

APPENDIX C**Creating and Investing a Prince of Wales**

The idiosyncratic nature of how the title of "Prince of Wales" was bestowed and invested created confusion for sixteenth century political observers (and probably for those in earlier periods) that has persisted to the present day. This confusion is surprising given that the royal tradition for designating the monarch's firstborn son as "Prince of Wales" has remained remarkably stable for centuries. The associated procedures and legal status of the title are the same today as they were in late medieval England. The title "Prince of Wales" is (and always has been) in the sovereign's gift. The title is reserved only for the monarch's firstborn son. The sovereign, however, can withhold the title. The monarch can elect not to bestow the title on his or her firstborn son. However, the sovereign does not have complete discretion over the granting of the title. Most important, the monarch cannot bestow the title "Prince of Wales" on anyone but the firstborn son, and that son must be the issue of a legally valid marriage. So Henry VIII could not bestow the title on his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy. The other relevant caveat for this study is that at that time the sovereign could not (and never could) bestow the title on a female.¹

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Complicating the issue further is the difference between the "creation" of a Prince of Wales and the formal investing of a royal offspring with the title. Some of Mary's contemporaries erroneously assumed that Henry had bestowed the title upon Mary informally, but they would have simultaneously understood that she had never been officially invested with title. A Prince of Wales is "created" or granted the title by the monarch informally. The sovereign can "create" (designate) his or her firstborn son as "Prince of Wales" shortly after birth, as Edward IV did for his son, the future Edward V, and as Henry VIII would later do for his son, the future Edward VI. This designation can be nothing more than a witnessed verbal declaration that finds confirmation in subsequent written documents. Edward VI's right to the title of Prince of Wales was confirmed by the crown when Henry VIII issued instructions for Edward's first household in which the infant was referred to as "prince of Wales and duke of Cornwall."²

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"Investing" a prince with the title "Prince of Wales" is another, much more public, matter. When sovereigns designated their infant firstborn sons as Prince of Wales, the investiture often did not take place until years later when the prince was judged of sufficient age to withstand the ceremony. The "investiture" of a prince with the title involves not only elaborate ceremony but also a confirming act of Parliament. The confusion over "creating" and "investing" a royal offspring with the title was aggravated in the sixteenth century by the imprecise terminology employed on this issue even by those most vitally concerned. For instance, the first entry in the chronicle kept by Edward VI refers to his "creation" as Prince of

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Wales and how this ceremony was to take place but was cancelled when his father, Henry VIII, died and Edward acceded to the throne.³ Edward, however, was referring to his "investiture." He had held the title "Prince of Wales" since infancy and even signed himself "princeps" in his personal correspondence, but had not yet been invested with the title ceremonially. It was the ceremony that had been cancelled, not Edward's assumption of the title of Prince of Wales.⁴

This disjunction between the designation and the ceremonial investment of a Prince of Wales was something not widely appreciated in the sixteenth century. Edward VI, before his accession, was styled "Prince of Wales" in royal documents even though he never underwent a formal investiture ceremony.⁵ In this, he followed in his father's footsteps. After the death of Arthur, Prince of Wales, his father Henry VII declared verbally that his younger son, Prince Henry, was now Prince of Wales. But Prince Henry (the future Henry VIII) did not undergo a formal investiture ceremony, nor was he granted the revenues of the principality as enjoyed by his brother before him. Despite this lack of ceremonial and public confirmation of the title, contemporaries understood in both cases that these princes held the title "Prince of Wales."

It is not surprising, therefore, that some of Mary's contemporaries drew the erroneous impression from her household on the Welsh Marches (which so resembled in scale and function those of preceding Princes of Wales) that she, too, had been granted the title. Given all this ambiguity, it appears that the scale of Mary's household in the Welsh Marches, evoking as it did the establishments of previous male Princes of Wales, was taken as a sign by many that Mary held the title officially.

To ensure that modern readers do not share in this confusion, it is necessary to be clear about this here: Mary was neither created nor invested as Princess of Wales. In the sixteenth century (and at the time of this writing), a woman was not eligible to hold the title in her own right. The designation "Princess of Wales" was (and at the time this writing, still is) reserved only for the wife of the Prince of Wales. There are no official documents generated by the crown that refer to Mary holding the title of Princess of Wales or Prince of Wales.

The designation referring to "princes council" signifies only that spelling has changed over the intervening centuries. The modern word "princess" was often spelled with only one "s" in the sixteenth century. Moreover, the possessive was often not employed and rarely with the type of punctuation common to modern usage. The "princes council" is properly translated into modern idiom as "the princess' council" with the term princess indicating Mary's rank as "my lady princess" rather than as a female Prince (or Princess) of Wales.

Despite this, Mary's princely household in the Welsh Marches associated her very strongly with the Principality. As indicated earlier, this association was compelling enough to persuade foreign and domestic observers into assuming that Mary held the title. Mary was the unofficial Princess of Wales because her household was on such a scale that many observers assumed that she held the title. **8**

Notes

Note 1: For an extended treatment of the procedures and history of the title, see F. Jones, *The Princes and Principality of Wales* [Wales UP, 1969]

Note 2: BL Cotton Vitellius C., i., f. 45v

Note 3: J. North, *England's Boy King: The Diary of Edward VI, 1547-1553* [Welwyn Garden City, UK, 2005], p. 16; best modern edition is in W. K. Jordan, ed., *The Chronicle and Political Papers of Edward VI* [London, 1966]

Note 4: Henry's plans for sending the prince to the Welsh marches after his investiture are in *LP*, XIII, pt.1, 1057. BL Cotton Vitellius C., i., ff. 39r–44v (formerly 59r–64v); printed in P. R. Roberts, "A Breviat of the Effectes Devised for Wales," *Camden Miscellany*, 1975

Note 5: BL Cotton Vitellius C., i., ff. 45v, 46v