



Handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Beaufort'.

TIES OF THE TUDORS

The Influence of Margaret Beaufort and her Web of
Relations on the Formation and Preservation of Tudor
Rulership

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Cover: Signature of Margaret Beaufort, taken from her first will, 1472.
St John's Archive D56.195, Cambridge University.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
PRO	Public Record Office
RP	Rotuli Parliamentorum
SJC	St John's College Archives

Introduction

A wife, mother of a king, landowner, and heiress, Margaret of Beaufort was nothing if not a versatile woman that has interested historians for centuries. She has intrigued people with the varied circumstances during her life and the changeability of her fortune that has become so exemplary of the medieval period. The life of Margaret Beaufort can be called versatile at the least. Born on the 31st of May 1443, she was born into a family with already quite a history of their own. Her ancestors stemmed from an affair between John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Katheryn Swynford, whose illegitimate children were named Beaufort; after a castle that Gaunt owned in the Champagne region. It was for that reason, and the families' strong alliance with the Lancastrian kings, that Margaret Beaufort was seen as a desirable marriage candidate.¹ It was not long, Margaret was only six years old, before a match was made with John de la Pole, an important heir of a noble family as well. The marriage was dissolved after only three years, which was possible as they were both minors, because of the shifting political alliances at the time.

Her second marriage, when she was only twelve, was with Edmund Tudor, a Welsh nobleman who was highly regarded at court and half-brother and close friend to the King Henry VI.² Unfortunately, Edmund died when Margaret was seven months pregnant with the future King Henry VII, to whom she would give birth at the young age of thirteen. Probably because of her age and a difficult labor, she would never bear children again. Speedily after Edmund's death a new marriage was formed, which would enhance the position of both Margaret and her son, with Henry Stafford, son of the Duke of Buckingham. This marriage was to become a long and stable relationship at last for Margaret and the couple appear to have been very fond of each other.³ In 1471 Stafford died and again Margaret was not to remain widowed for long. She married Thomas Lord Stanley within the year. Stanley, who was steward of the royal household during Edward IV's reign provided Margaret with access to the royal Yorkist court and the

¹ M. K. Jones and M. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge 1992) 20-26.

² R.A. Griffiths and R.S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucester, 2013) 52-53.

³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 36-42.

marriage also strengthened her links with the powerful Woodville family that was found in abundance in the royal lineage.⁴ These marriages, with the exception of the first and annulled agreement, each meant an augmentation of the property, lands and influence of Margaret Beaufort, which she managed to hold on to through the stormy period of the War of the Roses, though her property and person were often under threat. Her marriages form the very heart of her network building capabilities, their uses will therefore be thoroughly discussed in this thesis.

Besides increasing her influence and property, the protection and advancement of her son Henry were paramount to her in this restless period in English history. While her son was in exile plotting his capture of the throne, Margaret remained in England to pave the way for him and gather supporters to eventually plan a landing of Henry on English soil to claim the throne. She used her connections, such as to the Stanley family and to the Duke of Buckingham, to gather a group of conspirators to remove Richard III from the throne and install the first Tudor king.⁵ Especially the support of the Stanley family proved to be essential in overthrowing the Yorkists. Margaret's role in the conspiracy against Richard III was a result of a long process of political education that she had enjoyed during her years at court. Her tactics and actions displayed quite some courage and considerable political skill. So much that the contemporary historian Polydore Vergil commonly called her the head of the conspiracy.⁶ But her role did not stop at the victory at Bosworth. Henry's marriage with Elizabeth of York, which would bring the two houses of York and Lancaster together again, was also negotiated by Margaret, who saw the political value of the match. Margaret also was to recommend many of her allies and friends in her network to the court or other important political offices throughout the country after Henry was installed, but she also managed to bring some Yorkists to the Tudor cause. This was very necessary, as plots and uprisings were never far during the reign of Henry VII. At court she remained an important person in close contact with the king, which meant that she was also petitioned often. With the death of King Henry VII in 1509 and the consequent funeral, her prominence was once again visible, being given precedence over all other women present. It was an honor she had earned

⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 58-59.

⁵ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 99-105.

⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 63-65.

with her political activities, which had been so vital to the establishment and preservation of the young dynasty.⁷

From her own time to the present many writers have made portraits of this fascinating woman, all with their own accents. Writers who were active during or in the centuries after Margaret's life such as Polydore Vergil and Bernard André described a woman of great courage and steadfastness and both prescribe her with an active role in the Tudor dynastic and political developments.⁸ Writers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on Margaret Beaufort were often scholars of Cambridge, who had access to Margaret's personal archives at St. John's College. An example of this is George Ballard, who looked at the literary works that were dedicated to Lady Margaret and focused on her education and later role at Cambridge.⁹

The later literature and research that she inspired can often be placed into two categories: those emphasizing her moral and religious qualities and those focusing on her political capacities. Caroline Halsted was one of the main historians who researched the personal piety and sanctity of Margaret Beaufort, by examining her moral qualities and Christian character. This work mainly portrayed Margaret as a devout Christian and as patroness of Cambridge University, two important aspects of her life.¹⁰ However, the literature focusing on the political capacities of Margaret is of most interest for this research as it forms the focal point of this thesis. Until the 80s this dynamic, politically active side of Margaret has only been marginally present in writings on her life, while the majority of the attention had been on her pious endeavors. During the 90s, there was a renewed interest in the roles that medieval and early modern women played in politics and this is clearly reflected in the historiography. Very few books have since appeared dealing solely with the piety or moral aspects of Margaret's life, but they also dealt with the political implications of her actions. An example of an inquiry into the political control that Margaret exerted is the book *The King's Mother* by Jones and Underwood, who wished to show the political influence of Lady Margaret on both a local and national scene and to place that in the context of her contemporaries.¹¹ In the book by Jones and Underwood there is much appreciation for Margaret's political skills, but they rarely speak about the special agency that she acquired as

⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 92.

⁸ V. Polydore, *Three Books of English History*, Ed. H. Ellis, Camden Society, o.s., 39 (1844) 194-204.

⁹ G. Ballard, *Memoires of Learned Ladies* (London 1775)

¹⁰ C. Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (London 1839)

¹¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 14.

a female. Other sources have paid more attention to the aspect of gender. In her biography of Margaret, Linda Simon puts great emphasis on the role of widowhood as a main source of political power. She manages to incorporate medieval notions of motherhood, childbirth and marriage into the story of Margaret Beaufort.¹² Also more recent work like that of Denton-Spalding show a shift in the historiography to a more involved political analysis of Margaret Beaufort and other women in the early Tudor period.¹³ None of the authors emphasize or even explicitly mention the networks that Margaret Beaufort established and used. They all aim to create biographies of the person Margaret and in that context mention the areas in which she had an influence such as her household, the court and later her involvement with Cambridge University. Yet these authors never speak of networks and it is this aspect that I wish to discuss in my thesis, because I think that these areas of influence were in fact networks or webs of relations that she established for the advancement of the Tudor dynasty. The main purpose must therefore be to bring these ideas of female agency and networks together, as this gives us a more realistic image of Margaret Beaufort.

This research shall therefore be focusing on the political role of Margaret Beaufort and the network she gathered around herself, albeit with different accents than the research conducted by Underwood, Jones and Denton-Spalding. The aim will be to examine the network of relations, both kin and other like-minded people of political influence, of Margaret Beaufort which she gathered around herself to advance the dynastic ambitions of her son Henry and to strengthen his rule when he came to power. This web of relations was in my view vital in establishing and maintaining the dynastic rulership of the first Tudor king. In order to examine her role and the importance thereof I will be looking at two key concepts: that of kinship and patronage relations and that of female agency. The methodology will focus around these two key concepts by examining their importance and relating them to the primary material that is available on the network of Margaret, such as personal letters, correspondence with those incorporated in her network, wills and marriage contracts. The main interest of this thesis therefore is to come to new insights on what the role was of Margaret's web of relations and the role they played in the formation and preservation of Tudor rulership. In this context I will look at the period from her

¹² L. Simon, *Of Virtue Rare: Margaret Beaufort, Matriarch of the House of Tudor* (Boston 1982)

¹³ G.C. Denton-Spalding, *From Court to Countryside: Aristocratic Women's Networks in Early Tudor England, 1509-1547* (Middletown 2015)

marriage with Edmund Tudor, which led to the birth of Henry, in 1453 until her death in 1509. In the first chapter I will be examining the concept of kinship relations to see how her web of relations was established and used. Both her own family as well as those acquired through marriage will be treated here, the political relevance of widowhood will also receive attention in this chapter. In the following chapter the focus will be on patronage networks to examine the web of relations that Margaret Beaufort obtained through her patronage. In this chapter different aspects like her household, the court, her connections at Cambridge and the significance of her final will shall be investigated. In the final chapter her reputation, the role of women and the relationship between Margaret and Henry will be discussed to reflect on the stabilizing influence and agency of Margaret on Tudor rulership. Throughout all these facets the role of female agency will be discussed as this is crucial to discussing the role Margaret was able to play in the Tudor dynasty.

A key concept in this discussion of networks and political power is to look at the influence of female agency. One could argue that the formation of these networks by Margaret are all expressions of female agency. But what is female agency and how exactly did Margaret Beaufort wield that tool to her advantage? The definition of female agency can be seen as twofold according to Ronald Bodkin, who wrote on the economic power of women throughout history. He gives us a working definition of the term: “I essentially defined female agency, as the intellectual capacity of women (adult human females) to make intelligent, purposive (rational) decisions, under the standard constraints that face most decision-makers.” However, this is only part of the definition, as he continues: “It was also observed that a secondary meaning of female agency could be the financial *capacity* to make and carry out such purposive (rational) decisions.”¹⁴ Thus, this twofold definition leads us to believe that female agency is both the intellectual and economic capacity to make purposive decisions. This is the only explicit definition of female agency that can be found in contemporary literature, but for our case needs to be expanded beyond the economic motives that Bodkin used for his work. In the case of Margaret we have to be more concerned with the ability to make purposive decisions not merely of economic, but rather of a political and social nature. Here Theresa Earenfight can offer us an alternative definition that is of more use for this thesis. In her article she gives a definition of

¹⁴ R.G. Bodkin, “The Issue of Female Agency in Classical Economic Thought: Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, and the Men”, *Gender Issues* Vol 17, Issue 4 (1999) 62.

queenship that can be used for determining the capacity of women to make purposive decisions. She states that “Rulership, therefore, is an array of strategies and practices embedded in a cultural system that operates within the public political sphere in which both kings and queens are capable of exercising both political power and authority through official and unofficial channels.”¹⁵ We can adapt this definition to fit female agency as well and to see it as the possibility for women to be active in the public sphere within a cultural system, both in implicit and explicit ways. Thus, in the public sphere, women as well as men were capable of agency through different methods.

To make this more concrete for the situation of women in the Late Middle Ages and Margaret in particular, I have looked at Barbara Harris and her book *English Aristocratic Women- 1450-1550* in which she describes what exactly the areas were in which women could exert control. In her work she also explores why women exert their control and what the motives of these women were. Harris names marriage, families and connections as areas in which women were able to gain independence as well as political, financial, and social capital. Harris relates that their main motives for acquiring this agency and using it were mostly for the advantage of themselves and their families.¹⁶ This is a mode of thought on female history that is the result of a long historiography on female agency or female roles and spheres of influence. Our historical knowledge of women has increased tremendously with the growing numbers of female historians and the development of feminist theories. However, when speaking about the agency of women we always have to be careful not to project modern interpretations of female agency on the past. It is important to keep in mind that these women, who often had political careers, accumulated wealth and possessed agency, were still deeply rooted in patriarchal structures at the time, which also defined their rights and attitudes. However, despite these restrictions women managed to gain wealth, authority and power by exercising their agency in the field of marriage, households and careers.¹⁷

There is much agency to be found in medieval women and many historians have argued that we should adopt a much more nuanced way of looking at traditional ideas about women in history, such as the notion of the oppressed medieval woman as presented by Lawrence Stone.¹⁸

¹⁵ T. Earenfight, “Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe”, *Gender & History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2007) 12.

¹⁶ B.J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford 2002) 3.

¹⁷ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 6.

¹⁸ L. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Ann Arbor 1977)

Stone was the first to really delve into medieval female agency during the 1970s and he argued that patriarchal systems subordinated medieval women and made a sharp distinction between male and female spheres. His ideas were to dominate the field of female history up to the 1990s. During that period these images of medieval women began to change and were seen as more varied and cooperative than before. Female historians found that the family was not a homogenous entity dominated by men, but rather that women had their own interests, experiences and expectations within their family life. In order to examine the history of women in upper class families this meant that they also had to be studied separated from their spouses and husbands.¹⁹ A newer idea in contemporary female history is that the family is a corporation including both men and women and it therefore merits to also look into the role of women in this whole, without separating them from men. In this tradition there was also more attention given to the communication of women, such as letters which they wrote to each other. This led to more importance being placed on the networks that women established themselves, rather than just the patriarchal networks they were also a part of. An example of such research is that by Theresa Earenfight, who writes on the exercise of political power by women in the late Medieval period. She argues that women were not completely powerless, but instead operated in a dynamic relationship with men, a relationship that depended on social age, rank, marital status, and economic resources.²⁰ This historiography shows that female history remains a work in progress, as ideas about the political influence of medieval women are continuously reconstructed.²¹ So while understanding the deep patriarchal society in which Margaret Beaufort lived, current historiography now moves to examine the fields in which she and other aristocratic women could exert their influence and thus use their female agency to advance themselves and their families.

¹⁹ B.J. Harris, "Aristocratic and Gentry Women, 1460-1640", *History Compass*. Vol 4, Issue 4 (2006) 668-670.

²⁰ Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince", 5.

²¹ Harris, "Aristocratic and Gentry Women", 676.

1. Kinship Networks

In order to understand more of the network created by and surrounding Margaret Beaufort we will have to look deeper into what these networks actually were and how she created these connections. After that, we can explore the people that surrounded Margaret and how she was able to use them to advance the standing of the Tudor family. When speaking about connections and networks, it is important to differentiate between kinship networks and networks of patronage, as both used different tools of building and sustaining these relations. Both of these types of networks will be discussed in this chapter. Kinship, as well as patronage networks are forms of social structures, albeit existing and coming to existence within a different context. When looking at Margaret Beaufort and the primary source material that is available to us, we can see that both types of networks were used by Margaret. Firstly, I will focus on kinship networks, in particular on the four families that became important in the relationship network that Margaret formed: the Beaufort, the Tudor, the Stafford, and finally the Stanley family. Following the definition of Sabeau, Teuscher and Matieu that will be discussed later on in this chapter, I will examine how Margaret used these families to construct a network that was beneficial to her cause, the sustained leadership of her son Henry.

The study of kinship relations is one that seems to be sparking research in recent years again, after the interest in kinship had been diminishing because there was a general belief in the decline of kinship networks and their influence over time. This idea of decline is one that has largely formed the research surrounding kinship relations, especially in the 80s. There was an idea of almost constant lessening of kinship relations in history to form the nuclear family as we know it today. In most of this research kinship was seen as the predecessor to many things, but never as a constructive factor in social relations during the Middle Ages or the Early Modern period. Historical research on kinship has been building on a perceived discord between state formation and kinship. It was believed that as the state bureaucracy grew, there was less need for kinship ties, which therefore lost their relevance. Lawrence Stone, who characterized the state as a natural enemy of kinship relations is an example of such research.²² This general consensus meant that there was much more focus on the changes in kin organization and its diminishing

²² Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*, 132-135.

influence on European history than there was on its continuing importance. From 1950 to 1970 several researchers gathered evidence of a shift in kin organization around the year 1000. They developed the idea that the focus shifted within kinship relations from one based on horizontal ties with living family members to one based on generational depth, or on the survival of a family in the future.²³ This new conception of kinship was focused on the inheritance of the familial lands, therefore stressing patrilineal descent. This change caused a shift from a system of partible inheritance to one of primogeniture. There is still a broad consensus for this theory at the present day, but recent focus has shifted more towards the idea that kinship, despite a strong turn towards a patrilineal system, remained in essence bilateral, meaning that both male and female lines were important.²⁴ Recent research has also shown that even though there was a general trend towards a more patrilineal system, there were still many different varieties of inheritance practices co-existent at the same time.

The book *Kinship in Europe* edited by Sabeau, Teuscher, and Matieu brings a refreshing perspective in that sense by challenging these ideas on kinship. They have investigated patterns of succession and inheritance, as well as systems of marriage and alliances and the roles these have played in kinship relations over time.²⁵ In their opinion, there were two important shifts in medieval and early modern history in the concept of kinship relations, but they remark that they do not see an incompatibility between the state and kinship relations, as previous research has stressed. In their view, kinship remained vital for the development of extensive and reliable connections within and between families. Though they see that social changes in the broader society were reflected in kinship relations, they do not believe that this impacted their importance or relevance.²⁶ So how is their approach useful to the period that is examined here? First of all their research is interesting due to the timing of the Tudor period, which marks a period in which the state was centralizing and gaining influence as well as a stronger bureaucracy that was developing at this point. A period during which, as these other researchers have stated, kinship

²³ An example of this is G. Duby, "Lignage noblesse et chevalerie au XIIe siècle dans la Région maconnaise. Une revision", *Annales ESC* 27 (1972) pp 803-823.

²⁴ A. Guerreau-Jallabert, J. Le Régine and J. Morsel, "Familles et parents. De l'histoire de la famille à l'anthropologie de la parenté". In: *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire de Moyen Âge en France et en Allemagne*. Ed. J. Schmidt and O. Oexle, (Paris 2002) pp 433-446.

²⁵ D.W. Sabeau, S. Teuscher and J. Matieu, *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-term Development (1300-1900)* (New York 2007) 1-3.

²⁶ Sabeau, Teuscher and Matieu, *Kinship in Europe*, 3.

relations were in decline. However, the picture that Sabeen, Teuscher and Matieu give us of a construction of kinship relations that changes over time, but retains its importance. This seems to match the case of Margaret Beaufort, which will be discussed with the primary source material available to us. Another reason for the relevance of *Kinship in Europe* is its focus on kinship relations as bilateral systems, in which female ties are also seen as important, something that certainly connects with the case of Margaret Beaufort as well and allows us to investigate her female agency.

In this chapter, I wish to give some concrete examples of kinship ties and how Margaret used these to create a solid ground for the new dynasty. Kinship ties can be seen not only as one's connection to their own family, but of course also to the families that became integrated through marriage. As we have shortly discussed earlier, Margaret managed to make connections with multiple families through her marriages, but how were these families effectively put to use? How were these kinship ties activated? And what benefits did they reap? These are questions that I aim to answer in this chapter by using the conceptual framework of *Kinship in Europe* and by looking at primary source material to assess these kinship ties and the importance thereof in the case of Margaret Beaufort.

Though I have decided to make a separation between kinship and patronage relations in this thesis, much of the primary source material shows a mixture of these two types of connections. This is the case for example with the wills of Margaret from 1472 and 1508, where her executors consist out of both family and those who had received her patronage. Yet, due to the differences between the two kinds of networks and the relevance of those differences, I have decided to separate them into two chapters. In assessing the roles of these networks I have focused on several primary sources, which will often be discussed in both chapters as well. Most of the sources on Margaret's life can be found at Cambridge University, where the majority of them lies in the archive of St John's College. As Margaret was the patroness of St John's, most of her papers were collected there after her death. Other sources can be found in the other colleges of Cambridge as well as the Cambridge University Library, while the National Archives in London also hold some correspondences of Margaret. The National Archives also holds official government documentation that give us more insight in the influence and role of Margaret. Together these sources comprise personal letters, wills, inventories of her wardrobe and other

properties, charters and many other public and personal artifacts. For me, special interest is with her two wills, one drafted in 1472 after her marriage to Stanley and one in 1508, drafted a year before she died. In this chapter and the next on patronage, I will address the aspects of kin and patronage relationships that we can find in these two documents as well as assess the difference between the two and the significance that difference holds in assessing Margaret's role. In assessing these documents I have also focused on the executors that Margaret named in her will, and these men will make their appearance in these chapters as well, as they hold great significance in my view. Other documents will also be of value, such as her marriage act with Stanley, accounts of her household and personal communication between her and those that were part of her network, kin and clients alike. Finally, I would like to address one more source that is of interest for this research and that is the work of John Fisher, personal confessor of Margaret, who wrote her eulogy and gives us a lengthy description of the person Margaret was.

