

CHAPTER 3

Property and Politics: Land Acquisition and Political Status

Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world
It were a shame to let this land by lease.
But, for thy world, enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
Landlord of England art thou now, not king.

—William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 2.1

Previous chapters have discussed in detail the ways in which, for Mary and Elizabeth, the material and daily culture of their households both conferred and enhanced political credibility. Alongside this, however, their establishments served another crucial function, as the administrative centers from which the princesses controlled their landed estates, both of them coming eventually into possession of considerable properties. The revenues of these estates were the source of the princely wealth displayed by the princesses in their residences, and endowed them with legal and political status. In this period, politicians obtained and increased their status through the acquisition of land. The possession of property testified to a politician's ability to dispense patronage. For members of the nobility and upper gentry, the extent of an individual's landholdings was a direct measure of their standing in society and in the political arena.¹ 1

During the period of their respective preaccession careers, a detailed examination of the Tudor princesses as landowners yields new insights into their political activities during those same years. Indeed, I argue that the Edwardian political context as whole benefits from a thorough analysis of property grants to the princesses. An example of the connection between political status and land is detailed below in the discussion of the dispersal, location, and value of Mary's and Elizabeth's patrimonies. It highlights the inequalities in the relative political status of the half-sisters. 2

Land Ownership, Vassalage, and the Affinity

Political loyalty in the sixteenth century, as during the medieval period, was expressed in England in terms of service and good lordship. During the Middle Ages, kings and nobles "retained" local knights, via the household, to act as reserve military recruiters. In return for this service, householders and kings practiced good lordship either by awarding annuities, or by sponsoring the knight's extramilitary activities.² Other knights were required to serve the lord or king directly in the household, with various lengths in residency. This system was 3

known as bastard feudalism, and was largely on the wane by the time Mary and Elizabeth were presiding over their respective households.³ Kings by this time were more interested in recruiting judges than knights; aristocratic military retinues were too reminiscent of the overmighty nobles of the wars of the roses to be tolerated by the Tudor monarchs.⁴

Nevertheless, political loyalty was still expressed in terms of service within an economic context. It was this dimension that enabled Mary and Elizabeth to articulate their political ambitions through material culture and hospitality. Moreover, the household's economic function, as a conduit for the collection and redistribution of estate revenues, enabled the princesses to recruit political clients resident both within and around their establishments. Servants, tenants, and neighbors all depended on the local elite household for economic employment and political patronage.⁵ **4**

Regional offices such as church livings and rural offices were usually in the gift of the local magnate. Royal commissions were invariably conferred first on the major landholders in each region, and then on the gentry of lesser rank. Scholars sometimes draw a distinction between the nobility on one hand, and the Justices of the Peace (local agents of the crown) on the other, considering this latter group to be drafted primarily from the gentry class; there are many instances, however, in which the local magnate and the JP of a particular area were in fact one and the same person. Regional magnates invariably headed the list of JPs.⁶ In essence, the largest landholder in a given area was also typically the person with the most political clout, at both the national and regional level. This sphere of influence was expanded by the practice of vassalage/clientage. **5**

Often, the nobility allowed their clients to enjoy the revenues of specific estates, and stipulated that these clients were entitled to inherit the estates after the death of the original landowner. This legal device was known as a *reversionary* grant, designating a successor—the "holder of the reversionary interest"—to whom the land would ultimately "revert". In practice, the reversionary holder typically began to receive the revenues from the specified properties from the time the reversionary grant was recorded—generally well before the death of the original landowner. By its nature, the grant tended to indicate a patron/client relationship between the landowner and reversionary holder, since the property owner's consent had usually to be given in order for the recipient to obtain the reversionary interest. This legal device was therefore an effective means for property owners to patronize servants, clients, and colleagues. The granting landowner still retained legal title to the property throughout the remainder of his or her own lifetime, and could even sue to revoke the reversion should the designated recipient prove unsatisfactory in some way. **6**

As discussed later in this chapter, Mary and Elizabeth practiced this form of clientage in that they consented to reversionary grants of some of their estates. These land grants, however, were generally small, signifying the pre-existence rather than heralding the creation of a patron/client relationship. In many instances, the gentry clients rewarded in this way were already connected to their respective mistress as tenants or neighbors. **7**

This study has emphasized the ways in which Mary and Elizabeth operated in very much the same ways as other elite women, in their capacities as landowners and householders. There is one difference that may have provided the princesses with an valuable advantage not widely shared among their elite female contemporaries: both could read Latin. Their royal education ensured that they could read conveyancing documents, accounts, and other state documents for themselves—all of these being written in Latin at that time. Barbara Harris's study of English aristocratic women from this period suggests that the princesses had acquired a useful and uncommon skill.⁷ Few elite women read Latin, which obliged them to depend on their better educated male relatives, clerics and servants. **8**

For each of the princesses in turn, tenants and neighbors were an important part of her affinity, and would play a role in ensuring that their mistress was able to pursue successfully her claim to the throne. Such clients were in fact instrumental to all elite householders in establishing their political patronage, both at the local and national levels. The tenants of noble landowners were usually gentry and other well-to-do people, who leased or enjoyed reversionary interests in the magnates' estates and manors. In the case of many gentry clients, their ancestors had been leasing manors and pastures for generations from an elite or royal family. Those whose estates bordered those of an elite or royal magnate sought to maintain good relations with their powerful neighbors, in order to obtain political patronage and to ensure smooth cooperation in routine matters such as informal pasturage rights. In return, such gentry clients often formed the backbone of a noble's affinity. If the crown commissioned a magnate to draw up musters, the recipient of such an order would invariably call on their affinity—their dependent neighbors and tenants—to bring in men and equipment. **9**

This was part of the service rendered by tenants and neighbors to their noble patron. These clients were not resident members of the elite household, nor did they wear the householder's livery. Yet their economic and political dependence on the magnate meant that, when called on to do so, they functioned just as if they were household retainers, sworn to the service of the noble. This was not a matter of legal, formal, or official obligatory service owed to the elite householder. Such obligations, had they existed in a formal sense, would have posed political and legal dilemmas whenever elite householders incurred the displeasure of the crown. The prevailing circumstances thus included no formal requirement that clients must support the local elite householder or magnate. All the same, the rapid response that nobles received **10**

consistently from their regional clients indicate that the latter took their obligations in this regard quite seriously, despite their ostensible informality.⁸ As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, some gentry clients were prepared, on occasion, to answer the call to musters from a local magnate, even if this involved them in contributing to an army intended to meet government forces in battle, as was the case with Mary's clients in 1553 and Elizabeth's in 1558.

It should be emphasized that membership of a householder's affinity was not always defined in terms of land or proximity. Those who supplied or worked for the household but did not reside within the household were also part of the affinity, such as grocers and tailors. The householder could also call upon these landless members of their affinity for political purposes. They served, for example, by delivering messages, or by helping to spread deliberately orchestrated rumors. To give one instance, Mary received unofficial news of Edward VI's death through her goldsmith, and later deployed her nonresident affinity to spread rumors that her military forces had gathered in overwhelming numbers.⁹

11

Landed Magnates: Mary and Elizabeth Assuming Legal Title to Their Estates, 1525 and 1550

How and when Mary and Elizabeth first became landowners and official heads of princely households is germane to an understanding of how the princesses were able to establish themselves as authority figures *before* their accessions. Their ability to form political networks was the direct result of their role as landowners. As heads of household and regional magnates, Mary and Elizabeth exercised economic and political authority over their servants, neighbors and clients in much the same way as did elite male householders and widows.¹⁰ By the time they acceded to the throne, both princesses had already established themselves as politicians with identifiable agendas and dedicated followings. In detailing how Mary and Elizabeth formally assumed headship of their households and acquired legal title to their estates, the discussion must, perforce, focus on abstruse and complicated notions of legal procedure and chaotic political machinations.

12

A caveat is in order here. The following discussion centers on the political benefits that Mary and Elizabeth reaped as landowners before their accessions, but it must be emphasized that in the strictest legal sense, they did not "own" any land before their accessions. They enjoyed the revenues from these lands and lived in the manors granted to them but, ultimately, the crown retained ownership of them. At law, the princesses had no power to transmit these lands to their heirs, nor to sell them to others.¹¹ They could and did sponsor petitions to obtain reversionary interests in their estates, but the monarch's permission was essential to the grant of any such petition.

