

WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY

LIVING LINKS: THE ROLE OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN WELSH AND ANGLO-NORMAN
ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES IN THE WELSH STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY,
1066-1283

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Introduction

Wales and England in the High Middle Ages were each their own political entities, and each had their own cultures, as represented through their respective languages, laws, and customs. The Welsh and the Anglo-Normans clashed directly after the Norman conquest of England in 1066 when the Normans began an aggressive campaign of conquest throughout the entire island of England – thus, both groups had to find ways to cope with each other. One method that was frequently used as a political tool by both of these peoples was marriage between their respective aristocratic families. These marriages were utilized by the Welsh in their attempts to preserve their political identity and autonomy against the incursions of the Anglo-Normans, as well as to gain advantages over their Welsh rivals. The Anglo-Normans, in turn, used the marriages to gain land and influence in Wales. In other words, these marriages were meant to bridge the gap and serve as living links between two regions that were frequently at odds during the High Middle Ages.

The purpose of this study is to determine the ultimate role these marriages played in the Welsh struggle to retain autonomy from 1066 to 1283. In this process, the political, historical, literary, and legal background in which marriages between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans were made will be examined in order to discover how much of an effect the marriages had in the Welsh political struggles against the Anglo-Normans. To begin, I will delve into what the Welsh were trying to defend; more specifically, I will examine how the Welsh viewed themselves as a political and cultural unit and how this affected the political maneuvers their leaders made during this time. Next, the literary tradition of each region will be analyzed in order to more fully define the relations between Wales and England and to determine how the people of each region perceived the other. As this literary evidence will demonstrate, the Welsh and the Anglo-

Normans were not exactly on friendly terms, so I will also be examining why Welsh did not ally with any of the other regions in their proximity (e.g. Ireland, Scotland, France). All of this information needs to be examined in order to establish a background for Welsh/Anglo-Normans so the motives for creating these marriages and how the unions ultimately fared can be more fully understood.

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to demonstrate that the political situation in Wales could not be separated from the influence of the politics of England and that any strength the Welsh gained was almost always undone by their own internal political disputes. In other words, no matter how the Welsh tried to rid themselves of Anglo-Norman overlordship, their political inner-workings (especially their fight to maintain political autonomy) were always dependent on the political situation in England and their unrelenting tendency towards political fragmentation.

The primary sources that will be used in this study include the *Brut Y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*), Gerald of Wales' *Journey Through Wales* and *The Description of Wales*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (*The History of the English Kings*), the *Gesta Stephani* (*Deeds of Stephen*) (among other Anglo-Norman chronicles), medieval Welsh poetry, correspondence between Welsh and Anglo-Norman rulers, and medieval Welsh laws (*Cyfraith Hywel*). Many of these will be examined in detail when they are actually used in this study, but it must first be acknowledged that these sources do not often tell the whole truth about their topics, they are biased, and that much of what they say is exaggeration. These issues make the sources slightly difficult to work with, but they are still useful because they reveal how the Welsh thought of themselves (and the Anglo-Normans), how the Anglo-Normans thought of the Welsh, and details about the political situations surrounding the marriages themselves, as long as the biases and other problems with the texts are taken into account.

State of the Scholarship

One of the first major works written about Wales in the Middle Ages was John Edward Lloyd's *A History of Wales, From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (published 1911), which made substantial strides in the study of medieval Welsh history. Today, the most prominent scholar of medieval Wales is R. R. Davies, author of a multitude of works on the subject. These and other authors who write historical monographs about medieval Wales are often from Wales, so these sources do have a pro-Welsh bias, but historians who are not Welsh who also write about the same period often also have pro-Welsh biases. There do not, however, appear to be any major controversies among these historians. They all generally emphasize that the Welsh were burdened with the perpetual endeavor of attempting to rid themselves of Anglo-Norman overlordship, and consistently argue that the Welsh were unable to attain this goal because they could not overcome their own internal political problems.

In historical scholarship about medieval Wales, the leaders from the region of Gwynedd are emphasized as the driving force behind the political unification of Wales, so these rulers are given the most attention in this group of historians. The leaders of the region of Deheubarth are usually seen as additional contenders for power in Wales that almost matched the strength of the leaders of Gwynedd, and they receive the second-largest amount of attention. The region and leaders of Powys, however, are often pushed aside in favor of discussions of the hegemony of Gwynedd. Other historians that write about this time, such as Brock Holden and Max Lieberman, devote their attention to March of Wales; these scholars focus on the development of the formation of the March and its interaction with the English crown and with Wales.

Concerning the scholarship on marriage in the Middle Ages, there are plenty of works about the laws of marriage, the church and marriage, and women in marriage. Scholars such as

Georges Duby laid the foundations for examining marriage in the Middle Ages,¹ and many scholars have built off of and contradicted his work, but they all generally argue that marriage was used for political gain. There are also works that more specifically discuss Welsh/Anglo-Norman aristocratic marriages, but the topic has not been extensively researched, not because it is unimportant, but because the significance of the role of the marriages had been underestimated in historical discussions of Wales during this time. This has resulted in a minimal discussion of Welsh/Anglo-Norman marriages in many of the sources mentioned above, as the marriages are only related to the larger argument that the historians were making. The sources that do discuss the Welsh/Anglo-Norman marriages directly state the reasons behind the unions and how some of the unions ultimately played out, but do not delve into the copious details surrounding the marriages. My research will examine this information in a different light, as I will be looking more specifically at how the Welsh struggle for autonomy was impacted by these political marriages, and, conversely, how some of the marriages affected the political climate of the time.

What's in a Name: Welsh Identity in the High Middle Ages

The Welsh were not often unified under a single political leader, which historians of medieval Wales frequently blame on the custom of partible inheritance, as it led to copious inter-familial fighting and territorial and political fragmentations. R. R. Davies poignantly states about the nature of medieval Welsh politics that “Aggression was necessary for survival; continued aggression was essential for hegemony. In the absence of an effective central authority, each [power] must dominate or be dominated.”² Thus, the Welsh had great difficulty in uniting against the Anglo-Normans because they were too often focused on gaining

¹ Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models From Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

² R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales, 1063-1415* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1987), 71.

dominance amongst themselves to realize the potential impact that the ambitions of the Anglo-Normans could have for their political autonomy.

Despite these problems, the Welsh still had a strong sense of unity and identity as a people because of their culture. That is, they had distinct laws, customs, language, and common mythology and literary traditions, all of which differed greatly from the customs and culture of the Anglo-Normans.³ Because of these unifying factors, the Welsh had a conviction to defend their frontier at all costs and had what can be labeled an *ethnie*, which Anthony Smith says has six core components: a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture (e.g. language, laws, customs, folklore), an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity.⁴ While some medieval Welsh scholars (such as Davies) use the term “nation” to describe what Wales was at this time (which is not necessarily anachronistic – Smith argues that “the units and sentiments found in the modern world [in “nations”] are simply larger and more effective versions of similar units” of historical groups), many scholars argue that a “nation” is a purely modern construct,⁵ so it is more appropriate to call what the Welsh had an *ethnie* instead. The Welsh people were fully aware of the elements that constructed their *ethnie*, and therefore had an acute sense of unity as a people despite their political fragmentations and local divisions; even outsiders referred to the Welsh as a separate political and cultural entity.⁶

A large part of this identity can be seen in the Welsh literary tradition of the Middle Ages – their poets and story-tellers drew on their uniform literary language and common mythology in order to express love for a beloved country and the trials that they undertook in order to protect

³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 15-19.

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd), 22-31.

⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 6-12.

⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 15.

it.⁷ Though this literature may not necessarily speak for the identity of the whole of the Welsh people at this time, a firm sense of Welsh identity can be reasonably extrapolated from surviving texts with careful analysis. A large part of what medieval Welsh authors praise about their “Welshness” is the land itself. For instance, in the poem “From Exile” by Dafydd Benfras (d. 1257), he expressed his joy upon his return to his homeland: “To a Wales made one, contented and fair...where Welsh freely flows!”⁸ Similarly, Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) in his “Boast of His Country” speaks of his love for the “open ground of the North...thick woods...its sea-coast and its mountains, its castle by the wood, and the fine lands...how great a wonder!”⁹ Even Gerald of Wales, who fluctuates in his loyalties to his native region, describes the beauty and fertility of Wales, stating that the south had attractive “flat fields and long sea-coast,” and that the soil of Gwynedd “[was] richer and more fertile.”¹⁰

In the *Brut Y Tywysogion (Chronicle of the Princes)*, the anonymous author emphasized the lengths that the Welsh would go to in order to safeguard their beloved homeland. For instance, when King William II tried to subdue the Welsh in 1097, the “Britons, happy and unafraid, defended their land,” and when Henry I moved into Powys, the chronicler states that the Welsh wanted to join together “so that they could fearlessly defend the wild parts of their land.”¹¹ Welsh poets also acknowledged that the Anglo-Normans had disdain for Welsh lands; again, Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd's “Boast of His Country” says that “I love today what the English hate, the open ground of the North.”¹² These sentiments bring to light the importance of

⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 17-18.

⁸ Dafydd Benfras, “From Exile,” in *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English*, ed. Gwyn Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 30.

⁹ Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, “Hywel's Boast of His Country” in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Anthony Conran and J.E. Caerwyn Williams (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), 108-109.

¹⁰ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987), *Description*.I.6.

¹¹ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion; or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 1097.37, 1121.105-107.

¹² Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, “Hywel's Boast of His Country” in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Conran and Williams, 108-109.

the actual land in Welsh identity – clearly, Wales was a cherished land which contributed to the unity of the Welsh people and gave them strong motivation to defend it at all costs.

The names that these people assigned to themselves and the name that was assigned to them by outsiders are also telling of Welsh identity at this time. R. R. Davies notes that the people of Wales began to refer to themselves as *Cymry* (singular *Cymro*, literally “member of the same locality”) in the mid-seventh century, a term that demonstrates how they highlighted their awareness of themselves as fellow Welshmen, and which increasingly replaced the term *Brytaniaid* (Britons) in medieval texts written in Welsh.¹³ This shift in terminology may indicate a corresponding alteration in the Welsh identity – perhaps they were growing apart from their ancient and noble origins as rulers of the entire island of Britain and their claims of descendency from the legendary Brutus, which was previously and frequently stated to be a fundamental part of their identity in poetry and prose from the early Middle Ages.

This change in nomenclature, however, may not signify that the Welsh were abandoning their Briton past, but may instead demonstrate how they were adapting to the new circumstances in Britain, and it is very possible that the arrival of the Anglo-Normans altered how they saw themselves. In his article about the shift in what the Welsh called themselves in the Middle Ages, Hugh Pryce asserts that the name of Wales and the name of its people changed during the Middle Ages because the Welsh were responding to the increasing Anglo-Norman influence in Wales, and that the adoption of new terminology most likely came from a need to communicate with the world outside of Wales. For instance, the Anglo-Normans used terms similar to *Britones* and *Britanniae* in order to refer to the island of Britain as a whole, so if the Welsh used

¹³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 19. Huw Pryce, “British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales,” *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 468 (September 2001): 778.

similar terms to refer to themselves when communicating with the Anglo-Normans, negotiations might prove to be confusing.¹⁴

To support his argument, Pryce (like Davies) identifies the shift from *Brytaniaid* to *Cymry* in medieval texts (written in Welsh), but also calls attention to the shift in Latin terminology from *Britones* to *Walenses* in both Anglo-Norman and Welsh texts beginning in the mid-eleventh century. By 1150, he claims, the older Cambro-Latin words (i.e. *Briton*-derived) were being replaced by Latin words derived from the Old English *Walas* or *Wealas*.¹⁵ He states that the exact occurrences of these name shifts varied by author and audience, but cited evidence from Welsh ecclesiastical texts, correspondence between Welsh rulers and Anglo-Normans, the *Brut Y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*), the *Annales Cambriae* (*Annals of Wales*), and various works of poetry that supported the nomenclature modification.¹⁶ For instance, in extant correspondence between Welsh and Anglo-Normans leaders from the mid-twelfth century, Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) called himself *rex Wallie*, not *rex Britanniae*.¹⁷

Pryce also utilizes some Anglo-Norman texts to demonstrate the beginnings of this shift, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*, mid-twelfth century),¹⁸ but this and other sources like it may not be the best examples of accurate nomenclature for the Welsh people, as Anglo-Norman authors would likely not have cared much about what the Welsh were calling themselves and could have easily invented their own terms to describe the Welsh people. For instance, *Le Roman de Brut* (*The Romance of Brutus*) by Wace, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* both assign names to the regions of Britain when their stories describe the division of Britain by Brutus for his three sons – Locrin's

¹⁴ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 792, 795-797.

¹⁵ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 780-783.

¹⁶ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 780-783.

¹⁷ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 783-784.

¹⁸ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 784-785.

land became *Logres* (England), Camber's land became *Cambria* (Wales), and Albanactus' land became *Albany* (Scotland).¹⁹ Wace also states that Wales could also be called *Guala* (a name that is also used by Monmouth) – this term is used “in honor of the Queen Galaes” or the Duke Gualon.²⁰ Wace also mentions at the end of his work that “The remnants of the British people, whom we refer to as Welsh...never later had the strength” to “reclaim the land that they once held, that is, the entire island of Britain,” and “all lacked the honor, customs, nobleness, and life of those who'd lived before.”²¹

Thus, even Anglo-Normans adhered to the Welsh belief that they were descendants of the legendary Brutus, but they also appeared to view (and name) the Welsh as the pathetic remnant of a once-great people that became divided after Brutus' death, exiled and assigned a specific name to denote their new status on the island. This may have been why, in the late twelfth century and into the early thirteenth century, Gerald of Wales states that the word “Welsh” was a pejorative term. He repeats the story found in Monmouth's *Historia* about Brutus' three sons, but contradicts Monmouth's assertion that “Wales” comes from the queen Gwendolen, saying instead that it was “derived from one of the barbarous words brought in by the Saxons when they seized the kingdom of Britain,” emphasizing that “Wales” and “Welsh” were “barbarous terms.”²² Clearly, Gerald did not approve of the new words that his people were using to label themselves, perhaps because the new words had been so heavily influenced by non-Welsh sources.

It is this influence that Pryce emphasizes in his article – ultimately, he concludes that the name change was an attempt for the Welsh to be able to better communicate with the world

¹⁹ Wace, *Le Roman de Brut: The French Book of Brutus*, trans. Arthur Wayne Glowka (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), II.1251-1288.37-38. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), II.75.

²⁰ Wace, *Le Roman de Brut*, trans. Glowka, II.37.1277-1282. Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Thorpe, II.3-6.

²¹ Wace, *Le Roman de Brut*, trans. Glowka, XIV.397.14844-14854.

²² Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Description*.I.7.

immediately outside of Wales.²³ This shift, he continues, did not represent an alteration of the actual identity of the Welsh nor an alteration of their identification with their older British roots, as their identity was already firmly established by the year 1100.²⁴ Contrary to what Pryce asserts, in my opinion, it is reasonable to conclude that the shift away from *Briton*-derived terms did signify some sort of change in Welsh identity, and that the identity of the Welsh was not as static or straightforward as Pryce would have us believe. While there was a definite shift in terminology, the changes appear to have been gradual, which Pryce does mention, but he endeavors more fully to pinpoint an exact date as to when the change occurred. He even acknowledges (briefly) that *Brytaniaid*/*Briton*-derived terms co-existed with *Walensis*/*Walas*/*Cymry*-derived terms, but he brushes this off as influence from pre-Conquest sources.²⁵ It would be unwise, however, to dismiss the fact that *Brytaniaid*/*Briton*-derived terms were being replaced before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans because the evidence suggests that the shift from *Brytaniaid* to *Walensis* (and *Cymry*) may have had something to do with Anglo-Saxon influence as well as Anglo-Norman influence, especially since the use of *Cymry* began in the mid-seventh century, and *Walensis*/*Walas* came from Old English, not the Old French that the Normans would have been using. Therefore, Pryce may have overestimated the extent to which the Anglo-Normans affected Welsh nomenclature, so his theory that the Welsh changed their name to ease communications with the Anglo-Normans is not as substantiated as it first may seem.

A major text that will be used in this study, the anonymously authored *Brut Y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*), demonstrates the complications in attempting to understand the shift in nomenclature of the Welsh people in the Middle Ages. The text itself is slightly difficult to

²³ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 792, 795-797.

²⁴ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 799.

²⁵ Pryce, "British or Welsh?," 793-794.

work with because of the uncertainty of its origins. The extant manuscripts of at least two versions (Red Book of Hergest and the Peniarth MS 20), are in Middle Welsh, but show unmistakable signs of being translated from Latin into Welsh; however, the original Latin text is no longer extant.²⁶ Scholars are also unsure as to when the original Latin text (and the extant Middle Welsh text) were written. In an internal analysis of the text, John Edward Lloyd argues that the original Latin text was based off of at least three other original Latin texts, one from St. David's (covering years ca. 682-1100), one from Llanbadarn Fawr (covering years ca. 1100-1175), and one from the abbey at Strata Florida (covering years ca. 1175-1282).²⁷ Lloyd also states that these locations and dates are derived from inter-textual references, and the document could easily have influences from other regions in Wales.²⁸ He does not discuss when he believes the original Latin text was compiled, but this issue is addressed by Thomas Jones in the introductions to his translations of the Red Book of Hergest and the Peniarth MS 20 versions of the *Brut* – Jones argues that the original Latin chronicle was most likely compiled between the years 1307-1350, but the author of the chronicle used the documents from the regions stated above to write about all of the years discussed. Jones also asserts that these documents were likely written soon after the events that they describe had happened because they are generally reliable in terms of historical accuracy.²⁹

Because the extant text of the *Brut* has gone through so many changes and is likely based off of numerous original texts, it is difficult to ascertain any changes Welsh nomenclature for themselves may have undergone, a factor that Pryce does not address when he uses the text in his analysis of shifting Welsh terminology. Nevertheless, the nomenclature of the text does appear

²⁶ Thomas Jones, introduction to *Brut Y Twysogion; or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, trans. and ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), lix-lx.

²⁷ John Edward Lloyd, "The Welsh Chronicles," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 14 (1928): 14-19.

²⁸ Lloyd, "The Welsh Chronicles," 19.

²⁹ Jones, introduction to *Brut Y Tywysogion, or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, xl-xlii, liv-lv.

to follow the general pattern that Pryce lays out – from the beginning of the chronicle (year 682), the author calls his people “Britons” (*Brytaniaid*), but almost completely stops using this word in 1135, using it for the final time in the year 1197 when the Lord Rhys is eulogized.³⁰

Furthermore, the author regularly uses *Cymry* to denote the Welsh (or Wales) starting in 1135.³¹

These name changes may not be accurate indicators of the exact time when the terminology changed, but they do exhibit that there was some sort of shift around the time the Normans came to Britain.

Therefore, even though it is difficult to pinpoint the exact date of this shift in Welsh nomenclature because of inherent uncertainties in the primary source material, the fact that the terminology did change at some point in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries demonstrates that Welsh identity was being reshaped according to the fluctuating political dynamics of Britain in the High Middle Ages – it appears that the Welsh adapted to the changing circumstances that surrounded them and began to use terms that reflected their changing environment. Therefore, they could not define themselves without interference from the Anglo-Normans because the political changes in England reverberated in Wales on a much larger scale than one might initially surmise. This was a reflection of the political reality of the time; as the Anglo-Normans were quickly gaining ground in Britain, the influence that they exerted from their military and political pushes affected the people living in close proximity to their ambitions. The Welsh did not choose to have the Normans come to England and subsequently alter the political balance of Britain – the Anglo-Normans forced interaction upon them, and the Welsh were simply reacting to the fluctuating politics of the time. This interaction was undoubtedly a large part of the impetus for the Welsh movement to preserve their identity and political

³⁰ Pryce, “British or Welsh?,” 782.

³¹ Pryce, “British or Welsh?,” 782.

autonomy in the face of certain domination, strengthening their conviction to defend their beloved land and people at any cost, and thus was a strong factor in the many political decisions of their leaders, including their choices in marriage partners.

Giving the Devil his Due: Views of “The Other” In Literature

Medieval Welsh and Anglo-Norman literary traditions demonstrate the medieval Welsh sense of identity and unity, but the literary traditions can also reflect the tensions between the Welsh and Anglo-Normans and give a sense of how the two regions interacted. The views presented in each region's literature may not necessarily apply to all of the people in each area, but, again, views can be extrapolated to some extent. For instance, because the main literary authors in Wales (called the *Beirdd Y Tywysogion* or *Gogynfeirdd*, or the “Poets of the Princes” or “Less Early Poets”) were so connected to Welsh rulers of this time, the conflict that the poets describe would inherently reflect the conflicts and attitudes that the Welsh rulers themselves were experiencing. Similarly, the authors and compilers of the *Brut Y Tywysogion* were very likely Welshmen, so they too would have good reason to criticize the overlordship that the Anglo-Normans imposed on the Welsh rulers that were the subject of the chronicle. Thus, Welsh hatred of the Anglo-Normans in their literature can still be useful, even if the views were not held by the entire population of Wales.

