

**TITLE**

The King, the Cardinal-Legate and the Field of Cloth of Gold

**AUTHOR**

Richardson, Glenn

**JOURNAL**

Royal Studies Journal

**DATE DEPOSITED**

28 November 2018

**This version available at**

<https://research.stmarys.ac.uk/id/eprint/2817/>

---

**COPYRIGHT AND REUSE**

Open Research Archive makes this work available, in accordance with publisher policies, for research purposes.

**VERSIONS**

The version presented here may differ from the published version. For citation purposes, please consult the published version for pagination, volume/issue and date of publication.



*The King, the Cardinal-Legate  
and the Field of Cloth  
of Gold*

Glenn Richardson

## The King, the Cardinal-Legate, and the Field of Cloth of Gold

Glenn Richardson

**Abstract:** The Field of Cloth of Gold was a meeting in June 1520 between King Francis I of France and King Henry VIII of England. They met to affirm a treaty of peace and alliance between them, which was itself the centre of an international peace between most European princes. The presiding intelligence over the meeting was Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, simultaneously the Lord Chancellor of England and Pope Leo X's legate *a latere* in England.<sup>1</sup> This article looks at the context of that event from Wolsey's perspective, examining how the Universal Peace of 1518 was used in his own ambitions as well as those of Henry VIII. It shows how Wolsey strove to use the international situation at the time to obtain legatine authority, principally to advantage his own king, and himself, rather than the pope whose legate he was, and in whose name he ostensibly acted.

**Keywords:** Field of Cloth of Gold; legate *a latere*; Leo X; Thomas Wolsey; Charles V; Francis I; Henry VIII; Universal Peace; Clement VII; Adrian VI

### Cardinal-Legate

The Field of Cloth of Gold had its inception in plans for international Christian peace first laid out by Pope Leo X when, on 6 March 1518, he proclaimed a five-year international truce among European sovereigns and states, as the necessary prelude to a crusade to retake Istanbul from the Ottomans. Giovanni de' Medici had become pope in March 1513 at the death of Julius II, and had spent the previous five years building on his predecessor's cultural patronage in Rome, while simultaneously managing and ameliorating the consequences of Julius' aggressive policies towards a range of states in Italy and beyond. He promoted his family interests as vociferously as Julius had done his, legitimising his cousin Giulio, and making him a cardinal upon his own elevation. He appointed a number of Medici supporters to the papal curia, and in 1517 made a further thirty-one new appointments. This enabled him to have a compliant consistory upon whose cooperation in his major policies—ecclesiastical, dynastic, and territorial—he could rely.<sup>2</sup>

One of the foreign rulers upon whom Leo felt he could rely for similar cooperation was Henry VIII of England, assisted by Thomas Wolsey, the Archbishop of York, Lord Chancellor, and Henry's chief advisor. Wolsey's prominent role in the conduct of foreign policy under Henry has much occupied generations of historians of the reign. For A. J. Pollard,

---

<sup>1</sup> The full title is *Legatus a latere Apostolicae sedes*—literally a representative sent from the side, or arm, of the Apostolic seat. Francis I is the generally accepted common form of the name in English.

<sup>2</sup> C. Fletcher, *Our Man in Rome: Henry VIII and his Italian Ambassador* (London, 2012), 17.

Wolsey's first modern biographer, England's various changes in alliance were determined by the cardinal's ardent support for papal policy, whatever it was, and his ambition ultimately to be elected to the throne of St Peter himself.<sup>3</sup> More recently, it has been the king's changing priorities, rather than the pope's—and particularly Henry's desire for a high international profile—that are seen to explain Wolsey's actions. The dichotomies between the cardinal-chancellor's responsibilities for foreign policy, for the governance of the Church in England, and for the operation of the legal system, have also been appreciated and explored to varying extents in these accounts.<sup>4</sup> There is also a greater appreciation evident in the most recent biographies of the cardinal of his own awareness of himself as an international figure, and of his interest in the way his fellow cardinals worked with (and were treated by) the papacy and their national sovereigns.<sup>5</sup> This article continues in this recent tradition, but emphasizes how Wolsey himself saw obtaining the authority of a legate *a latere* as key to his capacity to serve Henry at home and abroad, and thus secure his own power and status. It also suggests that Wolsey's achieving this aim only three years after being made a cardinal subsequently involved him in a double game of actually meeting the demands of his English sovereign, while appearing to meet those of the sovereign pontiff until—almost inevitably—the needs of one directly contradicted those of the other.

Henry VIII's relations with Leo X were generally good, as they had been with Julius II before him, and it was in furtherance of these good relations that Leo made Wolsey cardinal-priest of S. Cecilia in Trastevere in September 1515. Anglo-Papal relations were conducted formally in Rome through two men: Silvestro de' Gigli, the absentee Bishop of Worcester; and Cardinal Adriano Castellesi, Bishop of Bath of Wells and papal collector, whose deputy in England was the cleric and chronicler, Polydore Vergil.<sup>6</sup> The two Italians were bitter rivals in curial politics. Wolsey worked well with Gigli, at whose intervention Giulio de' Medici became cardinal protector of England in December 1513. Wolsey's relations with Castellesi deteriorated rapidly thereafter, and Castellesi and Gigli made unedifying interventions in the process by which Wolsey became a cardinal in 1515.<sup>7</sup>

Upon first hearing of Pope Leo's plans in early 1518, Henry and Wolsey shared an apparently widespread scepticism about them. Wolsey promised the pope that he would raise money for the proposed crusade by taxing the English church, but had done nothing about it. He and the king agreed that they should temporise with Leo. On 26 March, Gigli was commissioned to represent Henry in any forthcoming discussions about the planned crusade and they seem to have been content to leave it at that.<sup>8</sup> The following day, however, came news of the appointment, on 4 March, of Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio as Leo's legate *a latere* to England to secure participation in the papal plan. This seems to have changed everything.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Pollard, *Wolsey* (London, 1965), 165-216.

<sup>4</sup> P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990); S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (eds), *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> S. Fletcher, *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* (London, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Cecil H. Clough, "Gigli, Silvestro (1463–1521)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/10671>.

<sup>7</sup> T. F. Mayer, "Castellesi, Adriano (c.1461-1521)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/174>.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509–1547*, eds. J. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie (London, 1862–1932), 2: 4028. Hereafter *LP*; numbers refer to entry, not pages.

Wolsey demanded that he, too, be made a legate before he would cooperate with Campeggio, or even allow him to cross to England.

Wolsey had wanted a legateship for himself when he had first been elevated to the cardinalate three years earlier, but the pope had refused. Now the same pope proposed to send a legate to England. The king, who had already started to turn his mind (sympathetically at this point) to the complex issue of papal authority, was not impressed. His secretary, Richard Pace, told Wolsey that on hearing of Campeggio's appointment, Henry said, that "it was not the rule of this realm to admit legates *de latere*. If however, he had nothing else except to treat against the Turks, he would admit him".<sup>9</sup> Leo responded by offering Wolsey joint legatine status with Campeggio for the duration of the latter's visit. Gigli advised from Rome that Wolsey had in fact been named as the senior cardinal of the two and that therefore only one cross, Wolsey's, was to be borne in procession before them.<sup>10</sup> Leo intended this as an inducement to Wolsey to support the papal plan, and gave him power to raise taxation for the papal crusade. Campeggio left Rome in April, arriving in Calais in mid-June. By then, Wolsey had received news of Leo's grant of legatine power for the international truce. Nevertheless, at the advice of Gigli, Campeggio was still kept waiting for several more weeks, until Leo acceded to another of Wolsey's demands: that Adriano Castellesi be deprived of the cardinalate and his English bishopric. This had first been requested a year earlier, when Wolsey's rancorous relations with Castellesi had reached their nadir. Then Leo had resisted, but Castellesi's subsequent part in a conspiracy against the pope and his flight to Venice in June 1517, together with Leo's need for English support, finally told. Wolsey and Henry had chosen their moment perfectly. The pope made Wolsey Bishop of Bath and Wells *in commendam* in place of Castellesi in July 1518, instantly repatriating the income and patronage of one of the wealthier bishoprics in England. No sooner had this grant been confirmed than Campeggio was conveyed with all speed and ceremony from Calais to London.<sup>11</sup>

