Building Royally: Expressions of Magnificence in the Palaces of Henry VII (1485–1509)

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Abstract
The early Tudor period (1485–1558) witnessed the establishment of the Tudor dynasty and a political, social, and cultural revolution. It was an age of architectural developments as medieval traditions were gradually abandoned and numerous royal palaces and their gardens were constructed or reconstructed corresponding to new trends, the current fashion, and the personal taste of the reigning monarch. Royal palaces and their adjoining gardens served as representations of the power and wealth of the dynasty by conveying magnificence. The paper discusses early Tudor textual records and the ways these documents give evidence of the magnificence of royal residences, together with presenting a possible typology based on the way of expression for the categorisation of the historical textual records.

Keywords: early modern textual records, Tudor architecture, royal palaces, magnificence and power

1 The Newly Established Dynasty

The Tudor period began with Henry VII (1485–1509) seizing the crown in the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and lasted for almost 120 years. During the successive reigns of Henry VIII (1509–1547), Edward VI (1547–1553), Mary I (1553–1558), and Elizabeth I (1558–1603), England was subject to major political and religious changes. In addition to these developments, the architectural achievements of the period are also remarkable, as during the age of the Renaissance in England, numerous iconic buildings were constructed or reconstructed. The construction of the greatest Tudor palaces all took place during the early Tudor period, and the extensive volume of architectural undertakings was partly a result of the lavish spending of Henry VIII. Elizabeth I, however, placed a greater emphasis on her progresses than on her building activity, and as Osborne summarises, the Queen's "power was based on the love of her subjects" (1989: 15) and "Elizabeth I believed […] that rapport with her people was vital to her sovereignty and to the prosperity of her kingdom" (1989: 15).

With the accession of Henry VII, a new era of internal peace and prosperity was introduced to England; moreover, the great intellectual movement called "the English Renaissance" began during this period. As a monarch, Henry VII sought to legitimise his right to the throne[1] and solidify the Tudors as the ruling dynasty of England. First of all, when Henry Tudor arrived in London after his victory in the Battle of Bosworth Field, he appeared before his first Parliament to affirm that "the crown had come to him both by hereditary succession and by the true judgement of God given in battle" (Meagher 1968: 45). Secondly, he fulfilled his previous promise made to the Yorkists and married Elizabeth of York, and this marriage did not only unite the rivalling Lancaster and York families but helped to assure Tudor succession with the birth of Arthur in 1486 (Guy 1988: 57). Even though Henry VII had taken precautions in order to solidify his power, he had to face several revolts up until 1499, the most serious one – with dynastic intentions – being that of Perkin Warbeck (Guy 1988: 57). However, he proved to be successful eventually, as he managed to establish his dynasty and

revive the efficiency of kingship. He had outstanding achievements in the field of finance, which were made possible by the great efforts that he had put into his administration, where he established complete personal authority (Kar 1980: 852).

Henry VII can be regarded as a pioneer when it comes to the art and practice of royal power. By the time he came to the throne, the English monarchy had been half a century old, and as a consequence, the king inherited an already well-developed system of government and royal residences that included medieval fortified castles of the countryside (such as Kenilworth Castle) and more fashionable London residences (such as Greenwich). He began to effectively use the power of architecture as a means of conveying his wealth and authority as the monarch of England. It was during his reign that medieval architectural traditions were gradually abandoned, and new, fashionable architectural trends were adopted. This paper discusses in detail two residences of Henry VII (Baynard's Castle and Richmond Palace) in order to illustrate how royal power was perceived through architectural achievements during the early Tudor period, and by presenting the ways perceptions took effect, it intends to present a typological classification of textual historical records. The paper proposes the following three categories based on the manner of reference a textual record employs to present the concept of magnificence: first, the record refers to the financial costs of the construction, second, the record refers to the physical features of the building that convey magnificence, and third, the record refers to the personal impressions concerning magnificence. The study presents examples of historical records that give account of Baynard's Castle and Richmond Palace as case studies without claiming to be exhaustive.

