

ARTICLES

Does the TOURNAMENT TAPESTRY IN THE MUSEUM OF VALENCIENNES represent 'The New Young King of England' among the royal spectators?

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An important part of The Missing Princes Project investigation is taking place in the Burgundian Low Countries where a number of key figures, including 'Richard of England', spent some considerable time. In July 2016, Nathalie Nijman-Bliekendaal from the Netherlands joined the project, quickly becoming a key member of the Dutch Research Group. Nathalie's original research work into a number of significant tapestries of the period is offering many potential new leads and becoming a significant line of investigation for the project going forward. The following article is an example of this innovative research work.

Philippa Langley

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Museum of Fine Arts in Valenciennes took possession of a beautiful tapestry representing a knightly tournament in Flanders at the end of the fifteenth century (see Figure 1). The tapestry was most probably ordered by a prominent enthusiast of tournaments, Duke Frederick III 'the Wise', elector of Saxony.¹ From August 1494 until at least November 1494 Frederick had been invited by the King of the Romans, Maximilian I,² to his court in Flanders to join in the celebrations following the inauguration of the 16-year-old archduke of Austria, Philip the Handsome, as the new duke of Brabant and count of Zeeland and Holland. Therefore it seems likely that the tapestry shows one of the tournaments which were held as part of the festivities.

If we take a close look at the royal spectators in the official gallery we can see a number of well-dressed nobles enjoying the knights in action (Figure 2). Compared to other surviving tapestries of the era, the Tournament Tapestry incorporates breathtakingly beautiful and surprisingly accurate portraits.

Among the royal spectators we can clearly identify: Archduke Philip the Handsome (Figure 3), his sister Margaret of Austria (Figures 4a and 4b) and King Charles VIII of France (Figure 5). There is, however one striking figure, a man, who is not yet identified – as far as I know from the existing literature. His garments are in no way inferior to those of the other male royals depicted. He wears an eye-catching gold-coloured mantle and is sporting fashionable red headwear (Figure 6). Who is this man who seems to attract all attention, and why is he so prominently depicted?

I think I can identify this man as the individual who entered history as the Pretender 'Perkin Warbeck', who

claimed to be Richard of Shrewsbury, second son of the Yorkist King Edward IV. Most historians consider Warbeck an imposter, who (from 1492 to 1497) made several attempts to overthrow the new Tudor regime in England. However, I have decided to call him Richard (of England), duke of York, in this article because at that moment in history he was seen and recognised as such at the Burgundian Court.³

Descriptions in the chronicle of Jean Molinet

We know that Richard, duke of York, travelled with the royal court of Maximilian during the late months of 1493 until at least January 1495, joining in hunting parties and other royal festivities with the likes of Philip the Handsome, Margaret of York and Maximilian. He also took a prominent role in the inaugural celebrations, riding beside Philip on his visits to Leuven and Antwerp.

Jean Molinet, the famous chronicler of the Burgundian court, describes Richard's conspicuous presence in Antwerp in October 1494 in his treatises on the joyous entry there of the 16-year-old Archduke Philip the Handsome:

Entre les autres princes, lesquels gaudissoient à ceste entrée estoit fort gorgias et, de grande pompe, Richard d'Yorck ... et avoit, pour triompher, gentilshommes et vingt archiers, portant la blanc rose⁴

Ann Wroe summarises this in her book *Perkin*: 'Philip, aged sixteen was the star of this show ... But Molinet noticed particularly Richard of York described as "really handsome", *fort gorgias*, shining in splendour, surrounded *pour triompher* by his own courtiers and twenty archers in white rose livery'.⁵

This shows that in Flanders the duke of York openly presented himself as the legitimate Yorkist heir to the



1. The Tournement Tapestry, Valenciennes, c. 1494. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux
 2. The royal spectators in the official gallery, from the Tournement Tapestry





3. Philip the Handsome' Paris, Louvre Museum. Creative Commons Licence



4a. and 4b. Margaret of Austria, portraits attributed to Pieter van Coninxloo. The first is in the Royal Collection and is based on the second, an earlier painted panel of a diptych now in the National Gallery, 1493–95



5. Portrait of Charles VIII of France, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Creative Commons Licence



6. Richard, duke of York? From the Tournament Tapestry



7. a & b Margaret of York as depicted on the Tournement Tapestry, compared with a painted portrait of her when she was at a younger age, Paris, Louvre Museum. Creative Commons Licence.