## Universal Peace

By the time Wolsey greeted his Italian colleague, he was far ahead of the pope in his own plans for the good of Christendom, and for the greater glory of himself and his master. Wolsey and Henry had no intention of participating in the proposed crusade—much less raising clerical taxation for it—when there was work to be done much closer to home. Since his accession in January 1515, Francis I of France had become Henry's keenest rival. Henry was appalled at Francis's conquest of the Duchy of Milan in September the same year, a conquest that Leo X had recognised in the Concordat of Bologna of 1516, in return for Francis restoring (on paper at least) papal rights of appointment to senior benefices in France—over and against the objections of the king's own senior clergy, and the judges of the Parlement of Paris.<sup>12</sup> Henry and Wolsey had tried unsuccessfully ever since then to put together an alliance with the pope,

---

<sup>9</sup> British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius B III, fo. 203 [*LP* II ii, 4034 (Pace to Wolsey, Abingdon 27 March 1518)].

<sup>10</sup> *LP* II ii, 4179; 4193-4 (Gigli to Wolsey, Rome, 20 May 1518; Campeggio to Wolsey, La Palice, 28 May 1518).

<sup>11</sup> T. F. Mayer, "Castellesi, Adriano (c.1461-1521)"; W. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1974), 104-9.

<sup>12</sup> R. J. Knecht, "The Concordat of 1516: A Reassessment", in *Francis I and the Sixteenth Century*, ed. R. J. Knecht (Farnham, 2015), 16-32.

the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, and Ferdinand of Aragon, against Francis. The French king, for his part, had cultivated Leo assiduously, but French power in Milan unnerved Leo and his Medici relatives in Florence, and he looked to England to help curb French ambitions in Italy. Francis had given a vague undertaking at the time of the Concordat that when he had a son and heir, he would lead a crusade.<sup>13</sup> That son, the dauphin François, had appeared in March 1518, just as the papal plans for a truce were being formulated, and doubtless Leo was hopeful that French military potential could be directed away from Italy. Francis had no more of a desire to go on crusade than had Henry, but Wolsey was determined that it would be his own sovereign, not Francis, who reaped the rewards for apparently coming to the pope's aid. Moreover, he had already seen that peace, rather than war, would not only save Henry money he could ill afford to spend at the time, but also might more effectively prevent Francis having any more military adventures of the kind that had so dismayed Henry and unnerved Leo.

As early as November 1517, Wolsey had accepted French overtures for a proposed new alliance based on Francis's wish to buy back the city of Tournai, conquered by Henry from Louis XII in 1513. Wolsey viewed the birth of the dauphin of France in March as providential in this respect.<sup>14</sup> By the early summer of 1518, he was involved in complex negotiations for a marriage between the French royal heir and Princess Mary. An alliance had been agreed, subject to royal approval, by 22 July.<sup>15</sup> On the surface at least, as he gathered more information about the papal plan and continued negotiations with the French ambassadors, Wolsey acted in accordance with the terms of his legateship to reform the English clergy, to raise clerical taxation, and to arrange Henry's participation in a Christian truce, in preparation for action against the Ottomans.

With this in mind, Cardinal Campeggio's formal reception into the kingdom of England was minutely stage-managed by Wolsey. From the outset, he was determined that he would be welcomed in a way that recognised Campeggio's high status as a cardinal-legate to England (rare as that historically was). Wolsey was, however, equally determined that his own equivalent, and in fact superior, status as the cardinal-legate *of* England and first-named member in the legatine commission, would be honoured—before domestic and international audiences alike. Campeggio arrived at Deal on 23 July. After being received into Canterbury, and venerating at the shrine of St Thomas a Becket, he travelled by slow degrees towards London, lodging at various ecclesiastical houses en route. The chronicler Edward Hall informs us that Campeggio's apparently meagre entourage was outfitted in red at Wolsey's expense, and his baggage train of eight sumpter mules was supplemented by twelve more from Wolsey.<sup>16</sup> The English cardinal certainly told Leo that he had assisted Campeggio, and it demonstrates Wolsey's determination that his guest would look as splendid as possible as the pope's legate, primarily in order that he could look equally splendid himself alongside him.

Thus arrayed, on Thursday 29 July, the Italian cardinal was formally received at

---

<sup>13</sup> See J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), 56-70, on Henry's unsuccessful efforts to isolate Francis between 1515 and 1518.

<sup>14</sup> BL, Cotton MS Caligula D VII fo. 2 [LP II ii, 4064] (Instructions to negotiate from Etienne de Poncher, Bishop of Paris to Jean Gobelín, 8 April 1518); LP II ii, 3812, (Wolsey to Gigli in Rome, undated, but from context November 1517).

<sup>15</sup> BL, Cotton MS Caligula D VII fos 9-17 [LP II ii, 4293, 4304]; *Catalogue des actes de François Ier*, ed. P. Marichal (Paris, 1887-1910) 1: 864, 868. The French envoy's commission for the alliance is dated Angers, 3 July 1518.

<sup>16</sup> E. Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of York and Lancastre* (London, 1809), 592.



Blackheath by the Duke of Norfolk and the Bishop of Durham, with a large company of nobles and gentlemen. From here, Campeggio entered London across its famous bridge, received by the whole clergy, the guilds, the Mayor, and aldermen of the city. After giving benediction at the High Altar of St Paul's, he was conveyed to his accommodation at Bath Place where he was greeted by none other than the very, very recently-appointed Bishop of Bath and Wells, Thomas Wolsey.<sup>17</sup> The high point of Campeggio's formal welcome came when Henry received the two papal legates at Greenwich on 3 August. Each made his way in a barge on the Thames, and at the riverside palace, with Wolsey's legatine cross borne before them, the two cardinals met the king. Hall tells us that, in front of the entire English court, "the Cardinal of York went on the right hand [of the king, signifying his status as host and first named in the commission for the peace] and there the king royally apparelled and accompanied, met them even as though both had come from Rome"—just as Wolsey intended. The commission from Leo X was read out, declaring the two cardinals' authority to conclude a truce, and to reform the clergy in England. Mass and a banquet followed, before the two cardinal-legates returned to London and "rode through the city together in great pomp and glory, to their lodgings".<sup>18</sup> The high-ranking representatives of the English political, commercial, and ecclesiastical elite had been actively co-opted into acknowledging the very particular authority and status of Campeggio as a papal legate *a latere* in their midst. As the procession through London on 3 August made clear, by welcoming him in a manner that befitted the honour of England, the political establishment had also necessarily to acknowledge the increased international status of Campeggio's fellow legate, Cardinal Wolsey.