1.1 The Beaufort Family

Before we turn to the marital families that Margaret acquired, I would like to turn to her own family first. To understand the connections of the Beaufort family, it is important to understand the background of their family and their rise to power. The main connection of the Beaufort family was of course that to the royal line through the affair between John of Gaunt and Katheryn Swynford.²⁷ The affair had begun in 1371, and had become publicly known by 1378, when Gaunt openly acknowledged the affair. Four children were born to John and Katheryn, three boys and one girl, between the years 1372-1381. The relationship between John of Gaunt and his Beaufort children was quite warm, they were never ostracized from the family and good marriages were arranged for them. Vital to the future of the Beaufort family was the eventual marriage between Katheryn and John and the ratification of that marriage contract and the legitimization their earlier children, born out of wedlock, by the Pope in September 1396. Richard II followed the Pope's example a year later in 1397 by stating:

“Therefore, yielding to the prayers of our uncle, your father, with whom it is said, you bear a defect of birth... we wish nevertheless that whatsoever honours, dignities, pre-eminencies, status, ranks, and offices, public and private, perpetual and temporal, feudal and noble there may be ... whether held immediately or directly from us ... you may receive, hold, enjoy, and exercise, as

²⁷ See Appendix 1: Royal descent of Margaret

fully, freely, and lawfully as if you were born in lawful wedlock.” Richard concluded by stating: “We legitimate you ... and any children that you may have.”²⁸

This ratification was crucial for the posterity of the Beaufort family and would enhance their promotion to the nobility. This also meant that they were accepted in the royal bloodline by an official act of parliament, even though their bastardy would never be entirely forgotten and they were not among the most likely to make claims to the throne.²⁹

John Beaufort, Margaret’s grandfather, was married to Margaret Holland, who was heiress to the Holland estates, amongst which was the earldom of Kent, which made the Beauforts in turn a great heirs over much land.³⁰ Out of this marriage between John Beaufort and Margaret Holland six children were born, all of whom would do well within aristocratic circles. Henry, the eldest, was Earl of Somerset, John was Duke of Somerset and Joan Beaufort would even marry James I of Scotland. After the death of their son Henry in 1418, it was John, their second son, who became heir to the combined estates of Beaufort and Holland. A marriage was arranged between him and Margaret Beauchamp of Bletsoe, the daughter and heiress of Sir John Beauchamp of Bletsoe. Margaret came from a family of gentry rather than nobility, and was probably not the best match the Earl of Somerset had imagined, but since he was a bachelor and in his thirties, she was probably the most prestigious wife possible for John. The reason John was so late to marry was due to his imprisonment in France after the Battle of Baugé in 1421, an affair that left a deep impression on him. It would take seventeen years before his ransom was paid and he could return to England. His wife Margaret had been married previously with Oliver St John and the children from this marriage would become integrated in the Beaufort household.³¹ The marriage was not especially happy and this was mostly due to the poor mental health of John. He seemed overwhelmed with his tasks as a landowning lord and his imprisonment must have left his traces as well. Only one child, a girl, was to come out of their marriage, something the new father only enjoyed for a short time.³² After leading a military expedition into France which failed miserably, also due to his poor skills on the battlefield, he

²⁸ A.R. Myers, *English Historical Documents Vol IV: 1327-1485* (London 1969) 169.

²⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 17-20.

³⁰ See Appendix 2: The Beaufort Family

³¹ See Appendix 3: The St John Family

³² M. Rickert, “The So-Called Beaufort Hours and York Psalter”, *The Burlington Magazine*. Vol. 104, No. 711 (1962) 238.

was banished from the court. The Earl of Somerset died only a year after the birth of his daughter and there were whispers that he had committed suicide, a high disgrace to the family. The only child that he left in this world was Margaret Beaufort.³³

Though the rumored suicide of her father blemished the family name, Margaret was still a very wealthy heiress and the great granddaughter of John of Gaunt, meaning that she was in the royal lineage. With the death of Margaret's father, there was little connection with the Beaufort family left, as Margaret's mother led her own household away from the Beaufort family. There is one notable exception to this, as Margaret remained in contact with the head of the Beaufort family, Edmund Beaufort, her uncle. He had earned his distinction in the wars with France and had been elected to the Order of the Garter and was given the earldom of Dorset as a reward. Edmund remained in close contact with the rest of the family, but Margaret appears to only have been in contact with Edmund, no evidence remains of other family connections. Edmund had three sons, Henry, Edmund and John, who would carry on the male line of the family for one more generation, before it became extinct.³⁴ The role of Edmund Beaufort in the life of Margaret will be discussed more thoroughly later in this thesis.

Another important connection to Margaret was that with her stepfamily on her mothers' side. After the death of her father, Margaret's sense of family was mostly derived from the connection with them.³⁵ Her mother, Margaret Beauchamp of Bletsoe, had been married before her match to John Beaufort to Sir Oliver St John by whom she had two sons and five daughters. As she married John Beaufort, the St John family remained closely connected with their mother and their half-sister Margaret and she grew up with the many children of the St John household. The St John family became Margaret's adopted family and she did not forget their interest and the connection they had after Henry ascended to the throne. Her half-brother John St John was to become the executor of both her wills, while his two children both got positions from Margaret. His daughter, Margaret St John became abbess of Shaftesbury and his son John II became Margaret's chamberlain in 1504 and became prominent at court. Some other members of the St John family served as a squire of Henry VII and good marriages were arranged for many of them. It becomes clear that Margaret identified with her family of her mother and her support remained

³³ E. Norton, *Margaret Beaufort: Mother of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucestershire 2011) p 9-18.

³⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 30-31.

³⁵ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 31.

consistent over the years. Especially after Bosworth, she was intent on sharing her fortune with the St John's and on protecting their property. Even though some of them had served Richard III, they were still adopted into Margaret's household or given notable positions.³⁶ It seems clear that she very much saw the St John family as her own and felt a responsibility for their fortunes.

The St John's were a durable kinship connection that would last her entire life. This also becomes clear from the fact that she did not just directly benefited those in the St John's family that were the natural born children of her mother, but that she bestowed gifts and positions more widely in their family. An example of this was the Zouche family, who were descendants of Margaret's niece Elizabeth St John. When for example Maurice St John entered royal service as a member of Henry VII's bodyguard, provisions were also made for his cousins Anne and Lionel Zouche and their stay and the equipment they needed was paid by Margaret.³⁷ The Zouches' link with the St John family had earned them a powerful protector in Margaret as many of them were brought up in the household of Margaret's various estates where their marriages were held. Some smaller estates, like Codnor, were even bestowed upon the Zouche family for their use. This clearly shows how this part of the extended St John family also became adopted by Margaret and indicates that she must have felt a close familial connection to them.³⁸ The importance of the St John family is clearly discernable in Margaret's will. In her final will of 1508 John St John, her half-brother, is noted as one of the executors of her will. Considering the importance of that role, as has been discussed above, we can clearly see that she not only held the St John family dear, but entrusted them with exercising her final will on earth. Margaret's birth family was thus of great importance to herself, but also to the establishment and advancement of Tudor rulership. It was the connection of the Beaufort family with John of Gaunt that would be the major aspect of Henry's claim to the throne. Also, Margaret's close ties with the St John family made them loyal allies, who took important positions at Henry's court to help him gain stability after coming to power.

³⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 33-34.

³⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 165-166.

³⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 114.

1.2 Marital Families

Marriage was a way for women not only to exert their influence, but also to gain political and social power. Those women who were married to men in powerful and socially desirable positions as well as women who gained access to positions of the court through their marriages were often able to exert their influence at the highest levels of society. Many of these women devoted their political and social energy and efforts to the elevation of their husbands and children's positions and used their networks in achieving this.³⁹ These networks form an important part of marriages. Women did not only expand their networks or establish new ones when entering a new family, but they also brought with them their own family ties, leading to a merging of these networks. These networks were often used for the further advancement of their positions and those of her husband and children. These kinship relations with their native and marital families provided them with the capital to enhance their positions and perform their duties as wives. These networks also often provided benefits to both families and reinforced their positions.⁴⁰ Special places within these family relations were often occupied by brothers or sisters in law with whom these women often developed warm relations and turned to for help.⁴¹

I would therefore like to move from the importance of Margaret's own family and adopted half-brothers and their families to the kin that she acquired through her marriages and the importance of those ties. Her first marriage, though annulled and not often considered a match of importance was to John de la Pole. John was to become the second Duke of Suffolk and was the son of William the la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk, who was Henry VI's chief advisor in the 1440s. The de la Pole family did not only have connections with the Lancastrians, but had family ties with the York family as well, Edward IV was the brother-in-law of John de la Pole.⁴² This marriage between Margaret and John was however dissolved when they were both still minors, and has little impact on the topic of this thesis. A marriage that did have a large impact, was Margaret's marriage into the Tudor family. When we look at the Tudor family at the time of the birth of Henry, we must conclude that it was far from a large family. Coming from Welsh roots, by the fifteenth century, only very few Tudors were still alive and their family ties were relatively

³⁹ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 61.

⁴⁰ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 175.

⁴¹ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 188.

⁴² J.A.F. Thomson, "John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk", *Speculum*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1979) p 528.

weak. Having little lands or titles, their true rise to power had not started until Owen Tudor connected himself to Katherine Valois, the widow of King Henry V. Before this match the Tudor family, an important Welsh family, was prominent in the service of Welsh princely houses. Around the thirteenth century they were connected to the Prince of Gwynedd, mostly as councilors, diplomats and soldiers and were what we call now part of the aristocracy of service, important noble or gentry families that served in houses of greater nobility.⁴³

The Tudors first came into contact with English politics when they pledged their allegiance to Edward I in 1296 and were known as loyal to the English crown ever since, with some family members in the king's service, mostly as soldiers. However, when Henry IV, often called the usurper king, came to power, the Tudor family rebelled and paid the price for this bold move when the rebellion failed. Stripped of their lands and titles, the Tudor family had forever lost its influence on the family lands in North Wales.⁴⁴ It seemed as if the role of the Tudor family in history was played out, but they managed to make a remarkable come-back to the English court. It was the grandfather of Henry, Owen Tudor, who formed the spill of the Tudor's restoration to power. Katherine of Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France, had been the wife of Henry V of England, who had died young leaving Katherine queen dowager of England after she had given him a son. A queen of such a young age, surely a women that would want to remarry, became a concern for the entire nation. Though it was first suggested that she would marry Edmund Beaufort⁴⁵, this idea was blocked by parliament who feared that the monarchy would be damaged if the queen married someone of inferior status. However, despite this act of Parliament, Katherine married Owen Tudor probably in 1431 or 1432, a fact that did not become widely known until the death of Katherine in 1437. The exact circumstances under which they met remain a mystery, but since Katherine had left the household of her son and the scrutiny of royal obligations, she had become free to marry as she wished. Although their marriage is veiled in secrets, nobody doubted that the marriage actually took place, and more importantly no one claimed that their children were illegitimate.⁴⁶ They had four children of which three, all boys, survived into adulthood. Two of these boys, Jasper and Edmund Tudor were eventually to be the

⁴³ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 7-8.

⁴⁴ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 25-27.

⁴⁵ In fact an uncle of Margaret, he was her father's brother.

⁴⁶ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 35-37.

most important kin relations of the Tudor side of Henry's family, while the third brother most likely became a priest. Jasper and Edmund were treated as young gentlemen and raised at the house of Katherine de la Pole, an important aristocratic family, when Henry VI began to take personal interest in the two, who were after all his stepbrothers. Probably out of the realization that they were possible heirs to the throne because of their mother, the two were ennobled in 1452, with Edmund becoming Earl of Richmond and Jasper Earl of Pembroke. It was this elevation to the nobility and their proximity to the Lancastrian king that would provide the Tudors access to the highest social circles of England.⁴⁷ As we know, Edmund would eventually marry Margaret Beaufort, dying shortly after his son Henry was born. It was his brother Jasper who would take his nephew and his mother in protection and there were even rumors that he and Margaret were planning to wed. What is true of these rumors can never be approximated, but it is clear that Jasper was eventually involved in the search for a new husband of Margaret and a stepfather to Henry, an aspect that will be further investigated later in this chapter. Other than Edmund and Jasper there seems to have been no further contact with any extended family of the Tudor line. This is of course not remarkable, as Jasper and Edmund grew up separated from their family at the royal court and besides a brother in the clergy had no other close relatives that were still alive.

So, while the Tudor family provided only a small kinship network, apart from their vital link to the Lancastrian line through Katherine of Valois, it is mostly interesting to look at the kinship networks that were established by Margaret through her other marriages as well. After the death of Edmund and the birth of Henry, Margaret wasted little time to remarry and did so with Henry Stafford in 1458. He was the second son of the Duke of Buckingham and as a younger son had little income, but it was not financial security that had attracted Margaret to this match. That she was not marrying him for income became clear when the marriage settlement was agreed upon at 400 marks, a relatively small sum at the time. For her, this marriage was a way of expanding a familial network, to find security for her and her son, and in order to relate herself to those with importance in the kingdom. Margaret and Henry were in fact already related twice, both as descendants of Edward III and through Stafford's mother, Anne Neville, who was the daughter of Margaret's great aunt Joan Beaufort. This connection was so strong that a dispensation was

⁴⁷ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 40-43.

necessary before the couple could marry. Besides the further integration of two important families of the English aristocracy, the connection to the Duke of Buckingham was probably most important to Margaret. Henry's father, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham was the brother-in-law of Richard, Duke of York and therefore one of the most powerful men in the kingdom.⁴⁸ The Stafford family had gotten most of their influence due to the large amounts of lands obtained through royal patronage and becoming part of the Stafford family meant an entrance to the Yorkist court for Margaret.⁴⁹

That she really became part of the Stafford family becomes clear in the way she maintained contact with many family members, even after her marriage to Stanley, a match made after Henry Stafford had passed away. What is also significant is that her tomb for example shows the weapon of the Staffords alongside that of the Beaufort family, while the Stanleys remained absent from her burial site. The bond between Margaret and Henry Stafford becomes clear from his will drafted in 1471. The document was made with great haste and is therefore difficult to read, made at the eve of the Battle of Barnet, which took place the 14th of April 1471. It is clear that Stafford was afraid he would not survive the encounter and this makes the testament a moving document. He names Margaret "My most entire belovyd wyff my chiefff executor"⁵⁰ He also mentions his son-in-law, Henry and leaves him a trapper and four new horse harnesses of velvet. The rest of his goods he bequeaths to Margaret. This emotional testament shows the strong bond between the couple. Besides their good relationships, the match also had political uses for Margaret and the advancement of her son's case. Stafford allowed Margaret to become more integrated in at the Yorkist court and protect the interests of her family. With their large estates and close court connections Stafford and Margaret were at the top of the English aristocracy.⁵¹ Her marriage with Stafford was thus an improvement in the social and political standing of Margaret, an important aspect in preparing the ground for her son Henry to return to England and claim the throne. A large part of this improvement in status of Margaret but also an improvement in the position of her son was the connection made to the Duke of Buckingham. This connection with a great Lancastrian family was of great importance. However, when the tides turned and Edward IV came to power, Henry Stafford decided to protect his interests along with those of his wife and

⁴⁸ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 50-51.

⁴⁹ C. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords: Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521* (Cambridge 1978) 1-7.

⁵⁰ SJC D.56.186, will of Sir Henry Stafford.

⁵¹ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 76-77.

stepson's possessions. Stafford's reconciliation with the Yorkist rulers protected Margaret's estates from two Acts of Resumption and he secured them both with a general pardon.⁵² On the long run this was very important, because it provided Margaret with the possibilities to weave webs of relations to advance the case of her son as she remained at the center of power with her possessions intact.⁵³

When Stafford died in 1471, it was however necessary for Margaret to remarry quickly for her own protection. It was to be her third marriage and this time a match with Thomas Stanley was made. In terms of using kinship ties for political purposes, one could argue that there is no stronger example than that of the Stanley family. The Stanleys had been a family on the rise since the fourteenth century, something they had mostly achieved through marriages to rich heiresses. They had become known for their political opportunism, changing alliances between the houses of York and Lancaster depending on which of them was capable of rewarding them richly for their loyalty. Coming from a modest background with a small estate on the border of Cheshire-Staffordshire, they managed to eventually climb their way up the ladder to become the Earls of Derby.⁵⁴ They are an interesting example of a family that did well during the Wars of the Roses because they refused to commit themselves officially to one of the fighting parties. It was their connections to the Tudors that eventually gave them the largest rise in power and provided them with the title of earl after the end of the wars.⁵⁵

The marriage of Lord Thomas Stanley to Margaret Beaufort in 1472 was far from a gamble or a passionate affair, but an act of political shrewdness again. Margaret was wealthy, had good connections at court and was part of the aristocratic elite of the country, making her an interesting match for Stanley, who had already had children from his previous wife. It is important to remember that the marriage was probably not constructed out of loyalty for the Tudor claim to the throne, a move displaying such political opportunism in tumultuous times would be highly out of character for the Stanley family. That this loyalty to the Tudors was not the main motive becomes clear when the young Henry invaded England and requested the support of the Stanleys

⁵² C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV* (London, 1923) Vol I. 203.

⁵³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 41.

⁵⁴ B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lord Stanley and the Earls of Derby 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth, and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester 1983) 2-3.

⁵⁵ Coward, *The Stanleys*, 9.

at Bosworth, who eventually made an appearance at the last moment and tilted the battle with their forces in favor of Henry Tudor. However, though they did not openly support Henry's claim until the Battle of Bosworth they did help with the preparations of his landing in England. The Stanley family, under the lead of Margaret was very much involved in gathering supporters of the Tudor cause and informing them of news from the exiled Henry. Through the household of Thomas Stanley money was also sent to Henry in 1483 and at least one mission with a ship of Stanley had set sail to Henry with supplies and funds.⁵⁶ The Stanleys were to receive great rewards for their aid at the battle and in the period before that and Thomas Stanley was created Earl of Derby and Constable of England. These rewards reflect both a marker of the status of the step-father of the king as well as a royal favor for their assistance in 1485 and the years preceding the battle.⁵⁷ It may seem obvious that the rewards for the Stanleys of this kinship relation to the new dynasty were fruitful, but they were also very useful for the young Tudor dynasty. Not only did their kinship ties to an influential family result in military assistance in times of great need, but they managed to tie an important family to their dynasty for future generations. Something that was certainly necessary in the turmoil of plots and Yorkist influence that was still to come during the reign of Henry VII.

An interesting document when looking at the marriage of Stanley and Margaret is the marriage contract that was established between them. Margaret ordered a quite elaborate marriage contract in 1472 that safeguarded her property from going over to the Stanley family in case she died before him. The marriage contract shows that Margaret negotiated the settlement very much on her own terms, profiting from Stanley's connections and a generous annual allowance from his property, while protecting her own possessions and safeguarding them for her son.⁵⁸ This is interesting as it confirms our image of this marriage as a political alliance. The contract confirms a yearly income for Margaret from Stanley's of 500 marks and states that her property, though a part of the income thereof would go to Stanley, would be going to Henry in case Margaret would pass away.⁵⁹ This marriage contract was confirmed by parliament in an Act, presented to Henry, stating:

⁵⁶ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 127-128.

⁵⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 74-75.

⁵⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 144-145.

⁵⁹ SJC D56.200, the marriage contract between Stanley and Margaret of 1472.