English throne, and was fully recognised and supported by the Burgundian rulers in his claim. Christine Weightman even calls the joyous entry of Philip the Handsome in Antwerp ‘an occasion for Yorkist propaganda in the full view of all the English merchants who were present in the city’.⁶ For these reasons, it is not surprising that Richard, duke of York, was prominent as a royal spectator at one of the tournaments held as part of the inauguration of Philip the Handsome as the new ruler of the Burgundian Low Countries.

Frederick III, the Wise, elector of Saxony

Besides Richard of England, the Saxon prince-electors Frederick III, who commissioned the tapestry, was also present at the festivities described above. In early August 1494 he arrived at the court in Mechelen. Frederick must have met Richard several times at various festivities, and spoken to him. Evidence for this is found in a travel report that was based on contemporary notes from his secretary Georg Spalatin. These diary notes describe a mass in Mechelen (my italics):

On Sunday Bartolomeus, my gracious lord and all other princes rode to the church with the Roman king. The king stood at the top, next to him first at his left hand the Archbishop of Mencia, Duke Frederick of Saxony, Duke Philip the son of the Roman King, *the young King of England*, Duke Albert of Saxony⁷

Both the duke of York, who is called the young king of England, and the prince-electors of Saxony are given an honourable place during the service. This implies that both men were important royal guests during Philip's inauguration. But Richard was more than that. He was considered a relative by Maximilian.

Maximilian I, king of the Romans

From mid-1493 the king of the Romans took care of Richard, duke of York, ‘whom he firmly believed to be the son of King Edward IV of England’.⁸ This conviction is evident from the fact that Richard was the only person to be allowed to escort Maximilian during his festive ride to the church on the occasion of the blessing of his marriage to Bianca Maria Sforza on 16 March 1494.⁹ The then 21-year-old Richard was taken into Maximilian's family. From 1493 to 1494 he also frequently stayed at the court of Margaret of York in Malines, where Richard and Philip the Handsome spent a great deal of time together.

Albert ‘the Bold’, duke of Saxony

There is no doubt that from his uncle Albert, duke of Saxony (the stadtholder general of the Netherlands), Frederick had already heard of the presence of ‘the son of King Edward IV’ in Flanders and his advanced invasion plans. After all, Albert was a faithful and loyal companion of Richard, duke of York, and they were regularly in each other's company. Albert made sure, most of all financially, that the duke of York could build up an army (fleet), with which he would make his (first) attempt to regain the English throne in July 1495.

Margaret of York

If we take a new look at the tapestry, we can see a lady in a blue dress, with a reddish-brown, elegant headdress – finished with pearls – and holding a white gillyflower in her left hand (Figure 7a). After some considerable research, I believe that this lady is the dowager duchess of Burgundy, Margaret of York, whose brother was Edward IV, king of England 1461–83.¹⁰ Her profile shows significant similarities to the best-known portrait (Figure 7b). One can recognise her pale egg-shaped face with the high forehead and the small nose and lips.

The pencil sketch from Arras

So far, only one image of ‘Perkin Warbeck’/Richard, duke of York is known from the period (Figure 8) and is, as things stand, the only portrait to which we can compare the face of Richard, duke of York, on the tapestry. If we look at both faces (see Figures 6 and 8), we are immediately struck by the same long face, with the same slight double chin. The nose, too, has a strikingly similar shape. However, the resemblance that strikes one the most is the shape of the mouth of both men. Fortunately, for identification we do not have to depend on that sole existing image on the Arras sketch alone.