13

Neither Mary nor Elizabeth held the legal status of *femme sole* held by their mothers and their paternal great-grandmother, Margaret Beaufort. A woman holding this status had the legal power to administer and dispose of properties granted to her, even by the crown, without reference to any male relative—husband, father, brother or son. Princess Mary and Princess Elizabeth, by contrast, held their lands at the pleasure of the monarch. Mary's first land grant was made by her father, and the second by her brother and his male advisors. Elizabeth, too, received revenues from estates that belonged legally to her brother, King Edward VI. Although Mary and Elizabeth both received income from crown estates from 1547 onward, it was clear to all concerned that the lands in question were not permanently alienated from the crown. **14**

Mary's First Land Grant, 1525

Mary's biographers concur that she did not receive any grants of lands prior to Henry VIII's death in 1547.¹² There is evidence, however, that the king had granted lands to her in 1525, when she was nine years old.¹³ It is not surprising that Mary's biographers have not highlighted this point, as the evidence for it does not appear in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*—the official listing of land grants. Furthermore, because no original patent for this grant has survived (perhaps because no document of this form was ever issued), it is extremely difficult to determine how long Mary retained possession of the estates granted to her in 1525. **15**

Mary's receipt of a grant from Henry between March and August of 1525 (when she left for the Welsh Marches) is explicitly recorded in the "Instructions" drawn up for her household. This document contains two references to Mary having charge of her own estates. Its preamble contains a list of the commissions the king granted to her household council. The fourth of these was "for surveyeng orderinge letting to farme and approvenge of all such lordshippes lands and seigniencies, as be assigned to the supportacōn and maintenance of the chardgs for thestate and houseold of the said Princess . . ." ¹⁴ The second reference in the "Instructions" makes clear that the lands were granted to Mary personally, rather than just placed at her disposal to fund her princely household. The "Instructions" order the surveyors to assess the value of: "the kings possessions and hereditaunces whatsoever they bene in the countrys palentyne of Chester, Wales and the Marches of the same and also Bromfielde Yale and Chirckland or elsewhere nowe assigned to the Princesse." ¹⁵ **16**

The term "assigned" leaves little room for misunderstanding. Contemporaries, including Mary and Elizabeth, usually referred to grants of lands as "assignments."¹⁶ Also, this statement refers to revenues from lands assigned to a specific individual, for their exclusive use. To reassign these revenues, the crown would have to initiate another legal conveyancing process. **17**

The most obvious conclusion based on the text is that Henry VIII granted these estates to Mary so that she could use their revenues to defray the considerable expenses of her viceregal establishment.

Another reason to take the phrasing of the "Instructions" at face value is that the particular lands assigned to Mary—the counties of Bromfield, Yale, and Chirkland—were just those granted, according to established precedent, to the viceregal representative of the crown in the counties of the Welsh Marches. In 1525, Mary was serving in exactly that capacity, in that very region. It was customary for these same possessions to form part of the patrimony granted to English princes on their formal investiture with the title Prince of Wales.¹⁷ **18**

In the early sixteenth century, there was no male heir to the English crown. Prior to July 1525, when Mary assumed the role (though not, technically, the title) of Princess of Wales, the governance of Wales and the Marches counties had been in the hands of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. To help him fund his Marches household and hold court as the crown representative in Wales, Henry VIII granted him the counties of Bromfield, Chirkland, and Yale. In March 1525, when Brandon was recalled from his duties as the crown representative in North Wales, he surrendered the counties back to the crown.¹⁸ The assignment of these counties to Mary in the "Instructions" was consistent with the reality as of mid-1525 that she became the new crown representative in the marcher counties, replacing Brandon. **19**

Indeed, a household on the scale that Mary received in 1525 almost required that she, as its nominal head, have estate revenues at her disposal to bear the costs of maintaining such a large establishment. Customarily, crown representatives of high rank, from princes to nonroyal administrators like Brandon, were given a local source of landed revenues to fund what was, in effect, a regional satellite court. This custom was certainly in place in 1525. King Henry's viceregal representative in York at this time was his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond. The king conferred vast estates and numerous manors on Richmond in order to fund the young duke's viceregal establishment.¹⁹ The "Instructions" indicate that in 1525, Mary like Richmond, received revenues assigned for her exclusive use from specific estates, for the purpose of supporting her viceregal household. **20**

Although Mary, like Richmond, was as yet still a minor, the conferring of grand households supported by landed revenues on these two children of the king's made them true viceregal governors of these respective border regions. Tudor England was a decentralized state, in which governance traditionally devolved to regional landowners.²⁰ One method of establishing the authority of a monarch's viceregal representatives was to grant them estates in the regions they were to administer on behalf of the crown, thereby embedding them in the **21**

pre-existing local structure of loyalty, patronage, clientage, and overlordship.²¹ The crown could then rely on local magnates to carry out its policy by acting as judges, calling musters, and networking with local gentry and urban officials.

In particular, by having charge of specific lands in the area she was governing on behalf of the crown, Mary could function, at least figuratively, within the feudal tradition of government through good lordship. Some of the "strangers" who flocked to her household court in the Welsh Marches would likely have been her tenant farmers, clerics, and landed gentry via the grant of Bromfield, Chirkland, and Yale. These clients owed Mary loyalty not just because she was the king's daughter and her household Privy Council had judicial authority over them, but also because the young princess was their titular landlord and overlord. **22**

Mary's household was responsible for settling any disputes that arose among those under her direct authority in the counties she held, as well as those under her viceregal authority in the Welsh principality in general.²² At the tender age of nine, Mary, via her household and landed interests, had become a governor in the full sense of that term understood by contemporaries. As a landholder and nominal head of a viceregal household, Mary was a significant authority figure in her own right. **23**

It is somewhat unclear when Mary surrendered the counties back to the crown; certainly they were no longer in her possession in 1534, when Henry granted them to his bastard son, Richmond.²³ After Richmond's death in 1536, the revenues from these lands would have reverted again to the crown. As noted earlier, they customarily formed part of the landed endowment of the Prince of Wales, so it is likely that Henry granted them to his son Edward shortly after the prince was born in 1537. In this, Prince Edward would have been more fortunate than his sisters; from 1534 throughout the rest of Henry's lifetime, there is no record of either princess holding land in her own right. **24**

All this changed on Henry's death in January 1547, when—ostensibly "in fulfilment" of his will—Mary and Elizabeth received lands worth between £3,000 and £4,000 per annum (see Appendix A for further discussion of Henry's will).²⁴ These lands were granted by patent letters that had then to be "sealed" (the mark of their official confirmation) and entered into the patent rolls. Until these procedural steps were completed, neither princess yet possessed her estates at law. Mary received her sealed patents by May 1547, four months after Henry VIII's death. **25**

Elizabeth's Delayed Patent Letters, 1550

Elizabeth did not receive her sealed patents until March 1550. Historians have attributed the delay in this delivery (almost three years after Mary's) to the shifting political alliances between her and the head of the Edwardian Privy Council. Scholars have assumed that Elizabeth's patent letters were deliberately withheld by Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset.²⁵ These same historians have assumed that Somerset harbored lingering enmity toward Elizabeth over her alleged involvement in the treasonous activities of Thomas Seymour. Scholars have noted that Elizabeth received her patents after Somerset was removed from power by his rival, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick (later Duke of Northumberland). Based on the timing and the conclusions of the ill-informed Imperial ambassador, it has been argued that Northumberland removed the obstacles put in place by Somerset deliberately to prevent Elizabeth from obtaining her patent letters.²⁶ The delivery of the patents in March 1550 is therefore regarded as a testament of the special alliance that existed between Northumberland and Elizabeth. **26**

Although this scenario has dramatic appeal, there is little evidence to support it. Further, it fails to consider the most obvious, if also the most prosaic, explanation for the delay in Elizabeth's receipt of her patents, which is that she did not obtain official title to her lands in 1547, because, unlike Mary, she remained legally a minor at that time. Elizabeth was only thirteen years old in April 1547 whereas Mary was thirty-one. As a female, Elizabeth would not attain her legal majority until she turned sixteen in September 1549.²⁷ **27**

A landowner's age was an important issue to contemporaries. A minor could succeed to a title, but could not administer the associated estates, especially if they were held as "knight-service," until he or she came of age.²⁸ This led to the practice of wardship: an underage heir became a ward of the crown, with their estates reverting to the crown during the remainder of the heir's minority. Even if a minor did not hold lands in knight-service, his or her legal title was still a vexed question. Indeed, the famous articulation of the king's two bodies in "Calvins Case" as reported in 1608 by Sir Edward Coke turned precisely on the issue of whether Edward VI had the legal right to lease lands in the Duchy of Lancaster during his minority. Famously, the eventual ruling was that Edward could lease these lands only because he was a king. Had he been merely a royal boy, he would not have possessed legal title to his lands. His kingship, however, endowed him with a fully mature "body politic," which legally corrected the deficiency (as the law saw it) of his still underage "body natural."²⁹ Therefore, Edward VI leased these lands as king, rather than as a legal minor. **28**

Of course, land grants were made to minors, especially royal children. The crucial point is that the patent letters were usually not delivered while the recipient remained underage. As noted earlier, Mary received revenues from lands when she was nine, but she probably did not have full legal title to them. The same would have been true of the lands "granted" to Henry's **29**

illegitimate son, Richmond. Kings often invested their infant sons with the Welsh principality, or at least the lands associated with the title of Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester. Usually in these cases, however, the royal offspring received the *revenues* from the lands rather than *legal title* to them.