In the same way, extant Anglo-Norman chronicles and histories were written by educated men who focused their attention on people whom they considered to be important (i.e. the rulers), people that would have had the greatest complaints about the hostile and unbeatable group of people that refused to accept total surrender of their autonomy and land. Anglo-Norman rulers, no matter how much they tried, could not seem to completely and thoroughly defeat all of the Welsh (at least not until the thirteenth century); thus, the Anglo-Normans

presumably harbored some lingering bitterness towards the people that were not easily conquered. Anglo-Norman authors of the time thus perceived and expressed in their works the frustrations of the rulers that they were writing about.

In medieval Welsh literature from the early Middle Ages, Welsh poetry frequently expressed a desire to drive foreigners from their land, as well as strong resentment for the foreigner, which is seen most notably in the anonymous *Armes Prydain Fawr* (*The Great Prophecy of Britain*, tenth century). This poet included a scathing attack of Anglo-Saxon rule in Britain, describing the treachery, oppressive taxes, and unworthiness of the Anglo-Saxons as the rulers of Britain.³² The author prophesies an alliance of the Welsh, the Irish, and the men of Anglesey, Pictland, and Cornwall being led by the ancient heroes Cynan, Cadwaladr, and even St. David (later the patron saint of Wales) to drive the Anglo-Saxons out of Britain.³³

This theme of ancient heroes (e.g. Arthur, Cynan, Cadwaladr, or Owain) coming out of hiding to deliver the Welsh from their oppressors was present in Welsh poetry (particularly from the works of Taliesin and Myrddin) from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, and it reflects how the Welsh wanted to reclaim all of the land they once held in Britain, their desire to rid themselves of foreign overlords, and to return to their glorious past.³⁴ Thomas Parry, a prominent scholar of Welsh literature, argued that these prophecies developed out of a sort of “patriotic zeal” that was meant to demonstrate the strength of the Welsh and their ability to overcome any enemy.³⁵ While looking back to a more glorious past during times hardship was not a new theme in medieval literature, this zeal persisted and was certainly welcomed by the Welsh when the Anglo-Normans came to the forefront of Welsh problems in the late eleventh century. For

³² G.R. Isaac, “*Armes Prydain Fawr* and St. David,” in *St. David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, ed. J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), lines 1-23, 147-170.

³³ Isaac, “*Armes Prydain Fawr* and St. David,” in *St. David of Wales*, ed. Evans and Wooding, lines 1-23, 147-170.

³⁴ Thomas Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. H. Idris Bell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 26-27.

³⁵ Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. Bell, 26.

instance, in eleventh and twelfth century poems, authors describe the hero Owain returning to save the Welsh from their sufferings, and predictions are made about the future successes of the Welsh people: “the Welsh will overcome, bright will be their day,” “The English will be destroyed from the lands of Britain,” and “May there be no salvation ever for Normandy.”³⁶

The theme of hatred towards Anglo-Normans was not limited to prophetic poems – this loathing can also be seen in other works, such as Gwalchmai ap Meilyr's (fl. 1130-1180) “Exultation,” in which Gwalchmai states that “They tremble, the English, before my blade” and “Gwalchmai I am called, foe of the Saxons...Against England a champion will not hide.”³⁷ It may seem strange that Gwalchmai refers to the Welsh fighting the Saxons (Welsh, *Saesson*), as the Welsh at this time were fighting the Anglo-Normans, but this phrasing was rhetorical device used by Welsh poets of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries that expressed the trials of the present in terms of the trials of the past. These poets, called the *Beirdd Y Tywysogion* or the *Gogynfeirdd* (“Poets of the Princes” or “Less Early Poets”), were professionals who worked solely to glorify the Welsh rulers that patronized them, and they incorporated ancient heroes and stories into their works, using their more glorious past to honor the rulers of the present, expressing a yearning to return to their proud past.³⁸ Thus, when Gwalchmai said that he was “foe of the Saxons,” he was using a historical occurrence that reflected the present Welsh struggle against the Anglo-Normans to express Welsh resentment against Anglo-Norman oppression. This is actually typical of Welsh poetry of this time; because the *Beirdd* were so inextricably linked to the rulers of Wales, their poems reflect the military and political battles

³⁶ “The Colloquy of Myrddin and Gwynedd his Sister” and “The Song of Myrddin in his Grave”, quoted in Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. Bell, 32.

³⁷ Gwalchmai ap Meilyr, “Exultation,” in *Medieval Welsh Poems*, ed. and trans. Joseph P. Clancy (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2003), 124-125. 9

³⁸ Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. Bell, 48-51.

with which these rulers were grappling as they sought to maintain and assert their political autonomy.

Other poems demonstrate the negative attitude of the Welsh against the Anglo-Normans in aggressive, graphic, and gory terms, such as in Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr's "In Praise of Owain Gwynedd", as he describes how Owain was fighting against his enemies: "blood-shower pouring, blood in full flow...Sword held in hand and hand hewing heads, hand on sword and the sword on Norman hosts."³⁹ Similarly, Llywarch ap Llywelyn says that his English "foes are acquainted with spears in their breasts," and is especially celebratory of one of the greatest Welsh rulers of his day, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (d. 1240).⁴⁰ Llywarch compares Llywelyn to Arthur and describes how Llywelyn was the "renowned helm of Britain," spurning obedience to England; "ferocious, he makes for the field," uprooting the Anglo-Normans.⁴¹

The Anglo-Norman aggression that provoked these hostile Welsh attitudes is also vividly portrayed in Welsh literature from the time. Most notably, the *Brut Y Tywysogion* describes the onslaught of the Anglo-Normans that were moving into Welsh territory, as the chronicler frequently refers to the multiple Anglo-Normans attempts to "[seize] all the land of the Britons."⁴² Additionally, the Latin *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* tells that when King William I gathered troops "to destroy and exterminate the natives so that he might not leave even a dog pissing against a wall....," Gruffudd ap Cynan rallied the Welsh to route them.⁴³ Also in Gruffudd's *Life*, when the "trickery" of the Anglo-Normans allowed them to take the island of

³⁹ Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, "In Praise of Owain Gwynedd" in *Medieval Welsh Poems*, ed. and trans. Clancy, 148-149.

⁴⁰ Llywarch ap Llywelyn (Prydydd Y Moch), "A Love Poem for Gwenllïant", in *Medieval Welsh Poems*, ed. and trans. Clancy, 156.

⁴¹ Llywarch ap Llywelyn (Prydydd Y Moch), "In Praise of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth", in *Medieval Welsh Poems*, ed. and trans. Clancy, 159-160.

⁴² Thomas Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1093.33.

⁴³ Paul Russell, ed. and trans., *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 26.

Anglesey (also called Môn), the Welsh were forced to hide and conceal themselves “through fear of the [Anglo-Normans]...who were driving them to destruction.”⁴⁴ The Anglo-Normans also “ensnared in deceit the wretched people of this island [Anglesey] oppressed by the heaviest slavery into treachery...”⁴⁵ Furthermore, when King Henry I, “the man who had tamed all the chieftains of the island of Britain through his might and power” mobilized a military campaign into Wales in 1114, the author of the *Brut* states that the Anglo-Normans “planned by agreement to seek to exterminate all the Britons completely, so that the Brittanic name should never more be remembered.”⁴⁶ Similarly, when King Henry II moved against Wales, the chronicler says that his purpose was “to carry into bondage and destroy all the Britons.”⁴⁷

Another facet of Anglo-Norman rule that the Welsh took issue with (as expressed in their literature) was Anglo-Norman governance over the Welsh people. The Welsh believed that they were the true and rightful rulers of the entire island of Britain, so they were understandably rankled when the Anglo-Normans established their political rule in many regions in Wales during the late eleventh century. Ifor Rowlands explains that the Welsh were discomfited by the requirement to swear fealty and homage to the Anglo-Norman kings because these pledges were personal to native Welsh rulers – Welsh rulers “did not regard themselves, as English barons did, as part of an institutionalized network of fealties” under direct control of the crown.⁴⁸ In Welsh poetry, for instance, in his poem “The Battle of Tal y Moelfre,” Gwalchmai ap Meilyr says that the great Welsh ruler Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) was “ward of the Marches” and the “right master of Britain”, and goes on to describe Owain's victory in a battle against Normans and other

⁴⁴ Paul Russell, ed. and trans., *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 26.

⁴⁵ Russell, ed. and trans., *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, 27.

⁴⁶ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1116.91, 1114.79.

⁴⁷ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1163.145.

⁴⁸ Ifor W. Rowlands, “King John and Wales,” in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 276. For more information on this see R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

foes.⁴⁹ In another work, Gwalchmai asserts that Owain Gwynedd is the “blest prince of Britain, land's rightful lord,” and that Gwynedd's legendary hero Cynan (who is helping Owain) holds “all of Britain's keys in his possessions.”⁵⁰

The *Brut Y Tywysogion* also specifically addresses the issues of Anglo-Norman rule in Wales that were noted so briefly in Welsh poems. One of the most marked affects that the *Brut* preserves about the status of Welsh rulers in Britain is the change in the titles of the Welsh rulers; at the outset of the chronicle, the author refers to Welsh leaders as “kings,”⁵¹ but near the middle of the twelfth century there is a shift in terminology, and the rulers are reduced to the status of “lords” or “princes” in the narrative. This not only reflects actual diminution of the power of the Welsh rulers but perceived diminution as well, as the author(s) of the *Brut* may not have been living during the time that they were writing about. Looking back at the history of Wales, the chronicler(s) could have undoubtedly noticed how the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans reduced the status of native Welsh rulers as time progressed, which is reflected in the narrative. This is recorded in other historical documents as well, such as correspondence and charters, in which Welsh rulers become merely *dominus* or *princeps* instead of *rex*.

This diminution of the political status of the Welsh rulers and government provoked a rash of insults against the Anglo-Normans in the *Brut* as well as strong assertions of the horrible oppression that the Anglo-Normans were imposing on the Welsh. A frequent complaint is that of the injustice of the Anglo-Normans as they trampled on Welsh customs and traditions; the author, speaking through the mouth of Iorwerth ap Bleddyn, says that “God has placed us [the Welsh] into the hands of our enemies and has brought us into such subjection that we could not accomplish aught of what would be our will,” and often mentions the treachery of the Anglo-

⁴⁹ Gwalchmai ap Meilyr, “The Battle of Tal y Moelfre”, in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Conran and Williams, 105.

⁵⁰ Gwalchmai ap Meilyr, “Exultation” in *Medieval Welsh Poems*, ed. and trans. Clancy, 125-6.

⁵¹ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 682.3.

Normans, “as it is the way of the [Normans] to deceive people with promises” and “to do everything by guile.”⁵² For instance, during the reign of King John, the author says that John violated the customs of the Welsh, and later his son King Henry III “unlawfully oppressed the Welsh and many others.”⁵³ When Henry's son Edward came to survey Gwynedd, “the magnates of Wales, despoiled of their liberty and reduced to bondage...mournfully made known to him [Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd] that they preferred to be slain in battle for their liberty rather than to suffer themselves to be trampled upon in bondage by men alien to them.”⁵⁴ This attitude taken in conjunction with the naming of the “rightful” Welsh rulers in the literature above clearly demonstrates that the Welsh saw the Anglo-Normans as the unlawful rulers of Welsh territory, and were unwillingly subjugated to Anglo-Norman governance. To be sure, the anger seen in this literature was justified for the Welsh because the Anglo-Normans were instituting many foreign changes into the sections of Wales that they controlled.

Anglo-Norman literature reciprocates these negative feelings, as it often depicts the Welsh as a barbarous group on the periphery of English society with rebellious habits, bad manners, and an untrustworthy nature. Even though these authors did not record the exact truth of historical events in their chronicles (just as in the Welsh texts), the events that they described were written with their twelfth-century perspective and views, so the negative aspects of the Welsh that they describe can be applied to how the authors (and others similar to them) felt about the Welsh people. Many of these authors were also writing for an aristocratic Anglo-Norman audience, so it makes sense that they would speak negatively of the people that were a persistent problem for the Anglo-Norman aristocracy.

⁵² Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red book of Hergest Version*, 1110.65-67, 1115.85, 1116.91.

⁵³ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red book of Hergest Version*, 1215.201-203, 1243.239.

⁵⁴ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red book of Hergest Version*, 1256.247.

When introducing Wales, the anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani* (*Deeds of Stephen*) describes the region as “a country of woodland and pasture, immediately bordering England” with plentiful natural resources.⁵⁵ These appear to be the only qualities worth praising about the Welsh, as the author continues by saying this peripheral land “breeds men of an animal type, naturally swift-footed, accustomed to war” that the Anglo-Normans needed to control.⁵⁶ Because the author was glorifying King Stephen in his work, his criticisms of the Welsh were presumably deemed necessary, as Stephen had numerous difficulties controlling the Welsh during his reign, which will be discussed more fully below.⁵⁷ Thus, the author says that King Stephen was able to “check [the] wanton recklessness” of the Welsh, demonstrating the control that Stephen had over these barbaric people, even though Stephen lost much of his predecessors' dominance in Wales during his chaotic reign.⁵⁸

William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (*The History of the English Kings*) similarly referred to the violent habits of the Welsh and how Anglo-Norman kings showed their strength in their ability to successfully subdue this warlike people; Malmesbury states that King William I “had all the Welsh as tributaries,” and that during the reign of King Henry I, “The Welsh were in constant revolt,” but “King Henry maintained pressure on them by frequent expeditions until they surrendered.”⁵⁹ Malmesbury also recounts how the English kings forced Welsh rulers to submit to them, defeated the Welsh in battle, and how the Welsh brought the kings tribute.⁶⁰ There are good reasons to believe that Malmesbury was being accurate in his descriptions – in the prologue to his first book, Malmesbury pledges his truthfulness and states

⁵⁵ K. R. Potter, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 8.15.

⁵⁶ Potter, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani*, 8.15.

⁵⁷ R. H. C. Davis, introduction to *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), xix.

⁵⁸ Potter, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani*, 8.15.

⁵⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 401.1, 258.1.

⁶⁰ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Mynors, 135.5, 155.

that either himself or another trustworthy person has witnessed the events he records; so, the Welsh may indeed have been “in constant revolt,” but Malmesbury had ulterior motives to describing the events of the realm.⁶¹ He greatly favored the the kings of England in his work (except for King Stephen), so he most likely wanted to demonstrate that the kings had successfully subdued the troublesome Welsh in order to convey the strength of all the kings but Stephen (William does not mention any victories that King Stephen had over the Welsh even though his chronicle covers Stephen's reign). Additionally, Kings William I, William II, and Henry I actually did have many victories against the Welsh during their reigns, so William of Malmesbury was indeed truthfully reporting events of the realm (albeit with bias and exaggeration).

Even Walter Map, a Welshman by birth, but heavily influenced by his Anglo-Norman education and career in England, said that “So strong...in the Welsh is the disuse of civility, that if in one respect they may appear kindly in most they show themselves ill-tempered and savages.”⁶² Similarly, Gerald of Wales, another man with Welsh roots (but with an education and career in England), had an entire section in his *Cambriae Descriptio* (*Description of Wales*) dedicated to criticizing the negative aspects of the Welsh, describing their greed, cowardice, and propensity for quarreling over land, among other faults.⁶³ This is, however, a *volt-face* from the first book of his *Descriptio*, in which he relates the good qualities of the Welsh, telling of their courage, frugality, rich rhetoric, good grooming habits, and excellent hospitality.⁶⁴ Gerald's misgivings about the people he appeared to both love and hate can also be seen in other sections of his work that describe both how the Welsh could be conquered as well as how they could

⁶¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Mynors, prologue.15-17.

⁶² Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), II.8.

⁶³ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Description*.II.

⁶⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Description*.I.

resist conquest.⁶⁵ While the fluctuating loyalties of Gerald is another matter entirely, his work and the work of Walter Map demonstrate that educated Anglo-Normans (and people greatly influenced by Anglo-Norman customs and education) viewed the Welsh with contempt.

Anglo-Norman authors do not stop at criticizing the manners and civility of the Welsh – they also denounce the warlike nature of the Welsh. Walter Map notes “the fierceness of their assault and the keenness of their resistance” and that they were “prodigal of life, greedy of liberty, neglectors of peace, warlike and skilled in arms, and eager for vengeance.”⁶⁶ He even uses an anecdote “To show [the reader] how indiscriminate and foolish...is the anger of the Welsh,” saying at the end of the story: “See how foolish and unreasonable is the wrath of these Welsh, and how swift they are to shed blood.”⁶⁷ The Welsh are also deemed untrustworthy and wicked, as William of Malmesbury says that “the Welsh [were] always ready to do ill,”⁶⁸ and the *Gesta Stephani* author asserts that the Welsh were “addicted to every crime, ready for anything unlawful,” and that “they spared no age, showed no respect for any order, [and] were not restrained from wickedness either by time or by place.”⁶⁹

Matthew Paris, however, was an Anglo-Norman that held very different views of the Welsh, as expressed in his *Chronica Majora*. Because Matthew was writing for monks and not for any specific Anglo-Norman ruler, the motives for his work were slightly different.⁷⁰ His *Chronica Majora* exemplifies an Anglo-Norman voice with a rare measure of sympathy for the Welsh, as he recognizes that the Welsh were unwilling to accept English rule, that they were being “miserably oppressed,” and that “their time-honored aristocratic pride [had fallen] into

⁶⁵ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Description*.II.8-10.

⁶⁶ M.R. James, introduction to *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, xiii-xix. Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. James, II.20, 26.

⁶⁷ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. James, II.21.

⁶⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Mynors, 396.1.

⁶⁹ Potter, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani*, 8.17.

⁷⁰ Antonia Grandsden, *Historical Writing in England*, 358.

decline.”⁷¹ These feelings are reflective of one of the major underlying themes in the *Chronica* – Matthew consistently expresses an opposition to centralized authority in church and state, which is derived from the political climate of the early thirteenth century, the influence of fellow chronicler Roger of Wendover, and Matthew's Benedictine training.⁷² Thus, he not only had pity for the Welsh, but for any others who were oppressed by the overbearing power of the papacy and the royalty of England.⁷³ Other chroniclers such as Walter Map, Gerald of Wales, and Gervase of Canterbury all demonstrate similar disdain for strong royal power, but Matthew Paris is one of the only writers that relates this aversion to royal power to the plight of the Welsh during this time.⁷⁴ Therefore, his opinion displays that not all Anglo-Normans viewed the Welsh with contempt, though it is uncertain as to how well this work was disseminated and received in the aristocratic Anglo-Norman community. Thus, it is difficult to know many other Anglo-Normans shared his views.

Keeping Enemies Close: Why Marriage with the Anglo-Normans?

From an examination of the mutually hostile feelings between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans in their respective literary traditions at this time (albeit with at least one exception), it is surprising that the Welsh and Anglo-Normans would want to make marital alliances with each other. The rulers of Wales could have made alliances with other regions (such as Ireland) that had their own similar battles against the Anglo-Normans, but the Welsh chose instead to make alliances with the people they professed to hate.

The idea for Welsh/Anglo-Norman marital alliances may have already been somewhat established in Britain by marriages that had been contracted between Welsh and Anglo-Saxon

⁷¹ Matthew Paris, *Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Monastic Life in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Richard Vaughn (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 1247.122-123.

⁷² Grandsden, *Historical Writing in England*, 367-368, 372-374.

⁷³ Grandsden, *Historical Writing in England*, 367-368.

⁷⁴ Grandsden, *Historical Writing in England*, 368.

rulers, such as the union of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1063) and Ealdgyth, daughter of Ælfgar, earl of Mercia (later wife of King Harold II). Ælfgar had previously made an alliance with Gruffudd in order to gain troops to use in his fight for the restoration of his earldom, an alliance that apparently resulted in a political marriage – when the earldom was restored to Ælfgar in 1057, Gruffudd married Ealdgyth.⁷⁵ What's more, the bond seemed to hold, as it appears that the two men continued to act as allies until 1062.⁷⁶ Walter Map, however, does not appear to think that this union was a good match, as he states that Gruffudd was a jealous husband, but this was most likely used to further defame the rash and wrathful nature of the Welsh.⁷⁷ Other than Gruffudd ap Cynan's marital alliance with the Anglo-Saxons, however, there did not appear to be similar Welsh/Anglo-Saxon marital alliances before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. Welsh rulers did have some dealings with the Anglo-Saxons, but none of these arrangements appeared to have been solidified by marital alliances.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Gruffudd's union demonstrates that alliances between major powers in England and Wales was not an entirely new strategy or concept when the Normans came to Britain, even if the practice was not widespread.

