To Kill Thy Brother: Kin-Strife, Power, and Politics in the Medieval Welsh Dynasty of Powys

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Introduction

Iorwerth ap Bleddyn awoke one night in 1111 to find his castle ablaze and his men fighting off an attack.[1] Iorwerth struggled to escape his burning home only to find himself struck down by an enemy's spear.[2] Perhaps Iorwerth knew the moment he woke up that he was being attacked by his nephew, Madog ap Rhirid, the son of Iorwerth's older brother Rhirid ap Bleddyn. Iorwerth knew that his nephew would someday come to his lands seeking power and wealth that Iorwerth had denied him. Especially after Madog murdered his uncle and Iorwerth's brother, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn. Cadwgan had been the ruler of Powys and leader of the Powys ruling family for decades before Madog decided to challenge his uncles. Madog hoped that by eliminating his uncles he would secure the throne of the Welsh kingdom of Powys. Unfortunately for Madog Ap Rhirid, the murder of his uncles did not secure him power over Powys.[3]

Instead, Maredudd Ap Bleddyn, Cadwgan's and Iorwerth's younger brother, and Owain Ap Cadwgan, Cadwgan's son, sought vengeance and an end to the political machinations of Madog Ap Rhirid. Madog's actions threatened the stability of Powys, and in a desperate bid to protect himself he turned to the Anglo-Norman King Henry I. While Henry I did not exert direct control over Wales, by 1111 he was a powerful figure, able to influence the politics of Wales as an outsider. Madog Ap Rhirid did successfully negotiate protection from Henry I, but eventually Maredudd and Owain caught Madog and castrated him in 1113, an act that ended Madog Ap Rhirid's bid for power.

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[1] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 73-75.
[2] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 75.

Madog ap Rhirid's actions would not have surprised any medieval Welsh princes; feuding among a kin group, or kin-strife, was a prominent feature of medieval Welsh politics. Previous scholarship on Welsh kin-strife has depicted these feuds as a sign of the divided and violent nature of Welsh politics that enabled the victory of the Anglo-Normans over the Welsh.[4] Scholars contend that Anglo-Norman kings manipulated the Welsh by inserting themselves into feuds in order to assert control over Wales. In their examination of interactions between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans, historians have tended to view the Anglo-Normans as militarily and intellectually superior to the Welsh. They describe Wales as "home to primitive ways and ideas."[5] For this reason earlier scholarship has even suggested conquest as being "inevitable and beneficial" to the Welsh.[6] One twentieth-century scholar stated that the Anglo-Normans were "a foreign foe who with the yoke imposed order and civilization."[7] Even early Welsh scholars depicted the Anglo-Norman conquest as beneficial. Robert Vaughan, a Welsh lord during the 1660s, wrote in a letter prefacing his examination of a medieval Welsh feud, "We may well say we were conquered to our gain, and undone to our advantage."[8] This view reflects an Anglo-Norman perspective that even the Welsh seem to have adopted.

This perspective appears early and prominently in interpretations of Welsh law. Edward I commissioned a report on the Welsh in 1280 to determine what laws and customs would be implemented in Wales. The report echoed the general bias that the Anglo-Normans felt towards

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[4] See R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 36; Roger Turvey, *The Welsh Princes 1063-1283* (New York: Pearson Education, 2002), 32; Smith, Beverley L. "Fosterage, adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales," *Welsh History Review* 16 (1992).
[5] John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest time to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1912), I: 89.
[6] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* II: 357.
[7] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* II: 357.
[8] Robert Vaughan, *British antiquities revived, or, A friendly contest touching the soveraignty of the three princes of VVales in ancient times managed with certain arguments whereunto answers are applyed by Robert Vaughan, Esq.; to which is added the pedigree of the Right Honourable the Earl of Carbery, Lord President of Wales; with a short account of the five royall tribes of Cambria, by the same author* (Oxford: Hen. Hall, 1662).

Welsh law. Many Anglo-Norman lords reported that the Welsh settled disputes by means of war rather than by law. [9] The Welsh laws were already being overturned in favor of Anglo-Norman ones by the time of this report. Stephan de Segrave, the king's justice, reported a land dispute being litigated not "by Welsh law, but in the English manner."[10] Knowledge of Welsh law varied among the Anglo-Norman authority in Wales. In this report an English clerk wrote, "find out what the law of Galanas are."[11] The law of Galanas governed bloodfueds, compensation and kin responsibility in Wales. By 1200, the Anglo-Normans were abandoning the practice of compensation and were adopting English common law.

In thirteenth-century England death associated with feuding constituted an offense against the state, and the Crown tried it as such. Based on Anglo-Normans' bias against feuding, scholars until the mid-twentieth century argued that the law of Galanas indicated the "primitive nature" of medieval Wales. In 1912 a scholar wrote that it is "difficult to imagine any race which had gone through the mill of Roman jurisprudence retaining the blood-feud and the compensation for manslaughter."[12] This bias against Welsh law in general and against bloodfeuds in particular was not unique or uncommon. In 1952 another scholar asserted that the law reflected a "relatively primitive legal conception."[13] This view faced few challenges until the mid-twentieth century when scholars pointed out that laws regulating bloodfeuds and compensation were common all over medieval Europe during the thirteenth-century.[14]

In addition to the biases against Welsh law and customs, early scholars have depicted

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[9] Great Britain, Court of Chancery, *Calendar of various Chancery rolls: Supplementary Close rolls, Welsh rolls, Scutage rolls, Preserved in the Public record office* (London: Published by H.M.S.O, 1912), 199.
[10] Great Britian, *Calendar,* 193.
[11] Great Britian, *Calendar,* 193.
[12] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* I: 88.
[13] T. Jones Pierce, *Medieval Welsh Society: Selected Essay,* Ed. J. Beverly Smith (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), 295.
[14] Robert Rees Davies, "The Survival of the Bloodfued in Medieval Wales," *History* 54 (1969): 340-341.

Wales as being under the sway of Norman power, though not conquered, from the 1070s with William the Conqueror's campaigns. These scholars have even back projected the Anglo-Norman Conquest to argue that the Earl Harold "subjugated" the Welsh in 1063.[15] In particular, John Edward Lloyd's two-volume history uses the term "subjugation" in describing the actions of both by the Anglo-Saxons and by the Anglo-Normans. Recent scholars have challenged these ideas by arguing that the Welsh resisted the Anglo-Normans with more success than previously suggested. For example, R.R. Davies has argued that the Welsh employed the "divide and rule" strategy effectively against the Anglo-Normans.[16]

In terms of military power, scholars now characterize the Welsh military as comparable rather than inferior to the Anglo-Normans.[17] Previously scholars argued that the Anglo-Normans were militarily more advanced than the Welsh. As one early scholar put it, "there can be little doubt that the initial overwhelming impact of the Anglo-Norman invaders on Wales and Ireland represented the victory of superior military technology and tactics."[18] Assumptions of Welsh military inferiority arose in part from the idea that the Welsh were innately disorganized people and that "pitched battles and protracted campaigns… [were] beyond their capabilities," while in comparison the Normans were capable, strong and disciplined.[19] More recently Sean Davies has pointed out that the "Welsh and Norman commanders worked along similar, recognizable strategic and tactical principles."[20] In short, a consensus is developing that the Welsh were equally capable of manipulating the Anglo-Norman politically just as they were the military

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[15] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* II: 371.
[16] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 36.
[17] For more on Welsh Military see Sean Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).
[18] R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 39.
[19] L.H. Nelson, *The Normans in South Wales, 1070-1171* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 1966), 12.
[20] Davies, *War and Society,* 89.

peers of the Anglo-Normans.

Despite new studies into Welsh history, historians tend to gloss over kin-strife. Earlier works in particular make little mention of such kin-strife in Wales, often either ignoring it altogether or using it to exemplify how violent the Welsh were. Further, scholars have tended to characterize the unification of Wales under one leader, whether an Anglo-Norman king or a Welsh prince, as "progress" and any force working against this progress as "barbarism."[21] Kin-strife as a force of disunity is often only talked about as leading to the downfall of Wales. R.R. Davies argues that whenever Powys had any "sustained momentum" in the direction of unity it "was regularly overtaken and shattered by family partitions and repartitions: by bitter and bloody family feuds…and by crimes of passion, political and otherwise."[22] The division within Powys, and of all of Wales, damaged the Welsh ability to withstand the Normans. [23] There is merit in this view, as frequent internal fighting did make the Welsh vulnerable to Anglo-Norman advances. However, the association of progress with the trajectory towards a single state and the consequential association of Welsh diffusion of power with backwardness has little merit.

Furthermore, Powys remained stable and unified until 1160 when it was divided into several kingdoms. The bouts of kin-strife seen in Powys occurred infrequently and typically ended with a strong king ascending the throne. Powys' kin-strife additionally was intensified by the political machinations of Henry I. Henry I is deemed a particularly successful manipulator playing "the succession game like a political chessboard."[24] However, I will argue that his attempts to interfere in affairs of the royal family of Powys failed to establish any lasting control for Henry I. Rather, the royal family of Powys became adept at handling Henry I's attempts.

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[21] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 42-43.
[22] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 43.
[23]R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 43.
[24] Roger Turvey, *The Welsh Princes 1063-1283* (New York: Pearson Education, 2002), 32.

The perpetuation of kin-strife has deep roots in Welsh culture and politics. Chronicles document episodes of kin-strife since the 6th century.[25] This kind of feuding differed from typical feuding in medieval society because it involved the murder of members of one's own kin-group, such as brothers, cousins and nephews. While killing nuclear family members was not unknown in other medieval societies, it did not assume the cultural and political significance or frequency which kin-strife attained in medieval Wales. Lords, especially Welsh princes, often practiced this type of behavior. Lower-class people might not have participated in this type of behavior, or if they did, the documentation does not record it. This practice has not been well researched by scholars, but most argue that the practice derived from the Welsh practice of partible inheritance.[26]

The Welsh law of partible inheritance ,as laid out in the laws of Hywel Dda, demanded that land be divided not only between brothers, but also between first and second cousins.[27] Both Welsh law and customs dictated that land be split between heirs. This practice largely arose from the fact that land was not viewed as belonging to one person, but rather belonged to the family as a whole. This mentality not only dictated that land be divided, but also placed incredible importance on kin ties. Of course, this focus also created tension within the kin group. In order to gain territory and power, the Welsh heirs attacked each other. Beverly Smith has argued that the practice of fosterage in Wales, in combination with partible inheritance, contributed to these feuds.[28] She contends that fosterage and other types of fictive kinships led to a division of loyalty

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[25] See *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955); Humphrey Llwyd, *Chronica Walliae,* Ed. Ieuan M. Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002); Nennius, *British History and The Welsh Annals*, Ed. John Morris (London: Phillimore &Co. LTD., 1980).
[26] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 58; Turvey, *The Welsh Princes,* 31-34.
[27] *Latin Redaction A of the Law of Hywel,* Translated by Ian F. Fletcher (Cardiff: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1986), 41.
[28] Beverley L. Smith, "Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval

among Welsh dynasties. A foster son was typically more loyal to his foster family than to his biological one. This theory arises from the writings of Gerald of Wales who in his book *The Itinerary Through Wales and the Description of Wales* argues that the ties between foster-brothers were stronger than blood ties and that this caused violence between biological siblings.[29]

Other scholars attribute the feuds to innate violence of the Welsh stating that the princes "were men of violent emotions, and if they were not mutilating each other, they were either imprisoning or exiling their kinfolk."[30] In contrast to this argument little evidence supports the claim that the Welsh were more violent than any other medieval society. Such arguments reflect a continued Anglo-Norman bias towards the Welsh. In short, scholarly explanations of the Welsh kin-strife are inadequate and are removed from evidentiary support. In addition, while partible inheritance was common in Wales, it was not a uniquely Welsh practice.

In medieval Europe inheritance systems varied and there were many instances of partible inheritance. For example, Charlemagne divided his kingdom between his three sons and grandchildren.[31] William the Conqueror divided his land between his sons William Rufus and Robert Curthose. So, while Anglo-Normans often practiced primogeniture, Norman laws only dictated that the entailed land be passed on to the eldest son; all other land acquisitions could be divided up according to the father's will.[32] While partible inheritance may have increased a younger son's chances of inheriting land, it did not offer much more motive to kill rival heirs than in any other medieval society. Additionally, the fosterage system, which allegedly divided

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Wales," *Welsh History Review* 16 (1992).
[29] Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Itinerary Through Wales and the Description of Wales* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons LTD, 1908), 194.
[30] Turvey, *The Welsh Princes*, 32.
[31] Matthew Innes, "Charlemagne's Will: Piety, Politics and the Imperial Succession," *The English Historical Review* 112 (1997): 842.
[32] David Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery: Britian 1066-1284* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110.

loyalty among kin-groups, was practiced by a variety of medieval societies.[33] For instance The practice was common in medieval Iceland.[34] Yet again such behavior did not result in the common practice of kin-strife that occurred among the ruling families of Wales. Earlier scholars have argued that these practices resulted in widespread kin-strife because of the violent nature of the Welsh, but such arguments have little supporting evidence and perpetuate the Anglo-Norman characterization of the Welsh.

I am specifically examining the kin-strife that occurred in the Welsh kingdom of Powys from 1066 to 1160. This period marks the beginning of the Anglo-Norman conquest of England until the division of Powys into several kingdoms. In terms of historiography little work has been done specifically on Powys. In fact, Welsh studies have traditionally focused on all of Wales. When they narrow their focus, they usually examine the kingdom of Gwynedd, which was the largest Welsh kingdom. Powys developed after the departure of the Romans and lasted as an autonomous principality until the fourteenth century.[35] Historians have depicted Powys as being one of the most precarious and divided kingdoms.[36] Therefore, scholars have expressed surprise at how long Powys survived in the face of the internal divisions that troubled it throughout the Norman Conquest.[37]

It is important to make note of the fact that despite being politically divided into separate and largely autonomous kingdoms, the separate Welsh kingdoms shared a strong common cultural identity. Every now and again Welsh princes conquered all of Wales and became the

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[33] For arguments about fosterage in Wales see Smith, "Ritual and Fictive Kinship;" Turvey, *The Welsh Princes,* 33; Huw Pryce, "Marriage and Inheritance" in *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1993).
[34] See William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and peacemaking: feud, law, and society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 171-174.
[35] Turvey, *The Welsh Princes,* 2, 23.
[36] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* II: 583.
[37] Turvey, *The Welsh Princes,* 23.

King of Wales, but their reigns were typically short and did not result in any long-term political unity. Historians have tended to focus on these Welsh overlords rather than the princes who ruled the divided kingdoms. While the number fluctuated for most of the medieval period, there were typically four large Welsh kingdoms, with Powys being the second largest Welsh kingdom, next to Gwynedd, for most of the medieval period.[38] Powys sat right on the border with England and often engaged in warfare with the Anglo-Normans. This interaction between Powys and Anglo-Normans is part of the reason I have chosen to focus on this area. Powys became a powerful state during this period. The royal family expanded into neighboring territories of Ceredigion, Arwystli, Cyfeiliog and made steadfast alliances with the princes of Rhos and Rhufoniog.[39]

The dynasty started by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn ruled Powys from 1063 till 1295. No scholar has specifically examined this royal family. Perhaps because most work done on Welsh princes has focused on those who conquered most ,if not all, of Wales for brief periods of time while Powys' princes are characterized as creators of disunity. Therefore, Powys appears largely in context of works on general Welsh history. The royal family of Powys is frequently cited as examples of kin-strife. The dynastic progenitor, Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, came to power over Powys after the death of his brother, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn.[40] Gruffudd had consolidated power over most of Wales, and his death left a power vacuum. Some historians have characterized Bleddyn to be a "puppet ruler" placed in power by the Anglo-Saxon King Edward the Confessor.[41] However, he gained significant power as he amassed control over most of northern Wales.