A similar arrangement was made for Elizabeth before she attained her legal majority.³⁰ The Privy Council allowed Elizabeth to draw on the revenues of her lands, having already decided roughly the distribution of her estates. Elizabeth enjoyed the revenues from her estates, but could not obtain legal title to them in the form of patent letters until she attained her legal majority in September 1549. **30**

The delay to be explained therefore excludes the period between April 1547 and September 1549, when Elizabeth was in any case too young to take legal possession of her lands through patent letters; the mystery concerns only the much shorter interval of six months, from September 1549 (when she attained legal majority) until March 1550. **31**

The date of Elizabeth's sixteenth birthday could hardly have come as a surprise to those concerned, making it a straightforward matter to have the letters drawn up somewhat in advance, so they could be "sealed" and entered into the official court records as soon as the princess reached majority. Sources detailed below suggest that in fact the letters had been prepared some considerable time earlier; also, there is circumstantial evidence that Elizabeth expected to receive them in September 1549, in the form of plans made by her to visit court at exactly this time.³¹ While this may have been a simple coincidence, it is likely that Elizabeth's visit was intended to provide the opportunity for her to take possession of the patent letters. Its timing is highly suggestive, since Elizabeth visited her brother's court infrequently—only on special occasions such as Christmas and Twelfth Night, judging from her correspondence. The visit she projected in September 1549 was therefore unusual, in that it did not coincide with a holiday; it did, of course, coincide with her sixteenth birthday. There is a certain logic in speculating that Elizabeth expected to receive her sealed patent letters as part of special planned celebrations to mark her attaining her legal majority. The question remains: for what reason did the delay of six months elapse from September 1549 to March 1550, when the patents finally arrived in Elizabeth's hands? **32**

At the time Elizabeth attained legal majority in September 1549, her relations with Protector Somerset were generally cordial.³² Somerset had allowed Elizabeth to receive revenues from the lands that were to be hers even though, technically, she did not yet hold legal title to them. Parry's testimony during the Seymour scandal, and the Privy Council records concerning the cessation of her pension from July 1547, indicate that Elizabeth was already receiving the revenues from her estates. The patent letters had been drawn up as early as 1548, according to Parry's testimony given during the Seymour crisis in January 1549. Furthermore, knowledge of their existence was sufficiently common that Thomas Seymour enquired in November 1548 **33**

as to whether Elizabeth's patent letters had "been sealed or no?"³³ Seymour's question indicates that estates and manors had been "assigned" or put aside for Elizabeth's use, but that she might not, as yet, possess formal legal title to them.

Confirmation that the princess had already taken informal, unofficial possession of her manors and estates is provided by Elizabeth's correspondence before 1550, which indicates that she was in residence at her manors before obtaining legal possession of them.³⁴ Informal as it was, her possession of her estates was still secure enough to prompt the government's intervention on her behalf in 1548, when a royal official inadvertently ordered that a forest—evidently awarded to Elizabeth in the unsealed patent letters—should be sold to raise revenue. The unfortunate official was informed by no less than William Cecil—secretary to Protector Somerset, and surveyor to Elizabeth—that the forest was part of Elizabeth's "settlement." Cecil peremptorily instructed the official to turn over the proceeds from the sale to the indignant princess.³⁵ Because Elizabeth was drawing the revenues from her estates, Somerset authorized an end to the practice of the crown paying her expenses, as of September 1547.³⁶ **34**

Unfortunately for Elizabeth, the attainment of her legal majority coincided exactly with the inception of a power struggle between Somerset and Northumberland for control of the young king and leadership of the ruling Privy Council. Somerset suddenly removed the king (and the court) from London to Windsor as he struggled to maintain his hold on power.³⁷ The court and the government were thrown into turmoil. Plans for Elizabeth's visit were scrapped, and the formal issuance of her patents was shelved. In late 1549, Somerset was removed from his position as leader of the Privy Council and guardian of the king; by Christmas, Northumberland was in firm control of the Privy Council, and had earned the trust of Edward VI.³⁸ Stability had now been restored, enough for Elizabeth to be invited to court perhaps for Christmas, and for her to receive her patent letters—which now required only the simple procedural steps of their sealing and entry into the patent rolls to make them official. Even so, another three months were to pass before Elizabeth would finally receive these long-awaited documents. **35**

To summarize: the delay in the issuance of Elizabeth's patents, at first sight almost three years—from April 1547 to March 1550—was reduced to six months, through the observation that from April 1547 until September 1549, Elizabeth had not yet attained legal majority and so could not take legal title to her manors and estates. That six-month interval was itself reduced after taking into consideration the political context of the autumn of 1549, when Elizabeth was no longer prevented by minority from receive her patents. Through the summer and autumn of that year, the Edwardian regime was destabilized by rebellion, and by a power struggle between Somerset and Northumberland for leadership of the ruling Privy Council. By Christmas 1549, however, Elizabeth was old enough to obtain legal title to her estates and **36**

Northumberland was firmly in control of the government. Therefore, the period of delay in Elizabeth's receipt of her patent letters that calls for explanation is the interval of approximately three months between Christmas 1549 and March 1550.

Some clue can be seen in the wrangling between Elizabeth and Northumberland over Hatfield. This had been her principal residence since early 1547; yet there was no mention of it in the patent letters Elizabeth finally received in March 1550.³⁹ During the Seymour crisis, she had endured a period of house arrest lasting around a year, spent entirely at Hatfield. Her protest of its omission from her patent letters, made immediately after she received them in March 1550, suggests strongly that she had fully expected Hatfield to be included.⁴⁰ She had been lived there for much of the last two years.⁴¹ In January 1550, however, the estate was granted to Northumberland.⁴² By June 1550, the Privy Council granted Elizabeth's petition to have "the house, parkes and lands of Hatfield" removed from Northumberland's keeping, so that full legal title to it could finally be hers.⁴³ **37**

Elizabeth's ability to wrest this property away from the most powerful man in the kingdom suggests a very different scenario from that canvassed by scholars. Elizabeth lived almost exclusively at Hatfield from 1548 until early 1550 because she understood it was to be part of her assignment that Parry had referred to in late 1547. Moreover, Hatfield had familial associations: her paternal grandmother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, had occupied it at the turn of the sixteenth century.⁴⁴ In 1547, Elizabeth furnished it with household goods lent to her from Henry VIII's storehouses. She had thoroughly taken possession. Mere weeks after consolidating his control over the Privy Council, however, Northumberland seized the estate for himself in January 1550. **38**

This sequence of events suggests a highly plausible explanation for the delay in the recording of Elizabeth's patent letters from Christmas 1549 to March 1550. Although the political situation had stabilized, Elizabeth was still prevented from taking formal legal title to her estates because Northumberland coveted Hatfield for himself. Since this estate had been informally assigned to Elizabeth since 1547 and so was, doubtless, already included the text of the patents drawn up two years before (now awaiting only the final step of sealing and entry into the patent rolls), Northumberland's scheme required that new patents be drawn up, excluding Hatfield from Elizabeth's "assignment", and granting it instead to himself; the time required to accomplish this was the likely cause for the delay between Christmas 1549 and March 1550 in Elizabeth's receipt of her patent letters. **39**

The swiftness with which Elizabeth was able to regain Hatfield—she appointed her own keeper to the estate by June 1550, a mere three months after its exclusion from her patents in March—argues that the princess was able to make a strong legal case for her right to hold title to this particular property.⁴⁵ The most plausible explanation of her ability to prevail against **40**

the new head of government was that this estate had been included in her original patent letters, even though those still had not undergone all the procedural steps required to give them full legal force. As if in acknowledgment of the original timetable and content regarding Elizabeth's legal title to Hatfield, it was granted to her on her seventeenth birthday, September 7, 1550, exactly a year after she had most likely expected it to pass formally into her possession.⁴⁶

The wrangling over Hatfield reveals that, initially, Elizabeth suffered by Somerset's removal from power in preference to Northumberland. It also reveals the significance of her status as a minor. Until she attained legal majority, and was thus able to receive title to her estates, her ability to control her lands and stabilize her estate was far from assured. Northumberland's bid for Hatfield was possible only because the estate had *not* been formally and legally conveyed to the princess while she remained a minor. **41**