It is still surprising, however, that the Welsh turned to their hostile neighbors instead of more friendly regions that could have helped them eradicate Anglo-Normans from Welsh territory. For instance, the Irish were fighting against the Anglo-Normans at this time and could possibly have helped the Welsh with their plight, but perhaps Ireland might not have seemed like a viable option because of its political turmoil, which may have weakened Ireland in the eyes of the Welsh. If the Welsh had allied with the Irish, it also would have been necessary for Irish

⁷⁵ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (1911; repr., London: Longmans, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1967), 2:364-369.

⁷⁶ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (1911; repr., London: Longmans, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1967), 2:364-369.

⁷⁷ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. James, II.22.

⁷⁸ Non-marital alliances included Ithel of Glywysing and Aethelbald of Mercia (mid-eighth century) and other dealings with Mercia with rulers such as Hywel and Owain of Gwent and Iago and Hywel of Gwynedd. Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 112-116.

troops to be transported across a body of water – not a large body, but it could have been enough of a logistical barrier to make the Welsh reluctant to partner with the Irish. Thus, the Welsh might not have wanted to make alliances with a region that lacked the necessary strength to help them beat back the Anglo-Normans. The Welsh ruler Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137), however, was actually born in Ireland of an Irish-Scandinavian mother and used Irish troops to try and take back Gwynedd, but this alliance was not typical of future Welsh political arrangement with Ireland.⁷⁹ Some Welsh rulers still drew military support from Ireland into the twelfth century, but this did not lead to further major alliances between the Welsh and the Irish at this time.

There may have also been trust issues with the Irish (although why these issues would have prevented an alliance when the Welsh complained about the Anglo-Normans in the same manner is unknown) – when Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) married Cristin, the daughter of Gronw ab Owain of Ireland (see Table 4), Cristin and her children (Dafydd and Rhodri) were viewed with contempt by the Welsh because Dafydd and Rhodri killed Hywel, another of Owain's sons by a different woman.⁸⁰ The Welsh poet Peryf ap Cedifor eulogized Hywel in his “The Killing of Hywel,” saying that “Because of the treachery brewed...by Cristin and her sons” they should not be allowed to live, and warns Dafydd: “Woe to you, cruel Dafydd, to stab Hywel...”⁸¹ This is only the view of one poet about a particular Irish family, but perhaps this incident resulted in enough negative reverberations or a common enough opinion about the Irish that the Welsh developed a certain mistrust of Irish alliances.

Thus, as an alliance with Ireland did not appear to be a viable option, the Welsh could have turned to Scotland or even France for marital alliances. While there were beginnings of

⁷⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 33. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:379-382. Russell, ed. and trans., *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, 2, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 31.

⁸⁰ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 71, 129.

⁸¹ Peryf ap Cedifor, “The Killing of Hywel” in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Conran and Williams, 112-113.

alliances with both Scotland and France, however, these agreements were never brought to fruition and no marriages were made in the process. For instance, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd temporarily allied with King Philip Augustus of France in 1212 when Philip was preparing to invade England, but the alliance did not last long, no marriage connections were made, and Philip never invaded.⁸² Additionally, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (grandson of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth) briefly made an alliance with a faction of Scottish nobles, but no marriages were made in the process and the Scots ultimately did not aid the Welsh.⁸³

Therefore, the native Welsh rulers turned to the Anglo-Normans for marital alliances. Welsh historians such as R. R. Davies often comment upon the brilliant negotiations of Welshmen like Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who made multiple marital alliances with the Anglo-Normans; Davies states that Llywelyn knew just how to manipulate the politics of his time and location in order to successfully keep the Anglo-Normans at bay and create a mostly unified Welsh political body.⁸⁴ Llywelyn may have forgone creating a marital alliance with Ireland (he abandoned plans to marry the daughter of the Irish king of Man) for similar reasons because he predicted that more advantages would come from a marriage alliance with his domineering neighbors. Such unions would allow him to better assert his supremacy over the other Welsh rulers by drawing power from the English crown and marcher lords, and would create amicable relations with the people that were attempting to overthrow his power. Other Welsh rulers may

⁸² Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 243. R.F. Treharne, "The Franco-Welsh Treaty of Alliance in 1212," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 18 (1958-1960): 60-75. A letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to King Philip Augustus of France states that Llywelyn swore alliance to Philip, asks Philip to be friendly to Llywelyn and his friends, and expects that the French will not make any truces with the English without first consulting the body of Welsh rulers that had been unified under Llywelyn's rule. Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Philip Augustus, King of France, *Thomas Matthew's Welsh Records in Paris: A Study of Selected Welsh Medieval Records*, ed. Dylan Rees and J. Gwynfor Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 2-4, 57-58.

⁸³ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 110-111, 280.

⁸⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 239-251.

have seen similar advantages when arranging their own marriages with the Anglo-Norman aristocracy.

The Marriages

While there is some evidence of the benefits and failures of these partnerships, it is necessary to extrapolate a good amount of information about the marriages due to lack of primary sources. The primary sources discuss the situations surrounding the marriages, but do not often discuss the marriages themselves, which requires some careful interpretation of the information that the sources do provide in order to determine the benefits and outcomes of these unions. Nevertheless, there is enough information to accurately discern the political situations behind many of the marriages. The marriages have been divided into phases according to the time in which they were contracted – Phase One (1066-1135), Phase Two (1135-1154), and Phase Three (1154-1283). These phases reflect the fluctuating political dynamics between Wales and England – more marriages were contracted when the Anglo-Normans exerted a tighter grip of overlordship on the native Welsh rulers and were making more military forays into Wales. Conversely, less marriages were made when the Anglo-Norman rulers were not as enthusiastic about penetrating deeper into Welsh territory. While this paper is written from a Welsh perspective, I, like the Welsh, cannot escape the influence of the Anglo-Normans, and have found that the most efficient way to unfold the story that these marriages tell is to organize them chronologically by Anglo-Norman king because the kings had such a great influence over the way that the Anglo-Norman rulers interacted with Welsh rulers.

Phase One, 1066-1135

The first phase of Anglo-Norman/Welsh marriages began in 1066 and lasted until about 1135. During this time, Normans (mainly from the March of Wales) contracted marriages with

Welsh aristocracy to gain additional land and influence in territory they wanted to rule (both in Wales and in the March). The land would come from inheritances and exchanges of marital gifts (i.e. dowries), and the influence would come from having a close alliance between families that might not have otherwise been amicably acquainted. In other words, these marriages opened doors to political worlds that might not have been accessible in the normal sphere of their interactions, allowing the each family to become more involved in the region of the other, in politics and otherwise. The Welsh agreed to marital alliances because the unions brought influence and powerful allies in England and in the March of Wales, and allowed them to more fully secure their land holdings, helping them to cope with their new aggressive neighbors. Additionally, these marriages allowed the rulers of both regions to attain political benefits without bloodshed, as the marriages were a way for the Anglo-Normans to expand deeper into Wales without military campaigns, and were also a way for the Welsh to strike bargains with their aggressive neighbors that did not deplete their limited resources.

Many of these marriages were contracted between Welsh rulers and Anglo-Norman Marcher barons because of the nature of the March of Wales – it was a politically and militarily volatile region between the territory that the Welsh inhabited and that the newly arrived Normans occupied, and the border was constantly fluctuating due to frequent skirmishes and piecemeal territorial gains. The Normans, *via* the Montgomery and the Lacy families, first advanced into southern Wales because it was geographically easier to attack than the rest of Welsh lands, while other Norman lords continued these advances into the north of Wales.⁸⁵ King William I created new earldoms in these border counties that essentially gave these earls the powers and the license to launch strong campaigns against the Welsh, as the Welsh posed a dangerous military threat to

⁸⁵ David Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 23-24.

the over-extended powers of King William.⁸⁶ These new lordships came to be called the March of Wales, or *Marchia Wallie*, and their creation and existence were a large part of the reason why the Welsh rulers and Anglo-Norman lords began to inter-marry. King William II largely continued his father's policies in the March by inciting the Marcher barons to expand into Welsh territory, so the Marcher barons continued to have military and political interactions with native Welsh rulers.

A large part of why the Welsh were in such a predicament is because Wales at this time was politically and militarily disadvantaged because their political unity had fragmented with the death of one of the few leaders who was able to unite Wales in the Middle Ages – Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (“King of all Wales,” d.1063), which made the Welsh more vulnerable to the aggressive territorial ambitions of the Anglo-Normans.⁸⁷ The Welsh had been dealing with threats from the Anglo-Saxons and other outsiders for centuries, but the arrival of the Anglo-Normans combined with the death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn meant that the native Welsh rulers were extremely vulnerable to the initial incursions of the Anglo-Normans during and after 1066.⁸⁸ Therefore, there was a heightened interaction between the Welsh and Anglo-Normans that led to many marriages being created between their respective aristocracies as an element of stability in this constantly fluctuating world.

One of the first marriages was between Nest ferch Gruffudd ap Llewelyn and Osbern Fitz Richard Fitz Scrop, lord of Richard's Castle and Byton in Shropshire (see Table 1).⁸⁹ Osbern was one of the first Normans to come to the March, and a marriage with the daughter of the man who had been the “King of All Wales” most likely appeared advantageous to him, as it could bring him land that Gruffudd once held to extend Norman reach farther into Wales, and would

⁸⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 27-28.

⁸⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 24. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 1063.

⁸⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 24-27.

⁸⁹ A.J. Roderick, “Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282,” *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968-9): 5.

hopefully be ensured of peaceful relations with this Welsh family in the future. Additionally, this marriage could help to secure Osbern's Welsh borders – by having an alliance with a native Welsh family, he would have one less troublesome Welshman to deal with as he was consolidating and expanding his territory in Shropshire.

One of the daughters of Nest and Osbern, another Nest (also called Agnes) married Bernard Neufmarché (see Table 1), who, according to Gerald of Wales, was the first Norman to take the region of Brecknock (or Brecon) from the Welsh.⁹⁰ Continuing the practices of the generation before, this marriage most likely brought the Norman lord additional influence and land, and gave the Welsh family another ally to use against any troublesome Anglo-Normans or other Welsh rulers. Nest and Bernard had two children, Mahel and Sybil (see Table 1). The marriage, however, did not appear to be a successful one, as Gerald of Wales relates that Nest committed adultery with “a certain knight,” which resulted in the knight being beaten by Mahel (Nest's son), which caused Nest to flee to the court of King Henry I. Nest then told King Henry that Mahel was not her husband's son (which Gerald reports to be a lie) in order to prevent Mahel from inheriting his father's lands. It appears that from this incident, Nest's daughter Sybil became the sole heir of her parent's estate, and King Henry even provided Sybil with a husband, Milo FitzWalter (or Miles of Gloucester), a “distinguished young knight of his own family,” constable of Gloucester and later lord of Brecon and earl of Hereford, as well as adding the lands of Brecon as a marriage portion (see Table 1).⁹¹

The union of Sybil and Miles is a good example of the heavy-handed manipulation Henry I used to bolster and extend his power into Wales at this time. At the outset of his reign, King Henry I engendered “a conscious effort...to weave the web of suzerainty more closely and to give

⁹⁰ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Journey*.I.2.88.

⁹¹ Gerald of Wales, *Journey Through Wales*, trans. Thorpe, *Journey*.I.2.89. Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 5, fn 2.

a more regular and demeaning content to the concept of overlordship” in Wales by doing things such as increasing his manipulation of the internal problems of the Welsh and by exacting more tributes and pledges of loyalty from those same rulers.⁹² Additionally, by 1102 he had three great border earldoms under his direct control, Hereford, Shrewsbury, and Chester, with which he was able to shape Anglo-Norman relations with Wales more intimately by appointing new earls with the license to forge ahead into Welsh territory, thus creating a stronger force in the March to take the Welsh under Anglo-Norman control.⁹³ It was in this context of a king's tightening grip over the native Welsh rulers that the marriages of the the two Nests and Sybil were made;⁹⁴ thus, their unions demonstrate the more connected relationship the Welsh rulers now had with the king of England and his barons and the measure of control that Henry held over the Welsh at this time.

Sybil and Milo then had five sons, “all of them famous knights,” (Roger, Walter, Henry, William, and Mahel), each of whom received a portion of their father's inheritance, but apparently they all died without children, thus ending the family line.⁹⁵ The story of this family (however melodramatically presented by Gerald of Wales) also demonstrates that Anglo-Norman inheritance practices were applied to the first of the Welsh/Anglo-Norman unions. Sybil would not have been able to inherit her father's land under native Welsh law, but she was designated as the sole heir to her parent's lands instead of her brother, which Welsh law did not allow for.⁹⁶ Adhering to Anglo-Norman inheritance laws and practices instead of native Welsh law continues to be seen in almost all of the marriages discussed in this study. The story also shows how

⁹² R. R. Davies, “Henry I and Wales,” in *Studies in Medieval History, Presented to R.H.C. Davis*, edited by Henry Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985), 138-140.

⁹³ Davies, “Henry I and Wales,” 142-143. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 40-43.

⁹⁴ Davies, “Henry I and Wales,” 145-146.

⁹⁵ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales, Journey*.I.2.89-90.

⁹⁶ Dafydd Jenkins, trans. and ed., *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, 2nd ed. (Llandysul, Dyfed: Gomer Press, 1990), 107.

closely interwoven the politics of Wales and England were, and when families united across regions, their unions truly did serve as living links to each other's lands.

Around the year 1100, another Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, was married to Gerald of Windsor, the first constable of the castle at Pembroke, and a close companion of marcher lord Arnulf Montgomery (see Table 2).⁹⁷ Rhys ap Tewdwr, called “King of Deheubarth,” was the leading power in southern Wales until his death in 1093; however, he was dead by the time this union was contracted, so the driving force behind this match was very likely Gerald of Windsor – by his marriage with Nest, he could draw on the resources and lands of her family and give him preeminence in these same Welsh lands.⁹⁸ Nest's family also presumably benefited from this alliance because it could redirect the ambitions of this particular family away from their territory in Deheubarth, and the Welsh could also possibly draw resources from the Anglo-Normans. Like the unions discussed above, this marriage was also part of the larger scheme of increasing dominance that King Henry I and the Marcher barons were instituting in Wales at this time.

In 1109, however (according to the *Brut*), Nest, who was apparently famous for her beauty, was abducted by Owain ap Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, who broke into the sleeping chambers of Gerald and his wife. Gerald was able to escape (reportedly by way of a privy hole), but Owain captured Nest and three of her children (among others) and plundered the castle.⁹⁹ The *Brut* continues, saying that Owain's father Cadwgan sought to restore Nest to her husband, but upon Owain's refusal, Nest was able to persuade Owain to release her children upon the condition that she would remain with him.¹⁰⁰ The chronicle does not specify if Nest and Owain

⁹⁷ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 5.

⁹⁸ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 10.

⁹⁹ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1109.55-57, Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, 1109.28-29. Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 6-7, fn. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1109.57.

were ever married (nor the fate of Nest's husband, Gerald), but it does say that the cause of the children's release was Owain's love for Nest.¹⁰¹ Thus, any benefits Gerald of Windsor might have gained from the marriage were eradicated, but as noted below, he was able to use his land to arrange marriages for his daughters to his benefit, and his son was also able to gain land through his father (at least until he was dispossessed by the Lord Rhys, another powerful ruler in Deheubarth).

The final marriage in this first phase was that of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn of Powys (father of Owain mentioned above), who married the daughter of Picot de Sai, an Anglo-Norman lord who held lands in Shropshire and who became a vassal of the earl of Shrewsbury in the late eleventh century (see Table 3).¹⁰² At this time, Cadwgan was fighting his brothers for political and military dominance in Powys,¹⁰³ so he likely hoped that this marriage alliance would ensure that Picot would not attack his lands, leaving Cadwgan free to battle his brothers. Cadwgan also gained some land from the marriage, as Lloyd mentions that he was able to settle in a border region that he had received as the dowry from his wife.¹⁰⁴ Picot most likely saw the connection with Cadwgan as a means to gain more land in Wales, as well a less bloody way to secure his borders by ensuring the allegiance of a potentially volatile neighbor, as Powys abutted Picot's territory in Shropshire. This alliance, however, did not appear to give Cadwgan permanent security, for after the trouble his son Owain had caused with Gerald of Windsor, King Henry I transferred Cadwgan's lands in Ceredigion to Gilbert Fitz Richard, and Cadwgan continued to be immersed in intra-familial struggles (which is probably what King Henry had in mind when he

¹⁰¹ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1109.57.

¹⁰² Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 19.

¹⁰³ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:404, 415.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:419.

gave Cadwgan back his lands – this arrangement would keep the brothers of Gwynedd weak, giving Henry and his barons greater opportunity to gain territory in Wales).¹⁰⁵

Because the Anglo-Normans were the dominant power in Wales from 1066 until around 1135 due to the creation of the Marcher lordships and by the operations of King Henry I, the above set of marriages ultimately provided more benefits for the Anglo-Normans rulers, as they were able to gain permanent land acquisitions while the Welsh struggled both against themselves and in keeping the Anglo-Normans at bay. Thus, the Welsh used the marriages to gain any advantage they could find in order to protect their territory against both the Anglo-Normans and their Welsh rivals, but they could not seem to completely halt the Anglo-Norman advances during this time nor unite themselves under one leader, no matter how many clever political weavings they undertook. Welsh rulers were able to temporarily secure some of their territory adjacent to the March and possibly gained influence in prominent Anglo-Norman families, but the evidence suggests that the Welsh were not the prime beneficiaries in these marriage arrangements because of their political weaknesses. The effects of Welsh/Anglo-Norman cooperations during this time, however, should not be overestimated – the rulers of both regions did undergo a great amount of interaction between 1066 and 1135, but the encounters did not leave as profound of an impact on the Anglo-Welsh relations as later periods. Kings William I, William II, and Henry I appeared to be content with the overlordship they asserted in Wales during their respective reigns, and they did not press their advantages to completely annihilate the autonomy of native Welsh rulers.

Phase Two, 1135-1154

The next phase of Welsh and Anglo-Norman marriages began with the death of King Henry I in 1135, which plunged England into the chaos of a succession dispute and civil war,

¹⁰⁵ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:420-421.

causing the power that England had held over Wales to be almost completely lost. During the reign of the next king of England (King Stephen), the Anglo-Normans were more concerned about their existing holdings in England than expansion into Wales. Thus, the Welsh took advantage of the Anglo-Norman chaos and revolted; they were able to recover much of their former autonomy and territory.¹⁰⁶ These revolts were, at first, restricted to southern Wales, but once Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare (held territory in Ceredigion) had been killed by Morgan ab Owain (ruler of upland Gwent), the ruling families of Gwynedd began to move against the Anglo-Normans as well.¹⁰⁷ The *Gesta Stephani* describes the havoc wreaked by the Welsh during Stephen's reign: "they were now by a reversal of fortune the stern masters of those before whom a little earlier had bent compliant necks."¹⁰⁸

King Stephen tried to quell these uprisings, but his ineffective administration and lack of attention in Welsh affairs resulted in even further territorial losses at the hands of the Welsh.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that Stephen and his advisors ignored Wales because they thought that royal money would be better spent elsewhere and that the Welsh would cease to be a problem if they were left to their own devices, but it could also be argued that Stephen simply focused more of his attention on the challenge of gaining and keeping England instead of bothering with the less pressing problem of the Welsh.¹¹⁰ Whatever the reason behind Stephen's decisions, the successes of Welsh rulers such as Gruffudd ap Rhys in Deheubarth and Morgan ab Owain of Glamorgan earned them enhanced status in their respective regions (both Gruffudd and Owain became *rex* of their respective regions, as seen in multiple extant Anglo-Norman texts).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 45-46.

¹⁰⁷ David Crouch, "The March and the Welsh Kings," in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 258. *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. Potter, 9.17.

¹⁰⁸ Potter, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani*, 9.19.

¹⁰⁹ Crouch, "The March and the Welsh Kings," 262.

¹¹⁰ Crouch, "The March and the Welsh Kings," 264.

¹¹¹ Crouch, "The March and the Welsh Kings," 273.

