A "Princely Lady": The Religion, Power and Identity of Anne Boleyn

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Abstract
Anne Boleyn (c. 1501 – 1536), the second wife of Henry VIII, was an influential and controversial figure in her time and is the subject of intense debate among historians today, not to mention fascination among the general public. Historians are sharply divided and seek to categorize her as either an early Protestant influential at court (historians such as Ives, Warnicke, and Starkey) or ultimately Catholic and passive (Bernard). This thesis moves beyond such polemics by combining a close analysis of documents from the time and the goals of their authors with post-modern approaches to historical biography emphasizing the fluidity of the self. This thesis argues that Anne had hybrid religious opinions; her views were fluid and flexible, and that enabled her to be an influential actor at the forefront of the transformation of English political and religious culture instead of a model sixteenth-century, passive lady.

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