The history of Elizabeth's ownership of Durham Place also illustrates how much she gained both politically and legally by receiving her patent letters in 1550. Northumberland was not the first to exploit her legal inability to obtain title to her properties before September 1549. Although Elizabeth enjoyed good relations with Somerset, he did not hesitate to requisition Durham Place in 1548, even though it had been earmarked to serve as her London residence.⁴⁷ Somerset converted it instead to a mint. This property was included in Elizabeth's "assignment" in March 1550. By this point, Somerset was no longer head of the government. Northumberland, having replaced him in that role, had designs of his own on Durham Place; having failed in his bid to obtain Hatfield, he attempted instead to poach this London property for himself in 1553. By this date, however, Elizabeth held legal title to it; Northumberland had therefore to gain her consent. By the time he applied to her, she had already heard of his plans, and expressed her displeasure that he was attempting to claim Durham Place without having first consulted her.⁴⁸ In compensation, Northumberland offered her the recently constructed and very grand Somerset House. Elizabeth's political clout had proved insufficient in the end to refuse outright his request for Durham Place; however, being unquestionably its legal owner, she was able to demand and receive due compensation for giving it up. **42**

The significance for this study of all these complicated political and legal maneuvers lies in their revelations about Elizabeth's political status and its expression in terms of land. Although the broad outlines of her lands had been determined by mid-1547, and she had begun drawing their revenues, she did not have legal title to the estates that formed her "assignment." This exposed her holdings to depredations by those in power, such as Somerset and Northumberland. There was no attempt to requisition Mary's London place, nor to poach her principal residence of Newhall, either by Somerset or Northumberland. As an adult, Mary had been able to take full legal possession of her property as early as 1547. She had obtained **43**

her patent letters in April 1547 and, since this date, held legal title to her estates. To reassign any of Mary's lands would have required her official permission, and involved the bureaucratic inconvenience of having new patent letters drawn up. As a minor at law, consequently unable to hold title to her estates, Elizabeth could not prevent attempts to purloin Durham Place or Hatfield. Once she obtained her patents in 1550, she gained formal legal title to both these properties among others. Elizabeth might yet find herself obliged to bow to overwhelming political pressure, as in the case of Durham Place, but having obtained legal title to her manors and estates, she was at least able to demand compensation in return for giving up any property.

The history of Elizabeth's patents, with all its convolutions, highlights her vulnerability throughout the period during which her legal minority prevented her from taking title to her estates. It was not until she turned sixteen that she began to feature regularly in diplomatic correspondence—not coincidentally, from the time she obtained legal possession of her estates. She could now act for herself in taking formal oaths of service from her tenants and clients, and could now "govern" her estates, thereby beginning to establish herself as a substantial landowning authority figure. Elizabeth could now bring suit in court should anyone damage or infringe on her holdings. She could solicit support from important politicians by consenting to their applications for reversionary grants of properties in her possession, and could now engage in the political activities incumbent on important landowners in this period. **44**

One very important avenue open to contemporary male landowners remained closed to both Mary and Elizabeth: as women, they could not hold regional political office. Even the circumscribed mandate of a female property owner, however, had been denied to Elizabeth while she remained a minor. The combination of her minority, the political struggle between Somerset and Northumberland, and the latter's attempt to steal Hatfield, had prevented Elizabeth from obtaining legal title to her estates until March 1550. When Elizabeth's patent letters were finally sealed, far more was accomplished than a mere technical transfer of land ownership: these documents signaled that the princess was now an adult "governor" of considerable estate(s). **45**

As the foregoing discussion has shown, the possession of landed estates was a weighty matter in this period. The possession of property automatically endowed its elite holder with regional powers of overlordship, office distribution, and patronage. The decision to confer a substantial endowment of estates on Mary and Elizabeth after Henry VIII's death was a fateful one (see Appendix A). The distribution of estates to the princesses allowed each of them to bestow **46**

patronage, building up regional affinities that would prove important to both of them: in Mary's case, to resist an attempt to deprive her of the throne and, in Elizabeth's case, to recruit politically important Protestants to her standard before her accession.

Mary's Estates and Regional Affinities

By May 1547, Lady Mary had received her assignment of lands. They yielded combined revenues of £3819 18s. 6d *p.a.*—a considerable sum. To put this in context, it is useful to observe that these revenues would have been very nearly sufficient to cover the costs of the combined household she had shared with Elizabeth in the 1530s (c. £4,000 *p.a.*). She could now fund a household on a scale reminiscent of her Welsh household in 1525, which had cost around £4,500 *p.a.*⁴⁹ From the time she received her assignment, Mary presided over a household staff of around one hundred. She avoided a recreation of her overtly viceregal establishment of 1525—since that would inevitably have appeared politically aggressive, during the reign of an underage king; nevertheless, her household and patrimony constituted a serious political power base. Mary Tudor now had at her disposal revenues exceeded by those of only six other peers of the realm and, of course, by those of the young king himself.⁵⁰ **47**

The lands and affinities of her endowment were centered primarily in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, and included the significant royal residences of Hunsdon and Newhall (see Map 1). Hunsdon was an impressive country manor in Hertfordshire, to the north of London. Henry VIII had purchased in 1525 from Philip Paries, esquire, and later conferred it on Anne Boleyn; after her execution, it reverted to the crown, and Mary herself lived there from time to time through the 1530s as a guest of the crown.⁵¹ When Prince Edward's household was reconstituted to reflect his maturity, and to emphasize his status as the king's immediate successor, Hunsdon became his primary country residence. In preparation for Edward's investiture as Prince of Wales in 1546, the king commissioned a portrait of the Prince with Hunsdon in the background.⁵² **48**

Mary's receipt of Hunsdon was evidently important, but Newhall in Essex (also known as Beaulieu), another of the manors included in her assignment, was even more so. Oddly enough, Newhall also had strong associations with the Boleyn family. Anne's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, inherited it from his mother in 1515, and entertained Henry VIII there in the same year. The king so enjoyed his stay that he purchased the property from his host for £1,000.⁵³ Henry renamed the estate Newhall, and refurbished it (though the name of Beaulieu persisted) starting in the early 1520s. He commissioned extensive structural alterations involving the addition of a new gallery, new chimneys for the entry facade, a new gatehouse, and new royal lodgings. The king also ordered the addition of a new chapel, tennis courts, and a new water conduit.⁵⁴ By the time Henry had finished this comprehensive **49**

renovation later in the 1520s, Newhall had become one of only six royal houses that could accommodate the entire Court—some six hundred people.⁵⁵ The final cost of all the works undertaken was at least £17,000.

After Cardinal Wolsey's fall into political disgrace, his houses at Whitehall and Hampton Court passed into Henry VIII's possession. These, along with Greenwich and Woodstock, became the king's principal residences, eclipsing Newhall despite the king's lavish spending on it in prior years. With Henry's architectural attentions occupied elsewhere, Newhall became Mary's residence, again at the pleasure of the crown, throughout the late 1520s and early 1530s.⁵⁶ From the mid-1530s until the end of Henry VIII's reign, it became the grand residence of well-heeled keepers—appointed by the king—such as George Boleyn (Queen Anne's brother), Robert, earl of Sussex and the Marquess of Northampton.⁵⁷ Among the more interesting decorations that Henry installed at Newhall during the 1530s was a stained glass window; the king had originally presented this as a gift to Waltham Abbey, but removed it to Newhall after the Abbey was dissolved.⁵⁸ The window's central panels depicted the crucifixion, flanked in the side panels by the kneeling figures of Henry himself and Catherine of Aragon—Mary's parents. It is little wonder that Mary adopted Newhall as one of her principal residences. Its scale and modernity would certainly have provided an impressive setting for all the furniture she selected from Henry VIII's storehouses, which—like the stained glass window in Newhall's chapel—provided numerous direct visual reminders to all onlookers of her royal lineage.

Although the country manors of Hunsdon and Newhall became Mary's principal residences until her accession, they were still not the most impressive of her houses and estates. The list of manors and estates she took into her possession was not composed exclusively of important royal properties; she also received the patrimonies of other great families, some of them old friends, some of them enemies. In the patent letters, the first manor listed in order of importance was Kenninghall in Norfolk.⁵⁹ This had until very recently been the principal seat of the duke of Norfolk, up to the time of his imprisonment in 1546. It was later to be Mary's first choice of refuge during the succession crisis of 1553. Her inheritance of this castle, along with its surrounding estates, lordships, parks, lesser manors, and rectorships, meant that she now assumed the duke of Norfolk's role as the leading magnate in East Anglia.