“That where certaine appointments and agreements were late made by youre said Moder [Margaret] and her said Husband [Stanley], that is to say, that the said Erle shuld cause a sufficiaunt and lawfull Estate of Lordshipps, Mannors, Lands and Tenements of his inheritaunce, to the yerely value of v c [500] Marcs over all charges, to be made to youre said Moder, or to certeine Feoffees to her use, for terme of her lyfe.”⁶⁰

Another interesting aspect is that they named a group of protectors to see to it that this agreement was honored by both parties. The fact that these protectors were necessary hints again at the political nature of the match. The three men that Margaret chose for this purpose, are names that will come back in more aspects of Margaret’s life including John Morton, the bishop of Ely and Reginald Bray, a member of Stafford’s household that Margaret had remained close to.⁶¹

Her marriage to Stanley also had great political use when the tide turned against Margaret and she was discovered as one of the plotters against Richard III in 1483. The Duke of Buckingham together with Margaret’s confidants Reginald Bray and John Morton had gathered a group of allies and were preparing to overthrow Richard to establish Henry Tudor on the throne.⁶² Margaret’s role in this plot is much discussed, as she seems to have been the person that laid contacts and kept people up to date with the plans of the plot.⁶³ The plot however fell apart and was discovered before Henry arrived in England to claim the throne and Margaret’s role in the plot was also unveiled. Richard was very displeased and attainted Margaret for treason by parliament in 1483. The Act stated:

“Forasmuch as Margaret Contesse of Richmond, Mother to the kyngs greate Rebelle and Traytour, Henry Erle of Richemond, hath of late conspired, confedered and comitted high Treason ayenst oure soveraigne lorde the king Richard the Third, in dyvers and sundry wyses, and in especiall in sendyng messages, writyngs and tokens to the said Henry, desiryng, procuring and stirryng him by the same, to come into his Roialme, and make Were ayenst oure said Soveraigne Lorde.”⁶⁴

Here Richard implicates that Margaret had a large role in the plot and that she would have to be severely punished for her role. What saved Margaret from execution was her marriage to Stanley,

⁶⁰ RP VI: 312. This quote is from the Act when it was presented to Henry after he had become king in 1485.

⁶¹ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 98-99.

⁶² C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437-1509* (Cambridge 1997) 212.

⁶³ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 118-123.

⁶⁴ RP V: 250, page 250-251 of the source.

who had been a loyal supporter, at least in public, of Richard III. It is probably that Richard also suspected that Stanley was not a loyal ally, as just before the plot was unmasked he was allowed to travel to his family in Lancashire, but only if his eldest son remained with the king.⁶⁵ Though Margaret's lands were confiscated, Stanley received those lands for the term of his life, ensuring that while he lived Margaret in fact lost nothing. That Stanley played a large role in the saving of Margaret's life becomes clear later on in the same Act:

“Yet neverthelesse, oure said Soveraigne lorde, of his grace especiall, remembryng the good and faithfull service that Thomas lord Stanley hath done, and entendeth to doo to oure said Soveraigne lorde, and for the good love and trust that the kyng hath in hym, and for his sake, remitteth and woll forbere the greate punyshement of attaynder of the said countesse, that she or any other so doeyng hath deserved.”⁶⁶

The connection of Margaret with Stanley thus literally saved her life and was vital to the eventual coming to the throne of Henry as Margaret was able to remain in contact with her son and continue their plans for his landing in England.⁶⁷ But what was the role of Stanley in this plot? Was he really unaware of his wife's schemes and thus so quickly forgiven by Richard III? Or was he secretly rallying for the cause of his stepson? Contemporary writers like Polydore Vergil have attributed a great role to Margaret in this plot and have rarely mentioned Stanley's involvement.⁶⁸ It is currently believed however, that he must have been not only aware of his wife's attempts to overthrow Richard III, but that he deliberately portrayed himself as a loyal servant to Richard III in case things were to turn sour and the plot should fail.⁶⁹ This approach would certainly suit Thomas Stanley, who had a reputation to wait with picking a side until it was clear who was on the winning end. It is clear that he was not entirely trusted by Richard III, for a while he was restricted from travelling and when he was allowed to visit family elsewhere he had to leave his son at the disposition of the king.⁷⁰ This implies that Stanley was certainly aware of the actions of his wife and by not intervening it shows that he probably thought that these ideas were viable. Another suggestion that he did not oppose to his wife's plan to put her son on the English throne

⁶⁵ J.R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1965) 257.

⁶⁶ RP V: 250, page 251.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, 214.

⁶⁸ Polydore, *Three Books of English History*, 204.

⁶⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 62-64.

⁷⁰ Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, 257.

was that when the plot was discovered and Margaret was put under house arrest in his Woking estate he allowed her to maintain in contact with her son and Jasper Tudor in Burgundy through letters. This contact was vital to the eventual landing of Henry in Wales in 1485 and his taking of the throne.⁷¹

When we look at Thomas Stanley do we look at a fervent supporter of the Lancastrian cause and Tudor rulership? The answer to that can be a simple no, the family history of political shrewdness is reflected in the behavior of Stanley during the Wars of the Roses. He had a nose for choosing the winning side, which is reflected in his behavior during the Battle of Bosworth, where he chose Henry's side when it had become clear that Henry was on the winning side. That does not decrease the impact that Margaret's choice of husband had on the establishment and advancement of Tudor rulership. J.R. Lander, a specialist on the Wars of the Roses and Tudor rulership even calls the Stanley family vital to the existence and success of the Tudors: "The English nobility stood remarkably aloof from his adventure (the invasion of Henry Tudor) and he owed his success to one family, that of his step-father, the Stanleys."⁷² Other researchers, like Jones and Underwood, agree with this perspective and note that "The support of the wider Stanley family network was a major factor in enabling Henry to gain the throne."⁷³ In my view, and this is reflected in the marriage settlement between Margaret and Stanley, she was very much aware of the political value of this match even if her husband was not a strong open supporter of her cause. She managed to use his connections and wealth to further establish her standing in the English society to advance her son and when things went downhill it was her connection to Stanley that saved her life. All in all, it was the most politically important of her marriages and a move that proved to be fruitful for both.

1.3 The Impact of Widowhood

Margaret was in a position that she was married thrice and widowed twice, not a very unusual position for women in the Middle Ages. What is of course of great importance to remember is that medieval women did not choose their own partners for marriage. Though marriage was indeed sometimes a great source for control or the gaining of influence for women, the partner

⁷¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 64-65.

⁷² J.R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450-1509* (London, 1980) 331.

⁷³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 65.

they were going to spend (part) of their lives with was chosen for them. It was the male head of the family, most often the father of the bride, which had prime responsibility for the choosing of the husband. The goal of the match was to enhance the social and economic standing of the family by making a good match. In the case of Margaret the responsibility of finding her a husband came to Edmund Beaufort. Since her father had passed, his brother Edmund had become head of the Beaufort family and therefore also responsible for creating a good match for his niece. He was however not the only one involved or interested in making a good match for Margaret. King Henry VI was aware of the good birth of Margaret and took an active role in introducing her and Edmund Tudor, who was his half-brother. His interest becomes clear when he endowed her with 100 marks to spend on a wardrobe, a large sum at the time.⁷⁴ She was however still on paper bound to John de la Pole, a marriage that would have to be dissolved if she were to marry Edmund Tudor. Margaret's later personal confessor John Fisher wrote that she had once told him that she had a vision of Saint Nicholas, to whom she prayed.

"The patron and helper of al true maydens, and to besech him to put in her mynde what she were best to do... especially that nyght when she sholde the morrow after make answer of her mynde determynatly. A mervaylous thing! that same nyght, as she lay in Prayer, calling upon St Nicholas, whether slepyng or wakeyng she could not assure, but about four of the clocke in the mornynge, one appered unto her arrayed like a Byshop, and naming unto her Edmonde, bad take hym unto her Husbande. And so by this meane she did encline her mynde unto Edmonde, the Kyng's Broder, and Erle of Rychemonde."⁷⁵

St Nicholas then told her to marry Edmund Tudor when she prayed to him. This makes it seem like Margaret very consciously chose her husband after divine guidance, but in reality she had little choice in the matter.⁷⁶

When Edmund Tudor died before the birth of his son, it was his brother Jasper, who took responsibility for the young family. Though there were rumors of a wedding between Jasper and Margaret, they both understood that this was unacceptable, as it was unacceptable to marry the brother of the deceased husband, and their common goal now became to find Margaret a new

⁷⁴ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 31-32.

⁷⁵ J. Fisher, "Mornynge Remembraunce had at the Moneth Mynd", In: J. Mayor, *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester* (London 1876) 292-293.

⁷⁶ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 34.

husband. In finding a new marriage candidate for Margaret Jasper appears to have been the only man involved, as her uncle Edmund Beaufort had been killed at the Battle of St Albans in 1455.⁷⁷ Margaret and newborn Henry had come to Jaspers care straight after the death of his brother. In order to protect Margaret and Henry this had to happen with relative haste and the official period of mourning was barely observed. In March 1457 Jasper made a visit to the Duke of Buckingham at Greenfield accompanied by Margaret and baby Henry. This was the occasion on which Margaret's marriage to Buckingham's second son, Henry Stafford was arranged.⁷⁸ We can see in this case that Jasper took the role of head of the family since the death of Margaret's uncle and his brother, who would otherwise have been responsible for Margaret. Though Jasper and Margaret remained in contact, and Jasper played a large role in the life of Henry Tudor, he would no longer act as the head of the family after she remarried.

Most interesting to us in this respect, however, is the marriage to Thomas Stanley, her last husband. When Stafford died in 1471 Margaret was quick to remarry to provide herself with protection and influence at the Yorkist court.⁷⁹ This marriage is so interesting because we can find only scant evidence of a male figure in Margaret's surrounding that arranges this match, but not as much as was the case with her previous marriages. The only indication we can find is that of an influence of Edward IV himself, who was said to have played a part in arranging the match, but there is no written evidence of this. This could simply mean that this information is not available to us, or that Jasper once again took responsibility for marrying off his sister-in-law, but in my view something else occurred. There is no indication that Jasper Tudor was involved and he would logically be relieved of that duty after Margaret married Henry Stafford. She was able thus to take a larger decision making role in her choice of marriage partner. This was in a large part due to her special status as a widow without the pressure to produce offspring.

What is interesting to see is that widows occupied a special place of power within medieval society and often enjoyed greater freedoms than married women. These widows would often remain central in their deceased husbands' families as they raised children and administered the wills of their late husbands. Though there are many accounts of conflicts between widows and their marital families after the death of their husbands, more often, widows saw their wealth

⁷⁷ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 36-37.

⁷⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 57-58.

⁷⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 58-59.

permanently augmented and were able to marry again and further expand their possessions and influence.⁸⁰ Margaret Beaufort was a prime example of such an augmentation through marriage, having been married four times and widowed thrice.⁸¹ All of her husbands left her with considerable wealth, lands, estates and titles, something she managed to use in her favor. She remained in good contact with all her marital families and often endowed them with positions and favors at the court, especially after her son had risen to the throne. By doing this, she managed to weave a network not only of her own kin, but of that of three different families and those they were in turn attached to as well. Widowhood had given her a key place in the dynastic marriage market, despite the fact that she could not bear children after giving birth to Henry.⁸²

Widows were regarded as suited marriage partners because they often came with established wealth and lands from their previous husband(s) and with connections to multiple families, both their native and marital families, with whom they often remained in good contact. For men these women were therefore often suitable partners after they had already established a family with a previous wife. In that way posterity was already settled and they could find a match that advanced their political and economic purposes. Marrying a widow brought economic advantages, as they brought a dowry, a principal much the same as the dowry for maidens. Traditionally a dowry comprised one third of her late husband's property, often with jointure.⁸³ This was not always the case, as widows often established marriage contracts in which they specified what holdings would be shared and what would remain their property. Margaret also did this with the marriage settlement of 1472, as discussed earlier. For these women widowhood often also provided them with a certain freedom to choose their next husbands. Having been married before, they were less attached to the wishes of their native families, as they were no longer under their father's direct authority and experienced more freedom in finding suitable matches themselves. What we see then is that widows often remarried promptly and repeatedly.⁸⁴ This does not mean that widows were always entirely free in their choices. Especially in the case

⁸⁰ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 192.

⁸¹ It is quite a discussion how often Margaret was married. On paper she had been married four times, but her first marriage, to John de la Pole was dissolved before either reached an age to marry and no provisions were made at the annulment. Therefore, within my research I will not give this marriage full weight nor consider it any further.

⁸² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 4.

⁸³ R.L. Friedrichs, "The Remarriage of Elite Widows in the Later Middle Ages", *Florilegium*. Vol. 23, Issue 1. (2006) 70.

⁸⁴ Friedrichs, "The Remarriage of Elite Widows", 69.

of the upper sections of the aristocracy heads of families as well as kings were often involved in establishing the marriages of these widows.⁸⁵ With Margaret we can see this in the involvement of Edmund Beaufort and Jasper Tudor in the arrangement of her marriages. In the case of Margaret, marriage definitely provided her with opportunities. Not only was she able to expand her territorial claims, she also found entry to the court and political influence. What we can see clearly with Margaret is that she had very good contact with her different marital families, also after her husbands' deaths. This helped her in weaving a web of relations that was to be so vital for the success of her son.

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the case of Margaret Beaufort shows us that kinship relations did not yet seem to be abiding in this period, as she made use of elaborate networks of kin, especially marital kin. Her descent from the line of John of Gaunt, guaranteed her family a place at the high English nobility. Though the family history of the Beaufort line was a rather tumultuous one, Margaret had become a great heiress and a suitable marriage partner. Though the Beaufort family was rather small, Edmund Beaufort as head of the family remained of some importance, being involved in the creation of Margaret's marriage to Jasper Tudor. Besides her own family her mother's earlier marriage to Oliver St John had also provided Margaret with a stepfamily that she would remain very close to for the rest of her life, considering them as kin. We can see this in how she integrated the St John family in her households, as confidants of her son, and one of them even as executor of her will.

In marriage, her match to Edmund Tudor provided her with important royal connections, cumulating with her own claim through John of Gaunt, making her son Henry related to the royal lineage in two ways. Her later marriages with Henry Stafford and Thomas Stanley were mostly practical in nature, providing her with further court connections and safety for her son. With the Stafford family Margaret seems to have felt a real connection, as their emblem was also present on her tomb, while that of the Stanley family was not. In these later marriages we can see that Margaret as a well-endowed widow enjoyed more freedom to make her own choices, especially in the case of her marriage to Stanley, when no male relatives seemed to be involved in her choice of partner, as more widows were able to do in her position. In the marriage contract that

⁸⁵ Friedrichs, "The Remarriage of Elite Widows", 71.

she established in 1472 she also protected her own holdings and those of her son, making the marriage more of a political alliance than an affair of the heart. Margaret thus took the expansion of her kinship network more into her own hands as time progressed. When we look at the ideas on kinship, as presented at the beginning of this paragraph, it is important to stress the diversity of these kinship relations and their enduring importance. Especially in the period after the War of the Roses binding one's goals to another family remained vital. By the marital alliances that Margaret built, she secured lasting protection for her son, something that would probably not have been possible on the small kinship basis of the Tudor family alone. Their case therefore proves to be a prime example of the importance of kinship relations, which lasted through an era in which bureaucracy and the centralization of the state were increasing. The thesis of *Kinship in Europe*, that these two processes of kinship and growing influence of the state were not incompatible, but coexisted with a lasting place in society for kinship relations, is something that I have encountered in the case of Margaret Beaufort and her efforts to establish and preserve the young Tudor dynasty. However, kinship relations can never be the only form of connections that are established and for that reason the next paragraph will focus on another pivotal way of increasing connections, namely that of patronage.

2. Patronage Networks

Another form of connections widely used in the Middle Ages was that of patronage networks. Relying solely on one's family and the other families to which one is connected through marriage or blood was seen as a large gamble that those in power could not afford to take. The War of the Roses had made it all too clear that alliances could shift, families could become extinct and royal favors were uncertain. For these reasons aristocratic families looked beyond the bonds and security that tying their family to others through marriage could give them and invested a great deal of time in establishing patronage networks. Royal favor or patronage was a strong tool frequently used by English monarchs. In the Elizabethan and early Stuart period it was often described by the metaphor of a fountain, a flowing source of favor and lands, but the water always returning to its source. Meaning that when the king rewarded his subjects, loyalty and service were the expected returns.⁸⁶ In modern historiography, the study of relationships between patrons, especially royal ones, and their clients has sparked much research. The French historian Roland Mousnier was a major factor at the beginning of the 20th century in delineating the relationships between courts and political elites.⁸⁷ Mousnier and others have analyzed the structures of informal power that often connected these groups and these groups created ties between the center and localities. More recent work, like that of Kevin Sharpe and Conrad Russel have given new emphasis to these connections, shifting the focus more towards less official forms of patronage.⁸⁸ Before these recent works the book of G.R. Elton was the standard work for our understanding of Tudor politics. In his book *England under the Tudors* he asserts that the Tudors managed to prevail due to their use of political institutions. He primarily looked at institutions such as the Privy Council and legal institutions. The court was far less important to him and something he defined as a private institution, built on gossips.⁸⁹ However, in the last twenty years, these ideas have been revised. Instead of only studying these institutions, historians have now placed more emphasis on social connections and cultural influences.⁹⁰ The first to do this was Patrick Collinson in 1989, who argued that it was essential to explore the social depths

⁸⁶ L.L. Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London 1993) 1.

⁸⁷ R. Mousnier, *Social Hierarchies: 1450 to the Present* (London 1973)

⁸⁸ K. Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven 2009)

⁸⁹ G.R. Elton, *England under the Tudors* (London 1955)

⁹⁰ N. Mears, "Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England", *The Historical Journal*, Vol 46, Issue 3 (2003) 703.

of politics and the ties between local communities and the monarchy.⁹¹ This generated a large stream of research by others on the role of social connections in Tudor politics. These historians, such as Davies, Bernard and Starkey have together defined a more social concept of Tudor politics, which was less about the institutions and more about how people interacted with them. They identified social networks, clienteles and patronage as central to the process of governance. This idea became known as the New Tudor political history, which though sharing their key elements, researchers do still differ in their focus between these elements.⁹²

Though there are variations in current research on the structures of governance in the Tudor era, we can assert that now most historians agree that these personal and private relationships between patrons and clients dominated late Medieval and Early Modern politics. This was mostly due to the rise of the bureaucratic state, especially in countries like England. Patronage was a method of security in society as these relationships were designed to improve the power and standing of those in charge.⁹³ In the primary source material we can see this growth the augmentation of central courts like the King's Bench and Common Pleas, but also the Chancery was growing in importance.⁹⁴ This meant that networks were formed, not only at court, but between those at court and the local authorities as well, as these held large estates and thereby power.⁹⁵ These networks could be established in a variety of ways, through appeal to friendship, mutual bonds or as mere political transactions. When looking for the language of these networks, we can find various different ways in which these were expressed. Gift-giving, granting titles and social benefits like the acceptance into a higher group of the society can be found in a broad variety of primary material. Of course, these ideas of patronage have always existed, but what makes the Tudor period truly remarkable in that sense, is that this became far more institutionalized and documented than had been the case before that. The centralization of power in the sixteenth century, combined with other factors like the growing number of landed elite and changing patterns of trade meant a significant change in the way patronage was established and executed. Another interesting theory for this increase in royal patronage was the simple necessity

⁹¹ P. Collinson, "De Republica Anglorum: or, History with the Politics Put Back", In: Collinson, ed., *Elizabethan Essay*, (London 1994) 1-29.

⁹² Mears, "Courts, Courtiers and Culture", 704-705.

⁹³ Peck, *Court, Patronage and Corruption*, 2-3.

⁹⁴ S. Gunn, "Henry VII in Context: Problems and Possibilities", *History*. Vol. 92, Issue 307 (2007) 302-303.

⁹⁵ Mears, "Court, Courtiers and Culture", 706.

for the Tudor dynasty to connect themselves with this elite, in order to maintain political power as a newly established dynasty.⁹⁶ Through her royal status as the mother of the king, Margaret had quite some leverage in this area and the majority of the focus in this chapter will therefore lie on the patronage relations that were established after Henry rose to the throne, though some of these patronage networks were established earlier.

There were several ways in which Margaret had power to acquire and create new patronage networks. As the mother of the king, she was an important figure at court, one through which people could obtain royal favor or gain access to the king and his circles. But the most important power she obtained was the ability to grant people official positions, which was acquired through her special relationship with her only son. She was in fact the only woman in the kingdom that had her own license to admit people to the royal household and take their oaths without needing royal consent first. This special privilege was one she often used to draw those she trusted closer to the center of power at court. Henry's reasons to bestow this favor upon his mother were most likely based on the simple fact that her network was larger than his and she was experienced in such nominations. Not only did Margaret possess large estates with officials and households that she had known and trusted for a long time, but she also had a good understanding of the court, the dynamics and workings thereof. Since Henry spent a large portion of his young life in exile across the channel, he was glad to use her knowledge and connections when he came to power. Contemporaries understood that Margaret was an important figure through which access to the court could be established and contact with her often formed a useful entrance to the king. This becomes clear in letters written to the king, by petitioners or others visiting the court, in which contact with Margaret, however brief, was often mentioned. From this we can assert that a service to his mother was seen by Henry as a debt of honor.⁹⁷ We can see that the degree of influence that Margaret had with her son and that with the aristocracy was closely related to her dominating position within the realm. These areas of influence such as her households, court, and her network at Cambridge will all be discussed in this chapter. Besides that there will be attention to Margaret's wills, as I believe these are crucial in mapping her network.

