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Abstract: This article explores the secular, political role of Renaissance cardinals through an analysis of the domestic agenda of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England from 1515 to 1529, while positioning him within the context of his near contemporary English and continental cardinal-politicians. The article explores his domestic patronage in the early sixteenth century, especially his promotion of select individuals for preferment within the structure of early Tudor government; it is particularly concerned with the selection of personnel for Somerset's commissions of the peace. The article stresses the importance of the household in selecting these individuals and discusses how these relationships were created and maintained. The article also explores Wolsey's attitude towards the nobility and considers whether his relationship with Somerset can shed any light on whether he was hostile towards the aristocracy. The article demonstrates that Wolsey sought an alternative to dominant forces within the county structure through the employment of a broad group of reliable local knights rather than electing to forge a relationship with a single county representative. Finally, the article highlights the significant changes to the composition of England's governing classes after Wolsey's fall, with a clear shift from clerical to secular personnel.

Keywords: Wolsey; Henry VIII; nobility; gentry; government; cardinals

This article is concerned with the secular, political role of Renaissance cardinals, through an exploration of the domestic agenda of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England from 1515 to 1529. Indeed, as both a cardinal—or "Prince of the Church"—and Lord Chancellor, Thomas Wolsey held an immensely powerful position during the reign of Henry VIII, to such an extent that some regarded him as an *alter rex*.[1] Such a position required Wolsey to engage in exhaustive diplomatic endeavours over the course of his political career. Consequently, there has been a tendency for historians to focus on his international ventures, but there is still much to be done at the local level. Indeed, Wolsey evidently recognised the importance of domestic stability, perhaps best demonstrated by his development of the various functions of both the legal system and county offices, as well as his cultivation of gentry affinities, as shall be discussed below. The title of this article comes from William Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, taken from Act II, Scene ii, which takes place in 1529. The line "Much joy and favour to you; you are the King's now" is delivered by Wolsey when addressing Stephen Gardiner, the king's newly appointed secretary, having been summoned by Henry to read through Pope Clement VII's judgement on his

[1] J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), 83.

divorce case. Wolsey takes the opportunity to remind Gardiner privately—yet passive-aggressively—that he had been Wolsey's own secretary for the previous four years, something he did not want Gardiner to forget in a hurry.

This article explores Wolsey's use of domestic patronage in the early sixteenth century, in particular his promotion of select individuals for preferment within the structure of early Tudor government. Rather than continuing Henry VII's partisan approach to local government, Wolsey sought an alternative to dominant forces within the county structure. Instead, Wolsey looked to employ a broad group of reliable local knights, rather than electing to forge a relationship with a single county representative. Yet, he nonetheless attempted to influence decisions made locally through the careful cultivation of local support through the selection and inclusion of individuals from his household, thereby extending royal influence across England. Together, this demonstrates how important ministerial favour could be within the personal world of Tudor government. For the purposes of this article, the county of Somerset will be used as an instructive case study.

Although regarded as "the most accomplished English example" of a cardinal-politician, Thomas Wolsey was by no means the first in England's recent history.[2] Despite his reputation for self-aggrandisement and rapaciousness, having amassed his personal wealth from hefty loans to the crown between 1424 and 1425, Henry Beaufort (*c.* 1375-1447), Chancellor to Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI, had been created cardinal in 1426.[3] What is clear from Beaufort's career is that, like Wolsey, he gained the trust of the king, Henry VI, through his administrative and logistical abilities—in particular his part in organising England's role in the crusade against the Hussites from 1426.[4] We can see further similarities in the attributes that would have gained Wolsey the king's trust through a more recent example of a cardinal-politician, John Morton (d. 1500), who had himself cultivated a "close and trusting relationship" with Henry VII, a relationship that had grown between 1483 and 1485.[5] Unlike both Beaufort and Wolsey, however, there were "no contemporary accusations against him of personal aggrandisement"—a suspicion that would play its part in Wolsey's ultimate undoing.[6]

Drawing on the example of the Portuguese cardinal Jorge Costa (1406-1508), David Chambers has suggested that the key characteristics of a Renaissance cardinal could be found in Paulo Cortesi's 1510 work, *De Cardinalatu*. In it, Cortesi suggests that a Renaissance cardinal ought to possess diplomatic abilities and "conciliatory skills": for Costa, these skills came in particularly useful when dealing with popes Alexander VI (1491-1503) and Julius II (1503-13), neither of whom were well known for their calm demeanours. Cortesi also suggests that, as princes of the church, Renaissance cardinals ought to possess a classic theological education, and with it a continued interest in learning; but, a Renaissance cardinal must also have considerable personal wealth, allowing him to live "in a fairly lavish style" (but, crucially,

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[2] C. Michon, "Pomp and Circumstances: State Prelates under Francis I and Henry VIII", in *The Contending Kingdoms: France and England, 1420-1700*, ed. G. J. Richardson (Aldershot, 2008), 79-94 (81).