In May 1553, Mary gained further properties that had previously belonged to the Howard family, exchanging some of her east Essex manors for Framlingham, Eye, and Bungay. Framlingham had been a residence of Mary's half-brother and late rival for the succession, Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond. It was a strongly fortified castle, important as a coastal defense. Mary would later choose this as the setting in which to issue her first proclamations as queen.

She inherited yet other impressive holdings that had formerly belonged to disgraced or defunct titled nobility. From the among possessions left by the Duke of Suffolk, the late Charles Brandon, she received the lordship and manor of Melford along with its surrounding estates. The property at Ware in Buckinghamshire that had belonged to her former governess Margaret Salisbury found its way into Mary's assignment of lands from the Privy Council in 1547. The grant of Newhall itself derived from Thomas Cromwell's patrimony as earl of Essex. The Privy Council (intentionally or otherwise) made Mary the *de facto* heir of Cromwell. As such, she received various other manors, lordships, parks, and rectorships that had been held by Cromwell before his disgrace caused their reversion to the crown; among these were Boreham, Guys Hall, and Cannons Hall. **53**

Surprisingly, in view of her later attempts to persuade her nobility to relinquish monastic lands, Mary as princess apparently showed no reluctance to take possession of vacated church properties.⁶⁰ The most significant among these was the priory of St. John of Jerusalem, which became Mary's London residence. Others included Oldehall in Essex, which had also been a priory; Epping manor in Essex, which had recently belonged to the monastery at Waltham; and the rents and pensions that had formerly been paid to the Thetford monastery in Norfolk. Through another grant in early 1553, she added to these the lands of Bungay and Norwich abbeys. **54**

This same grant brought Mary another important residence, in the form of Hertford Castle. Although it was by this time considered a "lesser house", not on the scale of Hunsdon or Newhall, it was nevertheless a royal residence. A crown property since the days of Edward IV, it had become a royal nursery manor during the reign of Henry VIII.⁶¹ Each of his children resided there at one time or another. Mary's receipt of the castle and its surrounding estates was like, Hunsdon and Newhall, a significant expression in manorial terms of her exalted royal status. **55**

Mary received more than just manors. As noted earlier, in many instances she also obtained the estates, the parks, forests, and lesser houses associated with major residences. Her patent letters note that the grant to her of Kenninghall included its title or "lordship", making her technically "lord of Kenninghall." Within this lordship was a rectory, the living of which was within her gift. Along with the two parks of Kenninghall, she acquired ten subsidiary manors and various further parks. The patent letters also granted Mary the lordships and manors of Wyveton, Wareham, Barningham Stafford, Sherringham, Acle, Welles, West Walton, Walpole, Walsoken, and Hitcham, all in Norfolk. Similar arrangements applied to her acquisitions in Essex near Cannon Hall. She controlled the religious livings associated with her principal manors of Kenninghall, Hunsdon, Newhall, and so on, for a total of over forty such positions now in her gift. She received all profits and fees associated with her new estates including, among others, "the office of foedary in the county of Norfolk." The parks and woods that now **56**

belonged to Mary enabled her to feed and victual her household. The offices now in her gift, while not of national import, nevertheless made her one of the major patrons of an extensive area spanning Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.

Mary's inheritance also involved numerous people. She was landlord to her tenants on her lands, and to those who leased her lesser houses, farms, and woods. She collected the proceeds from those who worked at her mills, and presented her clients to the various rectories and advowsons under her control. She began to recruit household retainers, both resident and nonresident. The most important of these was Robert Rochester, an Essex gentleman from a distinguished but nonaristocratic family, who now became comptroller of her household. Another senior officer, Edward Waldegrave, came from Suffolk—a shire in which Mary held an estate. Other household officers recruited from among the shires in which Mary held estates were Henry Jerningham and William Cordell. Gentry families of East Anglia—the epicenter of Mary's patrimony—placed their daughters in Mary's household, while their menfolk formed Mary's household knights; these included Coke, Cornwallis and Dormer.⁶² Those who responded so quickly to Mary's standard in 1553 as to suggest their membership in her non-resident affinity came from families such as Bedingfield, Southwell, Shelton, Huddleston, Drury, and Mordaunt. These all hailed from areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, where Mary owned significant properties.⁶³ As discuss further on in this chapter, Mary and her household officers recruited supporters from other areas later in 1553; those who responded immediately, however, became the core of her successful campaign to press her claim to the throne, and they all came from regions in which she was the major landholder.

57

Her regional affinity's quick response to her summons in 1553 may be attributed at least in part to her efforts in ensuring that they knew who she was, and what she stood for. Although Mary spent the majority of her time at her principal residences of Hunsdon, Newhall, and Copped Hall, there is evidence to suggest that she at least visited almost all of her manors, and stayed in a great many of them. In April 1547, the Imperial ambassador reported that even before Mary had taken legal possession of her estates, she was planning to visit the lands in Norfolk that were to become hers. In the event, she probably did not leave until July.⁶⁴ Certainly, she stayed at St. John's Priory whenever she visited the court, though the king also lent her St. James' Palace for her use during these visits. In August of 1551, her major confrontation with Privy Council took place at Copped Hall.⁶⁵ Late in 1552, she asked the king and the Privy Council to reimburse her for money she spent effecting repairs to her coastal properties in Essex, suggesting that she had fairly accurate knowledge of their condition, possibly gained at first hand.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, there are no documents that provide a detailed itinerary of her movements during these years. The variation in place of residence,

58

and her evident concern for her properties, argue that she did not divide her time exclusively between Hunsdon and Newhall. Rather, it would appear that she made regular tours of her estates throughout Essex and modern East Anglia.

The Privy Council's decision to award Mary a patrimony created the conditions needed for the princess to assume the traditionally masculine role of regional magnate and patron. Evidence suggests that Mary consolidated her position by traveling throughout her properties, enabling all those who saw her to put a face to the name of the national figure and local landlord she had become. Not since 1525 had Mary possessed such an important and concrete political presence. She was no longer just the heir to the throne, but now a landowner with substantial revenues and considerable patronage obligations. **59**

Elizabeth's Lands

As detailed earlier in this chapter, Elizabeth finally received her patent letters in March 1550, and proceeded at once to take legal possession of her estates. The most immediately noteworthy aspect of her new patrimony was its modesty in comparison with that of her half-sister. Mary's lands yielded annual revenues of almost £4,000, whereas the corresponding figure for Elizabeth's was just over £3,000. Not only was the younger princess' property assignment less valuable overall; her manors were, individually, far less impressive. Because of her youth, she remained for the time being less significant as a political personage than her older half-sister. As discussed previously, this certainly played a role in the delay of her patent letters. The next part of this study shows that Elizabeth's junior status was also manifested in the patrimony granted to her. **60**

The most obvious difference between the settlements received by the two princesses was the in overall number of manors; Mary received nearly ninety, while Elizabeth received only seventy-five, much of her assignment being in the form of meadows, parks, woods, and forests. To be sure, these were important, ensuring that she could feed her household from fishponds, pasture her herds, and have a steady supply of firewood; but the greater preponderance of scattered lands in Elizabeth's assignment made it clearly inferior to Mary's long list of important manors. Whereas the older princess obtained large, capacious residences and their surrounding estates, her younger half-sister had to make do with lesser houses and small, dispersed parcels, which ranged geographically from Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire to Dorset. This relatively high proportion of lands, rather than manors, suggest that Elizabeth's settlement resulted from a deliberate effort to ensure that her assignment provided no more than the £3,000 in annual revenue that Henry's VIII had specified in his will as the amount of her yearly allowance. Elizabeth's status not just as her half-sister's junior, but furthermore as a minor, meant that the executor-councilors felt no obligation either legal or political to award her manors on the scale of Newhall or Hunsdon. **61**

Mary was the adult heir to the throne and had already formed international political connections; for this reason, she obtained manors and lands far in excess of the allowance Henry's will had stipulated for her. Elizabeth, by contrast, did not as yet hold sufficient political stature to intimidate the Privy Council into greater generosity, as it considered the composition of her property assignment.