All of this, Wolsey would have said, only redounded to the honour of the king. Given the traditional antipathy to the presence in England of papal legates, he was at some pains to reassure Henry that his own legateship would increase not only the king's honour, but also his authority as well. Happily, Henry did indeed seem pleased about the outcome. As early as April, Pace had told Wolsey "how well contented" Henry was with Wolsey's ambition to be joined as equal with Campeggio.<sup>19</sup> At some point in September, the cardinal drafted a long description for Henry of how the papal legate to France, Cardinal Bibbiena, had been received there, based on information obtained from the French ambassadors.<sup>20</sup> Wolsey told Henry how the French, after much debate, had decided that the legate should have a canopy over him in the king's presence, and how Francis had met him on horseback and escorted him, placing the legate on his right side. He noted that no oration was made at Bibbiena's formal reception, "as was done here", and that hundreds of nobles continued to escort him everywhere until the legate had himself asked that they might be dispensed with. This description shows how important ceremonies that emphasised status were to Wolsey, as a man who had risen from humble origins, and may well have been in his mind when, nearly two years later, he contemplated his own formal entry to France as legate *a latere* at the Field of Cloth of Gold. More immediately, it emphasized to Henry the significance of his having not only a visiting, but also a resident, cardinal legate in his realm. For already, Wolsey was demanding that the

---

<sup>17</sup> LP II ii, 4333 (an anonymous contemporary description of the reception of Cardinal Campeggio).

<sup>18</sup> Hall, *Chronicle*, 593.

<sup>19</sup> LP II ii, 4055 (Pace to Wolsey, 1 April 1518).

<sup>20</sup> Bernardo Dovizi (1470-1520) was made Cardinal of Santa Maria in Portico by Leo X. Painted by Raphael, he took the name of his home town.

legatine power he had just been given should extend beyond Campeggio's time in England. On 27 August, Leo did issue a further extension of Wolsey's legatine powers (with Campeggio) to reform monasteries, but not the secular clergy as well.<sup>21</sup>

Even as he had been participating in these ceremonies, Wolsey had received news that Francis I was planning to send one of the largest and most splendid embassies ever seen in England to conclude the Anglo-French alliance. It duly arrived in September, and was received with all possible splendour by an English sovereign and his court determined to impress their high-ranking French guests. In anticipation of its arrival, Wolsey presented Campeggio with the *fait accompli* of the alliance, doubtless explaining that it was an excellent, and perhaps even necessary, prelude to the securing of the papal truce, while fending off his questions about how the clerical taxation for the crusade was proceeding. Campeggio played no part in the final negotiation of the agreement in September, as it lay outside his commission as legate. He nevertheless met with French and Venetian ambassadors and consulted with Wolsey, who informed him of his own efforts to secure the adherence of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, Charles of Spain, Venice, and a number of other states in an agreement. It is far from clear that Wolsey was open with his colleague about the full extent, or even the exact nature, of those negotiations, or that they were leading to something other than the truce envisaged by the pope. This marks the beginning of Wolsey's double game of telling the pope that he was doing what he was bidden, while acting solely for his king's advantage. As late as October, Leo was still authorising his legates in England to make arrangements with a number of princes "for an expedition against the Turk who has killed the Soldan [the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt] and conquered Syria, Egypt and Africa".<sup>22</sup>

That, however, was certainly *not* what was proclaimed in London the same day. Instead of a truce and a league for a crusade, a treaty for what became known as the 'Universal Peace' was signed and made public. There is only fragmentary evidence of its evolution, but it bears all the hallmarks of Wolsey's quick intelligence in seeking something more directly to Henry's purposes. Taking advantage of a widespread demand for peace, famously articulated by Erasmus and his English friend Sir Thomas More, Wolsey conceived of a covenant of permanent peace and league throughout Christendom. Territorial and other disputes between signatories were to be referred, not to Leo X as the pope originally envisaged, but to Henry VIII (and Wolsey) as the 'arbiter' of the agreement. The ultimate sanction for those who broke treaty obligations was 'police action' of war by all the other signatories until peace had been restored, and reparation made.<sup>23</sup> This plan was both underpinned and crowned by a high-profile Anglo-French alliance that tied Francis I into peace as Henry's closest ally. In the short term, all states avoided potential financial and military commitments of a crusade at the pope's behest.

Leo was given just four months to signal his acceptance of the league, despite being given no formal role in it. Campeggio, as legate, apparently attended the swearing of oaths to the new treaty during High Mass at St Paul's on 3 October, but did not sign the document. Wolsey signed as "Cardinal of York", and presumably as Lord Chancellor of England and

---

<sup>21</sup> LP II ii, Appendix 52 (draft letter to Henry, undated but from context, September 1518).

<sup>22</sup> LP II ii 4472 (Leo's commission to Wolsey and Campeggio, dated 2 October 1518).

<sup>23</sup> Garrett Mattingly, "An Early Non-Aggression Pact", *Journal of Modern History*, 10.1 (1938): 1–30. See also Scarisbrick, 70–74.



resident papal legate.<sup>24</sup> As cardinal-legate, he then presided over the Mass at which the oaths to the treaty were sworn, from a canopied seat, “with so many pontifical ceremonies, and of such unusual splendour, as to defy exaggeration” according to Sebastian Giustinian, the Venetian ambassador at Henry’s court. The oaths were made in tones barely audible, such that Giustinian thought it was equivalent to cancelling the clause about a crusade against the Ottomans.<sup>25</sup> Wolsey and Campeggio proclaimed the plenary indulgence they had been empowered to bestow when the truce was concluded, and so appeared to show that what was being done had papal sanction. That evening, Wolsey hosted an enormous banquet at York Place—his London residence as Archbishop—such as was “never given either by Cleopatra or Caligula”, according to Giustinian. Henry and his sister Mary led twelve couples of courtiers, including Mary’s husband and Henry’s best friend, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, in a masque. “Large bowls, filled with ducats and dice” were placed before the company by masked dancers, and further informal dancing followed until midnight.<sup>26</sup> More than simply not fully informing the pope what he was doing with his legatine authority, Wolsey was now actively deceiving Leo about it.

### Field of Cloth of Gold

The Anglo-French peace and alliance agreement was also signed and sworn during these days. One of the terms of that treaty was that the two kings were to meet personally to affirm their alliance and their commitment to the Universal Peace. This was not what Leo X wanted at all, as he feared the uncertain potential of an Anglo-French alliance. The meeting was first scheduled for the summer of 1519, but the death of Emperor Maximilian in January that year and the subsequent imperial election—in which both Henry and Francis were candidates to succeed him—resulted in a postponement until the summer of 1520. Throughout the first half of 1519, Wolsey was industrious in implementing the Anglo-French treaty, and trying to improve the relationship between his master and the king of France. Wolsey co-ordinated the necessary arrangements for the return of Tournai to French hands, and the identification and reception of young French hostages sent to England as security for the full performance of Francis’s obligations under the treaty. He worked closely with Sir Thomas Boleyn, the first resident English ambassador at the French court. Boleyn was occupied mainly with expressing fulsome support for Francis’s bid to succeed Maximilian while protecting his master from having to do so personally.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Campeggio remained in England and, by March 1519, the pope had issued a new commission to the two legates, ratifying what had been concluded in London the previous October: he had little choice anyway as he could not be seen to reject the apparent concord in Christendom for which he had first called. On 16 March, they were once more formally received at the English court as legates to present their new commissions, and as if

---

<sup>24</sup> *LP II ii*, 4469, 4470 (articles for the Treaty of Universal Peace, dated London 2 October 1518).

<sup>25</sup> *Four Years at the court of Henry VIII. Selection of despatches written by the Venetian ambassador Sebastian Giustinian... 1515 to 1519*, trans. Rawdon Brown (London, 1854), 2: 225.

<sup>26</sup> *Foedera, conventiones, literae et cuiuscunque generis acta publica*, ed. T. Rymer (London, 1727–35), 13: 625–32; *Four Years at the court of Henry VIII*, 2: 225; Hall, 594–5.