[3] G. A. Holmes, "Cardinal Beaufort and the Crusade Against the Hussites", *English Historical Review,* vol. 88, no. 349 (October 1973), 721-750 (721); G. L. Harriss, "Cardinal Beaufort – Patriot or Usurer?", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 20 (1970), 129-148 (129-131).

[4] Holmes, "Cardinal Beaufort and the Crusade Against the Hussites", 749.

[5] C. S. L. Davies, "Bishop John Morton, the Holy See, and the Accession of Henry VII", *English Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 402 (January 1987), 2-30 (3, 30).

[6] C. Harper-Bill, "Morton, John (d. 1500)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

without being ostentatious).[7] So, taking this instructive text as a guide, Wolsey, like his contemporaries, certainly possessed diplomatic skill, an interest in learning and, perhaps most ominously, a fondness for ostentation. Wolsey certainly had much in common with Henry Beaufort in particular: not only their shared experiences of benefitting from the logistics of war, but also their considerable wealth. Similarly, Wolsey and Beaufort were both accomplished—yet ambitious—statesmen; indeed, cardinal-politicians such as Wolsey and Beaufort were considered "the third pillar of the state alongside the courtiers and bureaucrats", something Cédric Michon has ascribed to their abilities in both law and theology (i.e. both temporal and spiritual).[8]

Being able to rely on dedicated, professional advisors was certainly good news for Henry VIII. As something of a playboy in his youth, Henry was largely unconcerned with policy until around 1525, when his interest was piqued by his desire to secure his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Before this time, Cardinal Wolsey had largely orchestrated domestic policy formation. In his role as royal chaplain, a post he had held since 1507, Wolsey was tasked with "diplomatic missions to Scotland and Flanders", which no doubt prepared him well for his future career as Lord Chancellor from 1515. Following Henry VII's death in 1509, Wolsey became almoner to Henry VIII, and was subsequently appointed to the king's council in 1510.[9] However, for John Guy, Wolsey's questionable ecclesiastical conduct, including his acquisition (in plurality) of the bishoprics of Bath and Wells, Durham, and Winchester, was permitted by Henry simply because he "wished the English church to be ruled by a royal servant".[10]

Wolsey's rapid rise has led some to interpret him as a ruthless operator, a man who callously ousted William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, from his role as Lord Chancellor in pursuit of gaining senior political office for himself. Others see Wolsey rather differently: Jack Scarisbrick characterised Wolsey simply as a convenient tonic to more than one political headache, first by removing Henry's responsibilities of state from him and, second, by relieving Warham, Wolsey's predecessor as Lord Chancellor, of his secular offices and thereby allowing him to focus on his ecclesiastical ones instead.[11] The latter interpretation is perhaps as sympathetic as the former is severe. There was, however, a particular role that certainly secured Wolsey's appointment as Lord Chancellor in 1515: his co-ordination of England's military campaign in France between 1512 and 1514—a task that clearly demonstrated his obvious logistical capabilities.

Cardinal Wolsey as a Domestic Patron

The early years of Henry VIII's reign were mainly concerned with military matters, with a view to recovering former English territory in northern France: a focus that allowed Wolsey the

[7] D. S. Chambers, "What Made a Renaissance Cardinal Respectable? The Case of Cardinal Costa of Portugal", *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (March 1998), 87-108 (93, 108).
[8] Michon, "Pomp and Circumstances", 80-82.
[9] J. Guy, "Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell and the Reform of Henrician Government", in *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety*, ed. D. MacCulloch (Basingstoke, 1995), 35-57 (41).
[10] Guy, *Tudor England*, 111-115.
[11] J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), 41-43.

opportunity to exercise his considerable administrative and organisational skills.[12] As already discussed, such an undertaking was something Wolsey had in common with Cardinal Beaufort, who had prepared England for war nearly a century earlier. For Wolsey, what followed the French wars of the early sixteenth century was an enthusiastic diplomatic campaign, including a failed Anglo-French peace treaty in 1514, the signing of a pan-European peace treaty, the treaty of London in 1518, and the meeting of Henry VIII and the French king, Francis I, at the Field of Cloth of Gold two years later.[13] Wolsey included members of his household in these diplomatic endeavours, including Sir Thomas Denys, chamberlain of his household, who was part of Wolsey's embassy to France in July 1527 to sign an alliance with the French "supposedly in the defence of Pope Clement VII but aimed principally at blocking Charles V's domination of Europe".[14]