The lands granted were nevertheless important, conferring upon Elizabeth the ability to maintain an impressive household. The revenues were real enough, even if they were not so substantial, in and of themselves, as to directly enhance her political prestige—nor even, according to her own statements, to cover her household expenses.⁶⁷ All the same, Elizabeth took a keen interest in exercising authority over her lands, as evidenced by her correspondence. Two letters in particular provide an early indication of the importance she placed even on the smallest land parcel, along with a demonstration of the way in which her status as a minor undermined her ability to establish control over her estates. **62**

On January 28, 1549, William Gyffard obtained a royal commission to sell certain parkland adjoining Collyweston and Apethorpe; he wrote to Laurence Lee, the steward of Apethorpe manor, to inform him.⁶⁸ Such a sale was problematic, since both of these manors and their parks were understood even at this time to be included in Elizabeth's assignment—but the princess had not yet obtained legal title to her lands (and was not to do so for another eighteen months). In fact, such power as she held to protect her estate was called even further into question by the government investigation then underway to determine the extent of her role in Thomas Seymour's treasonous activities. At the time Gyffard wrote to Lee, Elizabeth was under house arrest; during her continuing incarceration, the sale of the specified lands was duly completed. Despite the considerable distraction of the Seymour investigation, the princess authorized her surveyor general, William Cecil, to write to Gyffard on February 18, informing him that he must turn over the proceeds of the land sale to her officers. Cecil's letter has not survived, but Gyffard's reply to it, written in April, relates that he had been warned by Cecil that he was not to involve himself in the future with the selling of royal lands.⁶⁹ Beset as she then was with other difficulties, Elizabeth had felt compelled to act swiftly in order to prevent the complete alienation of her revenues from the two parks. **63**

Although Elizabeth's lands brought her sizable revenues, an indication that they were too scattered to serve her needs adequately exists in a letter she wrote to the Privy Council in May 1553. Due to her "great nede of pastures for my provicions, the lack wherof hath bene to my great chardges," Elizabeth had contracted with a certain "Smyth" to purchase his pastures near Woburn in Buckinghamshire.⁷⁰ She maintained that, "by just ordre of the Lawes justlie possessed", she now owned the said pastures. This met with the objections of John Russell, earl of Bedford, who insisted that the pastures belonged to him, and that Smyth therefore had no right to sell them. The council's letter to Elizabeth has not survived, but her reply suggests **64**

that Bedford must have convinced the council to ask the princess to surrender her legal title to the pastures, while the courts settled the dispute between Bedford and Smyth. The council had apparently put it to her that "it were myne honor and a poynt of comen justice not to imtromit therwith, the matier being litigiouse." Elizabeth protested in the strongest terms; indeed, she flatly refused to surrender her claim to the pasture land, giving the council clearly to understand that she would not relinquish it unless she were offered some superior property instead: "for I will not god willing forgoe it untill I may be better provided."⁷¹

Throughout most of the letter, Elizabeth managed to restrain herself to implicit—if none too subtle—criticisms of her property assignment's piecemeal geographic distribution. In closing, however, she could contain herself no longer: "And again because it is not unknowne to my Lord [Bedford] nor to any of you all but that it is most requisite for me to seeke some pastures for myself, which had never none out of Lease appointed me by others."⁷² In other words, Elizabeth was outraged that the very councilors who made so many difficulties for her, by giving her such a haphazard assignment in the first place, were now placing obstacles in the path of her own efforts to improve her situation. **65**

Elizabeth found ample grounds for dissatisfaction in the quality and location not only of her lands, but also of her manors. Principal among this latter category were Hatfield, Ashridge, Enfield, Collyweston, and her London residence of Durham Place. Just as Mary had become the *de facto* heir to the Howard estates in East Anglia, Elizabeth had become heir, in the same sense, to the estates of her paternal great-grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, who had resided both at Collyweston and Hatfield.⁷³ **66**

The "best of the rest" was Durham Place, which, as mentioned earlier, Elizabeth was unable to retain, suffering its appropriation first by Somerset, and then later by Northumberland. Collyweston in Northamptonshire had been the principal seat of Elizabeth's grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, and had later passed down to Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond and, briefly, to Anne Boleyn as part of her jointure.⁷⁴ It was very likely in disrepair by the time Elizabeth received it, since there it had not been occupied by anyone of social or political significance since Richmond's death in 1536. There is no evidence that Elizabeth herself ever stayed there. Ashridge and Enfield, the two remaining manors, were serviceable enough, but certainly not particularly impressive. Only a little information concerning them survives; it suggests they were adequate to house small-scale royal establishments, such as royal nurseries, but that Henry VIII had not modernized them or enlarged them sufficiently to render them suitable to Elizabeth's position as magnate and secondary heir to the throne. **67**

Ashridge was certainly in disrepair even to the point of being uninhabitable. In September 1549, Thomas Parry wrote to William Cecil that Elizabeth had to delay her arrival there for ten or twelve days because it was not yet ready for occupation.⁷⁵ Of all the letters that survive for **68**

the period from 1547 until 1553, only four indicate that Elizabeth was residing at Ashridge. Clearly, it was not a royal residence on the scale of Hunsdon or Newhall.⁷⁶ It had formerly been a monastery, and was acquired by Henry VIII following the dissolution of the monasteries. Like many such religious houses within striking distance of London, it contained royal lodgings that were used whenever the king passed through during his progresses and hunting trips. Its proximity to London, combined with its size, made it a convenient and entirely suitable residence for all three of Henry's children while they lived away from court; chambers had therefore been permanently assigned for each of them. Something of its antiquated condition was evidenced in the outdated nature of its water supply system: although most royal residences by now had newly installed conduit systems (such as Newhall, for example), Ashridge drew its water from wells via dog-powered pumps.⁷⁷ It is likely that in 1549, Elizabeth had already begun the work of modernizing the water supply arrangements, in order to make the estate more hygienic. As late as 1551 through 1552, however, Elizabeth's accounts show that Ashridge was still undergoing repairs.

Less information survives regarding Enfield. Hardly any of Elizabeth's correspondence for this period places her there, although her accounts for 1551–1552 indicate that repairs were in hand there, and that the estate had a working farm supplying hay to Elizabeth's principal residence at Hatfield.⁷⁸ **69**

Given the underwhelming state of both Ashridge and Enfield, it is little wonder that Elizabeth campaigned so vigorously to (re)gain Hatfield, as discussed earlier. Judging by her surviving correspondence—which is admittedly patchy—she preferred very strongly to reside at Hatfield.⁷⁹ David Starkey is doubtless correct in suggesting that, contrary to the claims of Elizabeth's modern biographers, she was not moved to request the return of Hatfield (after Northumberland had poached it) by any sentimental attachment to it as her beloved childhood home.⁸⁰ The simplest and most practical reason for her determination to reacquire Hatfield was that, unlike Ashridge or Enfield, it was clearly the most palatial of her manors; it was also conveniently close to London. Even so, Hatfield had never been capable of accommodating the entire court, as had been possible at Newhall. Originally, it had been part of the endowment of the bishopric of Ely, and was therefore still popularly known as "Bishop's Hatfield."⁸¹ By 1538, it had attracted Henry VIII's notice; the king he made it a condition of the new bishop's appointment that Hatfield be yielded to the crown. Thereafter, it became one of the nursery manors for the king's children, along with Ashridge and Enfield. Henry had probably sought to acquire it because of its parks, ponds, and proximity to London, and because it was large and comfortable. Nevertheless, a residence that had been very desirable in 1496 had fallen into disrepair by 1550. Elizabeth's accounts indicate that she had to employ a small army of workmen to effect repairs of a nature largely unspecified. One notation in the accounts concerns tile, suggesting that the roof probably needed some work.⁸² Hatfield possessed the important assets of deer-filled parks and fish ponds, very valuable to the **70**

feeding of a large household. Unlike Ashridge, Hatfield was at least habitable as soon as it came into Elizabeth's possession, and she resided there almost exclusively from late 1548 until her accession in 1558.

The geographic distribution of Elizabeth's lands also indicated that her settlement, while sizable enough, received rather less careful consideration than her half-sister's. Mary's lands formed two dense clusters: one along the boundary between Norfolk and Suffolk, and the other along the boundary between Essex and Hertfordshire (see Map 1). Elizabeth's lands were more scattered (see Map 2); the strongest concentrations, such as they were, formed an arc in two parts, the first sweeping up through eastern Bedfordshire and the south-west portion of Northamptonshire. A group of just over half a dozen manors in Rutland formed the focus of this first cluster. The second concentration lay where the arc swung down along the western border of Cambridgeshire (formerly Huntingdonshire). The estates here ringed an area in the three counties, especially in Bedfordshire, in which Elizabeth had no manors. Her major land holding at Missenden in Buckinghamshire was far from this cluster, although it anchored another much smaller one spanning eastern Buckinghamshire and western Hertfordshire. Her estates in Oxfordshire lay at the western end of the county, placing them a fair distance from her manors in the bordering county of Buckinghamshire. Many of Elizabeth's Northamptonshire estates ranged far from the main cluster. Similarly, a few of her Bedfordshire estates were relatively isolated from her other holdings. They were at least closer to the majority of her properties than her most outlying manors in far away Dorset and Gloucestershire.

