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The Marrying of Anne of Cleves: Royal Protocol in Early Modern England

Retha M. Warnicke

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This book is a study of the marrying of Anne of Cleves to King Henry VIII. It contains fascinating material--including "demonic" interference and sexual politics at court--that differs greatly from the usual stereotyped accounts of Anne. It also provides a rich new context of royal courtship rituals, and a startling account of the king's failure to consummate his marriage. Henry's decision to ally himself with this German noblewoman in 1540 was in part a reaction to the Franco-Imperial Treaty mediated by Pope Paul III, who renewed a suspended bull of excommunication against Henry in the hope of isolating England diplomatically. The subsequent marriage procedures, from the advent of negotiations and the portrait of Anne by Hans Holbein the Younger to Henry's Rochester greeting of Anne--in disguise--and the Greenwich nuptials, all followed usual royal protocol. However, the king's sexual incapacity, which prevented the consummation of the marriage, culminated in the fall and subsequent execution of Thomas Cromwell and his client Lord Hungerford, who were both tarred with the brush of sexual heresy. Retha M. Warnicke is Professor of History at Arizona State University. She is the author of several books, including The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn (Cambridge 1989).

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