Yet, the assumption that Wolsey was fixated on diplomatic dealings with the European mainland is somewhat skewed by the available evidence.[15] We rely almost entirely on extant documents from Wolsey's administration that relate primarily to diplomatic matters, as they have survived in great number in foreign archives. Nonetheless, Wolsey evidently recognised the economic and political profit to be had from peace, as he could then focus on domestic policy. Indeed, Cliff Davies viewed Wolsey's ministry as one characterised by long periods of stability, while making a clear effort to curb the power of the nobility.[16] Peter Gwyn refined this observation, arguing that Wolsey in fact had a positive working relationship with the nobility, citing his position with the Grey family at the turn of the sixteenth century, and his assistance in the "family affairs" of the Howards—namely the behaviour of John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, married to Anne, daughter of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Gwyn also notes that the nobility were happy to serve in Wolsey's household, although this is perhaps unsurprising.[17]

Domestically, as Lord Chancellor, Wolsey had three priorities. First was law and order, especially the development of the role and function of the Star Chamber. Second, aware of the importance of reforming taxation in preparation for any future continental warfare, Wolsey shifted the existing system for assessment from a fixed to a sliding scale.[18] Finally, and perhaps the most comprehensive and challenging task, was his move to centralise crown administration and to develop in turn a crown-controlled magistracy. In terms of his local dealings, Wolsey focused most of his attention on the north of England, appointing Justices of the Peace (JPs) "who were prepared to implement crown policy" there.[19] Indeed, Wolsey took a keen interest in the personnel and function of the national elite, demanding their regular presence at court;

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12 C. S. L. Davies, "Provisions for Armies, 1509-50; a Study in the Effectiveness of Early Tudor Government", *Economic History Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1964), 234-248.
13 Guy, *Tudor England*, 80-115.
14 British Library (BL), Caligula D X fol. 103 (*LP*, IV, 3216); G. J. Richardson, "The French Connection: Francis I and England's Break with Rome", in *The Contending Kingdoms: France and England, 1420-1700*, ed. G. J. Richardson (Aldershot, 2008), 95-115 (96).
15 S. J. Gunn, "Wolsey's Foreign Policy and the Domestic Crisis of 1527-8", in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, eds. S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (Cambridge, 1991), 149-177 (149-150).
16 C. S. L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism, 1450-1558* (London, 1995), 174-179.
17 P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990), 159-211.
18 Guy, *Tudor England*, 89-99.
19 Guy, "Thomas Wolsey", 55.

he "packed his own household, too, with great men", on a scale to equal that of the king's own household.[20]

George Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman-usher and biographer, reported that Wolsey felt strongly about the loyalty one could receive from household members, commenting that "thes be they that will not oonly serue and love you but they wyll also lyve and die with you, and be treu and faythfull seruauntes to you".[21] These words were supposedly uttered by Wolsey immediately before his arrest in 1529, referring to Henry Percy, 6th Earl of Northumberland, and his treatment of his household, a man who Wolsey had previously "groomed for high office in the north" while in his service. Indeed, Wolsey's household was recognised as a "training ground" for England's elite and had the capacity to foster an enduring affinity,[22] something Shakespeare has Wolsey reminding Stephen Gardiner of in 1529. We learn too that Wolsey's household created enduring affinities among those serving the cardinal. Indeed, Thomas Cromwell used the contacts he made working for Wolsey during his time as chief minister to Henry VIII in the 1530s, including Sir Thomas Denys, chamberlain in Wolsey's household, and Sir Thomas Arundell, both of whom were prominent west country knights.[23]

Yet, things began to unravel for Wolsey in the late 1520s, around the time Henry VIII began to intervene in policy, exemplified by the failure of the Amicable Grant of 1525. The French defeat at the battle of Pavia in 1525, and Francis I's subsequent incarceration by Charles V, reignited Henry's desire to invade France at an opportune moment, which in turn forced Wolsey to find a way to raise additional funds for England's war chest. The collection of the Amicable Grant was intended to be complete within five to six weeks (by 4 to 6 June 1525), although George Bernard rightly notes that such a feat would be "quite impossible", especially given that the Amicable Grant made no exemptions for the poorest citizens, which led to rioting in Lavenham in Suffolk and, in turn, halted "normal economic activity". Bernard, however, has argued that based on the instructions for the collection of the grant, the plan was devised not by Wolsey working in isolation as has been previously suggested, but rather by Henry, his council, and Wolsey working together.[24]

The County of Somerset

I turn now to the case study of Somerset to briefly explore the socio-political situation prior to Henry VIII's reign, and then to investigate Wolsey's subsequent interaction with it. Between 1485 and 1508, Somerset's county offices were dominated by its resident noble, Giles, Lord Daubeney (1451-1508). Daubeney had been richly rewarded by Henry VII after the battle of Bosworth in 1485, receiving highly sought after and profitable land across the south-west of

[20] Guy, *Tudor England*, 85.
[21] G. Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. R. Sylvester (London, 1959), 155 (cited in R. Britnell, "Service, Loyalty and Betrayal in Cavendish's *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*", *Moreana*, vol. 42, no. 161 (March 2005), 3-30 (28-29)).
[22] Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 175, 233.
[23] M. L. Robertson, "'The Art of the Possible': Thomas Cromwell's Management of West Country Government", *Historical Journal*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1989), 793-816 (801-802).
[24] G. W. Bernard, "The Instructions for the Levying of the Amicable Grant, March 1525", *Historical Research*, vol. 67, no. 163 (June 1994), 190-202 (190-192).