71

This relatively sparse distribution of her estates was exacerbated in 1551, when Elizabeth had to surrender the entirety of her original patent letters. As discussed in the next chapter, Mary's property exchanges were highly advantageous to her, whereas Elizabeth's new patent letters granted in 1551 left her worse off. Early in 1551, probably around the end of January, the princess surrendered her original patent letters for cancellation. The Imperial ambassador reported that she was in London for Christmas 1550, and stayed on through January 1551. During that time, Stephen Gardiner was arrested, and the ambassador reported that Elizabeth immediately asked for one of his manors now that his entire estate had been forfeited to the crown.⁸³ Either the ambassador was misinformed or Elizabeth was tricked, for the new patent letters stripped her of many useful manors in Northamptonshire—considerably weakening her position as the major landholder in that shire—while awarding her small outlying manors that she probably never visited, and that had not been part of the Gardiner estate.

72

In the reissued patent letters of April 1551, Elizabeth lost her Northamptonshire holdings of Apethorpe, Wadehowe, Woodnewton, Tansor, and Yarwell, which as noted earlier had formed something resembling a local concentration of properties. In exchange, she acquired the

73

nearly inaccessible manors of Norton Bawson in Devon and Bysleigh in Gloucestershire, along with some small manors in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Essex. She did not receive any manors that had previously belonged to Gardiner.

After this re-issue of her patents in 1551, her estates were now even more widely scattered. In place of the two arcs that had previously contained a number of her holdings in reasonably close proximity to each other, there was now only one significant concentration along the boundary between south Rutland and western Cambridgeshire. Her other Northamptonshire lands were dotted throughout the county. It is highly unlikely that Elizabeth visited her new manors in Devon and Gloucestershire. A trip to the West Country would have been a serious undertaking, on the same scale as Mary's journey to Ludlow in 1525 or Elizabeth's later progresses as queen. Given the distribution of her estates, it is hardly surprising that Elizabeth rarely traveled beyond Hatfield. Mary could shuttle among her numerous estates in southwest Essex with relative ease, whereas the nearest manor to Hatfield among Elizabeth's holdings was Redborn, well toward the far side of Hertfordshire and not even a major property. The only other plausible candidate within the county was Ashridge, which lay even farther away than Redborn. Elizabeth later admitted that she had never visited at least one of her major holdings, at Donnington Castle: she claimed as late as 1554 that "I neuer laye in it in all my lyfe."⁸⁴ The new settlement of her lands in 1551 left her at a distinct disadvantage. Her estates, previously rather scattered, were now even more sparsely distributed.

The immediate beneficiary of the 1551 resettlement was Sir Walter Mildmay: on April 24th, exactly the date on which her new patent letters were issued, he received the manors Elizabeth had surrendered; furthermore, the manors and lands in Devon now granted to the princess had previously belonged to him. This effective exchange of properties between Elizabeth and Mildmay draws attention to two seemingly opposing aspects of Elizabeth's emerging political status in 1551: on one hand her dispossession, and on the other her active alignment with leading evangelical educators.

Elizabeth did not yet wield enough political power to secure her continued ownership of her existing holdings, let alone to add to them. On the contrary: in this enforced reissue of patent letters, her patrimony was parceled up and redistributed so that Mildmay could obtain lands commensurate with his increasing status as a rising politician. On its face, this episode seems to show that Elizabeth's political status was inferior to that of a government official; she was unable to prevent or undo it. Beneath the surface, however, things were not quite so simple. While Elizabeth was obliged to surrender some important estates, she gained an important political ally in the process: very clearly, Mildmay now owed her a debt of gratitude. The political climate in general, and the relative status of Elizabeth and Mildmay, were too

complex to permit any straightforward assignment of the roles of "patron" and "client". Their relationship is better understood in the context of a broader political network, cemented by shared ideologies and landed properties.

A few months after the Mildmay grants, Elizabeth sponsored a reversionary grant to William Cecil of her manor at Baroughdon in southeast Rutland.⁸⁵ In March 1552, Elizabeth granted to Admiral Clinton reversionary interests in her lands near St. Neots in western Cambridgeshire.⁸⁶ Considered all together, the Mildmay exchange and the grants to Clinton and Cecil suggest that Elizabeth was publicly aligning herself with some of the more prominent Protestants in her brother's government. **77**

These grants also highlight a point that deserves emphasis, particularly in view of the earlier unfavorable comparison of Elizabeth's property assignment with Mary's. Despite the inequalities already noted, each princess obtained a considerable patrimony. Elizabeth objected to her lack of conveniently located pastures, and of a truly princely residence near London, but she was still one of the wealthiest peers in the realm. Her "lesser houses," like Apethorpe, were still grand enough to become the principal seats of important politicians such as Walter Mildmay. She possessed enough lands of good quality that she could use them to secure highly placed allies such as Admiral Clinton, and to reinforce her ties to William Cecil. Elizabeth's settlement was "inferior" only in relation to Mary's. By the standards of the day, she was extremely wealthy, receiving annual revenues exceeded by those of only handful among the most exalted peers of the realm. **78**

Nevertheless, that fact remains that her estate was significantly inferior to Mary's. Arguably, this says more about the clarity of Mary's position than it tells us about the uncertainty surrounding Elizabeth's status during her continuing minority. Even so, the disposition of Elizabeth's assignment is seen to hold more significance when considered in the light of her inability to establish her legal title, and to retain possession of her estates. The direct effect of these two issues—her problems in establishing her legal rights, and in retaining possession of her estates—on the development of her political persona is demonstrated in the letter quoted previously concerning her pastures in Woburn.⁸⁷ As noted earlier, the letter shows Elizabeth's acute sensitivity to the issue of legal title to property. Believing that she was "by just ordre of the Lawes justlie possessed" of the property, she refused to relinquish her legal rights to it. **79**

In light of the difficulties she had experienced in the long course of obtaining legal title to her estates, it is not surprising that she would have been rather touchy on the subject of lawful possession. Elizabeth's objections were grounded not only in law, but also in the political realities of the time. Throughout the letter, she insisted that it was not just "my necessitie" but also, crucially, "myne honor," that would be harmed in the event she were compelled to relinquish possession of the Woburn field without compensation. The princess directed attention to the correlation between property and public image: she could not accept the **80**

damage to her standing that would be implied by an enforced surrender of the property, having acquired clear legal possession of it "from which to be now rejected were to my great dishonor, syns all the contrey knoweth it." Although the term "contrey" carried a meaning closer to the modern "county," Elizabeth was convinced that the "controversie" surrounding the Woburn pasture was "not unknowne" even to a wider public. She was clearly convinced that her political and social reputation were at risk if she surrendered the Woburn field, unless she received reasonable compensation that would itself be a matter of public knowledge.

Elizabeth's fears on these grounds were no doubt aggravated by her inability to easily secure a farm for one of her clients. She commissioned Walter Buckler, her steward, to write to Cecil regarding her suit for "an honest man"—presumably a servant or client—to receive the reversionary grant of a small farm that was currently part of the endowment of the dean of Worcester.⁸⁸ Elizabeth held the neighboring manor of Worcester, and therefore assumed she was in a position to press the case with the dean. To her evident consternation, some of the canons in the dean's chapter expressed unspecified concerns regarding the grant. Buckler, writing on Elizabeth's behalf, urged Cecil to advise the king to indicate his approval by signing the necessary papers, a copy of which was enclosed for his convenience. **81**

Elizabeth's letter regarding the Woburn pasture highlights her perception that "honor" or status was linked to property and lordship. Because she did not possess "lordship" rights in Worcester (in contrast with Mary, who had obtained lordship rights for nearly all her manors and estates), Elizabeth could not extend patronage to her clients in the manner typical for regional magnates. The initial resistance of the canons of Worcester to Elizabeth's request concerning the Worcester farm cast another shadow on her "honor" and status. As for the contested pasture land in Woburn, Elizabeth signaled her belief that she must stand her ground, or else risk the sacrifice of considerable prestige with her clients, neighbors, and tenants. The Privy Council had urged her to back down, suggesting it was a disgrace for someone of her rank (and gender?) to meddle in a legal matter of this kind, but Elizabeth's letter indicates that she rejected their argument, finding it disingenuous; in her mind, "Honor" and property were inextricably linked. In the letter, Elizabeth makes clear that her view of the matter was diametrically opposed to that of the council: far from requiring her to drop her claim to the land, "honor" demanded that she employ all available means to retain possession of it. **82**

Elizabeth's pointed reminder to the privy councilors that they had created her difficulties by awarding her an estate without conveniently located pasture also reveals her recognition that the inferior quality of her property assignment—not just the smaller total of its revenues—reflected adversely on her political status. Henry's will had stipulated that both princesses were to be treated equally, but the council's selection of the lands she received clearly reflected the view that as a minor, she was of lesser importance than Mary. The delay in the issuance of **83**

patent letters, and the subsequent instability of her estate, were both products of the same assessment of her political significance. This same view was directly expressed in the inferior quality of her manors and the wide geographic distribution of her lands. Despite all this, Elizabeth's considerable estates still gave her the opportunity to attract important political allies like Admiral Clinton, Walter Mildmay, and William Cecil.

