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# **The Anglo-Welsh Relationship, c.1140–c.1280: A Reappraisal**

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2022

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## Introduction

Throughout Wales's pre-conquest history, Anglo-Welsh relations shifted to meet the pressures of the time. Before the Norman Conquest in 1066, relations had been strained, and there had been many instances of fighting between the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria, and the Welsh border kingdoms.<sup>1</sup> After the Norman Conquest, the Marcher lords, who had been sent by William the Conqueror and his immediate successors to keep the Welsh at bay, practised semi-regal powers, including declaring war and making peace, usually with Welsh rulers.<sup>2</sup> This dynamic of Marcher lords, English kings and Welsh princes was integral to Anglo-Welsh relations for the following two centuries. After a succession of intra-dynastic disputes amongst the leading dynasties of Wales, a new generation of leaders, men such as Owain Gwynedd, Lord Rhys of Deheubarth, and Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog of Powys, emerged in the twelfth century, all of whom had to negotiate their relationship with the English. Lord Rhys, for example, dealt with the English king of the time, Henry II, and with the king's support remained in a dominant position in Wales, becoming Justiciar of South Wales, though this period of peace ended after Henry's death, an event discussed in more detail below.<sup>3</sup> Gwenwynwyn also had to negotiate with the English, mainly King John. In the thirteenth century, Llewelyn ab Iorwerth was the dominant ruler in Wales: his relationship to both John and to his son and successor, Henry III, were more personal than had been the case with Llewelyn's predecessors as Henry had married John's illegitimate, later legitimised, daughter Joan. Llewelyn had a tempestuous relationship with his wife's family, often battling his

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<sup>1</sup> For a history of early Welsh relations with her eastern neighbours, see T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Robert R. Davies 'Kings, Lords and Liberties in the March of Wales, 1066–1272', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 29 (1979), pp. 41–61

<sup>3</sup> Huw Pryce, 'Rhys ap Gruffudd (1131/2–1197), Prince of Deheubarth.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23464>. Accessed 24 May 2022.

brother-in-law Henry III, as later would his grandson by a previous partner, Llewelyn ap Gruffudd.

From the time of Gruffudd ap Llewelyn to the Edwardian Conquest of Wales in 1282, the Welsh princes and the English kings had a difficult, often violent, relationship, with England apparently having clear dominance. In the historiography of Anglo-Welsh relations, the English domination of Wales is emphasised, and the victimhood of the Welsh rulers underscored. Treaties such as that between Llewelyn ab Iorwerth and King John in 1211 are used as evidence of Welsh humiliation. This dissertation will examine the extent to which this really was the case, or whether the Welsh princes were also using the influence and power of English kings and Marcher lords to their own advantage, rather than being humiliated or trampled upon. This dissertation will also examine to what extent Welsh rulers and Marcher lords used English influence and law to their own advantage in disagreements over land, and whether England can be seen as having a type of mediative role during disputes between Welsh rulers and Marcher lords, or between Welsh rulers themselves. For instance, how did English law, and English arbitration, affect the Arwystli dispute between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys Wenwynwyn and Llewelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd in the late thirteenth century? This dissertation will look at Welsh agency when negotiating with the English, and whether there were ulterior motives underlying the settlements and agreements entered into by the Welsh with the English.

Wales in the medieval period was far from a centralised and unified state; even up to the Edwardian conquest there were smaller principalities alongside the larger ones. The term 'Anglo-Welsh Relations' can imply that relations, agreements and terms were united across all Wales, and that conclusions drawn from, say, a study of Gwynedd is applicable to all Wales. This view cannot be sustained: Gwynedd's relations to England were different from those of Powys, Deheubarth from Gwynedd and so on. The situation is less that of Anglo-Welsh

relations and more to do with the individual principalities' own interaction with their English neighbours. Instead of drawing general conclusions, it is more appropriate to focus on each individual principality in its own context. Nevertheless, this dissertation will use the term 'Anglo-Welsh Relations' as the most convenient term for relations between Welsh rulers and English kings during this period.

The historiography of Anglo-Welsh relations and policy is extensive. Sir Rees Davies lectured on them in the five years leading up to the conquest in 1282, arguing that the events and decisions leading up to the conquest amounted to a 'struggle for mastery, nothing less'.<sup>4</sup> Davies further wrote on royal policy towards Wales, in summary arguing that 'the Welsh rulers for their part found themselves moving inexorably into the orbit of the king of England, drawn to him not merely or mainly by the formal ties of dependence, but also by the magnetic quality that the patronage and protection of a powerful neighbour can offer'.<sup>5</sup> This dissertation will build on this, arguing that the Welsh princes could, and did, see the English as an alternative to uniting with other Welsh princes or Marcher lords. In an assessment of Anglo-Welsh relations in Henry II's reign, Roger Turvey wrote that the king was 'pursuing a policy dedicated to the art of divide and rule';<sup>6</sup> Though Turvey covers the Anglo-Welsh relationship, it must still be asked whether focusing on the English motives gives a full picture. This dissertation will ask why Welsh princes saw England as a viable ally, as they often did. David Stephenson's book on Medieval Powys argues that Powys was more influential than previously thought, and in the same study he makes interesting observations on Powys's relations with England, especially concerning the three last rulers of Southern Powys: Owain Cyfeiliog, Gwenwynwyn ab Owain and his son Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn.<sup>7</sup> Sir Maurice Powicke wrote on Anglo-

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<sup>4</sup> Robert R. Davies, *The King of England and the Prince of Wales, 1277–84: Law Politics and Power*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures on Mediaeval Welsh History, 3 (Cambridge, 2003), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Robert R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 2000), p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> Roger K. Turvey, *The Welsh Princes: The Native Rulers of Wales 1063–1283* (London, 2002), p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys: Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132–1293* (Woodbridge, 2016).