⁹⁶ Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption*, 3-4.

⁹⁷ An example of this is PRO, SC6/Eliz/3368 where Sir John Hussay describes his connections to Margaret in a deposition to Henry VII.

2.1 Margaret's Household

Margaret's household was the largest source of confidants and clients of her patronage. It has been calculated that the average aristocratic English household in the fifteenth century ranged in size between seventy-five and 140 peoples, containing people from all social classes.⁹⁸ These households thus comprised both the estates that she owned, but also the people that managed those estates. It becomes clear that it was a small society in its own right, a network of patronage and influence in which she was very active. We could compare it to a small society of which she was the undoubted head. This society was defined not only by Margaret's own objectives, but after the ascension of Henry, for that of the royal line as well. She fulfilled the obligations of both her family and her household by appointing people in areas over which she exerted influence. One of these aspects that will be discussed later in this chapter was the foundation of two colleges at Cambridge where she also appointed many people from her household. Besides this she was also very active in many religious institutions and royal foundations. She used her households and estates to supply these institutions with people, as well as using the money coming from her estates to finance these institutions. The basis of this influence were her estates in Richmond, Lincolnshire and the Beaufort lands in Devon, Somerset and Northamptonshire and later supplemented with royal estates in Colyweston and Tattershall, which were granted to her in 1487.⁹⁹ These households were staffed with people and their families that Margaret had known for most or all of her life and she knew that she could trust them. This trust was reflected when Henry seized the throne and decided to place several people that could form threats against the new dynasty in the custody of Margaret and her household. Examples of those who were placed under her care were Elizabeth of York, Henry's future wife, and her cousin the Earl of Warwick, who was the only surviving male member of the House of York.¹⁰⁰

When Henry took the throne in 1485, it was a time of change in the household of Margaret as well, which began to grow both in size and importance. Those in her household of course also profited from her enlarged influence after Henry became king, as discussed earlier. We can see a stark difference in the way Margaret managed her estates before and after the

⁹⁸ B.J. Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relationships: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England", *Signs*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (1990) 611.

⁹⁹ M. Underwood, "Politics and Piety in the Household of Lady Margaret Beaufort", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol 38 (1987) 40.

¹⁰⁰ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 140-141.

ascension of her son. During the turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, she had a clearly defensive tactic, trying to keep her titles and far-flung lands and households together. However, during the reign of her son, Margaret took affirmative action to exercise her control in the area, she was taking legal action and was pursuing her own interests through her estates. This difference in her approach to her possessions was of course a direct result of the enhancement of her political status after 1485.¹⁰¹ Henry Parker, who would later become Lord Morley, served in Margaret's household and wrote an account of her household which forty years after Margaret's death was written down for her great-granddaughter Mary I. Parker first served as Margaret's cupbearer and gives us an interesting insight into the household at Collyweston, where she spent most of her time. Margaret later paid for his education at Oxford and during the reign of Henry VII frequently attended court as part of Margaret's household.¹⁰² His experiences in the household of Margaret and the patronage that he received can be seen as one of many such experiences. In his book he described that though Margaret was very religious, she also gave lavish feasts, as he recorded Christmas period in 1498 at her estates:

“In Cristmas tyme she kept so honorable a house, that upon one newe yeares day I being her carver off the age of fyftene yeares, had five&twentye knights folowing me of whom myne owne father was one, and sytting at her table the erle of derby her husband, the viscount Wellys, the olde Lord Hastings, the Byshoppe of Lincoln, and by her person under her clothe of estate the lady cecyle king Edwardes doughter your [Queen Mary I's] awnte. In her hall from nyne of the clock tyll it was sevyne off the clock at night as fast as one table was up another was sett, no pore man was denyed at that sayde feat of cristmas if he were of any honesty, but that he might come to the Buttrye, or to the cellar to drinke att his pleasure, her liberalytie was such that ther came no man of honour or worship to her as ther came many of the greatest of the realme.”¹⁰³

Parker made more remarks on her household, stating it consisted of 440 people, including her ladies, gentlemen, yeomen, and officers. This is likely to be an exaggeration, as it is unlikely that

¹⁰¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 115.

¹⁰² V. Schutte, *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications: Royal Women, Power, and Persuasion* (New York 2015) 82-83.

¹⁰³ BL Add. MS 12060.

she employed so many people on a daily basis. His testimonies do show, however, that Margaret lived a life befitting someone of her status and that was reflected clearly in her household.¹⁰⁴

There is another aspect of her household that I wish to turn to here, that of religious institutions supported by Margaret. Her ownership over much land, combined with the support of the crown, meant that she was capable of supporting many religious and charitable bodies that had her interest. Her households thus served as tools whose revenue Margaret could invest in expanding her network. These were not just acts of personal piety, but were also a method in expanding her influence in an area that she was personally familiar with and which had her interest. Conveniently, and probably not by accident, women traditionally had more access to this way of obtaining patronage, as it was seen as fitting for a lady to take an interest in religion. This choice for religious patronage will be more thoroughly discussed at a later point in this thesis. Those in her household were often chosen for positions in the charities that she was patroness of and she made financial means available for a considerable number of servants from her households to follow religious education and to ascend in power within the church afterwards. This meant that her household and her choices in patronage in religious institutions were much intertwined and showed the close connection she felt to her household. That Margaret's household was very important and dear to her becomes clear from her will, made in 1508, where she directs that her household should be paid half a year's wages in the event of her death. She appoints bishop Fox to make sure that both her old and serviceable servants of her household be rewarded at his discretion and that the poor that were housed and schooled at Hatfield should be maintained for their entire lives.¹⁰⁵

When we speak of Margaret's household, we have to realize that this constellation consisted out of two parts, or rather, two distinctive periods. Before Henry came to the throne, she had a household of her estates. Some of these people travelled with her, while others remained at her estates to take care of the buildings, animals and surrounding lands. When her status changed in 1485 after her son came to the throne, she suddenly became responsible for a royal household as well. This household that she formed at court is certainly also an aspect that can tell us much about the people Margaret surrounded herself with. Because there are some

¹⁰⁴ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 151-152.

¹⁰⁵ C.H. Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret: Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge 1874) 119- 121.

differences between the constellation of the royal household and the household that she had managed in the country, there are some facets that I wish to discuss. Their character is different as well as the way in which Margaret employed them. The first, and perhaps most important difference, was the composition of this royal household compared to that of her other household in the country. Though a substantial amount of people were simply brought with Margaret to this new royal environment, her household was also filled with new characters.¹⁰⁶ Where courts were made up of friends and foes alike and were used as a tool to keep the balance of power intact and to subdue the unruly nobility, royal households were always seen a direct reflection of personal preferences.¹⁰⁷ In the case of the early Tudors this was not entirely true. Though many that had served loyally in Margaret's household were taken into the royal household, space had to be made for some who had been political opponents, but whose alliance was required.¹⁰⁸ In terms of new people we can see that some ladies from Yorkist families entered Margaret's service in the royal household when Henry came to power. The hope was that by allowing these women to become immersed into the royal household, their families could be closely monitored and eventually be bound to the Tudor monarchy as loyal subjects. Elizabeth of York, Henry's wife, also caused some members of her family to be adopted into Margaret's train of ladies.¹⁰⁹ Despite the influx of some new people, there are many examples of people from the household of Margaret that gained influence directly after Henry ascended to the throne. Some of those in Margaret's household were elevated to that of her son. In this fashion Margaret's receiver Reginald Bay became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and a trusted councilor of Henry. Two of Margaret's agents, William Smyth and William Cope, respectively became clerk of the hanaper and the king's cofferer.¹¹⁰ But she also promoted people within her own household. Hugh Hornby became secretary and dean of Margaret's chapel, James Morris the clerk of works, William Merbury her controller and Miles Worsley her new cofferer. These were all men that had been a part of Margaret's household since the 1490s and were rewarded for their loyal service.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 202-203.

¹⁰⁷ H. Zmora, *Monarchy, Aristocracy and the State in Europe 1300-1500* (London 2001) 76.

¹⁰⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 203-204.

¹⁰⁹ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 158-160.

¹¹⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 79.

¹¹¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 154.

As we can see, Margaret's households played a pivotal role in the connection between the court and the landed elite in the country. It is almost impossible to completely separate between her household, the establishment of religious beneficiaries and the court, as there is much overlap between these areas. These households therefore had a strong political profile, maintaining close contacts between the royal center of power, the aristocracy and particular religious environments.¹¹² Her household consisted of people with whom she had built relationships of trust and with her elevation to royalty many of them were rewarded for their service, either by being offered positions in her network of religious patronage or at the royal household. Margaret's household thus served as an important part of the Tudor's ability to remain in power after their coup. Margaret, by having spun a web of relations in her household of people that she and her son could trust was thus able to place people she knew and relied on in positions of power quickly. Though it was inevitable to admit some new people, including those who had been the enemy during the Wars of the Roses, we can conclude that Margaret's old household formed the backbone of the royal environment and of the preservation of Tudor rulership.

2.2 The Court

For aristocratic women, their connections with other members of the nobility and with the court were of great importance for the political and social advancement of their families and themselves. In a period of expansion of royal power, the court had taken a central role in the networks that these women gathered around themselves. This development in the expansion and centralization of royal power meant that the separation between the public and private sphere began to fade and women were taking a more active role within their networks.¹¹³ As Barbara Harris states: "the boundaries between public and private concerns as we understand them either did not exist or were extraordinarily permeable...and that political affairs were not exclusively associated with men."¹¹⁴ Women were therefore also present at a public location like the court to advance the position of their families. Thus meant that they were present in the public sphere both with and without men.¹¹⁵ Moreover, women were very active in court, as court positions were highly regarded, also for women. At court they were able to undercut traditional boundaries

¹¹² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 85.

¹¹³ Denton-Spalding, *From Court to Countryside*, 5-7.

¹¹⁴ B.J. Harris, "Women and Politics in Early Tudor Britain", *The Historical Journal*. Vol 33. Issue 2 (1990) 268.

¹¹⁵ A.C. Bartlett, "Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft: Lady Margaret Beaufort and Caxton's Blanchardyn and Eglantine (1489)", *Essays in Medieval Studies*. Vol. 22. (2005) 62.

of gender, not limited to their role within their household, but also not defined by their performance in the political world, as men often were.¹¹⁶ This meant that their networks, stretching across gender lines, had social, political and financial consequences. The fact that these women were not just constrained to their roles at court nor their roles in their own household gave them elaborate networks of connections that intersected at different points. Women thus often combined their political and social networks, which allowed them to permeate different parts of society and increase their influence.¹¹⁷ They operated in overlapping spheres of influence and networks of both men and “women to accomplish their goals, often through interdependent actions. In other words, they activated their social networks and court relations to achieve their goals.”¹¹⁸ This role of women at court has however traditionally been underestimated by scholars, though these women participated in late medieval court culture and diplomacy.¹¹⁹ It is therefore important to look not only at the connections that Margaret made at court, but also how she used these connections to further the destiny of her family, and that of Henry in particular.

Margaret was first introduced at the court after her marriage to Henry Stafford and had lasting memories to her court introduction in 1453. She was marveled by the impressive display of ceremony and made a special notion of the role accorded to women at court.¹²⁰ Though Margaret and the Beauforts had been connected with the Lancastrians, she managed to obtain strong relations within the Yorkist court of Edward IV as well, which provided her with many connections in the political theatre. Positions at court offered aristocratic women the opportunity to create their identities and roles outside of their families, marital or native. However, we should keep in mind that women not often only had a career at court, but combined these with the duties of marriage or motherhood. It is the combination of their positions as wives, mothers and their court lives that provided them with enhanced status and possibilities.¹²¹ This was the case for Margaret as well. She combined her presence at court with the care for her husband and his family while maintaining in contact with her own son Henry at the same time as well. In the period before Henry’s ascension to the throne, she used her position at court mostly to assure

¹¹⁶ Bartlett, “Translation, Self-Representation and Statecraft”, 54.

¹¹⁷ Denton-Spalding, *From Court to Countryside*, 10-11.

¹¹⁸ Bartlett, “Translation, Self-Representation and Statecraft”, 54-57.

¹¹⁹ Bartlett, “Translation, Self-Representation and Statecraft”, 55.

¹²⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 39.

¹²¹ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 210.

support for her son's cause and to establish a strong network of allies whom she could trust. This becomes clear in the alliances she sought to make at court with important political actors such as the Duke of Buckingham and the Woodville family. It was during this period that the idea of a marriage between Henry and Elizabeth of York was formed as well. Though she gained her access to court through her marriage with Stafford, it has become clear that she acted as an independent political figure as well. During her marriage to Lord Stanley she was in fact actively involved in the plotting of a rebellion, headed by her ally the duke of Buckingham, against King Richard III. When the rebellion was uncovered before it really came off the ground and Henry had to abandon his planned landing at Dorset, the king was very displeased with the involvement of Margaret. This connection to the failed rebellion put her in considerable personal danger. Though she was stripped of most of her titles and estates, it was her marriage to Lord Stanley that probably saved her life. Since he had faithfully served the Yorkist cause her properties were re-granted to him, averting a complete personal disaster for Margaret. Stanley was to confine her to the house and she lost her position at court. However, she managed to maintain a large part of her relations with those who were loyal to Henry's cause. Stanley's loyalty, at least on the battlefield, also meant that Richard awarded new lands and offices to him, only strengthening his position. The importance of Margaret's alliance with her marital family becomes especially clear when Henry lands his troops and the armies of Stanley play a pivotal role in winning the battle of Bosworth.¹²² This example shows the agency that Margaret had by combining her court connection and the protection she enjoyed from her marriage.

Margaret's largest role however, was fulfilled at court after her son had risen to the throne. The ascension of Henry to the throne as the first Tudor king started a new era of court politics in English history. As stated previously these Tudor politics brought a growth of the institutions of government as well as a dominance of court connections, as the importance of the court grew. The rise of Henry to power also meant a large number of new faces came to the royal court. Opponents of the new ruler would often characterize these new men as 'villains from low birth'¹²³, but what we are talking about here is the rise of the middle class. A group consisting of gentry, merchants, townsmen and lawyers found access to the Tudor court. Though these had been present in a very limited sense since the thirteenth century, we can see an acceleration in

¹²² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 64-65.

¹²³ A.F. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources* (London 1913) 153.

their importance when Henry comes to power. Especially the heads of leading landed families that were outside of the peerage made a remarkable rise, as well as lawyers.¹²⁴ This change at the court has been seen as one responding to the problems arising around the country with uprisings and unwilling noble families. Though there is no evidence of a single important advisor with a role like Wolsey or Cromwell for the reign of Henry VII, there were some men with a legal background from gentry families that took prominence, like Reginald Bray and Richard Fox.¹²⁵ Dynamics at court were thus certainly changing, something that also had an impact on the role of Margaret as the mother of the king. She became a person of interest for nobles and others who wished to attend the court and was seen as an important gateway to entry to the court.

Henry used his power in turn to enlarge the role that his mother had at court and gave her more power. Immediately after he had gained the throne in 1485 Henry passed an Act of Parliament proclaiming Margaret to be a 'sole person', a status much like that of widows, giving her more autonomy.¹²⁶ This act was passed when Margaret was still married to Stanley, creating an unprecedented situation. It demonstrates the superior position Henry gave his mother at court after he came to power.¹²⁷ The Act was made in consultation with Margaret:

“And furthermore hit be ordained, enacted and stablissed by the same auctoritee, that the same countesse of Richmond, modre of the most Christen prince king Herrie the VIIth, king of England and of France, maie fro' henceforth terme of her lyfe sue all manner of actions reals and personalls and also all actions mixtes, and plede and be ympled for all manner of causes in all manner of courts spirituells and temporells, ayenst all persones, as any other persone or persones may or shall moue doe, in as good, large and beneficiall manner, as any other sole persone, not wife, ne covert of any husband, att anie tyme might or maie do. And that she as well onely, as with other persones, att her pleasure may from henceforth, dureinge her lyfe, as well make, and take and receive, all manner of feoffments, states, leases, releases, confirmations, presentations, bargains, sales, yefts, deeds, wills and writeings, as well of landes and tennements and all manner

¹²⁴ Gunn, “Henry VII in Context”, 306-307.

¹²⁵ Gunn, “Henry VII in Context”, 308-309.

¹²⁶ C. Beattie, “‘Living as a Single Person’: Marital Status, Performance and the Law in Late Medieval England”, *Women's History Review*. Vol. 17, Issue 3 (2008) 327.

¹²⁷ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 148.

of hereditaments, as of all manner goods, cattells and other thinges, to her owne use oonly, or to the use of such as shall please her.”¹²⁸

Henry gave his mother tremendous power here, causing her to be able to take a powerful position at court, as well as the tools to develop her network further. The changing circumstances at court after Henry came to power meant an increase in the possibilities for Margaret to further develop herself and to help Henry in maintain the stability of his reign. She also became able to appoint people at court and thus became an important figure for those who wanted entry to the royal court. Margaret held appointments, or hearings, to determine who were eligible for positions at court. The exact workings of these appointments through Margaret become clear in several documents such as a small book produced in 1502 in which names were noted of those of Margaret’s household and beyond who were interested in obtaining a court position and wished an audience with her.¹²⁹ Of a call to a later such an audience or meeting in 1508 we also have instructions of Margaret “to calle in her reteyned servauntes afore therein to doe the kynges grace service.”¹³⁰ Margaret thus became a conduit for allowance into court life.

Besides this power to admit people to the court, Margaret’s previous experiences with the Yorkist court were also valuable to Henry after his ascension. The former supporters of the Yorkist kings that remained at the court after they had sworn allegiance to the new king, remained a constant source of concern for the Tudors. They were disgruntled, had often lost land and titles, causing a constant fear for uprisings. That Henry feared dissention at court becomes clear from the writings of Polydore Vergil:

“His chief care was to regulate well affairs of state and, in order that the people of England should not be further torn by rival factions, he publicly proclaimed that (as he had already promised) he would take for his wife Elizabeth daughter of King Edward and that he would give complete pardon and forgiveness to all those who swore obedience to his name.”¹³¹

The court under Henry was very much occupied with suppressing disorder and sedition and the questions of public order and security were urgent to them. The main issues that the court had to

¹²⁸ RP VI 284.

¹²⁹ SJC D91.20, page 11,19.

¹³⁰ SJC D91.19, page 91-92.

¹³¹ Polydore, *Three Books of English History*, Chapter XXVI.

deal with in this period were the power base of support, public order, finance and foreign policy.¹³² Henry was willing to employ ex-Yorkists, a willingness probably born of necessity as so many noble families had been involved in the Yorkist rule. However, the slightest doubt in their loyalty would lead to their immediate downfall.¹³³

In the text of Polydore Vergil, the importance of the marriage between Henry and Elizabeth that was established by Margaret and Elizabeth Woodville shows its importance again. This is also clear in the papal dispensation necessary for the two distant cousins to marry and to end the fighting in England.¹³⁴ It also shows the pragmatic attitude that those who would swear allegiance to Henry should be pardoned, as after years of civil war and unrest these nobles were needed for the preservation of the young Tudor dynasty. But what role this Margaret play there? It is clear that Margaret, more than her son, was aware of the political landscape of England at the time, having spent times at both Lancastrian and Yorkist courts. Her decision to arrange a marriage between Henry and Elizabeth of York shows that she was aware of the need to unite the two houses to create a durable peace.

In conclusion, we can see that Margaret used her kinship network and marital connection to gain entry at the royal court. Like many other women, she played an active role there and was mainly concerned with gathering support for her son without the suspicion of the Yorkist rulers. When Henry came to the throne, he made sure that her position increased tremendously by declaring her a sole person and giving her the ability to allow people entry to the court. In this way, she was able to expand her networks, especially of patronage, in the area of religious institutions. Margaret's role at court was therefore not only important for the establishment of Tudor rulership, by paving the way before her son's arrival, but also afterwards in maintaining control over admittance to the court.