By coming into ownership of property on a large scale, Mary and Elizabeth both became individuals of considerable political consequence. Their tenants and leaseholders were now directly subject to their authority. The clerical livings associated with their estates were within their gifts, making them the leading patrons in areas where their estates were densely clustered. As Elizabeth demonstrated through her shrewd use of reversionary grants, the possession of property afforded excellent opportunities for the cementing of political and religious alliances. The next chapter examines the military dimension to landownership, and its explosive potential.

84

Notes

Note 1: Harris, *English Aristocratic Women* . . . , p. 6

Note 2: S. D. Church, *The Household Knights of King John* [Cambridge UP, 1999], p. 7

Note 3: R. Britnell, *The Closing of the Middle Ages? England, 1471–1529* [Oxford, 1997], p. 19

Note 4: C. Brooks, "A Law-abiding and Litigious Society," from *The Oxford History of Tudor Stuart Britain*, ed. J. Morrill [Oxford UP, 1996], pp. 139–155

Note 5: Mertes, *English Noble Households*, pp. 75–91

Note 6: For a typical list, and the prominence of nobility on such lists, see *CSP Mary Domestic*, 160

Note 7: Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 38

Note 8: S. Ellis, "A Crisis of the Aristocracy? Frontiers and Noble Power in the early Tudor State," from *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. J. Guy [London, 1997], pp. 330–339

Note 9: Loades, *Mary Tudor*, p. 176, 180

Note 10: Harris, *English Aristocratic Women* . . . , p. 147

Note 11: In this way, the patrimonies granted to Mary and Elizabeth differed from those granted to younger royal sons or uncles, which were entailed on their legitimate heirs and were meant to be permanent alienations of royal estates; see Wolffe, *Crown Lands* . . . , p. 31

Note 12: See, e.g., Loades, p. 80

Note 13: BL Cotton Vitellius, C.i, f. 7v.; hereafter cited as "Instructions"

Note 14: *Ibid.*

Note 15: "Instructions", f. 17r

Note 16: See, e.g., Privy Council discussions regarding lands and Henry VIII's will, *APC*, II, p. 43

Note 17: F. Jones, *The Princes and Principality of Wales* [Wales UP, 1969], pp. 87, 93–7. T. P. Ellis, *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale, Lordships A.D. 1315* [London, 1924], p. 4

Note 18: Gunn, "The Regime of Charles, Duke of Suffolk, in North Wales . . . ," p. 486

Note 19: *LP*, IV, 1500 and *LP*, 4/1, 1690

Note 20: For discussions of decentralized state systems in England, Western Europe, and in the Americas in this period, see S. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power* [Oxford UP, 1995], A. Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* [New York, 2004]

Note 21: A common practice in early modern Europe; see, e.g., S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* [Oxford UP, 1986]

Note 22: The complete jurisdictional "commissions" Henry granted to Mary's Privy Council are laid out in great detail in the "Instructions," ff. 8r–v, 11r–17r

Note 23: A. N. Palmer and E. Owen, *The History of Ancient Tenures of Land in North Wales and the Marches*, 2nd ed. [London, 1910], pp. 203–204

Note 24: *CPR*, III, 238

Note 25: Starkey, p. 95; P. Johnson, *Elizabeth I: A Study in Power and Intellect* [London, 1988], p. 33

Note 26: *CSP, Spanish*, X, pp. 186, 203, 361; Catholic Imperial ambassadors were not taken into the confidence of Edward VI's Protestant ministers

Note 27: Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 219

Note 28: A. W. Simpson, *An Introduction to the History of Land Law* [London, 1961], ch. 8. For its bearing on wardship, see Elton, *Reform*, p. 147

Note 29: Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, pp. 9–11

Note 30: She was in residence in the manors later granted to her in 1547 through 1550; *CW*, pp. 14–24, 31–36; *APC, II*, p. 120 and Starkey, p. 94

Note 31: *CSP Edward*, 362

Note 32: *CSP Edward*, 362, 363

Note 33: Haynes, *A Collection of State Papers*, p. 96

Note 34: She wrote from Ashridge, Hatfield, and Enfield regularly from 1547 through 1550; *CW*, pp. 14–24, 31–36.

Note 35: *CSP, Edward VI*, 180, 207

Note 36: *APC, II*, p. 120 and Starkey, p. 94

Note 37: *CSP, Edward*, 36

Note 38: Hoak, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI*, pp. 252–255; Northumberland, at this time, had yet to be granted his ducal title and was known by his then title Earl of Warwick

Note 39: *CW*, letters 7, 16, 17, and 18; *CSP Edward*, 362

Note 40: *APC, III*, 52

Note 41: For an alternate explanation, see Starkey, p. 100

Note 42: *CPR, III*, p. 415

Note 43: *APC, III*, 52

Note 44: Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother . . .*, pp. 156–157

Note 45: *CSP Edward*, 445

Note 46: *CPR, II*, pp. 240–241

Note 47: *CSP, Edward VI*, 195, 286

Note 48: *CSP Edward VI*, 804

Note 49: Loades, p. 41; BL Additional Charter 67534

Note 50: *CPR, II*, 20. Loades, p. 137 lists the peers whose revenues exceeded Mary's as Somerset, Warwick, Shrewsbury, Pembroke, and Derby

Note 51: In 1537, Mary served as a godmother to a child near Hunsdon; http://www.hunsdon.org.uk/village_history.htm; Thurley, *Royal Palaces* p. 49

Note 52: <http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/images/EdwardVI08.jpg>

Note 53: Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, pp. 44–45

Note 54: *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 186, 196, 205

Note 55: The other five being Richmond, Hampton Court, Greenwich, Eltham, and Woodstock; *Ibid.*, p. 73

Note 56: Loades, p. 138

Note 57: Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, p. 83

Note 58: *Ibid.*, p. 203

Note 59: *CPR, II*, pp. 20–23

Note 60: Loades, pp. 245–246

- Note 61:** Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, pp. 18, 79
- Note 62:** Loades, pp. 141–142
- Note 63:** *Ibid.*, p. 176
- Note 64:** Loades, p. 138
- Note 65:** *APC*, III, p. 348
- Note 66:** *CSP Domestic Edward VI*, 776, 777
- Note 67:** On the eve of her accession, Elizabeth claimed that her estate revenues had never been adequate to her expenses; M. J. Rodriguez-Salgado and S. Adams, "The Count of Feria's Dispatch to Philip II of 14 November 1558," *Camden Miscellany*, 4th ser., vol. 28 [London, 1984]. Hereafter "FD" for Feria Dispatch
- Note 68:** *CSP, Edward, Domestic*, 180, 207
- Note 69:** *Ibid.*
- Note 70:** *CW*, let.21, pp. 39–40
- Note 71:** *Ibid.*
- Note 72:** *Ibid.*
- Note 73:** M. K. Jones and M. G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby* [Cambridge UP, 1992], pp. 156–157
- Note 74:** *Stat. Realm.*, III, p. 479
- Note 75:** *CSP Edward VI*, 362
- Note 76:** Thurley, pp. 57, 81–82, 163
- Note 77:** Thurley, p. 163
- Note 78:** "Accounts," pp. 18, 44
- Note 79:** BL Harley 6986, art.12., fol.21; Bodleian, Smith 68, fol. 45; BL Lansdowne 1236, fol. 39; BL Harley 39, fol. 14v. All but the last are also printed in *Collected Works*, pp. 13–24, 37–38
- Note 80:** Starkey, p. 100–101
- Note 81:** J. J. Antrobus, *Hatfield: Some Memories of Bishop's Hatfield and Its Past*, 4th ed. [Hatfield, UK, 1933], pp. 24–28
- Note 82:** "Accounts," pp. 43–44
- Note 83:** *CSP Spanish*, X, p. 214
- Note 84:** As reported in Foxe, 1563, sig. 1712r–v
- Note 85:** *CPR*, IV, p. 198
- Note 86:** *CPR*, IV, p. 373
- Note 87:** BL Cotton Vespasian, F. XIII, f. 173
- Note 88:** *CSP Edward VI*, 727