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Citation: Murphy, Neil (2014) Tournai under Tudor Rule: Cooperation or Opposition? Mémoires de la Société Royale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Tournai, XIV. pp. 35-70.

Published by: Société Royale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Tournai

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‘Tournai under Tudor Rule: Cooperation or Opposition?’

On Friday 23 September 1513, Tournai surrendered to Henry VIII after a siege lasting just nine days. Henry claimed to be the rightful king of France, and in advance of the siege he instructed his herald, Thomas Benolt, to inform Tournai’s rulers that the population would be slaughtered and their property forfeit, should it have to be taken by force of arms.¹ With the city’s fall, the fate of the townspeople was in Henry’s hands. In a display that evoked Edward III’s actions at Calais in 1347 and Harfleur’s capitulation to Henry V in 1415, the English administration prepared a ceremonial submission which was designed to impress Henry VIII’s lordship on his new subjects.² The Tudor monarch received the municipal delegation that came to surrender the city in a magnificent tent made of golden cloth, where he sat surrounded by his personal guard and one hundred knights. The sides of the tent were left open, so that the anxious townspeople, who lined the city walls waiting to hear of their fate, could see their leaders, who wore penitential clothing, being made to wait for a full hour before they were permitted to prostrate themselves in front of the conquering monarch and beg for his mercy. Once this act of ritual submission was complete, Henry announced that he would spare the city from destruction. He sent a herald to the Sainte-Fontaine gate to instruct the English soldiers entering Tournai not to pillage any goods or attack the townspeople. In order to underline the gravity of this order, the commander of the occupying forces, Charles Brandon, erected a gibbet on

¹ C. G. CRUICKSHANK, *The English Occupation of Tournai 1513-1519*, Oxford, 1971, p. 1-2.

² Voir: N. MURPHY, *Ceremony and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century France: Lancastrian Ceremonial Entries into French Towns, 1415-1431*, dans *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 2013, 39, pp. 108-10.

the main square, which was to be used to hang anyone who infringed this command. Brandon then had public pronouncements made through the city streets stating that the native population had nothing to fear from its new lord.³

Previous studies of the Tudor occupation of Tournai have tended to stress the imposition of English rule on the city.⁴ The most prolific of these historians, C. G. Cruickshank, saw Tournai's occupation as 'the beginning of a new English empire on the continent', while T. E. Mayer described Henry's rule over the city as a 'colonial situation'.⁵ C. S. L. Davies has cautioned against such claims, stating that 'the significance of Tournai lay not in any assimilation of the conquered territory into the English crown; but rather in its very separateness, its status as part of Henry's dominion as "king of France"'.⁶ This article supports Davies' revisionist view of the occupation, and demonstrates that Tournai, unlike Calais, was not intended to be

³ R. MACQUEREAU, *Chronique de la maison de Bourgogne de 1500 à 1527*, J. A. C. Buchon (ed.), Paris, 1838, p. 47-8.

⁴ See, especially: C. G. CRUICKSHANK, *Henry VIII and the Invasion of France*, Gloucester, 1990; idem, *English Occupation*; idem, *Parliamentary Representation of Tournai*, dans *English Historical Review*, 1968, 83, p. 775-76; A. D. K. HAWKYARD, *The enfranchisement of constituencies, 1504-58*, dans *Parliamentary History*, 1991, 10, p. 1-26.

⁵ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 267; T. F. MAYER, *Tournai and Tyranny: Imperial Kingship and Critical Humanism*, dans *Historical Journal*, 1991, 34, p. 259

⁶ C. S. L. DAVIES, *Tournai and the English Crown, 1513-19*, dans *English Historical Review*, 1998, 4, p. 1-26. See also: C. S. L. DAVIES, *Tournai M.P.s at Westminster*, dans *Parliamentary History*, 2001, 20, p. 233-35.

developed along colonial lines.⁷ It will examine the impact of Tudor rule on Tournai and consider the nature of the relationship that developed between the English monarch and the native population. Although Mayer has asserted that Henry VIII developed a form of imperial kingship at Tournai and ‘asserted all the prerogatives of a *rex imperator*...against the Tournaisiens’, this article will demonstrate, in contrast, that Henry’s rule at Tournai was marked by the development of a favourable relationship between the king and the municipal elite.⁸ The Tudor monarch accorded the city’s rulers a range of economic grants and permitted them a highly privileged degree of access to the organs of central government. It is possible to track in detail the relations that developed between Tournai and the Tudor administration due to the large volume of surviving sources, which provide a wealth of detail on the city’s occupation. While Tournai’s archives were largely destroyed by a German air raid in 1940, the city’s archivists published a significant amount of the city’s records in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ The most important of these documents are the collection of municipal sources edited by Adolphe Hocquet, which permit us to

⁷ For Calais see: D. GRUMMITT, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436-1558*, Woodbridge, 2008; S. ROSE, *Calais: An English Town in France 1347-1558*, Woodbridge, 2008.

⁸ MAYER, *Tournai and Tyranny*, p. 257. See also T. F. MAYER, *On the road to 1534: the occupation of Tournai and Henry VIII’s theory of sovereignty*, dans *Tudor Political Culture*, D. HOAK (coord.), Cambridge, 1995, p. 11-30. See also: N. MURPHY, *Henry VIII’s French crown: his royal entry into Tournai revisited*, dans *Historical Research*, 2012, 85, p. 617-31.

⁹ L. VERREIST, *La perte des archives du Hainault et de Tournai*, dans *Revue belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, 1942, 21, p. 186-93; P. ROLLAND, *L’état actuel des grands problèmes tournaisiens*, dans *Revue belge d’archéologie et de l’histoire de l’art*, 1949, 18, p. 125-43.

track in detail the ruling elite's response to Tudor rule.¹⁰ In addition to the civic sources, the Henry's administration left numerous records relating to its rule at Tournai, which permits us to examine both sides of the relationship.¹¹ The study will look broadly at the impact of Tudor rule on the different strata of Tournai's society, beginning with the municipal elite.

The Municipal Elite

Following its annexation by Philip Augustus in 1187, Tournai became an important royal city on the northeastern frontier of the kingdom of France. The population developed an intense loyalty to the French monarchy during the Middle Ages and adopted the royal *fleur-de-lis* as the city's emblem in 1429.¹² Tournai displayed an especially strong devotion to the French monarchy during the tumultuous years of the fifteenth century, when they resisted repeated attempts at domination by the Valois dukes of Burgundy and their Habsburg successors.¹³ As well as contending with the expansionist policies of neighbouring powers, the citizens also successfully defied Edward III, who laid siege to the city after claiming the French crown at Ghent in

¹⁰ A. HOCQUET, *Tournai et l'occupation anglaise: contribution à l'étude du XVIe siècle*, Tournai, 1901.

¹¹ J. S. BREWER et al (éd), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, London, 1864-1932. [LP]

¹² HOCQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 13; G. SMALL, *Centre and Periphery in Late Medieval France: Tournai 1384-1477*, dans *War, Government and Power in Late Medieval France*, C. ALLMAND (coord.), Liverpool, 2000, p. 161-2, 173; A. de LA GRANGE, *Les varies armes de la ville de Tournai*, dans *Annales de la société royale d'histoire et d'archéologie de Tournai*, 1898, 3, p. 107-34; M. HOUTARD, *Le patriotisme dans l'histoire de Tournai*, dans *Revue tournaisienne*, 1905, 1, p. 80-115.

¹³ SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 145-74.

1340.¹⁴ Once news reached the municipal council on 12 July 1513 that another English monarch had landed in France to press his claim to the throne, Tournai's ruling elite declared that they would 'garder et entretenir la vraye fidélité foy et loyauté' to Louis XII and prepared to resist Henry VIII's army.¹⁵ While siege technology had developed considerably since the era of Edward III, Tournai's fortifications had not. The city walls were in a perilous state of decay by the early sixteenth century, and many of the cannons mounted on them were unsafe to use.¹⁶ The fall of Thérouanne in August 1513 provided a sharp illustration to the Tournasiens of the devastating capabilities of the army that was advancing upon the city. Despite having some of the most modern fortifications in the region, the episcopal town of Thérouanne, located in Artois, surrendered on 22 August, following which the entire city was laid to waste, with the exception of the cathedral and the houses of the clergy.¹⁷ The destruction of Thérouanne highlighted the gravity of

¹⁴ J. SUMPTION, *The Hundred Years' War. Volume 1: Trial by Battle*, London, 1990, p. 349-58; P. ROLLAND, *Histoire de Tournai*, Tournai, 1956, p. 109-15.

¹⁵ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 65.