¹³² Lander, *Government and Community*, 332-334.

¹³³ Lander, *Government and Community*, 340.

¹³⁴ J. P. Collier, *Bull of Pope Innocent VIII on the Marriage of Henry VII with Elizabeth York* (London, 1847)

2.3 The Cambridge Network

After her son had taken the throne, Margaret began to orient herself more clearly in the realm of education and religion, areas that personally interested her. An important figure in this respect was the personal confessor of Margaret, John Fisher. Fisher was born in Beverly in the country of Yorkshire in 1469 and joined the church at a young age. In 1483, at only fourteen years of age, he went to study at the University of Cambridge, where he became known as an excellent student of theology. He was ordained as a priest in 1491 and became a rising star within the university, where he became master debator in 1494, the same year as he would become the chaplain and the personal confessor of Margaret of Beaufort. He remained thoroughly connected to Cambridge and helped Margaret with founding St John's and Christ Colleges and continued to teach classes and attract scholars to study at Cambridge.¹³⁵ In 1504 he was named bishop of Rochester at the personal insistence of Henry VII, probably at the request of Margaret. Rochester, not a large diocese, was seen as the first step on the ladder towards a grand ecclesiastical career. This was not the case for Fisher who, probably by his own choice, decided to stay in Rochester for 31 years, combining it with the position of university chancellor. Why he did not advance to a more important or prestigious see remains largely unclear to us, though we have some indications that this was by his own choice. In Fisher's own accounts he notes that Margaret attempted to obtain him a better position before his death, but that he was too preoccupied with developments at Cambridge.¹³⁶

Over the years Fisher became more involved with the Tudor family and in 1509 he preached at the funerals of both Henry VII and Margaret Beaufort and was also involved in the education of the young prince, the later Henry VIII. It was this new king that would eventually turn against Fisher. When Henry VIII started the divorce procedures against his wife Catherine of Aragorn, it was Fisher who became her counsellor and organized her defense. At this point the relationship between him and Henry had already turned sour, but became truly problematic when Henry attacked the Catholic Church. Fisher had already been arrested when he and other bishops from the area around Cambridge had appealed to the Holy See against the behavior of the king, but his faith wasn't sealed until he refused to accept Henry as supreme head of the church in

¹³⁵ B. Bradshaw, and E. Duffy, *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation: The Career of Bishop John Fisher* (Cambridge 1989) 2.

¹³⁶ Underwood, "Politics and Piety", 43.

England. When he also refused to take an oath swearing that the marriage between the king and Anne Boleyn was legitimate as well as their possible offspring, he was transferred to the Tower of London in 1534. When in 1535 Pope Paul II tried to please the king and offered to take Fisher off his hands by giving him a position in San Vitale, this only enraged Henry more and Fisher was put on trial for treason shortly thereafter. A jury found Fisher guilty and he was sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Out of fear for a popular cult around the condemned ex-bishop, his sentence was changed and he was eventually beheaded on the 22nd of June. This fear of immediate popular religious interest in Fisher was without grounds, as he was only beatified in 1886 and canonized in 1935. The life of Fisher, from the most well-known preacher in England, as personal confessor of Margaret and a personal favorite of Henry VII to eventual execution by Henry VIII, shows an interesting and deep connection with the Tudors.¹³⁷

I wish to draw some attention to the later break of Fisher with the Tudor family. It is interesting that Fisher was so connected to Margaret and Henry VII, but that Henry's son would eventually execute him for not complying with his interests. There are two different aspects to this information that are of use to us. Firstly it shows that Henry VIII apparently felt no moral engagement to save the life of the personal confessor of his grandmother when he did not comply to his will. Secondly, the other way around, Fisher who had felt a very strong personal connection to Margaret and Henry VII was not so loyal to the Tudor family that he felt able to change his religious beliefs for their interests. This tells us something interesting about the nature of patronage ties and their durability. An important aspect of patronage networks and patron-client relationships, as briefly touched upon earlier in this chapter, was their temporal character. The bonds between Fisher and the Tudors thus was one of a personal connection and would not carry on into future generations.

We know much about the interaction between Fisher and Margaret as, luckily for us, there are many works remaining by John Fisher and he wrote extensively on the life of Margaret. Most of these works have been collected in the nineteenth century edition of the *English works of John Fisher* and contain mostly sermons and prayers written and spoken by Fisher. What is interesting is that of the six texts that form this collection of works, two are directly related to Margaret

¹³⁷ Bradshaw and Duffy, *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation*, 4.

Beaufort and a third to King Henry VII.¹³⁸ Fisher was the bishop that spoke at the funeral of Henry VII and he wrote a remembrance or eulogy for Margaret when she died several months after her son. The fact that Fisher composed these texts suggest that he was in good personal standing with the Tudors and that he had a close personal connection to them. It is interesting that these honors were bestowed upon a man from a simple background like Fisher. It is clear that the personal connection to Margaret got him into the position to speak at these occasions.

The first meeting between Fisher and Margaret was recorded in late 1494 or early 1495 in Greenwich, where they shared a lunch together. The cause or outcome of this meeting remains obscure, but was most likely about the university, where both had interests. Whatever the content of the meeting may have been, it impressed Margaret greatly, who later declared that Fisher became her spiritual guide from that moment.¹³⁹ Later, both Fisher and Margaret were also involved in the establishment of St John's College at Cambridge as becomes clear from the charters of the college. After the establishment of the colleges, Margaret and Fisher continued to work closely together. Not only was Fisher put in charge of Christ College and Margaret assigned her rooms at the college to him, an honor not usually given to the visitor of a college. It was by this gesture and the offices at the university granted to Fisher by Margaret that show their intimate relationship.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, there seems to be no remains of any personal communication between Fisher and Margaret, if there ever was such written communication. Yet the bishop remains one of the clear examples of a patronage connection to the mother of the king. Apart from, what we assume, her personal liking of Fisher, he served a purpose in the network of Margaret and received an episcopacy in return for his services. Judging by the honest and detailed description Fisher gives in his works, it seems that they had known each other quite well and his work is a great source on her character. From his text we can also gain some ideas of how she established and conducted these networks. In a broad sense they give an idea of her character, both in conducting business and in dealing with others. Fisher describes for example that Margaret would let unimportant things pass, but she would go through much pain and labor for the things that really mattered to her. She was also described as sharp, witty, good of memory and with a very good command of English and French. What is interesting is that she was also known

¹³⁸ Fisher, "Mornyng Remembraunce"

¹³⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 205.

¹⁴⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 227.

for settling dispute within her household or people that she knew.¹⁴¹ In Fisher, Margaret had an old friend that she trusted and who had access to the clerical domain, and who was able to help her gain access to other areas, like the world of the universities. This connection between Fisher and Margaret was the beginning of a more elaborate Cambridge network.

Their connection to two colleges of Cambridge and one in Oxford are also interesting in this respect as they provided Margaret with more opportunities for expanding her network of patronage. Many students that went to Cambridge did so with the financial help of patrons or patronesses. In return for this financial compensation these graduates would often serve at the house of their patron or, in the case of a royal patron, serve at the court. One could see this system as a way to ensure for loyal employees, but also a way to bind entire families to a house or the royal court, as brothers or children of these students were often brought into contact with these patrons as well. Though there seem to have been clear reasons of religious nature for Margaret to get involved in the establishment of two Cambridge colleges, she would not have been blind to these advantages. This becomes clear from the large number of students that she, in the name of the crown, supported financially and that received a function at the court afterwards. Within these colleges students were prepared for various careers, some to serve the Church, many others as administrators, lawyers, civil servants or in positions within households all over the country. These colleges had always attracted noble or royal patrons, who saw them as a useful tool to gain influence. It was also a good way to attach your name to an institution that would hopefully last a long time and thus give the royal patron more prestige.¹⁴² Many of these patrons were women as well as Margaret Beaufort, who fitted in a long line of female benefactors in the royal family. The interest of these benefactors in the freshly educated men becomes clear when we look at the sheer number of college's established in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Though the interest of patrons and patronesses in the universities was not new, the sheer amount of Cambridge graduates that were adopted into Margaret's service was remarkably high.¹⁴³ In order to establish the new colleges, Christ and St John's, Margaret established lectureships in

¹⁴¹ Fisher, "Mornyng Remembraunce", xi-xii.

¹⁴² M. Underwood, "A Cruel Necessity? Christ's and St John's, Two Cambridge Refoundations", In: R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones, *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge 2001) 88.

¹⁴³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 202-204.

1502, who had their own regulations and drew their funds from the lands that were granted to them. Margaret funded them with the resources provided to her by her households and estates.¹⁴⁴

It may come as no surprise that the first lecturer that was attracted under this agreement was John Fisher. The communal goal of Fisher and Margaret was to make educational institutions places where better priests were trained.¹⁴⁵ These lectureships, most on theology, were an opportunity for preachers to be placed all over the country. What is interesting is that we can see a system emerging from this education. Most of those who graduated from the lectureships were stationed in lands belonging to Margaret or her (marital) families and most of the students who followed the lectureships were those that had studied at one of Margaret's colleges. We can see that she established an almost closed system in which she could see to the personal returns that came from her benefices.¹⁴⁶ This system was kept under close scrutiny of Margaret herself, who was very often present in Cambridge and always remained in written contact as well. Especially in the years 1505-1508 there was an unprecedented number of royal visits to Cambridge, in what became known as 'The Cambridge Phenomenon', where the city became known as a royal favorite.¹⁴⁷ What is also interesting is that Margaret financed these colleges by granting them lands from which they could obtain their livelihood and income. These lands were purchased by Margaret herself and appear in her household accounts. When we look at the lands that were purchased for this purpose, we can see that Margaret often bought them from families who were, or recently had been, under political suspicion. Many of them were or had been charged with treason and had parted from their lands to pay for the costly trials. It seems then that the expansion of Margaret's patronage network was funded by lands that were confiscated or cheaply bought from her political opponents.¹⁴⁸ However, most interesting for this research is to look at whom Margaret benefited with her patronage and what the effect thereof was. Luckily, these benefices are fairly well documented and give us an idea of those families that were favored by Margaret.

The establishment of these educational institutions meant that Margaret got more involved in the religious spheres. Important men at Cambridge, like Fisher, that she was in contact with

¹⁴⁴ Underwood, "A Cruel Necessity?", 84.

¹⁴⁵ Underwood, "A Cruel Necessity?" 86.

¹⁴⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 208-211.

¹⁴⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 229-230.

¹⁴⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 221.

opened more possibilities for connections within the Church. That her influence within the church reached far is visible in the hand she had in several episcopal elections. The election of John Fisher, a close friend is the most obvious case, in which Henry suggested Fisher for the episcopacy of Rochester. William Smyth and Hugh Oldham, who also owned their religious careers to Margaret, were created bishops of Lincoln and Exeter respectively. Smyth was appointed in 1485 as Dean of Wimborne, the royal minister that was the burial site of Margaret's parents and in the same year he was appointed as keeper of the hanaper. In that role he was responsible for making sure that Margaret was reimbursed for the custody she had over several royal wards. Later Smyth was also involved in the foundation of chantry at Guildford, of which he was made rector in 1490 over the newly established rectory there. After Smyth had become a bishop, it was Oldham who would take over that position in 1493. The new bishop was aware of the debt that he owed Margaret for her appointments and support as he established a grammar school and almshouse in her name. Smyth also gave several dispensations to Margaret and her family in order for them to hold masses and other services in their chapels.¹⁴⁹ Hugh Oldham had a similar story, where he rose further in the ranks after succeeding Smyth at the rectory of Swineshead, eventually to become bishop of Exeter, benefactor to Corpus Christi College in Oxford, and the founder of a school in Manchester.¹⁵⁰ This active role that Margaret played in the careers of these men show us how important the influence of the royal mother was.

In conclusion, we can see that Margaret expanded her network into the areas of religion and education, which held her interest. By establishing contacts with John Fisher and other men of importance at Cambridge she started a system of giving patronage to scholars, who would then be admitted to her household, the court, or religious institutions. This way, she managed to bind large numbers of people to her and her family. The role of Fisher in the later tale of the Tudor dynasty however, suggests that these bonds were often of temporal nature.

¹⁴⁹ Underwood, "Politics and Piety", 42-44.

¹⁵⁰ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 54.

2.4 Margaret's Wills

Since Margaret's wills have an important role in researching Margaret's web of relations, both in terms of kin and of patronage it is useful to look at what these wills signified and what their purposes were. The medieval English will finds its origins in Anglo-Saxon practice and developed from there on. Of the later Middle Ages we have thousands of wills remaining from England and many of those have been published. Of the execution of wills there is also substantial information available from year books, episcopal registers and ecclesiastical courts that show us not only how these wills were executed, but also what the procedure of enforcement was. Because of all this material we have a solid idea of the will and its place in late medieval society.¹⁵¹ As noted earlier, the will in the form in which we see it in late medieval England stems from Anglo-Saxon practice and changed little from the thirteenth century onwards. It is important to make some distinctions in the different types of wills that can be distinguished. Firstly there are the *in extremis* wills, these are often called deathbed wills, made under whatever conditions the situation allowed when the person concerning the will had just passed and was unable to arrange this in time himself. The other two types are wills made during the life of a person. The first is called *post obit* and referred to a single person, the benefactor, to whom a single property or a group of property was given. These were often quite simple documents that were made in one sitting. The final form was more complex and was often a document that was expanded upon during life or that was a compilation of multiple *post orbit* arrangements involving a larger and more varied group to which property was given. This was called *cwide* by the Anglo-Saxons, a term that was no longer in use in the later medieval time, but most late medieval wills are most like this form. In the *cwide*, like in most aristocratic medieval wills, there were many objects and properties given to several people and it often confirmed earlier documents or arrangements such as marriage settlements or contracts. Though these three different types of wills have all come to existence in the oral tradition of the Anglo-Saxon world, we can still often distinguish these different types in late medieval wills in which their length and complexity is often a good indicator of the type of will they belong to.

¹⁵¹ M.M.M. Sheenan, *The Will in Medieval England: From the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the End of the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto 1963) 1.

An important difference between Anglo-Saxon documents and later medieval wills is the influence of Canon Law, a relationship too complex to explain in full here. Suffice it to say that the influence of the church in distributing property after death increased tremendously.¹⁵² What is important to remember is that these wills were legal acts and were contracts, which were completed only after the donor had passed away. This is pivotal, because speaking of a contract means that both (or more) people involved have obligations towards each other to come to an execution of this contract. What is interesting about this as well is that as soon as the will is drafted, the owner of the property or possession has already renounced and alienated its rights, but maintains its use until death.¹⁵³ Another important aspect to keep in mind was that people often expected a counter-gift after bestowing things upon them in a will. Most often this was to be something like prayers or other non-material things that would improve the salvation of the soul of the deceased.¹⁵⁴ Though wills were initially written without a strict form to adhere to by the clerk, they became more standardized over time and from the thirteenth century on we can see that they follow a set form.¹⁵⁵ What is interesting in the case of Margaret is to look at how women divided their property in wills. It was common for women, also during marriage, to have their own separate wills though probably with permission of their husbands. The wills of married women often refer to the wills of their husbands and the arrangements made between the married couple. In the case of widows they exercised their right to make divisions of property to their own wishes.¹⁵⁶ A vital part of these wills was the role of the executor(s), which grew considerably up to the thirteenth century, by which time the executor had become the representative of the testator.¹⁵⁷ These executors were charged with the successful completion of the final wishes and were therefore of great importance. Their role will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

What we have then is two different documents, two very distinct wills of Margaret Beaufort. It is possible that there were more wills made by Margaret, but only these two remain to us. The probability of more wills is due to the fact that she remarried multiple times. The first

¹⁵² Sheenan, *The Will in Medieval England*, 20-21.

¹⁵³ More on this topic can be found by looking at the very dated, but still applicable work of Andreas Heusler, who wrote *Institutionen des deutschen Privatrechts* about how this idea of ownerships and contracts worked.

¹⁵⁴ Sheenan, *The Will in Medieval England*, 28-29.

¹⁵⁵ Sheenan. *The Will in Medieval England*, 56.

¹⁵⁶ Sheenan. *The Will in Medieval England*, 70-71.

¹⁵⁷ Sheenan, *The Will in Medieval England*, 148.

one from 1472 was made at the time of her marriage to Thomas Stanley and was meant to make sure that her son was to inherit all of Margaret's lands and estates as Stanley promised in the will not to interfere with her estates obtained before their marriage. In this will she made reference to Edmund Tudor as her first husband and her wish to be buried alongside him. This will was rather ordinary and aimed to protect her landed wealth and estates from separated over multiple heirs. From this period we can find countless aristocratic wills that are very similar to this one from 1472. What is interesting however, is that it also expressed that her son, named 'earl of Richmond' would one day be restored to his inheritance, as he was exiled at that time.¹⁵⁸ It is estimated that this document stems from the period right after Stafford's death and made right after her marriage to Stanley, but this is not certain. This timing is interesting, as far as we know there were no special provisions made or wills established during her marriages to Edmund Tudor and Henry Stafford, but this was the case with her marriage to Thomas Stanley. Besides her will in which she provides her son with her possessions, a marriage contract with Stanley was also established in the same year that would keep her possessions separated from Stanley's if she were to pass away.¹⁵⁹

As noted at the beginning of the will this is an indenture, a legal document. We can see this in the form of the will as well, as the top is ridged, meaning that it probably had another version made at the same time and that could be verified by pasting it together with the original. Where this second part is or who owned it is not clear, it is possible that this would belong to the notary of the will. Another interesting part of the form of this first will is that it was cancelled, as we can see by the cuts made in the middle of the document. This is however not our only clue for the cancellation, as Margaret signed the bottom of the page under the folded bottom, or *sub plica*, with "This wyll we clerly revoke. Margaret R"¹⁶⁰ The R noted behind her name shows that this was clearly done at a later period, as she only started using this after 1485 when Henry was king and she started to use this to show her status as the royal mother. We can only speculate, but since there is a second will made in 1508, that could have been the moment that this will was revoked, though it is possible that this happened earlier of course. What we do know is that the cancellation of this document must have taken place between 1485, when she first started using

¹⁵⁸ SJC D56.195

¹⁵⁹ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 16-17.

¹⁶⁰ SJC D.56.195

the R in her signature and 1508, when her final will was established. In my opinion it is important to sketch the context of this first will. What has been of most interest to me, with this will as well as the later one of 1508 has been to look at the executors. With this first will the task of the executioners was to make sure that the division of property happened lawfully and organized. In the case of the second will this was slightly more complicated, as I will explain later. She names several people as her executors in this document and they are of importance as they show who were in Margaret's inner circles. Reynold Bray, John Morton and John St John are the main executors she names in her first will.¹⁶¹ Morton and Bray were both in Margaret's household, Morton as her chaplain and Bray originally was in Stafford's household but stayed on with Margaret after his death and served many functions over the years. John St John was her stepbrother through the earlier marriage with her mother.¹⁶² What we see in this will then is that people she knew well and had known over a long period of time were entrusted with the execution of her will and that these were part of her household or family.

What is of far more interest to us, especially in the context of Margaret's patronage network is her final will, dating from 1508, with additions in 1509, which is a large bookwork that is very specific in what is granted to whom.¹⁶³ The contrast in form and substance could hardly have been greater when we move from this first will to the second will that Margaret drafted in 1508. This is a manuscript containing over fifty folios, a far more diverse document than the first will that is a single piece of parchment. Of this final will, there are five versions or partial versions that remain to us and that can all be found in the archives of St John's College. The one I have used here SJC D6.27 is the most complete and probably the final version, as it contains additions from 1509, signed by Margaret, and they do not include Henry VII in her legacies as he died in 1509. The other versions contain parts of this final will or have a more elaborate estimate of the funeral expenses, but lack the body of the text. The will begins with instructions for her burial and prayers to be said:

¹⁶¹ SJC D.56.195

¹⁶² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 3.