Welsh relations in Henry III's reign in his book on Henry III and Edward, mainly pertaining to Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and Henry III's relationship.<sup>8</sup> Huw Pryce wrote an article concerning Anglo-Welsh relations between Llewelyn the Great and Henry III, concluding that 'if at times he [Llewelyn] confronted his brother-in-law as an enemy, he also appreciated the advantages of securing the support of the king of England in his efforts to construct a principality of Wales'.<sup>9</sup> In the historiography of Anglo-Welsh relations throughout the Mediaeval period, the focus is generally, though not exclusively, on Gwynedd, which is a problem in itself. David Carpenter wrote in 2007 on an agreement between Henry III and Dafydd ap Llewelyn in 1241, an agreement traditionally considered a humiliation for Dafydd, as it gave Gwynedd to the king if Dafydd died without issue. The treaty led the king to keep Gruffudd, Dafydd's half-brother, in the tower of London. Carpenter, however, argues that Dafydd 'in 1241 was only too pleased to see his half-brother disappear since this prevented the division of Gwynedd'.<sup>10</sup> This argument, that Welsh princes could and would benefit from English terms, will be examined more broadly: if Dafydd benefitted, did other princes also benefit in a similar way? Did rulers such as Lord Rhys of Deheubarth and others benefit from English settlements?

Books and articles surrounding the main actors in the 'Anglo-Welsh' relationship are plentiful, though with an undue emphasis on the English rulers. Henry II has been the subject of many books and biographies, the best known of which is probably W. L. Warren's *Henry II*; though published in 1973 it remains a valuable study of the king's life and times. There have also been studies of Henry's successor Richard I, including by John Gillingham published by Yale University Press.<sup>11</sup> For the Welsh rulers, the historiography is not as extensive. Roger

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<sup>8</sup> F. M. Powicke, 'England and Wales: The Conflict of Laws' in *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth-Century* (Oxford, 1947), vol. 2, pp. 618–86.

<sup>9</sup> 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. Björn K. U. Weiler and Ifor W. Rowlands (Aldershot, 2002), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> David Carpenter, 'Dafydd ap Llywelyn's Submission to King Henry III in October 1241: A New Perspective', *Welsh History Review*, 23/4 (2007), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven and London, 1999).

Turvey has been a prolific writer on Welsh rulers, with biographies ranging from Llewelyn the Great of Gwynedd<sup>12</sup> to Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth.<sup>13</sup> These are valuable studies, though Turvey's biography of Rhys can be excessive in its praise for its subject. David Stephenson penned a thorough and fascinating study surrounding the twelfth-century ruler of Powys, Madog ap Maredudd, which is invaluable when discussing the relationship between Powys and England. The principality of Gwynedd has been the focus of much of the research in the area of Anglo-Welsh relations and policy, though David Stephenson and others' work on Powys, and its importance in Welsh politics, is well on the way to redressing this balance.

The dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first will discuss the benefits of Anglo-Welsh policy to the Welsh princes, mainly those of the three major principalities of Deheubarth, Gwynedd and Powys. For the twelfth-century rulers, for whom no formal written agreements survive,<sup>14</sup> chronicles such as the *Brut y Tywysogion* will be used to gain as big a picture as possible of the relationships between English and Welsh rulers, and how strategic these military relationships were for the Welsh rulers. One point about the *Brut y Tywysogion* to be noted is that it is a translated, non-contemporary chronicle from a possible Latin source that is believed to have been an intended sequel to the *Brut y Brenhinedd*,<sup>15</sup> so its provenance should be kept in mind. Administrative primary sources, such as the financial records in the Pipe Rolls, will be used to trace payments to Welsh princes, especially in Powys. During the thirteenth century, Llewelyn ab Iorwerth, ruler of Gwynedd, was the hegemonic ruler in Wales. Llewelyn ab Iorwerth's strategy will be discussed briefly to ascertain whether his actions can

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<sup>12</sup> Roger K. Turvey *Llewelyn the Great: Princes of Gwynedd* (Llandysul, 2007)

<sup>13</sup> Roger K. Turvey *The Lord Rhys* (Llandysul, 1997)

<sup>14</sup> Huw Pryce, 'Anglo-Welsh agreements, 1201–77', in *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to J. Beverley Smith*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths and Philipp R. Schofield (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 2–3. The earliest surviving written agreement is dated 1201, though as Pryce argues older written agreements that have not survived cannot be ruled out.

<sup>15</sup> Ben Guy, 'Historical Scholars and Dishonest Charlatans: Studying the Chronicles of Medieval Wales', in *The Chronicles of Medieval Wales and the March: New Contexts, Studies and Texts*, ed. Ben Guy, Owain Wyn Jones, Georgia Henley and Rebecca Thomas (Turnhout, 2020), p. 72.

fit into any pattern and if he saw benefits in a relationship with the English. This section will seek to explain the strategy adopted, and whether the princes benefitted from it, why they did so and how successful overall their strategy was. This chapter will also discuss why some Welsh rulers, most particularly Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog, broke their relationship with the English, and why other rulers such as Rhys ap Gruffudd went from enmity to amicability with the English king. The second main chapter will look at the influence of England in Welsh dynastic and territorial disputes, such as the Arwystli dispute between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, and the dispute between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his matrilineal family, the Corbets of Caus. This chapter will draw upon the correspondence between the Welsh and English rulers surviving in the National Archives in London.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation's main focus will be to evaluate the value of the king of England and the Marchers to Welsh princes, from military support for Powys and its leaders, to English attempts – whether successful or not – at mediating in disputes.

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<sup>16</sup> *A Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. J. Goronwy Edwards (Cardiff, 1935).

## Chapter 2: Benefits for the Princes? (c.1140–c.1240)

Although a good deal has been written on Anglo-Welsh relations, the twelfth century (during the reigns of Henry I, King Stephen, Henry II and Richard I) is not so extensively studied when compared with the plentiful supply of material on the thirteenth century, studies such as those by F. M. Powicke and R. R. Davies.<sup>17</sup> For example, in Geraint Jenkins's *A Concise History of Wales*, Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth's career is given just a few passing references, with little mention of Henry II's extensive involvement in Welsh policy and politics.<sup>18</sup> Even though Jenkins's history of Wales is intended to be brief, it remains a glaring omission. Nevertheless, work has been done on the subject. Roger Turvey, in his assessment of the medieval Welsh princes in 2002, has a greater focus on the earlier periods, arguing that Henry II was pursued a policy 'of divide and rule' in his conduct of Welsh affairs.<sup>19</sup> However, back in 1973, W. L. Warren argued in his biography of Henry II that the king 'built nothing enduring in Wales', though he 'held back the dogs of war', primarily through his peaceful co-existence with Rhys ap Gruffudd, an area discussed in more detail below.<sup>20</sup> More recently, David Walker, in his book concerning Wales, wrote more extensively on Rhys ap Gruffudd, though Walker did not write on the Powys rulers in as much detail.<sup>21</sup> Given the varied historiography, written mostly from an English perspective, it must be wondered why polities such as Powys looked to their east for alliances and security.