¹⁶ CRUICKSHANK, *Invasion of France*, p. 126. For the fortifications of Tournai see: P. M. VECHE, *La fortification urbaine à Tournai au Moyen Age*, dans *Publications extraordinaires de la société royale d'histoire et d'archéologie de Tournai*, 1985, 2, p. 41-67; P. M. VECHE, *La fortification urbaine à Tournai des origines à 1513*, mémoire de licence en histoire présenté à U.C.L., Louvain-la-Neuve, 1984; A. SALMAGNE, *Château ou citadelle? Les fortifications de Tournai et la fin de l'architecture militaire médiévale*, dans *Mémoires de la société royale d'histoire et d'archéologie de Tournai*, 1995, 8, p. 5-31; E SOIL DE MORAIMÉ, *Armes et armeriers tournaisiens: contribution à l'histoire des métiers d'art et à l'histoire militaire de Tournai, du XIIIe au XVIIIe siècle*, Antwerp, 1913.

¹⁷ Y.-L. BOURILLY et F. VINDRY (éd), *Mémoires de Martin et Guillaume du Bellay*, Paris, 1908-19, tome 1, p. 34-7; DAVIES, *Tournai*, p. 4; D. POTTER, *War*

Tournai's position, as they city's out-dated medieval defences could not hope to withstand a siege by modern artillery.

Facing the prospect of ruin, Tournai's leaders wanted to offer Henry and Maximilian 'quelcque somme annuelle ou bon moyen pour demourer en neutralité'.¹⁸ This was a tried and tested method which the *Consaux* had successfully used during the fifteenth century to secure the city's neutrality from the dukes of Burgundy.¹⁹ On 27 August 1513, a municipal delegation went to Margaret of Savoy, regent of the Low Countries, begging her to persuade Henry and Maximilian to accept their proposal.²⁰ Margaret was able to secure guarantees of neutrality from the emperor. On 3 September, Maximilian and the Archduke Charles confirmed the provisions of the 1478 treaty and instructed imperial soldiers not to mistreat any Tournaisiens who were trading in the Low Countries.²¹ However, Margaret was unable to obtain a guarantee of neutrality from Henry, who was determined to have the city's surrender.²² While Tournai's distinctive political and geographic situation led the *Consaux* to grow accustomed to negotiating with foreign powers during the fifteenth

and Government in the French Provinces: Picardy 1470-1560, Cambridge, 1993, p. 92.

¹⁸ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 74-5.

¹⁹ SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 151; A. HOCQUET, *Tournai et le Tournaisis au XVIe siècle au point de vue politique et social*, Brussels, 1906, p. 20.

²⁰ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 10.

²¹ C. LAURENT (éd.), *Recueil des ordonnances des pays-bas, règne de Charles-Quint*, Brussels, 1893-1922, t. 1, p. 272-3; HOCQUET, *op. cit.*, p. 65-67, 70-71; M. LE GLAY (éd.), *Correspondance de l'empereur Maximilien Ier et de Marguerite d'Autriche, sa fille, gouvernante des Pays-Bas, de 1507 à 1519*, Paris, 1839, t. 2, p. 199.

²² MACQUEREAU, *op. cit.*, p. 40; CRUICKSHANK, *Invasion of France*, p. 121-22.

century, they also acted to gain Louis XII's support for their attempts to secure the city's neutrality in 1513, and two municipal representatives, Claude Dimenche and Jehan d'Estables, were sent to the French monarch, who was then attempting to muster an army at Amiens. Although the two deputies outlined the poor state of Tournai's fortifications and the lack of munitions in the city, Louis would not permit them to negotiate for their neutrality and 'leur ordonne de mettre ordre aux fortifications et aux provisions'.²³

While the civic delegation was with the king at Amiens, Ferry Carondelet, archdeacon of Besançon and Maximilian's ambassador, appeared before the city walls on 10 September to ask the municipal leaders if Tournai 'estoit ville imperial ou au roy de France'.²⁴ The ruling elite and wealthy citizens wanted to reach a peaceful settlement with the emperor and declare themselves an imperial town – a move intended to force Henry to leave Tournai alone in favour of his ally.²⁵ However, Tournai had an unusually democratic charter, which stated that, before being accepted, all the major decisions taken by the *Consaux* had to obtain the consent of at least two thirds of a general assembly of citizens. Following their negotiations with the English and imperial ambassadors, the municipal leaders summoned a general assembly 'pour avoir leur consentement' to surrender the city.²⁶ The *prévôt*, Adam le

²³ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 72-3.

²⁴ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 97.

²⁵ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 13; A. G. CHOTIN, *Histoire de Tournai et du tournésis*, Tournai, 1840, p. 88-9; MACQUEREAU, *op. cit.*, p. 40-1. The same question was put to the municipal leadership again on 16 September when they met with English and imperial representatives at the castle of Lannoy: HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 76-7.

²⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 78. For Tournai's constitution see: Rolland, *Histoire de Tournai*, p. 143-70.

Grut, was given the responsibility of persuading to the gathered crowd to accept this proposal.²⁷ However, his speech provoked a ‘commotion impétueuse et dangier inextimable’ and the assembly descended into violence and disorder. The gathered citizens were not prepared to countenance any action that would cause Tournai to leave the obedience of the Valois monarchy, and one of their number mounted the steps of the town hall and shouted out ‘nous vivons et mourons avec vous en la querelle du Roy [Louis XII]’.²⁸ As the spokesman for the ruling elite, le Grut became the target of the crowd’s hatred and he was chased through the city streets by armed townspeople. He sought sanctuary in the house of the *soeurs grises*, from where was dragged by the *doyens* of the guilds ‘disant qu’il estoit prisonnier du peuple et non de la haulte justice et parlèrent de le torturer publicquement’.²⁹

The revolt against the senior members of the *Consaux* was led by the thirty-six *collèges des métiers*, who had a long tradition of royalist sympathies. The guilds had obtained a role in the Tournai’s government in 1424, which was confirmed by Charles VII.³⁰ In return for this grant, the guilds remained fiercely loyal towards the kings of France, upon whose good favour their privileges rested.³¹ The guilds were the driving force behind the city’s military preparations in July and August 1513, when the *doyens* and *sous-doyens* compelled all those who worked on the fortifications to swear an oath of loyalty to France.³² The coup of September 1513 rendered the

²⁷ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 78-9.

²⁸ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 78.

²⁹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 78.

³⁰ For this revolt which led to this see especially: M. HOUTARD, *Les tournaisiens et le roi de Bourges*, Tournai, 1908.

³¹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 13.

³² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 98.

municipal elite powerless and the city's actions were led by the guilds. They raised their banners alongside those of Louis XII and declared Tournai to be a French *ville royale*, following which the guildsmen rang the alarm bell, barred the gates and mobilised the city's meagre military resources.³³ In reply to the question as to whether they would surrender to Henry or Maximilian, they replied defiantly with the city's motto that 'Tournai étoit tourné, que jamais n'avoit tourné, & jamais ne tourneroit'.³⁴ In contrast to the merchants who dominated the upper levels of the city government, the members of the craft guilds were less dependent on commercial relations with the cities of the Low Countries for their livelihoods. By taking up arms, the guilds violated the conditions of the treaty of 1478 and the goods and properties held by Tournaisien merchants in the Low Countries could now be confiscated. Several days into the siege, Henry VIII sent Thomas Benolt, the Clarenceux King of Arms, to attempt to reopen negotiations with the civic elite. However, they replied 'le plus gracieusement' that they were unable to do so for fear of 'mal contenter desdiz de la ville'.³⁵ This alerted Henry and his advisors to the fact that the resistance was being led by the lower orders and that the civic elite were more inclined to reach an accord.

The devastation wrought to the city's fortifications by Henry's artillery soon made it apparent to the general population that the city could not withstand the siege,

³³ ROLLAND, *Histoire de Tournai*, p. 172-3; CRUICKSHANK, *Invasion of France*, p. 123-24. In addition to the artisans, who had little experience of warfare, Tournai had four military guilds, which could raise an estimated force of five hundred men: HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 15.

³⁴ Cited in N. POUTRAIN, *Histoire de la ville et cité de Tournai: capitale des nerviens et premier siege de monarchie françoise*, La Haye, 1750, t. 1, p. 301.