England, as well as a series of influential crown offices. Consequently, by the time of his death in 1508, as Lord Chamberlain, Daubeney was one of the most powerful men in England. His receipt of land and offices in Somerset was both a reward and a means of allowing him to build up his landholdings and influence in the south-west, part of a bigger strategy on Henry VII's part to limit the breadth of the nobility.[25] After Daubeney's death in 1508, Somerset developed a more horizontal socio-political structure, thereby escaping the grips of a single, dominant figure.[26] This structural change was possible chiefly because, from the time of Henry VIII's accession in 1509, Westminster took a "bilateral" approach to local government, which meant harnessing support from local elites, while bolstering royal influence by the introduction of members of the king's "affinity" to local commissions, thereby creating a "political connection in the localities directly attached to the personal authority of the king".[27] Thus, the royal affinity ultimately supplanted the noble affinity by transferring the previous focus on a noble to the king himself.[28]

Wolsey's supposed distrust of the nobility created an opportunity for the gentry to increase their local authority without the presence of an overbearing local noble. In 1519, Wolsey advised Henry VIII to forge ties with "his most trusty servants in every shire" in order to develop a loyal and effective local taskforce,[29] a tried and tested political strategy with roots found long before Henry or his father.[30] Indeed, Richard II's court-county policy in particular has been highlighted, especially his cultivation of a gentry affinity, used to circumvent powerful regional nobility. These knights were then invited to court by Richard, and rewarded with robes and liveries to work for the crown, albeit in an unsalaried capacity.[31] Similarly, in 1400, Henry IV's council advised him that those elite members in each county "should be retained" to perform duties on behalf of the crown. Edward IV took the opposite approach, selecting men of his own household to link the court to the country through a "system of interlocking territorial lordship centred on the court".[32] Henry VIII's affinity, meanwhile, included around 200 knights in the 1520s.[33] In other words, previous monarchs had invited members of the gentry to court, and awarded them honorific positions as a form of patronage with the intention of ensuring their loyalty.

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[25] D. Luckett, "Crown Patronage and Political Morality in Early Tudor England: The Case of Giles, Lord Daubeney", *English Historical Review*, vol. 110, no. 437 (June 1995), 578-598.
[26] P. Fleming, "Politics", in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005), 150-162 (156-157).
[27] H. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster: Public Authority and Private Power, 1399-1461* (Oxford, 2000), 7-8.
[28] S. Hindle, "County Government in England", in *A Companion to Tudor Britain*, eds. R. Tittler and N. L. Jones (London, 1994), 98-115 (101).
[29] Guy, "Thomas Wolsey", 54.
[30] C. Carpenter, "Henry VII and the English Polity", in *The Reign of Henry VII: Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. B. Thompson (Stamford, 1995), 11-30 (29); J. Guy, "The Privy Council: Revolution or Evolution?", in *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration*, eds. C. Coleman and D. Starkey (Oxford, 1986), 59-85 (84-85).
[31] J. Fortescue, *On the Laws and Governance of England*, ed. S. Lockwood (Cambridge, 1997), 129.
[32] C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England, 1360-1413* (New Haven, 1986), 219.
[33] A. Wall, *Power and Protest in England, 1525-1640* (London, 2000), 48-49.

Once established, these mutually beneficial relationships had to be sustained, meaning public—and reciprocal—expressions of loyalty were important. The most direct forms of contact were through ceremonial gift-exchange at court on New Year's Day, and during a royal progress. Both of these occasions were "important sites for the maintenance of ongoing bonds that could serve the political interests of the Tudor crown".[34] New Year gifts in particular reflected status at court.[35] For example, in January 1526, Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, presented Henry VIII with an elaborate piece of headwear, "a bonnet trimmed with four pairs of buttons, a gold brooch and two images".[36] A gift as elaborate as this from Courtenay is hardly surprising, given that he was actively involved in campaigning for the king's divorce, and was subsequently part of the Privy Council meeting where Wolsey was charged with praemunire, with Courtenay's signature appearing on the warrants for his prosecution.[37] In other words, creating and sustaining political relationships of this type meant partaking in the performance of courtly spectacles and thereby acquiescing—or perhaps consenting—to the workings of personal government.