This new phase in the political balance of Wales and England included a change in marital strategies – during this time, both the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans made marital alliances within their respective groups instead of with each other. For example, the powerful Lord Rhys of Deheubarth (d. 1197), made many marriage alliances with other leading houses in Wales (especially in Gwynedd) in order to consolidate and fortify his existing powers and land holdings in southern Wales. His strategy proved successful, and he was able to bring many of the other minor lords under his control in Deheubarth.¹¹² The rulers in Powys and Gwynedd were able to recover much of their former strength as well, and they expanded their borders and solidified their territorial gains.¹¹³ Similarly, the Anglo-Norman Marcher barons sought marriage alliances among other marcher families in order to consolidate and fortify their existing land holdings in the March rather than in Wales.¹¹⁴ This new marital strategy ultimately allowed the native Welsh rulers to create stronger regional political entities during this time – because the Anglo-Normans were more concerned about their own land holdings in the March and about the civil war in England, they turned their attention away from Wales, thus allowing the Welsh to secure and strengthen their political power in Wales without having to worry about Anglo-Norman attacks. There was some minor cooperation between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans, made only as the Welsh suited the needs of the Anglo-Normans in the civil war, and as it suited the Welsh rulers in their struggle for dominance. For instance, Robert of Gloucester allied with Morgan ab Owain in order to ensure stability in the parts of his territory that bordered Morgan's, and Morgan in turn supplied Robert with Welsh troops at Tetbury in 1144.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 8-11.

¹¹³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 48-51.

¹¹⁴ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 7-8.

¹¹⁵ Crouch, “The March and the Welsh Kings,” 279.

Phase Three, 1154-1283

The marriages made during this last phase were arranged with different goals in mind for both the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans, and both groups broke with the previous phase's tradition of marrying only within families of their respective regions. The Welsh (in their respective regions) now had increased political and military power due to the political unity created by some more dominant Welsh rulers, which enabled them to more successfully resist Anglo-Norman incursions. The Anglo-Normans, however, were rising in power as well, so during this phase, the Welsh used marriage alliances with the Anglo-Normans to counteract and absorb the new stronger Anglo-Norman advances. The Anglo-Normans, similar to the first phase, used the marriages to gain land and influence in Wales, but they did not have as much control over marital negotiations as in the first phase, as many Welsh rulers were the driving force behind the marriage arrangements. This meant that the Welsh were able to derive more benefits from their marriages with the Anglo-Normans than in previous years. There were some cases where the Anglo-Normans were the dominant power in marital negotiations, and in these situations, the Anglo-Normans usually derived more benefits than the Welsh family they partnered with in marriage.

Marriages Under King Henry II, 1154-1189

This next phase began with the ascension of King Henry II to the English throne in 1154 and the restoration of order in England. King Henry's reign ushered in a period of renewed tension between England and Wales that resulted in the onset of this final (and longest) phase of marriages between the Welsh and Anglo-Norman aristocracies. Because England was now politically stable, there was a resurgence of Anglo-Norman aggression towards Wales, which toppled the precarious recovery that the native Welsh rulers had experienced, and King Henry was able to regain Welsh territory and reimposed English overlordship in Wales. Welsh rulers

then, most notably Owain Gwynedd and the Lord Rhys, formally did homage to King Henry, gave him hostages, and surrendered territory to him.¹¹⁶ In response to the resurgence in aggression from the Anglo-Normans, the *Brut* describes how “all the Welsh made a pact to drive out the garrisons of the [Anglo-Normans],” a decision that initially backfired, as Henry II responded by assembling an imposing force in 1163, perhaps wanting to crush Welsh resistance in one fell swoop.¹¹⁷ Henry, however, was defeated in this campaign, undone by bad weather, difficult terrain, and limited supplies. This would be the last full-scale invasion of Wales for almost forty years, but Henry still made his overlordship known by exacting pledges of fealty and homage from the native Welsh rulers and by way of the Marcher barons.¹¹⁸

Deheubarth

The first marriages of this phase were arranged with the children of the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth. The Lord Rhys had previously made numerous alliances with other Welsh families (especially with rulers in Gwynedd), but was now changing tactics. At this time, Lord Rhys, who styled himself the “Prince of the Southern Welsh,” and whom the *Brut* called “the man who was the head and the shield and the strength of the South and of all Wales, and the hope and defense of all the race of the Britons,” realized, according to Davies, that expelling the Anglo-Normans from southern Wales was not as realistic of a goal as it had once been.¹¹⁹ Thus, he decided instead to direct his efforts towards the prevention of further Anglo-Norman advance and the scaling back of Anglo-Norman control over the periphery of his lands.¹²⁰ The Lord Rhys began to “[hob-nob] with the Anglo-Normans, [ape] their manners and customs, [and] [woo]

¹¹⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 51-54.

¹¹⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 52-53. Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1164.145.

¹¹⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 53-54.

¹¹⁹ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1197.179. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222.

¹²⁰ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1197.179. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222.

them with matrimonial alliances.”¹²¹ These sycophantic affectations gave the Lord Rhys the results he wanted – his daughter Angharad was given in marriage to William Fitz Martin of Cemaes, and his son Gruffudd was set to marry Matilda de Braose, the daughter of one of the more powerful Marcher lords, William de Braose, sometime between 1154 and 1189 (see Table 2).¹²²

The Lord Rhys presumably predicted that these alliances would give him increased influence and an enhanced reputation in both the Welsh March and in Wales, and would secure the eastern flank of his kingdom.¹²³ Additionally, the Lord Rhys may have made other such marriages with his other children – a manuscript volume in the Exeter Cathedral Library lists that his daughter Gwladus was married to Stephen de Cantitune, and another daughter, Leuchu, was wed to William de Camville of Llanstephan.¹²⁴ Because the document contains at least one egregious factual flaw, however, the historical validity of these marriages is uncertain, and no other sources corroborate these marriages.¹²⁵ If these marriages did actually occur, then they would demonstrate further the Lord Rhys' ambitions to gain more influence and security in the March of Wales – if his children were allied to powerful Marcher barons, Lord Rhys would have an intimate way into the Anglo-Norman political world with which he could possibly affect Anglo-Norman decisions about the March and his own territory.

These alliances ultimately did not bring permanent security for this region, and Deheubarth's preeminence waned first with the death of King Henry II in 1189, and then with the death of the Lord Rhys in 1197. The Lord Rhys generally had an amicable relationship with Henry II, as the lord performed many “calculated acts of friendliness,” including visiting Henry's

¹²¹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222.

¹²² Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 8-11. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 50.

¹²³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*. 222.

¹²⁴ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 11-12.

¹²⁵ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 11-12.

court, supporting the king during the revolt of 1173, and by giving him permission to levy Welsh troops.¹²⁶ After Henry died, however, the government of his successor King Richard I did not maintain this relationship, and the royal protection that had guarded the Lord Rhys from other Anglo-Normans ceased to exist, and the Welsh lord was quickly embroiled in military troubles.¹²⁷ Then, after the Lord Rhys died, his reportedly enormous brood of children were constantly embroiled in struggles over their father's land, and the Anglo-Normans and other Welsh rulers were easily able to take advantage of the now politically fragmented Deheubarth.¹²⁸ Therefore, no matter what the Welsh did, their political success ultimately depended on their relationship with the more powerful Anglo-Normans and upon their unfailing ability to break themselves apart with internal struggles.

Gwynedd

The political fragmentation of Deheubarth was certainly taken advantage of by the rulers of Gwynedd in the late twelfth century. Because Gwynedd was the most geographically difficult region in Wales for the Anglo-Normans to penetrate, the region's ruling families were able to gain significant political and military strength, especially after the Anglo-Norman retreat from Wales following the death of King Henry I. Gruffudd ap Cynan, who was largely responsible for the rise of Gwynedd's power in the early twelfth century, left his sons Owain (also known as Owain Gwynedd) and Cadwaladr strong foundations to continue in their father's footsteps.¹²⁹ Even though there was friction between the two brothers, they still were able to work together for a time to expand the hegemony of Gwynedd. Their growing dominance was most likely a large part of the reason why Cadwaladr sought an alliance with an Anglo-Norman lady (most likely of the Clare family, who held land in Ceredigion) in the late twelfth century (see Table 4).

¹²⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222-224.

¹²⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 222-224.

¹²⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 224-227.

¹²⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 48.

Cadwgan was his brother's representative in Ceredigion at this time, so securing an alliance between himself and a family that held some power there allowed him to expand Gwynedd's hegemony without wasting military resources, and left Owain with more resources and one less Marcher family to worry about while he extended his power into Deheubarth.¹³⁰ Owain, however, was the more powerful of the two brothers, and he expelled Cadwgan from Ceredigion in 1152, an action that was not prevented by Cadwgan's marital alliance.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Cadwgan's marital ties ultimately aided him in regaining that same land, as it has been argued that his marriage into the Anglo-Norman world was part of the reason why King Henry II pressured Owain to reinstate Cadwaladr to the family lands in 1157 as part of a larger peace negotiation.¹³² This union not only demonstrates that a political marriage did not guarantee loyalties across political boundaries, but also that Welsh marriages with Anglo-Normans provided Welsh rulers with options and allies they might not have otherwise had in their political maneuvering. More importantly, the marriage exhibits the habit of the Welsh to fight amongst themselves even when they had previously cooperated with each other, as well as how the Anglo-Normans exploited this fragmentation for their own political gain. By forcing Owain to reinstate his brother (presumably against Owain's will), Henry ensured that the brothers' infighting would reduce the strength of that region, and thus eliminating any threat their power could pose to the March and England.

Like so many other instances, the stability of Owain Gwynedd's reign died with him (d.1170), and his land was divided between his surviving sons.¹³³ Thus, his sons sought to enhance their political and military situations in any way they could in order to take more land

¹³⁰ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 14.

¹³¹ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 14. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 48. Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1151.131. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:500.

¹³² Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 14. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 48. Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1151.131. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:500.

¹³³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 238-239.

from their brothers. This is most likely what Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd had in mind when he sought the hand of Emma of Anjou, half-sister of King Henry II (see Table 4). Because Dafydd refrained from taking advantage of the instability of King Henry II's reign in 1172-73, Henry allowed Dafydd to marry Emma in 1174, which came with the lordship of Ellesmere in Shropshire and gave Dafydd substantial prestige in Wales because he was now strongly connected with the royalty of England.¹³⁴ The author of the *Brut* appears to have believed that this marriage would stop the fighting in Dafydd's territory (as Dafydd himself most likely expected), as it is stated that Dafydd married "Dame Emma...thinking that he would be able to have his territory in peace and quiet..."¹³⁵ Nevertheless, "although Dafydd was strongly supported by the English" because of his marriage with Emma, he was eventually overpowered by his nephew, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1197, so the benefits of this union (along with any hegemony that Dafydd had achieved) again were transient and foiled by Welsh political discord.¹³⁶

Marriages Under King Richard I, 1189-1199

With the death of Henry II, as mentioned above, the fragile cooperations between the Welsh and Anglo-Norman rulers were terminated when King Richard I ended the *détente* that had existed between England and Wales. At the outset of Richard's reign, Welsh rulers such as the Lord Rhys in Deheubarth acted out against the Anglo-Normans and attacked some Anglo-Norman-held territory, but these uprisings were not like the full-scale revolts of Stephen's reign. True, Richard did ignore Wales much as Stephen did due to his long absences, but perhaps because England was not fighting a civil war during his rule and because Richard was a stronger ruler than Stephen, the Welsh were more reluctant to attempt a rebellion to overthrow Anglo-

¹³⁴ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 14. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 239-241.

¹³⁵ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1175.165.

¹³⁶ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, *Journey*.II.8.193.

Norman overlordship. Therefore, political marriages between Wales and England halted for a brief time during his reign. With the ascension of Richard's brother John to the English throne in 1199, however, Wales was placed back under the antagonistic gaze of English kings.

Marriages Under King John, 1199-1216

King John, unlike previous Anglo-Norman kings, had a more consistently aggressive approach towards Wales (and Scotland for that matter).¹³⁷ John's ascension to the throne of England fundamentally changed the political interactions between Wales and England, as he was much more directly involved in affairs of the March and in Wales than any previous Anglo-Norman king. It appeared that he had more reason to care about Wales than his predecessors, as he had been the lord of Glamorgan from 1189 to 1215 by right of his wife, Isabella of Gloucester, and his stunning losses on the continent in the early thirteenth century gave him more time with which to more closely monitor the affairs of his island realm.¹³⁸ Similarly, Ifor Rowlands, in his essay on King John and Wales, emphasizes that the king's position as the overlord of Welsh rulers was increasingly formalized and defined because John saw Welsh rulers as a different type of English baron, and required that they swear fealty to the crown.¹³⁹ The exact nature of John's role in Wales and his relationship with specific Welsh rulers will be discussed more fully below, but this preliminary analysis indicates that because John was more aggressively pushing English overlordship in Wales, the aristocratic marriages made between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans were revived.

Deheubarth

At this time in Deheubarth, the region had grown weak with the death of the Lord Rhys in 1197, thus, there were not as many marriages contracted between the Anglo-Normans because

¹³⁷ Rees Davies, "‘Keeping the Natives in Order’: The English King and the ‘Celtic’ Rulers 1066-1216,” *Peritia* 10 (1996): 222.

¹³⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 292-293.

¹³⁹ Rowlands, "King John and Wales," in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. Church, 276-279.

the Anglo-Normans would be reluctant to ally with a politically fragile family unless they could manipulate the weaknesses to their advantage. Thus, Welsh/Anglo-Normans marriages contracted during this time in Deheubarth were controlled more by the Anglo-Normans than by the Welsh. For instance, a grandson of the Lord Rhys, Maelgwn Fychan (d. 1257), was forced to marry the daughter of marcher lord Gilbert Marshal as part of a larger submission by Maelgwn that required him to swear fealty to Gilbert (see Table 2); thus, Gilbert took advantage of the weakness of this Welsh ruler in order to gain more territory and influence for himself.¹⁴⁰

Additionally, a son of the Lord Rhys, Rhys Gryg (d. 1233), married an unnamed daughter of Richard de Clare in 1219 (see Table 2).¹⁴¹ As Rhys Gryg was constantly fighting his brothers for his share of his inheritance after his father's death, an alliance with a Marcher family would have hopefully ensured that the Clares would not be attacking Rhys' lands as he fought his brothers.¹⁴²

Ultimately, Rhys was at the mercy of stronger powers in both England and Wales, as he was forced to surrender territory to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd and was continuously fighting against the campaigns of King John and Marcher barons.¹⁴³

Furthermore, the son of Rhys Gryg, Rhys Mechyll (d. 1244), married Matilda de Braose (daughter of Reginald de Braose, see Table 2) (most likely for similar reasons to his father), but this marriage again did not accomplish what Rhys Mechyll most likely hoped to gain from it, because according to the *Brut*, his wife gave their son's inheritance to unnamed Anglo-Normans.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Deheubarth in the thirteenth century became, as R. R. Davies puts it, “a collection of petty principalities, living by grace, or under the thumb of either the king of England or the prince of Gwynedd.”¹⁴⁵ These marriages demonstrate the great extent of Anglo-

¹⁴⁰ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 226.

¹⁴¹ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1219.219.

¹⁴² Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 224.

¹⁴³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 244.

¹⁴⁴ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:710-711. Jones, trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1248.243.

¹⁴⁵ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 227.

Normans influence in the political maneuvering of the Welsh rulers, as well as how the Welsh persisted in fighting amongst themselves even when the Anglo-Norman kings and lords were becoming increasingly intent upon asserting their overlordship in Wales.

Powys

The region of Powys had a similar situation to Deheubarth's later years of weakness; the heirs of its ruling family were constantly fighting over their father's lands, and none of them emerged as the strongest to lead Powys from its fragmentation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was because of this that historians often state that this was the politically the weakest area in Wales, and even Powys' strongest ruler of the thirteenth century, Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog of Southern Powys, like many of Powys' other rulers, was not able to assert his hegemony in all of Powys, and was either a pawn of King John or of the house of Gwynedd.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the ruling families of Powys were less politically attractive marriage partners. Powys' natural assets, however, still attracted the Anglo-Normans for marital alliances – the region had access to the markets of Chester and Shropshire, the land was exceptionally fertile, and it served as a buffer between the March and Gwynedd.¹⁴⁷ The Anglo-Normans no doubt wanted to take advantage of these benefits when they sought to marry into the ruling families of Powys.

The rulers of Powys also had their own reasons for marrying into Anglo-Norman families – they recognized that they needed to survive the incursions of Anglo-Normans and other Welsh rulers, so they decided to join the side that they most likely perceived as the stronger power, the Anglo-Normans (they even went so far as to mimic Anglo-Norman customs).¹⁴⁸ As R. R. Davies puts it, “Mastering the art of co-existence was one of the pre-conditions of survival for the

¹⁴⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 229-230.

¹⁴⁷ David Stephenson, “The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century,” *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 7 (1984): 40. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 230.

¹⁴⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 233.

dynasties of Powys in the thirteenth century;” therefore, no bold political motives emerged from the rulers of Powys during this time, there simply were survival instincts.¹⁴⁹ Davies also notes that historians have also neglected this region of Wales because of its weak status, stating that its rulers were often blamed for submitting to the kings of England rather than allying with the rulers of Gwynedd, thus impeding a total unification of Wales that might have prevented the Anglo-Normans from overtaking Wales in the late thirteenth century.¹⁵⁰

Gruffudd ap Iorwerth Goch was one such neglected figure, but his story is partly rescued by David Stephenson in his article on Welsh lords in Shropshire. Gruffudd appears to have been a displaced Welsh ruler, but one that still had some influence in Powys in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In 1196, he was married to Matilda Lestrage, daughter of John Lestrage of Knockin, from which Gruffudd received the lands of Dovaston and Kynaston, as well as the manor of Kinnerley (see Table 3).¹⁵¹ Aside from the immediate benefits of land, Gruffudd gained the support of an influential Marcher family against his Welsh rivals, and the Lestrages gained a method of obtaining more land and influence in Wales. This also may have been an attempt on Gruffudd's part to integrate himself into the political workings Anglo-Norman society, hoping to gain more power in England than he currently held in Wales.¹⁵²

This family was not alone in their attempts to gain friends across boundaries to ensure the survival of their power. Gwenwynwyn ap Owain Cyfeiliog of Southern Powys and his children also made unions with Anglo-Norman families for many of the same reasons. Even though he wanted to be restored to all of his family's old lands, Gwenwynwyn was perpetually caught in between the forces of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd and King John of England. Thus,

¹⁴⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 235. Roderick, “Marriage and Politics,” 19.

¹⁵⁰ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 236.

¹⁵¹ David Stephenson, “Welsh Lords in Shropshire: Gruffydd ap Iorwerth Goch and His Descendants in the Thirteenth Century,” *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society* 77 (2002): 32.

¹⁵² Stephenson, “Welsh Lords in Shropshire,” 33.

according to the *Brut*, in 1198 Gwenwynwyn “planned to restore to the Welsh their ancient liberty and their ancient proprietary rights and their bounds,” taking with him “all the princes of Wales;” however, he was soundly defeated at Paincastle in that same year.¹⁵³ It was around this time that John decided to back Gwenwynwyn against Llywelyn ab Iorwerth – Gwenwynwyn was granted any lands that he could win from rival Welsh rulers and the manor of Ashford in Derbyshire in exchange for his cooperation with John.¹⁵⁴

As evidenced by these collaborations, John was also likely involved in arranging Gwenwynwyn's marriage to Margaret Corbet (see Table 3), which brought Gwenwynwyn additional influence in the March because it gave him an intimate way into the lives and politics of the people that were attempting to overtake his territory and an ally to use against Gwynedd and other rival Welsh lords. In other words, this marriage could be used to shape political outcomes in Gwenwynwyn's favor. The marriage was also a further demonstration of his abandoned aggressions towards the March.¹⁵⁵ After these settlements were made, Gwenwynwyn acted as intermediary between Wales and England until about 1202, when it appears he fell from royal favor, as exhibited by John's failure to come to Gwenwynwyn's aid in 1202 when Llywelyn attacked his lands.¹⁵⁶

After this, Gwenwynwyn continued to endeavor to drive the Anglo-Normans from Powys, but in 1208 he was, in the words of R. R. Davies, “pulverized” by King John, and forced to submit to the king at Shrewsbury.¹⁵⁷ As a result of this defeat, John withheld all of Gwenwynwyn's lands from him until the Welsh ruler promised undying service to John – “Rarely had a native Welsh prince been so publicly and utterly humiliated.”¹⁵⁸ Even though John

¹⁵³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 229.

¹⁵⁴ Stephenson, “The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century,” 50.

¹⁵⁵ Stephenson, “The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century,” 50-51.

¹⁵⁶ Stephenson, “The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century,” 51.