Madog ap Maredudd succeeded in becoming the leader of Powys after intra-dynastic strife had struck his family in the early twelfth century.<sup>22</sup> Madog had close relations with the

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<sup>17</sup> F. M. Powicke, 'England and Wales: The Conflict of Laws' in *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth-Century* (Oxford, 1947), vol. 2, pp. 618–86.; Robert R. Davies, *The King of England and the Prince of Wales, 1277–84: Law Politics and Power*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures on Mediaeval Welsh History, 3 (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Geraint Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge, 2007), especially chapter three.

<sup>19</sup> Roger K. Turvey, *The Welsh Princes: The Native Rulers of Wales 1063–1283* (London, 2002), p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (New Haven and London, 2000), p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> David Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge, 1990), especially chapters two and three.

<sup>22</sup> David Stephenson, 'Madog ap Maredudd, Rex Powissensium', *Welsh History Review*, 24/1 (2008), p. 3.

English, both the Marchers and the king himself, and as such he provides an excellent case study of early- to mid-twelfth-century relations between a border Welsh ruler and the English; his dynasty's close links with the English can also be used as an example of why some Welsh rulers looked to the east for an ally. Madog himself intermittently allied with the Anglo-Norman Ranulf II, earl of Chester. Orderic Vitalis, a well-informed contemporary chronicler, records that the 'two brothers Maredudd and Cadwaladr' (believed by J. E. Lloyd to be Madog and his brother-in-law Cadwaladr, brother of Owain Gwynedd)<sup>23</sup> led a 'fierce mob of Welshmen' with the earl of Chester in the 1141 Battle of Lincoln which led to King Stephen's capture.<sup>24</sup> The earl and Madog appear to have had a reciprocal arrangement: Ranulf provided Powys with troops in some of its conflicts with Gwynedd.<sup>25</sup> G. A. Williams, however, has suggested that animosity between Cheshire and Powys existed.<sup>26</sup> Though obvious tensions existed between the ruler of Powys and the earl of Chester, not least territorially, the relationship between the two must have been of benefit to both parties: it cannot be denied that befriending a possible enemy is a worthy strategy. The *Brut y Tywysogion* records that in 1157, during a confrontation between the King and Owain Gwynedd, Madog was encamped between the two sides, because this 'enable[d] him to meet the first attack' by the king.<sup>27</sup> However, Madog's supposed alliance with Owain should not be taken at face value. In a comprehensive study of Madog, David Stephenson points out that the *Brut*'s comments directly contradict the assertion in *Annales Cambriae C* that Henry launched the invasion with 'the help of Madog ap Maredudd'.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, as Max Lieberman argues, it is unlikely that Madog 'supported

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<sup>23</sup> John E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales, in Two Volumes* (London, 1911), vol. 2, p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford 1969), vol. 6, p. 543.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Barraclough, 'The Earldom County Palatinate of Chester', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. 103 (1951), p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Gruffydd A. Williams, 'Welsh Raiding in the Twelfth-century Shropshire/Cheshire March: The Case of Owain Cyfeiliog', *Studia Celtica*, vol. 40 (2006), pp. 89–115.

<sup>27</sup> Anon., *Brut y Tywysogion: Or, the Chronicle of the Princes of Wales* ed. John Williams ab Ithel (London, 1860), p. 187.

<sup>28</sup> Anon., *Annales Cambriae*, ed. John Williams ab Ithel (London, 1860), p. 46; see Stephenson, 'Madog', p. 12.

Owain Gwynedd, with whom he had clashed at Coleshill in 1150'.<sup>29</sup> Supporting primary evidence for Madog's involvement with Henry is a payment of £8 10s to Madog by the English chancery in 1157,<sup>30</sup> with another payment again the next year.<sup>31</sup> These payments are too close to the campaign to be coincidental. The extent of English involvement in Powys during Madog's reign is complicated in part due to his adherence to aspects of Welsh culture; one of the few charters issued by Madog that has survived is the last known Welsh Celtic-style charter, a traditional style, and Madog gave his sons historically Welsh-sounding names, such as Elise ap Madog,<sup>32</sup> that would both soothe his own courtier's fears but also reveals a degree of cultural independence from England. Madog had English backing, but Madog was also committed to Welsh culture; his alliance was strategic, but this did not make him an English puppet.

After Madog's death in 1160, Powys was ruled by Owain Cyfeiliog. Owain is known to have raided Marcher lands in Shropshire and Cheshire in the earlier years of his adulthood.<sup>33</sup> The *Annales Cambriae*, a Latin chronicle, record that Owain and Iorwerth Goch both resisted Henry II's failed invasion of Wales in 1165.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in his earlier years, Owain was not an English ally. Despite this, he went on to develop a good friendship with Henry II, who helped Owain gain his lands back from a coalition of other Welsh princes in the 1160s.<sup>35</sup> There is ample evidence that Owain and Henry's relationship was personal as well as strategic. Gerald of Wales, an author whose information tends to be chattier than most, commented that Owain was able to make jokes at Henry's expense, wittily commenting on Henry's treatment of church

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<sup>29</sup> Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: The Creation and Perception of a Frontier, 1066–1283* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> *The Great Rolls of the Pipe for the Second, Third, and Fourth Years of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A. D. 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158*, ed. Joseph Hunter (London, 1844) p. 89; Stephenson, 'Madog', p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *The Great Rolls of the Pipe for the Second, Third, and Fourth Years of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A. D. 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158*, ed. Joseph Hunter (London, 1844) p. 170.

<sup>32</sup> Stephenson, 'Madog' pp. 18–21.

<sup>33</sup> For Owain Cyfeiliog's raiding, see Williams, 'Welsh Raiding', pp. 89–115.

<sup>34</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Williams ab Ithel, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> David Stephenson, 'Re-Thinking Thirteenth-Century Powys', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 21 (2015), p. 9.

vacancies,<sup>36</sup> and that he ‘espoused the cause of Henry II, King of the English’.<sup>37</sup> That Owain could make criticisms of events outside his own territory is illustrative of the close friendship that seems to have developed between the two rulers. Owain’s advocacy of Henry’s causes may not have been all encompassing; for instance, Owain may have advocated Henry’s views of Welsh affairs, a likely scenario considering their shared interests. Later, Gerald remarks on the ‘sensible way in which he [Owain] managed his land’,<sup>38</sup> which can be taken not only as a positive view on Owain’s virtues as a ruler, but also on the – albeit limited – peace he managed to keep, a rare thing indeed in medieval Wales.