¹⁶³ SJC D6.27

“It’m, we woll, that placebo dirige w’t lauds and w’t all divine s’vices, prayers, and observants belonging thereunto be solemply and devoutly songen and said in the daye of o’r decesse, by all the preests, mynisters, and children of o’r chapell”¹⁶⁴

The religious acts and observances to be followed after the death of Margaret contain more than ten folios and the salvation of her soul thus seems to have been something that really occupied her.

An aspect that I would like to examine closer is the men that she had chosen as executors for her will of 1508. These all had to be men that she trusted to exercise her last will and therefore had to have been close to Margaret. Why this will is so much larger than the earlier ones that she had was probably due to her now royal status. It contains so many details that it is impossible to list them all here, but among the most important things were the division of her property, both estates and personal belongings, the endowment to various charities of religious or educational character, endowments to the university for the completion of Christ College and St. John’s College, and instructions for the building of her tomb. At the beginning of the document she names appoints Richard Fox bishop of Winchester, John Fisher bishop of Rochester, Lord Herbert the king’s chamberlain, Sir Henry Marney chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, Sir John Saint John her chamberlain, Henry Hornby her chancellor and Sir Hugh Ashton comptroller of her household as her executors. She also appoints Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury to see to it that her will is performed.¹⁶⁵

The execution of a will, particularly one as complicated and diverse as Margaret’s final will, required quite some work for the executors. Especially the endowment made to the colleges of Christ and St John’s in Cambridge proved difficult to realize. This meant that the executors had to be people of which Margaret had known that they would do everything in their power to exercise her last will and they had to be people who were capable of cooperating with each other to attain this goal. Three of her executioners, John Fisher, Henry Hornby, and Hugh Ashton were an example of such cooperative effort. In order to make sure that there were sufficient funds for the further development of St John’s College, they each had to use their skills to raise money. While Fisher was seeking help at court, Hornby was supervising the affairs at Cambridge and

¹⁶⁴ SJC D6.27. Pages 3-4.

¹⁶⁵ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 119. And SJC D6.27. Page 16.

Ashton assisted Hornby there to make revenues available.¹⁶⁶ That she was concerned with the continuity of her affairs at Cambridge also comes forward in her will:

“And for the exhibicion and perpetuall fynding of the said II perpetual reders in the said universities of Oxenford and Cambrig, the saide abbot, prior, and convent, at our desire and request, and according to the said confidence and trust, have geven and granted by these several deeds.”¹⁶⁷

Looking at the men she chose to execute her will, it is little surprise to find John Fisher among them, but who were the other men and what was their significance? Henry Hornby was Margaret’s chancellor, also involved in the expansion of Margaret’s patronage in Cambridge. The Hornby family, from Deeping in Lincolnshire, had been recruited into the service of Margaret Beauchamp of Bletsoe, Margaret’s mother. When Margaret and Stanley took over the estates in 1482 the Hornby’s continued in their service, with George Hornby, Henry’s father, in charge of the horses. The early life of Henry remains obscure to us, but we know that he started the study of theology in 1489, where he contributed to the establishment of an office for the feast of the Name of Jesus. This may have sparked the interest of Margaret as from 1494 Hornby accompanied her often to events of religious nature. We know that Henry Hornby was already an important figure in Margaret’s household in the 1490s, where he became her secretary and dean of chapel during her marriage with Thomas Stanley. As her secretary he kept a rather informal book of accounts that reveal that he was involved in quite some offices of Margaret and that she revised the statutes of his wardenship in his native county.¹⁶⁸ It was during these years that Margaret made quite some revisions in her household, seen as a final step towards further developing her own interests at the universities and religious charities.¹⁶⁹ In 1501 he was appointed by Margaret as warden of Christ College, a prestigious office that must have reflected her trust in him.¹⁷⁰ This story is not altogether that different from that of Hugh Ashton, who was also an executor of Margaret’s final will. What these three men, Fisher, Ashton and Hornby, share in their involvement in theology

¹⁶⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 235.

¹⁶⁷ J. Nichols, *A Collection of All the Wills, Known to Be Extant, of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Blood Royal, from the Reign of William the Conqueror, to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive with Explanatory Notes, and a Glossary* (London 1780) 373.

¹⁶⁸ SJC D102.10

¹⁶⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 154.

¹⁷⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 132.

and the universities. Margaret's will therefore clearly reflects her interests at the later stages of her life. After securing the initial support for her son's ascension to the throne, her focus shifted more towards patronage in two fields that interested her: religion and education.

What do these two very different documents tell us about the will in the late medieval period? Were such works, especially the great bookwork from 1508 common during that time? As noted earlier, the will of Margaret of 1472 was quite ordinary; many aristocrats would specify who their heirs was, how their possessions were to be divided, and very importantly what religious provisions had to be made for the soul of the deceased. In the second will of 1508 this religious aspect was much more present than in the earlier will of 1472. This spiritual aspect of wills has long been underestimated, but is becoming more prominent in current research. It was a common aspect of wills that there was some directive on alms to be given, possessions that would go to the church and special rites that had to be performed as provision for the souls of the departed. Commemorative rites form an important part of these, where the celebration of masses to pray for the deceased were often issued. These commemorations were often a concern for the immediate well-being of the passed soul, while money given to parishes or donations to other religious institutions were often seen as beneficial on the longer run.¹⁷¹ We often see wills today as ways of managing property for after passing away, however, it is vital to understand that the medieval will was far more than this and was seen as having a great spiritual importance.¹⁷² This element of religiousness is something we can certainly find in the wills of Margaret. In her second will this aspect is much more expanded than in the first, as it contains prayers, instructions for masses and large sums of money to be donated to religious funds, but seem in no way out of the ordinary. So what does explain the difference in the size of these wills, going from a single page to a bookwork with over fifty pages? Other wills at the time that we know of were usually a single piece, like Margaret's will of 1472 and examples of those that were seen as large rarely exceeded ten pages. An example of this is the will of Humphrey Stafford, earl of Devon, who produced five pages in total with additions made of the years. His will, compared to others left of the late medieval English aristocracy is one of the longest ones available to us.¹⁷³ But of

¹⁷¹ C. Burgess, "'By Quick and By Dead': Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol", *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 405 (Oct 1987) 840-841.

¹⁷² M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (Chichester 2013 (3rd edition)) 234.

¹⁷³ H. Kleineke, "The Five Wills of Humphrey Stafford, Earl of Devon", *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, Vol 54 (2010) 140.

course, when Margaret adapted her will she was no longer part of the ordinary aristocracy, but had been elevated to royal status, so therefore it seems more useful to compare her will of 1508 with that of other royals. However, an alternative explanation is also possible. It seems strange that her first will was a legal document in the shape of an indenture, a part of two of the same documents that could be verified by putting their ridged edges together, but that the final will shows no signs of being a legal document. Why was this final will not accompanied by or formed as a legal document? A possible explanation could be that this document was far more like one of personal devotion or religiosity, which is what the first part mainly consists of. There are other examples of books like this, which are more personal accounts and not official wills. This could suggest that there was yet another will, an official parchment like the one of 1472 and that this book simply forms an addition to this in a more personal sense.

In conclusion, when looking at the differences between the first and second will of Margaret Beaufort, we can see the changing circumstances of her life. Moving from a dependence largely on kin and the small circle of her household for the execution of her will from 1471, to a large book dedicated to her work of patronage in the fields of religion and education. This change is also reflected in the executors she chose to exercise her last will, as four men from her Cambridge network were involved. These wills then serve as a prime example to see the shift from kin to patronage, from aristocratic power, to royal influence.

2.5 Conclusion

We can conclude that patronage networks were an important tool for the nobility and the royal family in the late medieval period, and for Margaret and her family as well. In the case of Margaret she surrounded herself with people that she trusted and those that enabled her influence in areas she could not reach with her kinship ties alone. It also allowed her to strengthen other areas in which she already had control, but that she wished to expand. She started her patronage network in the most logical place: her household. By offering the people she already knew and trusted scholarships and positions she managed to tie complete families to her cause. What we see is that those who studied thanks to a scholarship of Margaret often entered royal service and their children often succeeded them in similar jobs. Margaret thus managed to fill up positions at court with her clients. She thus also kept the circle of her household and their families close to her. But she did not just establish patronage networks to fill up government positions. Both her

household in the country as well as in the royal environment were used to reward those of loyal service, as well as to bind important families to her. Those formerly attached to important Yorkist families would also get positions at court to assure their allegiance to the new Tudor regime. For those families that were of exceptional danger to the preservation of the young dynasty they were often placed under the wardship of Margaret at one of her estates, a sign of both how much Henry trusted his mother and how much she trusted her household with the politically dangerous individuals.

Another main interest of her was the establishment of religious schools and especially university colleges. Her endeavors at the University of Cambridge form a prime example where she was able to use a network, headed by John Fisher to gain control over those who were studying at the university under her patronage and that were able to join royal service afterwards. The colleges established at Cambridge gave Margaret influence over the realm of the universities and religious schools and we can see her involvement in the election of several bishops as well. The Cambridge Network is a good example of how Margaret became more invested in the things that had her interest. This was also possible as the reign of Henry had become more secure after 1500. We can see that these patronage networks therefore seemed to be constantly expanding, where the families of those that were under her patronage also remained affiliated with Margaret later on. The fact that she was able to expand her patronage networks was of course related to the rise of her son to king of England. This meant that Margaret's status was elevated as well and that she had a lot more financial means to invest in a large network of patronage.

What is interesting to observe is the interaction and balance between kinship and patronage relations. What can we say of the relationship between the two during the lifetime of Margaret? When analyzing the dynamics of these networks we can see a clear shift from a kinship orientation to one focused more on patronage. This pattern we can also see in the primary source material, like in the wills of Margaret from 1472 and 1508. Where in the first will her executors are all kin or close relations in her household, the group is far more varied in her second will, when four executors are part of her Cambridge network. The same is visible with the goods that she endowed to others in her testament. Where in the first document only her great estates and a few heirs within the family are named, the second testament entails a complete inventory with a tremendous variation of people and institutions that are to be benefited. This is

very tangible proof of an expanding network over time. There seem to be multiple reasons for this shift from kinship to patronage. We can see a large reliance on family ties during and right after the Wars of the Roses. With fickle alliances and numerous plots, trusting one's own kin seems like the logical thing to do. After 1500, when the dynasty was more secure and the worst crises had passed, we can see that Margaret began to expand her network into religious institutions and two Cambridge colleges, allowing her to delve into a new area of influence.

3. The Formation and Preservation of Tudor Rulership

Now that we have discussed the important concepts of female agency and connections, both of kin and patronage, it is time to see how these two concepts can be merged and if we can assert what influence Margaret exerted on the formation and preservation of the Tudor dynasty through them. The aim of this chapter will therefore be to synthesize the two parts of this thesis and what conclusions we can draw from those. We should keep in mind that female agency is something that is always embedded in the connections that we have discussed. Though it is interesting to separate these aspects and networks and study them each on their own, we must at the end bring them together again to evaluate their combined effects. The aim of this chapter is to assert what the influence of Margaret, both through female agency and her networks, was on the formation and preservation of Tudor rulership. There are a few aspects I wish to turn to in order to examine this process of forming and preserving a rulership. These are aspects that have to do with both female agency and connections and that are in my view the underlying structures that enabled Margaret to exert her control. When I speak of the preservation of rulership, I have only looked at the preservation during the reign of Henry VII, as it is impossible to include possible later effects of Margaret's political work in this thesis. This would in my view, however be an interesting point for further investigation. Did Margaret's influence and network last through the turmoil of the reign of Henry VIII or where they diminished or even lost? The example of John Fisher in the previous chapter seems to indicate that they diminished with time. In this chapter I will first turn to discussing the reputation of Margaret, an important point where gender and the ability to establish a network come together. Moreover, reputation in my view was a pivotal aspect for the ability to build political networks and to advance social standing, in short an important notion in the formation and preservation of a dynasty. Another dimension that in my view brings together the role of Margaret as a mother and her networks is the bond between mother and son that will also be discussed in this chapter. In the interaction between them we can see how political ideas and emotional bonds came together to form an intricate part. Finally, I will discuss the role of Margaret during the most perilous times of the Tudor dynasty. What was her role when her son was under siege from pretenders and uprisings and how did she contribute to the immediate survival of her family?

3.1 Margaret's Reputation and the Role of Women

To assess the ways in which Margaret was able to aid the establishment of the Tudor rulership and the preservation thereof, the use of reputation and her role as a woman must be discussed as well. To assert the legitimacy of her family, the dynasty, and their authority, Margaret was acutely aware of the importance of reputation and performance.¹⁷⁴ Firstly, how she maneuvered within accepted notions of female behavior and the roles they were adhering to will be discussed, followed by a discussion on her reputation and how that was cultivated by Margaret to use to her advantage and that of her family. Reputation in this sense is used as the way someone is perceived by others, the image that is presented to the world.

Within these areas in which women maneuvered, they adhered to different roles as women. If women went beyond what was accepted of them in their capacity as wives, mothers or daughters, they would often be called back in line or were depicted as males themselves. Of course, some women had more power than others and some roles permitted women to have a larger influence than was commonly accepted. Those with the most outspoken roles were those that were a part of the royal family, be it as queen-mothers, queen-regents or even as queen. Their main responsibilities were not different from that of other women; to continue the family line of their husbands, to care for their household, and oversee the education of their children, to name a few examples. However, the position of those in the royal household provided them with opportunities that other noblewomen did not have, or not to the same extent. They had the opportunities to control patronage and to take an active part in court politics, for example. Though they often worked through and with males, royal women were capable of wielding more political and social influence than even the most important noble women.¹⁷⁵ However, even these powerful women in the royal house had to tread carefully, open political influence was disapproved, as women were seen as incapable of governing. It is telling for example that Margaret, who had a better claim to the throne than her son, passed her claim onto Henry rather than claiming the throne herself.¹⁷⁶ When women adhered to the spheres in which it was accepted that they exerted influence, they found it easier to do so. A well-known example of this is the role that royal women played in religious and charitable institutions. Their patronage here was

¹⁷⁴ Bartlett, "Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft", 56.

¹⁷⁵ R. Warnicke, "Queenship: Politics and Gender in Tudor England", *History Compass* Vol 4, Issue 2 (2006) 203-204.

¹⁷⁶ Warnicke, "Queenship", 208.

uncontroversial, and often raised a lot of praise. Influence on religious aspects meant that women also had prominent places in educational institutions and exerted their control there, as these were often financed by the church and connected to it.¹⁷⁷ Margaret was no exception here, becoming heavily invested in charities and religious institutions and eventually in education at the universities as well. It is difficult to examine how much these women were truly acting out of religious zealously and how many were simply exercising power within an accepted field they were familiar with. There are many descriptions of those around her, stating that Margaret was a deeply religious woman, especially since the difficult birth of her only son when she was still very young. It is also known that Margaret took a vow of chastity later in life while still married to her husband Thomas Stanley. Though this was uncommon, there are more examples of married women taking these vows. What does become clear is that though contemporaries understood and noted that Margaret was a powerful woman, there seems to have been little opposition to the role she assumed. This probably means that she stayed within the boundaries of what was seen as acceptable for women. Women who did not adhere to these societal notions were often themselves depicted as male or with male properties. We see this for example with Catherine de Medici, Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart, who were often portrayed as male and thereby explaining or condoning the influence they exerted. For women in the royal family it was important to adhere to contemporary expectations about gender, invoking feminine traits rather than adopting masculine roles, the stress placed on religion was a useful tool in this respect.¹⁷⁸

That Margaret adhered to roles that were expected of her as a woman and therefore drew very few critical remarks on her power does not mean that she was always on the background or very reserved in showing that she had power. On the contrary, Margaret often used rituals or insignia to stress her role as the king's mother. The clearest example of this is the use of the R behind her signature, signing documents from 1485, becoming standard from 1502 onwards, with Margaret R. This was a departure from the typical and common aristocratic nomenclature and signified her new royal status instead.¹⁷⁹ The change in signature thus served as a powerful reminder of Margaret's royal status and connections.¹⁸⁰ We can see the change in her status also

¹⁷⁷ Warnicke, "Queenship", 210-211.

¹⁷⁸ Warnicke, "Queenship", 221.

¹⁷⁹ Bartlett, "Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft", 57.

¹⁸⁰ S. Morley, "Translating Lady Margaret Beaufort: A Case for Translation as Compensatory Power", In: C. Whitehead and D. Renevey, *Lost in Translation?* (Turnhout 2009) 253-254.

in her wardrobe, as more expensive cloths and dresses were acquired. At the coronation of her son the 30th of October 1485, she wore a regal dress, putting her ascetic clothes aside for the day, as Fisher reported.¹⁸¹ The change in her wardrobe also hints to us that she must have worn expensive dresses and clothing more frequently. After her death an inventory of the goods she owned was made and part of that was “The Wardrobe of Robes.”¹⁸² Her entire wardrobe was inventoried, described and the value of the dresses marked in the margins of the document. It contained “Certayn apparelle Cloth of golde, silks and furies.”¹⁸³ Then follows an enumeration of several pages that indicate the large amount of expensive clothes in her wardrobe, befitting of the mother of the king. The adaptation of the royal signature and other aspects, such as her clothing, can be seen as a form of self-transformation, from aristocratic lady to mother of the king.¹⁸⁴

An important part of looking at the connections and networks that women made, is to look at their reputation as it tells us much about how the political notions of these women were perceived by others. I wish to use the definition of reputation here as Judith Richards uses it in her work as “Then, reputation was the enduring public identity of any person, constituting as it did the communal assessment of an individual’s worth.”¹⁸⁵ Looking at reputation can tell us many things when looking at how women exerted power, how they were perceived when they did and how they were able to gather people around themselves. Richards further notes that there were differences between the reputations of men and women especially in how they were constructed within society. She claims that the reputation of men was far more malleable and versatile, while that of women rested on a narrower basis and was more fixed.¹⁸⁶ I myself would not put it that strongly, as in my view women were often very much capable in creating malleable reputations as well. What is interesting however, is that the basis was indeed narrower, in the sense that women could transgress the borders of the acceptable quicker than men and there were fewer fields where they could exercise their power without damaging their reputations. Women therefore often chose to form their reputation as women who were pious and chaste, or other characteristics that were acceptable to them. In this way they could wield political power with

¹⁸¹ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret Beaufort*, 31.

¹⁸² SJC D91.2

¹⁸³ SJC D91.2. Page 1 r.

¹⁸⁴ Bartlett, “Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft”, 57.

¹⁸⁵ J.M. Richards, “Public Identity and Public Memory: Case Studies of Two Tudor Women”, In: S. Tarbin and S. Broomhall, *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Hampshire 2008) 195.

¹⁸⁶ Richards, “Public Identity and Public Memory”, 195-196.

less restrain or disapproval from others. Women with political power were often careful to craft a reputation by adhering to accepted notions of female behavior. Often they would use motherhood, religion or chastity as their identities. Examples of this are Catherine de Medici, who presented herself as a mother of her ruling sons and the entire nation or Elizabeth I of England, who represented herself as the virgin queen.¹⁸⁷ Margaret was both during life and later typified as an extremely devout woman and she was even often used as an example for other women in this respect. Fisher for example, when remembering Margaret in his eulogy, typified not her actions, but rather her character by saying

“Not vainly to extol or to magnifye above her merytes, but to the edifyenge of other by the example of her ... noblenes of persone, in dyscyplyne of their bodyes, in orderynge of theyr soules to god, in hospytalities keypyng and charitable dealing to theyr neybour.”¹⁸⁸

Fisher thus portrayed her as a woman of admirably piety and devotion. Throughout history Margaret remained best known for her piety, also visible in portraits that were made of her, also after her death, that depict her in a nun-like way. It is interesting that contemporaries and the generations after her death decided to portray her in that way, and not for example as the matriarch of the Tudor dynasty or by stressing her genealogy that had been so important for the Tudor's rise to power. Instead she was pictured as the female archetype of piety and virtue and her political capabilities were detached from the historical figure that Margaret was. It is almost surreal that for five hundred years there was virtually no interest in the political actions and the significance of Margaret Beaufort and her position.¹⁸⁹ Her politically active side was completely buried by attention for her pious and devout character or her book collection of religious works.¹⁹⁰ Because even though her reputation was that of a devout woman, she moved in the highest circles and had real political power. I wish not to discuss here whether this image is just or if she was really as religious as claimed her because I believe that is not the point. I would like to examine if she was involved in the creation of this image and if so what the benefits of this reputation were to her. In her article on Margaret's reputation, Jennifer Richards argues that it

¹⁸⁷ K. Crawford, “Catherine de Medici and the Performance of Political Motherhood”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3. (2000) pp 643-645

¹⁸⁸ Fisher, “Mornyng Remembraunce”, 290-295.

