

Knowledge Map: To what extent has religion shaped the English monarchy? Part 1: The Plantagenets

Summary:	The Plantagenet era experienced significant challenges to the power of the monarchy, with religion playing a crucial role. The power struggle between King Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket, leading to Becket's murder, showcased the conflict between the monarchy and the church. The church's influence was further highlighted by its ability to rally Christians for the Crusades. The Magna Carta's annulment by the Pope showcased the church's authority over the monarchy and barons, while religious figures in the Peasants' Revolt contributed to the decline of the feudal system. However, non-religious factors also shaped the monarchy, within events like the Magna Carta, Peasants Revolt and other conflicts like the War of the Roses.
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Key Terms

Annulment	Declaring a contract or legal agreement, such as a marriage or treaty, as cancelled or invalid, as if it never existed.
Archbishop	A priest of the highest rank in the English Church
Civil War	A war between different groups within the same country
Divine Right	The idea that a king or queen's power to rule comes directly from God, not from people or laws.
Duke	The highest rank for a nobleman other than the monarch, ranking above earls and barons
Excommunication	Officially excluding someone from participating in the Christian Church
Flagellation	Whipping or flogging oneself or another person, often as a form of religious penance or punishment.
Holy Land	A region of the Middle East, considered important and sacred by religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism
Hierarchy	The organization of people or institutions into ranks based on authority, status, or power.
Plantagenet	A royal dynasty that ruled England from 1154 to 1485, experiencing significant religious and secular conflicts during their reign.
Poll Tax	A tax on every individual, regardless of their income or property. One of the causes of the Peasants' Revolt
Pope	The head of the Roman Catholic Church, holding the highest spiritual authority and the ability to make decisions affecting the church and its relationship with secular rulers.
Primogeniture	The legal right of the eldest son to inherit his parent's estate, title, or office, often used to determine succession in royal families.
Salvation	Being saved from sin and its consequences

Thomas Becket

Summary

Henry II sought to curb the power of the church, but Archbishop Thomas Becket, his former close friend and advisor, fiercely defended the rights of the church. The argument escalated, leading to Becket's murder by knights loyal to the king in 1170. The assassination outraged Europe, forcing Henry to be publicly flagellated by his own request in order to repent for his role in the tragedy.

The Crusades

Summary

The Crusades were a series of religious wars launched by Christians to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim control. Spanning from the 11th to the 13th centuries, these campaigns were sanctioned by the Pope and rallied thousands of people from different social backgrounds. Crusaders sought spiritual salvation and material gain, while monarchs and the church aimed to expand their influence and power.

The Magna Carta

Summary

The Magna Carta, signed by King John in 1215, is a treaty that granted liberties to the barons and established a set of rules for the monarch to follow. However, Pope Innocent III, viewing it as a challenge to the church's authority, annulled the Magna Carta soon after. This led to a civil war known as the First Barons' War, which ultimately forced the reissue of the Magna Carta, setting a precedent for limiting the power of English monarchs.

The Peasants Revolt

Summary

The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 was fuelled by a mix of economic, social, and religious grievances. Key factors included the Black Death, which had caused a severe labour shortage, and the introduction of a poll tax. The revolt was further fuelled by radical priests like John Ball, who preached against social inequality and argued that all men were created equal in the eyes of God. The uprising was eventually suppressed, but it revealed deep-seated discontent with the feudal system and the monarchy.

The War of the Roses

Summary

The War of the Roses was a series of civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, both branches of the Plantagenet dynasty, fought for control of the English throne. The conflict was triggered by political instability, economic turmoil, and the mental incapacity of King Henry VI, which led to rival factions vying for power.

The War of the Roses concluded with the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, where Henry Tudor, representing the House of Lancaster, defeated Richard III of the House of York. Henry then married Elizabeth of York, uniting the two warring factions. The Tudor Rose, a symbol combining the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York, marked the end of the conflict and the beginning of the Tudor dynasty, which would rule England for over a century.