**34 Tournaments and Hunting**

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**Abstract**

This chapter considers tournaments and hunting as aspects of early modern court culture. It briefly sets out the cultural context of both quasi-martial sports among elite men (and women) as ways of expressing status and looks at their importance for the princes who hosted them. The chapter presents the main developments in tournaments, their different competitions and equipment and particularly the emergence of the *pas d’armes* from the fifteenth century to the early sixteenth. It then reviews the place of hunting at the court, looking at its conduct, its various forms, its principal participants, its role in diplomacy and as a cultural force, particularly among men, in early modern court culture.

**Captions**

Figure 1 Albrecht Dürer, *The Tournament on Horseback*, *ca.* 1517/18 Woodcut, 22.4 x 24.3 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Credit Line: Rogers Fund, 1921

Figure 2 Erasmus Krykenar, Armour garniture of Henry VIII for the field and tilt, probably about 1540

Low and medium carbon steel, gold, leather

Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

Figure 3 Hans Burgkmair, *Emperor Maximilian I on Horseback*, 1518

Woodcut, 32.3 x 22.7 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Credit Line: Gift of Felix M. Warburg, 1920

Figure 4 British School, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*, c. 1545

Oil on canvas, 168.9 x 347.3 cm

Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

Figure 5 South Netherlandish, Hawking Party, *ca.* 1500–1530

Tapestry with wool warp and wool wefts, 266.7 x 377.2 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Hawking was a highly skilled, if more gentle form of hunting than the chase

Credit Line: Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941

**Introduction**

The king for the honour of his sister, the 19th and 20th day

of May prepared two solemn days of jousts and the king

himself and the duke of Suffolk, the earl of Essex and

Nicholas Carew, esquire, took on them to answer all comers.

The apparel of them and their horses was black velvet,

covered all over with branches of honeysuckle of fine flat

gold of damask, of loose work, every leaf of the branch

moving; the embroidery was very cunning and sumptuous.

…and so they entered the field with trumpets, drumslades and

other minstrelsy.[[1]](#endnote-1)

This description of jousts held by Henry VIII (1491-1547) in May 1516 to honour Margaret of Scotland (1489-1541), contains most of the key elements of the tournament as an expression of early modern courtly chivalry. The quasi-military game is hosted by a high, indeed the highest, ranking man in society. Henry’s team of challengers is formed by men who are his friends, and who, down to Carew its most junior member, incarnate the social hierarchy of which he is head. Their participation in the dangerous sport and allegorical spectacle that will unfold is announced by trumpets and drums, the instruments of proclamation at court, and of command on the battlefield. Like hunting, its near counterpart, the tournament, with its many variants, was a regular aspect of sport and entertainment at most early modern courts. The scale and ostentation of both kinds of events enhanced the fame and status of the host and tournaments in particular allowed them to display, with great theatricality, their wealth and generosity.

The performance of masculinity by medieval and early modern kings, and their nobles, has received increased historical attention recently, prompted in large measure by revisionist studies of female European sovereigns.[[2]](#endnote-2) Until comparatively recently, male monarchs’ relationship to performed masculinity, and that of noblemen alongside them, has generally been seen as heteronormative and unproblematic.[[3]](#endnote-3) More recent revisionist studies of this performance have fitted it broadly within the paradigm of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, a term coined by Raewyn Connell whose work emphasised that the construction of masculinity generally has ever been closely aligned with claims to power.[[4]](#endnote-4) Judith Butler’s research and that of Joan Scott demonstrated that pre-modern societies constructed ideal males as those able to govern themselves and, crucially, others through self-control, self-sufficiency, rationality, physical strength and courage.[[5]](#endnote-5) Masculinity in early modern England has been examined in these terms by Alexandra Shepard, Elizabeth Foyster and others.[[6]](#endnote-6) For early modern monarchs and their nobles, embodying and enacting the expected manly qualities was an on-going process closely tied to status and lived out daily. Strenuous physical activities, of which hunting and tournaments were the most robust, alongside other physical skills such as dancing, were important ways of asserting masculine competency.[[7]](#endnote-7) Recently, Ben Griffen has suggested that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is an insufficiently nuanced concept albeit that certain normative models of masculinity were dominant within what he terms particular ‘communication communities’.[[8]](#endnote-8) The early modern royal or noble court was one type of such community, expressed formally through its ceremony, ritual and entertainments including quasi-military sports.

