10; see also, College of Arms, "Coronation Procession of Elizabeth I of England 1559," Wikimedia Commons, accessed March 2, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coronation_Procession_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England_1559.jpg; see also, Claire Ridgway, "14 January 1559 – Elizabeth I's Coronation Procession," The Tudor Society, accessed December 28, 2019, https://www.tudorsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Coronation_Procession_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England_1559.jpg.

¹⁰⁴ Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2003), 175.

¹⁰⁵ Kathy Lynn Emerson, *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 1996), see chapter 19. The side-saddle did not become a popular fashion until after 1533 when Catherine de Medici brought one back with her to France from Italy, but Richard II's wife, Anne of Bohemia, is the one credited with introducing the side-saddle to England in the late

saddle allowed a gentle lady to ride with her knees together and legs closed while projecting an image of innocence and virtue. However, Elizabeth's choice to ride in a litter instead of on horseback on the day of her coronation was not to be mistaken for weakness. Dudley looked regal dressed in purple cloth of gold while riding atop his horse trapped in crimson cloth of gold. His position as Master of the Horse kept him in close proximity to the Queen while he sat astride his horse, most likely a trotter, and dazzled the audiences with his showmanship of the Queen's Palfrey of Honor.¹⁰⁶ The combined pair of Lord Dudley and the Queen's horse directly behind Elizabeth's litter projected an image of masculinity that only added to the aura of female authority.

On the day of Elizabeth's coronation, the Queen's palfrey would have been an exceptional saddle horse and most likely ambled or paced, unlike horses used for hunting and tournaments. Procession participant II Schifanoya described the horse as a white hackney.¹⁰⁷ It was under the guidance of Elizabeth's Masters of the Horse, especially Robert Dudley, that foreign imports continued to improve the quality and range of the country's equine stock. The elite were obsessed with fashion and outward appearances and, therefore, valued horses for their symbolic, as well as their functional purposes. After Elizabeth's coronation, economic trade and travel dramatically increased. The increased horse trade provided buyers with a wide selection of horses based on color, markings, height, and conformation. Due to the rise in imported horses and horse breeds, people were not only able to purchase a horse more affordably, but they were also able to purchase horses for more specific functions, like the manège.¹⁰⁸

Horse breeding in England continued to improve in Elizabeth's reign. Horsemanship manuals were printed that listed proper instructions on how to breed, raise, train, and care for horses. England's royal stables were filled with several horse breeds. One breed was the Irish Hobby horse, or "small horse." Henry VIII bred and used them specifically for racing, and therefore, were sometimes known as Coursers. Thomas Blundeville, a former Gentlemen Pensioner, writes in *The fower chiefyst offices belonging to horsemanshippe (1566)*: "The Irish hobby is a pretty fine horse, having a good head and a body indifferently well proportioned, saving that many of them be slender and pin-buttocked. They be tender mouthed, nimble, light, pleasant, and apt to be taught, and for the most part they be amblers and therefore very mete

fourteenth century. For contemporary depictions of Elizabeth I riding side-saddle, see the "Seal of Elizabeth I, dated 1559," in Reese, *Master of the Horse*, 155; "Great Seal of Queen Elizabeth I, dated 1586-1603" and side-saddle used by Elizabeth in Patricia Conner, ed., *All the Queen's Horses: The Role of the Horse in British History* (Lexington, KY: Kentucky Horse Park, 2003), 26.1 and 26.2, 137. A contemporary painting of Elizabeth riding side-saddle at Tilbury after the defeat of the Spanish Armada can be seen at Geograph, "St Faith's Church in Gaywood - C17 Painting (Detail), Near to Gaywood, Norfolk, Great Britain," Accessed March 2, 2020. <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2019526>. For more information, see Erica Munkwitz, *Women, Horse Sports and Liberation: Equestrianism and Britain from the 18th to the 20th Centuries* (New York: Rutledge, 2021), 4-7.

¹⁰⁶ "Queen Elizabeth in Procession the Day Before Her Coronation in 1558," in *College of Arms MS M.6*, f.41v.