³⁵ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 81.

and they called for the municipal elite to resume their negotiations with the English crown on 21 September.³⁶ The ruling class was now in a position to re-establish its control over the city and its members re-entered negotiations with the Tudor monarchy. On 23 September, forty of the ‘plus honorables et gens de bien de la ville’ formally surrendered the city to Henry VIII.³⁷ The same men were at the forefront of Henry’s ceremonial entry into Tournai, which took place two days later. They welcomed the Tudor monarch ‘comme Roy de France’ in a ceremony which dated back to the reign of Louis IX.³⁸ Michel Allegambe, the ‘premier conseiller’, formally greeted Henry outside the city walls between 8 and 9 am on the morning of Sunday 25 September. The king was led to the Sainte-Fontaine gate, where the municipal council had instructed crowds of townspeople to call out ‘Vive le Roi!’. As Henry was about to cross over the threshold into the city, a canopy sewn with the leopards of England and the *fleur-de-lis* of France was raised above him. The streets along the processional route were cleared of rubble and the facades of houses lining the processional route were decorated with tapestries, linens and other fine cloths. Henry was brought along the rue Saint-Jacques, past the principal market place, to the cathedral, where a low mass was held. The procession was designed to pass buildings of great importance, including the municipal council chambers and the belfry, both of which were representative of the civic liberties they hoped to preserve under Tudor rule.³⁹

³⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 83, 102.

³⁷ MACQUEREAU, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³⁸ A. de LA GRANGE, *Les entrées des souverains à Tournai*, dans *Mémoires de la société historique et littéraire de Tournai*, 1981, 19, p. 74. For an analysis of Henry’s entry see: MURPHY, *Henry VIII’s French Crown.*, p. 516-31.

³⁹ LA GRANGE, *Entrées des souverains*, p. 79.

If Henry VIII wanted the local population to recognise him as king of France, he had to turn his attention towards gaining the support of the civic elite. During the early period of the occupation, Henry made determined efforts to win the support of the upper levels of the municipal government. Rather than seek to destroy or curtail the extent of the city's freedoms, Henry wrote to the municipal council on 18 November to confirm their privileges and assure them that he would treat them 'non moings que tous les meilleurs de tous noz subjectz'.⁴⁰ The confirmation of the urban charter was crucial for the municipal council, as it underpinned its political and economic dominance of the city. Tournai's leaders were given a highly privileged degree of direct contact with Henry and his council in England. Before departing Tournai on 13 October 1513, Henry appointed Sir Edward Poyning as governor and transferred the authority of the *bailli* to him and his successors. The governor was assisted by a number of advisors and together they formed the Council of Tournai, which was wholly composed of Englishmen. However, the privileged access and favourable treatment that Henry gave to the municipal administration weakened the power of the Council of Tournai, as the Tournaisiens were able to circumvent the governor and appeal directly to the king.⁴¹ In political terms, therefore, Henry consolidated the municipal council's power and its members were not made subject to interference from the Tudor authorities in the day-to-day governing of the town.

Henry also accorded the municipal elite a range of economic privileges designed to restore the city's finances in the expectation that this would allow him to

⁴⁰ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 116.

⁴¹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 51-52.

recoup the costs of the £680,000 he had spent on the campaign of 1513.⁴² By the terms of the treaty of surrender, Tournai was obliged to pay Henry 10,000 l. per year for ten years (which was an increase of 4,000 l. in the annual sum that the city paid to Louis XII), in addition to a one-off payment of 50,000 gold crowns. In order to help the *Consaux* raise these sums, Henry granted it the right to sell *rentes à vie* and levy additional taxes on merchandise brought into Tournai for sale. Indeed, he even permitted the municipal council the right to decide what form these taxes should take.⁴³ Henry also authorised the civic leaders to levy a tax on the townspeople to cover the costs of his ceremonial entry, along with a range of other money-raising schemes.⁴⁴ As Tournai's prosperity principally derived from the commercial activities of its merchants, the Tudor administration and its allies took measures to restore the regional trade network which had been disrupted by the conflict. On 8 October, for example, Maximilian and the Archduke Charles issued letters patent permitting Tournai's merchants the right to trade in their domains.⁴⁵

Henry invited the city's leaders to send a delegation to the meeting of Parliament, which was to be held at Westminster in Easter 1514. This was a significant moment for the city, as the delegation used the visit to England to obtain a range of additional economic privileges from the crown.⁴⁶ The town council was granted the right to collect one sixth of the corn brought down the Scheldt for sale in

⁴² DAVIES, *Tournai*, p. 25.

⁴³ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 56.

⁴⁴ London, TNA [The National Archives] PRO 31/8, t. f°144r, 231r, 245r (*LP*, vol. 1, 2303, 2735). HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 112-13; *Recueil des ordonnances, Charles-Quint*, t. 1, pp. 288-9.

⁴⁵ TNA PRO 31/8, t. 144, f° 231r (*LP*, t. 1, 2345).

⁴⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 115-16.

the city (called *le mis sus*).⁴⁷ Although this right was held by the rulers of neighbouring towns and cities, it had recently been abolished at Tournai. Thus, by restoring this right to the municipal council, Henry was extended their privileges beyond those granted by Louis XII.⁴⁸ Henry issued Tournai's merchants with a licence to trade with England, and to possess the same commercial rights as his English subjects.⁴⁹ An Act of Parliament issued in March 1514 was designed to encourage 'great amity, familiarity, and intercourse in buying and selling of merchandises, wares and otherwise' between the merchants of Tournai and England, and the city's merchants were permitted to own property in England and pay the same export taxes as English merchants.⁵⁰ These were significant concessions to Tournai's elite they and aroused the hostility of London's merchants, which led to a set of procedures being drawn up by Tudor officials to settle and any potential disputes that might arise between English and Tournaisien merchants.⁵¹ The grants obtained by the civic delegation during the visit were of great benefit to the merchants. While the city's cloth industry was in decline by the early sixteenth century, it remained the

⁴⁷ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 121-4; TNA PRO 31/8, t. f°144r, 237r (*LP*, t. 1 2676, 2684).

⁴⁸ *LP*, t.1, 2684.

⁴⁹ *LP*, t. 1, 2772.

⁵⁰ *The Statutes of the Realm*, London, 1810-22, t. 3, p. 92-3.

⁵¹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, pp. 136-7; H. MILLER, London and parliament in the reign of Henry VIII, dans *Historical studies of the English Parliament*, E. B. FRYDE (coord.), Cambridge, 1970, t. 2, p. 135-7; DAVIES, *Tournai*, p. 12.

principal source of Tournai's wealth, and it was dependent upon a steady supply of English wool.⁵²

The imposition of Henry VIII's rule over Tournai presented some members of the civic elite with an opportunity to advance their careers. Foremost amongst these was Jean le Sellier, who led the delegation that surrendered the city to Henry on 23 September.⁵³ Le Sellier quickly saw the advantages that could be obtained from working with the Tudor administration, and he acted to promote his standing with prominent English officials. His efforts met with success and in February 1514 Edward Poyning advised Henry VIII that le Sellier 'deserved his special favour'. Later that month, the governor remarked to Thomas Wolsey that le Sellier had 'well endeavoured him in every thing that I could desire him on the King's behalf sith the King's departing.'⁵⁴ As chancellor of the kingdom, Thomas Wolsey was one of the most powerful men in England, and le Sellier acted to strengthen his relationship with this key figure in the Tudor government. When he learned that Wolsey was especially fond of certain tapestries made by one 'demoiselle vesne' in Tournai, le Sellier attempted to persuade the woman – who had abandoned her trade due to economic difficulties – to return to tapestry making, so that he could offer some items to the chancellor.⁵⁵ Le Sellier also made a number of visits to England, which allowed him

⁵² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 21. For the decline of Tournai during the fifteenth century see: G. WYMANS, *Le déclin de Tournai au XVe siècle*, dans *Anciens pays et assemblées d'états*, 1961, 22, p. 113-34.

⁵³ E. HALL, *The triumphant reign of King Henry the VIII*, London, 1904, t. 1, p. 114-15; S. T. BINDORFF, *The House of Commons, 1509-1558*, London, 1982, t. 2, p. 521; CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ TNA SP 1/7, f°. 165r (*LP*, t. 2, 2657); CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ London, BL [British Library] Cotton Caligula D/VI, f°. 316v (*LP*, t. 2, 3206).

to foster relations with other prominent figures in the Tudor administration. He developed an acquaintance with William Blount during his visit to England in 1514, which he was able to renew after Blount was made governor of Tournai the following year.⁵⁶ Indeed, le Sellier developed good relationships with all three of the city's Tudor governors. Edward Poynings held him in high regard, while Richard Jerningham described him as the 'best Englishman that is born within Tournai'.⁵⁷ He also won the favour of other influential Tudor officials based in Tournai, including Dr Sampson (Thomas Wolsey's principal representative in the city), who wrote of Le Sellier's 'good mind and deeds' and advised the chancellor to treat him well when he next visited England.⁵⁸

Le Sellier was a key figure in the implementation of Tudor rule at Tournai. He acted as an intermediary between civic and royal administrations and promoted Tudor policy on contentious issues, such as the size of the garrison, and he was one of the principal civic officials involved in Wolsey's struggle to be appointed bishop of Tournai.⁵⁹ As a result of le Sellier's efforts on behalf of the Tudor administration, Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester, advised Henry to give him a position of authority, and he was granted a range of rewards by the Tudor government.⁶⁰ On 24 June 1516, for example, he was made a Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber on

⁵⁶ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o. 315r (*LP*, t. 2, 150); TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 160r (*LP*, t. 2, 1499).