**Tournaments**

The tournament at the early modern court had a long tradition going back as far at the eleventh century, with its origins in military training of knights to ride and fight in formation. It required constant practice to perform the kind of devastating cavalry charges upon which the reputation of mounted noblemen rested from the crusades to the Hundred Years War, when a lack of coordinated action brought disaster upon the French knights at Crécy and Agincourt. As the tournament developed, two main forms emerged: the joust, which was an encounter between single knights armed with lances couched under the right arm, fought along and over a barrier, known as the ‘list’ or ‘tilt’; and the tourney, which involved mounted teams fighting a melée or mock combat with swords, staves and clubs in a wider arena. As contemporary treatises indicate, different skills of horsemanship were developed and tested because, in both forms, the rider had to keep his horse moving, under tight control, enabling it to lend force to his strikes as he simultaneously sought to protect himself from those of his opponent. Improvisation and quick thinking were required, as in real mounted combat.

INSERT FIGURE 1 NEAR HERE

The joust had become the pre-eminent form of combat in tournaments as early as the 1300s. Jousts, also called ‘deeds of arms’ were held on a variety of special occasions and could be ‘of war’ or ‘of peace’, each having different objectives, rules and weaponry. For example, in 1390, three French knights offered to joust at Saint-Inglevert, between Calais and Boulogne, against all comers with sharpened or with ‘rebated’, blunted weapons at their opponent’s choice. In his *Chronicles*, Jean Froissart praised the skill of the three French challengers who longed to display their youthful energies honourably during a period of truce in the war with England. Ramon Lull’s *Book of the Order of Chivalry*, which appeared in English translation in 1484, presented the tournament as the antidote to idleness among young gentlemen in peace time.[[9]](#endnote-9) In the joust, accurately striking the opponent’s head, chest or shield so as to shatter one’s lance, and possibly unhorse him, required great controlled force and precision (Figure 1). In the freer form of tourney, each competitor attempted to encounter as many opponents as possible, to fight them with as brilliant a display of weapons as he could and to keep on the move in order to distinguish himself in front of the greatest number of the most important onlookers.

The valiant demonstration of these skills by a knight gained him great kudos. It affirmed his masculine ‘virtue’ and therefore his place of honour in noble society and was an excellent way for young gentlemen to attract powerful patrons, not least the ducal or royal host of the tournament himself. The Este dukes of Ferrara patronised a number of promising knights. Tournaments were used by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) quite regularly to attract to his court the young knights of his Austrian dominions particularly, and his grandson Charles V (1500-1558) did much the same in the Netherlands and Spain. Some of Henry VIII’s leading courtiers, including those mentioned in the quote at the outset of this chapter first made their names on the strength of their performances in tournaments. François I (1494-1547) appointed as Master of the Horse(responsible for his security and in some measure the organisation of tournaments), Galeazzo da San Severino, a Milanese nobleman and renowned jouster, who was praised by Baldassare Castiglione.[[10]](#endnote-10)

INSERT FIGURE 2 NEAR HERE

Changes in rules in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, alterations in the design of tournament saddles to make them more effective, together with adding coronels to the tips of lances, greatly increased the safety of tournaments. So, too, did the development of plate armour and special jousting reinforcements, the manifer, pasguard and granguard, which protected the left side of the body exposed to the opponent’s oncoming lance. The Royal Collection has a garniture of such armour made for Henry VIII at Greenwich in 1540 (Figure 2). New forms of armour were also a factor in the introduction of foot combats as a third competition in many tournaments from the late fifteenth century onwards. Their inclusion perhaps reflected the growing importance of the infantry and foot fighting on the battlefield at the time. They could be free form but most were fought over a barrier of some kind. As with the tilt in a joust, the barrier was primarily designed to reduce the risk of injury. It also deterred competitors from grappling hand-to-hand overly and forced them to keep their weapons, usually short swords, staves, pikes or poleaxes, held up at chest level and thus more visible to the spectators.[[11]](#endnote-11)