Resemblance to Edward IV

Contemporaries noted that Richard strongly resembled his father, Edward IV. An engraving of Edward compared with the sketch from the *Receuil d'Arras* shows remarkable similarities (see Figure 9), with the same, slightly double, line of chin and faintly retroussé nose. Another contemporary portrait of Edward IV also



8. Perkin Warbeck/Richard, duke of York. Sketch from the Recueil d'Arras, based on an earlier portrait c.1494. Image in the public domain.

shows a remarkable resemblance to the face of Richard, duke of York, as depicted on the tapestry. This is a portrait of Edward IV on the 'Royal Window' in Canterbury Cathedral (dated c.1480)¹¹ (Figures 10a and 10b). Even more remarkable than the clearly similar facial features (the chin and mouth) is the almost identical facial expression.

The Peace Treaty of Senlis (1493)

In this analysis I have shown that from mid-1493 onwards Richard, duke of York, was considered an important royal 'relative' by Maximilian, Margaret of York and Philip the Handsome and was regularly in their company. From this fact alone his prominent image on the tapestry can be explained.

However, the image of the French King Charles VIII among the Burgundian elite is very unexpected. If we assume that the tapestry is a realistic representation of a tournament held on the occasion of the inauguration of Philip in 1494 – as is generally assumed – we are confronted with an impossibility: at that time the king of France was in Italy engaged in the Italian war.¹²

Perhaps we need to look at the tapestry through different eyes. Although the setting is perhaps not wholly realistic, the figures depicted are, certainly in dress and appearance. It seems probable, therefore, that the intention was that contemporary viewers of the tapestry would immediately recognise the (combination of) figures and understand its underlying message. It is therefore my considered opinion that it was a very conscious choice to depict the duke of York, 'the young



9. Engraving of King Edward IV in an edition of Livy (1472). Image in the public domain

King of England', on the tapestry. The direct cause for this choice lies in a succession of events in 1493 that were painful for Maximilian and touched him deeply both personally and as a statesman.

In May 1493 the Peace of Senlis was established between Maximilian and Charles VIII. As a consequence of its provisions, Maximilian's daughter Margaret, who had been married to the French king at a young age and was raised at the French court in preparation for her position as the future queen of France, was sent back to her father and brother in Flanders. She was tossed aside in favour of Anne of Brittany. However, Maximilian had already married Anne of Brittany 'by proxy' in 1490. Charles, though, ignored his previous marriage to Margaret completely and made Anne his wife and queen of France in 1491. Maximilian's loss was both personal and political, he had been outmanoeuvred by the French King. This was a double humiliation for Maximilian and he must have felt deeply frustrated and betrayed. That this was indeed the case can be seen in a letter dated 4 April 1493 from the Milanese ambassador in France to the duke of Milan (my italics):

The admiral (Philip of Burgundy, lord of Beveren) tries to upset the peace (of Senlis) in every way. He persuades the king that the emperor only wants peace in order to deceive him and set up Burgundy again. He says if the king (of France) gives back the daughter (Margaret of Austria), one of two evils will follow, either her father (Maximilian) will never marry her, saying that she is the wife of his Majesty and thus make out that the king's children are bastards, *or they will try to make King of England the boy who calls*



10. a & b 'Almost identical facial expression'; Edward IV as depicted in the Royal Windows in Canterbury Cathedral (ca. 1480) compared with the image of Richard, duke of York on the Tournement Tapestry

himself the son of King Edward, who fled thither, and give him this daughter (Margaret) to wife, so as by his means to make perpetual war in France. These arguments have left the king (of France) very perplexed.¹³

This is just a small glimpse of events at the time, but it helps highlight the underlying emotions of anger and feelings of revenge in Maximilian. It seems the Peace of Senlis was the direct cause for the outmanoeuvred Maximilian to fully support 'the boy who calls himself the son of King Edward', Prince Richard, duke of York, in his plans to regain the English throne.