⁵⁷ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o. 315r (*LP*, t. 2, 150).

⁵⁸ TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 181r (*LP*, t. 2, 1411).

⁵⁹ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o. 296r (*LP*, t. 2, 512); BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f^o. 60r-61v (*LP*, t. 2, 820).

⁶⁰ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f^o. 60r-61v (*LP*, t. 2, 820); TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 164r-164v (*LP*, t. 2, 2686); TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 32r-32v (*LP*, t. 2, 3720); CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, pp. 48-49.

the recommendation of Sir Richard Jerningham, ‘in consideration of the good service to use heretofore done...and that hereafter he intendeth to do’.⁶¹ Le Sellier worked tirelessly to improve his social position at the expense of the other residents of the city who were also using Tudor rule as an opportunity to seek advancement. One Allard Bentinck, a citizen of Tournai and steward in the household of Margaret of Savoy, succeeded in having himself appointed *receveur* for the Tudor administration.⁶² However, in the hope of being appointed to the role instead, Le Sellier wrote to Wolsey in February 1515 stating that Bentnick was an ‘unfit person’.⁶³

The close relationships that Le Sellier developed with leading Tudor officials led him to be treated with suspicion by many of his fellow citizens. While le Sellier formed part of the delegation sent to England in 1514, the municipal council only reached an agreement on who was to go after two days of heated debates (‘il n’y eubt point d’assens de depputter aucuns notables personnaiges pour envoyer devers le Roy’).⁶⁴ Le Sellier’s efforts to ingratiate himself with the Tudor administration also led to him becoming a target for the general population. During his visit to the town in September 1515, the earl of Worcester noted that Le Sellier would be in great danger of attack without the protection of the English soldiers.⁶⁵ Richard Jerningham echoed these sentiments in a letter to Thomas Wolsey in February 1516, stating that le Sellier ‘is not a little hated among the Tournaisiens.’⁶⁶ Writing in the decades after the

⁶¹ Quoted in CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 60. This position brought with it an annual pension of £20: *LP*, t. 2, 2091.

⁶² TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 164r-164v (*LP*, t. 2, 2686).

⁶³ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o. 315r (*LP*, t. 2, 150).

⁶⁴ Cited in DAVIES, *Tournai*, p. 8. See also: HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 117.

⁶⁵ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 60.

⁶⁶ TNA SP 1/12, f^o 160r (*LP*, t. 2, 1499).

Second World War, C. G. Cruickshank labelled Le Sellier a ‘collaborator’, though it is perhaps unfair to use such a loaded term. Le Sellier was a member of Tournai’s ruling elite, who since 1420 had consistently shown itself to be only too ready to come to agreements with rival powers. The commercial interests of the city’s merchants meant that the king of France was just one ruler amongst many with whom they had to negotiate. Nor was le Sellier the only citizen of Tournai to make use of opportunities offered by Tudor rule to gain positions of power. Tournaisiens worked effectively with Tudor officials at all levels of government. William Blount asked Henry VIII not to replace his Tournaisien ‘Seale Ryall’ of the *bailliage* (who registered commercial contracts between Tournaisien and English merchants) with the Englishman Roger Hachemann.⁶⁷ In addition to this, other prominent official positions created by the Tudor administration also went to citizens of the city, including the *tabellions*, while Charles Somerset, wrote of the Frenchmen Emery and Thubainville, who had ‘served the King two years or more’ in Tournai.⁶⁸

Despite Henry’s best efforts to forge friendly links with the municipal elite, Tudor rule was not universally accepted in the upper levels of Tournai’s society. Some merchants decided to emigrate rather than swear an oath to a king who they regarded as a foreign invader. This trend is especially apparent in the early days of the English occupation, when the townspeople could hope that Henry’s presence in Tournai was a temporary aberration and that Louis XII would soon restore Valois rule to the city. A plot against Tudor rule was discovered in the early days of the occupation. The principal conspirators came from the social elite and included members of the municipal council and nobles from the surrounding region.

⁶⁷ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o. 305r-306r (*LP*, t. 2, 701).

⁶⁸ TNA SP 1/11, fols. 86r-86v (*LP*, t. 2, 891); *LP*, t. 1, 2767.

Concerned not to provoke further outbreaks of disorder amongst the population, the conspirators were sentenced to perpetual banishment instead of execution.⁶⁹ Rather than taking violent action against the Tudor authorities, many disaffected merchants instead opted to go into voluntary exile from their native city instead. A clause in the treaty of capitulation of September 1513 permitted any citizen who did not wish to take the oath of loyalty to Henry VIII the right to leave Tournai within twenty days, without incurring penalty or punishment.⁷⁰ The merchant class possessed the financial resources that permitted them to make such a move, and many prosperous Tournaisiens owned land and property in neighbouring territories, including as Artois, Hainault and Flanders.⁷¹ Some of the city's merchants left for Ghent and Bruges, Tournai's principal trading partners, while others fled to the French cities of Paris, Rouen and Lyon. In a bid to alleviate the negative financial consequences of the departures on the municipal budget, Henry ruled in March 1514 that the *Consaux* was not obliged to pay pensions to those exiles that had relocated to France.⁷² Maximilian issued a similar charter late that month, which extended this measure to include the merchants who had moved to the Low Countries.⁷³

Although the surviving records do not permit us put an exact figure on the number of merchants who fled Tournai, it was significant enough for Henry to write directly to the municipal council on 18 November 1513 expressing his regret at the

⁶⁹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 131-32.

⁷⁰ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 105.

⁷¹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 21; SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁷² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 124-25; *Recueil des ordonnances, Charles-Quint*, t. 1, p. 288-9; *LP*, t. 1, 2735.

⁷³ This was reconfirmed by Charles in March 1518: HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 150-54.

extent of the emigration. Their exit was particularly disappointing to Henry, as he had made a determined effort to try and win the merchants' support by granting them significant economic and political concessions. The Tudor monarch was concerned that the emigration was due to some fault of the governor, Edward Poynings, who was not treating the merchants as well as he would have wished.⁷⁴ These exiles became a source persistent concern for the English, who feared that they were plotting to restore Valois rule to the town, and in February 1516, the governor, Richard Jerningham, sent spies to monitor the activities of those who had relocated to Ghent and Bruges.⁷⁵ The departure of the pro-Valois supporters also affected the composition of the municipal council. At the municipal elections of February 1514 – the first held under Tudor rule – nineteen senior positions in the *Consaux* became vacant due to the flight of the merchants.⁷⁶ Although Henry was concerned about the detrimental effects which the emigration could have on the city's finances, their exit also worked to the advantage of the Tudor monarchy. The upper levels of the municipal administration were now dominated by those individuals, such as Jehan le Sellier, who were more inclined to work with the Tudor administration than against it.

Resistance and Sedition

Although some members of the municipal elite were willing to develop friendly relations with Henry's government, the general population of the city manifested a persistent hostility towards Tudor rule from the onset of the occupation. This animosity was remarked on by the English chronicler Edward Hall, who wrote that

⁷⁴ *LP*, t. 1, 2450.

⁷⁵ TNA SP 1/12, f^o. 156r-156v (*LP*, t. 2, 1498).

⁷⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 26-7; HOCQUET, *Tournai et le Tournaisis*, p. 28.

the general population ‘scare looked up, nor showed once to him [Henry VIII] any amiable countenance’ when the king made his ceremonial entry into the city.⁷⁷ The records of the municipal council substantiate Hall’s disparaging account of the general population’s enmity towards their new ruler. On 13 October 1513, the city’s leaders ruled that no townsperson was to ‘chante ou dyse aucuns libelles difamatoires ou chanchons, ballades ne aultrement’ about Henry or his allies.⁷⁸ The population of Tournai had a tradition of insulting those who had pretensions to impose their rule over them, including Charles the Bold and the Emperor Maximilian.⁷⁹ The general population also directed its animosity towards Tournai’s elite. In October 1513, the Venetian ambassador – who accompanied Henry during the campaign – reported to the Signory that the general population of Tournai believed that the ruling elite had betrayed the city.⁸⁰ There was lasting suspicion towards Tournai’s leaders at the Valois court, encouraged by those merchants who had left the city rather than live under Tudor rule. One contemporary chronicler wrote that ‘sans aucune résistance leur fut livrée par les mains des principaux de la ville, ainsi qu’ilz avoient conclu ensemble’.⁸¹

The Tudor administration also faced determined opposition from the city’s clergy. The most prominent of these was the bishop-elect, Louis Guillard, who was

⁷⁷ HALL, *Henry the VIII*, p. 566.