¹⁵⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 229.

¹⁵⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 229.

wanted this event to demonstrate the control he had over the native Welsh rulers, he was too harsh with Gwenwynwyn, and Gwenwynwyn abandoned his onetime royal ally to support Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd. Gwenwynwyn changed sides again, however, when John granted Gwenwynwyn lands in Montgomery as incentive for abandoning Llywelyn; nevertheless, after John died, Llywelyn defeated Gwenwynwyn yet again and was recognized as the custodian of Southern Powys until Gwenwynwyn's sons came of age, as stipulated by the Treaty of Worcester in 1218.¹⁵⁹ Thus, Gwenwynwyn was forever caught between the feud of John and Llywelyn (which will be examined in more detail later), so any benefits Gwenwynwyn had gained from his marriage with the Corbets were as fluid as his alliances with King John and Llywelyn.

Marriages Under King Henry III, 1216-1272

Powys

It was these complicated and continuously oscillating political situations that Gwenwynwyn's son, Gruffudd inherited. Gruffudd was just as affected by the Anglo-Normans as his father was, but only under a different Anglo-Norman king.¹⁶⁰ Gruffudd was in power under King Henry III, whose relationship with Wales was quite different than that of King John's, especially during the first years of his reign. John died when Henry was only a child, so while the Anglo-Normans were busy working out who would hold power during the reign the new boy king, Wales was given a brief period of respite from the hostility of England – only three (brief) royal campaigns were launched into Wales, and they were in the later years of Henry III's reign (1223, 1228, 1231). The crown, however, still maintained a measure of control in Wales and in the March; in 1218 all of the major Welsh rulers traveled to Woodstock and Worcester to do homage to Henry, and the crown frequently sponsored Marcher campaigns (i.e. backed by the

¹⁵⁹ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 43-44.

¹⁶⁰ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 44.

crown but not launched by it) into Wales in order to check the power of native Welsh rulers such as Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd.¹⁶¹ The crown also backed certain native Welsh rulers against each other – most notably, it supported Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in his campaigns against Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1228, as Gruffudd received monetary support and shelter in Anglo-Norman border towns and castles while he was harassing Llywelyn.¹⁶²

The support of the English crown may have also helped Gruffudd arrange a marriage with the Lestrangle family, as Gruffudd was married to Hawisa Lestrangle around 1242 (see Table 3). Gruffudd's partner, however, was not chosen for him by the crown – Hawisa was likely a bride of Gruffudd's choosing, as the union aligned Gruffudd against his mother's family of Corbet, who were involved in a land dispute with the Lestranges and with Gruffudd himself.¹⁶³ Thus, while Gruffudd was heavily influenced by Anglo-Norman politics, his marriage was contracted more for potential land benefits rather than as a direct result of being caught between the forces of Gwynedd and the crown (as his father's marriage was).¹⁶⁴ The Lestranges presumably made this marriage connection in order to fill in the power vacuum left by the defunct Shrewsbury earldom, thus creating a power base from which they could launch into other Welsh territory.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, with help from the Lestranges, Gruffudd made significant headway into the disputed lands in Powys.¹⁶⁶ He sought to secure these holdings even further, however, through the marriage of his daughter to an enemy of the Corbets, Fulk Fitz Warin (see Table 3), from which

¹⁶¹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 299.

¹⁶² Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 44-45.

¹⁶³ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 55. The land in question was the region of Gorddwr and its adjacent lands.

¹⁶⁴ Linda E. Mitchell, "Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales: The Lestrangle Family's Marital Adventures in Powys," in *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England, 1225-1350* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 62.

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell, "Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales," 65.

¹⁶⁶ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 55.

Gruffudd gained the allegiance of the Fitz Warin family against the Corbets; Fitz Warin in turn gained some territory in Gruffudd's land (such as Bausley).¹⁶⁷

By 1263, Gruffudd had regained the disputed lands, but in September of that year, Henry III ordered Gruffudd to restore the territory to the Corbets and demanded that he fight alongside the Corbets and other Marcher barons against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd under the command of James Audley.¹⁶⁸ It appears that this royal command was too much of a burden for Gruffudd to bear, as these orders meant that he would lose his hard-earned land, that he would be under the command of a man who was the brother-in-law of Gruffudd's rival in Northern Powys (Gruffudd Maelor II of Bromfield and Northern Powys, see Table 3), and that the Lestranges had abandoned him to support the king.¹⁶⁹ Thus, by December of that year, Gruffudd had fled to the side of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and together they embarked on a campaign to ravage the March. It appears, however, that Gruffudd continued to be involved with the Lestranges, as he and Hamon Lestrangle were both part of a company that plundered parts of Thomas Corbet's lands, and Hamon transferred some of his land to Gruffudd's son Llywelyn.¹⁷⁰

Despite all of these measures, Gruffudd ultimately was not able to win back the disputed lands due to his conflicts with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and his final allegiance was pledged to the crown against Gwynedd in 1275.¹⁷¹ This decision, however, was likely not a result of feelings of loyalty towards his wife's family – he probably joined King Edward I as a result of Edward's own promises of land and titles in England. Indeed, Gruffudd's family was awarded the status of

¹⁶⁷ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 55-56.

¹⁶⁸ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 56-57.

¹⁶⁹ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 56, 58-59.

¹⁷⁰ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 57.

¹⁷¹ Stephenson, "The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century," 58. Mitchell, "Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales," 62.

Marcher barons soon after this final switch, and they gained control of the region that had previously been held by the Montgomery family.¹⁷²

These events and unions in Powys demonstrate that marital alliances brought help as well as hurt to the families that arranged them and that the unions did not always manufacture the anticipated results. As has been seen, marriages between Welsh and Anglo-Normans did not necessarily create an indestructible bond that forged families together across two competing regions – the families still switched sides and alliances as they saw fit, with no apparent concern for the bond that marriage had formed to bring them together. It can also be argued that these actions were largely based on this Welsh family's interactions with their neighboring Anglo-Norman lords and with their rivals within Wales itself, as they were constantly caught between the forces of Gwynedd and England. Additionally, the marriages demonstrate the increasing desire of this branch of the Powys family to make permanent alliances with their Anglo-Norman neighbors, as Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his children continued to marry into the families of their Anglo-Norman neighbors instead of with other Welsh rulers (see Table 3).¹⁷³

Historian Linda Mitchell argues that this strategy in Powys exhibits a desire in the line of Gwenwynwyn to integrate themselves more fully into the aristocratic world of England – Gruffudd, after all, would stay a permanent ally of the crown until his death, and at least three of his children married into other Marcher families (see Table 3).¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, however, makes too much of the impact that these Welsh/Anglo-Norman marriages had on the “Welshness” of this family – she states that in arranging these marriages, Gwenwynwyn's family was “abandoning [their] Welsh cultural-political identity.”¹⁷⁵ True, this Welsh family was aligning themselves more closely with the Anglo-Norman aristocracy and did appear to want to integrate themselves

¹⁷² Mitchell, “Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales,” 62.

¹⁷³ Mitchell, “Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales,” 66.

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, “Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales,” 59-60, 62-68, 77.

¹⁷⁵ Mitchell, “Welshness, Englishness, and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales,” 62.

somewhat into the Anglo-Norman political world, but this does not mean that these Welsh rulers were in any way obliged to relinquish their native cultural and political background, especially since the land that this family sought to regain was actually in Wales itself. Furthermore, it is difficult to substantiate this claim with historical evidence, as historians can never truly know the mindset behind the marital strategies of Gwenwynwyn and his descendants, nor if they were intentionally abandoning their cultural ties to Wales.

Marriages in Gwynedd Under King John and King Henry III, 1199- ca. 1250

Llywelyn ab Iorwerth

The marriages made between the families of Powys and Deheubarth and the Anglo-Normans pale in comparison to the political maneuvering of the rulers of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century. As previously noted, the leading ruler in Wales, Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd, had been overpowered by his nephew Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1197, and from this victory, Llywelyn went on to become the *de facto* ruler of all Wales, eventually gaining the title “Prince of Aberffraw and lord of Snowdon” in Wales, and being called *princeps Norwallie* (Prince of North Wales) in Latin sources.¹⁷⁶ Because of this, he is given copious attention by historians, much to the neglect of the rulers of Powys and Deheubarth, and he is often lauded as the great unifier of the Welsh people of the Middle Ages. This praise, however, is not undue – his political and military achievements were truly remarkable, as he was able to keep the Anglo-Norman crown and Marcher barons at a safe distance while asserting and maintaining his own hegemony in most of Wales. Llywelyn was aided considerably by Gwynedd's natural geographical advantages – its natural barriers of numerous mountains and rivers allowed him (like previous rulers of Gwynedd) to build his power without substantial threats from peripheral attacks.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 236, 246-247, 253, 300.

¹⁷⁷ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 236-238.

Additionally, Llywelyn's defeat of his uncle enabled him to secure a strong base from which to expand his power further into Wales.

Llywelyn's political dealings led him to have somewhat complex relationships with the crown and the Anglo-Norman barons, and many of these complications stemmed from his interactions with King John. As noted above, John took a more aggressive approach towards Wales than his predecessors, and his campaigns in Wales were greatly aimed at the growing power of Llywelyn, as the king no doubt worried that this upstart Welsh ruler could seriously upset the power balance between Wales and England. It was at this time that the first extant formal treaty was written between a Welsh ruler and English king – in July 1201, King John's advisers recognized Llywelyn's title to all the lands that he currently held, and that in the event of a dispute, the issues would be discussed in terms of Welsh law; in exchange, Llywelyn was required to swear fealty and do homage to John as his liege lord.¹⁷⁸

John sought to control Llywelyn even further, so in 1205 John arranged to have Llywelyn marry his illegitimate daughter, Joan (see Table 4). It is uncertain when the arrangements were actually made or who initiated negotiations for the marriage, but this union was a dramatic development in Welsh/Anglo-Norman and intra-Welsh political dynamics, and it defined the relationship between the crown and Llywelyn.¹⁷⁹ The immediate land benefits for Llywelyn were the manor of Ellesmere in Shropshire and the prestige of having the daughter of the King of England (albeit illegitimate) as a wife, as well as amplified influence with powerful men in England, which served his ultimate goal of controlling the entirety of Wales.¹⁸⁰ For John, this marriage would tie Llywelyn to him, giving the king more control over the man that was attempting to establish a permanent, independent, and united political body in Wales, greatly free

¹⁷⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 239, 294.

¹⁷⁹ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics," 16.

¹⁸⁰ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 239-241.

from Anglo-Norman control. This alliance could also free John from concern about Welsh incursions into England (at least those led by Llywelyn), so John could focus his attention on other problems in England and the continent. John also possibly hoped to gain some (if not all) of Llywelyn's territory if Llywelyn died without any legitimate heirs of his body, as he could control Llywelyn's land through Joan. The fact that Joan was a bastard is also significant – it demonstrates that John was reluctant to offer a legitimate daughter to complete this union, signifying that John did not wholly trust Llywelyn with members of his immediate family and that John did not consider this Welsh ruler worthy to marry one of his legitimate children.

The relationship between John and Llywelyn initially appeared to be a mutually beneficial one, as Llywelyn went out of his way to demonstrate his loyalty to John by doing things such as accompanying John to the Scottish border when John was negotiating with rebellious Scots, and he occasionally traveled into England to meet with John; John reciprocated by directing his hostilities away from Wales for a time.¹⁸¹ The peace, however, was not to last – in 1208 Llywelyn took advantage of the absence of Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog in Powys to annex Gwenwynwyn's territory and began to stretch his power even further into the south of Wales. In 1210, John, apparently angry with Llywelyn's for these advances, mounted a campaign against Llywelyn, and Llywelyn was badly defeated. This event bore the first record of Llywelyn's wife (and John's daughter) Joan making a foray into the politics of her husband's and her father's world. According to the *Brut*, in 1211 Llywelyn sent Joan to King John “to make peace between [Llywelyn] and the king on whatsoever terms she could,” an intervention that most likely made the terms of the surrender less harsh for Llywelyn.¹⁸² Llywelyn, nonetheless, was still forced to surrender a significant portion of land, as well as his illegitimate son Gruffudd

¹⁸¹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 241.

¹⁸² Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red book of Hergest Version*, 1211.191-193. Gwennyth Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century: An Historical Study of Medieval Welsh Law and Gender Roles* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mella Press, 2009), 129.

as a hostage, a large tribute in the form of cattle and horses, and the allegiance of his own subjects.¹⁸³ Additionally, John forced Llywelyn to agree that if he died without a legitimate heir by Joan, his lands would revert to John.¹⁸⁴ It was a humiliating defeat. This situation demonstrates, however, how a marriage with the daughter of his most powerful Anglo-Norman rival helped Llywelyn sue for peace, which he would not have been able to do with a Welsh wife. It also demonstrates that this particular marriage impacted the political situation in Wales and England, rather than the political situation impacting the marriage, as has been seen in many of the previous marriages.

This can be further demonstrated when Joan undertook deliberate actions to benefit her father at the expense of her husband. After his defeat, Llywelyn retaliated by resuming his hostilities against the crown in 1212 and became involved in a baronial conspiracy against John while John was preparing another (larger and more menacing) military foray into Wales in order to, as Lloyd puts it, “crush Llywelyn once and for all.”¹⁸⁵ John's campaign, however, was never launched, as he abandoned his plans when he learned of a conspiracy against his life that had been plotted by his barons and by his own son-in-law, Llywelyn. It has been postulated by Lloyd that John was only made known of Llywelyn's involvement in the baronial conspiracy by way of a letter from Joan, “who had, no doubt, the safety of her husband, as well as of her father, in mind...”¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, John's response was not kind – he summarily hanged about twenty-eight Welsh hostages, all of whom were the sons of Welsh leaders.¹⁸⁷ In the end, however, Joan's intervention ultimately gained more benefits for her husband, as the conspiracy and other

¹⁸³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 295.

¹⁸⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 295. Rowlands, “King John and Wales,” 282.

¹⁸⁵ Rowlands, “King John and Wales,” 281. Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, 130. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 295-296. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:639.

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:639. The letter appears to no longer be extant.

¹⁸⁷ Rowlands, “King John and Wales,” 281. Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, 129-130. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 296.

troubles in England prevented John from mounting any further military expeditions into Wales during the remainder of his reign. Thus, the union of Llywelyn and Joan during the reign of King John drastically altered the relationship between Wales and England (at least during John's and Llywelyn's lifetimes), as Joan's actions as emissary between the two most powerful men in Wales had significant political reverberations, and Wales and England were linked more closely because of the marriage.

During the reign of King Henry III (King John's son and Joan's half-brother), Henry granted Joan the manors of Rothley in Leicestershire and Condover in Shropshire in 1225 and 1226, respectively, perhaps as a gesture of goodwill towards the woman who was both his sister and the wife of the most powerful man in Wales.¹⁸⁸ This demonstrates that Joan may well have continued to act as emissary between Wales and England after John's death, and it appears from these land grants that the relations between Wales and England were, for a time, cordial. An undated letter from Joan to Henry III is also revealing; Joan wrote that she was upset that “enemies should succeed in sowing discord between her husband and the king, especially as she knows the sincere affection which her husband had and still has for the king.” It appears that a clerk of the king and of her husband (called Instructus) had angered Henry for some unknown reason, but Joan assured Henry that his fears were unjustified.¹⁸⁹ This could signify that Joan had a close relationship with the king, especially taking into consideration that the rest of the letter is of a very personal nature, as she pleads with Henry to believe her. She also seems to imply that distrusting Llywelyn in this matter would sour the relationship between Llywelyn and Henry, so she apparently did not want her half-brother and her husband to become hostile, as this could damage the generally amicable relations between Wales and England at this time.¹⁹⁰ This letter

¹⁸⁸ Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, 131-132.

¹⁸⁹ Joan, Lady of Wales to King Henry III, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 20.

¹⁹⁰ Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, 134-135.

further demonstrates Joan's continued role as intermediary in Welsh/Anglo-Norman politics, as well as how relations between Llywelyn and Henry were strained at times even though they were connected through Joan (i.e. family relationships could only go so far). Joan's title in this letter and in other sources also reveal the extent of her importance in both Wales and England – she signs as *Domina Walliae* (Lady of Wales), which is also reflected in English chancery records that entitle her the “Lady of North Wales.”¹⁹¹

Despite Joan's respected position in Llywelyn's court, her later actions jeopardized this status. In 1230, the *Brut* records that she was caught in Llywelyn's chamber with William de Braose.¹⁹² William had been taken prisoner by Llywelyn in 1228 after a failed royal campaign into the cantref (medieval Welsh land division) of Ceri and was released the following year after paying a £2,000 ransom, promising to permanently forgo bearing arms against Llywelyn, to surrender the lordship and castle of Builth, and to agree to marry his daughter Isabella to Llywelyn's son Dafydd.¹⁹³ William spent a year at Llywelyn's court while the terms of the ransom were negotiated, which is most likely when the relationship between him and Joan developed; however, it was only when he returned to Llywelyn's court in 1230 to continue negotiations for his ransom that he was caught with Joan.¹⁹⁴ Numerous secondary sources, including Walker, Davies, and Richards all attest to Llywelyn's pain from Joan's infidelity – these historians state that Llywelyn regarded Joan as a close friend and confidant, citing her previous intercessions with England and her long marriage with Llywelyn as evidence, so their interpretation is not without foundation, but there is no definite way to know if Llywelyn truly

¹⁹¹ Joan, Lady of Wales to King Henry III, 20. Huw Pryce, “Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations: Llywelyn the Great and Henry III,” in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)*, ed. Bjorn K.U. Weiler and Ifor W. Rowlands (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 19.

¹⁹² Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1230.229.

¹⁹³ Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1228.227-229. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 96. J.J. Crump, “Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose: A Letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave,” *Historical Research* 73, no. 181 (2000): 198-200.

¹⁹⁴ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 96.

was as personally stunned and shaken as they claim.¹⁹⁵ Even if Llywelyn was not personally hurt, however, he had still been politically humiliated, and saw the need to act forcefully:

William de Braose was hanged one month later and Joan herself was imprisoned, presumably away from Llywelyn's court.¹⁹⁶

According to native Welsh law, there was a legal route that Llywelyn could pursue that stipulated the actions he could take against Joan and her lover. The main set of laws in Wales in the thirteenth century were the Laws of Hywel Dda (the Good) or *Cyfraith Hywel*, which were based off of Welsh customary law (compiled and written in the twelfth century). According to these laws, in cases of adultery, which was defined as a woman “commit[ing] a gross offense” with a man (e.g. kissing, fondling, copulation), “that [was] *sarhaed* to her husband,” meaning that the husband had to be compensated monetarily for the offense (payment varied on the level of involvement between the offenders and the status of the individuals involved, but the text does not specify who was to pay), and he was permitted to leave his wife without any giving any compensation to her.¹⁹⁷ If the husband beat his wife for her infidelity, he was not permitted to have compensation beyond that, “for there is no right to compensation and vengeance for the same offense.”¹⁹⁸ Nowhere in *Cyfraith Hywel*, however, is it stated that killing the wife's lover was justified compensation for the husband, as killing was usually reserved for *galanas* (killing in compensation for murder), so Llywelyn may have seen the execution of Braose as his “vengeance” instead of obliging his wife (or her lover) to pay monetary compensation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ These authors most likely extracted this meaning from J.E. Lloyd's narrative, as he states (without reference to primary sources): “The confidence [Llywelyn] had placed in Joan as his best friend and faithful supporter throughout many years was the measure of his wrath; both she and her paramour were forthwith imprisoned...” Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:670.

¹⁹⁶ Crump, “Repercussions of the Execution of William de Broase,” 200. Nicholas, Abbot of Vaudey, to Ralph, Bishop of Chichester, Chancellor, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 37. According to this letter, more than eight-hundred people came to witness the execution.

¹⁹⁷ Jenkins, trans. and ed., *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, 48. Jenkins, trans. and ed., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, glossary and index to notes, s.v. *sarhaed*, 379-380.

¹⁹⁸ Jenkins, trans. and ed., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 53.

¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, the laws also made provisions for the wife to be compensated for her husband's adultery – if the

It appears, however, that Llywelyn did not make the decision to execute William de Braose on his own; extant letters to Eva de Braose (William's wife) and to William Marshal sent by Llywelyn state that Llywelyn's magnates were to blame for the decision, which would (if this excuse was believed) clear Llywelyn of any condemnation in the eyes of the Braoses and other Marcher lords.²⁰⁰ It certainly is not a completely unbelievable alibi on Llywelyn's part, as the magnates would have had good reason to want William de Braose dead, as the Braose family had a reputation for brutal treatment of the Welsh in the middle March; thus, it is probable that Llywelyn's magnates argued for William's execution to such an extent that Llywelyn could not deny their request.²⁰¹ Therefore, "far from merely indulging his own injured pride, Llywelyn's execution of the latest scion of this hated brood was a political act that he could scarcely avoid..." that would appease his Welsh magnates and that would address the deeply wounding political (and possibly personal) injury William had done to Llywelyn, even though the action could have serious implications for Llywelyn's relationship with the Braose family.²⁰²

Indeed, the political repercussions of Joan's affair and of William's execution caused some significant issues for Llywelyn, as he wanted to maintain good relations with the Braose family due to the usefulness of an allegiance with them against the crown.²⁰³ Soon after William's execution, Llywelyn was already doing damage control, presumably beginning with

wife caught her husband with another woman, she was entitled to *gowyn*, or compensation for her husband's infidelity. The first two times this occurred, the husband had to pay his wife a specific sum of money, but the third time she caught him, she was allowed to "separate from him without losing any of what [was] hers." Also, the wife was permitted to kill her husband's mistress with her own hands without having to make any compensatory payments. Jenkins, trans. and ed. *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 53. McAll "The Normal Paradigms," in Christopher McAll, "The Normal Paradigms of a Woman's Life in the Irish and Welsh Law Texts," in *The Welsh Law of Women: Studies Presented to Professor Daniel A. Binchy*, ed. Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), 21.

²⁰⁰ Llywelyn, Prince of Aberffraw, Lord of Snowdon, to Eva de Braose, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 51. Llywelyn, Prince of Aberffraw, Lord of Snowdon, to William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 51.

²⁰¹ Crump, "Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose," 201.

²⁰² Crump, "Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose," 202.

²⁰³ Llywelyn had already arranged marriages between his daughters Gwladus and Margaret to other members of the Braose family (Reginald and John, respectively), all of whom will be discussed later. See Table 4.

the aforementioned letter to Eva de Braose, in which he also asked if she still desired to carry out the marital alliance between her daughter Isabella and his son Dafydd.²⁰⁴ Eva's reply is not extant; however, in another letter (also from Llywelyn), Llywelyn complained that Eva's chaplain had excommunicated him multiple times, and warned that such affronts could lead to violent retaliations.²⁰⁵ Clearly (and understandably), the Braose family was quite disconcerted about Llywelyn's somewhat over-zealous reaction, but the hurt Llywelyn had done them apparently did not outweigh the benefits of a marital alliance between their children, and the marriage between Dafydd and Isabella was concluded as planned in the early 1230s. Additionally, Llywelyn continued to exploit the power vacuum left by the death of both William de Braose and William Marshal II (d. February 1231) – after Marshal's death, Llywelyn initiated a campaign with his Welsh magnates against the Marshal and Braose lands in the southern March.²⁰⁶ It is uncertain if this campaign was initiated before Llywelyn's negotiations with Eva de Braose about his son's marriage to Isabella were finalized, but I have found nothing that indicates that the Braoses were upset with Llywelyn's new militarily initiative (or if Llywelyn tried to cover up his involvement in the campaign), so the marriage proceeded as planned. Therefore, Llywelyn emerged from this fiasco with more triumphs than the Braoses – his campaign was able to secure his leadership over the southern March and over his magnates in southern Wales, and he was able to retain his marital alliance with the Braoses. Thus, William's execution was undoubtedly more calculated than his letters to the Eva de Braose betray.

Llywelyn's dealings with the remains of his married life also display a similar measure of political savvy. Joan was released from prison in 1231 and continued to be involved in the

²⁰⁴ Llywelyn, Prince of Aberfraw, Lord of Snowdon to Eva de Braose, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 51.

²⁰⁵ Crump, "Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose," 201, appendix, lines 9-10.

²⁰⁶ Crump, "Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose," 208-209.

politics of her husband's court,²⁰⁷ which could affirm historians' assertions that Llywelyn and Joan were stalwart companions, but it could also be a shrewd political move on Llywelyn's part – by accepting Joan back into his court, he continued to have an ally (albeit not as trustworthy as before) to mediate between Welsh and Anglo-Norman affairs. Nevertheless, the damage control that Llywelyn had done still did not exempt him from a meeting with King Henry III, and the king arranged a meeting with Llywelyn in June of 1230 in order to assess the state of the March and his Welsh vassal.²⁰⁸ Interestingly, according to J. J. Crump's research, there are no extant records that signify King Henry's involvement in Llywelyn's decision to exile Joan, but it is possible that the situation was discussed between the two men at the meeting of 1230, and Henry may have been a factor in Joan's release one year later.²⁰⁹

Upon Joan's death in 1237, the *Brut* records that “the Lady of Wales, wife of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and daughter to the king of England...died in Llywelyn's court at Aber in the month of February.”²¹⁰ She was buried in a new graveyard in Llanfaes, which was consecrated by Bishop Hywel of St. Asaph; Llywelyn also founded a monastery for the Barefooted Friars at the site in her honor.²¹¹ Perhaps, then, Lloyd was right to state that Llywelyn considered Joan “his best friend and faithful supporter throughout many years,” as these actions convey a deep level of affection.²¹² The political benefits of the marriage, however, were not as long-lasting – for the remainder of Llywelyn's life, relations between himself and the crown and other Anglo-Normans were continuously strained (especially under John). Therefore, even this marriage could not completely prevent hostilities between Wales and England, and Anglo-Norman influence

²⁰⁷ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:685-686.

²⁰⁸ Crump, “Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose,” 206.

²⁰⁹ Crump, “Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose,” 206-209.

²¹⁰ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, 1237.104.

²¹¹ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, 1237.104.

²¹² Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Peniarth MS 20*, 1237.104. Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1237.235. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2:670.

continued to be a powerful and overbearing factor in the political dynamics between the two regions.

The Children of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth

Even though Llywelyn's marriage had its low points (to say the least), Llywelyn still saw the benefits in creating marital alliances between his own children and Anglo-Norman rulers, so he arranged to have all but one of his brood married into Anglo-Norman families. It is interesting that Llywelyn married so many of his children into Anglo-Norman families when he could have also benefited from marital alliances with the rulers of Powys and Deheubarth, whose lands he sought to rule. He most likely predicted that, despite the potential problems of an alliance with Anglo-Norman families, the benefits far outweighed the risks. Thus, the marriages were forged in order to strengthen Llywelyn's military and political position in Wales, to bond his more powerful rivals to him, and to consolidate the political entity that he had spent so much effort constructing.²¹³

One of the first marriages that Llywelyn arranged was between his daughter Gwladus Ddu (d. 1251) and Reginald de Braose in 1215 (see Table 4).²¹⁴ This union was contracted after Welsh relations with John had soured, so Llywelyn most likely wanted to ensure the support of powerful Anglo-Norman families against John and to gain influence in the March (i.e. gaining access to politics and decisions that he might not otherwise have been a part of). Reginald no doubt saw that an alliance with the *de facto* ruler of Wales could ensure peaceful relations with Llywelyn, enabling him to grow and consolidate power in his own lands in the March. The marriage was initially beneficial for Llywelyn, as Reginald gave Llywelyn military support when civil unrest broke out in England after John's death, but this alliance did not last.²¹⁵ In 1217,

²¹³ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 248-249.

²¹⁴ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1215.205.

²¹⁵ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1216.209. Brock W. Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches: English Aristocracy and Frontier Society, 1087-1265* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008),

Reginald gave his allegiance to King Henry III in exchange for the return of his family lands, an offense that earned him not only the rage of Llywelyn but also Llywelyn's military campaign aimed at destroying all of the Marcher lord's lands.²¹⁶ Llywelyn attacked Builth and Brecon, and eventually Reginald was forced to surrender Swansea to prevent further incursions by Llywelyn, but the two continued to clash even after this agreement.²¹⁷ Thus, even the bonds of matrimony did not prevent Reginald from disavowing his alliance with Llywelyn, and most certainly did not impede Llywelyn's aggressions towards Reginald after their deal was broken.

Around the time Reginald broke faith with Llywelyn, Llywelyn arranged to have his other daughter Margaret marry Reginald's nephew, John de Braose in 1219 (see Table 4), an alliance which Llywelyn planned to use against Reginald.²¹⁸ John at this time had come of age and had brought a suit against Reginald for the Braose inheritance; most likely with some support from Llywelyn, John was eventually rewarded with the grant of Gower (formerly Reginald's land).²¹⁹ Thus, Llywelyn was able to exact punishment against Reginald for renouncing him through the alliance he constructed between a different daughter and Reginald's nephew. John de Braose, in turn, was able to gain additional land by allying with an enemy of his enemy, as well as additional influence in Wales. John, however, died in 1232, so the alliance was, again, temporary.

Another of Llywelyn's daughters, Helen (d. 1253), married John le Scot, earl of Huntingdon and Cambridge, and who succeeded his uncle Ranulf as earl of Chester in 1232 (see Table 4).²²⁰ The marriage took place in 1223, and strengthened the friendship between Llywelyn

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²¹⁶ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1217.215.

²¹⁷ Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches*, 197.

²¹⁸ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1219.219. Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches*, 199.

²¹⁹ Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches*, 199. The suit was finally settled in 1227, and John was awarded pieces of the Braose inheritance.

²²⁰ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics in Wales," 18.

and Ranulf, who were steady allies during much of both of their lives.²²¹ Upon the occasion of the marriage, Ranulf also granted his nephew lands in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire, as well as one-thousand silver pounds, so this alliance appeared to be very advantageous for both John and Helen.²²² John also gained the most powerful figure in Wales as an ally, which could be used for many different political and/or military advantages, and they would each now have more secure land holdings and allies against other Marcher families and the crown if the need arose (as long as they honored this agreement, unlike Reginald de Braose). Therefore, the relations between John le Scot and Llywelyn appear to have been mutually beneficial, at least as long as John lived (he died in 1237).

Finally, there was the marriage of Llywelyn's son and heir Dafydd (d. 1246) and Isabella de Braose (see Table 4). As mentioned above, the pair were married in the early 1230s, which Llywelyn hoped would create peace and stability with the Braose family, but he also gained the added land benefit of the lordship of Builth for Dafydd.²²³ This was part of Llywelyn's long and involved process of ensuring that Dafydd would have a smooth succession after his father's death. Because Llywelyn had two sons, Dafydd and Gruffudd (see Table 4), both of them under Welsh law were supposed to inherit a share of their father's land, even though Gruffudd was illegitimate. While this went against Christian practice of the time, as acknowledged by *Cyfraith Hywel*, the same laws declare that "The law of Hywel adjudges [the inheritance] to the youngest son as to the eldest, and judges that the father's sin and his illegality should not be set against the son for his patrimony."²²⁴ Thus, when a Welshman died, his land was divided between all of his sons, creating a system of partible inheritance.²²⁵ This custom caused no small amount of trouble

²²¹ Roderick, "Marriage and Politics in Wales," 18.

²²² Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, 60.

²²³ Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches*, 207.

²²⁴ Jenkins, trans., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 110.

²²⁵ Jenkins, trans., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 98-99.

for the Welsh, as the breaking up of an inheritance made it more susceptible to external incursions and encouraged fighting amongst male heirs, thus creating major political fragmentation.

It was not the intent of the laws, however, to create a weakened state by dividing the inheritance between sons. J. Beverley Smith argues that the land was divided in such a way that the integrity of the inheritance was maintained, at least with the landholdings of kings and other major rulers.²²⁶ Smith cites *Cyfraith Hywel* redactions from Gwynedd and Deheubarth, both of which declare that an heir should be designated by the king before his death, and that any other potential heirs were granted estates in that undivided kingdom.²²⁷ This argument is sound, but even though an heir was most likely designated with some of the more powerful Welsh rulers (with land allocations for younger brothers), this did not mean that the younger brothers would not want a larger share of their father's land, which can be seen in the multiple political disunity problems stemming from partible inheritance.

This is the problem Llywelyn faced with his two sons Dafydd and Gruffudd. Llywelyn did not want the dominance that he had worked so hard to create and maintain to crumble after his death, so before he died, he made plans to leave his entire inheritance for Dafydd, his eldest legitimate son instead of dividing it between Dafydd and his illegitimate son, Gruffudd. As this went against native Welsh law, Llywelyn took precautions to ensure that Dafydd would actually inherit all of his father's lands – in 1220 the government of King Henry III officially acknowledged Dafydd as Llywelyn's heir, and in 1222 Llywelyn was able to secure Pope Honorius III to confirm Dafydd's succession and to condemn the practice of inheritance by illegitimate children, thus barring Gruffudd from inheriting what he was entitled to by native

²²⁶ J. Beverley Smith, "Dynastic Succession in Medieval Wales," in *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 33 (1986): 201, 232.

²²⁷ Smith, "Dynastic Succession in Medieval Wales," 206.

Welsh law.²²⁸ Additionally, Llywelyn arranged for the same pope to declare his wife Joan a legitimate daughter of King John to further enhance Dafydd's status and legitimacy, and also had the leading rulers of Wales swear fealty to Dafydd.²²⁹ To further ensure that the government of England recognized Dafydd as his heir, Dafydd again did homage to Henry III in 1229 for all the lands that his father was passing down to him, and Henry's government acknowledged his status by granting him royal lands in return.²³⁰ Moreover, Dafydd's marriage to Isabella de Braose around this time confirmed and supported Dafydd's status as sole successor to Llywelyn's lands. Finally, Llywelyn summoned all of his magnates to Strata Florida in 1238 and required them to re-swear their fealty to Dafydd as heir.²³¹

Despite these measures, Llywelyn and Dafydd still had to cope with the many problems that Dafydd's half-brother Gruffudd created. As stated above, Gruffudd was barred from inheriting any of his father's lands, a measure that he did not handle well. It appears that Gruffudd had always had issues with his father – when Llywelyn had given Gruffudd land in Meirionydd and Ardudwy, Gruffudd was expelled from these lands in 1221 for maladministration, and he was imprisoned from about 1228-1234 (reasons unknown, but presumably similar to the previous problem).²³² Gruffudd was also the only one of Llywelyn's children to marry a Welshwoman, Senena ferch Caradog ap Thomas ap Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd (see Table 4), which may signify that Gruffudd was unwilling to comply with his father's scheme of marrying his children into prominent Anglo-Norman families. Nevertheless, Llywelyn did not forsake Gruffudd, and his son was given land in Llŷn and had wide authority in

²²⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 249. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 103.

²²⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 249. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 103.

²³⁰ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 249. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 103.

²³¹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 249.

²³² Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 249. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 103. Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1221.221, 1234.233. In 1221 Llywelyn had been so enraged at Gruffudd for his botched administration in Meirionydd and Ardudwy that both men gathered troops and prepared to fight one another, but they made peace, after which Gruffudd was expelled from the lands.

southern Powys. Dafydd, however, apparently was not as willing to forgive his brother as his father did, so he “seized Gruffudd, his brother, breaking faith with him, and he imprisoned him and his son [Owain] at Cricieth...” sometime around the death of Llywelyn.²³³ Because Gruffudd had become such a liability to the stability of Gwynedd, Dafydd needed to ensure that he would not further upset the precarious arrangement Dafydd forged with Henry III after Llywelyn's death.

Unfortunately for Dafydd, these measures did not prevent Llywelyn's death (d. 1240) from destroying the stability of Dafydd's inheritance, as the previously unified Welsh political body “was no more than a loose federation kept together by the force of [Llywelyn's] personality and the weakness of his opponents, native and Anglo-Norman.”²³⁴ With the strong hand of Llywelyn no longer in place to unify and control the Welsh rulers that had previously been under his control, and with Anglo-Norman rulers steadily growing in power, the fragmented remains of Llywelyn's political entity could not gain enough strength to resist the continued imposition and enforcement of Anglo-Norman overlordship in Wales. Even Dafydd's marriage into the Braose family (or his siblings' marriages for that matter) did not appear to help him sustain Gwynedd's hegemony in Wales, as Dafydd's short political career continued to be filled with struggles that an alliance with one family could not hope to counteract.

²³³ The *Brut* tells that Gruffudd was imprisoned before Llywelyn's death, but Matthew Paris places Gruffudd's imprisonment after Llywelyn's death. Gwyn Williams asserts that both sources present this event at logical times, but concludes that Matthew's account is likely the most reliable on this matter. After his imprisonment in 1239, Gruffudd spent the remainder of his life in captivity – he was released into the king's keeping in 1241 as part of a larger agreement between Dafydd and King Henry and was transferred to the Tower of London. On March 1, 1244, Gruffudd attempted to escape his Tower room through the window with an improvised rope, but the rope broke and he fell to his death. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 301. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 105-106. Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1244.239. Gwyn A. Williams, “Succession to Gwynedd 1238-47,” *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 20, no. 4 (1964): 407-408. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 103-104. Jones, ed. and trans., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1239.235-237.

²³⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 250.

Marriages Under King Henry III and King Edward I, ca. 1250-1283

Gwynedd

Dafydd died without issue in 1246, and the Anglo-Normans continued their advance into Wales, forcing the native Welsh rulers into submission to their overlordship. Welsh rulers would never recover the strength they held in the days of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (later dubbed Llywelyn Fawr, “The Great”), but his grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, came close to restoring it.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was the son of the troublesome and perpetually imprisoned Gruffudd and Senena ferch Caradog (see Table 4), and he initially shared the rulership of Gwynedd with his brothers Owain, Dafydd, and Rhodri from 1247-1255. In 1255, Llywelyn defeated his brothers at the battle of Bryn Derwin and became the sole ruler of Gwynedd. By 1257, he had overrun a good portion of southern Powys and was moving into Glamorgan. The following year, “an assembly of the magnates of Wales gave an oath of allegiance to Llywelyn...” and he began calling himself the Prince of Wales (*princeps Wallie*), a title that was formally recognized by the king of England in 1267 by the Treaty of Montgomery.²³⁵ Llywelyn, however, differed from his grandfather in that he enforced the homage of the leading rulers of Wales with more precision, and had an awareness of the necessity for native Welsh rulers to escape the bonds of fealty that the Anglo-Normans (especially the kings) imposed on the Welsh if they wanted to maintain their political autonomy.²³⁶

Part of the reason why Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was so successful in his initial endeavors is because of the political turmoil that Henry III was experiencing near the end of his reign in the mid-thirteenth century (similar to the turbulence of Stephen's reign). These problems in England culminated in the baronial rebellion of 1263-65 led by Simon de Montfort, which is where one of

²³⁵ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 112-113. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 253, 309-310, 314-317. Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1258.251.

²³⁶ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 115.

the final Welsh/Anglo-Norman marriages enters. Simon de Montfort's power had a very narrow basis, and he came to depend heavily on Welsh support in his years of open rebellion, so, naturally, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was involved in many of his affairs. While there is no formal extant record of a marital agreement, it was presumably during this time that an arrangement was made that would bind the two men together – the union of Llywelyn and Simon's daughter, Eleanor.

As it is difficult to assess the nature of Llywelyn's and Simon's political associations at this time due to lack of historical evidence, it is uncertain as to when Llywelyn and Simon began negotiations for this union, but it is known that the first time they were recorded as acting together was July 1264 against the Mortimers in the March.²³⁷ Additionally, in June 1265 a formal agreement was made between the two at Pipton-on-Wye, which officially recognized Llywelyn's title as Prince of Wales and granted Llywelyn lands in Wales and the March in exchange for £20,000 (to be paid by Llywelyn over a period of ten years), among promises of mutual military aid.²³⁸ Curiously, there is no mention of the proposed marriage between Llywelyn and Eleanor in this document, so perhaps their terms for the marriage had not matured enough to be included in it. These agreements, however, do demonstrate that Llywelyn and Simon were close allies, and that a future marriage between Llywelyn and Eleanor would have been a logical extension of their negotiations.

These transactions are also demonstrative of Llywelyn's wider policies – he had a tendency to ally with political figures who had similar resentments against the English crown. Most notably, in 1258 he entered into negotiations with the Comyn family of Scotland, who had lost considerable power after the intervention of Henry III. At this time, a document was drawn

²³⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 161-165.

²³⁸ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 119. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 166-169.

up that confirmed the friendship between the two groups, which stated that the king of Scotland would not make an agreement with the king of England (nor with the magnates of Scotland or England) unless they were also bound in agreement with the Welsh rulers that participated in the present treaty.²³⁹ Despite these efforts, the magnates of Scotland could not bind their king to this agreement, as he was not present at the negotiations, so the treaty was not necessarily binding, and did not alter the political situation of either party.