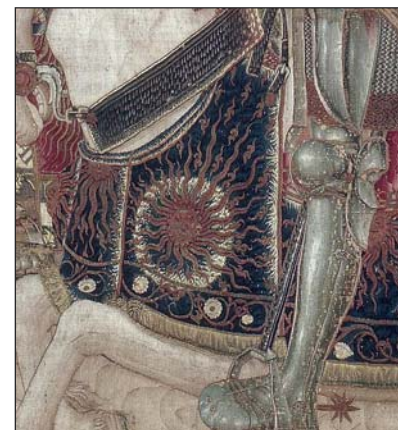
From mid-1493 we indeed see that Richard of England is presented by Maximilian as the rightful Yorkist heir to the English throne and York had to promise that he would attack France as soon as he became king of England.¹⁴ The pledged support for York consisted not only of money and soldiers. Among other things, during the joyous entries of Philip the Handsome, Richard was offered an international podium to present himself in public as 'the new young king of England', using an extensive repertoire of platforms to build a credible royal image.¹⁵

This could also have taken the form of a tapestry, on which Richard, duke of York (who by then had proclaimed himself King Richard IV of England) and the French king Charles VIII are pictured together. It is difficult not to conclude that the French king is the

figure of fun on the tapestry. Otherwise it would be inexplicable for Charles to be pictured next to Margaret of Austria, whom he had recently rejected and sent home, and who was rumoured (for a short while in 1493) to be offered in marriage by Maximilian to Richard of England.¹⁶

Further support for this conclusion is found in the two knights in the foreground. They were not pictured so conspicuously on the tapestry without reason. The horseman on the left symbolises the Peace of Senlis. His horse wears a caparison with the Latin text: *Domine Da Nobis Pacem in Diebus Nostris*, or 'Give us peace in our days, Lord'. This peace is attacked by the knight on the right. His horse is dressed in murrey and blue, the colours of the English House of York, and decorated with 'the sun in splendour' and white wild roses, the ultimate Yorkist symbols (Figures 11a–d).

A funny quirk is the crest chosen on the helmet of the Zeeland knight of the House of Reymerswaal.¹⁷ It's clearly a beaver (*bever* in Dutch) – see Figure 12. This crest could very well be a subtle reference to one of the important negotiators of the peace treaty, namely the Admiral of the Netherlands: Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren:¹⁸ indeed, the same person who was tormenting the king of France during the peace negotiations, and who 'tried to upset the peace treaty' according to the Milanese Ambassador.



(Above) 11. a Charging knights: 'Domine Da Nobis Pacem in Diebus Nostris' from the Tournament Tapestry, Valenciennes, c. 1494 (Right) 11. b Yorkist colours and symbols from the Tournament Tapestry, Valenciennes, c. 1494. 11. c Emblem of Edward IV, *rose en soleil*, from the BL Royal MS 14 E vi, f.110). © British Library. 11.d. White (wild) rose from the Tournament Tapestry, Valenciennes, c. 1494

Conclusion

Although it remains difficult to identify individuals on a tapestry, it is in my view actually possible. Concerning the identification of the figure I believe to be Richard, duke of York, I have offered several features that support this conclusion.

First, there are clear similarities with the Arras sketch and comparison to contemporary images of Edward IV in a number of portraits as well as the Royal Window in Canterbury Cathedral. This is supported by similar claims of his likeness to Edward IV by his contemporaries. Besides this, his prominence among the Burgundian elite on the tapestry can be explained: Maximilian recognised Richard, duke of York, shortly after the Peace of Senlis in 1493 as the son of the deceased English king and fully supported him in his claim to that throne from then on, at the expense of the ruling king, Henry VII. Under the auspices of Margaret of York, Richard was taken in by the family of Maximilian and became a close companion of Maximilian's son the Archduke Philip the Handsome.