⁷⁸ LA GRANGE, *Entrées des souverains*, p. 79; *LP*, t. 1, 2358; HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 113-14.

⁷⁹ DAVIES, *Tournai*, p. 5; SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁸⁰ *LP*, t. 1, 2396.

⁸¹ Cited in HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 20.

appointed to replace Charles de Hautbois shortly before Henry's invasion of France.⁸² Guillard worked energetically to undermine Tudor rule at Tournai and he refused to come and take formal possession of his bishopric in order to avoid having to take the oath of loyalty to Henry VIII.⁸³ At the very beginning of the occupation, Henry confirmed the privileges of the city's religious authorities and declared that they were 'in nowise to be infringed by the King's recent grants to the town [i.e. the *Consaux*]' .⁸⁴ Despite confirming their rights, it soon became apparent to the English that some of the most determined opposition to their rule came from the clergy. Indeed, the cathedral canons used the very privileges which Henry had recently granted them to refuse to lodge his lieutenant. This led Dr Sampson to comment that they were 'so French in heart that they are sure to rebel when they see their advantage in it.'⁸⁵

In a bid to curb the power of the clergy, the Tudor administration attempted to extend its control over city's religious institutions. This was in sharp contrast to their attitude towards the *Consaux*, which was largely permitted to rule without interference. In return for this freedom, the municipal council supported the Thomas Wolsey's appointment to the bishopric over Louis Guillard.⁸⁶ Wolsey sent his representative, Dr Richard Sampson, to meet with the city's leader on 2 September

⁸² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 23; I. LA MAISTRE D'ANSTAIN, *Recherches sur l'histoire et l'architecture de l'église cathédrale de Notre-Dame de Tournai*, Tournai, 1842-43, t. 2, p. 97.

⁸³ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 28.

⁸⁴ F. STEFANI (éd), *I diarii di Marino Sanuto* (Venice, 1879-1902), t. 17, p. 321 (*LP*, t. 1, 2862).

⁸⁵ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 289r-290v (*LP*, t. 2, 29).

⁸⁶ *LP*, t. 1, 3075.

1514. He informed the magistrates that Pope Leo X had made Wolsey bishop of Tournai and requested that they recognise his appointment. Faced with competing claims to the bishopric, the civic leaders declared that they would support the Tudor candidate, though they asked to have written copies of the orders from both Henry and Leo X confirming Wolsey's appointment. This was an astute move, as it meant that should the city return to Valois rule, the municipal administration had written proof that their support for Wolsey came as a result of direct instructions issued by the temporal and spiritual masters of the city.⁸⁷

The bishop of Tournai was a major landholder in the region and some of the staunchest dissatisfaction from the rural population towards Tudor rule came from the inhabitants of his territories, who William Blount considered to be "craffte" and troublesome'.⁸⁸ The discontent increased as the struggle for the bishopric intensified and in May 1515, English troops, acting under the instructions of Dr Sampson, attacked inhabitants of the bishop's lands to quell the disorder.⁸⁹ This represented a break in the Tudor crown's policy towards the inhabitants of the Tournaisis, as the Tudor administration had made an effort to win their favour in the early stages of the occupation. During the campaign of 1513, Henry attempted to restrain his soldiers from attacking the inhabitants of the Tournaisis. When four English soldiers were arrested for causing disturbances in the village of Aire, Henry had two of them hanged.⁹⁰ Following the city's surrender, Henry persisted with his attempts to win the support of the population of the Tournaisis. He permitted all who had fled behind

⁸⁷ *LP*, t. 1, 3231, 3284.

⁸⁸ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 65 (*LP*, t. 2, 825).

⁸⁹ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 494r-495v (*LP*, t. 2, 480).

⁹⁰ *LP*, t. 1, 2391.

Tournai's walls in advance of the siege to return to their lands without being deprived of either of their homes or their goods.⁹¹ In spite of these attempts to win over the rural dwellers, many inhabitants of the Tournaisis shared the hostility of the city's general population towards Tudor rule. Indeed, over a year after the conquest, residents of the villages of Bussuyt, Helchin and Saint-Genoix were still refusing to take the oath of loyalty to the Tudor monarch.⁹²

The powerful abbey of Saint-Martin's was a further centre of opposition to Henry's rule. It was viewed with such distrust by the Tudor administration that the governor, William Blount, wanted to place a permanent body of English soldiers in the abbey to guard against potential disorder. Saint-Martin's lay beyond the jurisdiction of both the Tudor governor and the municipal administration, and in September 1515 some townspeople who had been arrested for sedition escaped from the governor's prison and fled to the sanctuary of the abbey.⁹³ Despite being amongst those who surrendered the city Henry on 23 September 1513, the abbot of St. Martin's, Jean de Bois, soon revealed himself to be staunchly anti-English. He fled the city in 1516 when the governor began to act against him and, as with the bishop-elect, the English initiated a long and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to have de Bois removed from his position.⁹⁴ The abbot was a favourite of Henry's ally, the Archduke Charles, and he succeeded in having himself appointed as the king of Castile's ambassador at the Danish court. This was a clever move by de Bois, as it

⁹¹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 40.

⁹² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 27-8; HOCQUET, *Tournai et le Tournaisis*, p. 27.

⁹³ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f^o 346 (*LP*, t. 2, 919).

⁹⁴ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, pp. 170-71.

allowed him to claim that Ferdinand was his sovereign lord, and thus avoid having to take the oath of loyalty to the Tudor monarch.⁹⁵

The English orchestrated a campaign of negative propaganda against the abbot. Although Dr Sampson claimed that there were enough crimes against him to depose ten abbots, he proved unable to persuade the monks to make a complaint against their superior.⁹⁶ Sampson wrote to Wolsey on 5 February 1516 encouraging him to have Henry complain to Pope Leo X about the abbot's dissolute lifestyle, his absence from the abbey, the alleged robbing of goods and the poor maintenance of the abbey's buildings.⁹⁷ In spite of their determined efforts, the Tudor administration was unable to have de Bois removed from his position. The best that they could achieve was having their own representative appointed coadjutor to the absentee abbot. Indeed, as late as December 1518 – less than three months before the city was returned to French rule – Sampson was still complaining that the abbot should be expelled from his position due to his immoralities.⁹⁸

French Spies and Agents

The Tudor administration developed a highly sophisticated network of spies, who proved to be very effective in alerting them of potential sources of trouble. Some of these spies were members of the garrison, such as the soldiers who went disguised as

⁹⁵ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 63r-63v (*LP*, t. 2, 824); BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 293 (*LP*, t. 2, 1849).

⁹⁶ TNA SP 1/11, f° 84 (*LP*, t. 2, 889).

⁹⁷ TNA SP 1/12, f° 149r-149v (*LP*, t. 2, 1492).

⁹⁸ TNA SP 1/13, f° 163r (*LP*, t. 2, 1898); *LP*, t. 2, 2502, 4627.

merchants to Normandy and Champagne in the summer of 1517 to confirm reports that the French were raising an army to attack Tournai.⁹⁹ Although such spies were useful, the Tudor administration would not have achieved such a high degree of success in averting threats to the security of the city without developing a network of French agents. In 1516, for example, the Parisian Henri Cressent sent reports to William Blount concerning French preparations to retake Tournai.¹⁰⁰ Later that year, an unnamed miller from the *bailliage* of Amiens alerted the governor to the presence of an army gathering in Guelders and Friesland, which was to be used against Tournai.¹⁰¹ By far the most valuable French agent developed by the Tudor administration was Nicholas de Saint-Genois, who Edward Poyning had infiltrate the French court at the beginning of the occupation. Saint-Genois came from an old and distinguished Tournaisien family and he was a leading figure in the ruling administration.¹⁰² He had considerable experience of civic government and had served as *juré*, *éwardeur* and *second prévôt*. During his time as *souverain prévôt*, Saint-Genois had orchestrated the capture of the village of Saint-Amand from its Burgundian garrison. As well as being an important member of the city's government, Saint-Genois also had a dubious past and in 1502 he was perpetually banished from the city for misappropriation of civic funds. Fleeing to the episcopal castle at Wez, he managed to convince Louis XII that his banishment was the result of

⁹⁹ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 146r-147v (*LP*, t. 2, 3120).

¹⁰⁰ BL Cotton Caligula B/VI, f° 277r (*LP*, t. 2, 2671).

¹⁰¹ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 307v (*LP*, t. 2, 2380).