2 Stately Magnificence

The use of magnificence and the practice of the art of power were not Tudor inventions; according to Anglo, it was fundamentally a classical, Aristotelian principle that was reinforced several times during the successive eras (1992: 6). Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics,* differentiates between liberality and prodigality[2] based on the modes of using one's wealth. Rooted in the idea of liberality and prodigality, the philosopher mentions and discusses the notion of magnificence, which according to him, appears to be a virtue concerned with wealth (1956: 205). Aristotle compares magnificence to liberality, thus providing a definition of the term: "it does not, however, like Liberality, extend to all actions dealing with wealth, but only refers to the spending of wealth; and in this sphere it surpasses Liberality in point of magnitude, for, as its name itself implies, it consists in suitable expenditure on a great scale" (1956: 205); he further clarifies the definition by adding that "the term magnificence denotes someone who spends suitably on great objects" (1956: 205) and that "the magnificent man is an artist in expenditure: he can discern what is suitable, and spend great sums with good taste" (1956: 207). Finally, it is established that "a poor man cannot be magnificent, since he has not the means to make a great outlay suitably" (1956: 209).

While Aristotle discusses magnificence as a universal virtue of the ordinary man, John Fortescue[3] associates the concept with rules and mentions magnificence as one of the "extraordinary charges of a king" in his *The Governance of England* (c. 1470). Skeel emphasises that Fortescue had a significant impact on the early Tudor period and on various practices of Henry VII. The King favoured constitutional forms and made efforts to reduce the power of the nobles. However, above all, during his reign he was perceived by foreign observers as an especially wealthy king; as a proof, Skeel cites impressions from the *Milanese*

Calendar where the King is viewed as "very powerful in money" and someone who "has a very great treasure which increases daily" (1916: 84). According to Fortescue, it is needed that the king has great treasures, as he might make new buildings for his pleasure and for magnificence (1885: 125). Not only will the king dress richly, but he will also care for the rich decoration and ornaments for his royal estate (1885: 125). Aristotle's basic condition, that a man needs to be wealthy in order to be magnificent, is supported in Fortescue's *The Governance of England.*

The connection between architecture and magnificence might be established on several terms. Vitruvius' classical work, *Ten Books on Architecture* draws attention to the importance of symmetry and harmony – principles in connection with the overall beauty of a building that need to be carefully observed by the architect and both of which contribute to the perception of magnificence (1914: 72). A less practical and more theoretical and idealistic approach is formulated by Moore, who claims that "buildings are not purely functional […] there is an intangible something about them that has to do with emotion" (2013: 15) and that "architecture is intimate with power […] it requires authority, money, and ownership" (2013: 145).

3 The Building Activity of Henry VII

Architectural styles and practices are subject to constant change and are exposed to social and economic changes of the current era. By the beginning of the early modern era, aristocratic houses started to transform and take on a new look. This transformation could be explained by a change in their ways of life. Due to the decrease of household mobility[4], early modern households spent much longer periods in one place (Thurley 2014: 318). Therefore, a need for more spacious chambers and more convenient accommodations appeared.

Henry VII contributed on several occasions to many of the existing palaces of the realm, as the financial resources needed to do so were already at his disposal. The *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* Vol. XI, No. 1244. is not a strictly contemporary record, however, it gives a valuable account of how Henry VII's financial achievements, wealth, and power were perceived a few decades after his death (in 1536). The account starts with a reference to the wealth of Henry VIII's father: "If the King will be rich, let him follow the trade of his father, the second Solomon, who enhanced his riches by wisdom and mercy" (qtd. in Pollard 1914: 5). The extract also gives evidence of the phenomena that Henry VII was clever with money. It explains how the king appointed chaplains of his favour for vacant positions, thus increasing his riches. Also, the fact that the king appreciated overseas merchants who brought in "buloyn" which intends to refer to the modern English word "bullion" (which is applied to gold or silver in the form of bars). These measures all contributed to the riches of the realm, while Henry VII was both loved and feared by contemporaries, and the "reyme so inrychyde and hymselfe also that yt was spokyn to the worldes end that in thys reyme was the goldyn hyll" (qtd. in Pollard 1914: 5).