<sup>27</sup> G. Richardson, “Entertainments for the French ambassadors at the court of Henry VIII”, *Renaissance Studies* 9.4 (1995), 404–15.

newly sent from Rome, “with all the ceremonies observed on first arrival”, as ambassador Giustinian noted. This time, however, there was an added element in the person of Count Horn, the ambassador of Charles of Spain who was, as Maximilian’s grandson, the principal contender to succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor. He formally thanked Henry for making Charles the “principal” confederate in the universal peace, “not mentioning the Pope or any other”. On 20 March, during High Mass sung by Campeggio, the two legates signed a document signifying Leo’s acceptance of the Universal Peace, and gave another plenary indulgence to all present. Reflecting on all of this Giustinian observed further:

the chief author of these proceedings is Wolsey, whose sole aim is to procure incense for his King and himself. He will, in point of fact, make sale of all these settlements, and nothing pleases him more than to be stiled the arbitrator of the affairs of Christendom.<sup>28</sup>

Wolsey’s directions to the Bishop of Worcester in Rome, and his dealings with the departing Campeggio at this time, certainly support the Venetian ambassador’s view. He pressed the bishop to discover who, if anyone, Leo supported in the imperial election, while suggesting Henry as an alternative candidate. He continued to represent what had been agreed in London the previous autumn as a prelude to a crusade, when the Universal Peace was actually intended to prevent one. Wolsey presented himself as devoted to the papacy’s interests and linked his service to a further demand for the extension of his legatine power over the Church in England after Campeggio’s departure, ostensibly to reform the clergy and urge the (now defunct) crusade. Once again, Wolsey’s awareness of events in France came to hand. He instructed Worcester to remind the pope that a similar privilege had been accorded to the “bishop of Bussi”—Adrien de Gouffier, Bishop of Coutances and Cardinal de Boisy—who the same month had been made a papal legate *a latere* for one year for the realm of France after the return to Rome of Cardinal Bibbiena, Campeggio’s counterpart. Wolsey asserted that he had served the Holy See far more assiduously and effectively than Boisy ever had.<sup>29</sup> On 10 June, Leo did concede Wolsey legatine power to continue reform of the monasteries after Campeggio’s departure, but nothing more. Charles of Spain’s election as Emperor the same month cleared the way for Henry and Francis to fulfil their commitment to meet each other as agreed in the Treaty of London. Campeggio left England on 24 August and even as he did so, Wolsey petitioned the pope again for an extension of his legatine powers and once more Leo resisted, still having had no satisfactory response to his request for clerical taxation. In the end, however, pressure from Henry and Leo’s wish to prevent the Anglo-French alliance told, and by the end of the year, Wolsey had secured the extension of legatine power for a year, backdated from Campeggio’s departure.

Medieval elites usually celebrated being at peace by playing war games, so the planned meeting was to be an extended tournament, punctuated with lavish celebratory banquets. Detailed planning began in February 1520, when Henry signed a treaty setting forward the arrangements that was eventually ratified by Francis.<sup>30</sup> A proclamation followed, and a “Memoriall” of all things necessary was drawn up under Wolsey’s supervision, as were detailed

---

<sup>28</sup> *Four Years at the court of Henry VIII*, 2: 276.

<sup>29</sup> *LP III i*, 137 (Wolsey to Gigli, Lambeth, 25 March 1519).

<sup>30</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 5761, 39r-42r, “Articles pour l’entrevue du roy et du roy d’angleterre faite à ardre”; *LP III i*, 702.

lists of the numbers of attendants that each of the principal members of Henry's entourage could bring with them to the meeting. It eventually numbered around 6,000 people, about the size of an English army during the Hundred Years War. Francis brought a similar number with him to the Field. Wolsey's personal retinue was the largest apart from those of the king and queen. He was able to bring fifty gentlemen, twelve chaplains, and 237 servants: 299 men in total, and 150 horses.<sup>31</sup> Due to his status as cardinal, Wolsey's immediate household wore red livery that, Cavendish tell us, "was either of fine scarlet or else of crimson satin, taffeta, damask or caffia, the best that he could get for money".<sup>32</sup>

While overseeing the intense diplomatic activity required to co-ordinate the meeting of the two courts, Wolsey also superintended the preparation of accommodation and provisioning for the English entourage in and around the town of Guînes in the Pale of Calais.<sup>33</sup> In April, as English preparations reached their pitch, Leo X sent Girolamo Ghinucci as his nuncio to England, and he kept the pope informed of plans for the Anglo-French meeting, in a way that Wolsey evidently did not.<sup>34</sup> With the attention to detail that Henry prized in him, Wolsey worked with a three-man commission liaising on the building of a magnificent temporary palace just outside Guînes to house the leading members of the royal family—and himself—when they entertained their French counterparts.

Observers' descriptions indicate that the front range of the palace carried a gateway that gave access to the inner court and an entrance hall. To the left of the "principal entry" on the first floor level were Wolsey's lodgings which comprised, "two halls and a chamber" that extended from the gate house around the angle of the building and about half way along the left side wing. They connected to the king's apartments on the same side of the palace. On the opposite side were the same arrangements for Mary, Duchess of Suffolk, and for Queen Katherine. We have no description of Wolsey's apartments beyond one observation that the first two chambers were hung with "silken tapestry without gold, of astounding beauty".<sup>35</sup> The hangings may have been at least part of a set of the *Triumphs of Petrarch* that appear to have been made for the cardinal in 1520, on a design first presented to Louis XII by Cardinal George d'Amboise in about 1503. As Lord Chancellor and papal legate, Wolsey had access to the king's apartments throughout the duration of the Field. He also presumably had use of a gallery that led from the king's side back to the Guînes castle which, Hall noted, was intended "for the secrete passage of the kynges persone into a secrete lodgyng within the same castle the more for the kings ease".<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "Two papers relating to the interview between Henry the Eighth of England and Francis the First of France", ed. J. Caley, *Archaeologia* 21 (London, 1827), 176; Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1116, fols 95-99: 95r.

<sup>32</sup> George Cavendish, *[The] Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, in *Two Early Tudor Lives*, eds. R. Sylvester and D. Harding (New Haven and London, 1962), 24.

<sup>33</sup> See G. Richardson, *The Field of Cloth of Gold* (New Haven and London, 2013), 52-72, on English and French preparations for the Field.

<sup>34</sup> *LP III* i, 720 (Gigli to Wolsey, Rome, 4 April 1520, advising that Leo was annoyed at having had no communication about the forthcoming meeting). Cecil H. Clough, "Ghinucci, Girolamo (1480-1541)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/66931>.

<sup>35</sup> *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice etc.*, eds. R. Brown, C. Bentinck, and H. Brown (London, 1864-98) 2: 94. Hereafter cited as *CSPV*.

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *Chronicle*, 606; *CSPV* 2: 94; S. Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460-1547* (New Haven and London, 1993), 46, where a conjectural plan of the palace conforms to Mantuan ambassador's report.

