



Filiere: English Studies

Semester 3

Module: 19

British Culture/ US Culture

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Lecture 3: The Tudors

-Henry the seventh came to the throne in 1485 after a period of political instability, weak government, monarchy and civil war. Yet, his achievements were noticeable at the political and at the historical levels: He brought political stability to Britain; he made the monarchy strong and gained the respect of the British people.

-Henry the seventh managed to get into power easily after his marriage to the yorkist heiress, Elizabeth, in 1486. During his reign, he was exposed to many challenges to his place on the throne, the most notable being from Lambert Simnel and Perkin warbeck.

-Henry the seventh brought political stability to England after putting an end to the war of the roses which took place in 1455 to 1485 between the house of Lancaster and the house of York. It was called so because each house had a rose as its emblem. The Yorkists had white and the Lancastrian had a red. The wars were fought over the throne and ended by the victory of Lancastrians.

-Henry the seventh came to the throne after defeating Richard the third at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. He was a serious man and faced many challenges to his place on the throne, the most notable being from Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck. He married Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV uniting the houses of Lancaster and York ending the wars of the roses. Henry the seventh successfully established the Tudors dynasty and when he died in 1509, his son's succession was not challenged and England was a rich and prosperous country.

-Henry the seventh dynasty was respected in Europe so much so that his eldest son, Arthur married the Spanish princess, Katharine of Aragon. When Arthur passed away in 1502 the Spanish royal family decided to remarry Katharine to the younger son of Henry the seventh, or Henry the eighth, the future British king. Henry the seventh's daughter married king James IV of Scotland. This, of course, was a traditional means of keeping and securing good relations between England and Scotland. Despite Henry the seventh's desire for wealth, especially in the last years of his reign, he strongly maintained a very splendid court to demonstrate and show the nobility at home and rulers abroad that the Tudor dynasty was actually the established royal house of England. Above all, Henry Tudor's peaceful government earned his family the general approval and loyalty of the English people.

-Henry the eighth was eighteen years old when he succeeded his father in 1509. He was a handsome ruler and was different from his father. He straightaway moved from his father's cautious policies and decided to get involved in wars with France. Henry the eighth, then, invaded France and won the battle of the Spurs. His commander also managed to defeat the Scots, the allies of France, James IV, king of Scotland. Henry's brother-in-law, was killed in the battle of Flodden.

-Henry the eighth was bored with the routine of government and was actually willing to entrust the affairs of state to his chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, who was a remarkable man. He quickly rose through the hierarchy of the church to become archbishop of York, cardinal, and ultimately legate. That is to say, the permanent representative of the pope in England. A position which gave him complete control of the English church.

-Wolsey's position in the church was unquestionable and unchallengeable. His supremacy over the English church left it weaker and less able to face the several attacks which would soon be mounted against it. Wolsey did not actually give the church either reform or uniformity; and his personal extravagance and worldliness were a vivid example of the corruption inherent in the church. Wolsey's immense energies as well as talents were mainly consumed by foreign affairs. He basically cherished the ambition of becoming pope and did all what he could to bend the English foreign policy to this unrealistic end.

-Wolsey failed to grant Henry the eighth the divorce he wanted. Henry the eighth's wife, Katharine of Aragon was forty, five years older than Henry and she had only one child, the princess Mary. Henry the eighth wanted to have a son to succeed him. After all, he feared that a female succession would bring the return of civil war.

-Henry the eight did not really think that the divorce would present serious problems, as the church had consented to the separation of royal couples in the past and his own relations with the church were good. But problems and difficulties soon arose. Katharine of Aragon was opposed to any suggestion of divorce, and in this she was supported by her family, the Habsburgs, who were the most powerful royal house in Europe, controlling both the empire and Spain.

-Henry the eight's hopes that the pope would grant him a divorce were dashed in 1527, when Rome was captured by the armies of the Habsburg emperor, Charles V. The pope became a virtual prisoner of Charles. Cardinal Wolsey had failed to obtain the divorce that the king wanted. As a result, the king turned against him. Wolsey was, then, stripped of all his offices of state and was allowed to keep only one of his many former ecclesiastical offices. In 1529, Henry the eight had Wolsey charged with treason, and of course if he had not died on his way to London, he would almost certainly have been executed. The easiness with which Henry the eight removed the church's leading servant in England showed and clearly illustrated the immensity of the royal power.

-Henry the eight's diplomatic efforts to secure a divorce failed and automatically he turned to policy of force against the church, which ended in a complete break with Rome.

-The enormous task of carrying out the reformation in England was accomplished by Thomas Cromwell who, from 1531 until his disgrace and execution in 1540, was the most powerful of the king's ministers. Cromwell arranged for parliament (which sat from 1529 until 1536 and is called the "Reformation Parliament" to pass statutes which swept away the power of the papacy in England and vested it in the crown instead. In addition to this, he nationalized the monastic lands and established the bureaucracy which was needed to control and to manage the revenues that ought to be at the monarchy's disposal.