Llywelyn's relationship with Simon also encountered major obstacles – Simon was defeated and killed at the Battle of Evesham in August 1265, so it appeared that any arrangements that were made to join Llywelyn and Eleanor in matrimony were canceled. It initially did not appear that the union would be fulfilled, as Llywelyn was able to maintain somewhat amicable relations with Henry III after Simon's death (albeit with less benefits than his alliance with Simon de Montfort). The prince apparently did not see the need in a marital alliance until the 1270s, during which time Llywelyn's political situation grew precarious and lost much of its former strength. First, the weak Henry III had died in 1272, and his son ascended the throne as King Edward I, who did not neglect Welsh affairs as his father had done. Indeed, King Edward was the most aggressive towards Wales of all the Anglo-Norman kings up to this period, and he seemed bent on ensuring that the native Welsh lords knew their place as his vassals, much like the policy of his grandfather, King John. Second, in 1274 Llywelyn uncovered a plot to end his life – his brother Dafydd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Southern Powys had conspired to kill him so that Llywelyn could be replaced with Dafydd, which resulted in Dafydd and Gruffudd fleeing to England in November of that year.²⁴⁰ Finally, Llywelyn failed

²³⁹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 110-111, 280.

²⁴⁰ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1274-1275.261-263. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 323-324. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 393-394. Walker, *Medieval Wales* 119-120. Llywelyn originally knew of Gruffudd's involvement in the plot, and required him to surrender land, to agree to forfeit all of his lands in the event of further treachery, and to surrender hostages. It was only after Llywelyn discovered Dafydd's involvement in the plot in November of that year did Gruffudd and Dafydd flee to England.

to appear to no less than six summonses by King Edward from 1273-1276 that required Llywelyn to swear homage and fealty to the king, which provoked Edward into condemning Llywelyn as a rebel in November 1276.²⁴¹

Therefore, Llywelyn clearly felt threatened enough to make arrangements to more fully stabilize his position in Wales, and he somehow thought that following through on an old promise of a marriage with the daughter of a now-dead rebel would help his situation. While making a politically advantageous marriage was a wise decision on Llywelyn's part, rekindling his alliance with the Montfort family after Simon's defeat might not have been the most astute political move, as the remainder of Simon's family were now living in exile in France with limited power and influence. As Llywelyn's political situation grew more dire, however, he most likely felt the need to make a rapid alliance with someone he trusted, especially if it was with a party with whom he had previously worked and who had exhibited similar antagonism towards the king. Llywelyn also could have anticipated some profit in the fact that Eleanor was the niece of King Henry III (and the cousin of Edward I), based off of the benefits his grandfather had gained in marrying a relative of the crown.²⁴² Thus, in the initial stages of negotiations of his marriage to Eleanor in the 1270s, Llywelyn most likely hoped that this marriage could ultimately help him escape being subjected to the English king, especially since his own actions had driven Edward I to an increased level of aggression towards Wales.²⁴³ The Montfort family, in turn, no doubt saw this marriage as an opportunity to slight the English king for the brutal slaying of Simon de Montfort, and no doubt hoped that this marriage could help recover some of their former strength.

²⁴¹ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 327-328.

²⁴² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 279.

²⁴³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 280.

On the Anglo-Norman side of these affairs, King Edward I wanted to prevent the creation of this alliance because he knew it would be a great danger to his power if Llywelyn and his Montfortian allies regained their strength, so Edward had Eleanor and her brother Amaury captured on their way from France to Wales in 1275.²⁴⁴ Edward had been watching the movements of the Montfort family for some time, and he expressed in a letter to Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury, that he believed that Eleanor could spread her father's malice by Llywelyn's power, so he was clearly concerned that this union (if used effectively) could seriously damage his power over Wales, and he saw the journey of Eleanor to Wales as an act of blatant retaliation against him.²⁴⁵ Edward, however, apparently felt the need to justify his actions, so he sent letters to Pope Adrian V the following summer explaining the reasons behind the capture, arguing that he viewed Llywelyn as a rebellious magnate that needed to be controlled instead of a competing political power, making it necessary for him to prevent Llywelyn from gaining any more strength with which to oppose the crown.²⁴⁶ In response to this dilemma, Llywelyn, through various letters, completely reversed his previous antagonisms towards the crown – he professed willingness to do homage to the king and offered to pay 6,000 marks for Eleanor's release, on the condition that Edward provided safe conduct so that Llywelyn to come and pay homage to him (as Llywelyn was likely concerned that Edward would attempt to capture him as well).²⁴⁷ Pope John XXI also sent a letter to Edward on Llywelyn's behalf urging Edward to release Eleanor so that their marriage could be completed according to the will of God.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1275.263. Peter of Langtoft, *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, in French Verse from the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I*, ed. and trans. Thomas Wright (1868; repr., Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1964), 1275.171.

²⁴⁵ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 395-397.

²⁴⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 401.

²⁴⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 410-411.

²⁴⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 411-412.

It is strange that Llywelyn was willing to sacrifice so much to fulfill this marriage with Eleanor. As there is no extant written agreement between Llywelyn and the Montforts that includes stipulations about the marriage, it is likely that Llywelyn was not obliged to follow through with the union after Eleanor's capture (or even after Simon's death). As previously stated, a marriage with Eleanor was probably not the most advantageous political match that Llywelyn could have made. Perhaps, however, Edward's reaction to the proposed union is a measure of the potential the marriage had – Edward clearly believed it to be enough of a danger to his power to physically impede its completion, thus Llywelyn must have seen some significant benefits in both arranging it and endeavoring to complete it. In fact, the *Brut* states that Llywelyn had already ensured that the marriage would proceed as planned, and had married Eleanor by proxy (which Pope John XXI also referred to in his letter to the king), creating a legally binding union in the eyes of the church, so Llywelyn clearly believed that the marriage was a risk worth taking in order to ensure the survival of his power.²⁴⁹

It was only after Llywelyn agreed to a cessation of hostilities with Edward at Rhuddlan in September of 1278 that the king allowed the couple to marry, but Edward made it unmistakably clear that he was the dominant force behind the marriage. The wedding took place on the feast of St. Edward in an English cathedral (Worcester), Edward gave the bride away, paid for the entire affair, and even gave gifts to the couple – thus, Llywelyn could not forget that “it was by the king's hand that Eleanor became” his wife.²⁵⁰ Whatever Llywelyn's intentions were for this marriage, it appeared that the union would bring no immediate benefits to Wales in terms of gaining autonomy from the English crown. It is possible that Llywelyn was striving for peace (or at least a *détente*) with England instead of autonomy at this point in his career, which his

²⁴⁹ Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1278.269. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 397-398.

²⁵⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 447-449. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 341-342.

agreements with Edward seem to indicate, but it is difficult to imagine that he would want to completely relinquish the autonomy that he retained in Wales, limited as it was. Thus, it could be argued that Llywelyn still hoped that this alliance could someday help him attain a greater measure of autonomy from England.

If Llywelyn had wanted Eleanor to act as moderator between Wales and England as his grandfather's wife Joan had done, there is not much evidence to show that this prospect had come to fruition. Eleanor appears to have been at least moderately involved in acting as arbitrator between England and Wales, but her actions were not as far-reaching as Joan's had been. For instance, Eleanor wrote a letter to King Edward expressing her regret that “credence should be given to anybody who complains about [Llywelyn] before the matter had been thoroughly discussed in the prince's own land,” but there is not much evidence of her political involvement beyond this.²⁵¹ By winter of 1281 Eleanor was pregnant, and she gave birth to a daughter (Gwenllian) in June 1282. Sadly, however, Eleanor died shortly after giving birth, and Llywelyn interred her at the Monastery of the Barefooted Friars at Llanfaes where his grandfather had buried his wife, Joan.²⁵² There is no evidence that Llywelyn made any immediate attempts to remarry even though his position remained precarious, as he continued to struggle to retain hegemony in Wales and autonomy against the crown.

Llywelyn's marriage to Eleanor is somewhat difficult to interpret. If he truly wanted to escape the power of the English crown as his previous actions indicated (e.g. refusing to do homage to King Edward I), then why follow through with a marriage that would bind him more tightly to the crown? Perhaps he genuinely believed that Eleanor's family could somehow recover their power and aid him in his ultimate goal of autonomy, or that Eleanor (being

²⁵¹ Eleanor, Princess of Wales, and Lady of Snowdon, to Edward I, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 76.

²⁵² Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1275.263-265. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 507, 510.

Edward's niece) could act as mediator between England and Wales, thus softening Edward's hostile intentions. At the very least, she could give him a son to whom he could pass on his realm, but even this prospect was crushed by the sobering realities of chance and medieval childbirth. Whatever Llywelyn's intentions were, it is impossible to know exactly why he followed through on this marriage due to lack of historical evidence. Nevertheless, the union is a good example of how a Welsh/Anglo-Norman union affected the political relations between England and Wales – due to this marriage, relations between Llywelyn and Edward I became even more strained, and it even caused Llywelyn to bend to Edward's will where he otherwise might not have submitted. Ultimately, the influence of England proved too difficult to escape, which was a large part of Llywelyn's desperate situation in the 1270s and 1280s, a situation that his marital alliance was not able to heal as he hoped it might.

Llywelyn's youngest brother Dafydd chose a decidedly different political route than that of his brother (recall that Dafydd had been defeated by Llywelyn at Bryn Derwin in 1255 and had later plotted to kill Llywelyn with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1274). Dafydd's political career was filled with incessant swapping of loyalties between Llywelyn and the English crown, depending on which power he deemed could benefit him the most at the time. It is because of this that he is usually seen by historians as an “evil genius, as the betrayer of his brother, as a man consumed by jealousy and as the instigator of the final disastrous war of 1282-83.”²⁵³

It was during a period of one of his infamous betrayals of his brother that Dafydd was married to Elizabeth de Ferrers sometime between 1265-68 (see Table 4) – Dafydd had been backing the crown against his brother since 1263, so his marriage to Elizabeth was likely a reward for Dafydd's service to the crown, especially since it appears that Dafydd had also stayed

²⁵³ A.D. Carr, “‘The Last and Weakest of His Line’: Dafydd ap Gruffudd, The Last Prince of Wales,” *Welsh History Review* 19, no. 3 (June 1999): 375.

loyal to the crown during the baronial rebellion in the 1260's.²⁵⁴ The marriage gave Dafydd substantial prestige and lands in England, as his wife was the widow of William Marshal and the daughter of William de Ferrers, fifth earl of Derby.²⁵⁵ Dafydd, however, returned to his brother's side in 1267 when Llywelyn granted him lands in Wales, promised not to imprison him, and guaranteed his protection and safety;²⁵⁶ thus, Dafydd's marriage did not anchor him to his allegiance to the crown as the crown might have hoped. Nevertheless, as no alliance ever seemed to be permanent for Dafydd, he was restored to King Edward's good graces after his botched assassination attempt on Llywelyn in 1274, and stayed at Edward's side until March of 1282, when he attacked the castle of Hawarden on Llywelyn's behalf.²⁵⁷

The Conquest, 1282-83

Dafydd's attack was the signal of the beginning of the end of Welsh political autonomy, as it prompted Edward to declare war on Llywelyn in that year. The war continued into the end of the year, at which time Llywelyn moved out of Gwynedd, leaving it in the care of Dafydd. Llywelyn planned to open a new front into the Wye Valley in southern Wales, but he never had the chance – on 11 December his forces clashed with an English contingent commanded by Stephen Frankton at the river Irfon, and it was here that Llywelyn was struck down and killed. His head was subsequently delivered to King Edward at Rhuddlan, and the rest of his body was buried by the monks of the abbey at Cwmhir.²⁵⁸ The news of his death was also reported by Roger Lestrangle in a letter to Edward, stating that “Llywelyn ap Gruffudd is dead, his army defeated, and all the flower of his army dead...,” and Edward quickly exploited the power

²⁵⁴ Carr, “‘The Last and Weakest of His Line’: Dafydd ap Gruffudd,” 381.

²⁵⁵ Roderick, “Marriage and Politics in Wales,” 18. Carr, “‘The Last and Weakest of His Line’: Dafydd ap Gruffudd,” 381-382.

²⁵⁶ Carr, “‘The Last and Weakest of His Line’: Dafydd ap Gruffudd,” 382.

²⁵⁷ Carr, “‘The Last and Weakest of His Line’: Dafydd ap Gruffudd,” 384-389.

²⁵⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 562-568. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 353. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 131-132.

vacuum left by his death, moving into Gwynedd and crushing the remainder of the Welsh resistance.²⁵⁹

A weak Welsh opposition was maintained from Gwynedd by Dafydd, but he could not halt Edward's steady advances and in 1283 he was betrayed by his own men somewhere in the countryside of north Wales along with his wife, two sons, and seven daughters (according to Walter of Guisborough), who were then handed over to the English.²⁶⁰ Perhaps he hoped for rescue by some of his wife's kin, as Elizabeth could possibly plead with the king on Dafydd's behalf, but Dafydd's connections in England and his wife served only as a reminder of the scorned generosity that Edward had bestowed upon Dafydd. Because Dafydd's last major decision had been to abandon Edward, he was accorded a brutal fate – he was hanged, cut down while he was still alive, disemboweled, and finally quartered, with the pieces of his body dispatched to Winchester, Northampton, Chester, and York for public display. His head joined Llywelyn's at the Tower of London.²⁶¹

King Edward made sure to imprison or kill the remaining members of the house of Gwynedd that were capable of initiating a rebellion to undermine royal power, truly crushing any autonomy that the Welsh had from Anglo-Norman control. Llywelyn's daughter Gwenllïan and the daughters of Dafydd were placed into various nunneries, and Dafydd's two sons (Llywelyn and Owain) were imprisoned at Bristol castle, where they both spent the rest of their lives. The fate of Elizabeth, Dafydd's wife, is unknown, but she likely spent the remainder of her days in political exile, or at least with a diminished status in England.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Roger Lestrangle to King Edward I, in *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. Edwards, 83-84.

²⁶⁰ Carr, "The Last and Weakest of His Line': Dafydd ap Gruffudd," 391-392. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change*, 353-354.

²⁶¹ Carr, "The Last and Weakest of His Line': Dafydd ap Gruffudd," 393.

²⁶² Carr, "The Last and Weakest of His Line': Dafydd ap Gruffudd," 393-394.

The tragic fate of the last independent native Welsh rulers sparked a brief revival Welsh poetry – two laments written by *Beirdd Y Tywysogion* express the sorrow of losing Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the subsequent takeover by the English king. Gruffudd ab Yr Ynad Coch in his “Lament” says:

Mine now to rage against Saxons who've wronged me,
 Mine for this death bitterly to mourn.
 Mine, with good cause, to cry protest to God who has left me without him.
 Mine now his praise, without stint or silence,
 Mine, henceforth, long to consider him.
 Grief, for as long as I live, I shall have for him;
 As I am full with it, so I must weep.

He also calls Llywelyn “Candle of kingship, strong lion of Gwynedd...A lord all-triumphant...No Saxon dared touch him, a Lord of all Wales.”²⁶³ Similarly, Bleddyn Fardd in his “Elegy” says that “Great Wales has lost her most manly of princes...Man who was killed for us, who ruled over all, Man who ruled Wales...”²⁶⁴

One final marriage in Deheubarth directly before the Edwardian conquest demonstrates the nature of the overlordship of Edward I after the conquest of Wales as well as a change in marital strategies for the Welsh: the union of Rhys ap Maredudd of Deheubarth (d. 1292) and Ada de Hastings, sister of John de Hastings of Abergavenny in 1285 (see Table 2). Rhys had been consistently loyal to King Edward I throughout the 1270s, and had even confirmed his loyalty to Edward in a treaty in 1276-1277, through which he was awarded various castles and commotes (medieval Welsh divisions of land) by Edward.²⁶⁵ These land grants in combination with Rhys' marriage (which King Edward no doubt had a hand in arranging because of his close associations with Rhys) demonstrate that Rhys was deep in royal favor and that Edward

²⁶³ Gruffudd ab Yr Ynad Coch, “Lament,” in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Conran and Williams, 128-129.

²⁶⁴ Bleddyn Fardd, “Elegy,” in *The Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*, trans. and ed. Conran and Williams, 132.

²⁶⁵ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 152.

considered Rhys to be a dependable ally.²⁶⁶ Additionally when the war of 1282 broke out, Rhys remained at Edward's side even though his kinsmen joined Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. This marriage indicates that some Welsh rulers were beginning to use marriages with Anglo-Normans to purposefully grow closer to the crown in order to gain more power and prestige for themselves.

While this situation appears to have been mutually beneficial, Edward may have enforced Rhys' loyalty too far – he had Rhys swear homage to him multiple times, and chastised him for the improper seizure of some lands in Wales.²⁶⁷ Rhys was unhappy with this arrangement, and he rebelled against the crown in 1287, during which time he sustained heavy losses and chose to live as an outlaw. He was ultimately betrayed by his own men at Mallaen, taken to York, and executed in 1292.²⁶⁸ This final example of a Welsh/Anglo-Norman political marriage demonstrates that, in the years after the Edwardian conquest, “a sense of personal humiliation...was a more powerful motive than any consideration of political wisdom or territorial gain” for some Welsh rulers.²⁶⁹ Even though Rhys had a politically advantageous marriage, it seemed that the marriage for him was only a symbol of what he was required to relinquish to the English crown in order to gain political power and prestige, as opposed to previous marriages that were (usually) meant to empower the Welsh against the Anglo-Normans.

Conclusion

While the Welsh were often politically fragmented, they still considered themselves to be one group that was unified by their common culture (their *ethnie*), which they wanted to protect by any means possible. When this group was threatened by the Anglo-Normans in the late eleventh century, the Welsh expressed their loathing for these invaders in their literary tradition, speaking of the oppressive nature of Anglo-Norman overlordship. The Anglo-Normans

²⁶⁶ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 153.

²⁶⁷ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 153.

²⁶⁸ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 154. Jones, trans. and ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, 1290.121.

²⁶⁹ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 154.

reciprocated these negative feelings and criticized the war-like and uncivilized nature of the Welsh. Despite these feelings of mutual hatred, however, the aristocratic families of both regions still arranged marriages with each other for political gain. The reasoning behind these marriages is still somewhat of a mystery, as there were other groups that the Welsh could have allied with (e.g. the Irish or the Scots) to retain autonomy, and there were no great precedents for the Welsh to follow in terms of cross-regional marriages with the Anglo-Norman predecessors, the Anglo-Saxons. Despite these uncertainties, many marriages were made between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans, so the Welsh must have predicted that the most benefits would come from arranging marriages with the Anglo-Normans than with any other group.

For the Welsh, the benefits derived from these Welsh/Anglo-Norman marital alliances varied based on the strength of the families and the political situations surrounding the marriages, but a good number of the unions temporarily allowed Welsh rulers to consolidate their power in Wales, and to gain land in the March, or to gain allies against Welsh and Anglo-Norman adversaries. Loyalties, however, always shifted if either party found a more advantageous arrangement (or if any of the rulers associated with the union died), destroying whatever benefits or security that may have come from the marriages, and leaving the Welsh with an unsuccessful political tool with which they had hoped to gain advantages over their adversaries (both Anglo-Norman and Welsh). In some areas of Wales, such as Powys and Deheubarth, the cross-regional marriages did not give the Welsh any advantages at all, as the rulers of these areas were often pawns of the more powerful houses of Wales and England. For the Anglo-Normans, the benefits also varied, but they were able to attain some land and influence in Wales from these marriages, which may have been a contributing factor in their eventual overpowering of Welsh autonomy.

Furthermore, the pattern in which these unions were made demonstrates that the amount of force that Anglo-Norman rulers were using to penetrate into Welsh territory directly affected the number of marriages that were created between the aristocracies of Wales and England. When the Anglo-Normans initiated and sustained more forceful military advances into Wales and more determined attempts to exact defined homage from the Welsh, a greater number of marriages were made between the Welsh and Anglo-Norman aristocracies because the two regions had closer interactions. Ultimately, the final vigor of these close interactions (as led by King Edward I) were too much for the Welsh to bear, mostly because the Welsh were unable to completely eradicate their inner political and military squabbles. Therefore, as evidenced by Welsh/Anglo-Norman marital alliances, the political situation in Wales was at the mercy of the politics of England largely because of the unfailing ability of the Welsh to reduce themselves to political infighting, a reality that even marital alliances could not change.