¹⁰² TNA SP 1/8, f° 173 (*LP*, t. 1, 3025); HOCQUET, *Tournai et le Tournaisis*, p. 28; For the Saint-Genois family see: HOUTART, *Roi de Bourges*, p. 33; SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 153. P.-A. DU CHASTEL DE LA HOWARDERIES-NEUVIREUIL, *Notices généalogiques tournaisiennes dressées sur titres*, Tournai, 1881-1910, t. 3, p. 426-7.

a plot orchestrated against him by the Austro-Burgundians and he was appointed governor of Mortagne by the king.¹⁰³ Despite his sentence of perpetual banishment, Saint-Genois was once again resident in Tournai by 1513. Such talents led to Saint-Genois being courted by Tudor officials and Edward Poyning was able to persuade him to act as his agent at the French court.

Poyning used the discovery of the plot amongst some prominent bourgeois and nobles at the outset of the Tudor occupation to have Saint-Genois banished from the city. He then arranged for another English agent to organise Saint-Genois' appearance at the Valois court.¹⁰⁴ The Tournaisien excelled at his role as an English agent and he used his previous experience of dealing with Louis XII to convince the Valois monarch that he was trustworthy.¹⁰⁵ He turned the French court's suspicion of Tournai's ruling elite to his advantage by presenting himself as a staunchly loyal subject who had resisted Tudor rule. Saint-Genois sent regular reports to Edward Poyning and in 1514 he alerted the governor to a plot that was being hatched to retake the city. Charles, seigneur d'Espichelière, *président à mortier* at the *Parlement* of Paris, and the father of Louis Guillard, along with Etienne de Poncher, bishop of Paris, and a number of other senior figures at the French court plotted to retake Tournai. According to Saint-Genois, Guillard was to lead a small French army towards Tournai. A group of loyal townspeople was then to bring them into the city

¹⁰³ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 27; HOWARDERIES-NEUVIREUIL, *Notices généalogiques*, t. 3, p. 426-7.

¹⁰⁴ TNA SP 1/8, f° 173 (*LP*, t. 1, 3025); TNA SP 1/8, f° 174 (*LP*, t. 1, 3026).

¹⁰⁵ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 26 (*LP*, t. 1, 3004); CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 62-3; HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 23.

by boat under cover of darkness, so that they could take the English garrison by surprise and encourage a general rising of the population.¹⁰⁶

As a result of this information, Edward Poynings made a series of arrests in September 1514, including two friars who were particularly implicated in the plot.¹⁰⁷ During their interrogation, the friars confessed that they had planned to return the city to Valois rule, and they identified the ringleaders of the plot, which included prominent members of Tournai's social hierarchy, most notably Jehan d'Estable, *second conseiller* of the city.¹⁰⁸ They were supported by members of the local nobility, including François de la Howardrie, seigneur de Montgobert and Fontenil, whose lands had been confiscated by Henry VIII in 1514.¹⁰⁹ Some of the conspirators had a background of opposition to Tudor rule. Jehan d'Estable, along with one Nicholas d'Aubermont, had passed through enemy lands on 17 September 1513 to lead a group of French knights in an attempt to break the line of the besieging army. Although this attempt failed, the guildsmen – who had galvanised the resistance against both the municipal leaders and the Anglo-Imperial army – learned of his efforts and it is likely that he was seen as a leading figure of resistance to Tudor rule by the disaffected elements of the city's population.¹¹⁰ Rather than join those

¹⁰⁶ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 26r (*LP*, t. 1, 3004).

¹⁰⁷ TNA SP 1/9, f° 71r (*LP*, t. 1, 3247).

¹⁰⁸ M. LE GLAY(éd.), *Négociations diplomatiques entre la France et l'Autriche Durant les trente premières années du XVIe siècle*, Paris, 1845, t. 1, p. 585; *LP*, t. 1, 3258, 3264.

¹⁰⁹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 27-28; HOWARDRIES-NEUVIREUIL, *Notices généalogiques*, t. 1, p. 449. His lands were given to William Sampson: T. RYMER, *Foedera, conventiones, litterae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica* (London, 1704-35), t. 6, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 16.

merchants who had relocated to France and the Low Countries, d'Estable remained at Tournai and worked against Tudor rule from the inside.

Many of those implicated in the 1514 conspiracy fled the city once the arrests began. However, it was considerably more difficult for artisans to relocate to another city than it was for members of the municipal elite, such as Jean d'Estables, who fled to Lyon once the conspiracy was discovered. One Arnold Beaufitz, a brewer, returned to Tournai after William Blount replaced Edward Poyning as governor in January 1515 in the hope that his role in the conspiracy would have been forgotten and that he could resume his trade in the city. These hopes were soon dashed, however, and Beaufitz was arrested soon after his return to the city. After being questioned by the Tudor authorities, he revealed the names of several other co-conspirators, who were then also arrested. Having so many townspeople implicated in the revolt presented a major problem for the new governor of Tournai, and he wrote to Henry to tell him that 'if all the others should be taken which be accused we think a great rumour should follow, and no good, seeing that it is a matter past and the chief doers thereof be fled'. Blount feared that the mass execution of the conspirators would lead to widespread disturbances from the general population and he proposed instead the ringleaders should be banished and the rest pardoned.¹¹¹ Henry agreed to the governor's suggestion and issued a general pardon on 1 October. The ringleaders of the conspiracy, Jean de Malines and Jean d'Estables, were excluded from the pardon,

¹¹¹ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 62 (*LP*, t. 2, 824). For the use of pardons by Tudor monarchs see: K. L. KESSELRING, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State*, Cambridge, 2003.

as was Nicholas de Saint-Genois, so that his cover could be maintained at the French court.¹¹²

Defending the City

Fears of plots by external and internal enemies brought issues of security to the forefront of relations between the Tudor administration and the townspeople. As Tournai had to be taken by conquest and had a largely hostile population, it was placed under military occupation. When Henry VIII departed from Tournai, he left a garrison of 5,000 troops in the city and ordered that all the weapons held by the townspeople were to be confiscated.¹¹³ The establishment of a permanent garrison in the city was initially a source of great concern to the municipal administration, as their presence violated the treaty of neutrality made with Maximilian at Brussels on 22 October 1478. The treaty stipulated that Tournai should not ‘receptront ou soustiendront en leurdicte ville garnison de gens d’armes soubz umbre de la garde de la ville ne aultrement, et ne bailleroient passaiges à aulcunes gens d’armes.’¹¹⁴

However, once they had obtained assurances from Maximilian that introduction of an English garrison into the city would not invalidate Tournai’s trading privileges, the

¹¹² TNA SP 1/11, f°127 (*LP*, t. 2, 978). For Jean de Malines see: P. A. DU CHASTEL DE HOWARDERIES-NEUVIREUIL, *Etudes d’archéologie généalogique sur les familles Croquevilain, de la Foy & de Cambry*, dans *Mémoires de la société historique et littéraire de Tournai*, 1893, 23, p. 471.

¹¹³ *LP*, t. 1, 2336, 2435; HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 110-11.

¹¹⁴ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 61. For the negotiations around this treaty see: HOCQUET, *Tournai et le Tournaisis*, p. 14. This was also a condition of the peace agreements made with the dukes of Burgundy in the fifteenth century: SMALL, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

municipal council became accustomed to some of the benefits of having a professional garrison reside permanently in the city.¹¹⁵

Although Henry made the establishment of a permanent garrison at Tournai a condition of the city's surrender, it soon became apparent to the Tudor administration that there were a number of difficulties with maintaining a large garrison far from England.¹¹⁶ A large permanent garrison was expensive to maintain and English officials worked to persuade the municipal council take over the bulk of the costs. The most determined effort to do so came in August 1515, when Henry VIII dispatched Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester, to Tournai to encourage the municipal administration to take responsibility for the city's security. The Tudor monarch took a close interest in the matter and he outlined a three-tiered process that Worcester was to adopt in his negotiations. In the first instance, he was to attempt to persuade the *Consaux* to return to the pre-conquest situation, when it had sole responsibility for both organising and paying for the city's defences. If this was not accepted, Somerset was to propose that Tournai's annual payment to the crown be put towards the defence of the city, thus removing the additional financial burden from the Tudor government in England. However, given that the Tudor government spent an the massive sum of £178,000 on maintaining the garrison during the five and a half years of occupation, the *Consaux* could expect to pay considerably more than 6,000 l. per year on the city's security. Should this proposal also be rejected, Somerset was at the very least to have the municipal agree to pay for the *garde* and *guet* duties of a garrison which was to be considerably reduced in size.

¹¹⁵ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 80.

¹¹⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 87, 107.