¹⁸⁹ Richards, “Public Identity and Public Memory”, 197.

¹⁹⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 5.

was exactly her important position as the matriarch of the Tudor dynasty that led Margaret to form her public image and memory to the expectations that contemporaries had of women.

When exactly this reputation of Margaret as a devout women began to take shape is unclear, but the vow of chastity that she took was certainly a large factor in shaping this identity. It was not uncommon for widows to take such vows, though it was far from standard. These widows who took these vows were often seen as examples for other women. Her vow has been preserved to us and stated:

“In the presence of my Lord Jesu Christ and his Blessed Mother the glorious Virgin St. Mary and of all the whole company of heaven and of you also my ghostly father I Margaret of Richmond with full purpose and good deliberation for the weale of my sinfull soule with all my hearte promise from henceforth the chastity of my bodye, that is never to use my bodye having actuall knowledge of manne after the common usage in matrimony; the which thing I had before purposed in my lord husband’s dayes, then being my ghostly father the bishop of Rochester Mr Richard Fitz James, and now eftsince I fully confirm it as far as in me lyeth, beseeching my Lord God that he will this my poore wyll, accept to the remedye of my wretched lyfe and relief of my sinfull soule and that he will give me his grace to perform the same.”¹⁹¹

Besides vows, these devout women often adopted other notions of quasi-monastic regimens.¹⁹² We know that Margaret took her vows during her marriage with Stanley. To us it may sound strange that a married woman would take a vow of chastity, but since this was mostly a political marriage and Stanley had secured his lineage in an earlier marriage, it was not that uncommon. She also adhered to a strict schedule of prayer, which is described by Fisher in his work:

“First in prayer every daye at her uprysinge, which comynly was not long after five of the clock, she began certain devocyons, and so after them with one of her gentlewomen the Matynes of our Lady, which kept her to them he came into her closet, where then with her Chaplayne she said also Matyns of the Daye; and after that, dayly herde four or five Masses upon her knees, so continuing in her Prayers and Devocyons unto the hour of dyner, wiche of the etynginge day was ten of the clocke, and upon the fastynginge day, eleven. After dyner full truly she wolde goe her

¹⁹¹ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret Beaufort*, 97-98. The original is captured in MS Cole XXIV 244b and reprinted by Cooper in his book.

¹⁹² Friedrichs, “The Remarriage of Widows”, 69.

statyons to the thre aulters dayly; dayly her Dyryges and Commendacyons she wolde saye, and her Even Songs before souper, both of the day and of our Lady, beside many other Prayers and Psalters of Davyde throughout the yeare; and at nyghte before she went to bedde she fayled not to resort unto her Chappell, and there a large quarter of an houre to occupye her [in] Devocyons.”¹⁹³

This description of the daily devotions of Margaret give us a unique inside into how she experienced her religion. Though piety was nothing strange to aristocratic ladies, this type of devotion seems extreme. We have many indications that Margaret became far more religious with age, but she seems to have always been quite religious.¹⁹⁴ Margaret also made a translation of the fourth book of *The Imitation of Christ* from French to English, to make this work on piety and penitence available to a larger public. She also ordered the translation of other religious works for broader dissemination among the public.¹⁹⁵ The translation of *The Imitation* was the first vernacular to vernacular translation of the text and the translation by Margaret made her the first English woman in print.¹⁹⁶ The translation of this work shows her preoccupation with the spreading of the Christian faith, as it must have taken considerable time and effort to translate the work.

Besides her vow of chastity and the translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, Margaret also used clothing and appearance for her devout reputation. Though her inventory shows that she had clothing in all colors, of luxurious fabrics and of the highest quality, the images that remain to us



Margaret depicted in religious habit

¹⁹³ Fisher, “Mornyng Remembraunce”, 113.

¹⁹⁴ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 78-79.

¹⁹⁵ M.K. Jones and M. Underwood, “The Tudors & England: Lady Margaret Beaufort”, *History Today*, Vol. 35, Issue 8. (1985) 27.

¹⁹⁶ Morley, “Translating Lady Margaret Beaufort”, 251.

of Margaret show a sober woman.¹⁹⁷ When looking at her wardrobe, as recorded after her death she actually owned nearly as many red dresses [6] as she did black ones [7] at the end of her life.¹⁹⁸ The black dresses that were in her possession were also not simple pieces of garment, but were all made of velvet and most were furred.¹⁹⁹ However, in portraits that remain of her, we see a woman garbed in simple black, with a white coif, appearing nun-like and displayed in a position either kneeling or holding a book of devotions.²⁰⁰ Though an interest in religion or piety were not uncommon for women during this time her portraiture is of such a pious nature that she wished to accentuate that part.²⁰¹ She formed a public image of herself that conferred to notions of accepted female behavior, as Stephanie Morley notes: “Lady Margaret was able to confer upon herself the symbolic power to manipulate her own public identity.”²⁰² Though manipulation gives the idea of deceitful changes, in my view her image was a carefully constructed one that allowed her to augment both her political and patronage networks. Religion did not just help her establish a wider network of patronage, but also helped her to advance the position of her son during her marriage with Stafford when Henry was under wardship to lessen his threat to the Yorkist throne. She managed to remain in contact with her son through the use of her piety. Margaret convinced Edward IV that she was concerned with the religious education of her son and was for that reason allowed to maintain contact with him and get him admitted to the Order of the Holy Trinity in Yorkshire in 1465.²⁰³ This is significant as her piety here ensured a measure of control over the destiny of her son, something that was vital to unfolding her plans for Henry.

3.2 Mother and Son

Another important aspect for the formation and preservation of the Tudor dynasty in my view and an aspect that stands above both female agency and networks is that of the relationship between mother and son. This aspect, these relationships between mother and son, have remained largely unstudied until the 90s, but now have come to attract more attention. Besides studying mother and son’s relationships as reproductive and affective bonds, they are now seen as a

¹⁹⁷ An example of her luxurious clothes is SJC D91.2, the wardrobe of Margaret inventoried after her death in 1509.

¹⁹⁸ Black dresses are inventoried in SJC D91.2. Page 1 r. Red dresses are listed in SJC D91.15. Page 10 r.

¹⁹⁹ SJC D91.2. Page 1 r.

²⁰⁰ Jones and Underwood, “The Tudors & England”, 23.

²⁰¹ Jones and Underwood, “The Tudors & England”, 27.

²⁰² Morley, “Translating Lady Margaret Beaufort”, 254.

²⁰³ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 80.

political unit as well.²⁰⁴ It is often stated that the birth of a son strengthened the position of women within their families as their son now presented themselves as the continuation of that family. Once women became mothers, their political and social functions changed.²⁰⁵ Late medieval relationships between mothers and sons were however very different from modern ones. Due to their responsibilities to manage their estates, support their husbands and often to visit relatives or religious benefices, mothers were often away from their children and many aristocratic women left them in the care of others for the majority of the year. This means that these upper-class mothers were not involved in the day-to-day care for their children. But despite this separation, women developed strong bonds with their children.²⁰⁶

This separation is a recurring theme between Margaret and Henry as well as they in fact spent very little time in Henry's life together. There have been multiple researchers that have drawn the conclusion from this that since they had little contact, their bond must have been less strong. This argument is one that started with John Britton in the nineteenth century, but has also occurred in the work of Halsted published in 1839. They both wrote about a distant and non-affectionate relationship between mother and son. Britton examined their letters and found Henry to be formal and distant to his mother in these correspondences.²⁰⁷ This idea is now seen as outdated and a result of negative thoughts on medieval interactions between mothers and children that were present in the nineteenth century, when it was assumed that less intensive contact meant a weaker bond. Barbara Harris is also opposed to this idea that a separation of mother and sons meant that they were less emotionally involved. She argues that strong emotional ties survived boy's early departures from the family home. In a society where this practice was considered the norm, sons were more accepting of leaving their mothers at a young age.²⁰⁸

It is certainly true that Margaret and Henry were often separated during their lives. Margaret and Henry Stafford had supported the Lancastrian support, but with the victory of the Yorkists in 1461 and the rise to the throne of Edward IV they were quick to declare loyalty to the Yorkists. The result was however, that mother and son were to be separated. Henry was placed under the wardship of William Lord Herbert and his wife Anne Devereux. Herbert was one of the

²⁰⁴ Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relationships", 608.

²⁰⁵ Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relationships", 610-611.

²⁰⁶ Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relationships", 612-615.

²⁰⁷ Britton's work can be found in the Cambridge University Library as MS Oo.6.89

²⁰⁸ Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relationships", 618.

staunchest supporters of Edward IV and he managed to secure multiple wardships and royal grants. These wardships were very common in the Middle Ages, but there are two distinctive types that we can distinguish. Firstly there were wardships that parents arranged with another family and these parents often paid to have their child placed with an influential family. This was mostly done for economic purposes as an alliance was made with another family and marriages were often arranged during this time of wardship.²⁰⁹ The second form of wardship was of a more political nature and was mainly about the naturalization of threats. Sons and daughters of families with good names but dangerous reputations were often placed under the protective care of a ward, who would carefully monitor them and the contacts they had. This latter form of wardship was used in the case of the young Tudor heir. This meant that Henry spent a considerable amount of his youth from 1461 at Raglan Castle under careful supervision. Herbert must have understood the political potential of his guest and even planned to marry his own daughter Maud to the young Tudor heir.

At the meantime, Margaret and Henry remained in contact through letters and the occasional visits.²¹⁰ These visits would however not always be possible. Henry and his uncle Jasper Tudor fled to France in 1471 when things turned increasingly dangerous for them in England. They set sail to France, but ended up in Brittany because of stormy weather. It would take until the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 that Henry would return to English soil for good and would be reunited with his mother.²¹¹ It was Margaret herself who had warned them against accepting an earlier pardon from the Yorkists and to stay in their relative safety in exile.²¹² This meant that in all the years in between Margaret and Henry were only able to communicate through letters or to hear news from communal friends. Unfortunately there are no letters remaining from this period as far as we know, but we do have later letters between the two of later periods after the ascension of Henry to the throne. If we take for example one of the letters between Henry and Margaret we can see quite some signs of affection and of a clear bond between the two.

²⁰⁹ Harris, "Property, Power, and Personal Relations", 614.

²¹⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 41-43.

²¹¹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 85-89.

²¹² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 58.

In a letter from Henry to Margaret in 1504 we can see the dynamics of their relationship.²¹³ In this correspondence Henry asks after the wellbeing of his mother, wishing her good health and many blessings. The nature of the letter is cordial and pleasantries are exchanged. At the end of the letter Henry apologizes for the shortness thereof but notes that his eyesight is getting worse and he writes: “I write not so often with myn own hande.”²¹⁴ It was well known that Henry had difficulty with his eye sight in the later years of his reign and that makes it of course notable that he does write to his mother himself. Instead of trusting another person with the writing, he labors on reading her letters and writing responses. There are other indicators to their bond, he calls himself “your most humble and loving Sonne.”²¹⁵ We also have letters remaining that Margaret wrote to her son, and these display the same kind of affections expressed. In a collection of letters we can see that she addresses her son as “my dearest and only desired joy in this world.” And calls him “my own sweet and most dear king and all my worldly joy”²¹⁶ What is interesting is that the letters they exchanged have been compared to others from the same period and were found to be more effusive and in more romantic language than any of the other letters written by mothers to their sons that they have found for this period.²¹⁷ However, besides these expressions of affection, these letters also deals with political issues that are discussed. Henry mentions an indenture that he received from Margaret and for which he is thankful. Interestingly, he also discusses John Fisher, Margaret’s personal confessor and as we have seen in previous chapters, an important player in her network of patronage. Henry says that he has talked to Fisher about Margaret and other matters and that he is pleased with her confessor.²¹⁸ This means not only that they were aware of who were favorites, but also shows that Henry was aware what Fisher meant to Margaret. It also shows that their conversations bore some political aspects, which were also discussed in the letter. In my view, a letter like this one shows exactly what their relationship was about: it was cordial, familiar and personal, but they were also very much political allies. Besides an affectionate aspect, their relationship was an

²¹³ SJC D91.23. Page 110-111. This is a copy of a letter. The exact date is not available, but it is from the year 1504

²¹⁴ SJC D91.23. Page 111.

²¹⁵ SJD D.91.23. Page 111.

²¹⁶ L. Howard, *A Collection of Letters from the Original Manuscripts* (London 1753) 46-47.

²¹⁷ Harris, “Property, Power, and Personal Relations”, 620.

²¹⁸ SJD D.91.23. Page 110.

active partnership in which they worked together, discussed important themes and tried to help each other.²¹⁹

This can also be seen in letters from Margaret's hand to Henry, though very few of those remain to us. In these she explicitly discusses politics with her son, like in two letters from 1501. In the first letter she states: "And my good heart, where that you say that the French king hath at this time given me courteous answer, and written letter of favour to his Court of Parliament, for the brief expedition of my matter, which so long hath hanged."²²⁰ In a later letter she urges Henry to take more action on the same matter with the French king:

"My dear heart, an it may please your highness to licence Master Whitstone, for this time, to present your honourable letters, and begin the process of my cause- for that he so well knoweth the matter, and also brought me the writings from the said French king, with his other letters to his parliament at Paris- it should be greatly to my help, as I think."²²¹

These letters are interesting because they show that Margaret was in contact with the French king on a matter that she found important, but that she was happy to use the influence of her son to strengthen her position.

After coming to the throne, Henry granted large portions of land to his mother, who had always protected his interest and he even named his first born child, a daughter after her.²²² At the same time, Henry's ascension to the throne meant that Margaret finally saw a life's work completed and had guided her son to his seat. The relief that she felt is described by Fisher: "For when the kynge her son was crowned in all that greate tryumphe and glorye, she wept mervaylously."²²³ This mixture of affection and politics at the same time is thus characteristic for the relationship between Margaret and Henry and this is a logical consequence of their position and their dynastic aspirations. Earenfight notes about such relations: "The private royal sphere is a public creation. It is a powerful kin group, organized as a dynasty, a complex blend of the domestic and the political, though not necessarily in equal parts."²²⁴

²¹⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 9-10.

²²⁰ Printed in: Halsted, *The Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 206-207.

²²¹ M.A.E. Wood, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*. Vol 2 (London 1846) 118-119

²²² Cooper, *Memoir of Margret*, 47.

²²³ Fisher, "Mornyng Remembraunce", 29.

²²⁴ Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince", 9.

3.3 Preserving Tudor Rulership

In the past chapters we have been able to explore Margaret's role in the establishment of Tudor rulership and her involvement in patronage networks after the ascension of her son to the throne. But in order to understand her role in the success of the Tudor dynasty, we have to look at the greatest tests and threats that her son faced during his reign and what her role there was. The main threats to Henry VII's reign came from pretenders to the throne and armed uprisings in the country. As Polydore Vergil describes: "From the start [Henry VII] was threatened with plots by fresh opponents. He had to cope with armed uprisings by enemies, who were also his subjects, surviving with difficulty."²²⁵ After the Battle of Bosworth there was still a Plantagenet heir alive to cause unrest. 1487 saw a revolt led in the name of the Earl of Warwick, Richard III's young nephew. That year the Yorkists invaded England, where they gathered little support and lost at the Battle of Stoke on the 16th of June 1487, leading to the death or disappearance of many leaders from the Yorkist party.²²⁶ During the 1490s the Tudor rulership was threatened by Perkin Warbeck, who posed as one of the Princes in the Tower and landed in Ireland, where he gathered supported virtually undisturbed for eight years. Eventually his support waned and he threw himself at the mercy of the king in July 1497, who had him hanged in 1499 after two attempted escapes.²²⁷ This succession of uprisings and intrigues were a constant threat to the survival of the young dynasty.

Margaret Beaufort had two roles to play in aiding her son and her dynasty to overcome these problems and stay in the saddle. The first role was a political one, while the other was more public. In terms of the political aspect, Margaret possessed something that Henry gladly used: a network. As Henry had spent much of his life under wardship and in exile, he lacked a personal connection to a majority of the peerage in England, something his mother did possess. An example of how Margaret put her network into action can be seen in the case of the pretender Lambert Simnel. He pretended to be Richard of York, the youngest of Edward IV's sons. Though many people knew that it was impossible that he was in fact Richard, the plot became immensely popular. Most sympathizers were found in Ireland, a Yorkist stronghold that Henry had little

²²⁵ Polydore, *Three Books of English History*, 9.

²²⁶ D. Seward, *The Last White Rose* (London, 2010) xiv-xv.

²²⁷ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 26-29.

control over.²²⁸ However, Margaret did have an important ally in Ireland and when Simnel landed in Ireland in May 1487, the Earl of Ormond was called upon by Henry: “Forasmuche as we have sent for our derrest wif and for our derrest moder to come unto us... we pray you that, yeving your due attendaunce upon the said derrest wif and lady moder, ye come with thaym unto us; not failing herof as ye purpose to doo us plaisir.”²²⁹ Margaret had a long standing relationship with the Earls of Ormond, who were her cousins and were of great importance because of their influence in Ireland. Their presence and military abilities in Ireland were vital to the survival of the Tudor dynasty, who faced many Yorkist threats in Ireland.²³⁰ Margaret exchanged letters with Thomas, Earl of Ormond (1477-1539) member of the Boleyn family and father of Anne Boleyn, who would become the wife of Henry VIII. They corresponded about news at court, the situation in Ireland and personal events in their lives.²³¹ It was Margaret’s connection with the Earl of Ormond that gave her son an important ally in Ireland, vital for the preservation of the Tudor dynasty.²³²

Margaret’s political influence also becomes apparent in another case, that of Margaret of Salisbury. She was the sister of the Earl of Warwick and was seen as a threat to the Tudor rule, as a surviving member of the House of York and one that was not bastardized yet. Margaret Beaufort used her political tools to attempt to prevent her influence on possible Yorkist plots. Margaret soon realized that the sister of Edward was a cause for trouble and decided that a marriage to a husband that was loyal to the Tudors was the best option. She chose a cousin of the Tudor king, Richard Pole, whose mother was the half-sister of Margaret Beaufort through the St John family. The two were married either 1486 or 1487, when the bride was fourteen, she became very attached to her husband, showing in the letters she wrote after he died in which she mourned her husband.²³³ There were more marriages made between ladies of the York family and Henry’s kinsman and friends, but in this particular instance we know from the accounts of Lord Herbert of

²²⁸ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 22-23.

²²⁹ Printed in: Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret Beaufort*, 38.

²³⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 70-71.

²³¹ These letters can be found in the National Archives. SC/1/51/189.

²³² Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, 282-283.

²³³ Seward, *The Last White Rose*, 291-292.

Cherbury, written during the reign of Henry VIII, that Margaret Beaufort was responsible for this match.²³⁴

Besides this political role for Margaret, there was also a more public role for her in the preservation of the Tudor dynasty in times of turmoil. In 1494, after a new series of conspiracies which also implicated the king's chamberlain Sir William Stanley, the Tudors made a very public display of the creation of Prince Henry as the Duke of York. For this occasion banquets, dances and jousts were organized and Margaret played a very visible and prominent role in those events.²³⁵ Contemporaries also noted that Margaret often accompanied the king and queen on their royal visits, especially in times of turmoil. These visits and the public display of Margaret had a political rationale. These conspiracies and uprisings for a large part came from a contested right to the throne, with others who perhaps had better claim still alive and a lack of support for his claim.²³⁶ Touring around the country with his wife, a York, and his mother, through whom he held the Lancastrian claim to the throne was a strong signal to his people on the strength of his claim. They visited different parts of the country, often to visit building projects as well. A good example of this is their visit to Windsor to oversee the work done at St George's Chapel in 1492. Later in 1496 they did a tour of Margaret's lands in Dorset as well. This visit was during the uprising of Perkin Warbeck and was used to make political statements. They visited several buildings that had been rebuilt under their supervision and symbols of the importance of the Beaufort family and their legitimization can be found in these buildings. In a parish church near Corfe the coat of arms of the family was displayed twice. On the left it was shown with the shield on the side, indicating a bastard line, whilst on the right it was placed upright, showing the legitimacy of their royal lineage.²³⁷

This political and public role of Margaret in these tumultuous times for the young dynasty contributed to the survival thereof. Her network and connections played a clear role in battling uprisings and pretenders, as we can see with the case of the Earl of Ormond in Ireland and the marriage that she arranged for Margaret of Salisbury. She would also publicly tour the country with her son and his wife, attending feasts and jousts to show the strength of their dynasty and

²³⁴ H. of Cherbury, *The Life and Reigne of King Henry VIII* (London, 1649) 648.

