

British/US culture and society

Lecture 5(Pr. EL HADARI)

- ✓ The Romans did so many things in Britain.
- ✓ They introduced the British to the culture of stone building and bricks. They constructed proper towns and cities, villas, roads and defense forts. Britain becomes a flourishing country in the Roman Empire. It becomes an exporter of such products as corn, lead and tin.
- ✓ In about 367 AD, **the Picts, the Scots** and **the Saxons** launched an attack against Britain, and peoples trust in the Romans ability to defend Britain withered, thus, the Roman army was forced to withdraw/leave from Britain in 410 AD.

The Dark Ages (410-1066):

- ✓ This period has been called the Dark Ages because it witnessed little scientific and culture progress and because so many things were not written about this period. It is known as a period when some genocides/mass killing and crimes happened and nothing was written. It covered the time span stretching from the beginning of the 5th century to about 1066 AD. The year 1066 marked the withdrawal of the Romans from the Britain after their defeat at **the Battle of Hastings**.
- ✓ The Battle of Hastings took place in C.1066 AD. It ended with the defeat of **King Harold II** and the coming of **Duke William**.
- ✓ During the Dark Ages two main invasions took places. The first one was led by **the Anglo-Saxons** and the second one was led by **the Vikings**.
- ✓ English literature has focused on this period known as the Dark Ages. For example, **Kazuo Ishiguro** in his novel **The Buried Giant**

(2015) takes us to the period of Dark Ages and more specifically to the 5th and 6th centuries. According to Kazuo Ishiguro there is a gap concerning this period. He raises the question of what happened exactly to Britain at that time. He tries to fill in this gap using fiction.

The Anglo-Saxons invasion of Britain:

- ✓ The Anglo-Saxons's presence in Britain lasted for about six centuries after the breaking up of the Roman Empire. Warm climate encouraged the Anglo-Saxons invaders to move to Britain. This kind of climate meant productive agriculture activities. It meant better crops. After the withdrawal of the Roman army, Britain was a defenseless country, and this urged people like the Anglo-Saxons to conquer it.
- ✓ Another point is that there were Anglo-Saxons mercenaries (who fought in the Roman army in Britain) this means that Britain was not a strange land to the Anglo-Saxons.
- ✓ At the beginning the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons faced little resistance led by **King Arthur**. Up to now, there are big question marks about the existence of this King. Did this King really exist? Very little was written about this period. There have been doubts about his real existence. During this period, Britain was divided into seven kingdoms: **Kent, Mercia, Northumbria, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex**. But by C.850 AD, these seven kingdoms are grouped into three kingdoms: **Northumbria, Mercia** and **Wessex**.
- ✓ The Anglo-Saxons were basically Christians.

The Vikings:

- ✓ These people came from Scandinavia and settled in Britain using their long boats. Though the Britons welcomed them, the Vikings did bad things as stealing from the Church and burning buildings. They also used violence with the local people in Britain, using long swords and axes. In 793 AD they sailed down the eastern coast targeted a monastery named **lindisfarne** and killed the monks who were there.
- ✓ The Vikings were **pagans** and **heathens** (an irreligious, uncultured and uncivilized).
- ✓ In 865 AD an army of the Vikings started battling against the Anglo-Saxons by C.874 AD, the army took control of all the Anglo-Saxons kingdoms except the Wessex which was ruled by **King Alfred the Great**, this King defeated the Viking army, but he did not manage to drive the Vikings out of Britain.
- ✓ The battle between the Vikings and King Alfred the Great ended with a peace agreement.
- ✓ The Vikings are generally thought to be **bloodthirsty warriors**. But to be fair to some of them, not all of them were bad, some of them simply came to Britain peacefully, all that they wanted was to settle in Britain and not fight.

The Norman invasion of Britain:

- ✓ The arrival of the Normans took place during the medieval Age (1066-1199) after the Anglo-Saxons. They came from Modern France.
- ✓ The Norman Conquest was led by **Duke William the conqueror** after his victory at the Battle of Hastings in 966 AD. This victory marked the coming of Normans as new rulers of England. William

the conqueror took the advantage of shaky position of King Harold II.

- ✓ William the conqueror is said to have purchased divine and earthy support. A diplomatic mission was also sent to Rome to obtain papal support for the invasion.