There remains a question, however, as to why the rulers of Powys looked to the east for an alliance. The historiography surrounding Powys’s involvement in Gwynedd is usually tainted with accusations of treason and duplicity.<sup>39</sup> This should not cloud our view of Anglo-Powys relations: as John Davies notes, if loyalties were still dynastic and local, then a Welsh national cause may not have existed, with loyalties remaining local.<sup>40</sup> The answer as to why Powys went to the east must lie in security, of both the ruler and of Powys itself. Powys was cursed by geography: it had Gwynedd to the north, England to the east and Deheubarth close by. Gwynedd was an ever-present threat to the survival of Powys, and the Venedotian princes often raided their neighbours, Powys being a common victim. England, too, was an ever-potent risk to Powys’s security. It appears, therefore, that having the king of England, or at least a powerful Marcher lord, as an ally was crucial for the survival of Powys and its rulers. Take the case of Madog ap Maredudd and Henry II, for example: an alliance between the two rulers was of mutual benefit: Henry had a Welsh ally which reduced the military threat from Powys, and

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<sup>36</sup> Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales: and, the Description of Wales*, ed. and trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London, 1988), p. 203.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> See Jenkins, ‘A Concise History’, p. 90; ‘with the exception of the perfidious Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn’.

<sup>40</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 2007), p. 122.

Madog could support incursions against Gwynedd, a powerful rival, and weaken it to the extent that it was not able to threaten his own realm, all the while lessening the English threat.

Gwenwynwyn, son of Owain Cyfeiliog, is an example of a Welsh prince going against rather than allying with the English. Gwenwynwyn most certainly did not consider King John, the ruler of England for most of Gwenwynwyn's reign, to be a trustworthy ally; he is mentioned as fighting against the king in 1204.<sup>41</sup> Gwenwynwyn quickly found that England was the more powerful of the two in the alliance, for in 1208, after Gwenwynwyn had incurred the displeasure of the king, John seized Powys and imprisoned Gwenwynwyn. Thus, in 1212, Gwenwynwyn entered into 'confederacy'<sup>42</sup> with Llewelyn ab Iorwerth, ruler of Gwynedd, sticking with Llewelyn until making peace again with the English king in 1216.<sup>43</sup> Gwenwynwyn has often been called a traitor or been criticised for his fleeting alliances, but there are explanations for his conduct. One such explanation lies in Gwenwynwyn's concern for his own land's safety. Llewelyn ab Iorwerth had occupied Southern Powys during Gwenwynwyn's incarceration,<sup>44</sup> and this may have been forefront in Gwenwynwyn's mind; Gwenwynwyn may have been trying to stave off a threat from Gwynedd, while juggling the threat from the east. Another explanation, as David Stephenson argues, is that Gwenwynwyn flitted because of Llewelyn ab Iorwerth's increasing power in Wales, and the latter's increasingly close ties to the de Braose family, who did not have friendly relations with

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<sup>41</sup> Stephenson, 'Medieval Powys' p. 87, n. 86. Notably it is the earl of Chester who is described as an ally of Gwenwynwyn against the king.

<sup>42</sup> *Brut*, p. 271

<sup>43</sup> T. F. Tout and A. D. Carr, 'Gwenwynwyn (d. 1216?), Ruler in Wales', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-11806>. Accessed: 24 May 2022.

<sup>44</sup> *The Acts of Welsh Rulers: 1120–1283*, ed. by Huw Pryce (Cardiff, 2010), pp. 377–8.

Gwenwynwyn. This policy, of sailing to whichever winds were strongest, was not unheard of in medieval Wales,<sup>45</sup> and neither was flitting between a Gwynedd and English alliance.<sup>46</sup>

The career of Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth is similar to that of Owain Cyfeiliog: both begin with animosity towards the English and then make peace. Indicative of the initial animosity between Rhys ap Gruffudd and Henry II is that, during an English council in 1164 regarding Welsh issues, Rhys was the only Welsh ruler mentioned by name.<sup>47</sup> Rhys himself was the subject of an 1159 English campaign, led by five English earls.<sup>48</sup> Both Rhys and the English king undoubtedly did not consider each other in favourable terms. In 1171, Wales – and Rhys – experienced an important turning point, a change that has been debated often by historians. Rhys made peace, or as the *Brut* phrases it, ‘entered into friendship’,<sup>49</sup> with the king. After the agreement of 1171, an extended period of general peace in Wales unrivalled in its history was inaugurated that would last until Henry II’s death in 1189.<sup>50</sup> To such an extent had relations thawed that Henry II gave ‘to the lord Rhys Ceredigion and the Vale of Tywi, and Ystlwyv and Euelvre’.<sup>51</sup> Rhys had long sought these lands; he was fighting for Ceredigion from as early as 1150,<sup>52</sup> and Ceredigion was a vital part of Rhys’s growing ambitions: he needed Ceredigion to form a truly feasible lordship.<sup>53</sup> These lands were a major sticking point in negotiations after 1157, and gaining control of them from the Marcher lords, many of whom

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<sup>45</sup> Stephenson, ‘Re-Thinking’, pp. 16–17. Also, for Gwenwynwyn’s career and convincing explanations of Gwenwynwyn’s actions, see Stephenson, ‘Medieval Powys’, pp. 75–96.

<sup>46</sup> For the relationship between Wales, Gwynedd and England see: A. J. Roderick, ‘The Feudal Relations between the English Crown and the Welsh Princes’. *History*, new series, 37 (1952), pp. 201–12.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Latimer, ‘Henry II’s Campaign against the Welsh in 1165’, *Welsh History Review*, 14/4 (1988), pp. 530–1.

<sup>48</sup> Lloyd, ‘History of Wales’, vol. 2, p. 511–12.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., *Brut y Tywysogion: Or, the Chronicle of the Princes of Wales*, ed. John Williams ab Ithel (London, 1860), p. 211.

<sup>50</sup> Huw Pryce, ‘Rhys ap Gruffudd (1131/2–1197), Prince of Deheubarth’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-c-23464>. Accessed 24 May 2022.