By the middle of the fifteenth century, jousts and associated competitions were almost invariably ‘of peace’, using blunted weapons and staged in ever more elaborate ways, known as *pas d’armes* (the passage of arms). These events presented participants as the cast of fantastical chivalric or classical tales, disguised as hermits, angels, monks or knights of the Round Table. Alternatively, they might incarnate virtues in allegorical competitions between love and ambition or between truth and wisdom, and so on. In whatever way conceived, these events usually combined disguising and theatrical scenery and props, feasting, music and speeches with the actual combats fought in the lists. Particularly prominent in this trend were the Valois dukes of Burgundy and René duke of Anjou (1409-1480). René wrote a number of treatises on tournaments including *Traicté de la forme et devis d’ung tourney* (*c.* 1460)in which he described how such events could be held. He devised the tournaments of the ‘Château de la Joyeuse Garde’ at Saumur and the ‘Emprise de la Gueule du Dragon’ held at Razilly near Chinon, both held in 1446.[[12]](#endnote-12)

INSERT FIGURE 3 NEAR HERE

Tournaments were usually held to mark points in the annual court cycle, such as Shrovetide, as well as special events like coronations and weddings or to entertain visiting dignitaries and ambassadors (as in the jousts for Queen Margaret in 1516 noted at the outset). One of the most spectacular was held at Bruges in 1468 for the marriage of Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1433-1477) to Margaret of York (1446-1503), the sister of Edward IV. Charles’s successor in the Netherlands, Maximilian I, who prided himself as knight errant, hosted the tournament of ‘de la dame Sauvage’ during the Diet of Worms of 1495. by Hans Burgkmair commemorates Maximilian’s knightly virtues in a woodcut (Figure 3). Maximilian was himself a champion jouster who participated well into his middle years and presented himself to the wider world in a trilogy of published, self-glorifying allegories illustrated with woodcuts – *Weisskunig*, *Theuerdank* and *Freydal* – the last two of which focused heavily on his participation in tournaments.[[13]](#endnote-13) In the next generation, Henry VIII was an enthusiastic royal jouster throughout the first half of his reign. In January 1511, he hosted a *pas d’armes* at Westminster to celebrate the birth of his short-lived son, Henry. The king’s participation as the character of Sir Loyal Heart, who won the prize for the best performance, was brilliantly illustrated by the English heralds of the time.[[14]](#endnote-14)

INSERT FIGURE 4 NEAR HERE

Henry was one of the stars nine years later at what is perhaps the most famous tournament of the early sixteenth century, the Field of Cloth of Gold in June 1520 (Figure 4). Held to inaugurate an alliance between Henry and François I, the meeting involved some 5,000-6,000 people on either side. Over the course of a fortnight, the two kings participated in the tournament as joint captains of mixed teams of English and French knights comprising about 200 competitors in all. Judging from the score checks, François was as good a jouster as Henry on this occasion, but he was not generally as devoted to tournaments as his English counterpart.

A tiltyard and tournament ‘field’ was specially constructed on the site in the English ‘Pale’ of Calais, close to the border with France. As was by then common at *pas d’armes*, an artificial tree was set up at the tiltyard hung with three shields, one for each of the competitions, and the knights touched each shield with their lances to enter. Both kings also built lavish accommodation for themselves and their principal nobles, Henry built an entire temporary palace just outside the town and castle of Guînes and François created a temporary *hôtel particulier* for himself and his household at Ardres, just inside the French border. On several occasions over the fortnight, each king and his immediate entourage was entertained by the court of the other at these splendid venues. Hundreds of tents were also erected in the vicinity to accommodate their larger entourages. They were dressed over in rich fabrics like velvet, in livery colours and heraldic designs, and the cloth of gold that gave the event its name. True to the *pas d’armes* tradition, elaborate allegorical costumes were worn by the two kings and their teams as they participated in the various competitions, although the tournament overall did not feature any specific chivalric theme or conceit.[[15]](#endnote-15)