The Tudor administration's willingness to negotiate with the *Consaux*, rather than simply impose the security burden on them, coupled with the need to reduce its defence costs, provided the municipal council with an opportunity to substantially increase their power over the population. The city's leaders offered to undertake the expense of paying for a garrison of between five to six hundred men, if these English soldiers were placed under their direct control. This was a bold attempt by the municipal elite to taken advantage of the difficulties faced by the Tudor government ruling a city that lay far from its powerbase. The city's proposition received some degree of support from prominent Tudor officials in Tournai, including the governor, William Blount. He was suspicious of the general population's loyalty to Henry and believed that they would rise up in support of any French attack on the city. Blount considered the city's elite to be broadly supportive of Tudor rule and he advised Henry to give them command of the garrison, so that they could secure their hold over the general population.¹¹⁷

Eventually, however, this proposal was withdrawn, following a meeting of the four councils, possibly under pressure from the guild representatives. When John Yonge, the master of the rolls, tried to press the issue by telling the *Consaux* that they were obliged to provide for the city's security, the civic leaders stating that there was no specific article in the treaty of surrender which bound them to do so. Yonge believed that the municipal council's sudden change of heart resulted from reports then circulating that Tournai was soon to be returned to Valois rule.¹¹⁸ There was some truth to these rumours, as following the death of Louis XII and the ascension of Francis I to the throne on 1 January 1515, Henry contemplated selling Tournai back to

¹¹⁷ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 67r-67v (*LP*, t. 2, 890).

¹¹⁸ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 198v (*LP*, t. 2, 856).

France.¹¹⁹ Ultimately, however, the secret talks with France collapsed as Francis went on campaign in Italy. Henry progressed with his plans to overhaul the security of the city and in September 1515 he instructed Worcester to reinvigorate his efforts with the municipal council. However, the municipal council informed the earl that they would prefer to keep the English garrison and continue to make their annual payment to the crown.¹²⁰ After this refusal, the matter was dropped and it is significant that the Tudor government did not take punitive measures to force the municipal council to accede to their demands.

Although the treaty of surrender stipulated that the soldiers in the garrison were to be ‘gens de honneste estat, vie et conversacion’, the behaviour of Tournai’s garrison was a source of persistent concern for both the Tudor and municipal authorities.¹²¹ By early 1515, the difficulties faced by Henry VIII’s government in paying for a large permanent garrison had reached a crisis point. In February that year the English soldiers mutinied, taking to the streets of the city to demand an increase in their wages.¹²² The soldiers accosted the members of the Council of Tournai, including the governor, William Blount. They also threatened the life of the marshal, Dr Sampson Norton, who was responsible for organising their wages, and he had to be brought out of the city covertly. As well as posing grave problems for the Tudor administration, the mutiny was extremely disruptive for the townspeople, as the soldiers threatened to keep the gates of the city closed until their demands were

¹¹⁹ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 218v-219v (*LP*, t. 2, 175).

¹²⁰ TNA SP 1/11, f° 86r-86v (*LP*, t. 2, 891).

¹²¹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 106. For the wider problems of discipline in Henry VIII’s armies see: J. RAYMOND, *Henry VIII’s Military Revolution: The Armies of Sixteenth-Century Britain and Europe*, London, 2007, p. 65-79.

¹²² TNA SP 1/9, f° 4 (*LP*, t. 1, no. 3114).

met.¹²³ This was very serious threat for Tournai's merchants, as the enforced closure of the city's gates during trading hours would have paralysed the commerce upon which their prosperity was dependent. Even more disturbing for the general population, was the garrison's threat to ransack the town, as this would have led to considerable economic disruption and social unrest. Indeed, this threat was so serious that it pushed the governor into acceding to the soldiers' demand for higher wages.¹²⁴ Emboldened by their success, the garrison mutinied for a second time in October 1515, and there were a number of serious disturbances in the streets.¹²⁵ On this occasion, however, the Tudor administration acted more firmly and five of the ringleaders were executed and their heads placed on spikes at the city's gates.¹²⁶

Although the specific details of what happened during these disturbances are unclear from the surviving sources, it appears that elements of the city's general population were also involved, and a number of townspeople were pardoned 'for their treasons and conspiracies' at the time of the February 1515 mutiny.¹²⁷ The garrison may have encouraged the civic disturbances, as the English soldiers who were executed during the October 1515 mutiny were convicted of 'seditiously exhorting the people, spreading rumours'.¹²⁸ The Tudor authorities feared that the mutiny could lead to a general rising of the population and a contingent of loyal troops was kept

¹²³ TNA SP 1/10, f° 63-63v (*LP*, t. 2, 171).

¹²⁴ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 40-41v (*LP*, t. 2, 147).

¹²⁵ TNA SP 1/11, f° 145 (*LP*, t. 2, 1059).

¹²⁶ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 308 (*LP*, t. 2, 1259); *LP*, t. 2, 1333, 1408, 1088, 1180. A further seven soldiers were paraded through the streets in penitential clothing before being banished from the city: TNA SP 1/12, f° 7r-7v (*LP*, t. 2, 1255).

¹²⁷ Cited in CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 76.

¹²⁸ TNA SP 1/12, f° 7r-7v (*LP*, t. 2, 1255).

ready to quell any trouble during the October mutiny.¹²⁹ The extent of popular participation in the disturbances created by the garrison is difficult to gauge. William Blount wrote of the ‘many thieves and murderers and such other’ amongst the general population who supported the soldiers in their mutiny.¹³⁰ It is possible elements from the general population used the mutiny as an opportunity to create further disorder, as there were persistent problems between the garrison and the townspeople. In the summer of 1517, for example, a group of angry citizens forcibly took hold of an English archer who had killed one of their number. This was a time of heightened alert for the garrison due to rumours of an imminent French attack on the city. Concerned that the townspeople would rise to support any French attack, they feared to go out in the city’s streets.¹³¹

One of the principal causes of the discontent between the members of the garrison and the general population was that the soldiers had to be lodged at the homes of townspeople due to the absence of a suitable fortress. In a bid to reduce the size of the garrison and improve the security of the city, William Blount arrived in Tournai as governor in early 1515 with the task of overseeing the construction of a citadel.¹³² Blount encouraged the municipal authorities to contribute to the costs of construction by assuring them that the completion of the citadel would remove the burden of having to lodge the garrison with the townspeople. However, of greater concern to the municipal leaders than the relations between soldiers and citizens was the fear that the construction of a citadel would transform Tournai from a centre of

¹²⁹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, pp. 78-79.

¹³⁰ *LP*, t. 2, 964.

¹³¹ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 162 (*LP*, t. 2, 3548); BL Cotton Galba B/V, f° 323 (*LP*, t. 2, 3542).

¹³² HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 29.

trade and commerce into a highly militarised zone, and they opposed the project to construct the citadel from the beginning.¹³³ While French towns and cities of the period regularly resisted the financial burden of constructing and maintaining fortifications, this issue was of particular concern for Tournai. The city's distinctive geo-political situation meant that its prosperity was dependent on friendly relations with its neighbours. Although Maximilian was prepared to sidestep the treaty of 1478 in order to maintain good relations with Henry, the Flemish cities were alarmed by the militarisation of Tournai. In August 1515, Ghent's municipal administration appealed to Archduke Charles to prohibit the export of stone and wood from Flanders to Tournai, so that it could not be used in the construction of the citadel.¹³⁴ This economic sanction may have had some effect, as Blount complained in 1516 that he was unable to complete the building due to problems obtaining wood and stone.¹³⁵

With problems of supply and finance slowing the work on the citadel, part of Charles Somerset's mission to the city in the summer of 1515 was to persuade the civic administration to contribute wood, stone and labour.¹³⁶ He invited twelve prominent members of the civic administration (including the *grand prévôt*) to dine with him, hoping to gain their support for the project. However, this attempt was a resounding failure, and the civic administration requested that the plans to construct the citadel be abandoned immediately.¹³⁷ Further problems with funding led Blount to renew his efforts to persuade the city to contribute to the construction costs in

¹³³ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 60r-61v (*LP*, t. 2, 820); *LP*, t. 2, 148; ROLLAND, *Histoire de Tournai*, p. 179.

¹³⁴ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 60v (*LP*, t. 2, 820).

¹³⁵ *LP*, t. 2, 2260, 2274.

¹³⁶ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 130-31.

¹³⁷ *LP*, t. 2, 964.