Wolsey also oversaw the preparation of the vast array of tents covered with rich fabric, including the cloth of gold, which gives the event its name. Wolsey charged the Deputy of Calais, Sir John Peche, with securing sufficient livestock, grain, and other provisions to feed the English entourage and to provide banquets for Henry's French guests. Wolsey sent some of his own household officers to assist the royal 'harbingers' who were arranging accommodation for the English. A surviving draft of instructions to one such ordered him to remind the harbingers that at Dover, at Sandwich, at Calais, and at Guînes, Wolsey should have "convenient" lodgings, "so that I be not disappointed at my coming". He also wanted to know whether flour and beer were "as cheap, good, and plentiful there as here". Wolsey further instructed his servant to investigate whether a wide range of specified game birds and poultry could be obtained in and beyond the Calais Pale.<sup>37</sup>

These instructions appear to relate to the provisions for Wolsey's own entourage and his guests, rather than to the larger English party. Wolsey and his retinue attended on Charles V when he visited Henry at Canterbury in the last days of May, prior to the start of the Field. Charles was Henry's nephew by marriage, and already Francis's staunch opponent. Henry was the first European sovereign Charles had greeted personally since his election to the imperial throne the previous year. His aim in visiting was to dissuade Wolsey and Henry from concluding anything with Francis that might be to his prejudice. He received assurances that they would not, and that Henry would meet him again immediately after the Field. Henry and Katherine crossed from Dover to Calais on board the *Katherine Plesaunce* on the morning of Friday 31 May. It is known that Wolsey did not travel with them because he was escorting the emperor to Sandwich, from where Charles sailed for the Netherlands, and Wolsey crossed to Calais.

### Wolsey's Negotiations with Francis

On Friday June 1, Wolsey met the king of France for the first time. He travelled with a huge entourage the short distance from Guînes to Ardres, in French territory just outside the Pale of Calais where the French king was lodged. Wearing scarlet silk and velvet robes and a clerical hat, he rode a mule richly caparisoned in gold and red. A second mule was led before him, as was his *galero* hat. As was customary, two crosses were borne in procession. One signified Wolsey's status as Archbishop of York, and it stopped at the border with France. The second, a double cross, signified his episcopal and legatine status. The cardinal was escorted by the fifty gentlemen of his household, and 100 archers of the king's guard guarded him on his way. Before him rode six of the eight English bishops who were present at the Field. These ecclesiastical grandees were joined by Thomas Docwra, the Prior of the Knights of the Order of St John. He had been included as part of the fiction that the Anglo-French peace of 1518 under which the two kings met was part of a European-wide truce orchestrated by Wolsey, ostensibly under papal auspices, as the prelude to military action against the Ottomans.<sup>38</sup>

As Wolsey arrived at Ardres, artillery boomed in salute from the walls of the town.

---

<sup>37</sup> BL, Cotton Caligula D VII fo.229 [LP III i, 851].

<sup>38</sup> B. de Montfaucon, *Les monuments de la monarchie française* (Paris, 1732), 4: 165-67 [LP III i, 869]; Jacobus Sylvius, *Francisci Francorum Regis et Henrici Anglorum Colloquium*, eds. S. Bamforth and J. Dupèbe, *Renaissance Studies* 5 (March-June 1991), 57-61; *CSPV*, 3: 58, 59.

Francis came out to meet Wolsey, escorted by his mounted archers. They embraced, Wolsey removed his hat but, aware of his legatine status, he made no other deferential gesture, nor did he dismount. The king escorted the cardinal to his own lodgings in the town and they embraced again after dismounting. Wolsey's procession to meet the king of France on 1 June 1520, and his assurance in meeting him in the way he did, should be contextualised. This was the first time Wolsey had appeared in a foreign country as cardinal-legate *a latere*, and as Lord Chancellor of England. As Hall noted, there was something of royalty in his manner, and Wolsey was very conscious of representing both English and papal sovereignty in this encounter.<sup>39</sup> Wolsey also wanted to impress Francis with his power, dignity, and personal charm in the hope of establishing a good working relationship with him. He was aware that for six years the French king had been receiving reports of him from his ambassadors in England, and others as well. These accounts had often been ambivalent about him, and Wolsey wanted to emphasise his importance in the recent past and for the immediate future in securing Henry's co-operation with Francis, and also perhaps his own potential support of Francis's relations with the Holy See.

Wolsey returned to Henry the same day and having reported, requested full, plenipotentiary, power to negotiate with Francis. This being granted, a few days later, Wolsey returned to Ardres and demanded the same from Francis in order to dispense with French and English councils, and to negotiate directly between the two kings. As papal legate he might have been expected to ask for such a thing and Francis duly obliged, perhaps half-heartedly. As Hall smugly put it, "It was highly esteemed & taken for great love that the Frenche Kyng had geven so greate power to the Kyng of England's subject".<sup>40</sup> Then, having been granted his request, Wolsey scrupulously refused to accept it unless, and until, he had Henry's express permission to do so. This in effect gave Henry the power to arbitrate on Francis's decision to delegate his own sovereignty to Wolsey. Moreover, it allowed Henry to determine whether Wolsey could in practice exercise the papal authority, as legate for peace, with which Leo had invested him anew in 1519. Henry was therefore placed in a subtly superior position to both as the one whose final consent was required for Wolsey to exercise not only any royal authority, but also papal authority. It is perhaps the best illustration of his use of legatine authority to flatter and serve the interests of his own sovereign, rather than those of the pope who had delegated that authority to him.

While no record has survived of the negotiations Wolsey subsequently conducted at Ardres, they evidently dealt with existing Anglo-Scottish disputes and perhaps also those between Francis I and Charles V. A treaty was signed on 6 June, but it essentially ratified the status quo after agreements made since 1514. Once the negotiations were completed, the two kings were able to meet. They did so on 7 June. That day, Wolsey dined with the French king as a final gesture of reassurance and goodwill before the legate returned to Guînes at about 3.00pm. At about 5.00pm, the two kings set off towards the appointed meeting place, about a mile east of Guînes in a place called the Val d'Or, or golden valley. Each was escorted by entourages of guards and gentlemen in their hundreds, and they finally confronted each other across a shallow vale at the meeting place. Each paused for a time before, as previously agreed,

---

<sup>39</sup> Hall, *Chronicle*, 607. The book that Hall refers to is probably *L'ordonnance et ordre du tournoy*, summarised in LP III i, 870. The description of the cardinal's procession to which Hall refers is on sigs. B3v to C1r.

<sup>40</sup> Hall, *Chronicle*, 607-8.



riding down its floor to meet. Henry was escorted by Wolsey, together with the Marquis of Dorset, bearing the Sword of State, and Sir Henry Guildford, the Master of the Horse. After Henry and Francis had embraced on horseback, they dismounted and entered a lavishly decorated tent at the centre of the vale together. There they had a conversation chaired by Wolsey, in which they affirmed their commitment to the Universal Peace and friendly intentions towards each other. The meeting went on for longer than planned, and finally towards sunset Wolsey brought it to a conclusion, and the two kings with their entourages returned to their respective towns.<sup>41</sup> In the days after this first meeting, the jousts of the tournament were held, and Wolsey was closely involved in entertaining French nobles and high ecclesiastics at Guînes during a series of banquets held in their honour. The Manutan ambassador Soardino reported that Wolsey entertained the French princes who had accompanied the king for a banquet on one such occasion, and another source informs us that on another, Queen Katherine and Wolsey together hosted the French king's mother, Louise de Savoie, in Wolsey's apartments in the temporary palace.<sup>42</sup>

Wolsey's personal high point at the Field of Cloth of Gold was the Mass of the Trinity, which he celebrated on St John's Day, 24 June—the penultimate day of the event. A special temporary chapel and altar was erected across the top of the tiltyard where the tournament had taken place. This was mostly for practical reasons as the best place to accommodate the greatest number of participants, but also perhaps intended to signify the triumph of a holy peace over war. Wolsey was robed in full pontificals, wearing jewelled sandals and enthroned under a canopy to the right of the high altar. Cardinal de Boisy, his counterpart as papal legate in France, sat opposite him also under a canopy—but one step down from Wolsey. Accompanying Boisy were the cardinals of Albret, Bourbon, and Lorraine. A further dozen French prelates sat near these cardinals, and eight or nine of their English counterparts sat opposite them below Wolsey. The cardinal gave a plenary indulgence at the Mass, and then had to contend with the appearance over the site of the dragon kite, flown over the tiltyard at the high point of the ceremony, probably in tribute to Francis, as featured in the famous painting of the Field now in the Royal Collection and displayed at Hampton Court Palace.<sup>43</sup>

### **Royal and Papal Arbiter**

The activities between Guînes and Ardres were widely reported and discussed throughout Europe, not least at the Vatican. The imperial ambassador at the papal court, Juan Manuel, reported home that news had reached Rome of how Wolsey had apparently boasted to a papal official with the court at Guînes of his power to conclude a tri-partite alliance between the kings of England and France and his master Charles.<sup>44</sup> When they had met at Dover in May, it had been agreed that Charles and Henry would meet again at Gravelines on Wednesday 4 July, immediately after Henry had left the Field. In the days after the Anglo-French summit, the

---

<sup>41</sup> See Hall, *Chronicle*, 608-10, for a description of the meeting of the two kings.