Table 1 – Miscellaneous

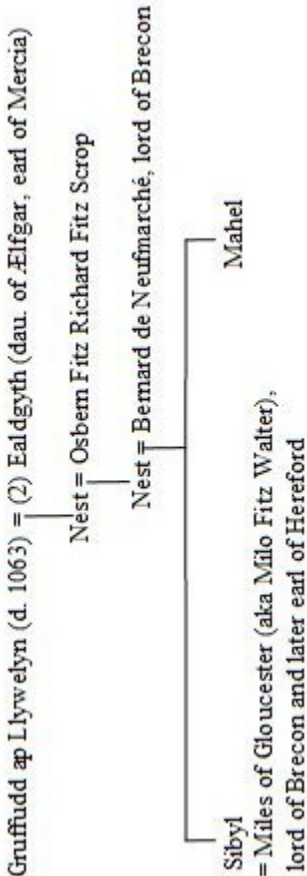


Table 2 – Deheubarth

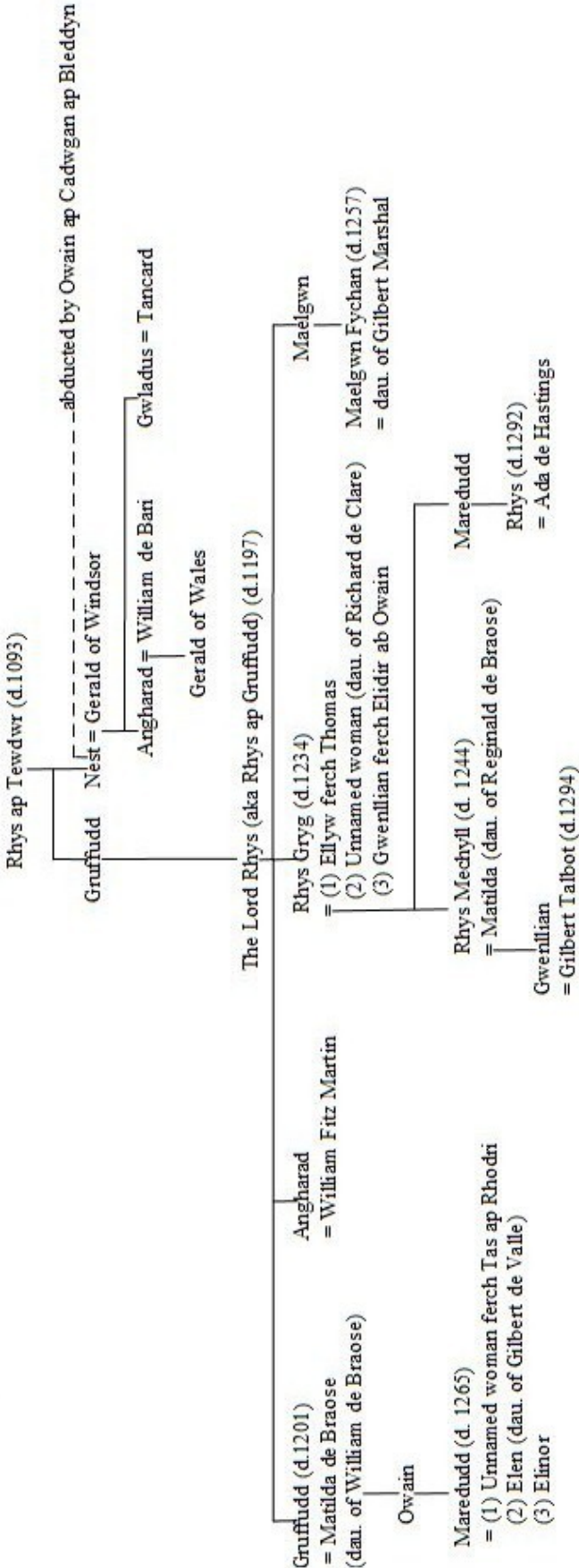


Table 3 – Powys

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn (d.1111) = unnamed dau. of Picot de Sai

Owain

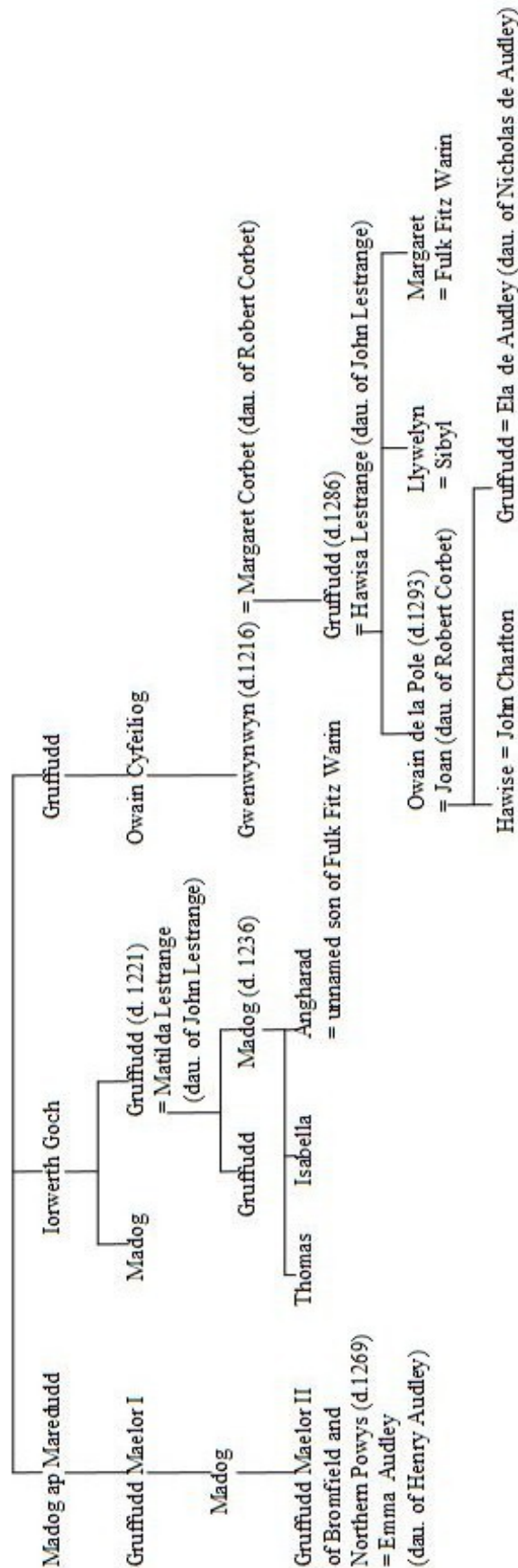
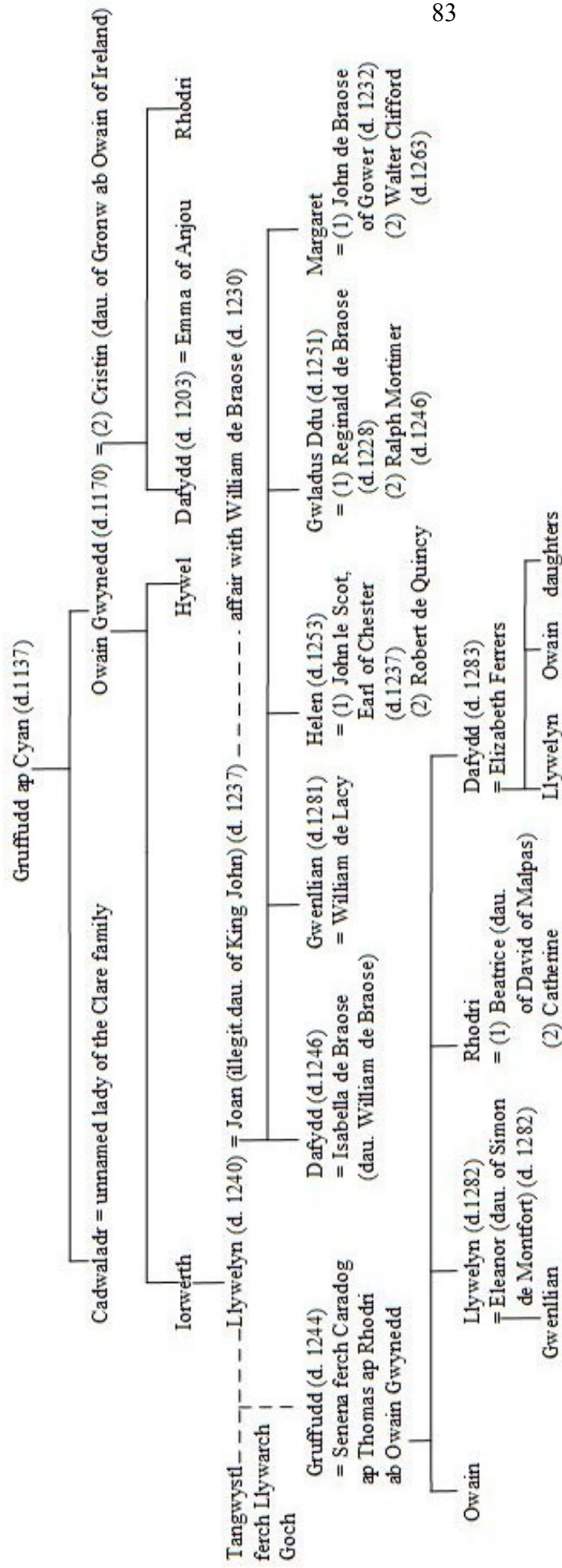
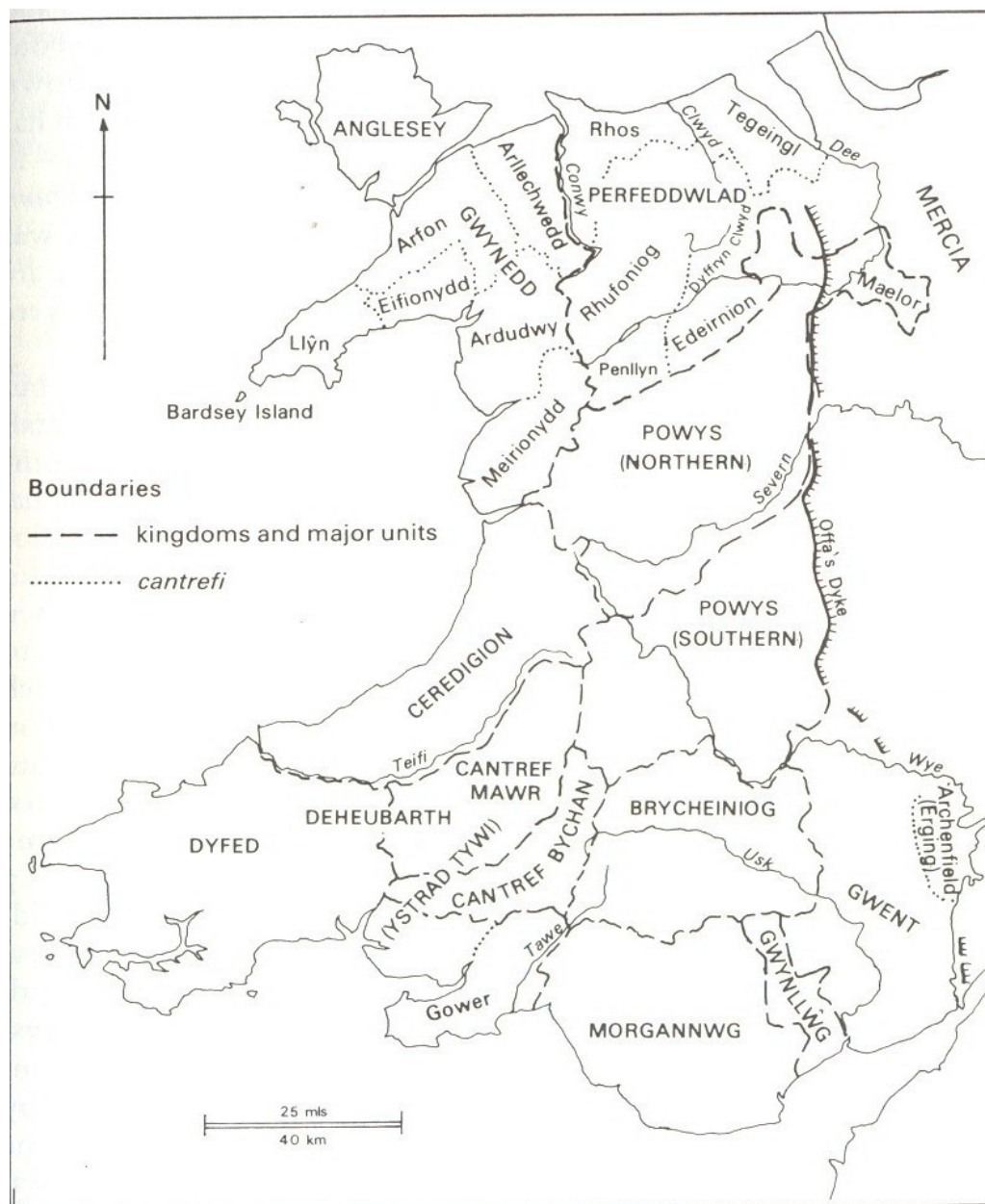


Table 4 – Gwynedd

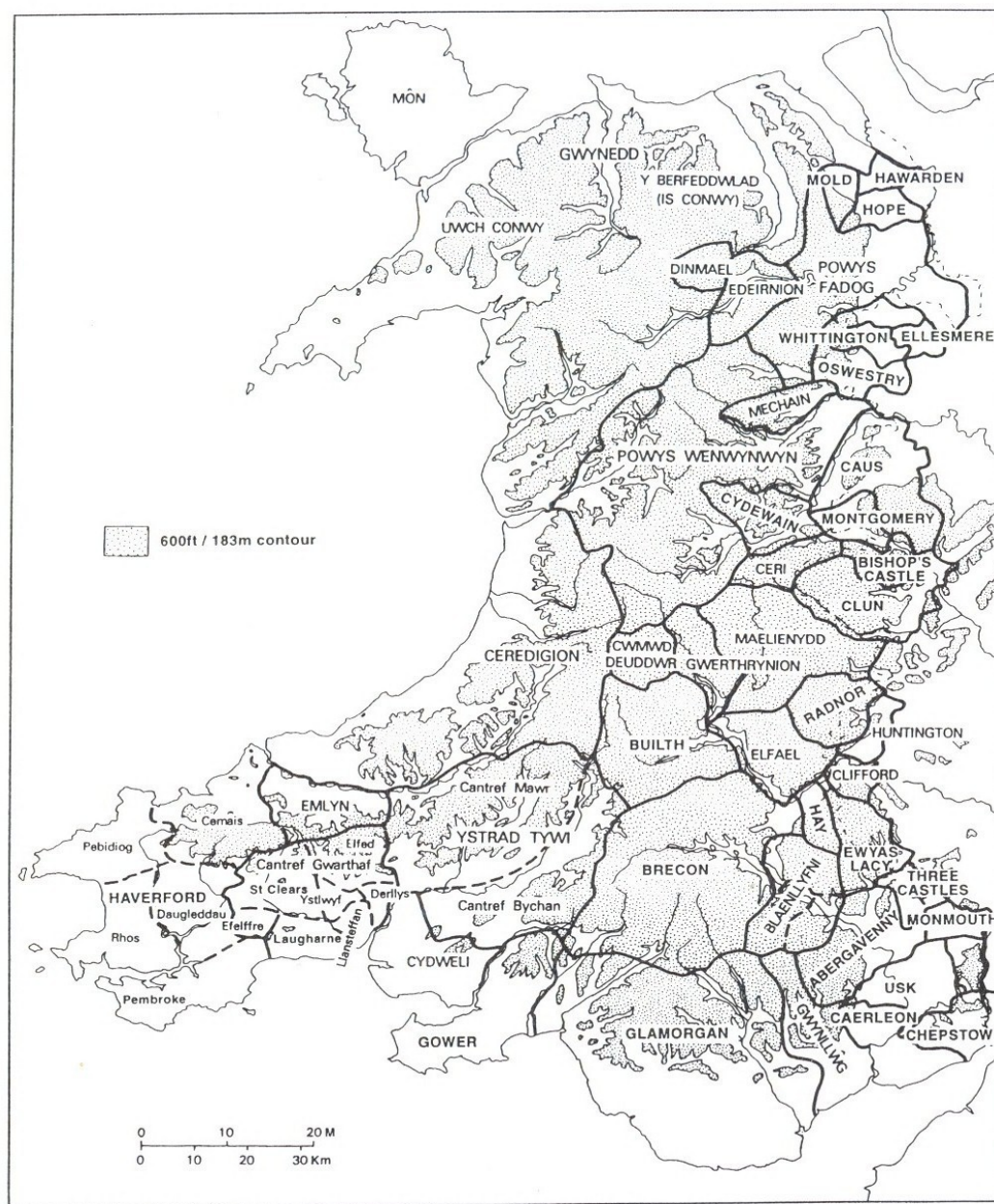


Map 1 – Regional divisions of Wales



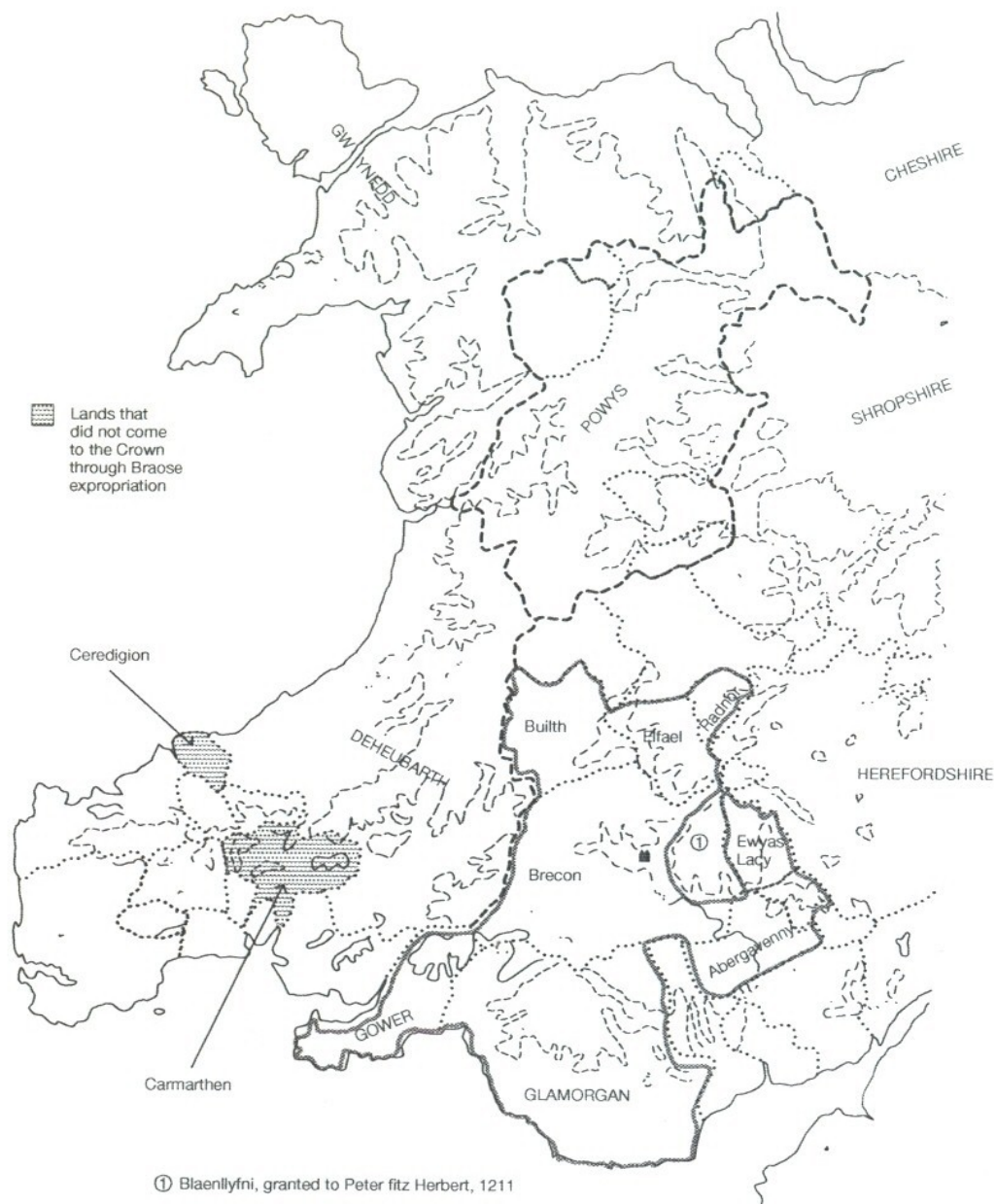
David Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 3.

Map 2 – Regional and local divisions of Wales and the March



J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 610.

Map 3 – Regional Divisions of Wales and the March



Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches*, xiv.

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