The queens of France and England led the noblewomen at the Field in 1520, as chief spectators and prize-givers to the winners of the competitions. Far more than in hunting, women were, in one way, rather passive observers at tournaments. Yet, although not direct participants, many were actively involved insofar as knights jousted as their champions, carrying their colours in the courtly love allegories which made up so many tournaments and in prize-giving. In 1511 Henry had jousted before Queen Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536), as her ‘Sir Loyal Heart’, bound in love and service to the lady who presided over the tournament.[[16]](#endnote-16) Doubtless, the presence of wives, sweethearts, sisters or prospective girlfriends, lent courage and spurred competition among the men, as well making the tournaments, like the banquets and dancing that often followed them, entertainments for the whole court. While she could not joust like her father, Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was the undoubted sovereign lady who presided over the Accession Day tilts held in her honour annually from the 1580s under the direction first of Sir Henry Lee and then George Clifford 3rd Earl of Cumberland as ‘Queen’s Champion’.[[17]](#endnote-17)

**Hunting**

While jousting was the most spectacular form of physical sport in which early modern male courtiers engaged, hunting was the one they practised most frequently either on their own estates or while in the entourage of their ruler. Sixteenth-century commentators on kingship including Maximilian, Machiavelli, and Sir Thomas Elyot all exhorted the benefits of hunting. Castiglione insisted that hunting afforded both ruler and courtier opportunities for physical exercise and to ‘display one's skill and build up a good reputation, especially with the crowd which the courtier always has to humour’.[[18]](#endnote-18) Hunting was seen as a particularly chivalrous way to exercise, to strengthen the legs in riding and the upper body in the use of the bow and the spear, and to practice the aristocratic skills of horsemanship. Machiavelli and later writers on hunting likened it to military campaigning as the prince came to know his territory while ordering his band of attendants, huntsmen, horses and dogs in ways that showed his authority. Hunting also enabled the practice of the very personal skills of courage in trapping and closing with his quarry and having the determination and technical skills of killing it swiftly and reasonably humanely.[[19]](#endnote-19)

Beyond its ephemeral associations with warfare, hunting was an important aspect of dominion and lordship. In most places in Europe, hunting was by definition, an elite sport. It was also physically provided for with part or whole forests set aside for the purpose. Hunting parks fenced off within palisades were also created for the exclusive use of princes and courts. These lands were tightly regulated by laws policing their use, outlawing poaching, and protecting the privileges of elite hunters across private lands within or bordering them. Game keepers were employed to oversee forests and parks to protect and enhance stocks of desirable quarry.

The patronage of hunting could also be a direct assertion of control over territory and demonstrate the personal power of a ruler. Eric Goldberg has argued persuasively that Louis the Pious (778-840), the successor of Charlemagne, used hunting in authenticating his personal rule after that of his famously martial father and in so doing made hunting – in the European context at least – a specifically princely activity in which he led his nobles.[[20]](#endnote-20) Five centuries later, Maximilian I created an image of himself as an effective ruler through associating his skill in hunting with his capacity to rule.[[21]](#endnote-21) In a similarly literary vein, a direct association was drawn between François I as a huntsman and the successful imposition of his authority over Milan in September 1515. His victory over a Swiss army at Marignano was celebrated in a trilogy of books, the *Commentaires de la guerre gallique* (1519-20), written by François Demoulins featuring, among its illustrations, drawings of mythical dialogues between François and Caesar in the forest near Cognac. Caesar likens François’s conquest of Milan to his own of Gaul and recognises him as his true successor in Italy. In one, they converse while François is dressed in hunting clothes and about to start a chase. In another he is shown on horseback pursuing a stag with hounds. Later in his reign François was frequently called, by the French at least, ‘the father of hunting’.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Hunting as the performance of authority and lordship was not simply a literary trope. At least one of the motivations for the king’s extension of the château of Fontainebleau in the late 1520s was to have access to the large hunting forests in the area, effectively giving him a wide corridor of hunting parks and forestland, stretching from his birth-place at Cognac on the river Charente, up through the Loire Valley and into the Île-de France. While he was not the first king to make *palais de retraite* or hunting lodges near forests and hunting parks, François certainly built some of the best. He often used these to escape the press of people in his larger metropolitan palaces. In 1546, the Ferrarese ambassador noted the king’s liking for Challuau, near Fontainebleau which François had given to Anne de Pisseleu, duchess of Étampes (1508-1580):

because it is a fine place for hunting and hawking, and, as

it only has this palace which cannot accommodate a large

suite, he can be sure than no one will importune him with

audiences and such like.[[23]](#endnote-23)