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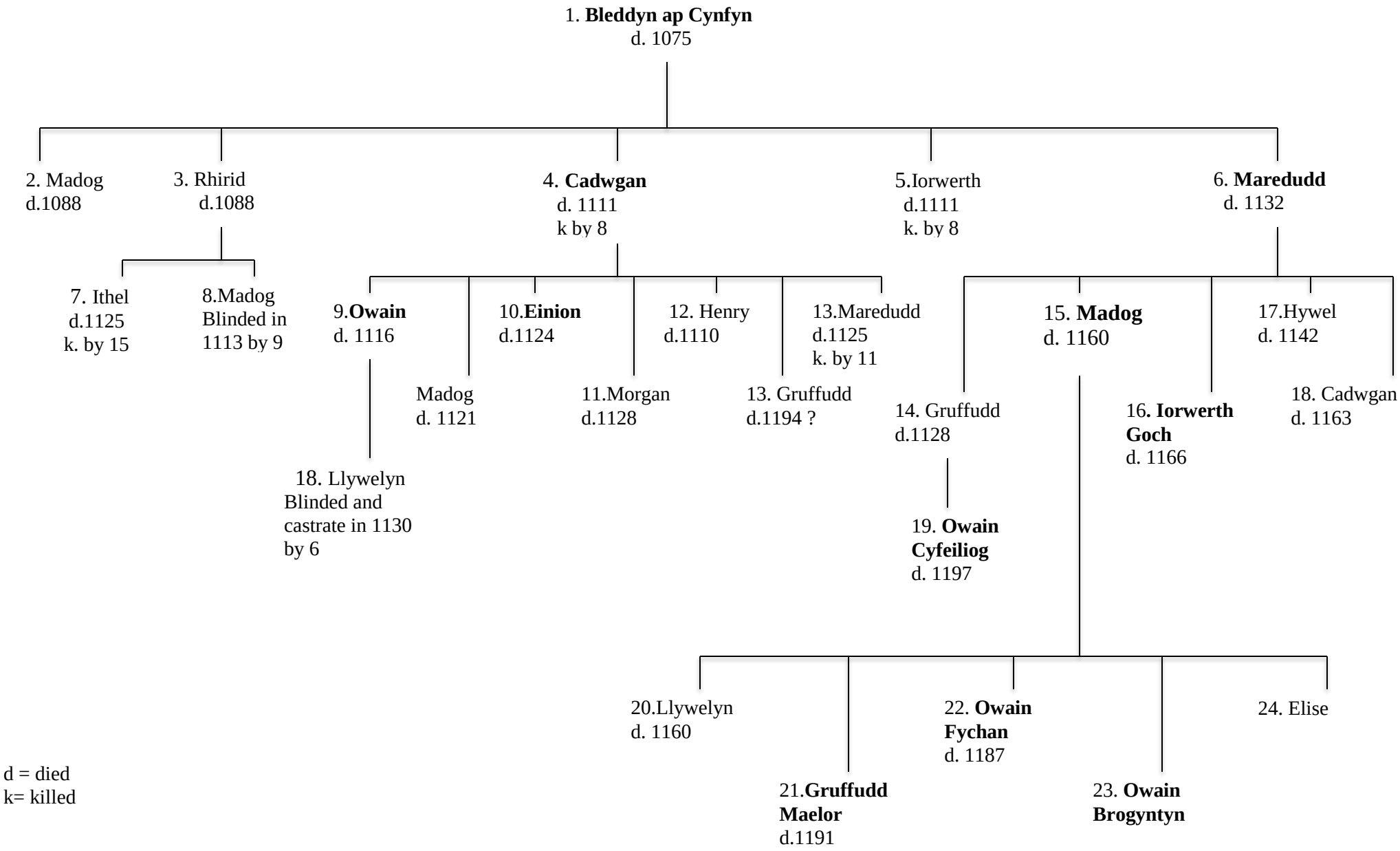
[38] Turvey, *The Welsh Princes,* 2.
[39] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 43.
[40] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 24.
[41] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 24.

Bleddyn had five sons, but only three, Iorwerth, Cadwgan and Maredudd, were politically significant as the oldest two died in battle in 1088.

Within this work I will argue that kin-strife within the ruling dynasty of Powys resulted more from a clear policy pursued by Anglo-Norman kings, particularly by Henry I, to divide and weaken Welsh princes than from internal causes. Internal tensions made the manipulations of Henry I more effective, but they were not what drove kin-strife during this period in Powys. Further, I argue that despite this kin-strife Powys was remarkably stable throughout this period in the face of Anglo-Norman aggression. Most scholars view Powys as an unstable kingdom given to a high level of kin-strife; however, the ruling dynasty demonstrated a large degree of unity especially in the periods following the death of a ruler. Bleddyn ap Cynfyn's sons did not turn on each other following their father's death; instead, they fought together against the Norman threat following the leadership of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn for about two decades with no hints of internal strife. Furthermore, following bouts of kin-strife stable rulers rose to power, such as Owain ap Cadwgan (1111-1116) and Maredudd ap Bleddyn (1124-1132), both of whom created stability in Powys following the outbreak of kin-strife. While Powys did break apart in 1160, this kingdom had previously witnessed more unity than disunity.

Figure 1: Powys Royal Dynasty, 1075-1197



d = died
k= killed

Based on diagrams in R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 60; K. L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh Century* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1991), 107, 109.

Chapter 1: The Cultural Causes of Kin-Strife in Wales

Welsh kin-strife resulted from a combination of cultural and political causes. This chapter will focus on the long-standing cultural causes for Welsh kin-strife. The following chapters will examine the political causes in the context of the royal family of Powys. Welsh laws and customs worked together to create the tensions that led to kin-strife by creating contrasting loyalties and opposing purposes that tore kin groups apart.

Kinship existed at the center of medieval Welsh culture. The Welsh placed just as much, if not more, importance on kinship bonds as the Anglo-Normans and other medieval cultures. At its core Welsh kinship was traced through the male side of a family and typically each kin-group had a common ancestor to whom all members could trace their ancestry.[1] For instance, Bleddyn ap Cynfyn served as the common ancestor to whom all his children, grand children, great-grandchildren and so on trace back too. Eventually of course these descendant groups grew too big for any kin obligation to work efficiently. So while many belonged to the kin group that descended from Bleddyn ap Cynfyn they had limited obligation to other members of the descent group.

How far obligations of kin extended within a group varied depending on the situation. Legally the *Galanas* stipulated that kinship obligations extended " as far as the ninth degree" or to fifth cousins.[2] The kin-group of a murderer was responsible for two-thirds of the payment, which varied based on the rank and gender of the victim.[3] Furthermore, both the paternal and

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[1]Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 72; R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 123.
[2]*Latin Redaction A of the Law of Hywel,* Trans. Ian F. Fletcher (Cardiff: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1986), 23; Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages,* 72.
[3] *Latin Redaction A,* 23; *The Law of Hywel Dda: The Book of Blegywryd*, Trans. Melville Richards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954), 45-46.

maternal lines and both male and female relatives bore the burden of paying compensation.[4] Of course in practice the system rarely worked out so smoothly. For example, fifth cousins were unlikely to willing pay the *Galanas* fines for a distant cousin. Even close relatives were unlikely to eagerly pay for their cousin or brother. Relatives often denied kin ties to the murderer. Some even packed their bags and moved away in order to escape paying compensation.[5] Further, relatives of the victim were unlikely to accept payment. Instead, they were more likely to kill the murderer.

Kinship had a narrower definition in terms of inheritance than in *galanas.* The medieval Welsh largely practiced partible inheritance, meaning that land and wealth were typically divided among suitable male heirs in the kin-group. In such cases of inheritance kin-ship extended as far as second cousins. This group of viable heirs, the "Gwely," all traced their lines back to the same great-grandfather. The *Latin Redaction A of the Law of Hywel* states that "land should be shared three times: first, between brothers; secondly, between first cousins; thirdly, between cousins sons." [6] Any man related farther than second cousin to the owner of the land had no legal claim to the land and could not legally own the land. Land ownership in Wales was based mostly on genealogy. In order for a man to have legal claim to a land-title he had to be able to prove that his family had owned the land for four unbroken generations.[7] Individuals may hold the title to land, but he, as R.R. Davies, describes it "was on trust as a member of the descent group."[8] The owner could not sell the land only lease it for a short period of time. Further, one could not try to

[4] *Latin Redaction A,* 23; *The Book of Blegywryd,* 45-46.
[5] Robert Rees Davies, "The Survival of the Bloodfued in Medieval Wales," *History* 54 (1969): 344.
[6] *Latin Redaction A,* 41.
[7] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 125.
[8] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 125.

avoid the law by bequeathing it to someone outside of the designated heirs.[9] If a suitable male heir could not be found, then the land could be passed down through a daughter, but this option was rarely practiced.[10]

Furthermore, the Welsh recognized both legitimate and illegitimate children as legal heirs. Legitimacy in medieval Wales was not based upon martial status of the parents of a child, but rather upon whether or not the father recognized the child as his own.[11] Consequently, a mother's martial status did not matter much in terms of legitimacy. Of course, this practice violated Church doctrine and thereby created strains between the Welsh and the Church. Tension increased during the Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales as Anglo-Norman clergy began to fill the ranks of the Welsh Church. Later on the Welsh Church was incorporated under the control of an Anglo-Norman Archbishop.[12] Anglo-Norman kings attempted to stop the practice by passing various laws such as the Edward I Statue of Wales in 1284, which stated only legitimate sons could inherit.[13] The two cultures clashed over the practice, but illegitimate children would remain legitimate heirs throughout the High Middle Ages. Though the practice was widely accepted, rival heirs often challenged it in order to avoid having to share their inheritance.

For Example, let us look at Rhys ap Gruffudd or Lord Rhys, the Welsh King of Deheubarth. During the mid-twelfth century Rhys had subjected many southern Welsh princes under his rule in the 1160s.[14] Henry II made Rhys ap Gruffudd the justice of south Wales in 1172.[15] Lord Rhys like most Welsh rulers had several mistress and wives. The children of all

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[9] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 126.
[10] Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, 72
[11] Huw Pryce, "Marriage and Inheritance" in *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales.* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1993), 96.
[12] Huw Pryce, "Marriage and Inheritance," 96.
[13] Huw Pryce, "Marriage and Inheritance," 96.
[14] John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 123.
[15] Davies, *A History of Wales,* 123.

these women were recognized as Rhys' children and therefore were considered legal heirs under Welsh law. After his death his illegitimate children would battle for land and power with their legitimate siblings. Even before his death Rhys' children had begun to contest his power. Maelgwn, the eldest of Rhys' children and the product of Rhys and one of his mistress, tried to seize power before his father even died.[16] For this Rhys imprisoned Maelgwn around 1187.[17] Following Rhys' death Maelgwn and Gruffudd, Rhys eldest legitimate child, would fight for control over Deheubarth. Lord Rhys legitimate children attempted to have his illegitimate children declared as illegitimate heirs, even appealing to King John. John gave most of the territory to Gruffudd, but granted Maelgwn control over Ceredigion and Emlyn in 1199 leaving the rest of the kingdom to be divided among the other heirs.[18] This conflict between heirs weakened southern Wales and reinforced Anglo-Norman control over Wales.

This example reflects the habits of the Welsh aristocracy. Very little is known about the inheritance practices and retributive justice of other social strata in medieval Wales, and these customs likely varied by social class. The Welsh aristocracy valued kinship deeply; however at the same time they demonstrated a violent tendency towards those most closely related to them and to whom they carried the heaviest burden of obligation. A man took on responsibility for his cousins and brothers actions. He shared property with these men and often relied on them to support him in legal cases, such as proving his claim to land. He was required to consult these men when making decisions about their kin-group's land.[19] Nevertheless, these kinship relations often exhibited violence and strife.

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[16] Roger Turvey, *The Lord Rhys: Prince of Deheubarth* (Llandysul, Wales: Gomer Press, 1988), 103.
[17] Turvey, *The Lord Rhys,* 100.
[18] Davies, *A History of Wales,* 130.
[19] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 126.

The question as to why these relationships erupted in periodic bouts of kin-strife is somewhat anomalous in a society that valued kinship so much. So far scholars have not adequately addressed the causes for kin-strife in Welsh aristocratic kin groups A variety of cultural, political, and geographical reasons placed members of royal Welsh dynasties under extreme pressure that drove them to attack each other. The Welsh did not engage in such feuding because they were more violent than other medieval societies or because they practiced fosterage. Rather the cultural and social norms of the Welsh made kin-strife viable and effective path to power. Furthermore, in the period of Anglo-Norman conquest the Welsh faced a strong outside force that threatened the princely class more than past opponents. This outside force often compelled princes to make political necessary actions that broke with cultural customs. Partible inheritance split the land and could create the rise of multiple kings within a kingdom, much as it would in 1160 after the death of Madog ap Maredudd. This left the Welsh vulnerable to Anglo-Normans. To avoid this Welsh Princes would eliminate their relatives to secure control over the throne.

Part of the reason for these conflicts was that Medieval Wales was a highly stratified society with clear social castes based primarily upon family lineage. Welsh society at its simplest was broken into three classes: princes, nobles, and villeins.[20] To what group one belonged to was based on lineage; wealth meant very little in terms of what caste one belonged to in medieval Wales.[21] Because of this one would not loose their status in Welsh society even if they lost their land or wealth. Status was based on the lineage of both parents. Medieval Welsh law makes clear that each person was aware of what rights he did and did not have in Welsh society based on lineage and position. This is seen in the description of given of the king's court in Welsh law

[20] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 115.
[21] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 115.

books. For example a the chief falconer of the king was entitled to " his land free and his horse in attendance, his woolen clothing from the king and his linen clothing from the queen."[22] Further the falconer's "place in court is as the fourth man from the King."[23] The law goes on to specify how many candles the falconer was given, his duties, what rewards and privileges he can earn.[24] Welsh law breaks down the rights and duties of every member of the king's household in a similar manner. While Welsh laws lay out a very clear hierarchy in reality Welsh society like all societies was one full of complicated interaction between social relationships, political ambitions and kin ties. At the top of the hierarchy in Wales sat the princes.

Defining what exactly being a prince in medieval Wales meant is difficult due to the paucity of sources available to the modern scholar. The law texts and other material do put forth some ideas of the duties and power of Welsh princes. For instance princes served as the ultimate judge and determiner of law in Welsh kingdoms.[25] Mostly, princes were military leaders who exerted power through force with few limitations place upon them. Power in medieval Wales was inextricably bound to land. Kingdoms in Wales were not discussed in abstract terms, but were carefully defined territories with boundaries that, as Wendy Davies puts it, were to be "protected, defended, and extended."[26] Welsh princes were rulers of territory first and people second, for this reason power was dependent on the amount of land a prince controlled. Welsh kings were apart of this princely class. The king position can be describes as *primus inter pares,*

[22] *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, Trans. Dafydd Jenkins (Dyfed: Gomer Press, 1986), 14.
[23] *The Law of Hywel Dda,* 14.
[24]*The Law of Hywel Dda,* 14-15.
[25] *The Law of Hywel Dda* 84-84; Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages,* 125-131.
[26] Wendy Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 16.

the first among equals.[27] How much power a King had depended more on his personality and ability than his title.

Due to the highly stratified nature of Welsh society kingship was constrained within the ruling kin-groups.[28] Kingship passed from father to son in theory. While usurpation by nobles outside of the ruling dynasties was possible, families kept tight control over power and the battle for kingship was mostly a family affair.[29] While inheritance would be divided among sons and cousins in Wales, kingship rarely was. Welsh legal texts indicate that the ruling prince would designate an *Edling,* an heir-apparent. The *Edling* would be a member of the prince's family. Some law texts suggest this designation could be applied to "his sons and his nephews, and his male first cousins" as the legitimate heirs.[30] Other legal texts, such as the *Latin Redaction A of the Law of Hywel,* suggested that only the prince's sons can inherit.[31] Any member of the gwely, meaning any of prince's sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, could have been viable options, as were any of the ruling prince's brothers. Further, the law texts do not discuss any formal system for how an *Edling* would be chosen and some texts seem to suggest that many heirs could be thought of as an *Edling* at the same time.[32] The process of succession seems to have been determined more by a kingdoms customs and the character of the kin-group than by law.

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[27] David Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd (*Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), 139.
[28] While the discussion of how the establishment of princes and the princely dynasties is a valuable discussion it is not the focus of this thesis and cannot be discussed in any depth within this paper. For more information of the political developments of Wales see: Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise 400 to 1070* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010); Wendy Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982); John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest time to the Edwardian Conquest,* 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1912).
[29]Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, 72.
[30] *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 7.
[31] *Latin Redaction A,* 41.
[32] Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd,* 138-139.

Despite the fluidity surrounding the possible candidates for kingship, it could only be passed down to one heir. Both *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* and *Brut Y Tywysogyon* emphasized this point in the previously mentioned case of the sons of Rhys ap Gruffudd. After Lord Rhys's death his son Gruffudd "ruled in his place" or as the *Brut Y Tywysogyon* states, "After the death of Lord Rhys, Gruffudd his son, succeeded after him in the rule of his territory."[33] Lord Rhys had several sons, both legitimate and illegitimate, but only one succeeded him as ruler. Of course, there were exceptions to this general scheme of succession; in Wales, occasionally power was divided between heirs after the rulers death.

Within this political system kin-strife was the most viable path to power for the members of Welsh dynasties. A king could have five or more viable heirs; his brothers, his first cousins, his own children, and his nephews, including any illegitimate children. All of these men would be legitimate heirs who could legally succeed the king according to Welsh law. As dynasties strictly controlled power and land there were few outsiders who could be challengers for rule. After the death of a king his heirs claim to the throne would be unstable, as he would have many rivals undermining his ability to rule. Leaving his kin alone would only endanger his position as ruler. Fighting his kin served two purposes, one it allowed him to get rid of potential challenger to his rule and two it allowed him to take their land, which only increased his power. For the other members of the kin-group eliminating the new king, as well as, other potential heirs increased their chances of becoming the king and increased their property. To see this in action let us return once again to the sons of Lord Rhys. He left his son Gruffudd as his *Edling.* This displeased Gruffudd's brothers, particularly Maelgwn, who was the illegitimate eldest son of

[33] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson or the Kings of the Saxons,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), 93; *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 179.

Lord Rhys. Maelgwn gathered his forces and storm Gruffudd's home.[34] Maelgwn proved to be more generous then others and instead of killing his brother he imprisoned Gruffudd.[35] Gruffudd eventually released from prison came back to pester Maelgwn. This story does not include the actions of Maelgwn and Gruffudd's other brothers who also competed to be prince.

Partible inheritance does play a large role in these conflicts. Even before the death of a king his group of heirs would have controlled land within the kingdom as lords. After his death his land would be divided between his heirs. Most historians put forth the idea that this created competition between the heirs driving them to kill each other in order to regain all the land of the father and therefore retain the level of power their father had. This mostly likely was element of kin-strife. The bigger problem though in terms of princes is that it provided the competitors of the *Edling* with the means to challenge him. Its true that even if the other heirs had no land whatsoever they would still be a possible competitor to the *Edling* due to lineage alone. However, land equaled power in the medieval world. Land provided resources and wealth to noblemen, the things one needs to wage war. Partible inheritance provided most, if not all, possible heirs with the ability to wage war on their kin. Together partible inheritance and the strict hierarchy, which limited power to a single family, created a political situation where the only way to gain power and keep it was to hurt other members of your kin. In part its easy to see kin-groups killing each other simply out of greed and ambition to claim the throne, but a variety of cultural, political, and geographical reasons pressured princes to secure land and power.