-In 1532, the archbishop of Canterbury died and was replaced by Thomas Cranmer, who was a man of great learning and who showed his willingness to bring some reformation within the scared institution in England. He showed complete devotion to the king. In January 1533, he married Henry and Ann Boleyn. The outcome of the marriage was the birth of the princess Elizabeth, which was a disappointing event for the king.

-Henry the eight broke away from the Roman's pope and in 1534 the act of supremacy declared Henry the eight to be the supreme head of the church in England.

-The reformation of the church was mainly intended to be political and not religious. Henry the eight was catholic. In 1521, he gained and earned the title of the defender of the faith from the pope for writing a denunciation of the German Protestant reformer, Martin Luther. In 1539, Henry the eight had the six acts passed, which demanded complete conformity to catholic doctrine and practice. Those who refused to obey were to be punished savagely.

-The publication of the Bible in English, which was followed in 1538 by its placing in every church in England, could only serve to encourage Protestantism, for the Protestant faith was based on the authority of the scriptures and on the belief that the truth about the Christian

religion was to be found in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, and that any man could discover the truths of religion for himself. Hence, according to Protestant doctrine, salvation was personal and could not be attained through the sacraments, as the Roman Catholic Church taught.

-Henry the eight, king of England, was famously married six times and played a critical role in the English reformation, turning his country into a protestant nation.

-In 1534, Henry the eight declared himself as the supreme head of the church of England. He broke away from the roman church and from the roman pope and established the church of England. Fully separated now from the pope, the church of England was under England's rule, not Rome's. From 1536 to 1537, a great northern rebellion or uprising known as the pilgrimage Grace took place, during which 30000 people rebelled against the king's changes. It was the only major threat to Henry's security as monarch. The leader, Robert Aske and 200 others were executed. When John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and Sir Thomas More, Henry's former lord chancellor, refused to take the oath to the king, they were executed or beheaded at Tower Hill.

-Henry the eight is the best known of the Tudor Monarchs. He was the second son of Henry the seventh and became king because his brother, Arthur had died. He married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon when he became king, but divorced her when she did not produce a male heir to the throne. In order to gain his divorce, Henry had to establish the church of England and end Catholicism. Henry went on to marry another five wives, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Katherine Howard and Katherine Parr. Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard were executed for treason. Henry the eight passed away in 1547.

-The wars of the roses were a series of dynastic wars for the throne of England. They were actually fought between the supporters of the two rival branches of the royal house of Plantagenet, the houses of Lancaster and York. They were fought in several periods and episodes between 1455 and 1487. The conflict resulted from the social and financial troubles that followed the hundred years war, combined with the mental infirmity and weak rule of Henry the sixth which revived interest in the alternative claim to the throne of Richard, Duke of York. The final victory went to a Lancastrian claimant, Henry Tudor, who defeated the last yorkist king, Richard III, at the battle of Bosworth Field. After assuming the throne as Henry the seventh, Henry Tudor married Elizabeth of York, the daughter of Edward IV, thereby uniting the two houses. This era in British history was referred to as the "Golden Age" of Elizabeth. The house of Tudor ruled England and wales until 1603.

-Edward the sixth came to the throne at the age of 9 years. He was a sickly child and the country was run by his protectors: firstly, the duke of Somerset and then by the duke of Northumberland. Edward died at the age of 15.

-Later on, Lady Jane Grey was chosen to be queen by the duke of Northumberland in an attempt to keep England a protestant country. Next in the line of succession was Henry the eight's eldest daughter, Mary. Mary was a catholic and had sworn to return England to Catholicism. The public did not approve of Jane's succession and supported Mary's claim to

the throne. Queen Jane reigned or ruled for just 9 days before Mary successfully took the throne. Jane and Her husband, Guildford Dudley, son of the duke of Northumberland, were executed or beheaded.

-Mary the first was the daughter of Henry the eight and Catherine of Aragon and was a committed catholic. When she came to the throne, she vowed to return England to Rome and Catholicism. She is known in British history as bloody Mary because of the numbers of people who were executed simply because they were Protestants. She made herself even more unpopular by marrying Philip of Spain and losing Calais, England's last possession in France.

-Elizabeth the first became queen after her sister Mary the first died without an heir. She was the daughter of Henry the eight and Anne Boleyn. She upheld Protestantism in England and her will was the law. She did not marry and was known as the virgin queen. During Elizabeth's reign, the age of exploration began with explorers such as Francis Drake claiming new lands for England and introducing new materials and foods. The American state, Virginia, is named after her. When Elizabeth the first died in 1603 the Tudor line ended.

-Elizabeth's reign was a glorious one as it witnessed the establishment as well as the founding of local funds, many grammar schools, hospitals and alms houses to look after the aged. The Christian doctrines and conscience demanded that the rich should help the poor. The need was even sharper after the dissolution of the monasteries, which had for centuries helped both the local community and travelers. Hence, some of the money available as a consequence of the confiscation of church property was used to found professorships at the universities of oxford and Cambridge and for other educational purposes.

-Elizabeth the first reign saw many brave voyages of discovery, including those of Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh and Humphrey Gilbert, particularly to the Americas. These expeditions prepared England for an age of colonization and trade expansion, which Elizabeth herself recognized by establishing the East India company.