Returning to Somerset, what emerges from the evidence is that Wolsey dealt with the potential socio-political "void" created by Giles Daubeney's death not by searching for a straight replacement, but by relying on corporate responsibility, issuing commissions and directives instead to a large body of the county elite.[38] An oft-quoted example of Wolsey's reluctance to rely on an individual (and perhaps to emphasise his ruthlessness) is the case of a Somerset knight, Sir Amias Paulet. Paulet was viewed by his peers as the natural successor to Giles Daubeney's political inheritance, and ought to have been increasingly involved with the magistracy and with delivering county administration in the wake of Daubeney's death. But, it has been suggested that Paulet's political ambitions were deliberately overlooked from the outset of Wolsey's administration in the early years of Henry VIII's reign, following an incident at Limington, Somerset, involving Paulet and Wolsey while the latter was working as tutor to the sons of Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset, from 10 October 1500.[39] This event allegedly triggered a period of disgrace for Paulet between 1515 and 1523.[40] He was rumoured to have "set" the roguish (and supposedly drunk) young Wolsey "by the feet" (i.e. placed in the stocks) at a local fair, assumed to be Lopen Fair, in Limington, while Paulet was the sheriff there.41 The incident captured the imagination of contemporary chroniclers. An early account is recorded in *The Interlude of Youth*, a morality play from the mid-1550s. In it, the main

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[34] F. Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), 111.

[35] *The Lisle Letters: an Abridgement*, ed. M. St Clare Byrne (Harmondsworth, 1985), 355.

[36] The National Archives (TNA), SP1/19, fol. 27 (*LP*, IV, 1906).

[37] G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage of England*, 8 vols (London, 1892), IV, 331.

[38] D. J. Ashton, "The Tudor State and County Politics: the Greater Gentry of Somerset, *c.*1509-1558" (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1998), 3-4, 13-16.

[39] E. H. Bates-Harbin, "Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Amyas Pawlet", *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, vol. 10 (1907), 9-11.

[40] Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, 5-6.

[41] J. Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, 3 vols (Bath, 1791), III, 220. For a narrative of this event, see T. W. Cameron, "The Early Life of Thomas Wolsey", *English Historical Review*, vol. 3, no. 11 (July 1888), 458-477 (464-466). Some accounts suggest Paulet was acting as JP (J. Galt, *Life of Cardinal Wolsey* (London, 1846), 6-7).

protagonist, Riot (Paulet), prepares to place his nemesis, Charity (Wolsey), in the stocks by his feet.[42]

Wolsey, "Wrong'd by a Knight", made the "cleargy-scorning Knight repent", punishing him by grounding him in London, although Paulet allegedly later made amends for his actions by financing building works at Middle Temple, namely embellishing the gate there with Wolsey's personal coat of arms.43 If true, this story illustrates vividly the personal nature of Tudor government. In all likelihood, however, the story is either a local allegory, inaccurately recorded from confused notes by George Cavendish, and perpetuated by later writers, or perhaps simply an attempt to adjust "reality to fit political convenience".[44] Peter Gwyn has noted that this story was probably untrue as it is unlikely that Wolsey ever took up residence at Limington. As a "clerical careerist", Wolsey would have been loath to become too comfortable in his first post, before resigning to become chaplain to Henry Deane, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1502.[45] In his own account, Cavendish himself also subsequently comments on the meaning of this story. For Cavendish, the tale is a reminder that power and fortune could be ephemeral: authority "may slide and vanish, as princes' pleasures do alter and change", perhaps making the story less a comment on Paulet's conduct and subsequent punishment, and more a reflection on Wolsey's later demise at the hands of Henry VIII.[46]

Nadine Lewycky has recently added significantly to our understanding of the nature of early Tudor politics by exploring Wolsey's household, and his creation of a "service-based affinity" throughout England. Lewycky achieved this through a prosopographical analysis of the members of Wolsey's household through the available subsidy lists between 1523 and 1527.[47] Taking the example of Somerset, there are five native Somersetians within Wolsey's household: Thomas Adams of Wells, John Dyer of Glastonbury, Sir Andrew Luttrell of Dunster, Robert Moore, and Edward Stanynges. These men span a wide range of the socio-economic spectra. From the 1523 subsidy, we find that Moore was assessed at 4d, Dyer at 12d with 40s in wages, Adams was assessed at 2s (with goods valued at £4), and Stanynges was assessed at 50s. But the most influential of this group was Sir Andrew Luttrell, both for his wealth and his socio-political power, with lands valued at £266 13s 4d.[48]

Such an act was part of a dual approach to political interaction. On one side, wealthy and, more importantly, politically influential individuals were summoned to court, or indeed to the royal household; on the other, the approach used the existing socio-political structures in the county and their "collective social power" to implement crown policy within the administrative unit of the county.[49] Indeed, it was through individuals such as these that Wolsey's household was able to link so powerfully with the royal household through their regular communication. Wolsey favoured legally trained personnel as his advisors, owing both

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42 I. Lancashire, *Two Tudor Interludes: The Interlude of Youth; Hick Scorner* (Manchester, 1980), 58, 122-123, lines 297-305.