Most of this comes back to the importance placed on land in Welsh politics. Power was "defined in relation to territory."[36] New kings faced the lost of a significant portion of his

[34] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson*, 193.
[35] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson*, 194.
[36] Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales*, 16.

property to his relatives. This weakened him not only in relation to other heirs, but also to outside forces. Wales's princes faced almost constant threats on their borders from both other princes and external threats. Other princes were just as eager to expand their borders and one way to do that was to conquer their neighbor. Whether or not a new prince would have the support of his kin-group against an enemy could not be guaranteed. Other members of the kin-group weren't always inclined to help their rival, sometimes this meant they did nothing and other times they joined enemy if the right incentive was offered. The Anglo-Normans often took advantage by offering rivals land and support, allowing them to weaken an entire kingdom. The Anglo-Normans and before them the Anglo-Saxon provided a constant threat to princes. The Welsh also had to deal with the threat of Vikings who regularly pillage the coastline. Surrounded by external threats a king could not afford to tolerate internal ones, eliminating a troublesome relative insured the prince's grip on power. Securing a majority of the land in a kingdom secured the princes gasp on the kingdom.

Princes mainly functioned as military leaders and their power largely came from their ability to use force. The center of a medieval Welsh army is the *teulu*, or warband. This group made-up of about fifty or so nobles and freeman, served as the core of the Welsh princes army.[37] The men who made up *teulu* would be close to a professional soldier and used to command the less experienced troops when a prince called upon an entire army. Any powerful Welsh lord had a *teulu.* While a larger army could be raised for more formal war, the *teulu* served as the base of a prince or lords power. Sean Davies in his examination of the medieval Welsh military institution, states that the "*teulu* protected the king from his enemies. It ensured his social position, both by giving him physical force to rule as part of the military elite and by providing

[37] Sean Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 14-31.

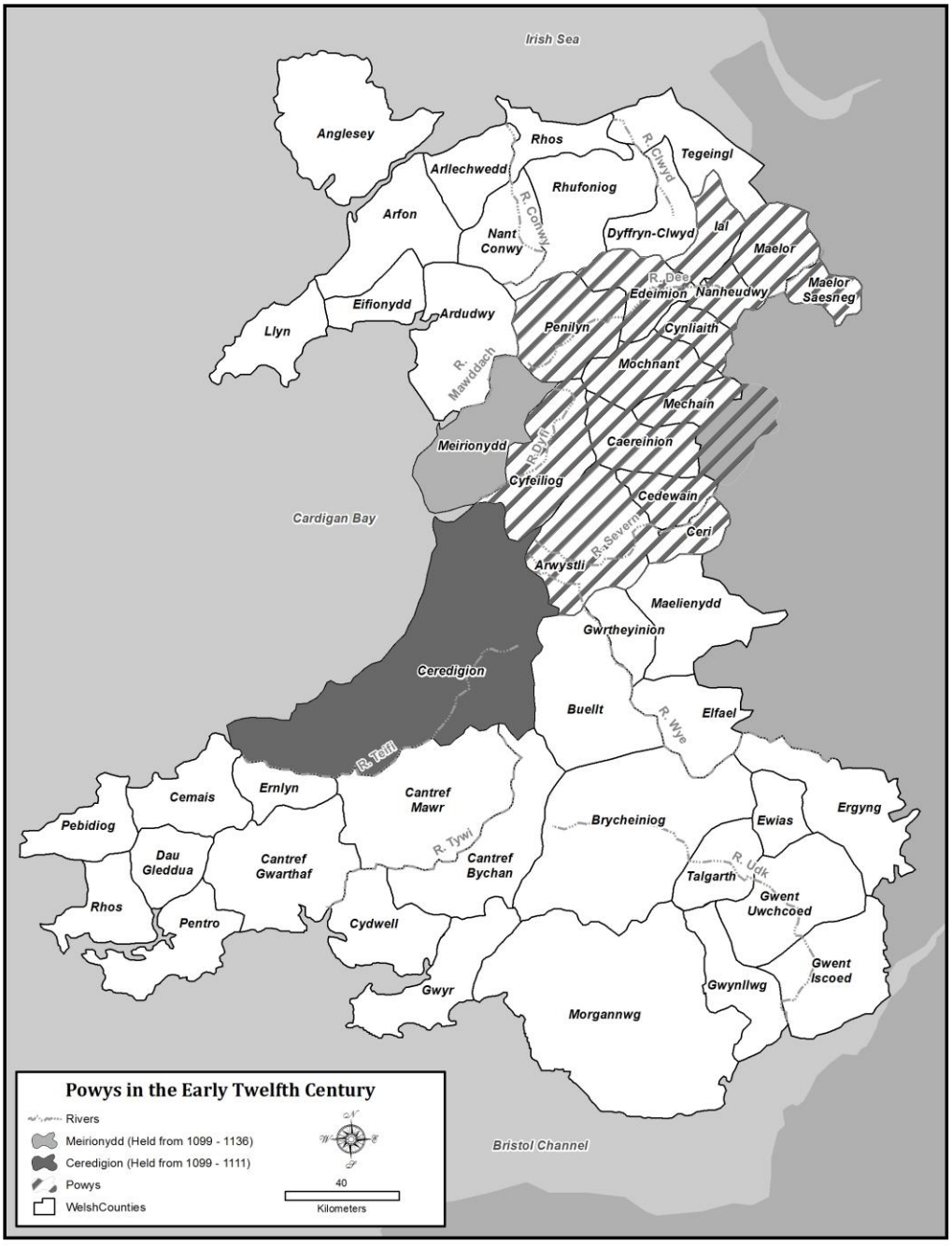
him with the prestige and trappings of nobility."[38] For these reasons a prince need the full support of his warband to succeed in ruling. If any of his competitors were able to raise a force to challenge him having the support of his warband would mean the difference between his death and victory. If a prince lost the support of his warband it would be disastrous. In order to ensure support a prince needed to continue to pay his warband and allow them access to ample spoils, which could include land.[39] Failure to pay or give the warband enough spoils could lead the warband to abandon the lord or kill him.[40] For instance Gruffudd ap Llywelyn was " fell through the treachery of his own men" due to them losing faith him after several losses to King Harold in 1063.[41] In order to ensure support a prince needed a constant supply of spoils and land. Land provided a prince with the resources needed to pay his warband. This pressure to continue expand their territory in order to continue to support their power base drove princes to attack members of their own kin who were far easier targets than other princes who would have raised an army to protect their kingdom.

The pressure to expand clashed with the geography of Wales providing princes with limited option when expanding. Wales was constrained geographically, surrounded by sea on three sides and on its eastern boundary faced with a powerful state that made pushing east difficult.[42] The interior of Wales is made up of mountains and marshes, isolating kingdoms from each other.[43] The mountainous terrain combined with a large amount of woodland and marshes made travel between kingdoms difficult. In order for the prince of Powys to conquer Ceredigion, a kingdom located to the southwest of Powys, they needed to cross a mountain range a difficult

[38] Davies, *War and Society,* 37.
[39] Davies, *War and Society,* 37.
[40] Davies, *War and Society,* 42.
[41] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 27; Davies, *War and Society,* 42.
[42] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 7-8.
[43] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 8.

task in the 12th century. The physical boundaries that separated the kingdoms made fighting other kingdoms difficult and costly, far easier would it be to kill of a cousin and take his land ensuring ones own success and getting rid of a rival. Further the geography of Wales's limited the amount of usable land there was. While Wales is by no means an unfertile land the interior geography has limited the areas able to sustain a population. For instance, the mountain massif in upland Wales isolates much of the usable land on the coastline from the rest of Wales. With few options the pressure to obtained lands pushed princes towards their kin, whose lands they had a justifiable claim to.

The power structure of medieval Wales in combination with cultural and societal norms created an unstable political structure based upon controlling land and dominating rivals. In order for a prince to be successful he need to control land and provide ample resources to his supporters. Land was a precious resource as Welsh was geographically limited in several ways. Welsh cultural norms created a system where princes had to compete with a large number of possible rivals all of whom were among their own kin group. These pressures were heightened by Anglo-Norman interference into Welsh culture. Leaders like Henry I recognized that these pressures could be manipulated to weaken the Welsh to foreign forces. By disrupting the status quo in a dynasty Henry I could break apart a unified kingdom. Kin-strife became a part of Henry I and the kings after him policy. Powys while subject to all of these pressures initially did not fall to them during Anglo-Norman Conquest. Rather Henry I incited kin-strife in order to weaken Powys to Anglo-Norman influence.



Jason Kord, "Powys in the Early Twelfth Century," (map).
(Based on map in David Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings" in *The Anarchy of King Stephan's Reign,* ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2001), 257.)

Chapter 2: So it begins, Powys and Normans, 1063-1100

The Welsh kingdom of Powys laid in the center of eastern Wales, bordered by Gwynedd to the north, the smaller kingdom of Meirionydd to the west. The river Severn constituted the southern boundary and the river Dee delineated the northern end of Powys. The river Dee, flowing through the Valley Dee, created fertile rich lowlands, which the princes of Powys controlled.[1] The valley served as a passage into Wales making is a tempting target for the Anglo-Normans. On the east lay the Anglo-Norman county of Shropshire, which was one of the three large counties William I established on the Welsh border. Most of Powys has an elevation above 600 feet with the Berwyn Mountains running through the kingdom creating challenging terrain. The geography of the kingdom often served the Welsh well in facing the Anglo-Normans.[2] Sometimes the Welsh withdrew in mountainous or forest areas rather than facing the Anglo-Norman Knights in open battle. Like most Welsh kingdoms, Powys consisted of a multitude of Cantrefs and Commotes, which were smaller administrative regions. The *Brut Y Tywysogyon* indicates that the Saxons captured the Kingdom in 823.[3] The Brut contains a few other mentions of two Kings of Powys, Cyngen and Cadwallon ap Ieuaf, who lived in the tenth century. Overall though the history of Powys is not well documented until Bleddyn ap Cynfyn gained control of Powys sometime between 1063 and 1069.

Before Bleddyn rose to power, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn had conquered most of Wales. Gruffudd had become king of Gwynedd in 1039 and then proceeded to unite most of Wales under his rule.[4] Bleddyn ap Cynfyn and his brother Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn were Gruffudd ap

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[1] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8.
[2] Davies. *The Age of Conquest,* 4.
[3] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 7.
[4] K. L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh Century* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1991), 68.

Llywelyn's half brothers, sharing the same mother, Angharad ferch Maredudd.[5] Little is known about Cynfyn, his name is only mentioned in genealogies and he is never mentioned in other Welsh sources. Gruffudd and his brothers led several raids on the Anglo-Saxons during the 1050s and as a result relations between Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and the Anglo-Saxons began to deteriorate in 1055. Edward the Confessor in response sent Harold Godwinesson with a large army to destroy Gruffudd, the battle ended in stalemate as Gruffudd withdrew to the mountains.[6] Learning nothing from these events Gruffudd continued to raid the Saxons, until Christmas 1062 when Harold conducted a surprise attack, forcing Gruffudd to run during the winter.

Gruffudd was unable to gather troops over the winter in early 1063, and in the spring the Anglo-Saxon were able to conduct a successful war on Wales and shattered Gruffudd's control of the country. Due to these continuing losses and weeks on the run from the Anglo-Saxons, Gruffudd's Teulu, his warband, lost faith in him. They turned on Gruffudd and sent his head to Edward the Confessor in order to appease the Anglo-Saxons.[7] The Anglo-Saxon interference in Welsh affairs was similar to that seen in early Welsh-Anglo-Norman interactions. Often Anglo-Norman Kings would conduct huge campaigns into Wales in response to Welsh raids similar to those conducted by Harold Godwinesson. The Welsh and the Anglo-Saxons often clashed and occasionally formed alliance, over all though the Anglo-Saxons never had the control of the Welsh that the Anglo-Normans would come to have.

After Gruffudd's death Wales once again split into several different kingdoms. Welsh unity was a delicate bond held together only by the personality of the leader and at his death fell apart. In part this was because Welsh princes ruled not through divine authority or tradition, but

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[5] K. L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh Century*, 68.
[6] Sean Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 56.
[7] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 27.

through brute force. A prince only ruled if he could control his territory. A king who united Wales held it only through brute force not through any other bonds. There may have been alliances between such a king and other princes, but his power came from his military might. So when a king, like Gruffudd, died a huge power vacuum was created which all princes wanted to fill. Furthermore, these kings spent most of their time conquering all of Wales rather than creating the societal infrastructure necessary to unify Wales. Foremost in terms of heirs and property, the Welsh practice of partibility would mean that Wales territorially would have been divided up even if there was an agreed upon heir. Further, the Welsh possessed a deep sense of regional identity, and often these regional identities and loyalties were placed above an overall Welsh identity. These factors made united Wales unstable an easily torn apart by internal and external forces, such as the Anglo-Saxons or the Normans.

In the power vacuum created by Gruffudd's death new men came to power, including Bleddyn Ap Cynfyn. Bleddyn's actions in between 1063 and 1069 were not recorded in the Welsh historical records. However, two English chronicles do mention him, the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and the *Chronicle of John Worcester.* According to the *Gesta,* Edward the Confessor positioned Bleddyn and Rhiwallon as kings of Wales.[8] It is unlikely that Edward actually made Bleddyn and Rhiwallon "kings of Wales." More likely the brothers made alliance with the Anglo-Saxons in order to gain a leg up on their competitors. The *Chronicle of John Worcester* states that in 1067 Bleddyn and Rhiwallon raided Herefordshire all the way to the river Lugg.[9] Here, John of Worcester, the chronicler, calls Bleddyn and his brother "kings of the Welsh."[10] According to Worcester, Bleddyn and Rhiwallon raided the Anglo-Normans in 1067 because

[8] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: the history of the English Kings,* Trans. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1998), 421.
[9] John of Worcester, *The chronicle of John Worcester*, Trans. P. McGurk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 5.
[10] John of Worcester, *The chronicle of John Worcester,* 5.

they had formed alliance with Eadric son of Ælfric, an Anglo-Saxon lord who formerly controlled Shropshire, but had lost his land to the Normans. Eadric turned to the Welsh as allies.[11] These references to Bleddyn and Rhiwallon suggest that neither had gained unrivalled power in Wales following Gruffudd's death. It is unclear what territory they controlled or how powerful they were in the years immediately following Gruffudd's death.

Bleddyn appears in Welsh sources again in 1069 when he and his brothers fought the sons of Gruffudd at the Battle of Mechain.[12] Tensions most likely had been building between Gruffudd's sons and Bleddyn and Rhiwallon during intervening years. According to Welsh law, both groups had a legitimate claim to Gwynedd and the various other territories Gruffudd had controlled. Bleddyn and Rhiwallon proved victorious killing the sons of Gruffudd. However, Rhiwallon died in the battle.[13] As a result of the battle Bleddyn gained control over both Gwynedd and Powys. Bleddyn was now effectively the King of North Wales as he controlled the two largest northern kingdoms. He seems to have also made an alliance with the Ruler of Deheubarth, Maredudd ab Owain ab Edwin. Deheubarth was a general term for south wales, referring to the land from Cardigan Bay to the Wye, but occasionally one king would control the kingdoms in this area. Often though this area was broken into multiple kingdoms, such as Dryfd and Ceredigion.

By 1069, William the Conquer was not interested in conquering Wales. William was still struggling to stabilize his control over England and the Welsh proved more formidable than William had imagined. For example, in England the rebellion Eadric, son of Ælfric, continued

[11] John of Worcester, *The chronicle of John Worcester,* 5.
[12] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 27.
[13] Davies, *War and Society,* 56.

into 1070.[14] Consequently, William did assume personal interest in Wales until 1081 when he led a campaign into Wales. Rather, he appointed William fitz Osborn, Roger of Montgomery and Hugh of Avaranches in charge of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire.[15] These three large counties provided a buffer between Wales and the rest of England.[16] These lords can be viewed as the first proto-type of the marcher lords, in light of their power and freedom to act with out kingly consent in matters of war. This arrangement became common in Welsh-Anglo-Norman history. Kings, while leading several campaigns into Wales and negotiating often with Welsh princes, never spearheaded the conquest Wales. Instead Anglo-Norman Marcher lords took charge, establishing the Welsh Marches, which "consisted of the foreign-held lordships in Wales and the compact honors directly adjoining Welsh territory."[17] The area defined as the Welsh Marches changed as the Anglo-Normans gained and lost territory. Marcher Lord possessed princely power and land by the end of thirteenth century. During the 200 years and beyond it took to conquer Wales Marcher Lords acted without permission from the king concerning both civilians and military matters. Gradually these lords expanded into Wales, but this process began with these first three lords. Osborn was the first lord appointed in 1067, though he did not assume his position until 1069.[18]

From 1069-1071 Osborn made substantial gains against the Welsh by utilizing a common Norman tactic in dealing with their enemy: he built a line of castles spanning from north in Wigmore to Chepstow in the south.[19] Castles served two important functions in Norman strategy.

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[14] Frederick C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches, 1066-1300* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1994), 79
[15] David Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery: Britian 1066-1284* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110.
[16] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 110.
[17] Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: the Creation and Perception of a Frontier 1066-1283* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010), 4-5.
[18] Davies. *The Age of Conquest*, 28.
[19] Davies. *The Age of Conquest*, 28-29.

Defensively they deterred Welsh raids on their territory. Offensively they allowed Anglo-Normans to launch raids into Welsh territory. Edward I finally conquered most of Wales at the end of the thirteenth century by utilizing castles in a similar manner. Osborn began by pushing into Gwent, the Welsh kingdom bordering Herefordshire.[20] By the time of his death in 1071 he had pushed all the way to the river Usk.[21] Subsequently, Roger fitz Osborn took command over Herefordshire following his father's death. Progress slowed after 1071, especially in 1075 when Roger joined an English rebellion against William I.[22] Roger lost his lands and was imprisoned for life after William quickly put down the rebellion.[23] However, by 1080 the Anglo-Normans continued their progress into southern Wales.