¹⁰⁷ Calendar of State Papers, *Venice, 1558-80*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 1-2.

for the saddle.”¹⁰⁹ For these reasons, hobbies made excellent palfreys, or small riding horses, ideal for long distances due to the desired amble gait. England also saw an increase in Spanish jennets, Barbary horses, and Neapolitan horses. With its thick neck and hindquarters and long wavy mane and tail, the Spanish Jennet was prized by nobleman for their courage and strength in war. The Barbary horse, named for the region from which the horse derives, was most noted for its ability to gallop on the flat for ages, a trait most useful on the racecourse. From the south of Italy in Naples came the Napoliti, or Neapolitan. The horse breeder Gervase Markham felt that the Neapolitan courser was one of the strongest horses, both in strength and courage.¹¹⁰ Infused with Turkish or Barb blood, they were swift, agile, and lean animals. Markham also agreed with popular opinion that “they made the best war horses and, with their long, slender heads, sharp eyes and ears, had the appearance of hawks;” however, he preferred the English style above all other breeds, and in his opinion the Neapolitan came second.¹¹¹ This was opposed to Thomas Beckham, who favored the Neapolitan courser over all others: “A trim horse being both comely and strongly made, and of so much goodness, of so gentle a nature and of so high a courage as any horse is... In my opinion their gentle nature and docility, their comely shape, their strength, their courage, their sure footmanship, their well-reining, their lofty pace, their clean trotting, their strong galloping and their swift running well considered... they excel numbers of other races.”¹¹² Despite the differences of opinions, by the first decade of the seventeenth century, the English horse had grown so desirable that the Holy Roman Emperor requested some English trotting horses for himself having “heard were both swift and of excellent quality.”¹¹³

The practice of importing professional Italian horsemen into England to improve English horsemanship also continued into the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1565, Robert Dudley, Master of the Horse, brought to England an Italian horseman, Claudio Corte of Pavia, and made him his riding master.¹¹⁴ Later, in 1575, Dudley sent for horse expert Prospero d’ Osma, who lived in Naples, and commissioned him to provide a report on the royal studs at Malmesbury in Wiltshire and Tutbury in Staffordshire to lend a keener perspective on the quality of horses maintained there.¹¹⁵ The manège became a popular pastime among the elite during the reign of Elizabeth. So much so that in 1584 Thomas Bedingfield complained “The Gentlemen of this land have studied to make horses more for pleasure than service.”¹¹⁶ Having felt that horsemanship should be related to function, Bedingfield wrote “The principall use of horses is, to travel by the waie, & serve in the war: whatsoever your horse learneth

¹⁰⁹ Ian Mortimer, *The Time Traveler's Guide to Elizabethan England* (New York, New York: Viking, 2012), 172-73.

¹¹⁰ Murray, *All the Kings Horses*, 38.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹³ Edwards, *Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England*, 48.

¹¹⁴ Murray, *All the Kings Horses*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Charles Matthew Prior, *The Royal Studs of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Together with a Reproduction of the Second Earl of Godolphin's Stud Book and Sundry Other Papers Relating to the Thoroughbred Horse* (London: Horse and Hound Publications, 1935), 11-38.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Bedingfield, *The Art of Riding* (London, 1584); see also Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 82.

more, is rather for pompe or pleasure than honor or use.”¹¹⁷ Despite his feelings, he recognized that horsemanship among the elite was a valuable way for them to demonstrate their equestrian skills and show off the capabilities of their mount.

Elizabethan roads were increasingly teamed with matching-colored horses wearing elegantly crafted harnesses that only bolstered one’s image. This was due in part to the Pomeranian coach, a fully enclosed four-wheeled carriage with a bench attached to the front for a driver and pulled by a team of beautifully paired horses. The first coaches appeared in London in the 1550s.¹¹⁸ Already popular abroad, Protestant emigrants returning from Europe contributed to its popularization in England. Increasingly, women began to prefer traveling by carriage for the more obvious comforts, which was more readily accessible once the coach became available for hire. Elizabeth continued to remodel the stables, and it was during her reign that the coach house was added on to house the queen’s preferred mode of long-distance transportation. The addition of the carriage house in stables of the nobility and the gentry began to appear towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign; however, they became a staple addition to upper class stables more prominently throughout the Stuart era.