Henry VII constructed a new privy chamber block, to be exact, a privy tower at Windsor Castle between 1489 and 1501 (Thurley 2019: 29). Thurley emphasised the relevance of towers as architectural features from the Saxon times. It was no coincidence that Henry VII himself renovated only parts of royal residences, these parts being towers. It was expensive to build, but they were dominant when looked at as they represented might and power together with providing defence, and at the same time, they were pleasant places to live as they offered extensive views. These towers stood more independently at the beginning of the 15th century;

however, by the end of the century they were more integrated with the principal lodgings of the house (2014: 321). Besides Windsor Castle, Greenwich Palace also became a preferred residence with the accession of Henry VII, where he often spent Christmas (Rait 1911: 52).

4 Palaces with Symbolical Connotations

Baynard's Castle was of symbolic significance for Henry VII, as this house had been granted to his father, Edmund Tudor, in March 1453 (Thurley 2019: 12). Thurley finds the significance of the grant in the fact that "it can be said to have marked the founding of the Tudor dynasty, for that year Henry VI had ennobled his two half-brothers, Jasper as Earl of Pembroke and Edmund as Earl of Richmond…" (2019: 12). Later, however, the residence became the main Yorkist residence in London when it was confiscated from Edmund Tudor and was given to Richard, Duke of York (Thurley 2019: 12).

Baynard's Castle is one striking example of abandoning medieval architectural practices during the early Tudor period. Baynard's was originally a fortress-like castle; a detailed history of the building is presented in *A Survey of London Written in the Year 1598* by John Stow[5] which demonstrates in what way medieval fortresses were often remodelled into magnificent royal residences during the early modern period. Stow clarifies the origin of the castle by claiming that it was built by a nobleman called Baynard who arrived in England as a companion of William the Conqueror (1066–1087), and gives a brief description of the characteristic of the original building by mentioning "two most strong castles […] are built with walls and rampires […] banking on the river Thames" (2005: 71). Based on the description, one could imagine a fortress on the riverbank with high stone walls and miniature windows. Stow's *Survey* also gives account of the remodelling of the castle in the following way: "Henry VII., about the year 1501, and the 16th of his reign, repaired, or rather new built this house, not embattled, or so strongly fortified castle like, but far more beautiful and commodious for the entertainment of any prince or great estate" (2005: 76). It was Henry VII's apparent intention to refurbish the residence that bore a symbolic meaning to his dynasty into a more attractive and comfortable one and display it to distinguished guests and ambassadors – the usage of a magnificently renovated building as a symbol of royal power is evident. However, as the King was uncertain due to his questionable legitimacy to the throne, he has not completely disposed of towers and bastions that served the defence of the building. The modernisation of Baynard's Castle is recorded by an early modern sketch of Anthonis van den Wyngaerde[6] and further explained by Thurley: "a substantially new building […] was of brick and showed to the river a façade animated by a series of great bay windows […] at either end were massive towers with machicolations[7] and turrets, making the house look, from the river, like an exotic little castle" (2019: 37). Based on Thurley's description, Baynard's still resembled more of a castle (it is also justified by features such as machicolations), nonetheless, gradually leaving behind the medieval traditions, as it is now perceived as "exotic". As this paper concerns contemporary textual records and the perception of royal magnificence in those records, therefore early modern visual records now should be mentioned because they are valuable sources for confirming descriptions and serve as a good basis for comparison. Stow's account of Baynard's Castle echoes the physical properties of the residence; therefore, it could be said that it is an objective description, free of emotionally charged expressions, which also saves the details of the costs of the construction.