Bleddyn must have been far more concerned by the actions of Roger of Montgomery, the earl of Shrewsbury, than Osborn because Montgomery controlled Shropshire, which bordered Powys. Montgomery assumed control over Shropshire in 1071 after the defeat of Eadric. In order to deter Welsh raids Montgomery reorganized the county by forming a series of manors run by strong lords along the border with Wales.[24] They built castles along this border zone, and then occupied lands between Offa's Dyke and the Severn River. Slowly Montgomery established some control over the surrounding Welsh areas.[25] This Intrusion troubled the princes of Powys and the rest of North Wales because the Anglo-Normans were able to establish a foothold to invade northern Wales through valleys, like the Difi Valley into Ceredigion. The *Brut Y Tywysogyon* tells us that the Normans attacked Ceredigion in 1073 and 1074, land that Bleddyn

[20] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 110.
[21] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 110.
[22] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 102
[23] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 102
[24] Suppe, *Military Institutions*, 89.
[25] Davies. *The Age of Conquest*, 29-30.

either controlled or had indirect control over during this period.[26] Hugh of Avaranches, who controlled Cheshire, further threatened Bleddyn. Hugh established a castle at Rhuddlan, which threatened Gwynedd, Anglesey, and northern Wales. By the 1090s Normans looked on the verge of conquest.[27]

The sources tell us nothing about what the Bleddyn did in response to the incursions of the Anglo-Normans. Based on previous behavior we can speculate that he continued to conduct raids against Anglo-Norman territory. Perhaps, he raided his neighbors to the south, as the Norman advances would have distracted them. Although the sources do not substantiate this speculation, it is hard to imagine that Bleddyn did nothing during these early years especially when he controlled most of north Wales. Never the less, he died in 1075 killed by Rhys ap Owain and the men of Ystrad Tywi, in what both the *Brut Y Tywysogyon* and the *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* described this as a treacherous act.[28] Following his death Thrahraean ap Caradog, Bleddyn's first cousin, became prince of Gwynedd.[29] Powys and north Wales did not receive mention in the chronicles, but later events tell us that Bleddyn's Sons must have taken control Powys in 1075, perhaps under the rule of Madog ap Bleddyn, who was the Bleddyn's eldest son. Bleddyn's sons remained outside these chronicles' gaze until 1088 when they forced Rhys Ap Tewdwr, the prince of Deheubarth to flee from Wales to Ireland.[30] Rhys ap Tewdwr returned that same year to do battle at Llechryd.[31] During the battle both Madog and Rhirid died. Subsequently, after the death of his elder brothers, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, Bleddyn's third son became ruler of Powys

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[26] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 29.
[27] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery,* 112.
[28] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 29; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson or the Kings of the Saxons,* Trans Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), 79.
[29] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 29; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 79.
[30] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 31; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 83.
[31] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 31; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 83.

Although the royal family of Powys between 1075 and 1088 received little comment from the chronicles, this silence is telling in many ways. First, the chronicles would have mentioned if the brothers had immediately turned on each other after the death of their father. Infighting among welsh princes was a common concern in Welsh sources. In addition, the brothers clearly fought together in their campaign against Rhys ap Tewdwr. There is no evidence in the sources that the brothers were antagonistic to each other during this period. Although, scholars have suggested the Welsh immediately turn on each after the death of the patriarch this does not seem to be true in the case of Bleddyn's sons, rather they united together against both the threat of other Welsh princes and the Anglo-Normans.

In addition, all of Bleddyn's sons were alive in 1088 and able to participate in battle. This indicates that the brothers did not engage in kin-strife during this period. The two eldest brothers died in battle and not at the hands of their younger brother. This unity supports that kin-strife was not the result of innate Welsh aggression or greed for power. Instead it was a reasoned response to a set of circumstances. During the late 1080s the members of the royal family of Powys had nothing to gain from kin-strife. They gained more from keeping their kin-group strong as the Normans pressed deeper into Welsh territory and other Welsh princes moved to prey upon Powys in the absence of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn.

William the Conquers' death in 1087 did not stop Anglo-Norman advances into Wales. William II, prepared to demonstrate his prowess, continued the same strategy used by his father and from 1087 to 1093 the Anglo-Normans made significant progress in Wales. Again Marchers Lord led the conquest of Wales. During this period Rufus spent a large amount of his time focused on Scotland and his brother, Robert the duke of Normandy. Unsurprisingly Welsh sources depict William Rufus unfavorably. The *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* states that, "there was no

king more cruel than he [William Rufus]."[32] This characterization reflects the fact that during the early years of Rufus' rule he almost conquered Wales. The situation was so dire to the Welsh Chronicler of the *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* that he claimed "the kingdom of Wales fell" in 1093.[33] By 1093 most of south and north Wales had fallen into Anglo-Norman hands. However this year proved to be an important turning point in Welsh-Anglo-Norman.

In 1093 Rhys ap Tewdwr, prince of Deheubarth, was killed by the Normans, who were moving into the district of Brecon.[34] Tewdwr had been a constant source of frustration for other Welsh princes, but especially the royal family of Powys. In part this was because he controlled most of south Wales making him a powerful enemy. Further, he attempted expand into northern Wales, as demonstrated by his clashes with Powys who controlled most of central and northern Wales. The fact that he had made concessions to the Anglo-Normans in the 1070s additionally made him less popular. According to the Domesday books Rhys ap Tewdwr paid a tribute of £40 annually.[35] Rhys ap Tewdwr came against the Anglo-Normans in the 1070s when Fitz Osbern was pushing into south Wales. Tribute was a more palatable option then fighting a long drawn out conflict with the Anglo-Normans.

With Fitz Osbern's death in 1075, pressure was taken off Rhys as the Anglo-Normans shifted their focus from Wales. However by the 1090s the Anglo-Normans once again turned their attention to Wales and once again began to pursue conquest in south Wales. Rhys ap Tewdwr was killed by Anglo-Normans pushing in to Brecon, a kingdom located in south wales bordering England. The river Usk flows through Brecon, making this region easier to navigate for the Anglo-Normans and most likely made the surrounding land more fertile than other

[32] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 83.
[33] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 83.
[34] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 85.
[35] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery,* 110.

region. Rhys Ap Tewdwr's death, much like the death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, created a power vacuum in Wales that allowed other Welsh rulers to come to power and push back against the Anglo-Normans. Cadwgan ap Bleddyn acted quickly to seize power and plundered Dryfd in 1093 following Tewdwr's death. The Anglo-Norman also rushed to fill the power vacuum. Tewdwr had done a good job of keeping the Anglo-Normans from pushing to any deeper into south Wales. After his death the Anglo-Normans took advantage of the lack of leadership to push further into south Wales seizing Dryfd and Ceredigion.

Another powerful figure died in 1093, Robert of Rhuddlan, the cousin of Hugh of Avaranches, the earl of Cheshire.[36] Robert of Rhuddlan was instrumental in Anglo-Norman activity in north Wales, especially Gwynedd. Robert and his cousin in standard Anglo-Norman fashion had built castles throughout northern Wales to control territory.[37] Their actions in conjunction with Anglo-Norman success in the south made the conquest of Wales seem imminent. However on July 3, 1093 the Welsh assaulted Robert of Rhuddlan's fortress at Degannwy.[38] Rhuddlan was killed during the assault. According to Orderic Vitalis, the attack was led by Gruffudd Ap Cyan, though this account is open to debate and one must be wary of a Anglo-Norman Bias in the accounts of Orderic Vitalis who was a English monk.[39] Rhuddlan's death weakened the Anglo-Normans and allowed northern princes, including those of Powys, to rally their forces and destroy several Anglo-Norman castles in the north. Power for both the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans resulted from a leader's ability, military force, and alliances, and

[36] Davies. *The Age of Conquest,* 30.
[37] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery,* 112.
[38] Davies. *The Age of Conquest,* 31.
[39] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis,* Trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1969).

was given to ebb and flow. Both sides would suffer huge losses and victories as power came and went throughout the 11th and 12th century.

The Welsh Chronicles describe 1094 as the year the "Britons threw off the rule of the French [Anglo-Normans], Being unable to suffer their tyranny."[40] The Welsh resistance began in the north with the destruction of Anglo-Norman Castles in Gwynedd. Welsh forces led by Cadwgan, met the Anglo-Norman host at Coedydbys.[41] It's difficult to determine the size of the forces fighting at Coedydbys. How large a Welsh army would have been is unclear, the core of the army would have been Cadwgan's *Teulu*, his warband made up of elite soldiers. *Teulu* is estimated to be around fifty men typically, but the amount seems to have varied based on the prince and the extent on his power.[42] The rest of the army would have drawn from the men in the prince's lands. Evidence suggests that a Welsh King would have been able to call upon armies close to the size of Anglo-Norman army, in part because more of the male Welsh population was expected to give military service than in England or France.[43] The sources reveal little more about the battle at Coedydbys other than the victor. Cadwgan defeated the Norman forces and continued south to raid Ceredigion and Dyfed, destroying most of the Anglo-Norman castles, which were built of wood rather then masonry. The first Anglo-Norman castles would have been underwhelming wooden structures hastily constructed. The Welsh largely conducted war through raids, ambushes and evasions, rather than large battles. The Welsh landscape favored this type of combat providing the Welsh with ample cover to conduct raids or to hide from the Normans.

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[40] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 35.
[41] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 35; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 87.
[42] Davies, *War and Society,* 26.
[43] Davies, *War and Society,* 52-53.

The *Chronicle of John Worcester* indicates there were Welsh raids into Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford at this time.[44] In response to these losses William Rufus led a campaign into Wales, in an attempt to force the Welsh in to open confrontation. He attacked Gower, Cydweli and Ystrad Tywi, but the Welsh retreated into "the woods and valleys."[45] Rufus returned home empty-handed after failing to stop the Welsh resistance. In 1096, the Anglo-Norman castles, Rhyd-y-gors and Pembroke fell to the Welsh. The Welsh lands of Brecon, Gwent, and Gwynllwg rebelled against Anglo-Norman control.[46] The Anglo-Normans sent an army into Gwent, south Wales, to reestablish control, but the Anglo-Normans were defeated at Celli Garnant.[47] The Anglo-Normans also met defeat at Aber-llech when they sent a force to reestablish control over Brecon.[48] Rufus once again led a campaign into Wales in 1097 and once again the Welsh retreated leaving the Anglo-Normans to return home empty-handed. The Welsh favored Fabian tactics of retreating and delaying rather than meeting the Anglo-Norman host.

Scholars of the past have tended to view the Welsh strategy of withdrawing into difficult terrain such as the dense woods that covered most of Wales as a verification of Anglo-Norman military superiority. However, this requires revision. The Welsh strategy of retreat played to their military strength. The Welsh military was based on archers and light armored foot soldiers.[49] By comparison the Anglo-Normans favored cavalry.[50] As a result the Anglo-Normans typically fared better in open field battles, while the Welsh succeeded through guerilla warfare tactics that scattered their enemy. These tactics played to the geographical constraints of the Welsh landscape. Large mountains divided center Wales and dense forests covered Wales. In

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[44] John of Worcester, *The chronicle of John Worcester,* 5.
[45] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 35.
[46] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 35.
[47] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 89.
[48] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 89.
[49] Suppe, *Military Institutions,* 8-9.
[50] Suppe, *Military institutions,* 8-9.

south Wales lowland marshes provided a natural deterrent.[51] The fertile areas were in river valleys, such as the one on the river Dees in Powys, and on the western coast. This landscape made it easy for the Welsh to withdraw and lure the enemy into the difficult terrain that they had trouble navigating. The Anglo-Normans to combat this often employed Welsh guides.

The other claim is that the Welsh were incapable of dealing with Castles, the favored technique of conquest for the Anglo-Normans. To begin with, many of the first Anglo-Norman castles would have been little more the grouping of wooden stakes in a defensible position, rather than the stone fortifications seen later.[52] The Welsh successfully besieged against Anglo-Norman castles in 1094 and 1096. Furthermore, the Welsh adapted Anglo-Norman fortifications, often taking over Anglo-Norman forts. Madog ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn would capture and use two Anglo-Norman castles to defend Powys in the 1150s. Although some historians have viewed the conflict between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans as one sided, with the Welsh struggling to adapt too much more advanced enemy, this view ignores that the Anglo-Normans also had to adapt new tactics to meet the Welsh. For instance, the Anglo-Normans began fielding lightly armed cavalry who were more mobile to counteract the mobility of the Welsh troops.[53]

These tactics were demonstrated in the Welsh-Anglo-Norman conflicts in 1098, when the Anglo-Normans once again marched into Wales hoping to reclaim their recent losses. The Earl of Shrewsbury and Earl of Chester attacked Gwynedd and forced the northern princes, including Cadwgan and Gruffudd ap Cyan, to retreat to Anglesey.[54] The Welsh hoped to be able to fortify

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[51] Davies. *The Age of Conquest,* 9.
[52] Davies, *War and Society*, 199.
[53] Suppe, *Military institutions,* 17. While it is important to discuss Welsh military and the Anglo-Normans there is not enough time in this project to engage in such a conversation, so for more in formation of Welsh Military see: Frederick C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches, 1066-1300* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1994) and Sean Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).
[54] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 37.

the island against the Anglo-Norman force. This tactic might have worked, but the Anglo-Normans bribed the Welsh princes' Irish allies to abandon the Welsh forces. Without the support of the Irish forces, especially their ships, the Welsh were left open to attack.[55] Cadwgan and Gruffudd ap Cyan fled to Ireland before the Anglo-Normans arrived rather than face losing. The Anglo-Normans might have struck a final defeat to the northern princes if not for the dramatic appearance of the King of Norway, Magnus Barelegs. Magnus had occupied the Western Islands during a season of raiding and by chance Magnus landed at Anglesey.[56] Magnus fought off the Anglo-Normans killing the Earl of Shrewsbury and then departed. The *Brut Y Tywysogyon* states that Magnus landed at Anglesey with the intent to conquer Wales, but other Welsh sources make no mention of this intention.[57] Magnus intervention saved the Welsh rebellion from a crushing defeat.

The rebellion continued into 1099 when, Gruffudd ap Cyan and Cadwgan returned to Wales. These princes agreed to make peace with the Anglo-Normans. Here the sources disagree. Either the Anglo-Normans gave Gruffudd ap Cyan control over Anglesey and Cadwgan control over Powys and Ceredigion.[58] Or they on their return made peace with the Anglo-Normans and then they seized the land. [59] While I find the second option more likely other historians such as R.R. Davies find the first option more likely. R.R. Davies suggests that the Anglo-Normans installed them as "clients."[60] I do not believe that the Normans would have been in the position to determine who ruled in Wales even after the near defeat of the Welsh in 1098. Because the Welsh in the north continued to rebel after the near defeat at Anglesey, the Normans had little

[55] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 37.
[56] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 132.
[57] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 37.
[58] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), 21.
[59] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 39.
[60] Davies. *The Age of Conquest*, 36.

control over the area in 1099. Secondly, if the Normans had any the type of control over the area needed to determine leaders, they would not have chosen Cadwgan and Gruffudd ap Cyan as clients as they had led the rebellion against the Anglo-Normans. They showed no signs of submission to the Anglo-Normans. Instead, I would propose that after 1098 William II, frustrated by recent loses, decided that an alliance with the Welsh rulers for now would serve his interests better. Further, in 1099 William II was facing a rebellion in Maine, which was of greater concern to William II ambitions in Normandy than conquest of Wales. This is indicated by the fact that William II replaced Hugh of Avaranches, the Earl of Shrewsbury, with Robert of Bellême. Bellême was not in England in 1099, but in Normandy dealing with the rebellion. Reinforcing Bellême loyalty by gifting him land was more important than giving the position to a strong lord in England who would have continued to pursue aggressive action in Wales.

Either way by 1099 the Anglo-Norman and the Welsh relations dramatically changed. The Welsh had successfully resisted Anglo-Norman aggressive attempts to conquer Wales. In response to this failure William II made peace with the Welsh. This move set the tone of the Welsh-Anglo-Norman relationship for the next hundred years. Henry I rather than attempt to follow his father and brother aggressive attempts adopted a more diplomatic approach by allying with Welsh princes and playing them against each other. The Welsh adopted similar tactics of diplomacy of divided-and-conquer. Despite this more diplomatic tone, Wales still remained a battleground between the Welsh and their would-be conquers.

Cadwgan and his brothers once again controlled Powys. They likely had maintained some control over Powys between 1075 and 1099. This dynasties control of Powys continued into to 13th century. Scholars have depicted their influence of Welsh unity as negative because of

their "patriotism [was] strictly local and provincial."[61] Certainly, the royal family of Powys and other Welsh princes had a strict sense of loyalty to their regional kingdoms that often undermined their loyalty to Wales as a whole. However, despite large regional difference and political segmentation, the Welsh maintained a deep sense of Welsh identity. Cultural Identity meant something to all Welshmen, as it did for the Scotts. However, loyalties to princes or kin-groups were also strong. These contradictory loyalties periodically weakened Welsh opposition to the Normans. However, as demonstrated in the 1060s even a unified Wales could falter against opponents. And as demonstrated in 1090s a divided Wales could successfully defeat the Anglo-Norman forces. The royal family of Powys demonstrated a willingness to work together within their kin-group and a willingness to work with other Welsh princes during this period.

[61] John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest time to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1912), II: 583.