43 C. E. A. Bedwell, *A Brief History of the Middle Temple* (London, 1909), 101-102.

44 T. Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State, 1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2000), 175.

45 Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 2-3.

46 Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, 5-6.

47 N. Lewycky, "Serving God and King: Cardinal Thomas Wolsey's Patronage Networks and Early Tudor Government, 1514-1529, with Special Reference to the Archdiocese of York" (York Ph.D. thesis, 2008), 46.

48 Lewycky, "Serving God and King", 255-357.

49 D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), 69.

to their legal training, and the connections they would have forged through their time at the Inns of Court and with the established gentry communities within their native counties for the same reasons.[50] For example, Sir Thomas Denys of Devon, chamberlain of Wolsey's household, wrote to the cardinal on 21 July 1528, asking for the position of under-treasurer of the Exchequer. Although he was unsuccessful in his bid, Denys claimed to Wolsey that he would "do better service than others in that office" owing to his legal background, having been Marshal of Inner Temple in 1511, 1513, and 1514; in other words, he possessed the requisite experience and training that the previous incumbents had lacked.[51]

While Wolsey abided by an essentially "traditional framework" for local commissions—in that he included politically and socially influential individuals such as lawyers and knights—he did everything possible to bolster these commissions with his patron-client representatives, thereby extending royal influence throughout England by swelling the ranks of royal representatives within local commissions.[52] In Somerset, we find a change in the composition of the commissions of the peace during the 1520s with a broadening of social representation. Sir Andrew Luttrell of Dunster, a member of Wolsey's household, began to appear regularly on Somerset's commissions during the 1520s, including the subsidy commission of 30 August 1523.[53] Luttrell also featured as a nominee for the shrievalty in Somerset in 1522. While he was nominated, presumably for his family's long established wealth and political influence, it seems that Luttrell was ultimately not especially favoured by the king, going unselected as sheriff.[54] Prior to Luttrell's role on these commissions, Robert Moore, also of Wolsey's household, appeared on the commission of the peace for Somerset (in February and October 1514, and again in November 1515) and was included in an enquiry into a murder at Poole, Dorset, on 20 November 1515. Edward Stanynges was additionally included on the commission for musters for Somerset on 30 March 1514, as well as the later subsidy commission of 1523.[55]

In the first decade of Henry VIII's reign, Somerset's JPs were exclusively knights, nobles, and clergy. Although we do not have records of the county's peace commissions between 29 November 1515 and 11 February 1521, what we can see from the available evidence is that the number of knights on peace commissions decreased slightly, with a gradual increase in number, perhaps surprisingly, of nobles, and also a greater representation of untitled gentry (esquires and gentlemen). The total number of JPs on each commission between 1509 and 1529 ranges from twenty-eight to thirty-three, although there is no discernible pattern to explain either increase or decrease. Rather, the number of JPs per commission is seemingly arbitrary. Nonetheless, in Somerset, Wolsey appears to have made an

[50] Lewycky, "Serving God and King", 27, 52-53.
[51] BL, Titus B IV, fol. 107 (*LP*, IV, 4544); *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558*, ed. S. T. Bindoff, 3 vols (London, 1982), II, 34-36.
[52] Lewycky, "Serving God and King", 167-198.
[53] BL, Cotton MS Caligula D X, fol. 103 (*LP*, IV, 3216); TNA, E36/221, fol. 25 (*LP*, III, 3282), cited in Lewycky, "Serving God and King", 74.
[54] TNA, C82/538 (*LP,* III, 3583).
[55] Lewycky, "Serving God and King", 290-305; TNA, E101/56/14 (*LP*, I, 2759); C66/625 (*LP*, II, 1184), 1220; C66/656, m. 18d (*LP*, V, 119 [26]); *LP*, XIII, 384 [19], 646 [46].

effort to broaden representation of local society rather than relying purely on titled members of society.[56]