<sup>42</sup> *CSPV*, 2: 90 (Soardino to the Marquess of Mantua, Ardes, 19 June 1520); 91 (Giovanni Badoer and Antonio Giustinian to the Venetian Signory, Ardes, 21 June 1520).

<sup>43</sup> Richardson, *The Field of Cloth of Gold*, 170-74, for a fuller account of the incident.

<sup>44</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, eds. G. A. Bergenroth et. al. (London, 1862–1964), 2: 281 (Juan Manuel to the Emperor, 13 June 1520). Hereafter cited as *CSP Sp*.



emperor's council suggested that Henry should instead make his way to Bruges in Flanders to meet Charles there. This suggestion was rejected out of hand by Wolsey, but he did agree to meet the imperial Grand Chancellor Meurino Gattinara and Guillaume de Croy, the Marquess of Aerscot, at Calais. They were evidently anxious to speak with him prior to the meeting between their two sovereigns. That this meeting was intended to stop any talk of a triple alliance with Francis is clear from Gattinara's note on the margin of Juan Manuel's letter of 13 June to the effect that the ambassador in Rome was not to worry about Wolsey's boast because, "we are about to conclude a treaty with the King of England".<sup>45</sup> This was to be very different kind of triple alliance from the one of which Wolsey boasted: one between Leo X, Henry, and Charles *against* Francis in support of Charles's attempt to wrest Milan from French hands. This is exactly the sort of alliance that Francis feared, and why he had staked so much on a personal meeting with Henry to affirm his commitment to the Franco-English alliance of 1518.

Charles's request that Henry come to Bruges to meet him was therefore really a ploy to buy extra time. Uncertain of what Wolsey might make his visit to Calais betoken internationally, and well aware of the cardinal's influence, Charles wanted his ministers to persuade Wolsey to dissuade Henry from honouring the peace with France, and instead to form an Anglo-Imperial alliance. This Wolsey resolutely refused to do. At about this time he declared that he knew that the pope did not trust him (which was true), and that Leo was deceived by others (by whom he presumably meant the imperialists). It was himself who, in striving for peace between the three sovereigns, truly served the papacy—whether Leo believed it or not—and certainly the peace in Christendom that the pope had been loudly calling for since 1517.<sup>46</sup> All of this rankled at the papal court, where Wolsey had long since been identified as the key to Henry. The pope and his advisors also thought they knew the key to Wolsey. Juan Manuel reported home that Leo had said he would "make the Cardinal his legate in England" if he could bring about the anti-French alliance, by which he presumably meant extending or making for life the powers last granted in 1519. Leo doubtless held this out in the hope that the imperial advisors could suggest it to Wolsey, knowing as he did how ardently and how often Wolsey had sought an extension of his legateship. Ten days later, Leo also conferred the rich see of Badajoz on Wolsey, apparently at Charles's suggestion, and doubtless as another inducement to conclude the anti-French alliance.<sup>47</sup>

Henry and Charles did meet finally, as agreed, on 10 July at Gravelines. At Calais over the following three days the emperor was entertained, and negotiations were conducted. A treaty was agreed, but nothing in it contradicted the pre-existing Anglo-French alliance agreement and for Mary's marriage to the dauphin. Among other things, the two rulers agreed to send special representatives to Calais within two years to work towards increased co-operation between them, but no plans for an attack on France were made. Both sides were evidently serious about a deal between them, but in the end the English were not serious enough because at this point Henry and Wolsey had more to gain by keeping Henry in the role of

---

<sup>45</sup> *CSP Sp.*, 2: 281.

<sup>46</sup> *CSP Sp.*, 2: 288 (Juan Manuel to the Emperor, Rome, 22 July 1520, reporting news heard earlier in the month).

<sup>47</sup> *LP III i*, 866 (Spinelly to Wolsey, Ghent, 8 June 1520); *CSP Sp.*, 2: 283, 286 (Juan Manuel to Guillaume de Croy, seigneur de Chièvres, Rome, 5 July and the same to the Emperor, 13 July 1520).

international arbiter.<sup>48</sup>

From Wolsey's point of view, it seemed that the Field of Cloth had worked very well. After some years of political isolation, Henry was now allied to the two most powerful monarchs of Western Europe, and was where Wolsey knew he wanted to be. He was careful always to pose as an advocate of peace, and seemed always to have papal authority and blessing for the actions he took. The reality was rather different. Leo's promise to extend his legatine status if he secured a Franco-Imperial alliance may have been sincere, but it was evidently not compelling enough for Wolsey to act upon it. Was that because he genuinely believed in the Anglo-French peace, or at least the Universal Peace agreement that it underpinned? He may well have done, at least insofar as it served Henry's purposes very well between 1518 and 1520 to be the arbitrator of peace, if it meant curbing the ambitions of his great rival Francis, without having to commit himself to an expensive war for the aims of the emperor or the pope. The Universal Peace kept their options open, and to traduce Francis so quickly after the Field would have damaged the English king's reputation, rather than enhancing it. Likewise, betraying Francis would have subjected England's foreign policy priorities to papal ones, something Wolsey always refused to do. Wolsey's legatine status technically ended shortly after his return to London after the Field. Given his conspicuous failure to raise the clerical taxation for which, among other things, it had first been granted, it is perhaps surprising that in January 1521 Leo agreed to a further extension of that status and those powers: not for life, but for a further two years. The only real explanation for this conciliatory gesture is that the pope still hoped for Wolsey's cooperation against Francis. More followed. In April and in June, Leo further extended the legatine status for ten years, and amplified Wolsey's powers over the English church considerably. He had, in the end, more or less honoured the promise of which he had spoken the previous summer.<sup>49</sup>

The outbreak of war between Charles and Francis in the spring of 1521, of exactly the kind that the Universal Peace was meant to deal with, demonstrated the paucity of Henry's claims to arbitrate conflict. Although, under the terms of the treaty, he convened a peace conference between the French and the Habsburgs at Calais in the summer of 1521, in the end Wolsey had little choice but to swing Henry behind Charles. The emperor's preponderant strength made him the more likely victor, and at all costs, Henry had to be kept on the winning side.<sup>50</sup> Even so, Wolsey still wanted to delay to the latest possible moment the point of Henry's military intervention in the conflict in an effort first to save money, then to raise further funds, and finally in the hope that a resolution of the conflict might be arrived at before Henry was committed to war.<sup>51</sup>

In all of this, Wolsey seems once more to have ignored Leo X, calculating on the

---

<sup>48</sup> *CSP Sp.*, 2: 287 (Treaty between Charles V and Henry VIII dated 14 July 1520). See also: *LP III* i, 908, 914; BL, *Le trin[m]phe festifx bien venue [et] honorable recoeil fait par le roy da[n]gleterre en la ville de Calais a la tressacree Cesaree catholig[ue] maeste ...* (Arras, 1520),

<[www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/pageview.aspx?strFest=0009&strPage=001](http://www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/pageview.aspx?strFest=0009&strPage=001)>.