Chapter 3: The Rule of Cadwgan and Owain, 1100-1116

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn had now established control over both Ceredigion and Powys. Through his role as a leader in the Welsh rebellion Cadwgan had gained significant power and influence in Wales. Further, he had maintained control over his brothers establishing his authority as king. The Anglo-Norman threat had abated, though they still controlled parts of both northern and southern Wales. Cadwgan had secured Powys future stability by signing a peace treaty with the Anglo-Normans. Cadwgan may have felt safe and secure at the start 1100 believing that the chaos of the past decades had receded and peace would return to Wales, or as much peace as a Welsh king could hope for. However, things changed dramatically for Powys and Wales with the death of William Rufus in 1100 and ascension of Henry I to the throne.

Henry I's rule began with a frantic journey to Westminster to be crowned king before his brother, the Duke of Normandy, Robert Curthose, could return from the crusades or his brother's supporters could interfere.[1] William II had never established a clear line of succession giving Henry I a questionable claim to the throne.[2] The fact that Henry I was technically a sworn vassal to Robert hurt his claims to the throne of England. Division sparked by Henry I's uncertain claim to the throne of England and to Normandy would stain his rule. Many of the Norman lords in England were homage-bound to Robert, making their loyalties questionable at best. Because of this Henry spent the first years of his rule focused on maintaining control over England. Curthose

[1] C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven: Yale university Press, 2001), 108-109.
[2] Hollister, *Henry I,* 105.

was unwilling to let go of his claims to the English throne and in 1101 Curthose sailed across the channel to take the throne from his brother. Ultimately the brothers did not fight and Curthose was forced to surrender his claims to the throne and Henry I to surrender most of his land in Normandy to his brother.[3] The fighting between Henry and Robert Curthose mimics the kin-strife seen between Welsh princes following the death of a family's patriarch. These challenges to his authority in England and Normandy drew Henry I attention from Wales. For this reason, Henry I focused less on conquest of Wales and more on controlling Wales. In short, 1100 marked the onset of a new period in the politics of Powys.

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn's rule had faced several challenges during William I and William II rule, but at no point in the period following Bleddyn ap Cynfyn's death in 1075 until 1102 is there mention of kin-strife between the brothers. In fact the chronicles suggest a high level of cooperation between the brothers. This rapprochement was evident in the brothers' joint efforts in 1088, when they forced Rhys ap Tewdwr, the prince of Deheubarth to flee from Wales to Ireland.[4] Of course, not all of their actions over this period were recorded. For example the chroniclers document no events between Bleddyn ap Cynfyn's death in 1075 and 1088 when the brothers battled Rhys ap Tewdwr. Additionally, the chroniclers paint a clearer picture of Cadwgan's actions than his brothers, as he was a main figure in Welsh resistance against the Anglo-Norman. The apparent absence of kin-strife likely indicates that there was none, because the chronicles thoroughly detailed the kin-strife in the family in the 12th century. The respite during this period reflects that the danger of the Anglo-Normans and the encroachments of the

[3] Hollister, *Henry I*, 142.
[4] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson or the Kings of the Saxons,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), 83; *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 31.

prince of Deheubarth superseded the personal concerns and internal tensions that drove kin-strife in Wales. Kin-strife largely erupted over competition for land and power within the kin group due to a scarcity of resources within a kingdom. Throughout the 1080s and 1090s the brothers would have faced losing their entire kingdom, a threat that superseded their own desires. In addition, the wars in the 1080s had eliminated two of their older sibling leaving the remaining brothers with more land to consolidate their control over.

Following 1100 and Henry's ascent to the throne Cadwgan faced conflict within his kin-group for the first time in his rule. Cadwgan's powers over Ceredigion and Powys had remained unchallenged by his kin until 1102, when the family was drawn into an Anglo-Norman conflict. Robert Curthose had many men loyal to him in England including the lord of Shropshire, Robert of Bellême, who William Rufus had appointed in 1099 for his success in Maine. Henry I focus in this early period was on eliminating such men from England in order build a solid foundation for his rule. Conflict erupted between Henry and Bellême in 1102 when Henry attacked Bellême's forts in England. Powys became allies with Bellême. Powys was probably already loosely allied with Bellême as he controlled neighboring land. Bellême promised them spoils in return for their help.[5] Henry I, in autumn of 1102, sought to break up this alliance between Powys and Bellême. In order to do this Henry I sought out Iorwerth ap Bleddyn, the second eldest brother.

Henry convinced Iorwerth to turn on Bellême with the promise great rewards, including Ceredigion, Powys and a half of Dyfed, which were currently held by his brothers and Bellême. Iorwerth switched sides willingly. Immediately he sent his war band into Bellême's territory. Iorwerth's betrayal was particularly devastating because Bellême had sequestered a large amount

[5] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 43.

of his chattel in Powys during the war, all of which Iorwerth and his warband pillaged.[6] According to the *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* both the Peniarth and Red Hergest version of the chronicle, Iorwerth's brothers had no knowledge that Iorwerth had turned against Bellême and by extension them.[7] The chronicles state that Bellême no longer trusted his Welsh allies after Iorwerth's betrayal and that Bellême defenses fell apart. Bellême then begged the king to allow him to leave the country and return to his Norman holdings.[8] After Bellême's defeat in England, Iorwerth almost immediately made peace with his brothers and shared the land he had received for allying with Henry I with his brothers.[9] A few months after the brothers made peace Iorwerth captured Maredudd, the youngest brother, and turned him over to Henry.[10]

Iorwerth actions in 1102 can be seen as example of Welsh kin-strife. He turns on his brothers to increase his own power and then sends Maredudd off to remove competitor and secure a more stable alliance with Henry I. However, Iorwerth's actions do not reflect the typical pattern of Welsh kin-strife. Iorwerth could have utilized his advantages, Henry I's favor and control over a significant amount of land and wealth, to attack his brothers and become king of Powys. Iorwerth would have had good chance of eliminating his brothers if he had been so inclined. Rather than attack his brothers, Iorwerth shared the territory he had gained during the conflict with them. Iorwerth made peace with his brothers and maintained unity in Powys. This suggests that his switching sides was not an act of kin-strife. Instead Iorwerth made a strategic and practical alliance, without the intent of betraying his brothers. This conflict arose in Powys more from Henry I's manipulations than internal strife.

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[6] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), 24.
[7] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 25; *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 45-47.
[8] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 25.
[9] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 25.
[10] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 25.

Powys had become central to Henry's attempt to consolidate control, probably due to their history of resisting Anglo-Normans advances and the fact that Powys currently dominated northern Wales. Henry I pursued a different approach than his brother and father. Rather than supporting the more aggressive conquest that William I and William II had begun, Henry I sought to establish control using more diplomatic methods. In part this was due to the conflict with his brother, the Duke of Normandy and internal crisis in England. To this end Henry I pursued a tactic of divide and conquer inserting himself into internal Welsh conflicts in an attempt to undercut any one Welsh prince from becoming too powerful. For this reason scholars have classified his control in north Wales as one of overlordship.[11] Overlordship was a fluid relationship that could vacillate between little control over a dependent to laying the groundwork for direct control.[12] In 1102 Henry had significant control over southern Wales, but in northern Wales, including Powys, he had little direct influence. By giving land to Iorwerth, even land that he seems to have had little actual claim to, such as Powys, he was implicitly exerting that their territorial lordship was dependent upon him, which would paved a path to more direct control. In order to maintain his control over Wales, Henry I depended upon his ability to manipulate the Welsh lords into fighting among themselves.

Henry I therefore pursued two aims in brokering an alliance with Iorwerth ap Bleddyn, one, he immediately desired to weaken Bellême and two he wanted to destroy the unity in Powys and weaken its influence in northern Wales. Powys would have represented a threat to Henry I's control over Wales. Powys' dynasty seems to have been respected in Wales based upon the chronicle entries. For instances Iorwerth was considered to be "the foremost of the Britons and

[11] R.R. Davies, "Henry I and Wales," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davis,* ed. H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (London: Hambledon press, 1985), 138.
[12] Davies, "Henry I and Wales," 138.

the most powerful."[13] This respect suggests that they possessed a large amount of influence, if not control over the rest of north Wales. Furthermore, the family had played a significant role in the Welsh rebellion in the 1090s that had stopped the Anglo-Normans from completely conquering Wales. They had proven themselves effective at fighting the Anglo-Normans. Cadwgan especially represents a threat due to his position as king of Powys and Ceredigion. Henry I by promising Iorwerth Cadwgan's land, even if he could not actually give the land to Iorwerth, was trying to undermined the bonds between Iorwerth and Cadwgan in order to incite kin-strife that would have broken not only unity in Powys, but done significant damage to unity in north Wales as a whole. Despite Henry plans Iorwerth and Cadwgan did not come into conflict. In fact they seemed willing to go very far to avoid conflict between themselves. So far that Cadwgan kept peace even after Iorwerth gave Maredudd to Henry I as hostage.

The chronicles say nothing of Iorwerth's motives for giving his brother as a hostage to Henry I, but Iorwerth may have had two possible reasons for giving Maredudd to Henry. Either he, to ensure political standing in Powys, turned to Henry, and gave a hostage, his brother, to Henry I as surety.[14] On the other hand, Henry may have threatened Iorwerth forcing him to give his brother a hostage to ensure peace. Both reasons involve using Maredudd as a hostage to secure loyalty. The only difference between either situation is whether or not Iorwerth was the instigator in his brother's capture or an unwilling participant. Due to Iorwerth position in Wales the second seems a bit more likely. As Iorwerth was in a powerful position after the war and did not seem to need to secure Henry I favor to assure his position in Wales. Furthermore, after Iorwerth turned Maredudd over to Henry, Cadwgan was more than willing to make peace with

[13] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 45.
[14] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn to Owain ap Cadwgan 1069-1116," in *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud: Tempest Press, 2002), 87.

Iorwerth and once again Iorwerth willingly shared land with Cadwgan.[15] These actions suggest that the brothers realized that turning on each other would leave them weak to Henry I's manipulations. Rather they remained united. Henry I reneged on his promises to Iorwerth and arrested and imprisoned him in 1103 when Iorwerth came to Henry's court, probably on the promise of greater gifts from Henry I. This move allowed Henry to get rid of two troublesome Welsh princes. However, this left all of Powys in the hands of one brother, Cadwgan, this rather than weakening the kingdom and allowing Henry I to assert complete control over Powys.

Of course, the unity of Powys following 1103 is debatable based on how one perceives Cadwgan's rule. Scholars debate the success of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn's rule of Powys. Lloyd viewed Cadwgan as man of "weak character…wanting in the sterner qualities which were demanded by the problems of statecraft."[16] Some argue that his rule oversaw the collapse of Powys into internal dynastic feuding that was only ended a decade later by Maredudd and his son Madog.[17] Others take a more positive view of Cadwgan's rule seeing him as a good king, who despite internal conflicts and Henry I's meddling, maintained a large amount of independence for his kingdom in the face of Anglo-Norman pressures.[18] Under Cadwgan rule Powys reached one its greatest peaks of power in Wales, in terms of territory and influence.

During these early years of the 12th century Cadwgan worked to stabilize Powys and create alliances with other Welsh princes. Welsh lack of unity was not a result of lack of effort, but in part brought about by the geography of the country. Natural boundaries separated the Welsh kingdoms from each other, creating isolation from each other that was difficult to overcome. However, the Welsh did strive to make alliances and create stability for their

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[15] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 47.
[16] Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* 417.
[17] David Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen* (London: Pearson education, 2000), 55.
[18] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn," 87.

kingdoms. For this reason Cadwgan pursued two important alliances in the early 1100s. To begin with he allied himself with Uchdryd ab Edwin, giving him Cyfeiliog and Meirionydd. This made Uchdryd beholden to Cadwgan's power. Cadwgan also married or took as concubine, Gwenllian, the daughter of Gruffudd ap Cyan, a prince of Gwynedd, in order to secure an alliance with Gwynedd.

Cadwgan also pursued he a war with Trahaearn ap Caradog. His motives for this war are unclear. Perhaps the most convincing argument is that Trahaearn began to represent a threat or a nuisance to Cadwgan. During the war, Owain ap Cadwgan, Cadwgan's son, killed Trahaearn son's Meurig and Griffri in 1106. This act initiated a feud between Trahaearn ap Caradog's family and the ruling family of Powys. In 1107 Maredudd escaped from his English prison and returned to his lands in Powys. In Powys, he offered his support to Cadwgan against Trahaearn.[19] Powys during this time reached what many scholars see as its height of power, in terms of influence in Wales and territory. Cadwgan controlled Powys, large amounts of Ceredigion and land in surrounding kingdoms and exercised a huge amount of influence among Welsh leaders. In 1109 though this prosperity was compromised by the actions of Cadwgan's son Owain.

The story goes that during a feast held by Cadwgan, Owain heard of the beauty of Nest, the daughter of Rhys Ap Tewdwr. Nest was the wife Gerald of Windsor, an Anglo-Norman officer in charge of Pembroke castle in Cenarth Bychan. [20] Owain learned that she was currently at Pembroke. Owain decided to see Nest for himself and journeyed to Cenarth Bychan under the pretense that he was going to check on his cousin Nest, whose grandfather was Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn, Bleddyn ap Cynfyn's brother.[21] Owain overcome with passion led a small force against

[19] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 27.
[20] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn," 88; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 28.
[21] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 105.

the castle at night. He lit the castle on fire and stole away with Nest and her children back to Powys. By attacking Gerald of Windsor, Owain brought Henry I's anger down on Powys.

Even before Owain's treachery Henry I was already worried about Cadwgan's power and Welsh resistance during the previous year. In 1108 he had begun to move people into Wales to settle the land he claimed and to push the Welsh out.[22] Rather than lead a campaign into Wales in 1109 to punish Owain, Henry I instead sought use internal strife. Henry I turned to Madog and Ithel ap Rhirid, sons of Cadwgan's older brother Rhirid ap Bleddyn.[23] He promised them riches and power if they drove Cadwgan and Owain out of their land.[24] Henry also approached Llywarch ap Trahaearn, due to the feuding between the families, and Uchdryd ab Edwin.[25] Madog, Ithel, Llywarch and Uchdryd were all promised wealth and land in return for attacking Owain and Cadwgan. This approach worked out more effectively than campaigning due to the terrain of Wales. More often than not Anglo-Norman Campaigns ended up hampered if not completely stalled by the terrain of Wales. Cadwgan and Owain had a better chance of avoiding an Anglo-Norman assault by withdrawing into the mountains located in Powys. Welsh princes and their warbands were use to the terrain and could navigate it with greater effectiveness than an Anglo-Norman force.

Faced with Anglo-Norman induced opposition, Cadwgan and Owain fled from their lands and Madog and Ithel took control of Powys. Owain fled to Ireland, while Cadwgan stayed in Wales and began negotiations with Richard De Beaumais, Bishop of London, who acted as the King's commander in Shrewsbury.[26] Cadwgan reclaimed control of Ceredigion, after having to

[22] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 27.
[23] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 59.
[24] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 59.
[25] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 59.
[26] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn," 88.

pay a fine of £100 to Henry and promising not to contact or support Owain. Madog and his brother though maintained control over Powys. The chronicles, which have a clear bias in favor of Cadwgan, state that Madog and Ithel's governed Powys, "infamously and unsuccessfully: for their was no peace between themselves."[27] Cadwgan had done much to keep his kin group united, but despite his efforts the last years of his rule would mark a period of disunity in Powys as the younger generation of the kin group battled to usurp the power of Cadwgan and his brothers in Powys. Henry by using Madog and Ithel's desire for power against Cadwgan had successfully undercut the growing power of Cadwgan and Powys.

In the short term this was a success for Henry I, He had now placed rulers in Powys who were dependent on him for their power, eliminated Cadwgan as threat, and he had weakened the unity between northern Princes. Henry I had turned Cadwgan's form ally against him, Uchdryd ab Edwin. However, this success was short lived as Madog ap Rhirid was not willing to play the role of puppet king. Madog quickly began to cause trouble in 1109, sending members of his war band to raid England. Madog argued that these raids were done as retaliation for robberies committed by Anglo-Normans.[28] Madog refused to turn over his men to Henry I or agree to any peace. Instead Madog turned to Owain ap Cadwgan, who had recently returned to Powys from Ireland. Owain and Madog forged an alliance, the men agreeing that neither would make peace with Henry without the other.[29] Together the men set off to plunder and raid "whosesoever fate led them," a path that included the Welsh land which Henry I had recently sought to colonize.[30]

Henry I in attempt to reestablish control and take care of the problem of Owain and Madog reintroduced a player into royal family of Powys: Iorwerth. In 1110, Henry I released

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[27] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 27.
[28] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 31.
[29] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 65.
[30] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 31; Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn," 89.

Iorwerth ap Bleddyn from prison and returned to him all of his lands in return for a large sum of money and several hostages, including another son of Cadwgan. The boy was released almost immediately though. Iorwerth, as soon as he had reclaimed his land, sent his warband after Owain and Madog. Once again feuding between the leading nobles of Powys was not due so much to Welsh culture as to Anglo-Norman Involvement. The young men fled towards the lands of Uchdryd ab Edwin in Meirionydd, who was Powys western neighbor and Madog former ally.[31] Uchdryd rather than welcoming the men tried to drive them out, but the cousins put Uchdryd's warband to flight. [32] After this success Owain and Madog parted ways.