Considering Henry VII's aspirations to convey royal power and wealth through buildings in order to solidify his ruling dynasty, another palace should be discussed, namely Sheen or as later known, Richmond Palace. Besides Baynard's Castle, Richmond Palace also came to signify Henry VII's ancestry and bore a symbolic meaning. Thurley highlights the fact that "he was fiercely proud of his own patrimony, in particular his title, Richmond, which had been given to his father, Edmund Tudor, by Henry VI and which, on his birth, Henry had inherited" (2019: 40).

Hall's Chronicle[8] records the history of Richmond Palace in the following way: "Also in this yere was burned a place of the kynges called the maner of Shene Situate, & liynge nygh the Thamys side, which he after buylded agayne sumptuously & costly, and chaunged the name of Shene, and called it Rychemond, because hys father and he were erles of Richemonde" (1809: 491).

This record gives account of the fact that Sheen was not simply rebuilt but was endowed a new symbolic role as the family seat of the Tudors, signifying both the dynasty's wealth and power and ancestry. Edwards Hall includes the fact that this renovation work was a costly matter; thus, implying the obvious; in order to convey magnificence through buildings, the king needed to be wealthy – as mentioned earlier, Henry VII was clever with money, and as a result, he managed to financially stabilise his country after the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses. By using the expression "sumptuously", Hall indicates that the palace was rebuilt in a way that is both impressive and seems expensive.

Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*[9] first mentions Sheen in connection with Edward III (1327–1377), who built himself this medieval residence and who also died at Sheen (Kingsford 1905: 15). Moreover, it records the unfortunate incident from 1497, the fire at Sheen, and gives a detailed account of the fact that in 1497 the King spent Christmas at his manor of Sheen, and that during the Christmas wake around nine o'clock a great fire began within the king's lodgings; during the fire the great part of the old building was burnt (Kingsford 1905: 222). The Chronicle also reports that a great sum of money was necessary for the rebuilding of the palace; accordingly, this record discusses the renovation in terms of financial costs, besides also mentioning the renaming of the palace:

In this yere the king, after he had ffynysshed a greate parte of the buyldyng of his Manoir of Shene, which as before is said was consumed by ffire […] And also that the Reedifiyng of the said Manoir had cost, and after shuld cost or it were pursued, grete and notable sumes of money, where before that season it was ones called or named Shene, ffrom this tyme forward it was commauned by the kyng that it shuld be called or named Rich mount. (Kingsford 1905: 233)

The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne[10] is another significant manuscript regarding Tudor palaces and Renaissance festivities. Even though it is an elaborate description of the wedding of Henry VII's son, Arthur (1486–1502) to Katherine of Aragon (1485–1536), it provides valuable mentions of Richmond Palace as well. As for the historical facts in connection with the marriage, it was Henry VII's initial intention to complete renovation works at Richmond Palace for this major diplomatic event. Kipling highlights the significance of *The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne* by stating that it "provides the best single source of information about the Tudor festival it describes" (Kipling 1990: xi), furthermore the prestige of the event for Henry VII as the "the successful culmination of his dynastic and political ambitions" (Kipling 1990: xiii).

The 9th chapter of Book IV gives an account "of the huntyng in the Kinges parke and of the description of the Place of Rychemont". It praises "the pleasaunt Place of Richemond

[…] That is to sey, this erthly and secunde paradise of oure region of Englond" (Kipling 1990: 71). Then the text continues with a detailed description of the courtyard, the galleries, the great hall, the chapel and other spaces within the palace. The author mentions aspects of convenience several times, which further supports the formerly mentioned claim, that the medieval architectural traditions were progressively abandoned, and new factors became significant, such as convenience and pomp. The author refers to the palace as a building "of great comodities, pleasures, and excellent goodlynes" and also mentions that "uppon ich side of this goodly courte there are galeres with many wyndowes full lightsume and commodious" (Kipling 1990: 71). This record builds on the subjective perceptions of the author, who is undoubtedly impressed by the atmosphere of the palace.