<sup>49</sup> *LP III* i, 1216 (Leo X to Wolsey, Rome, 1 April 1520). The full text of Leo's letter of 27 June 1521, detailing amplified powers, is printed in P. D. Clarke, "Rivalling Rome: Cardinal Wolsey and Dispensations", in *Papal Authority and the Limits of the Law in Tudor England*, eds. P. D. Clarke and M. Questier (Cambridge, 2015), 31-9.

<sup>50</sup> P. Gwyn, "Wolsey's Foreign Policy: The Conferences at Calais and Bruges Reconsidered", *Historical Journal* 23.4 (1980), 755-72.

<sup>51</sup> Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, 147-56.

pope's limited room for action in the Franco-Imperial conflict. He had, after all, relatively easily hijacked the papal truce plans and in Wolsey's view, Leo owed him a debt of gratitude for making a much grander entity of them to bring about the unity of Christendom the pope ostensibly wanted. The pope took rather a different view. Although accepting the imposition upon him of the Universal Peace, Leo's fears about French dominance in the Italian peninsula were probably as great, or greater, than his anger at Wolsey for hijacking his truce plans. They led him to promote the tri-partite alliance first rejected by Henry and Wolsey in July 1520. Leo pursued his own negotiations with imperial representatives, and an alliance with Charles was agreed by May 1521. Of this Wolsey was kept ignorant—even as discussions were maintained about the presentation to the pope of Henry's defence of the Church against Luther, the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, as well as action against heretics in England, and the death of the Bishop of Worcester.<sup>52</sup> In July, Leo pressed Henry to send his treatise to Rome where it would be assured of a warm welcome. Wolsey maintained that, as legate for the peace, he was duty-bound in calling the Calais conference, to represent the pope at it, but he acceded to Francis's request that the pope should be asked to send a representative to it "to watch his interests, as Francis is bound to make no treaty with Charles without the pope's consent".<sup>53</sup> This was a somewhat disingenuous claim, and was Francis's back-handed way of warning the papacy not to break the Concordat of Bologna by which Leo X had recognised him as the Duke of Milan. Francis and his regime knew well enough by 1521 that the pope was working against them. His request also made plain how grudging was French confidence in Wolsey, as one who claimed to be have pope's trust in peace-making. There was never any papal involvement in the Calais conference, or the emergent plan to deceive the French and ally with Charles, because Wolsey did not trust Leo.

By August 1521, however, after the conclusion of the secret treaty of Bruges with Charles, Wolsey's aims and Leo's at last began to converge. The anti-French alliance the pope had wanted a year beforehand was by that treaty put in place. Yet, although Wolsey immediately informed the English ambassador in Rome, John Clerk, of the fact (and Clerk in turn informed the pope on 13 September), he was not working for the immediate action against France that Leo wanted. Trying perhaps to appeal directly to Henry, the immediate papal response to the news of the Anglo-Imperial agreement was, on 25 October, to issue the bull conferring the title of Defender of the Faith on the king. It remained only to include the papacy formally in the anti-French treaty, and that was done by Wolsey and the papal nuncio to England, still Ghinucci, during a series of meetings at Calais, immediately before Wolsey's long-anticipated return to England on 27 November 1521. At these meetings, Wolsey made it clear that although the pope was comprehended in the alliance, it was Charles and Henry who would determine the timetable and location of action against Francis, not Leo.<sup>54</sup> Barely had Wolsey got home from Calais, however, than news reached England that Leo X had died on 1 December 1521.

---

<sup>52</sup> LP III i, 1371 (Charles V to his Audiencer Haneton, Brussels, 27 June 1521). See 1297 and 1298 for Henry and Wolsey to Leo X, Greenwich, 21 May 1521, with Henry's offer of the book and of the bishopric of Worcester to Giulio de' Medici, following the death of Gigli in April.

<sup>53</sup> LP III i, 1339 (declaration of conference by Henry VIII, 9 June 1521).

<sup>54</sup> LP III i, 1802 (Treaty dated Calais 24 November 1521); LP III i, 1796 (memorandum of negotiating points with imperial representatives, November 1522); Clough, "Ghinucci, Girolamo"; Gwyn, *Wolsey*, 157.

The short pontificate of Leo's successor Adrian VI, elected on 9 January 1522, made little material difference to the agreements made the previous year which were affirmed when, in June 1522, Charles V made his second, and much longer, visit to England to celebrate his alliance with Henry.<sup>55</sup> Ghinucci was sent to Spain with Thomas Hannibal to congratulate the new pope, and to offer him assistance. Wolsey lost no time in pressing Adrian to grant him a legateship for life, perhaps expecting the pope's gratitude given his work for Charles, for whom Adrian had been regent in Spain until his election to the papacy. Yet, Adrian proved less of a Habsburg puppet than he had widely been assumed to be, and refused Wolsey's request about the legateship outright. To his reformist cast of mind, Wolsey was exactly the sort of ecclesiastical grandee that had brought the Church into disrepute, and he was certainly not going to do anything to aggrandize him further. He did, however, sanction Ghinucci replacing Giulio de' Medici as absentee Bishop of Worcester without any ill feeling on the latter's part. Ghinucci returned to Rome as Auditor of the Chamber to the new pope. Giulio de' Medici, who had been the cardinal protector of England since 1513, remained a strong supporter of Wolsey and Henry. This was made abundantly clear to John Clerk—to whom Wolsey had resigned the bishopric of Bath and Wells—when he returned to Rome in the spring of 1523 as the English ambassador to the new pope. He was also welcomed by Campeggio.<sup>56</sup> Both Italians supported Clerk's request for a lifetime legateship for Wolsey, but to no avail. Adrian was initially very reluctant to endorse his predecessor's anti-French policy in the interests of remaining neutral between European princes, but he eventually agreed to join the alliance, now including Venice, against France. Yet, as with Leo, barely had he done so than he died, in September 1523. It was with openly expressed joy that Wolsey and Henry jointly and severally greeted the election of Giulio de' Medici as Pope Clement VII the same month. It seemed to promise a new start in Anglo-Papal relations. Ghinucci of Worcester and Campeggio were both in the new pope's confidence. As they had done in 1518, Henry and Wolsey used Campeggio as the bargaining chip in negotiations for another extension of the cardinal's legatine powers. In 1524, the confirmation of Campeggio's appointment as cardinal protector of England in succession to Giulio de' Medici was the issue. Clement proved immediately obliging, and Wolsey finally secured the legateship for life that he had earnestly sought for six years. In April 1524, he also obtained papal approval for the foundation of Cardinal College, Oxford.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

It took Thomas Wolsey a decade from becoming Archbishop of York in 1514 to being made a papal legate *a latere* for life in 1524. His elevation to the cardinalate in 1515 gave him the status and entrée to the highest circles of the international ecclesiastical establishment. It also betokened papal regard and respect for England, which Wolsey did his best publicly to ascribe to Henry as an exceptionally gifted sovereign. Having been granted legatine authority, Wolsey

---

<sup>55</sup> See S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969), 190-208, on Charles V's entry to London and entertainments during his visit to England.

<sup>56</sup> W. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1974), 131-36.