Owain briefly settled in Ceredigion where his father ruled and from there he continued to incite violence by gathering the young men of Ceredigion and Irish allies to conduct raids on Dyfed.[33] Young men in Wales during this period often joined such ventures in order to gain property and wealth, which was frustratingly sparse in Wales. The fact that land equaled wealth and power in Wales combined with the fact that there was an extremely finite amount of fertile land left little opportunity for young men. This led them often to turn to raiding or to be mercenaries. During Stephan I rule the Marcher lords often hired the Welsh a mercenary in their armies.[34] Owain's actions once again angered Henry and he therefore fled to Ireland again. Owain sent Cadwgan to Henry I court to sooth the king's anger. Cadwgan failed to placate Henry and Henry I gave his vassal, Gilbert Fitz Richard the right to lay claim Cadwgan's land. Fitz Richard forcefully took possession of a portion of Ceredigion and built two castles there.[35]

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[31] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 33.
[32] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,*33.
[33] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 33.
[34] David Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings" in *The Anarchy of King Stephan's Reign,* Ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2001), 277.
[35] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 34.

Kin-strife during this period of time had effectively created chaos in the Powys royal dynasty. This chaos though rather then leave Wales weak to conquest and control had created a serious of dangerous landed welsh lords who were operated largely unbound by the relationships that kept them inline. Cadwgan had been able to control the younger generation of Powys creating unity. Henry I manipulations had tapped into the desires of this generation of young lords and young Welshmen in general who were facing cultural, political, and economic changes that threatened their futures. Wales before Norman Conquest of England had a barter economy that was based on agriculture. They had no form of currency.[36] The Anglo-Normans conquest of Welsh land especially the southern coastline limited the potential options of young men by limiting their access to land. This created a group of young men who no longer seemed to have a place in society. Owain and Madog, while not in the same position, were cut out of ruling by the older generation. So far these pressure had been constrained by the current ruling princes, especially Cadwgan. Henry I though cut the kin bounds that had restrained Madog, Ithel and Owain. Further, his weakening of northern princes had unleashed the fury of young men determined to gather wealth through raiding. This left Henry struggling to find a reliable ally in the large Welsh kingdom. His release of Iorwerth from prison was a desperate attempt after a series of failures to find a capable and loyal supporter in Wales.

After departing from Owain, Madog sought out a new ally who was in Henry I favor, Iorwerth. However, Iorwerth had no interest in making an alliance with his nephew.[37] Lacking allies within his kin group, Madog turned to another old ally, Llywarch ap Trahaearn. Llywarch and Madog had briefly fought together in 1109 at Henry behest against Cadwgan, despite the fact

[36] Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 29-30.
[37] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 73.

that Llywarch's family was feuding with the royal family of Powys.[38] Llywarch wanting revenge against the man who had helped kill his brothers agreed to an alliance with Madog. Together, in 1111, they attacked Iorwerth, killed Iorwerth and burned down his castle.[39] These actions did not solve Madog's problem, but instead increased them. First, by killing Iorwerth, Madog induced Henry I to turn to Cadwgan to be his ally in Powys' royal family. Henry swiftly supported Cadwgan's claims to Powys over Madog's after Iorwerth's death and pardoned Owain of any crimes.[40] By killing Iorwerth Madog had created powerful enemies. To take land from a relative or to force a relative to flee was a acceptable approach to kin-strife, but to kill a blood relative constituted an extreme that found censure especially among the rest of the kin-group. Cadwgan had little love for Madog and Owain was more likely to side with his father as it earned him a pardon. Madog fled into the Welsh woods to escape from punishment.

Cadwgan returned to Powys and made no moves to hunt Madog down, apparently he sought to end the incident.[41] Madog however took advantage of Cadwgan's complacency and ambushed and killed him. Madog had now killed his two greatest competitors for the throne of Powys, Owain had not yet returned to from Ireland, and Maredudd had stayed out of the strife completely. This constellation of events gave Madog the confidence to approach Henry I in 1111. Madog hoped to gain recognition as the king of Powys and all of Iorwerth and Cadwgan's lands from Henry, as well as protection from his relatives. The death of Cadwgan, though, pushed both Owain and Maredudd into action and both men sought to kill Madog. Henry I who clearly no longer trusted Madog's loyalty, only rewarded him and his brother with a small

[38] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 117.
[39] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 73-75.
[40] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 35.
[41] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 75; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 119; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 35. All three chronicles state that Cadwgan had no wish to hurt any one.

amount of land in Powys. Rather Maredudd received Iorwerth's land and Owain was made king of Powys upon his return.[42] Madog managed to avoid the wrath of his relatives for a year, but in 1013 Maredudd on his way to raid Trahaearn's lands, found one of Madog's warband and tortured Madog's location out of him.[43]

After Maredudd's warband captured Madog, He took Madog to Owain, who then blinded Madog.[44] Blinding and castration were common means of obtaining revenge against kin because internecine killings constituted a taboo especially among Christians. So instead the Welsh and other medieval societies adapted blinding and/or castration of their kin.[45] Blinding made a pesky relative no longer a viable threat as they were now physically crippled. Castration made it so the man could no longer produce heirs, a serious impediment to a medieval ruler. The Welsh sources suggest that the practice of castration was one they adopted from the Normans, rather then one they traditionally practiced.[46] Maredudd and Owain divided Madog's land between them. Maredudd willingly stepped aside and allowed his nephew to become king of Powys. Further Owain's younger sibling also willingly let him take the throne. The three years of kin-strife ended with Owain uncontested ascension to the throne.

However, this period of kin-strife, from 1109 to 1111, had undermined Powys growing status in Wales. To begin with several northern princes had taken Powys' territory in 1109, most notably Llywarch ap Trahaearn and Uchdryd ap Edwin. Furthermore, Henry I had established more direct influence over Powys than before 1109. Throughout the chaos of these three years Henry I had successfully inserted himself into the politic of Powys. Madog by turning to Henry I

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[42] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 36.
[43] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 36.
[44] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 36-37.
[45] Charelene M. Eska, "Castration in Early Welsh and Irish Sources" in Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages. Ed. Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 159.
[46] Eska, "Castration," 150.

to justify his right to rule over his kin allowed Henry to assert that the royal families territorial lordship was dependent upon him. This strengthened Henry I control over Powys and Wales at large, all while weakening the autonomy of Powys. This had significantly cut away at the power Cadwgan had spent a majority of his life establishing. However, Powys in 1113 was now stably held in the hands of Cadwgan's chosen successors: Owain. The most serious contender to Owain's power, Maredudd ap Bleddyn, was content to support Owain. Owain upon becoming king would have possessed a large amount of power in Wales and had made formable Irish allies during his travels. Owain's assent to the throne stabilized Powys.

Owain was not to be content with just stability though and soon set out to reclaim his father's land in Ceredigion. Owain began to conduct raids on the Normans in order to regain this land.[47] These incursions and the actions of Gruffudd ap Cyan and Goronwy ap Owain led Henry I to lead a campaign in 1114 against northern Wales.[48] While other Welsh lords rushed to placate the Normans, Owain withdrew into the mountains, and refused for several months to make peace. Henry's campaign in 1114 unlike those of William the conqueror and William Rufus was more a show of force then anything else, as it seems no blood was actually spilt.[49] Henry I could have followed Owain and his forces into the mountains. It would have been difficult and probably costly, but it could have been done, especially with a Welsh guide.

William I and William II had both conducted campaigns deep into Welsh territory. Henry's Campaign, though, had not set out to conquer. Henry I took no land and demanded little more than tribute from the Welsh. Rather Henry I made peace with all the Welsh lords, though Owain was one of the last to make peace. Henry gave many Welsh princes titles and wealth. For

[47] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 121.
[48] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 121.
[49] Hollister, *Henry I,* 237-238.

instance Henry knighted Owain and invited Owain to join his court.[50] In 1114 Owain accompanied Henry I on a campaign in Normandy.[51] Henry I by making peace rather than engaging in war with the Welsh brought the Welsh lords deeper under his control, they owed him loyalty now due to his generosity. Further, by bringing Owain into his court Henry I reestablished influence over a large Welsh kingdom, one that tended to cause him trouble. Owain by accepting peace seemingly lost little that immediately affected him. Rather he avoided war and gained spoils from the interaction.

Owain died in 1116 at the hands of Flemish settlers and Gerald of Windsor according to the chronicles.[52] The chronicles state that Owain was assisting Henry I's army against Gruffudd ap Rhys, when Gerald's host and Flemish fighters set upon Owain in retribution for previous attacks.[53] Upon Owain's death his brother Einion became king of Powys with the support of Maredudd.[54] This transition of power after Owain death again indicates that kin-strife was not pervasive or inevitable in medieval Welsh politics. Maredudd, who could have easily led the kingdom into chaos by killing his nephew and taking power both in 1111 and 1116, instead maintained stability supporting the chosen *Edling*. Further Maredudd never sought revenge on his brother for turning him over to Henry I.

The actions of Madog ap Rhirid had destabilized and weakened Powys. Though eventually the royal family of Powys did pull together and regained a significant amount of the power they had lost. The blow many historians view the action of Madog and his brother as dealing is overstated. Yes, territory was lost, but all of Powys was held and the family during

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[50] Hollister, *Henry I,* 238.
[51] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 123.
[52] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 99; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 135; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 45.
[53] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 97; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 133; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 44.
[54] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn," 92.

Cadwgan and Owain rule managed to win more from the Normans than they lost to them. The greatest affect from the kin-strife of this period was that it expanded Henry I overlordship in Wales. After Owain's death though Henry I control over Powys was undercut by the Leadership of Maredudd ap Bleddyn. Henry I interference in Welsh Politics had caused him as much trouble as the Welsh and did little to stop Welsh raids on Anglo-Norman territory.

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn was ultimately a more successful ruler than he has been given credit for. He successfully led the Welsh rebellion in the 1090s and he maintained control of Powys for all but the last three years of his life. Kin-strife may have briefly created chaos, but for most of Cadwgan's rule he maintained control over his kin-group, facing little internal war until the end of his rule. Powys' royal family demonstrated during this period that at its core it was united. Though this unity would be tested severely in the next decade and eventually would be destroyed by kin-strife as Maredudd ap Bleddyn rose to power.

Chapter 4: The Rule of Maredudd, 1116-1132

From 1109 to 1116 Powys had lost power. Cadwgan had lost a large section of Ceredigion to the Anglo-Normans. Ceredigion was located on the western coast of central Wales. It was a fertile piece of land that was separated from Powys by a mountain range. During Owain ap Cadwgan's reign all of Ceredigion was conquered by the Normans. Powys would never regain Ceredigion, despite the royal family's attempts in 1116 to do so, or the power and influence it knew under Cadwgan. However Maredudd ap Bleddyn's rule would serve as a period of stabilization, creating a foundation for the successful rule of his son, Madog. Maredudd would not officially become king of Powys until 1124, but he played an active role from 1116 to 1124, often taking a leadership role in conflicts. After 1124 Maredudd would eliminate all rivals to the throne and secure it for his children. Maredudd seemed to have understood Henry I's manipulation better than his brother or nephew. He was apparently less willing to fall into Henry I's plans both before 1124 and after. This knowledge helped him stabilize Powys and bring about a period of growth. Maredudd and the rest of the ruling family worked hard to reestablish Powys power over the north following Owain's death.

Maredudd's rise to power began following the Owain's death in 1116, when Einion and Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn, Maredudd's son, waged war on Uchdryd ap Edwin.[1] Previously, Uchdryd had been an ally of Powys. Cadwgan had given Uchdryd land in

[1] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), 46.

Meirionydd and Cyfeiliog sometime after 1102.[2] However Uchdryd had turned against Cadwgan and Powys in 1109 when he allied with Madog and Rhirid against Cadwgan. Uchdryd therefore was an enemy of Powys. In 1116, Uchdryd moved against Powys believing them to be weak following the death of Owain.[3] Owain lack of an heir could have resulted in disaster if the rest of the kin-group had not willing accepted Einion's rule. Uchdryd probably hoped to play upon the royal family's distraction. Uchdryd built a castle at Cymer in Meirionydd as part of his aggressive designs against Powys.

Powys led by Einion and Gruffudd attacked the castle and burnt it to the ground. They then proceeded to take back Meirionydd and Cyfeiliog and Penllyn, another of Uchdryd's territories.[4] Cyfeiliog and Penllyn would remain under Powys' control until 1160. Following the attack, the territories were split between Cadwgan's sons and Gruffudd.[5] This display sent a powerful message in Welsh politics, where aggressive force demonstrated power. Powys was capable of protecting its territory and could regroup after the loss of a capable leader, Owain ap Bleddyn. This victory likely reassured Einion's warband that he was a competent king who could bring them rewards for their service. Furthermore, This victory may have encouraged Maredudd to support Einion's rule because Einion here proved himself a capable and decisive leader.

Beyond securing territory the royal family of Powys worked to reinforce their control over the surrounding kingdoms. For example they established peace in 1118 after conflict arose

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[2] Kari Maund, "From Bleddyn ap Cynfyn to Owain ap Cadwgan 1069-1116," in *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud: Tempest Press, 2002), 87.

[3] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 101; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 45-46.
[4] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 101; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 45-46.
[5] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 101; *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 45-46.

when Hywel ap Ithel fought the sons of Owain ap Edwin, nephews of Uchdryd. [6] Hywel controlled the territories of Rhos and Rhufoniog, territories north of Powys that existed occasionally as part of Gwynedd. Hywel appealed to Powys for aid, which they gave. Maredudd and his nephews gathered around "four hundred of kinsmen and comrades and a warband of theirs."[7] The sons of Owain ap Edwin called upon their uncle to help them. They also enlisted "French from Chester." This indicates that the earl of Cheshire was working on his own to expand his territory in Wales, in all likelihood Henry I may had nothing to do with this group of Anglo-Normans fighting in 1118.[8] The ensuing battle was brutal, but Hywel and Powys forced Uchdryd and his nephews to flee.[9] The royal family demonstrated their unity and determination to establish peace within there sphere of influence.

The chronicles state that Hywel called on Powys for aid because "it was through their support and help that he held and maintained what land had fallen to his lot."[10] The *Brenhinedd Y Saesson* states that Hywel called upon the Powys because "it was they who were holding those portions of the land by right."[11] This second phrasing implies that they land belonged to the royal family of Powys, but they had given it to Hywel to look after as a vassal. This meaning could be inferred from the passages in both the *Peniarth MS. 20* and *Red Hergest* versions of the *Brut Y Tywysogyon* as both imply that Powys claimed Hywel's land, though neither states directly that the royal family Powys gifted this land to him.

Either way Einion acted as a liege lord to Hywel, and Hywel owed his loyalty to Powys. This reciprocal relationship implies that Powys, despite setbacks, maintained a substantial

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[6] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 46.
[7] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 46.
[8] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 46.
[9] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 46-47.
[10] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 46; *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 103. The Red Hergest version of the *Brut* uses a similar phrase thought wording is slightly different, but the meaning is the same.
[11] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 137.

influence over other Welsh lords. Further, it demonstrated that the family influenced Welsh politics beyond Powys' borders. Powys was still a powerful influence in Welsh politics in the second decade of the 1100s. And its leaders were eager to maintain working relationships with Henry I. Powys did not gain any territory from their victory due to fear of the "French" [the Normans].[12] This reluctance on the part of the royal family of Powys reflects their willingness to accommodate Henry I, perhaps due to the events of 1114 or due to the events of 1116, which resulted in Owain's death. Either way, the royal family of Powys wished to accommodate Henry I in 1118. The Norman interest in this conflict most likely stems from the fact that the sons of Owain ap Edwin controlled Dyffryn Clwyd, an area close to the Anglo-Normans holdings in Wales. Therefore, the policy of accommodations kept Powys from conquering more territory in Northern Wales.

This conflict was a victory for Powys as it stopped both the sons of Owain ap Edwin and the Anglo-Normans from expanding further into Northern Wale. However, this victory cost Powys an important ally, Hywel, who had controlled Rhos and Rhufoniog strategically valuable kingdoms. Rhos and Rhufoniog composed an important buffer against Gwynedd's expansion in northern Wales. Gwynedd had drifted out of power following the death of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn in 1075. In 1095 Gruffudd ap Cyan became king.[13] Gruffudd throughout his rule strove to rebuild Gwynedd's influence and established a powerful dynasty. He was a dangerous enemy of Powys as he stabilized Gwynedd and would begin a new wave of expansion in Wales. Maredudd and Madog would spend most of their reigns combating Gwynedd's expansion.

[12] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 46-47.
[13] K.L. Maund, ed., *Gruffudd ap Cyan: A Collaborative Biography* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1996), ix.

Historians have often marked the death of Owain in 1116 as the beginning of the end of Powys' power and have viewed the brief period of expansion during Madog's rule from 1132 to 1160 as the last breath of Powys power. In part this view reflects the growing power of Gwynedd under Gruffudd ap Cyan during the 1110's and the 1120's. By the 1150s Gwynedd would dominate Wales, as the princes of Gwynedd set out again and again to conquer all of Wales. From 1120 to 1160 Gwynedd and Powys battled for power, and Powys eventually lost. However, it is important to recognize up to 1160 Powys, as Gwynedd's chief rival in Wales, remained a powerful kingdom

The royal family of Powys once again found themselves facing a campaign by Henry I's into Wales in 1121. The chronicles directly attributed the cause of Henry I campaign to the royal family of Powys, who had attacked the lands of the Earl of Chester following his death in the wreck of the White Ship. In particular Powys pillaged two of Chester's castles.[14] In response, Henry I decided to lead an army into Powys. Henry I could not allow them to raid English territory without response, especially because Powys and probably most of Wales perceived the Anglo-Normans to be weak following the disaster of the White Ship, which had killed several important Anglo-Norman lords. Chester's absence would have left the Anglo-Norman border vulnerable. Henry I had to respond quickly to reinforce his power before any more Welsh Kings decided to challenge the Anglo-Normans.