<sup>51</sup> *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 213.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

<sup>53</sup> Warren, *Henry II*, p. 166.

he had fought against, was a major gain for Rhys and a major concession for Henry.<sup>54</sup> Rhys's agreement with Henry II was reinforced when Rhys sent his own son to aid the king in 1274.<sup>55</sup> In 1172, the king made Rhys Justiciar of South Wales. This title was not confined to Rhys's own realm of Deheubarth but may have made Rhys a semi-royal official in South Wales and there is a convincing case that the title tacitly recognised Rhys's hegemony over the Southern Welsh rulers. Roger of Howden, a royal clerk and Yorkshire cleric, wrote in his *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* of 'David king of North Wales' and 'Rhys king of South Wales' being given Ellesmere and Merioneth respectively, and afterwards giving liege homage to the king.<sup>56</sup> This, as Warren argues, required that the two 'kings' owe their homage to Henry II, but other, minor, Welsh princes owed their homage to the rulers of Gwynedd and Deheubarth.<sup>57</sup> Beverley Smith, however, believes that the higher titles accorded by Roger may not be as significant as Warren makes them out to be.<sup>58</sup> Whatever the case may be with Roger's use of higher titles for Rhys and Dafydd, it cannot be denied that Rhys had changed from the rebellious Welsh prince to fervent English ally.

To understand this enormous shift from confrontation to co-operation, we must examine the context of 1171. Owain Gwynedd had died a year earlier, thereby removing the main threat to Rhys's supremacy in Wales. Henry II, also, had more major issues to deal with. Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in 1170, leading to outrage on the continent. The murder had damaged Henry's reputation internationally, though to assume this had a direct bearing on events in 1171 in to exaggerate the influence of the murder in Wales and for Henry's Welsh policy, with the more pressing issue of Anglo-Norman Marcher lords in Ireland, many

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 167, n. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Pryce 'Rhys ap Gruffudd'.

<sup>56</sup> Roger of Howden (Benedict of Peterborough), *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi benedicti abbatis. The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I, AD 1169–1192: Known Commonly under the Name of Benedict of Peterborough*, ed. William Stubbs (London 1867), p. 162; Warren, *Henry II*, p. 168.

<sup>57</sup> Warren, *Henry II*, p. 168.

<sup>58</sup> J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff, 2014), p. 21, n. 69.

of whom had begun life in the Welsh marches, becoming much more troublesome for the king. Henry needed to get to Ireland to stem the tide of their power. As Warren points out, one of the best ways to get to Ireland was through Milford Haven in Pembroke, and Rhys, if hostile to Henry, could easily have blocked the way for the king, thereby making it more difficult to pass.<sup>59</sup> Warren, however, notes that there is a possibility Henry had changed his attitude towards the Welsh princes after the debacle in 1165,<sup>60</sup> though Rhys himself is known to have been actively hostile towards Henry to as late as 1168.<sup>61</sup> Possibly one reason for Rhys's change of heart between 1168 and 1171 was the impracticality of continuing hostilities; the economic costs were not insignificant. Further, Rhys's lands that had already been taken needed recognition, otherwise the threat of both Marcher and royal warfare hung over his gains. Henry himself had time; he was less focused on his French lands than he had been before 1171. Therefore, Rhys and Henry both now had perfect reasons for coming to terms and reaching détente with each other. Deheubarth was recognised as the leader of Welsh principalities, only Gwynedd equalling its status. Further, Rhys and Dafydd of Gwynedd had managed to retain their honour concerning Henry's overlordship, a contentious subject for any Welsh prince at any moment in time. Rhys and Dafydd had been given land by Henry in 1177, and therefore recognised him as feudal overlord, but not as overlord of their inherited lands, and 'in this devious way honour was preserved for both sides'.<sup>62</sup> Undeniably, there were bouts of violence during the détente, but these interruptions were just that, and no major rupture occurred,<sup>63</sup> due in part to the two leaders' obvious commitment to the peace. Rhys was an astute leader and had benefitted hugely from Henry II's changing attitudes, gaining recognised supremacy over most other principalities, his rule recognised and fewer threats to his leadership, from other

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<sup>59</sup> Warren, *Henry II*, p. 164–5.

<sup>60</sup> Warren, *Henry II*, p. 164–5.

<sup>61</sup> 'Kings of Wales' are recorded in a letter sent to the king of France. John of Salisbury, *Letters*, no. 279, referenced in Latimer, 'Henry II's campaign', p. 542.

<sup>62</sup> Warren, *Henry II*, p. 202, n. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Roger Turvey, *The Lord Rhys*, pp. 65–6.

principalities and, most importantly, from the English king himself. The English alliance cemented Rhys's role in native Welsh politics and secured him in his own role in Deheubarth.

To be sure, Rhys rebelled against Richard I after Henry's death, but this can be interpreted in a variety of ways. One contemporary commented that Richard insulted Rhys through not showing up to a meeting,<sup>64</sup> though this is a matter of contention: some historians argue that Richard did not insult Rhys, and others conclude that Rhys considered the agreement personal, with Henry II, rather than with the crown or Henry's successor.<sup>65</sup> Both Henry and Rhys benefitted from the relationship between them, and it is most probable that Rhys, after Henry's death, did not know how Richard was going to conduct Welsh affairs: after all, Richard had little experience of Wales, unlike his brother John, and Rhys had little chance to gauge his intentions in Wales. There seems a good chance that Rhys was testing Richard. Rhys abandoned his alliance with England for a variety of reasons, but it seems plausible that it could have been that Rhys believed his gains were at risk under the new regime.

Llewelyn ab Iorwerth has been credited with many achievements:<sup>66</sup> he has been praised for his domination of Wales during the early-thirteenth century and was given the sobriquet 'the Great' after his death. For all the things he did during his life, friendly and consistent relations with his neighbours, Welsh and English, cannot be counted among them. Llewelyn is arguably one of the most studied princes in Welsh history, and there is insufficient space here to comment fully on his relationship with the English kings.<sup>67</sup> However, a brief survey reveals both similarities and differences in Llewelyn's English strategy. For instance, Llewelyn was

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<sup>64</sup> Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*. ed. William Stubbs (London 1870), vol. 3, p. 23. Rhys left Oxford, where the meeting was to be held, 'indignatus', or angry, because of Richard I's not turning up.