<sup>57</sup> S. Fletcher, *The Popes and Britain* (London, 2017), 81; J. Curthoys, *The Cardinal's College: Christ Church, Chapter and Verse* (London, 2012), 5.

then used it to imply papal sanction for the Universal Peace of 1518, while studiously misleading Leo as to its true nature until he could present it as a *fait accompli*. In so doing, he prevented the pope from frustrating his own plans to aggrandize Henry VIII as the arbiter of international relations in the years immediately before and after the Field of Cloth of Gold. Wolsey used the legatine powers conferred him in an international context to extend his powers over the Church in England, assuring the pope that the authority delegated to him would be used in accord with the aims and needs of the church universal. Simultaneously, he increased his practical, if not formal, control over a wide range of ecclesiastical affairs, and assured Henry that he used delegated papal authority in England, as internationally, so that the king's interests in both spheres would be managed in Henry's interests and for his honour and renown.<sup>58</sup>

This required enormous energy, dexterity, and luck; and, for some time, Wolsey had all three. He worked as closely as possible with Clement from 1524, while never allowing him to dictate the agenda in England any more than he had his predecessors. In the end of course, Wolsey's luck ran out. Having assured king and pope that he could get for each of them whatever they wanted of the other, Wolsey was finally caught between their competing needs. In 1527, Henry's demand for an annulment of his marriage could not be met by Clement without his alienating Charles V, upon whose favour the fortunes of his Florentine family now directly depended. Wolsey attempted to use the Anglo-French 'Eternal Peace' of April 1527 to make himself in effect 'deputy-Pope' in the wake of the Sack of Rome in May. He had hoped to use such a position to bring about the annulment Henry needed without directly compromising Clement's position. This plan was at least as ambitious as anything else he had done since 1518, but was far less likely to succeed. To Wolsey's despair, not only was he unable to deputise for the pope but, having finally regained Rome, all Clement would do was to allow a legatine court to hear the case at Blackfriars in July 1529. With a rich irony, Wolsey was once more joined in commission by Campeggio, who adjourned the case following Katherine's direct appeal to Rome. In response, Henry railed that popes obeyed kings, not contrariwise. Clement, perhaps more than many other popes, knew that well enough. Nothing encapsulates Wolsey's dilemma at this point better than the fact that his need to be at Blackfriars to exercise legatine authority in Henry's matrimonial cause, prevented him from being at Cambrai for negotiations between representatives of Charles and Francis that resulted in the most significant European peace treaty for a decade, and one from which Henry was effectively excluded. This resulted in his potential isolation once again: the very thing Wolsey had striven to prevent since 1512.<sup>59</sup>

Wolsey had always kept the closest connection between his work for Henry at home and abroad, and his status as legate since 1518 and this connection perhaps reached its symbolic highpoint at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520. Yet his inability, for once, to use that legateship to provide what the king wanted, laid him open to accusations of putting his loyalty

---

<sup>58</sup> Wolsey's ambitions and achievements in church regulation and reform as legate lie outside the scope of the present article. The most recent full treatment of the subject remains Gwyn, *King's Cardinal*, 265-353; but also see Clarke, "Rivaling Rome".

<sup>59</sup> J. G. Russell, *Peacemaking in the Renaissance* (London, 1986). See also S. J. Gunn, "Wolsey's foreign policy and the domestic crisis of 1527-8", in *Cardinal Wolsey*, eds. Gunn and Lindley, 149-77, for the fullest exposition of Wolsey's dilemma.

to the papacy before that to Henry. In reality of course, Wolsey's entire career since being made a cardinal was based on his doing exactly the opposite, and placing royal above papal authority at virtually every turn. Nevertheless, a little more than a decade after the conferral of the first temporary legateship *a latere* upon which he had built so much, Wolsey had lost both royal and papal favour, and died in disgrace.



## Bibliography

### Manuscripts

The British Library

Caligula B II  
Caligula D VI  
Caligula D VII  
Caligula D VIII

Bodleian Library

Ashmole MS 1116

Bibliothèque Nationale

BN MS Fr 5761, ff 39-42

### Printed Primary Sources

*Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, eds. G. A. Bergenroth et. al. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1862–1964).

*Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, eds. R. Brown, C. Bentinck, and H. Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1864–98).

*Catalogue des actes de François Ier*, ed. Paul Marichal (Paris, 1887–1910).

Cavendish, George, “[The] Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey”, in *Two Early Tudor Lives*, eds. R. Sylvester and D. Harding (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962).

*Foedera, conventiones, literae et cuiuscunque generis acta publica*, ed. T. Rymer (London, 1727–35).

*Four Years at the court of Henry VIII. Selection of despatches written by the Venetian ambassador Sebastian Giustinian...1515 to 1519*, trans. Rawdon Brown (London, 1854).

Hall, Edward. *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of York and Lancastre* (London, 1809).

*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509–1547*, eds. J. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1862–1932).

*Le triu[m]phe festifz bien venue [et] honorable recoeil fait par le roy da[n]gleterre en la ville de Calais a la tressacree Cesaree catholique maieste ...* (Arras, 1520), <[www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/pageview.aspx?strFest=0009&strPage=001](http://www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/pageview.aspx?strFest=0009&strPage=001)>.

*L'ordonnance et ordre du tournoy / ioustes / & combat / a pied / & a cheval. Le tresdesire & plusque triumpfant recontre / entrevue / assemblee / & visitation / des treshaultz / tresexcellens princes / les Roys de France / & de Angleterre...* (Paris, [1520]).

Montfaucon, B de., *Les monuments de la monarchie française* (Paris, 1732).

*State Papers Published under the Authority of his Majesty's Commission, King Henry VIII* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1830–52).

Sylvius, Jacobus (Jacques Dubois), “Francisci Francorum Regis et Henrici Anglorum Colloquium”, eds. S. Bamforth and J. Dupèbe, *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 5, nos. 1-2 (March-June 1991), 56-97.

“Two papers relating to the interview between Henry the Eighth of England and Francis the First of France”, ed. J. Caley, *Archaeologia*, vol. 21 (London, 1827), 176-91.

### Secondary Sources

- Anglo, Sydney, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
- Clarke, Peter, “Rivalling Rome: Cardinal Wolsey and Dispensations”, in *Papal Authority and the Limits of the Law in Tudor England*, eds. Peter Clarke and Michael Questier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1-100.
- Clough, Cecil, “Gigli, Silvestro (1463–1521)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/10671>.
- Curthoys, Judith, *The Cardinal’s College: Christ Church, Chapter and Verse* (London: Profile Books, 2012).
- Clough, Cecil H., “Ghinucci, Girolamo (1480–1541)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/66931>.
- Fletcher, Catherine, *Our Man in Rome: Henry VIII and his Italian Ambassador* (London: Random House, 2012).
- Fletcher, Stella, *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).
- , *The Popes and Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017).
- Gunn, Steven J., and Lindley, Peter G., eds., *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- Gwyn, Peter, “Wolsey’s Foreign Policy: The Conferences at Calais and Bruges Reconsidered”, *Historical Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1980), 755-72.
- , *The King’s Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1990).
- Knecht, Robert, “The Concordat of 1516: A Reassessment”, in *Francis I and the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Robert Knecht (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), 16-32.
- Mattingly, Garrett, “An Early Non-Aggression Pact”, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1938), 1–30.
- Mayer, Thomas F., “Castellesi, Adriano (c.1461-1521)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/174>
- Pollard, Albert, *Wolsey* (London: Longmans, 1965).
- Richardson, Glenn, “Entertainments for the French ambassadors at the Court of Henry VIII”, *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1995), 404-15.
- , *The Field of Cloth of Gold* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013).
- Russell, Joycelene G., *Peacemaking in the Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1986).
- Scarbrick, Jack, *Henry VIII* (London: Methuen Press, 1968).
- Wilkie, William, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).