Maredudd to combat this invasion employed a typical Welsh tactic. He sent archers to harass the army to weaken and slow the main Anglo-Norman force while the rest of Powys' forces retreated into the mountains.[15] One of these archers almost killed Henry I. Rather than retaliate with violence, Henry I sent the surviving Welsh archers back to Maredudd in order to

[14] Hollister, *Henry I,* 282.
[15] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 48.

arrange a peace between him and Powys.[16] Peace was accomplished. The treaty favored Henry who demanded that Maredudd and Cadwgan's sons pay a heavy tribute of, according to the chronicles, around ten thousand cattle.[17] This incident indicates Maredudd control over Powys by 1121. He led Powys in this battle, despite the fact that Einion was king. Maredudd's decision to not take the kingship from his nephew may have been due to his realization that to do so would result in kin-strife and leave Powys vulnerable to Henry I's manipulations.

This campaign was Henry I's last into Wales as Henry was more focused on maintaining control of Normandy than on Wales after 1121. Henry I's heirs had died the year before in 1120 in the wreck of the White Ship. This incident destabilized his rule, as he no longer had an heir apparent, a condition that often led to and ultimately did lead to civil war. The White Ship incident encouraged the formation of a faction who opposed Henry's children in favor of William Clito, his nephew and the son of Robert Curthose. William seemed like the most logical heir to some Normans. Multiple factions used Clito as a means to try to gain power during and after Henry's rule. The last decade of Henry I's rule (d. 1135) often involved issues related to his loss of an heir. This concern made Wales a pretty low priority. Consequently, Henry I's influence over Wales weakened. The Welsh princes seemed to sense his inability to mount another campaign into Wales at this time. Perhaps predictably, Henry I once again attempted to use kin-strife to ensure control.

It began with the death of Einion; the cause of his death is unknown, but following his death his brother Maredudd ap Cadwgan became the ruler of Powys as Einion *Edling*.[18] His uncle, Maredudd ap Bleddyn, however, was unwilling to step aside this time and peacefully

[16] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 48.
[17] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 48.
[18] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 49.

allow the succession to occur. Instead he attacked Maredudd ap Cadwgan and drove him from his land.[19] Henry I took advantage of the strife by releasing Ithel ap Rhirid from prison. Ithel tenaciously sought to regain his land from Maredudd ap Cadwgan and Maredudd ap Bleddyn. Henry sought either a reliable puppet ruler in control of Powys or the kingdom's collapse. Powys held strategic values because it bordered England and had to rivers flowing through it. These rivers, the Severn and the Dee, provided valuable fertile land in northern Wales and the river valleys provided the easiest path into northern and central Wales, which was difficult terrain. Conquest of Wales required reliable passage into the north Wales. In addition, the royal family of Powys had proven trouble for Henry in the past, and he could not miss an opportunity to weaken them to their influence. Releasing Ithel ap Rhirid served Henry I interests of establishing control, much as encouraging Madog ap Rhirid in 1109 had.

During this chaos Gruffudd ap Cyan, the prince of Gwynedd, sought to take advantage of the royal family of Powys' distraction and raided Meirionydd, a northern kingdom on the western coast.[20] According to the chronicles, Gruffudd had grand plans to drive the royal family out of Powys altogether, but these plans collapsed. In response to these attacks, the kin-group briefly tabled their internal disputes and attacked their enemies, in particular the descendants of Trahaearn ap Caradog, who had allied with Gwynedd and helped Gruffudd ap Cyan attack their land.[21] Despite internal division, the princes of Powys united to maintain Powys territorial borders. Whatever feelings of greed, ambition, or anxiety about station drove Welsh princes to attack their family, ultimately these feelings remained secondary to the overall survival of his

[19] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 49.
[20] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 49.
[21] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 49.

kin-group and kingdom. For the princes of Powys unity increased as the threat of foreign invasion waxed.

Once the threat of invasion subsided, the kin-strife resumed in 1125 following Einion's death. The dynasty had no clear king at this point, which incited possible heirs to fight each other for the throne. Ithel ap Rhirid came into conflict with Maredudd ap Bleddyn and his sons in 1125. Later that year Gruffudd ap Maredudd killed Ithel ap Rhirid.[22] This action occurred on Maredudd's command as Gruffudd preformed the deed in front of his father according to the chronicles, and Maredudd benefited from his death. The killing was therefore a demonstration of loyalty. Ithel had been a constant source of trouble to the others of his family, and when he was released from Henry's prison, he sought to retrieve his lands from his family. According to the *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* he obtained no land from his family, which is understandable as all heirs would have been scrambling to fortify their position and none would have been willing to share with a competitor. Further, Gruffudd and Maredudd's killing of Ithel may have been an act of retaliation as Ithel's brother had killed Maredudd's older brothers.

That same year Morgan ap Cadwgan killed his younger brother, Maredudd ap Cadwgan, who was Einion's designated heir.[23] The *Brut Y Tywysogyon, The Red Hergest* version tells us that strife had brewed between the two brothers that year leading to a fight in which Morgan killed his brother.[24] No other reason is given, but this strife probably arose from Morgan's anger at being passed over as Einion's heir. Morgan did not receive the throne after killing his brother. Instead Morgan went on crusade. The *Brut Y Tywysogyon, The Red Hergest* version states that he had gone " as a crusader to Jerusalem because he had before that killed, Maredudd, his

[22] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 109.
[23] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 109.
[24] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 111.

brother."[25] He could have gone willingly as a penitent, but it is also likely that the rest of his kin-group pressured him to leave the country as punishment for his actions and to eliminate a competitor. Morgan never returned to Wales; he died in Cyprus in 1128 on his journey home.[26]

After the death of Maredudd ap Cadwgan and the exile of Morgan in 1125, Maredudd ap Bleddyn became the king of a somewhat divided Powys and would rule till his death in 1132. During his rule Maredudd secured his descendants' claim to the throne. By 1125, Maredudd and his sons had only two competitors to their control over Powys. One was Morgan ap Cadwgan and the other was Llywelyn ap Owain ap Cadwgan, the only son of Owain ap Cadwgan. Morgan's death in 1128 eliminated him as a competitor for the throne and left Llywelyn as the only competing heir to Maredudd's children. Strife seems to have developed between Maredudd and Llywelyn, though there is limited information on Llywelyn within the sources, as he is not mentioned until 1128 when Maredudd seized him and gave him to Payne Fitz John, who was the sheriff of Shropshire, and was one of Henry I's trusted lieutenants.[27] The chronicles state that Payne imprisoned Llywelyn at the castle of Bridgenorth.[28] The incident may have just been a move by Maredudd to cultivate support from Payne and Henry I. However it was likely that this was Maredudd's way of removing a pesky relative. Though this does fit into a pattern of Maredudd collaborating with Henry I and the Anglo-Normans. Maredudd may have resisted Anglo-Norman expansion, but he also realistically sought to build relationship with his neighbors in order to protect his holding. This willingness to work with the Anglo-Normans and their king would be a hallmark of Madog ap Maredudd's rule and in part contributed to his success as a ruler.

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[25] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 111.
[26] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 111.
[27] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 111; Lloyd, *A History of Wales,* 443.
[28] *Brut Y Tywysogyon,* 111.

Llewellyn ap Owain may have avoided being a target of his family and history simply by being too young before 1128. Although Llewellyn's age is unknown 1128, he was more than likely was only a child when his father died in 1116 and therefore would not have been a real threat until around 1128. This dating could explain the absence of any mention of Llywelyn until he came into conflict with his uncle. Another factor precipitating Llywelyn's imprisonment could be the death of Gruffudd, Maredudd ap Bleddyn's eldest son died in 1128.[29] Gruffudd's death would have eliminated the clearest successor to Maredudd, and Llywelyn, as the son of Owain, may have seemed a superior successor to Maredudd's warband than any of Maredudd's other sons.

Llywelyn was likely a prisoner at Bridgenorth for less than two years; the sources place him as being in Powys again in 1130. At this point Llywelyn killed Iorwerth ap Llywarch, the son of Llywarch ap Trahaearn, in Powys. [30] Because Llywelyn 's father, Owain, killed Iorwerth ap Llywarch's brother, this event likely continued a feud between the descendants of Trahaearn ap Caradog and princes of Powys. Shortly afterwards Maredudd captured, blinded, and castrated Llywelyn. These actions eliminated Llywelyn as a competitor to Maredudd's own line and ensured that Maredudd's line would rule Powys.

Maredudd's son Madog would face no impediment to his taking the kingship in 1132 when Maredudd died. By blinding and castrating his nephew, Maredudd successfully assured internal peace in Powys, which enabled his son to rule for twenty-eight years with no kin-strife. This kin-strife was a continuation of the conflict that began in 1124 with the death of Einion. Kin-strife conflicts tended to become drawn out over years and even decades as fortunes changed for competitors. Both episodes of kin-strife within Powys in the 12th century lasted for several

[29] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 111.
[30] *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 111.

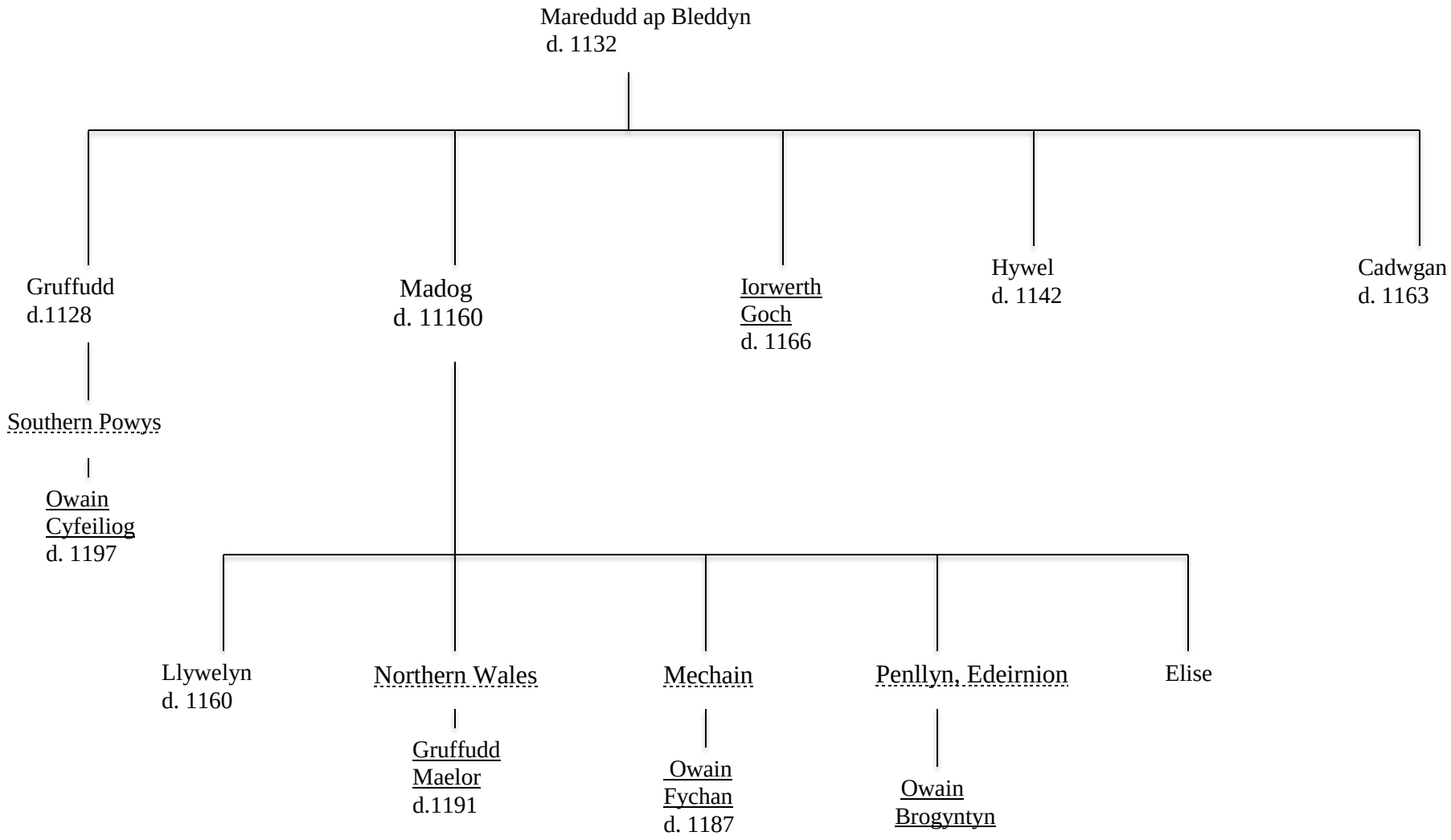
years before they were resolved. Maredudd had witnessed the danger kin-strife stood for in Powys and took steps to insure that his heir would not fall prey to it.

The machinations of the Anglo-Normans only heightened the threat of rival heirs. In 1109 and in 1124, Henry I had demonstrated that the Anglo-Normans where more than happy to use a disgruntled cousin to overthrow a Welsh prince. Maredudd must have recognized Henry's propensity in his support of Madog ap Rhirid in 1109. Henry I had specifically chosen a member of the kin-group in 1109 to strike at Cadwgan and Owain. Maredudd witnessed this propensity again in 1124 when Henry I released Ithel ap Rhirid. Maredudd understood the potential of kin-strife to be heightened or incited by Henry I. Maredudd's actions focused on avoiding kin-strife upon his death by eliminating the threats outside of his own line and probably reinforcing Madog place as his heir.

Although, kin-strife arose from Welsh culture, from deeply ingrained practices such partible inheritance, the focus on military power, and the pressures to satisfy one's own warband and followers, kin-strife also emerged in response to and as part of Anglo-Norman policies. Kin-strife created disunity within Welsh dynasties and thereby weakened resistance to the Normans. However, kin-strife was also the solution to internal problems in the minds of the Welsh princes, a way of dealing with the burdens of partible inheritance and the pressures of finite resources. It could provide unity and success in a kingdom. It allowed princes to remove competitors, who given the chance would throw the entire kingdom into chaos for a chance of having more land or power. Further, while kin-strife could be manipulated by the Anglo-Normans, it allowed princes to eliminate a relative whom the Anglo-Norman could exploit. Llywelyn may not have been a great threat in 1130, but he likely would have posed one later on, the moment when Maredudd or his sons became too powerful or angered the Anglo-Normans. Based on precedent Henry I

would have tried to weaken Powys through Llywelyn. Madog ap Maredudd, a prince who ruled in relative peace, as far as Welsh princes go, for almost thirty years, enjoyed such peace partly due to his father's actions, and the elimination of all potential threats to his claim to the kingship.

Figure 2: Division of Powys 1160



= Five co-heirs between who Powys was divided in 1160

= Major kingdoms Powys was divided into in 1160

Jason Kord, “Powys after 1160,”(map).
(Based on map in R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 232.)

Chapter 5: Peace and Division in Powys, 1132-1160

Madog ap Maredudd was by most accounts one of the greatest rulers of Powys, both in the eyes of his contemporaries and of modern scholars. He oversaw the second golden age of Powys, a period in which Powys' witnessed an expansion in territory. The first golden age was from 1099 to 1010.[1] R.R. Davies describes Madog as a "remarkable prince."[2] The Welsh poet Cynndelw Brydydd Mawr, who was a member of Madog's court, described Madog as "reproachless, powerful comrade of lords, / Monarch armed in iron, iron-crowned."[3] His rule, while marked by conflict with the Anglo-Norman and other Welsh princes, witnessed no kin-strife. Following his father's death, he became ruler of Powys in 1132 without conflict. The chronicles document his rule in less detail than the reigns of his predecessor probably due to the relative peace. However, he was an especially powerful prince during the 1140s and 1150s, despite the relentless growth of Gwynedd's power at that time.

Madog's ability to expand Powys and the extent of his power was part of a larger phenomenon that occurred in Wales at the time. When Henry I died in 1135, he left no uncontested heir. Rather a favored member of his court, Stephen of Blois seized the throne. crowned king on December 22, 1135. However, Stephen had little support, and Mathilda, Henry I's daughter, and William Clito did not easily surrender their claims to the throne. These disputes over the English crown lasted from 1139 until 1147. This chaos created an opportunity for the Welsh princes to weaken Anglo-Norman influence in Wales. By the then end of Stephen's reign the Welsh Marches had collapsed, and south Wales was no longer under Anglo-Norman control.

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[1] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 229.
[2] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 49.
[3]Cynndelw Brydydd Mawr, "Lament for Madawg ap Maredudd" in *The Earliest Welsh Poetry*, Trans. Joseph P. Clancy (London: Macmillan, 1970), 142.

This opportunity in part came from the chaos of the civil war, but it also had to do with Stephen's disregard for Welsh politics. Stephen paid little attention during his reign to the Marcher lords, who maintained the Anglo-Norman borderlands and were responsible for furthering Anglo-Norman interest in Wales. The Welsh Princes, including Madog ap Maredudd, began to attack Anglo-Norman holdings in Wales. Without the support of the king the Marcher lords could not withstand Welsh aggression in the late 1130s and 1140s.

The first indication of this change in Wales came when a Welsh prince attacked and killed Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare, the Anglo-Norman lord who now controlled a large part of Ceredigion. [4] Morgan ap Owain and his warband attacked de Clare while he and his retinue were returning to his Welsh holdings from England.[5] De Clare's death created a power vacuum that the Welsh princes exploited. For example, Owain and Calwaladr, the sons of Gruffudd ap Cyan, the prince of Gwynedd, attacked Ceredigion previously controlled by de Clare.[6] They burned several Anglo-Norman castles before they returned home.[7] They returned later that year, joined by several other Welsh princes from surrounding kingdoms. This time the Anglo-Normans responded, but the Welsh defeated them.[8] Stephen's response to these events was to commission a retaliatory raid, led by Baldwin Fitz Gilbert, de Clare's brother, and Robert Fitz Harold of Ewyas, a marcher lord.[9] Both men failed to reestablish control in Wales. At this point Stephen relinquished Wales by leaving the Marchers to battle the Welsh by themselves. This approach differs radically from the previous kings policy towards Wales. While the Marcher lords had

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[4] Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen*, 54.
[5] *Gesta Stephani*. Trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1976), 15.
[6] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), 51.
[7] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 51.
[8] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson or the Kings of the Saxons,* Trans Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), 147.
[9] David Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings" in *The Anarchy of King Stephan's Reign,* Ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2001), 261-262.

always been the first to respond to Welsh aggression, the Kings supported the Marcher lords by leading large campaigns to reestablish control if the Welsh attack escalated. Previous kings would have led a campaign into Wales in response to the death of Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare. Stephen by not doing such allowed Welsh attacks to escalate beyond the standard raids.

