LANCASTRIAN, YORKIST, AND EARLY TUDOR CONSTITUTIONS

Kings: England | Battles
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Henry IV — 1399–1413 | Shrewesbury — 1403
Henry V — 1413–1422 (age 35) | Agincourt — 1415
Henry VI — 1422–1461, 1470–1471 | Treaty of Troyes — 1420
 | Orléans — 1429
 | Loss of France — 1449–53
Edward IV — 1461–1470, 1471–1483 | Towton — 1461
Edward V — 1483
Richard III — 1483–1485 | Bosworth Field — 1485
Henry VII — 1485–1509
Henry VIII — 1509–1547

I. PORTRAITS OF KINGS

1. Richard II
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/Ric2WestmPortrait.jpg)
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/WiltonDipLeftPanel.jpg)
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/WiltonDipRightPanel.jpg)
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/WiltonDipShield.jpg)
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/WiltonDipWhiteHart.jpg)

2. Richard III [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/Ric3.jpg)

3. Henry VII [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/Hen7.jpg)

4. Henry VIII
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/Hen8.jpg)
   - [Link to image](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/ELH/slides/Hen8copyOfMural.jpg)

II. FROM 1399 TO 1461

1. Our chronology (p. VI–45) reflects the inescapable influence of Shakespeare and the Tudor view of history.
   a. The traditional view: the 100 years war was followed by the Wars of the Roses, which ended at Bosworth Field in 1485 with the glorious accession of the Tudors and the end of the Middle Ages.
   b. There is no doubt that Henry IV needed all the support he could get.
   c. Henry V’s French adventures cost him dearly financially.
   d. The loss of France was probably inevitable.
   e. The Wars of the Roses are largely the invention of the Tudors.
   f. All this would tend to suggest that if we are dividing, then 1461 ought to be our dividing point.

2. Three themes:
a. Perhaps because the Tudor history focused on the problem of the succession, modern historians have a tendency to downplay its importance.

b. The council must be an important institution at the times of minority or insanity of the king. What recent work has tended to show is that the council is also important in at least some of the periods when the king is strong.

c. Indentures and retainers.

3. Two largely incremental changes in English institutions:
   a. In the first half of the 15th century control of the Chancery comes to rest first in the council and the privy seal and then in those who possess the signet and the way is paved for the reforms of Thomas Cromwell in the reign of Henry VIII.
   b. We noted that Edward III had experimented with chamber finance. Richard II did not, nor did the Lancastrians. We will see when we return to the topic that in the second half of the 15th century there was a return to the practice of chamber finance. Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII had increasingly tight control over finances through the Chamber. Again the final reform comes under Cromwell with the reform of the Exchequer and the rise of the Privy Council.

III. FROM 1461 TO THE REFORMATION PARLIAMENT (1529–36)

1. The danger of rebellion did not stop at Towton. But from 1471 to his death in 1483, Edward IV was solidly in control.

2. In April of 1483 Edward IV died young. In June, his brother Richard usurped the crown. In 1485, Henry Tudor (who claimed through the Beauforts), won a great victory at Bosworth field. In 1486 Henry married Elizabeth of York, Edward IV’s daughter, thus uniting Lancaster and York.

3. The problem of the succession, however, did not end there.

4. So many had lost their lives or had been attainted during the 15th century that Henry VIII had the opportunity to create a virtually new higher nobility. His father, Henry VII, made use of a wider circle of advisers.

5. The first European power to take the Tudors seriously was Spain.

6. Henry VIII’s foreign ventures.

7. The period from 1515 to 1529 was the period of the ascendancy of Cardinal Wolsey.

8. We have already said that from Edward IV on we have an increasing trade and prosperity. There was also, beginning in 1500, a truly phenomenal inflation. The causes of this are once more in dispute.

9. Officially Protestantism begins in the late 16th century. Most modern historians regard Henry VIII’s break with Rome as a schism rather than as an open espousal of Protestantism. We will have a later lecture on the religious changes of the 16th century.