12. A funny quirk: a sitting beaver (bever in Dutch) on top of the helmet of the charging Zeeland knight from the Tournament Tapestry. A subtle reference to the Lord of Beveren.



Furthermore, I have shown that during several joyous entries of Archduke Philip in 1494 Richard was present and showcased himself openly as the rightful heir to the House of York. Various propagandistic means and platforms were also clearly used to this end.

Given the combination of noblemen that are depicted we must assume that the tapestry is a fictitious rather than a realistic representation of a tournament, with the tournament scene depicted presumably based on one of the many that were held in the honour of Philip the Handsome as duke of Brabant (or as count of Zeeland and Holland) in 1494. In my opinion, the scene on the tapestry must be read in a way that is often overlooked in the history of tapestries, namely as a form of (portable) propaganda, in this case an (artistic) medium of anti-French or pro-Yorkist propaganda. A parody of the Peace of Senlis, intended to mock the French king and let him know: 'Here stands Richard, duke of York, the rightful and future king of England, ready "to make perpetual war" with France'.

It is difficult not to conclude that the Tournament Tapestry is an expression of the humiliation suffered by Maximilian around the Treaty of Senlis and the ensuing personal feelings of hatred and revenge he must have held for the French King. It is also a significant riposte and warning.

Frederick the Wise of Saxony, who most likely commissioned the tapestry, must have experienced the frustration and anger of Maximilian at close quarters during his stay at the court of the king and the inaugural festivities. At the same time, he also witnessed how Maximilian openly encouraged and displayed Richard of England and fully supported him in his plans to reconquer his kingdom (and following this, to attack France). It is highly probable that Frederick (possibly influenced by his uncle Albert of Saxony, who was a loyal supporter of Richard) was convinced that he was in the company of the rightful English heir. The duke of York is called no less than *Der junge König von England* (the young king of England) in his diary.

Nathalie Nijman-Blikendaal graduated from the University of Leiden in 1993, where she studied (criminal) Law. She started her career at the Court of Appeal in The Hague and after four years provided legal support to victims of crime, first at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, and later at Victim Support Netherlands. After having worked successfully in this field for many years, in 2016 she left to follow her real passion: European medieval history, becoming a dedicated researcher on behalf of The Missing Princes Project. She has been a member of the Richard III Society since 2014.

The Tournament Tapestry is currently on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as part of their exhibition 'The Last Knight: The Art, Armor, and Ambition of Maximilian I'. We will have a review of this exhibition in March's Bulletin.