<sup>65</sup> Pryce 'Rhys ap Gruffudd'

<sup>66</sup> David Carpenter, *Henry III: The Rise to Power and Personal Rule 1207–1258* (New Haven, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> See Pryce 'Anglo-Welsh Relations' and Walker, R. F. 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales, 1218-1232.' *The English Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 344, (1972), pp. 465–94 for some useful analyses of Llewelyn ab Iorwerth's relations with his English neighbours.

the son-in-law of the king, marrying John's illegitimate daughter Joan, he also married some of his daughters to Marcher lords and, as Huw Pryce argued, realised 'royal support was important [...] because it eliminated the threat that the king would back any of his [Llewelyn's] rivals.'<sup>68</sup> This much is obvious in Llewelyn's marriage: his wife would often intercede on Llewelyn's behalf to her father, a useful way to gain concessions from his father-in-law.<sup>69</sup> Llewelyn's actions fit no model of any previous Anglo-Welsh relationship. Llewelyn did gain something from the English, however. Though unofficial, Llewelyn had effective control of Powys from Gwenwynwyn's death in c.1216: Gwenwynwyn's son was underage, and, during his minority, his lands, including the entirety of Southern Powys, were given to Llewelyn ab Iorwerth with the proviso that 'Llywelyn's right in the lands shall neither increase nor diminish on account of this custody'.<sup>70</sup> The agreement reached was clearly worded to make the arrangement temporary, but the possibility that Llewelyn was going into this agreement with the intention of never giving back Powys to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, at least during Llewelyn's lifetime, should not be ignored. It is also notable that when this settlement was agreed, the witnesses to it were mostly Anglo-Norman with virtually no representatives of the Powys elite. The fact that Llewelyn held Southern Powys, multiple times and without the English protesting against it, is indicative of the occasional and tacit consent to the new norm from the English, a useful course of events for Llewelyn.

For most Welsh princes, their interrelations with other native Welsh polities and their relationship with the English were of key importance. However, this took many different forms, from Madog ap Maredudd's policy of often supporting the English king, to Llewelyn the

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<sup>68</sup> 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. W. Weiler and Ifor W. Rowlands (Abingdon and New York, 2002), p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Donna R. Messer, 'A Model of Welsh Queenship: Joan of England and the Medieval Court of Gwynedd', *Women's History Review*, 30/5 (2021), pp. 754–65.

<sup>70</sup> *The Acts of Welsh Rulers: 1120–1283*, ed. by Huw Pryce, (Cardiff, 2010), pp. 396–8.

Great's chronic rebellion and limited alliance. Many of the princes, though, did gain from English support, or at least from English relations with their polity. Madog ap Maredudd kept his lands secure, as did his successors, no mean feat in medieval Wales. Rhys ap Gruffudd had a confrontational approach, until he came to an agreement with Henry II that was, overall, quite favourable to Rhys, and they both came to have mutual respect for each other. Llewelyn the Great had recognition, albeit limited, and outright confrontation was the norm for his reign, showing the variation in approaches and outcomes. Powys's relationship with England was the closest, both geographically and diplomatically, and it is no surprise that when the English-reared Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn came to Powys, he considered himself less a Welsh ruler, more a Marcher lord. It is also worth noting that after the conquest in 1282, Powys kept the same dynasty as their baronial lord, with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn managing to hold onto his lordship after the conquest, as they had had during the reign of the princes, an exceptional feat for any dynasty in Wales. This is not to say, of course, that the relationship between England and Welsh rulers could not be violent, disruptive and negative. It was all these. But, when looking at the broader picture, there is a scene painted that shows an Anglo-Welsh relationship that did not wholly involve the subjugation of Welsh rulers – they were able to manipulate relations with the English to their own ends.

### Chapter 3: Mediation and Adjudication: The English king as Mediator in Wales and the March (c.1220–c.1280)

In medieval Wales, territorial disputes were for the most part inevitable. Due in part to the partible inheritance that was a feature of traditional Welsh law,<sup>71</sup> many medieval Welsh polities fractured and splintered after a leader's death. Mediation was just as large a part of Welsh law as dispute was. There is an abundant historiography surrounding arbitration in medieval Wales, in part due to the emphasis on arbitration and mediation in Welsh law. As Dafydd Jenkins has argued, the Law of Hywel Dda was more 'concerned with justice and reconciliation than with order and punishment'.<sup>72</sup> L. Beverley Smith's work on arbitration in later medieval Wales is revealing since, although the period she studied is later, some aspects of arbitration could be extended into earlier centuries.<sup>73</sup> Shaun McGuiness's dissertation on arbitration in medieval Wales throws up some interesting examples of the mediative role of many individuals and groups in medieval Wales.<sup>74</sup> An under-researched part of both the Anglo-Welsh relationship and Welsh arbitration is the mediative role England played in Welsh disputes, in cases usually concerning territorial disputes involving Welsh rulers and Marcher lords. Two leading examples are the Arwystli Case, on the eve of the Edwardian conquest, between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Southern Powys and Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, the Prince of Wales, and the Gorddwr dispute between the same Gruffudd and the Corbets of Caus. These cases show a remarkable willingness, not least by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, to utilise English law and kingly aid not only in solving disputes but also in winning them. It may be possible to glimpse

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<sup>71</sup> For the law on distribution of land, see Anon. *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, ed. and trans. by Aneurin Owen (London, 1841), pp. 536–7.

<sup>72</sup> Dafydd Jenkins, 'The Significance of the Law of Hywel', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1977), p. 67.

<sup>73</sup> L. Beverley Smith, 'Disputes and Settlements in Medieval Wales: The Role of Arbitration', *The English Historical Review*, 106/421 (1991), pp. 835–60.

<sup>74</sup> Shaun McGuiness, 'Arbitration and Dispute Resolution in Wales during the Age of the Princes c.1100 – c.1283', Master's dissertation (Bangor University, 2012); Anon., *Cartae et alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de Glamorgancia Pertinent*, ed. George T. Clark (Cardiff, 1910), pp. 693–4.

the role of the king in the Welsh and Welsh-Marcher disputes that proliferated throughout Welsh society when looking at these cases. The Patent Rolls, the Close Rolls and myriad other sources help build this picture. Letters to and from Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and many other Welsh and English dignitaries from the early thirteenth century to after the Edwardian Conquest in 1282 survive in the National Archives, and provide invaluable sources for communication between the Welsh and English powers.<sup>75</sup>

The Gorddwr dispute, between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his maternal uncle, Thomas Corbet, has been discussed by historians for decades.<sup>76</sup> Hostility surrounding the Gorddwr certainly existed between Margaret Corbet and her brother, perhaps from as early as Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog's lifetime.<sup>77</sup> Henry III's role in this conflict is amply revealed through his actions in trying to settle the dispute, one that had rapidly escalated into what amounted to a Marcher war between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and his uncle Thomas Corbet. Indicative of the violence around the dispute is a letter, dated by J. G. Edwards to the 1250s. Gruffudd is the author of the letter, in which he accuses his uncle of hanging three of Gruffudd's men, creating a blood feud across the border. Gruffudd wrote in his letter that 'he would prefer to suffer all evils than do anything against the king' and that he 'is prepared to appear before the king' whenever the king wishes.<sup>78</sup> Gruffudd's intent in writing the letter can be easily deduced. The ruler of Powys was clearly trying to compel Henry act on this issue, and one must assume Gruffudd had good reason for thinking that the king could and would do so. On 5 July 1254, Henry sent a commission to inquire into the 'the amending of injuries and excesses in the March, and especially for the hearing of the contentions between Thomas

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<sup>75</sup> *A Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, ed. J. Goronwy Edwards (Cardiff, 1935).