February 1516. In response to this appeal, the municipal council pleaded that the city was in a poor financial state due to the impact of the siege of 1513 and payment of the 50,000 crowns imposed on the city. They informed Blount that they had already paid out 16,000 l. to repair the damage caused to the fortifications and highlighted the ravages caused by the plague, which they stated had killed the greatly inflated figure of between 13-14,000 townspeople.¹³⁸ Blount was infuriated with the city's claims of poverty and he wrote to Henry to assert that the municipal administration obtained healthy revenues from taxation and that any problems with the civic finances were due to their own mismanagement. There was some truth to this, as the city's finances had slightly improved under Tudor rule as a result of not having to pay pensions to the exiled merchants.¹³⁹

Once it became apparent to Blount that he could expect no assistance from the municipal council, he appealed directly to the general population for support. This was a complete reversal of tactics, as the Tudor administration had previously looked to the municipal elite to support their policies. The governor ordered proclamations to be read throughout the city and its region, stating that the construction of the citadel was in their best interests. Blount believed that he had achieved some success with this campaign and that the resistance to the plan came from the civic administration.¹⁴⁰ There is some evidence to support the governor's claim, as several villages in the Tournaisis offered to provide free labour for use at the citadel. The abbot of St. Amand had offered to contribute to the building costs when it was proposed that the construct the citadel close to his abbey, though these plans were

¹³⁸ TNA SP 1/13, f° 28r-29v (*LP*, t. 2, 1607).

¹³⁹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, pp. 58-9.

¹⁴⁰ BL Cotton Caligula E/I, f° 58r-59v (*LP*, t. 2, 812).

eventually dropped.¹⁴¹ Despite these offers of support from the Tournaisis, there is no evidence that Blount received any backing from citizens of the city. Both the municipal elite and the general population remained overwhelming hostile to the project. This hostility reached its height on the night of 30 May 1517 when a fire broke out in the citadel, as construction was nearing completion. In the wake of the event, the Tudor administration executed a number of townspeople it believed were responsible for the act.¹⁴² It is certainly possible that a number of disgruntled townspeople had set the blaze and there had been previous civic disturbances as a result of the construction of the citadel, though it is also possible that the fire was an accident and the executions were a result of Tudor paranoia towards the general population.¹⁴³ While opposition towards the citadel was the one issue that had united the civic elite and general population, the Tudor administration persisted in its belief that its construction was necessary to quell disorder amongst the city's population.¹⁴⁴

On 19 January 1517, after almost two years of discussion, the municipal council eventually offered to provide some assistance to the project. While the governor, Richard Jerningham, wanted a minimum of five hundred labourers for six months, the municipal administration offered to pay for fifty labourers, though some members of the civic administration deemed even this as excessive. In order to outmanoeuvre the governor, the municipal council sought to redevelop the direct link to the king and his council which Henry had permitted them in the early days of the occupation. A civic delegation led by the *prévôt*, Jean Thorow, went to England in

¹⁴¹ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 198r-99 (*LP*, t. 2, 856).

¹⁴² TNA SP 1/15, f° 143r-143v (*LP*, t. 2, 3313).

¹⁴³ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 301r (*LP*, t. 2, 2274); *LP*, t. 2, 2346).

¹⁴⁴ BL Cotton Caligula D/VI, f° 301 (*LP*, t. 2, 2274); *LP*, t. 2, 1855.

early 1517 to speak to Henry of their concerns regarding the citadel. As part of their attempts to obtain a favourable audience, the civic delegation offered several high-quality tapestries to the king's favourite, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk.¹⁴⁵ Although Tournai's tapestry industry was in sharp decline by the early sixteenth century, its tapestries were much valued in England and the municipal delegation hoped that Brandon would act on their behalf with Henry.¹⁴⁶ While the civic delegation obtained its audience with the king, the friendly relations that had characterised the earlier relationship between Henry and the municipal elite were notably absent. The Tudor monarch informed the delegation the construction of the citadel and maintenance of a permanent garrison were of common benefit to all and that the city should share in the expense.¹⁴⁷ Following this meeting with the king, the civic government agreed to pay for the expenses of one hundred labourers for six months.¹⁴⁸ However, while T. F. Mayer views Henry's response to the municipal delegation and his subsequent threats to re-examine their liberties as a key example of his heavy-handed and authoritarian treatment of the city, when we look in greater

¹⁴⁵ TNA SP 1/14, f° 222r (*LP*, t. 2, 2826).

¹⁴⁶ For Tournai's tapestry industry see: F. JOUBERT, *A propos de la tapisserie tournaisienne au 15e siècle: la question des modèles*, dans *Les Grands Siècles de Tournai (12e – 15e siècles): Recueil d'études publié à l'occasion du 20e anniversaire des Guides de Tournai*, Tournai and Louvain-la-Neuve, 1993, p. 41-58; E. SOIL, *Les tapisseries de Tournai. Les tapissiers et les hautelisseurs de cette ville. Recherches et documents sur l'histoire, la fabrication et les produits des ateliers de Tournai*, Tournai, 1892; J. LESTOCQUOY, *Deux siècles de l'histoire de la tapisserie (1300-1500)*. Paris, Arras, Lille, Tournai, Bruxelles, Arras, 1978; J.-P. ASSELBERGHES, *Les tapisseries tournaisiennes de la guerre de Troie*, Brussels, 1972.

¹⁴⁷ TNA SP 1/15, f° 37r (*LP*, t. 2, 3055).

¹⁴⁸ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, pp. 144-45; TNA SP 1/16, f° 87r-87v (*LP*, t. 2, 3848).

detail it does not appear as draconian as it may first seem. The number of workers provided by the city was only fifty more than they had originally offered and considerably fewer than the five to six hundred demanded by the governor. Henry was still treating the municipal elite favourably by alleviating the burden that some of his officials wanted to place on the city. The Tournaisien workers commenced work on the citadel on 24 April 1517 and finished on 24 October that year, at the cost to the municipal budget of 2264 l.¹⁴⁹ With Tournai's contribution the citadel was completed and the garrison were able to locate there in January 1518, where they remained until the city was returned to French rule in February 1519.¹⁵⁰

Tournai's ceremonial surrender to Henry VIII on 23 September 1513 marked the beginning of five and a half years of Tudor rule at Tournai. For C. G. Cruickshank, this act of submission meant that 'the Tournaisiens were now English' and that 'Tournai was intended to become part of England'.¹⁵¹ In contrast to this view, this article has hoped to demonstrate that Henry ruled over Tournai as king of France. He did not impose English kingship on his French subjects and, unlike Calais, which from the mid-fifteenth century was understood to be an English city in France, Henry VIII was careful to treat Tournai as one of his French possessions.¹⁵² For T. F. Mayer, Henry's actions at Tournai represented a major break with the French policy

¹⁴⁹ HOCQUET, *Occupation*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁰ ROLLAND, *Histoire de Tournai*, p. 180.

¹⁵¹ CRUICKSHANK, *English Occupation*, p. 8, 268.

¹⁵² GRUMMITT, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

of later medieval English monarchs, such as Edward III. However, there was little innovation in Henry's policy towards France in the early years of his reign and he shared the continental ambitions of his predecessors. Henry revived his ancestral claims to the throne of France and he intended his capture of Tournai to mark the beginning of further conquests. The Tudor monarch wanted to emulate the actions of Henry V, who had conquered large swathes of territory in northern France and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Dual Monarchy under his son, Henry VI. Indeed, Steven Gunn has remarked that Henry adopted 'an almost ritualistic imitation of his namesake' and the first English translation of his life was published in the months before Henry VIII invaded France.¹⁵³

Henry's hopes to be taken seriously as king of France are reflected in his relationship with the ruling elite of Tournai, with whom he worked to develop good relations. As well as confirming the city's liberties as they had stood under Valois rule, he also made a wide number of significant additional economic and political grants that were designed to encourage the support of the municipal elite. The city's existing forms of government were preserved and the Tudor administration did not attempt to interfere in the day-to-day running of the city. Although Mayer writes that he acted to bring the whip hand down on the municipal government, his rule at Tournai was, for the most part, characterised by negotiation and persuasion rather than tyranny. Tudor authority could not be maintained by the threat of force alone, especially in a recently acquired city that lay far from the centre of Henry's power, and the Tudor monarch required the support of the municipal council to rule. In spite

¹⁵³ S. GUNN, *The French Wars of Henry VIII*, dans *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe*, J. BLACK (coord.), Edinburgh, 1987, p. 37; C. L. KINGSFORD (éd.), *The First English Life of Henry the Fifth*, Oxford, 1911.

of these efforts, Henry never won the support of the mass of the city's population, who enthusiastically welcomed the return to Valois rule in February 1519, and Tournai's lasting significance lies in the fact that it was last time that an English monarch would attempt to rule in France as king of France.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ When Henry returned to France in 1544 to conquer Boulogne, he expelled the entire population and ruled the city as an English colony in France. For the Boulogne campaign see: M. B. DAVIES, Surrey at Boulogne, dans *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1960, 23, p. 339-48; D. POTTER, *Henry VIII and Francis I: The Final Conflict, 1540-47*, Leiden, 2011, p. 153-204.