Luc Duerloo has shown how the Archdukes Albert and Isabella of the Habsburg Netherlands very deliberately revived the Burgundian-Habsburg tradition of hunting, deriving from the exploits of the emperors Maximilian and Charles V, as they re-established their authority in the aftermath of the Dutch Revolt. They re-established senior court offices supervising the hunt and amended and reissued earlier regulations of 1543, a deliberate strategy to connect their regime with the Habsburg’s high reputation as hunting patrons.[[24]](#endnote-24) Henry VIII had extensive hunting parks and also the remnants of medieval royal forests to use. He hunted when on summer progresses across his kingdom, but concentrated most of his hunting in the south and east of England, especially around London. Lacking such facilities at his accession, Frederik II of Denmark and Norway (1534-1588) established more than a dozen immense hunting domains across his kingdom. These domains were connected by roads for the exclusive use of the court, and all were used during the Great Hunt of 1587.[[25]](#endnote-25)

With the cost of the upkeep of such lands, and the associated accoutrements of the sport, hunting was an expensive and complex activity to organise. Its expense was a key element of its status as an elite sport and most early modern courts had large departments responsible for its provision. Like their Gonzaga and Montefeltro counterparts, the Este dukes of Ferrara had a hunting staff of at least sixty, responsible for dogs, birds and horses. In France, the *grand veneur* (chief huntsman) had overall charge of the hunting establishment, the two chief offices of which were the *vénerie* and *fauconnerie*, responsible for the hunting of game and for falconry. The former grew rapidly under François I, reflecting the king’s interest in hunting at the chase and his increased varieties of hunting forms over the course of the reign. Total annual expenditure of 32, 869 *livres* in 1518, had risen by some 71% to almost 58,000 *livres* between 1542 and 1546.[[26]](#endnote-26)

As the pre-eminent nobles of their realms, most early modern monarchs hunted what, as we have just seen, the French (and English) called beasts of *vénerie*. These were red and fallow deer and (on the Continent) roe deer, wild boar and wolves in certain places. Although smaller than the red, fallow deer were easier to empark and could be hunted with a variety of weapons including crossbows. They could be driven in front of waiting hunters, controlled and directed in the drive with various nets, and ‘toils’. In his 1587 *The Description of England*, William Harrison rather dispraised fallow deer as more suitable for gentlewomen to hunt ‘than for men of courage to follow, whose hunting should practice their arms in tasting of their manhood and dealing with such beasts as eftsoons will turn again and offer them the hardest danger’.[[27]](#endnote-27)

As Harrison reminds us, in contrast to the entirely male sport of the tournament, hunting was at heart an exercise of noble and gentry privilege, rather than gender *per se*, and so women also hunted. As he notes, they tended to hunt in parks, often from stands, using crossbows on quarry driven before them, such as fallow deer, and also hunted with birds. Nevertheless, women could also hunt on horseback, some of them riding astride but more usually side saddle, as did Elizabeth I. She enjoyed both park hunting and the freer form of the chase in forests pursuing red deer bucks and stags. Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587) also hunted regularly as did a number of the Valois and Habsburg queens, most notably Margaret of Savoy (1480-1530) and Mary of Hungary (1505-1558), Charles V’s aunt and sister respectively, and sequentially his regents in the Netherlands.[[28]](#endnote-28) It should also be noted that in courtly literature, hunting had a gendered register and often an erotic edge. It was sometimes an allegory of the pursuit and seduction of women, as in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s ‘Whoso list to Hunt’. Alternatively, it might be constructed as a contest between the virtues of masculinity and femininity, of love, bravery and of chastity. Diana was the goddess of the hunt, ever unattainable, and Henry VIII wrote in song about hunting as a virtuous ‘passtyme with good company’ and an antidote to licentious idleness.[[29]](#endnote-29)