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Archdeacon Thomas, 'The Gorther', *Collections Historical and Archaeological related to Montgomeryshire* 38/2 (1916), pp. 185–213; C. J. Spurgeon, 'Gwyddgrug Castle, Forden, and the Gorddwr Dispute', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 57/2 (1961/2), pp. 125–137; and David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys: Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132–1293* (Woodbridge, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Archdeacon Thomas, 'The Gorther', p. 198.

<sup>78</sup> *A Calendar*, pp. 19–20.

Corbet and Griffith son of Wenonewen [*sic*].<sup>79</sup> Archdeacon Thomas, in his study of ‘The Gorther’, argued that the commission’s findings ‘rankled’ in Gruffudd’s mind.<sup>80</sup> This may well be the case, but it must be asked why, in 1257, and clearly in response to Llewelyn ap Gruffudd’s growing influence,<sup>81</sup> Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and thirteen others, including curiously a Thomas Corbet, are mandated for ‘counsel and aid to John de Grey’,<sup>82</sup> an important role for someone apparently disaffected by the king’s actions of just two years previous. Though Gruffudd’s bidding his time with the English after losing Powys is a possibility, it is more likely that, if Gruffudd felt disaffected by the English king, then he felt able to go over to join in alliance with Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, which he did in 1263. Could it be that the 1257 entry, partnering Thomas Corbet and Gruffudd together, was part of a mediation process? It is unlikely, though possible. What is certain is that Gruffudd was still in royal service two years after the Gorddwr intervention, showing, perhaps, that the mediative role of the king did not completely fail. The Gorddwr dispute reveals an aspect of Henry III’s governance and influence in Wales rarely discussed, that of Welsh-Marcher dispute resolution. In the Gorddwr, Henry clearly was able to exercise mediative and judicial powers, though the fact that both Corbet and Gruffudd considered themselves Marcher lords must be taken into consideration.<sup>83</sup>

The Arwystli dispute presents a fascinatingly well-documented case in which the king of England prominently features. Debate over various issues surrounding the Arwystli Case, ranging in focus from Edward I’s council into Welsh law,<sup>84</sup> to Llewelyn’s real intentions with

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<sup>79</sup> ‘1254, membranes 17d, 16d, 15d, 14d, 13d, 12d, 11d, 10d, 8d, 5d, 3d, 2d.’, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry III: Volume 4, 1247–1258*, ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte (London, 1908), p. 438.

<sup>80</sup> Archdeacon Thomas, ‘The Gorther’, p. 198.

<sup>81</sup> Stephenson, ‘Medieval Powys’, p. 139.

<sup>82</sup> ‘1257, membranes 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8.’, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry III: Volume 4, 1247–1258*. ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte (London, 1908), p. 553.

<sup>83</sup> For Gruffudd’s consideration of himself as a Marcher, see Stephenson, ‘Medieval Powys’, p. 145.

<sup>84</sup> John E. Lloyd, ‘Edward the First’s Commission of Enquiry of 1280–1: An Examination of its Origin and Purpose’, *Y Cymmrodor*, 25 (1915), pp. 1–20.

the dispute.<sup>85</sup> There is insufficient space to comment in detail on the complexities of the case,<sup>86</sup> but the king's role is revealing in showing the growing jurisdictional power the king of England now held in Wales. For one, both parties often presented their arguments to the king, who was the main decider of which law to follow. Edward often was evasive when his thoughts on the matter were sought, usually by Llewelyn, using prevarications such as he would strive to 'adhere to the customs used in the time of his [Edward's] predecessors'.<sup>87</sup> Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, who epitomised the changing nature of Powys from Welsh principality to Marcher lordship,<sup>88</sup> and whose recourse to English aid during the Gorddwr dispute had failed, seems to have had, albeit tacitly, Edward's support. Edward knew that he could not give Llewelyn political points in denying him his own Welsh law, but he could not hand both the judicial powers over to the native Welsh and thus let Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn down. Edward had become a mediator in this dispute, though far from an impartial one.

We can glimpse some English intervention in Wales in the Patent Rolls, formulaic administrative documents which record letters patent issued by the English state. Occasionally the entries involve Welsh-Marcher disputes, but they also include dynastic and familial disputes in Wales. The Gorddwr example is, admittedly, an example where two Marcher lords disputed land, and therefore the king's influence was bound to be felt. Nevertheless, it can still be noted that in jurisdictional terms and in adjudicational terms the king of England was an important actor in Welsh disputes: in May 1254, Henry de la Mare, Geoffrey de Langele and William de Wilton were appointed justices to hear and determine the 'contentions between Owen son of Griffin and Llewellyn his brother touching lands which Owen claims of the

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<sup>85</sup> David Stephenson, 'The Arwystli Case', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 94 (2006), p. 12

<sup>86</sup> For a thorough analysis of the case, see J. Beverley Smith, *Llewelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 469–89.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, 'Llewelyn ap Gruffudd', p. 479

<sup>88</sup> T. Tout and A. Carr, 'Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn (d. 1286), baron in Wales', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available at: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-11694>. Accessed: 18 May 2022.

inheritance of his father'.<sup>89</sup> This patent roll is suggestive of the king's intervention in a native Welsh dispute. At the time of this entry, Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and his brothers were arguing over inheritance of lands in Gwynedd. The king intervened often during this dispute, including in this entry of 1254, just one year before the decisive battle of Bryn Derwin.<sup>90</sup> It must be admitted, however, that Llewelyn and Owain ap Gruffudd's brother Dafydd defected to the English a few years after this entry in the Patent Roll. In this entry itself we can see the presence of an Englishman, Alan le Zouche, and as such it is possible that this was why the king became involved. Even if this were the explanation of the king's actions, however, it would nonetheless contribute to the idea that the intervention of the king of England was acceptable to some Welsh princes, including Llewelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd himself.