Another finding is that during Wolsey's administration external (or "outsider") influences began to appear on Somerset's commissions.[57] This included Henry Courtenay, Earl of Devon (later Marquess of Exeter), the noble whose elaborate gift-exchange with the king was discussed earlier, from 1522; Thomas Boleyn and Sir Richard Wingfield from 1524; Sir William Paulet (later Marquess of Winchester) from 1526; and, from 1529, John Tuchet, Lord Audley, and Henry Pole, Lord Montague. Finally, Wolsey's own name also began to appear on the commissions from 1521.[58] But just how involved were these outsiders in Somerset's commissions? With the increasing presence of non-native—and probably nominal—officials on the Somerset commissions (eight in total), and the roughly stable number included on each commission (around thirty), it is perhaps logical that there was in fact a reduced magistracy in the county rather than a dramatic increase under Wolsey.[59] Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the most prominent Somerset individuals were outsiders, and these "newcomers" were successfully integrated into county society.[60] Perhaps the best example of this was Sir William Compton, who was appointed JP for Somerset in 1513 and as steward of the possessions of Henry VII's mother, Margaret Beaufort, in Somerset and Dorset the previous year. Such appointments allowed these "outsiders" to gain influence within a county through the appointment of deputies, acting as a form of "local patronage".[61]

Wolsey was evidently aware of the potential uses of a local agent in the form of a JP, and sought to bring them firmly under his influence, recognising that it was prudent for juries to be local to an offence.[62] Wolsey had become more concerned with the practice and control of local government from 1516, following the implementation of his domestic law enforcement policy, including making an example of especially negligent officials.[63] Wolsey made a conscious effort to impart his understanding of the importance of such a local office by inviting JPs to the Star Chamber to be sworn in, and to complete a "questionnaire" about the role, making them "subservient to royal mandate".[64]

We must also consider another layer of patronage, through local agents who were non-resident in Wolsey's household, but were called upon by the cardinal when required to assist with local commissions. One such example is found in Somerset when John Sydenham and John Trevelyan were requested during 1521 and 1522 to arbitrate a dispute between Joan Lange and William Marchant, regarding an alleged ousting from Alcombe and Stanton Down, Dunster.[65] Sir Amias Paulet, the supposed victim of Wolsey's ruthlessness, was also

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[56] Guy, *Tudor England*, 63-64.
[57] Guy, "Thomas Wolsey", 56.
[58] Ashton, "The Tudor State", 20-21.
[59] Guy, "Wolsey and the Tudor Polity", in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, eds. S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (Cambridge, 1991), 54-75 (69).
[60] Ashton, "The Tudor State", 1-2.
[61] TNA, C53/200 (*LP*, I, 1221 [23]); C66/623 (*LP*, II, 57); G. W. Bernard, "The Rise of Sir William Compton, Early Tudor Courtier", *English Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 381 (October 1981), 754-777 (762-764).
[62] S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (Basingstoke, 1995), 70-71, 100-102.
[63] Guy, "Wolsey and the Tudor Polity", 65-73 (70, 72).
[64] Guy, *Tudor England*, 172.
[65] TNA, C1/535/62, cited in Ashton, "The Tudor State", 187.

subsequently included in this form of Wolsey's patronage and influence, being included as one of the subsidy collectors for Somerset in 1523.[66] Paulet evidently operated as one of Wolsey's regional contacts, working outside any official inclusion within his household, yet performing provincial administrative tasks for Wolsey when required.[67]

Wolsey's efforts to encourage broader social representation in local politics were perhaps a result of his complicated relationship with the nobility. Indeed, accounts of Wolsey's low birth and his rapid rise to power were well documented by his contemporaries, perhaps most famously by John Skelton (who also lambasted Wolsey for his perceived avarice and pride). Wolsey's seemingly unassailable position certainly ruffled some feathers, something Gwyn has suggested could have been because, "by becoming a royal favourite, Wolsey destroyed the subtle balance between king and political nation".[68] In other words, Wolsey's dominance of policy formation and his ubiquity at court set the proverbial cat among the pigeons. Yet, Wolsey's political agenda was, initially at least, committed to ecclesiastical and legal reform rather than instigating "a vendetta against the aristocracy".[69]

Wolsey's reform of the composition of local commissions may have been simply an attempt to include a broader spectrum of society, rather than a deliberate effort to eradicate noble dominance in the localities. This reform could perhaps have been motivated by a desire to introduce a sense of meritocracy in local government, by positioning legally trained members of society on the county bench, as part of Westminster's bilateral approach to local government. Certainly, in the north of England, Gwyn is doubtful that there was a concerted effort by Wolsey to limit the power of the nobility as it would have weakened the crown's already fragile hold in those parts. The point here is that, in Somerset, Wolsey did not replace Giles, Lord Daubeney, with an individual of any social status as a single point of contact in the county, a fact perhaps best demonstrated by his decision not to use Sir Amias Paulet in place of Daubeney. It is perhaps the case that Wolsey chose to mete out his patronage among a much broader group, thereby potentially securing greater loyalty, and preventing territorial and political dominance by a small group of individuals, even if that meant frustrating local and non-local nobles alike and, for Wolsey, ultimately sowing the seeds of his own demise by turning members of a powerful group against him.