Henry VII considered Richmond his family seat, his most important residence of all; this is supported by the fact that the king died at Richmond Palace. The occurrence is recorded by Kingsford's *Chronicles of London* as well as the *Chronicles of the Grey Friars of London*[11]*;* "Thys yere the xxii day of Aprill dyde kynge Henry the VIIth at Richmonde, and browth to London […] and the nexte day to Westmynster nobylly and there buryd" (Nichols 1852: 29).

If one thinks about it, the name of the palace, Richmond can also be interpreted as a "rich mount" (as mentioned earlier by quoting the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII,* in which there was a reference to a golden hill in the realm of Henry VII). Rawlinson further emphasises this "pun" by stating that Henry VII's intention was both to identify this renovated palace with his ancestral dynasty and praise it as a "rich mount" (2016: 95). This idea and image are further confirmed by the painting *The Family of Henry VII with St George and the Dragon* (c. 1503–9), which represents Richmond Palace in a more fantastical and allegorical environment. In the painting, the palace can be observed high on the top of a mountain, thus it can be described as a "rich mount." These are all subjective perceptions of the expression of magnificence in a building.

5 Conclusion

Rawlinson points out that early modern contemporaries did perceive architecture as an expression of power and wealth and supports his claim by quoting John Skelton's verses in Colin Clout (1521–22) (2016: 101)

> Buyldyng royally
> Theyr mancyons curyously,
> With turrettes and with toures,
> With halles and with boures,
> Stretchynge to the starres,
> With glasse wyndowes and barres ;
> Hangynge aboute the walles
> Clothes of golde and palles
>
> (Skelton 1983: 270-71)

The perception of magnificence and wealth, however, does not always have a positive connotation. Skelton's poem, *Colin Clout* is unquestionably a satire, and according to Burrow, it has a single target as it is addressed to the rulers of the Church, the bishops, and especially Cardinal Wolsey[12], archbishop of York (2016: 469). It is interesting to see that some were not

impressed by the magnificence and splendour, however, the exact opposite happened, some felt a strong disgust towards the wealthy individual. This aversion is conveyed in Skelton's *Colin Clout,* when he refers to prelates as haughty, i.e., arrogantly superior. Skelton, similarly to other contemporaries, perceives wealth and power conveyed by magnificent buildings, however, the impressions and feelings attached to this perception are quite different.

Cardinal Wolsey's grandiose spending was merely a forerunner to that of Henry VII's son and successor, Henry VIII. During his reign, a large-scale change occurred in terms of royal constructions, as the new monarch surpassed all previous rulers in this respect; even his father, as he used buildings and the power of royal splendour in his dynastic rivalry with his contemporary, Francis I of France (1515–1547) and in order to demonstrate his power to continental Europe as well. Henry VIII's building activity is more widely documented than that of Henry VII, which justifies the topic's exclusion from the present study.

As a conclusion, based on the examples presented in the paper, Henry VII was efficient in using his buildings to convey his royal power, wealth, and magnificence – which all contributed to the eventual consolidation of the Tudor dynasty. Early modern textual records present the evident perception of magnificence conveyed by palaces by referring to the physical features (*Survey of London* by John Stow), the cost of the construction (*Hall's Chronicle* or *Chronicles of London)*, or personal impressions (*The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne)*.