²³⁵ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 70.

²³⁶ Lander, *Government and Community*, 332.

²³⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 71-72.

their claim to the throne. Both these approaches, public and political, were of great importance to the preservation and survival of the house.

3.4 Conclusion

For the establishment and preservation of Tudor rulership the reputation of Margaret and her relation with her son were of great importance. In these attributes we can see both the influence of notions of female behavior as well as the advancement of her networks. Her reputation and the mother-son relation were the underlying structures on which she was able to build her control and agency. The interaction between reputation and the role of women was an important one, as women were expected to behave within the boundaries of appropriate female behavior. It was therefore crucial to create a reputation that adhered to these notions. Women within the royal household were already allowed a larger freedoms, as we can see with Margaret as well when she becomes the mother of the king and her influence grows tremendously.

Margaret adhered to these notions of accepted behavior by becoming very active in the religious sphere. A path not unusual for aristocratic ladies, as it allowed them great freedom within this area, where female interest was accepted and even encouraged. Margaret also became very active in religious institutions and actively shaped the public image to that of a devout woman. We can see this back in many aspects such as the vow of chastity that she took, her translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, and her public image in portraits. Though we cannot prove how much of this is true religiosity and how much is manufactured, it was probably a combination of the two. Margaret used her interest in the religious sphere to advance the goals of herself and her son. These connections within the religious institutions allowed her to expand her network of patronage, while her reputation as a pious woman gave her the freedom to build these networks and make use of them.

In this respect the relationship with her son was also of great importance which we should see not only as a measure of affection between the two, but more as a political bond between mother and son. Though they spent considerable time apart from each other, their bond remained remarkable over the years. We can see this strong bond in the letters that they exchanged. Their political unity also becomes clear in these letters as well as their affection for each other. What these letters show is that Henry and Margaret not only took a keen interest in each other, but that political events were also discussed in their correspondence. Their relationship was one of active

partnership, containing both aspects of affection and political realism, a blend of the private and public sphere.

Besides her reputation and the relationship with her son, it is important to look at the role that Margaret played during moments when the dynasty was at peril due to uprisings and turmoil in the country. In these situations we can see the value of her network in action. Margaret's network brought safety to the dynasty because of the connections she had with people like the Earl of Ormond, who provided much needed support in areas that were largely in favor of a Yorkist restoration. On the other hand, reflected in the more political role that we see of Margaret touring the country with her son and his wife, her connection to the House of Lancaster was of paramount importance during this period.

Conclusion

When Margaret Beaufort passed away in June 1509 her life looked very different than most, probably including herself, had imagined it. Born as the daughter of a man who probably committed suicide in a family with a bastard name, she died as the mother and grandmother of kings. But rather than being a bystander in these occasions, she was a driving force behind the success of her family. In this thesis I have tried to examine the ways in which Margaret played a role in the foundation and preservation of the new Tudor rulership. To assert the role that she played this thesis has looked at the networks and connections that were built by Margaret and the influence that she, as a woman, had on the processes of control. Of course these cannot be separated as two completely distinct categories, but in fact interacted with each other. With regards to female agency we can see that there were several areas in which Margaret managed to play a role of importance in her household, through her marriages and at the court. Clear is that it was especially marriage that gave Margaret the possibilities to take a more active public role in the protection of her son's interests. Though Margaret had very little to say about the choice for her first two husbands, we can see that her marriage with Thomas Stanley was a very deliberate political move by Margaret. The fact that she was able to make such a choice relatively independently had everything to do with her status as a widow and the fact that her child-bearing years were behind her. These two aspects gave her more freedom to choose a partner that would benefit the claim of her son to the throne. Within these marriages she managed to wield her position to gain access to the court, build networks, and protect her property for the advancement of her son and his cause. Her marriages enabled her to establish a broad base of relations with several families that are of great political use to the later Tudor rulership.

What has surfaced during this research, especially when examining Margaret's wills and the networks that she built is the shift from a reliance on kinship relations to one on patronage relations. We can see that in the years before Henry captured the throne Margaret was mostly depended on her kin relations, both her own and those acquired through marriage. In the turmoil of the Wars of the Roses her family was a solid basis of trustworthy people that could help Margaret protect her son and help him in his claim to the throne. What we can see is that after Henry occupies the throne and the turmoil of pretenders starts to calm down around 1500 is that Margaret shifts her focus to other areas. The Cambridge Network that is extensively discussed in

this thesis is a prime example of the changes that Margaret made in her surroundings. As she had more freedom to spend time and money on the matters that really interested her: religion and education. This is clearly reflected in a large expansion of her patronage network from 1500 until her death in 1509. This shift is also visible in the wills that remain of Margaret and these are very interesting documents for examining her networks. The difference between these two wills, not only in appearance, but also in their substance reflect the changes of the position and possibilities of Margaret during her life. The first will of Margaret from 1472 is a document typical of the aristocracy of that time, a legal document called indenture shortly naming those involved in the execution of her testament and who are bestowed with her worldly possessions. This type of will stems from a long tradition dating back to the Anglo-Saxons and confirms what we know of wills from this period of time. The second will however is vastly different. Made at the end of her life in 1508 it reflects the changes that Margaret underwent, not only in her position but also in her personal life. The document is a reflection of her newfound royal status, something that also becomes clear from the large inventory list at the end of the work, showing an augmentation in her possessions and the worth thereof. Secondly, we can also see that it is also a religious work, a very important part of Margaret's later life, as we can also see in her connections with Fisher and others in the Cambridge network.

In the final chapter I have aimed to bring these notions on connections and female agency together by looking at three aspects that transcend these notions; her reputation, connected to the role of women in the later Middle Ages, her relationship with her son and her influence on the preservation of Tudor rulership when it was under siege. These aspects were the underlying structures that form the basis of the networks that Margaret established and the political influence she was able to wield through them. In Margaret's reputation as a devout and pious women we can see a public image coming together with her goals for her patronage networks set up in the educational and religious spheres. Adhering to a field in which the influence of women was accepted and even encouraged gave Margaret the freedom to exert her power there and built important networks of patronage. Her reputation as a devout Christian becomes visible in the portraits made of her, where she is often depicted in a nun-like way. This imagery was also part of crafting this religious reputation to help her wield political power and create networks. It seems therefore that Margaret was very consciously portraying herself and shaping a reputation that was beneficial to the preservation of Tudor rulership. That this image was mainly build after

Henry came to the throne shows us that she mainly used this to strengthen her patronage network, which was very much connected to her endeavors at Cambridge. In the relationship with her son there was no aspect of conscious portraying or of manipulating public opinion. From the interaction between the two it becomes clear that they had an affectionate relationship, despite the long time they were separated. But besides this affection and mutual interest that they had, we can also see that their relation was very much one of an active partnership between the two. They exchange political ideas, but also in the privileges that Henry gives to Margaret and the trust he places on her and her household, can we see that they were partners in advancing and protecting the interests of their family. The influence of Margaret's network and the importance of her person become especially clear when we look at the role she played during the greatest challenges that the young dynasty faced. During the several uprisings and pretenders that Henry had to deal with, the value of Margaret's connections and her position become very clear to us.

When looking at the role of Margaret in this dynastic endeavor, it becomes apparent that she possessed the things that her son lacked the most: connections and networks. While Henry had spent a large part of his youth under a warden and later in exile, his mother prepared the ground for her coming. She managed to build a network of those in favor of her cause, while at the same time she gained knowledge of her political opponents during the time of Yorkist rule. In my view, she was very much aware of the need to build a web of relations to advance the cause of her son and she actively used the powers available to her as a woman to obtain these connections. This idea of female agency has been one that has formed the center of this research and it is important to ask ourselves what the case of Margaret Beaufort adds to our understanding of what female agency is and how it was used by women. At the beginning of this thesis I quoted Theresa Earenfight, who in my opinion gives the best definition of female agency available to us by stating that rulership is a wide mix of strategies operating in the public political sphere in which both men and women are able to exercise control through both official and unofficial channels. Though I still subscribe to this idea of female agency, the case of Margaret does give us some new insights in the possibilities for women to exert their power. In my view, the influence that she had on the establishment and preservation of the Tudor dynasty were not just instrumental, but were in fact vital to the existence of such rulership. This shows not only that women are capable of exerting control in both official and unofficial channels in the public political arena, but moreover that their strategies can be a *sine qua non* of major political events.

This makes Margaret, who was always named the king's mother, perhaps more of a king's maker, altering our perspective of this cunning women who was determined to place her son on the English throne.

In short, all these aspects mentioned here together form an intricate web of the influence and power that Margaret Beaufort wielded to establish and protect the rulership of her son. Rather than just an interesting side-story, or a devout women with an interest in education, she forms the very heart of the Tudor endeavor. The web of relations that she spun, an intricate combination of kinship and patronage relations enabled her to prepare the arrival of her son and afterwards helped them to maintain a steady base to preserve his rulership. By cleverly adhering to notion of accepted female behavior and using the tools available to her in marriage, at the court and in her households, Margaret was a vital part in the establishment of Tudor rulership. She was very much aware of the political role she could play, which comes to the foreground in all aspects of her life. This makes her the undisputed matriarch of the Tudor house.

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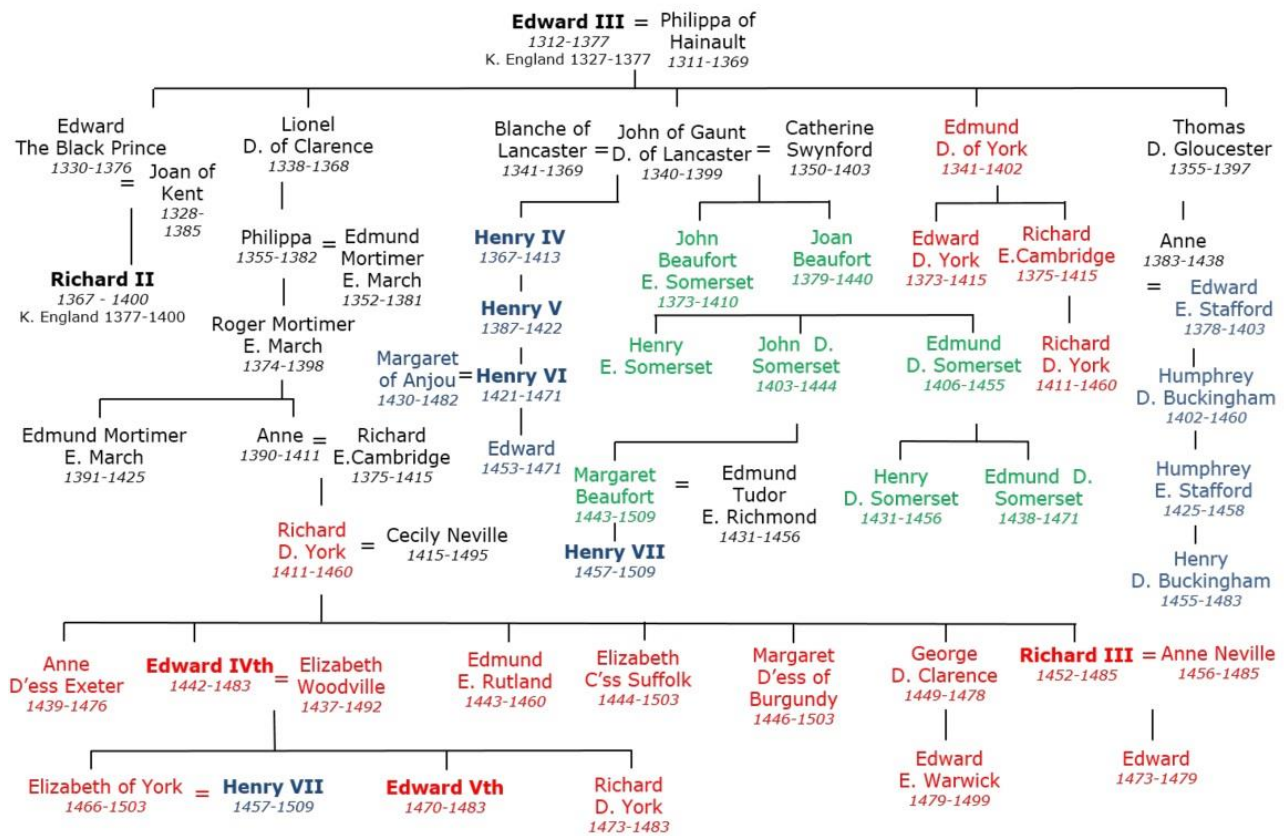
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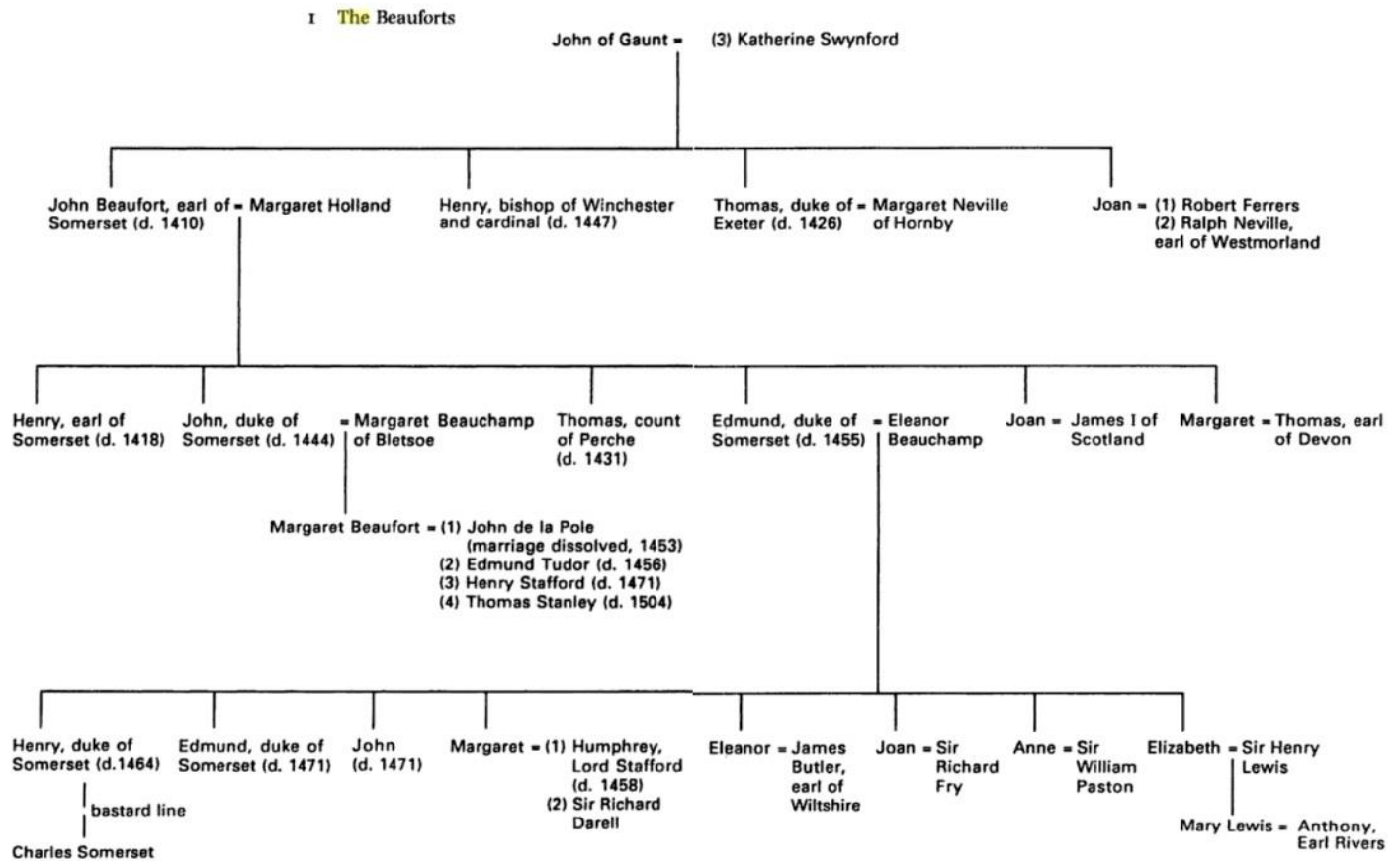
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Appendix 1: Margaret's Royal Descent



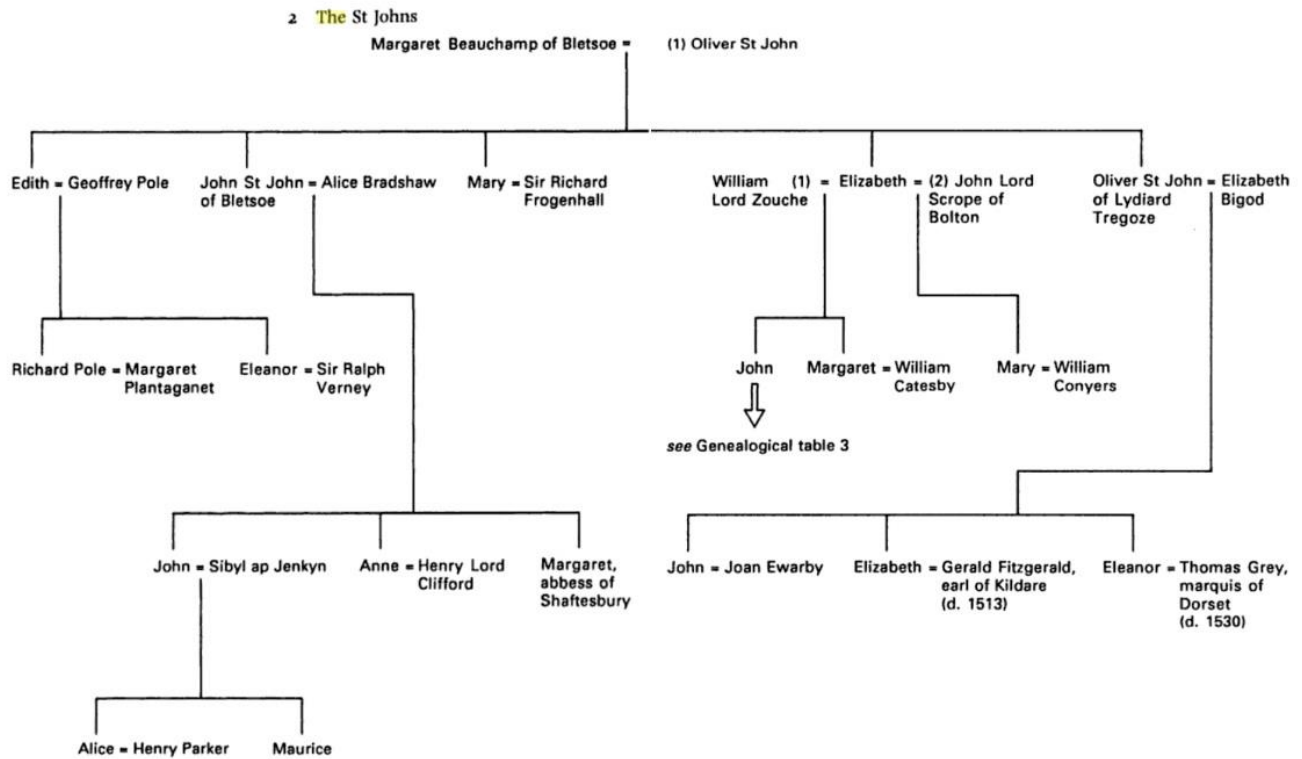
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Appendix 2: The Beaufort Family



Source: Jones, M. and Underwood, M., *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge 1992)

Appendix 3: The St John Family



Source: Jones, M. and Underwood, M., *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge 1992)