Notes and references

1. Frederick III, 'the Wise' of Saxony is generally regarded as the person who ordered the Tournament Tapestry. He was a great art collector in his time and had a preference for tapestries. See: Ingetraut Ludolph, 'Friedrich der Weise, Kurfürst von Sachsen; 1463–1525', p. 112 and F. Salet, 'Chefs- d' oeuvre de la tapisserie du XIVe au XVIe siècle' (1973). On p. 75 Salet argues why he is convinced that the tapestry was commissioned by Frederick of Saxony. He also indicates that this tapestry shows 'without any doubts' an image of Philip the Handsome at the age of 15, from which he concludes that it is very likely that the tapestry shows an image of a tournament from 1494.
2. In this paper Maximilian is referred to as the king of the Romans to follow the contemporary source material. The adoption of the title: 'Holy Roman Emperor' only took place in 1508 at Maximilian's coronation in Trent. So in 1494 Maximilian was still king (and 'regent').
3. This was not only at the Burgundian Court, but also at various other European courts. It is not certain that 'Perkin Warbeck' really was an imposter. Opinions vary. It may be very possible that 'Warbeck' actually was the missing younger prince, Richard, duke of York, though there is no conclusive evidence at this stage.
4. *Chronique de Jean Molinet*, Tome 5 (www.gallica.bnf.fr), Chapitre CCLXXV 'L'entrée de monseigneur l' archduke en Anvers', pp 14–16.
5. A. Wroe, *Perkin, a Story of Deception*, London (2003), p. 154.
6. C. Weightman, *Margaret of York: the diabolical duchess* (1989) pp 164, 165.
7. See the itinerary of the journey of Frederick of Saxony (Frederick the Wise) into the Netherlands in 1494 (based on a collection of contemporary notes from his secretary G. Spalatin) in which Richard, duke of York is mentioned as *der Junge konig von Engeland* ('the young king of England') standing next to Frederick of Saxony, Philip the Handsome and Duke Albert of Saxony during a mass in Malines. In: *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Thüringische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 4, (1860), p. 132 (pp 127–37).
8. 'Venice: 1496', in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, Vol. 1, 1202–1509, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1864), nr 665 (letter of the Venetian Ambassador Zacharia Contarini, written at the Court of Maximilian in Nordlingen, Germany, on 6 January 1496).
9. A. Wroe, *Perkin*, p. 152 (RI XIV, 1 nr. 478 in: *Regesta Imperii Online*).
10. She is also identified as Margaret of York by Guy Delmarcel (see *Flemish Tapestry from the 15th to the 18th century*, p. 52) and Thomas P. Campbell (see *Tapestry in the Renaissance: art and magnificence*, p. 135).
11. John Ashdown-Hill states that it is clear from the glass we see today in the 'Royal Window' that the depictions of Edward IV and Elizabeth Widville comprise restored versions of their original images. He continues: 'As we can see in the case of Edward IV, although his face had been broken in 1643, the pieces survived. Thus the glass which depicts him today is still his original (repaired) image'. See more on this at johnashdownhill.com 'Does the "Royal Window" at Canterbury Cathedral show us

- what Edward IV's two sons really look like?' (6 November 2017).
12. E. Dupont, *Memoires de Philippe de Commynes* (1840), Tome II, Chapitre VI.
 13. 'Milan: 1493', in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385–1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London, 1912), p. 291. British History Online. A. Wroe, *Perkin*, p. 205.
 14. 'Venice: 1491–1495', in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, Vol. 1, 1202–1509, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1864), nr 650. Letter from the Venetian ambassadors Contarini and Trevisano, dated 19 July 1495: 'This morning had audience of his Caesarean Majesty [Maximilian], who after asking them what news they had, said: With regard to the duke of York we entertain great hopes that after obtaining the kingdom of England he will soon attack the king of France, and to this effect have we received every promise and certainty from the duke aforesaid.'
 15. The Flemish historian Steven Thiry concludes that the image-building of the English pretender reached a peak during the joyous entrances of Philip in Leuven and Antwerp, using the traditional media of symbolic communication, such as the use of heraldry, coins and splendour to reinforce his royal image and claim to the English throne. See: S. Thiry, 'Counterfeited Jewels Make the True Mistrusted: Perkin Warbeck en de constructie van een "vorstelijke identiteit"' (1492–1495).
 16. In the years 1493 and 1494 Maximilian played a short while with the idea of marrying his daughter Margaret, one of the most eligible princesses of Europe, to the future king of England, Richard, duke of York. See: A. Wroe, *Perkin*, pp 148, 205. Could this be an explanation why Margaret of York is holding a gillyflower (often considered as a medieval symbol of betrothal) right in front of Richard, duke of York?
 17. See the coat of arms of Reimerswaal on the head of the left horse. According to Arie van Steensel, it can be deduced from this that the rider is the Zeeland knight Claes van Reimerswaal. See: A. van Steensel, *Edelen in Zeeland: macht, rijkdom en status in een laat middeleeuwse samenleving*, p. 383.
 18. Philip of Burgundy, Lord of Beveren, of Veere, etc. was from 1491 Admiral of the Netherlands and seated in Veere (Zeeland). He was one of the negotiators and signatories to the Peace Treaty of Senlis. In: H. Cools, 'Mannen met macht', *Edellieden en de Moderne Staat in de Bourgondisch-Habsburgse landen (1475–1530)*, p. 168.
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