Notes

1. Henry Tudor's claim to the English throne was dubious; therefore, at the beginning of his reign, the security and stability of the Tudor rule were a crucial concern for him. His father, Edmund Tudor, earl of Richmond, was half-brother to Henry VI (1422–1461 and 1470–1471) through his mother, Catherine of Valois. His mother, Margaret Beaufort, was the great-granddaughter of King Edward III's son, John of Gaunt, who legitimised the Beaufort descendants by an Act of Parliament; however, the Act excluded them from succession to the throne (Gunn 2016: 4).
2. Liberality and prodigality are important terms to discuss if one attempts to gain understanding of the notion of magnificence. Liberality is a virtue, a virtue of giving and getting wealth, but especially giving and refraining from taking more than it is due (Aristotle 1956: 189). Prodigality is a mode of excess and of deficiency; prodigality exceeds in giving and is deficient in getting (Aristotle 1956: 197).
3. Sir John Fortescue served as a chief councillor to Henry VI (1422–1461 and 1470–1471), tutor to Prince Edward, and propagandist for the Lancastrian family during the Wars of the Roses (Gill 1971: 333). It was between 1471 and 1476 that Fortescue wrote his constitutional treatise, *The Governance of England.* According to Skeel, as it was the author's last work, it embodies the observations of a lifetime (1916: 82). The influence of Fortescue's writings can be proved by the fact that under the Tudors many of his suggestions were actually in practice (Skeel 1916: 83).
4. This change in lifestyle might be due to the fact that a great part of land was tenanted. Strong points out that landownership has always represented economic wealth, political power, or social status, and with the emergence of cartography, land was looked at in terms of ownership; in summary, civic virtue depended on landownership (2001: 99).
5. John Stow (1525–1605) was one of the most renowned Renaissance historians, chroniclers, and antiquarians of the Elizabethan Age. His greatest work, *A Survey of London* is a type of "chorographic" (i.e., the systematic description and mapping of specific regions or areas) historical narration, where the organising model is the physical layout of London (Hall 1991: 1). One can observe that the narrative is organised both along a topographic and chronological line. The description of Baynard's Castle is reported according to the progression of time, highlighting the successive proprietors of the building.

6. Anthonis van den Wyngaerde was one of the most productive topographical artists of the Renaissance Period, as between 1544 and 1570 he created numerous views in different locations in the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, and also in England. As reported by Haverkamp-Begemann the topographer himself wrote that "among all joys that the delightful and ingenious art of painting has to offer, there is not one that I hold in higher esteem than the representation of sites" (1969: 357). Wyngaerde's illustrations contribute to a better understanding of the architectural practices of early modern England and the layout of palaces and gardens.
7. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, machicolation is "a series of holes in a floor that projects (=sticks out over the edge) around the top of a castle, through which the people inside can drop or throw objects with the intention of causing injury or damage" ("Machicolation").
8. The original title of Edward Hall's chronicle is *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* and was first published in the middle of the 16th century, in 1548. According to Smith, Hall is not a first-hand author for the reigns from Henry IV to the death of Henry VIII – one may believe that he was not an original writer of history, but rather a collector of the chronicles of others (1918: 254).
9. *Chronicles of London* is an edition by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, who made a compilation of three original mid-fifteenth-century manuscript copies as indicated by the 1905 editions Contents page. His introduction to the editions discusses in detail the authorship, contents, and dates of the manuscripts.
10. According to Kipling, the editor of the account, the author of the original manuscript was almost certainly a member of the King's household – he bases his statement on the fact that the narrator reports from the point of view of an attendant at court; eyewitness experiences from a position very close to the King (1990: xliv).
11. The *Chronicles of the Grey Friars of London* is a valuable textual historical record from the Tudor period and was edited by John Gough Nichols in the middle of the 19th century. It documents events starting from the reign of Richard I (1189–1199); referring to him as "Kynge Rychard the Furst surnamed Cure de Lyon" (1852: 1) highlighting his informal title of Richard the Lionheart.
12. Thomas Wolsey (1475–1530) was a cardinal and stateman who dominated the government of England under Henry VIII, between 1515 and 1529. He amassed great wealth and power and with his roles in the church he acquired estates as well, such as York Place. He took over Hampton Court, a medieval manor, situated outside of London on the north bank of the River Thames and between 1515 and 1521 he transformed it into a remarkable palace and one of England's most significant great houses of the early Tudor age (Foyle 2002: 128).

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