For men particularly, being able to hunt the most dangerous quarry was about acting out bravery as a signifier of masculinity and the pursuit of red deer, wild boar and other large animals was usually far more aggressive and often more dangerous than other forms. The chase of a capital stag might last several hours and even a whole day depending on the terrain, the quarry’s stamina and the skill of the hunters. At the end of August 1528, Henry VIII was reported to have had hunted ‘the greatest red deer killed by him or any of his hunters this year…hunting from nine in the morning till seven at night’, a feat of endurance (incidentally) also accomplished by his daughter Elizabeth on at least one occasion.[[30]](#endnote-30) Once the animal was brought to bay by the hounds it would be killed by the chief huntsman or often by the king himself, with a spear usually in the case of boar, or sword or hunting knife before it was ritually ‘unmade’. This practice varied from place to place and type of quarry, from cutting off the beast’s right forefoot to its being disembowelled, jointed and shared out hierarchically among all participants, human and canine. Elizabeth I is shown about to do this with a stag in an illustration from George Gascoigne’s 1575 book, *The Noble Arte of Venerie or hunting*.[[31]](#endnote-31)

INSERT FIGURE 5 NEAR HERE

Rulers in more temperate climates, including the Tudor, Valois and Habsburg monarchs, hunted regularly and throughout most of the year while others in colder or hotter climes treated it as a more seasonal entertainment. Hawking was a sport practised all year round but during the earlier summer and in the autumn rut when deer and other large mammals were spared, it came into its own. Using various kinds of raptors, chiefly peregrine falcons (sometimes called tercels), goshawks, gyrfalcons, sparrow hawks and merlins, hunters would mainly enjoy the encounter aloft, although birds brought down were collected for consumption. Falcons were generally loosed off the gloved fist to a high altitude from where they dived on pheasants or partridges, flushed up from the ground by spaniels and beaters. Herons were a particular favourite, as they flew to a great height when disturbed and fought back against falcons loosed to them. Sparrowhawks and merlins might be uncaged to hunt in woodlands where they fly low and fast in pursuit of other birds and ground dwelling mammals. Although hawking is often presented in literature and in tapestries (Figure 5) and pictures from the time as the particular sport of noblewomen, men enjoyed it too and for some, like Louis XII of France (1462-1515), it was their preferred form of hunting.

Acquiring, breeding, and exchanging hunting horses, dogs and birds was a perennial preoccupation of noblemen and courtiers. There was a wide range of dogs used in hunting, variously identified as mastiffs, staghounds, buckhounds, deerhounds, greyhounds and wolfhounds. As their names imply, each was used against particular quarry and in different combinations. William Harrison devoted several pages of *The* *Description of England* to hunting dogs (and birds) and their characteristics.[[32]](#endnote-32) In the spring of 1536, Ippolito II d’Este (1509-1572) received three deerhounds as a present from François I when he arrived at the French court. Ippolito later ordered that his own dogs and twenty-one hunting birds be sent to him in France. In January 1537, Ippolito sent his brother, Ercole II, duke of Ferrara (1508-1559), a dog which had hunted ‘a deer which I killed in the park at Vincennes, where it ran very well’. In the autumn of the following year he gave François some falcons. ‘He liked them very much’, Ippolito told Ercole, ‘and examined each one carefully’.[[33]](#endnote-33) Ercole II himself had a considerable hunting establishment inherited from his grandfather Ercole I, who had created the Barco, an enclosed hunting park. His hunting animals included leopards. They were carried to the hunt on horseback, sitting on specially made carpets to protect the horses’ hindquarters, just as they are shown doing in a section of Gentile da Fabriano’s altarpiece *The Adoration of the Magi* of 1423, now in the Uffizi Gallery.[[34]](#endnote-34) Imagery of hunting was ubiquitous in early modern palaces and hunting lodges, particularly in tapestries. Some pieces belonging to Cardinal Wolsey depicted:

a dog carrying a bolt out of the water; a wild boar with

two arrows in him; a dog and hawk taking a heron; two dogs

harnessed biting a griffin…a woman taking a bear by the

head amongst dogs: a bow drawn and a heron and a hawk

in the compass thereof.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Sixteenth-century kings and their courtiers were often depicted with hunting dogs, symbols of bravery, tenacity and faithfulness. Perhaps the most famous of these is Titian’s 1533 portrait *Charles V with a Dog* a brilliant reworking of Jacob Seisenegger’s original, painted a year earlier.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Like the tournament, hunting was used regularly as part of diplomacy. Apart from animals, equipment and game itself sent as gifts from one prince to another, inviting a fellow ruler or his representative to hunt was a frequently deployed mark of favour. As Sir William Fitzwilliam, Henry VIII’s ambassador in France, reported to Cardinal Wolsey (1473-1530) on taking up his post in February 1521:

The king [François I] takes great pleasure in talking to me of hunting

and says I shall be lodged near him and hunt with him

every day; which I mean to do unless I hear from you to

the contrary, because by being with him I shall learn more.[[37]](#endnote-37)

As Fitzwilliam understood, many of the strictures governing interaction between a ruler and ambassadors were less strict during hunting and they could get physically close. From that distance, the health, hunting preferences and prowess of the host was easily observed and would often be commented on in reports home. The host’s merits as a hunter compared to those of the ambassador’s own sovereign might even be the subject of carefully good-humoured banter on occasions. By contrast, withholding an invitation to hunt, or using hunting as a means to avoid an ambassador, might risk giving offence, but could also telegraph disapproval. For, as Fitzwilliam told Wolsey barely three months later, and as Henry’s relations with François deteriorated:

If it were not that I can some skill in hunting; whereunto

he hath a great appetite and by reason thereof come near

him, I should know little or nothing; and in likewise in

hawking to the Admiral.[[38]](#endnote-38)

Henry and François were particularly energetic practitioners of this kind of ‘hunting diplomacy’, but reports of hunting punctuate diplomatic correspondence right across the courts of early-modern Europe.

**Conclusion**

Monarchs and other rulers of the early modern period made tournaments and hunting key activities in their courts. From the later fifteenth century onwards, new techniques and new equipment were deployed to make both forms of sport more compelling spectacles for participants and observers alike. This was designed to demonstrate the ‘princely’ virtues of lordship and magnificence of the hosts and to garner from the social and hereditary elites the support upon which their reigns most directly depended. Most rulers were enthusiastic patrons of one or or both entertainments and some, like Maximilian and Henry VIII in the tournament and François I in hunting, used their highly skilled participation to advance claims for themselves as exceptional men and monarchs. Of the two, hunting as a traditional pursuit of the nobility was the more frequently practised. Virtually daily at some courts, monarchs and princes would ride out with all the panoply of the chase; they and their companions mounted on splendid horses, with finely bred dogs lolloping about at their stirrups, eager for their work, overseen by liveried huntsmen, with grooms, beaters and the like. It all bespoke power over the land and nature and with it the privileges and authority of rank. It must have been an impressive experience for those who took part, whatever the outcome of the hunt itself. Yet, precisely because its real enjoyment and significance lay in participation, its value as a means of display to a wider audience than the spectators who might be out on the day, was general and comparatively limited.

It was very different with the tournament particularly in its most evolved form, the *pas d’armes*. Such events could be staged before much larger audiences, either in specially-built tiltyards, as they generally were in England, France and the Netherlands, or in streets and towns squares as happened more often in the Italian princely and city-state courts. The best seating reserved for guests and a greater number of elite men able to participate at the biggest events, the tournament was a truly spectacular occasion that could be enjoyed by the court, its guests and citizens alike. The host’s reputation, and that of his court, would be enhanced by attracting knights from his own realm and beyond as participants who could offer the best show. At its best that show was compelling with the thunder of hooves down the tilt, the sight and sound of the clash of arms (when sparks really did fly) and always the possibility of injury or death amongst the brave and glamorous young men on the circuit, rather like in modern Formula One motor racing. Tournaments also afforded the host more possibilities than did hunting to demonstrate lordly sophistication in the chivalric theme of the event, and a winning munificence in the rich costumes, scenery, and prizes provided. Above all, however, for the men participating, the tournament and hunting were integral parts of the chivalric courtly ethos. By that participation, royal and noble men demonstrated to each other, as well as to other male and female ‘communication communities’, their masculine virtues and thus their particular claims to status and authority, in a word, honour, in early modern court society.

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