Following Elizabeth’s anointing, Sir Edward Dymoke made his last grand entry into the Great Hall as the King’s Champion. Il Schifanoia writes that the knight entered on “a very handsome barbed charger,” threw down the gauntlet, and found no one to answer the call.¹¹⁹ This act of ritualistic equestrianism was the final stage of Elizabeth I’s ascension and concluded coronations of the Tudor period. Following the events of the evening, a week’s worth of jousting commenced in which knights demonstrated their skill and nobility.¹²⁰ Elizabeth recognized the importance of regal splendor and sat graciously as heralds gave long winded speeches to announce their master and explanations for their costumes. This chivalric act in which English nobles paid homage to their Virgin Queen ultimately turned Elizabeth’s femininity from a weakness into a strength. It is yet another example of the prominent expression of pageantry and symbolism in the Elizabethan coronation festivities.

III. Conclusion

The Early Tudor period experienced significant political, religious, and cultural changes that greatly affected the realm of England. Henry VII claimed the throne from Richard III to establish an entirely new dynasty, a dynasty that the Tudors worked endlessly to legitimize. They did so by adopting European influences, efforts that extended to the royal horses. The four equestrian components of the Early Tudor coronation processions also elevated in status, identity, and symbolism. By 1485, the Dymoke family had firmly established its hereditary right to serve as the King’s Champion. The Gilded Spurs in the procession were carried by a noble of the realm and took on the symbolic meaning of Knighthood during the coronation. The

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *Horse and Man*, 213.

¹¹⁹ Calendar of State Papers, *Venice, 1558-80*, 10.

¹²⁰ Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, 136.

Master of the Horse's role in the procession went from being just a lad leading a spare horse to one of increasing authority. Moreover, the spare horse gradually gained significance throughout the period. For Richard III's procession in 1483, the spare horse's role advanced from a strictly utilitarian function towards a more ceremonial one as it became tacked with a symbolic emblem, the Saddle of Estate. It is the beginning of the Tudor Dynasty that the spare horse itself is referred to as the Horse of Estate. Finally, for the procession of Edward VI, the College of Arms refers to the riderless horse as the Courser of Honor. No longer just a spare horse adorned in a symbolic display of power and state, the horse itself had become the metonym for power and state. Combined, the components mirror the rise of horse culture that Henry VIII ushered into England, and Edward VI continued, despite his short reign.

For the coronation of England's first Queen regnant, Mary I chose to combine aspects from both a king and a queen consort's coronation for her ceremony; this included the Saddle of Estate and the Horse of Estate. Indeed, a spare horse would not have been needed on the day of procession, and yet the horse's powerful presence remained directly behind the Queen. For the Tudor queen, the horse became a highly ritualized figure, deliberately laden with symbolic meaning. It was a powerful statement that the Queen's own horse was used to parade the Saddle of Estate and the long cloth of gold unlike other horses in the procession who wore crimson velvet. The Horse of Estate made its ultimate transformation undergoing a complete ceremonial role. For the coronation procession of the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, the queen's own horse became permanently recorded in the College of Arms illustration as the Palfrey of Honor. This significant change in title from a Horse of *Estate* to a Palfrey of *Honor* denoted more than just the authority of the power and the state, it was a symbolic representation of the pomp and ceremonial grandeur that embodied Tudor coronations. The riderless horse's title may have changed over time, but its symbolism as a metonym for power and authority remained and was, indeed, further bolstered by the Master of the Horse's mere position. As Master of the Horse, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, was tantamount to the masculine moxie that reflected Elizabeth's image as sovereign.

In the broader scope of horse culture in early modern England, it was an emphatic renaissance elegance that characterized the Tudor period. Henry VIII saw fit to bring culture and grandeur into the English court, and he spent an exuberant amount of money doing so. The importation of foreign-bred horses and the exchange of horses with European rulers only enhanced the quality of equines housed in the royal studs. The meticulous records of their care and keeping, along with the amount of money spent on building materials for the stables themselves, reflect the importance of the Tudor horse and the status it projected. Horsemanship as an art form became the ultimate pastime in early modern England. The rider's ability to govern an animal of superior power and strength impressed on-looking pedestrians. Gentlemen were expected to know how to ride, hunt, and hawk as part of their courtly education, and women were expected to display courtly virtues by riding side-saddle. Elizabethan roads were teamed with magnificent matching horses, Pomeranian coaches, elaborate saddles, and harnesses decorated with intricate designs. The Tudor horse elevated one's status and reflected the beauty, wealth, and pageantry that embodied the era.

Early modern England is a rich tapestry of culture and, when unraveled, reveals the significance and magnificence of the ritualistic Tudor horse.

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