Conclusion

It is hardly surprising that Henry VIII would entrust Cardinal Wolsey with the position of Lord Chancellor for some fourteen years, given his obvious capabilities as an advisor, politician, and administrator. On the international stage, knowing England's economic and military shortcomings, Wolsey had sought to negotiate peace treaties and alliances with England's European rivals, thereby presenting Henry VIII as the architect of "Universal Peace" throughout Christendom, rather than as a celebrated military leader.[70] Yet, despite his

[66] TNA, E36/221; C66/642 (*LP*, III, 3282), C66/643 (*LP*, III, 3504), SP1/29, fols 148^{r}-151^{v} (*LP*, III, 3687); C66/645, mm. 1d-8d, 22 (*LP*, IV, 547).

[67] Guy, "Wolsey and the Tudor Polity", 68.

[68] Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 175.

[69] G. Walker, "John Skelton, Cardinal Wolsey and the English Nobility", in *The Tudor Nobility*, ed. G. W. Bernard (Manchester, 1992), 111-133 (120).

[70] P. S. Crowson, *Tudor Foreign Policy* (London, 1973), 74-91.

dedication to his king, his cultivation of gentry affinities, and his development of the various functions of both the legal system and county offices, Cardinal Wolsey was ultimately undone by events and political machinations at court and, perhaps more importantly, in Rome. After protracted legal and theological proceedings, Wolsey failed to secure the king's divorce, with Henry eventually running out of patience with him, albeit under pressure from court factionalism. Outmanoeuvred, in October 1529, having been accused of—and subsequently charged with—praemunire, Wolsey's power, office, and reputation were systemically dismantled by his enemies at court, although he did retain his post as Archbishop of York.[71]

Having been stripped of almost all his offices and land, Wolsey began to make overtures to some of the contacts he thought could help him in his hour of need. On 10 August 1530, Wolsey wrote to Somerset man (and Chief Justice of King's Bench) Sir John Fitzjames, pleading with him to intervene with the king and his council on his behalf, "for the old amity that hath betwixt us", regarding "the inquisition lately taken upon the lands belonging to mine archbishopric of York". About two weeks later, sometime between 20 and 22 August, Wolsey again wrote to Fitzjames, this time asking him to investigate the fate of his Oxford college, Cardinal College (Christ Church today), and to petition the king of his innocence.[72] Two months later, on 17 October, Wolsey instructed Sir Thomas Arundell, formerly a member of his household, to deliver a letter personally to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, asking for his help in protecting his interests at Cardinal College; Arundell's reply to Wolsey has Norfolk claiming that "in all your reasonable causes he will be as good friend to your Grace as I can desire", no matter how disingenuous a response this may have been.[73] However, Wolsey's efforts were in vain, for he died just a month later, on 29 November, with preparations for his funeral being initiated immediately.[74]

By using Somerset as a case study, we have seen examples of how Cardinal Wolsey used patronage to create domestic stability as far as possible, in terms of the legal system, and through his relationship with the county elite; the level of noble and gentry co-operation was entirely dependent on their relationship with Westminster—that is with king or minister—but what seems clear is that the greater gentry very much acted as the crown's enforcers within the county, largely in the hope of positioning themselves to receive royal and ministerial patronage in the form of land and office. It seems that Wolsey was not simply a "clerical careerist", but a political one too. He recognised the importance of offering patronage in return for continued service and loyalty; yet, it is also clear that his efforts could not make him impervious to the vicissitudes of the court. After Wolsey's death, there was a "progressive laicisation" of senior political positions in England; indeed, by 1540, the offices of chancellor, Lord Privy Seal, Secretary of State, Master of the Rolls, and the clerk of the council had shifted from clerical to secular incumbents.[75] Ultimately, Thomas Wolsey was the last of the great Renaissance cardinal-politicians in England. He had certainly lived up to the expectations of personal living standards set out by Cortesi in his *De Cardinalatu*, not least through his architectural patronage, wealth, and ambition. Shakespeare's prophetic words, "Much joy and favour to you; you are

[71] Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 228-240.
[72] TNA, SP1/57, fols 287^{r}-288^{v} (*LP*, IV, 6555), fols 298^{r}-299^{v} (*LP*, IV, 6575).
[73] TNA, SP1/58, fols 122^{r} -123^{v} (*LP*, IV, 6688).
[74] BL, Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 80 (*LP*, IV, 6748).
[75] Michon, "Pomp and Circumstances", 81.

the King's now", apply equally well to Wolsey, for he himself enjoyed the trappings of wealth and power afforded to him by the king much as he had cautioned his protégé Stephen Gardiner—while it lasted, at least.

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