A less visible but still highly potent part of English interventionism in Welsh disputes is that of intra-dynastic feuding that, as mentioned above, was rife throughout Wales.<sup>91</sup> To take a well-known example, Llewelyn ap Gruffudd's brother Dafydd is known to have gone to England often to exert pressure on his brother, though it is also true that he sporadically returned to Llewelyn's side. Just as well-known is the dispute between Gruffudd ap Llewelyn, Llewelyn ap Gruffudd's father, and his younger half-brother Dafydd ap Llewelyn, who both vied for power in Gwynedd. In both these cases, England's harbouring of Welsh dynasts is ever present, leading one to assume that England was the go-to staging post for disaffected Welsh dynasts. In a convincing study of the 1241 agreement between Dafydd ap Llewelyn, when he was still in power, and Henry III, David Carpenter argued that the agreement, whose terms at first sight seem to be humiliating, could be considered a shrewd move by Dafydd to ensure his continuing ruling of Gwynedd, by having the king of England keep Gruffudd ap Llewelyn in

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<sup>89</sup> '1254, membranes 17d, 16d, 15d, 14d, 13d, 12d, 11d, 10d, 8d, 5d, 3d, 2d', *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry III: Volume 4, 1247-1258*, ed. H C Maxwell Lyte (London, 1908), p. 432.

<sup>90</sup> For Bryn Derwin and its aftermath, see Smith, 'Llewelyn ap Gruffudd', pp. 74–76.

<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of intra-dynastic rivalries and for some examples, see David Stephenson, *Medieval Wales c.1050–1332: Centuries of Ambiguity* (Cardiff, 2019), pp. 101–4.

custody at the Tower of London, therefore lessening the threat from him.<sup>92</sup> In all these examples, and others besides, there is a view of England, the English king and the English court more generally, being dragged in, willingly or not, into disputes. It could be argued that this was part and parcel of the policy of ‘divide and rule’ propagated by the English kings. This is most probably part of the case, but this argument limits the agency of the princes themselves. Dafydd ap Llewelyn’s peace with Henry III, for instance, does not fit in with the ‘divide and rule’ hypothesis, for Dafydd was the better of the two claimants for Henry III if he had any hope of gaining land in Wales. Therefore, England was not only a mediator but an active participant in these disputes, though the fact that this could be to dispel discontent through division should not be ignored.

Ultimately, the king of England had a sizeable impact on Welsh disputes. Though in earlier centuries the use of military force had been the main go-to source of countering Welsh hostilities, in the thirteenth century disputes start to become visible in the administrative records (although admittedly this could reflect the survival of sources). Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn himself is a particularly useful example of someone who could use the English for his own ends, though it was more complicated than often thought. Gruffudd failed in the Gorddwr Dispute. How far this bothered him is unknown, but it may be significant that he is recorded in royal service two years after. The Arwystli dispute shows how things changed, especially with a new monarch sitting on the throne. Edward I seems to have tried to help Gruffudd in this case, though tacitly and with reservations. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn considered himself a Marcher, it is true, but he is known to have used Welsh law when it suited him. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, instead of using English militarily and strategically using the English to hold onto stability, he used them for territorial expansion. The English king also

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<sup>92</sup> David Carpenter, ‘Dafydd ap Llywelyn’s Submission to King Henry III in October 1241: A New Perspective’, *Welsh History Review*, 23/4 (2007), pp. 8 and 10.

made his presence felt in dynastic disputes, ranging from direct intervention, such as harbouring fugitive dynasts, to indirect intervention in the form of Gruffudd ap Llewelyn's prolonged imprisonment. England's involvement in Welsh disputes, be they between Welsh rulers and Marcher lords or purely Welsh disputes, and the acceptance of this intervention adds another layer to the complicated web of Anglo-Welsh relations.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

It is clear that, far from the Welsh rulers being passive victims of English domination, the relationship between Welsh and English rulers could have real and substantial mutual benefits. The Welsh princes were usually divided; they would rarely come together and only at times when the English threatened all the Welsh polities. Though Roger Turvey suggests that there was a divide and rule strategy from the English, it can also be concluded that the Welsh princes adopted a similar approach. They acted in English wars, such as the war between King Stephen and Matilda. Powys's rulers saw a clear strategic advantage in their alliance with the English: befriending one enemy to fight the other minimises the potential threat as much as any other strategy could have done. Though some influence of English culture can be detected in Powys during the twelfth century, Madog ap Maredudd maintained Welsh culture which runs counter to the idea that Powys was traitorous. What the Powys rulers were doing was most definitely not best for Wales as a whole but was best for Powys. In Deheubarth, there is another variation of the same theme, security. The Lord Rhys considered himself an enemy of the English, his fighting record leads to no other conclusion. Yet in 1171 he made peace with Henry II. Both had good reasons for this peace, but Henry's reasons have been stressed more than Rhys's. Rhys seems to have changed his mind because of his concern for his territorial gains being lost, and a need for recognition. Gwynedd, the most famous and arguably most powerful of the Welsh polities, Llewelyn ab Iorwerth, ruler of Gwynedd during the first half of the thirteenth century, had a rebellious streak, but also negotiated and married into leading English families, including the family of the English king. His marriage to Joan, illegitimate daughter of King John, helped both sides keep in communication. Llewelyn could and would use English support when available.

Disputes were rampant in medieval Wales, as was English involvement in them. We have seen that in Welsh-Marcher disputes, the king features reasonably prominently,

intervening often in Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's numerous disputes with family and foes. At the beginning of this dissertation, Dafydd ap Llewelyn's agreement with Henry III and David Carpenter's analysis of it was referenced. This agreement and Carpenter's convincing analysis shows us the king's involvement, knowingly or not, in Welsh dynastic disputes. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn's use of English law to win cases, be it successfully or not, shows some recourse, though Gruffudd was effectively a Marcher lord, to English law. Though there were benefits, it would be wrong to assume that the entirety of the Anglo-Welsh relationship during the Medieval era was peaceful and coexistent, this is clearly not the case, but it still must be considered that the relationship was far from being the underdog Welsh princes against the might of the English, but that Welsh princes had agency in their dealings, and could use English and Marcher influence to their own advantage.

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