The Welsh success after 1136 arose in part from their formation of large alliances that allowed them to resist the Marchers lord's attempts to reclaim territory. David Crouch argues that Welsh princes had learned "that necessity was the mother of co-operation," that allowed for Welsh successes during the anarchy of Stephen. Crouch also notes that Powys had become "unified."[10] Crouch sees Madog's reign as a rare instance of Welsh cooperation.[11]

The Welsh, while not as unified as the Anglo-Normans, had frequently demonstrated a tendency to cooperate, whether as a nation or as a region, with each other in face of outside threats. The success of the Welsh rebellion against William Rufus in the 1090s hinged on cooperation between the northern princes, and alliances between princes were common. Furthermore, Welsh princes had often demonstrated a willingness to put aside feuds when facing external threats, as the royal family of Powys demonstrated in 1124 when Gwynedd and the descendants of Trahaearn ap Caradog attacked them. However, Crouch points to the brothers working together as a revelation in the 1130s. However, kin-strife often subsided in Welsh dynasties when they faced a common enemy. The Welsh often demonstrated a willingness to take advantage of unity.

The Welsh princes were not simple. They neither lacked all sense of loyalty to their local kingdoms nor were they noble princes bent on unifying all of Wales, Wales had existed as separate kingdoms and regions since time out of mind. The geography Wales had long isolated

[10] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 267.
[11] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 267.

these local Welsh kingdoms. Consequently, different cultures and loyalties arose within Wales. These loyalties and cultural bonds could not so easily be tossed aside for one unified identity. Certainly some like Gruffudd ap Llywelyn united Wales. While others, such as Madog ap Rhirid, almost destroyed their dynastic power base. Some princes were opportunists who when given the right circumstances preserved their interests at great cost to their families. This opportunism worked in combination with a set of cultural pressures and a very diverse set of loyalties. A Welsh prince owed his loyalty to his kin group, his warband, his kingdom, and all of Wales. While kin group often trumped other loyalties these other interests encouraged princes to decide to violate one or more of these ties.

Kin-strife often occurred as a reasoned response to complex consideration. In the 1130s and 1140s, the Anglo-Norman civil war led the Welsh to shift their tactics. They had an opportunity re-conquer the Anglo-Normans' holdings. This reconquest lessened internal pressures on the princes and made kin-strife an unnecessary solution. The Welsh princes had more territory to distribute to their warbands. Previously, Henry I had increased cases of kin-strife through his manipulations, and without his actions as a catalyst for internal strife, the practice of kin-strife subsided, especially in Powys, which most often felt Henry I's hand. Additionally, Madog ap Maredudd employed several Welsh tactics to avoid kin-strife. For example, he appointed his younger brother Iorwerth Goch as his Penteulu.[12] The Penteulu was the commander of a Welsh prince's Teulu, warband, and it was one of the highest and most honored positions within a Welsh princes court.[13] Madog gave this position to his brother as a

[12] *The Mabinogion*, Trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 214.
[13] Sean Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 32.

way of gaining his support for his kingship. Such gestures were a common way of sharing authority within the family, but still maintaining control over the kin-group.

During the anarchy of Stephen, in Powys Madog and his brothers faced an aggressive enemy to the north, Gwynedd, who had many new allies. Additionally on Powys' eastern border Marcher lords struggled to regain the territory they had lost. Gwynedd as a kingdom profited most from the collapse of Anglo-Norman power during this early period. Gwynedd's princes, Owain and Calwaladr, pursued an aggressive policy both against the Anglo-Norman holdings and against Powys. Madog struggled against the aggressive and expansionist goals of Gwynedd. By 1137 Powys had lost Meirionydd and Penllyn, the territories Maredudd and Einion had taken in 1116 from Uchdryd. This pressure likely encouraged Powys to unify in the face of a threat to their holdings.

Madog and his brothers did not take advantage of the period directly following the onset of the anarchy in 1136, but they gradually used the Anglo-Norman civil war to gain territory as they recognized Stephens shift in policy. They began by allying with the Marcher lords. Sources placed Madog as fighting with the Marcher lords and with the princes of Gwynedd against Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141.[14] Briefly Powys and Gwynedd stifled their quarrels to profit from the English civil war. Most Marcher lords had sided with Henry I's daughter Mathilda against Stephen.[15] This battle proved a profitable exchange for the Marchers and the Welsh princes, who won the day at Lincoln. This alliance lasted only briefly. By 1145 the three princes who had fought on with the Marcher lords in 1141 were again conducting raids into Anglo-Norman territory.

[14] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 277.
[15] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 279.

Stephen's disregard for Wales encouraged the Marcher lords to side with Mathilda. Stephen had refused to help the Marchers in 1136 and had done nothing while they suffered the Welsh onslaughts. Therefore, his own Marcher lords fought against him. Stephen would continue to turn away the Marchers lords' requests throughout his reign. Stephen's reticence to become involved in Wales led him to reject the request of Ranulf, the Earl of Chester, in 1146 when the princes of Gwynedd were pressing into his territory.[16] Ranulf was one of the most powerful lords in England. The reasons for Stephen's disregard towards Wales are a little unclear. Some sources, such as the *Gesta Stephani*, stated that trying to maintain control over Wales was to costly; others suggest that Stephen sought to reduce the power that the Marcher lords had begun to gain over the past decades.[17] Either way, Stephen's inaction allowed for the Welsh to regain a significant amount of territory.

Because of civil war in England, most of Powys' growth during the 1140s and 1150s was not into Welsh territory, but into Anglo-Norman controlled England. Madog in the 1140s expanded Powys' boundaries out towards Cheshire and Shropshire. These large Anglo-Norman counties had been first established by William the Conqueror as a buffer between Wales and the rest of England. The most significant of this activity occurred in 1149 when Madog captured the castle of Oswestry in Shropshire. [18] The Anglo-Norman lord, William Fitz Alan, who had been in charge of Oswestry had joined the supporters of Mathilda forcing him to flee to his holdings or face Stephen's wrath.[19] Madog seized this opportunity by confiscating Oswestry and the surrounding land. Madog raided into England as far as Dudleston and Whittington, counties in

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[16] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 277.
[17] Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen*, 58-59.
[18] *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes. The Red Book of Hergest Version,* Trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 129.
[19] John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest time to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1912), II: 493.

Shropshire, achieving victories in these territories.[20] In his poem "The Fall of Powys" Cynndelw Brydydd Mawr celebrated many of Madog's military victories, including his victory at Dudleston.[21]

Madog's expansions to the east partly compensated for territory lost to Gwynedd in the north at the beginning of his rule, but Gwynedd continued to be a problem and led to one of the greatest losses of Madog's reign in 1150. In 1149 Owain, the prince of Gwynedd, moved into the territory of Iâl, a territory where Madog had built a castle.[22] Madog, angered by Owain's provocation and Gwynedd's previous attacks, allied with Ranulf, Earl of Chester. Ranulf also faced the aggression of Gwynedd as Owain raided Chester throughout the 1040s.[23] Together, Madog and Ranulf organized a campaign into Tegeingl. This campaign failed and Madog and Ranulf returned defeated.[24] Gwynedd expansion in part is the reason why Madog pursued expansion into England and to the south, as well as, why he often sought alliances with the Anglo-Normans. Later Madog would form an alliance with Henry II. Gwynedd was too powerful for Powys to push further into the northern Wales, the areas which they had historically controlled. The Anglo-Normans lords were engaged in a civil war, which left their lands open to conquest. Madog's response was logical if ill-fated.

Madog's rule was not well chronicled. The next mention of him in the chronicles was not until 1156, six years later, when he built a castle in Caereinion. In between these two dates the chronicles briefly related that his son Llewellyn ap Madog ap Maredudd slayed Stephen Fitz Baldwin, the son of the Norman lord of Montgomery, which was located near the southeast

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[20] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 50.
[21] Cynndelw Brydydd Mawr, "The Fall of Powys" in *The Earliest Welsh Poetry,* Trans. Joseph P. Clancy (London: Macmillan, 1970), 142.
[22] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 279.
[23] Crouch, "The March and Welsh Kings," 279.
[24] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 57.

border of Powys.[25] This entry likely indicated that Madog and his family were conducting raids into the territory, but the Welsh chronicles mentioned no more information about the event other than that it occurred. Based on the information given in Welsh poetry and the chronicles, we can assume that throughout the early period of the 1150s he continued to raid English territory and fend off Gwynedd's encroachment into Powys.

The death of King Stephen in 1154 changed the politics of Wales completely. Henry II pursued a much more aggressive policy towards Wales and the Marcher lords. His tactics set a precedent for later kings and were based mostly upon the tactics of his grandfather, Henry I. Henry II began by reigning in the Marcher lords. He targeted Earl Roger of Hereford and Hugh Mortimer of Wigmore, two of the most powerful Marcher lords.[26] Henry II went so far as to wage an all-out campaign against Hugh Mortimer in order to bring him under control.[27] Henry II had clearly learned from Stephen's mistake of letting the Marcher lords act without supervision.

As a part of his aggressive approach to Wales, in 1157 Henry II led a campaign against Owain ap Gruffudd ap Cyan of Gwynedd, the most powerful Welsh king by 1155.[28] Madog, sensing the change in English policy, allied himself with Henry II and joined in the campaign against Owain.[29] The level success of Henry II's campaign is debatable, but he succeeded in regaining territory lost to Owain and forced Owain to return property to the brother he had forced out of Wales in 1152.[30] Henry II seemed to focus on regaining the control and the land that Anglo-Normans had controlled before 1136. For Madog the campaign was successful; he

[25] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 58; Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 50.
[26] Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 496.
[27] Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 496.
[28] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 57.
[29] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20*, 57.
[30] Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 51.

reclaimed Iâl from Gwynedd and saw his greatest opponent for power in Wales weakened. Apparently Henry II and Madog stayed on friendly terms until Madog's death in 1160.

Madog ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn died in 1160 of natural causes. He was buried in Meifod, which was the ancient seat of Powys in Mathrafal; he was the last of his line to be buried there.[31] He ruled for 28 years with no serious rivals in Powys and no incidents of kin-strife. In part this success arose from his close relationship to the Marcher lords and later Henry II towards the end of his life. Henry II had no need to attack an ally, especially one who helped him stop the expansion of Gwynedd. Madog's success was related to certain strategies to stop kin-strife within his family. For example, he willingly shared his land with his nephews, and he promoted his brother to the position of Penteulu, the leader of the prince's warband. This position gave his brother power and kept him as an ally.

Powys golden age arose out of kin-strife, with Bleddyn ap Cynfyn defeating his nephews in battle in 1069 and it ended not in violence, but in peace. Perhaps Powys could have continued to grow following Madog's death if Llywelyn ap Madog, his heir, had not been slain in the same year. As the *Edling*, Llywelyn had extensive power, and his death left a power vacuum that his male kin rushed to fill.[32] The chronicles do not state who killed Llywelyn, but any of Madog's male kin would have been a beneficiary of his death.[33] Following Llywelyn's death, the remaining members of kin group did not turn on each other. Instead, they simply divided Powys up into five different kingdoms in accordance with Welsh law. The two largest regions of Powys were Powys Fadog, Northern Powys, and Powys Wenwynyn, Southern Powys.[34] Powys continued to be partitioned over the years into smaller and smaller units by the family. For

[31] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 233.
[32] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 62.
[33] *Brut Peniarth MS. 20,* 62; *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, 141; *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 163.
[34] Davies, *The Age of Conquest,* 234.

instance, Owain Cyfeiliog, Madog's, nephew and Owain Fychan, Madog's son, exiled Iorwerth Goch, Madog's brother, in 1166.[35] They divided Iorwerth's territory in two.[36] While the dynasty briefly maintained some independence from both Gwynedd and the Anglo-Normans, ultimately Powys lost most of its hegemony to the Anglo-Normans.

The decline and division of Powys reflected the fact that following Madog and Llywelyn's deaths, no one lord rose to power over the others. Instead, the remaining heirs peacefully accepted their pieces of the country. In this case the lack of kin-strife allowed partible inheritance to weaken Powys. Rather than providing a unified force against the Anglo-Normans and Gwynedd, Powys divided itself and allowed the Anglo-Normans and other Welsh princes to absorb the smaller portions, such a Penllyn, which was lost once again to Gwynedd. Furthermore although Madog's heirs were not struggling to kill each other, they still could not unite to face the threats present. Kin-strife had almost destroyed Cadwgan rule in 1109, but the lack of it ultimately weakened Powys to Anglo-Norman advances. Kin-strife, while a brutal solution to modern readers, allowed Welsh princes to establish control over rival heirs as the events of 1160s would prove.

Despite what can be described as the decline of Powys following Madog ap Maredudd's death in 1160, Powys never completely disintegrated. In 1277 Powys maintained largely the same borders as it had in 1160; it was no longer autonomous, and it rulers often had to bow other Welsh rulers or to the English king, but it survived as a whole unit until 1282 when it was still ruled by descendants of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. This survival was a remarkable accomplishment as the rest of Wales had already fallen to the Anglo-Normans and was controlled by marcher lords.

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[35] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 169.
[36] *Brenhinedd Y Saesson,* 169.

R.R. Davies ascribes this success largely to Powys' princes' willingness to adjust to the situation and to make alliances with old enemies, such as Gwynedd and the English kings. [37] This ability to adapt to changing balance of power was a characteristic demonstrated throughout the history of Powys from Cadwgan ap Bleddyn to Madog ap Maredudd ap Bleddyn and also a characteristic that best described the Welsh during the early years of Anglo-Norman Conquest. The Welsh rulers of Powys willingly adopted new allies, changed tactics, unified, and betrayed each other in their struggle for survival. They succeed for two centuries. These tactics contradicted the historical legacy fashioned first by the Anglo-Normans, who often assumed that unification was synonymous with progress. Powys, despite defeats, survived, longer then any other Welsh kingdom.

[37] Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 235.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To kill one's brother has been a horrible crime, at least since the Hebrews recorded the story of Cain and Abel; yet stories of fratricide pepper the pages of Welsh chronicles. Kin-strife violated the bonds of the kin-group in a manner that most historians have found beyond the pale. Yet the kin-strife within Welsh ruling dynasties was not so different from the English war of successions in the 1100's and the 1400's. William the Conqueror's children spent most of their lives fighting each other for dominion over Williams lands. Welsh kin-strife's place in the medieval world was not so strange. It arose from a series of conflicting pressures and desires, especially at the end of the 11th century and throughout the 12th century when the Welsh power relations shifted in reaction to the Anglo-Norman invasion of England. The Anglo-Normans from the beginning involved themselves in Welsh affairs and strove towards conquest that would not be complete until 1282 under Edward I.

Bleddyn ap Cynfyn in 1069 killed his nephews and gained control over all of northern Wales, including the kingdom that his descendants would rule for over two centuries: Powys. This principality experienced growth and decline over these two centuries. Bleddyn ap Cynfyn was one of the first to battle the Anglo-Normans, and his kingdom eventually fell to them. The Anglo-Norman kings actively fomented kin-strife in the kingdom of Powys. In particular, Henry I intentionally sought to weaken Powys using kin-strife. This policy arose partly from the common tradition of kin-strife in Wales. Henry I could easily convince a nephew or brother to kill his king if it would result in the nephew or brother's rise to power. This pattern was evident in 1109 when Henry I picked Madog ap Rhirid (featured in the opening scene of this paper) to end the rule of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, Madog's uncle. This success allowed Henry I to support a king of Powys who owed him loyalty. Henry I's interest in Powys came in part from its strategic

position on the English border and its easy accessibility through river valleys. However, it also arose from Henry I's desire to control the amount of power Powys had over north Wales. By weakening this control, Henry would open northern Wales to his control. The Anglo-Normans throughout Henry I's reign had a tentative grasp upon North Wales, which is generally more mountainous and remote than southern Wales.

Despite Henry's meddling, the kingdom of Powys only experienced two bouts of kin-strife over a period of about a hundred years, from 1066 to 1160. The first bout directly resulted from Henry I's actions rather than internal disputes. The second resulted from a conflict, which Henry I sought to intensify, over succession following the death of Einion ap Cadwgan. These two incidents do not define the character of Powys as some historians have suggested. Rather throughout this period Powys experienced long periods of internal peace, beginning with Cadwgan's rule from 1075 to 1111. Only the last three years of his rule were marred by kin-strife. Madog ap Maredudd's reign from 1132 to 1160 also witnessed no kin-strife. What kin-strife there was arose during the rule of Henry I, who consciously fostered kin-strife in Powys.

During these stable periods Powys experienced enormous territorial growth and power, especially in north Wales. This trend was significant as Powys served as obstacle to the Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales. Powys was situated on the border to England and was vulnerable to Anglo-Norman invasion. Strength in the ruling family of Powys hampered Anglo-Norman progress, a point which Henry I must have realized. By inciting conflict, he weakened the kingdom and gave his Marcher lords the advantage they needed to push further into northern Wales. Powys' unity kept it from falling in the 11th and 12th century. The death of Madog ap Maredudd destroyed this unity as the kingdom was divided according to Welsh law between all

male heirs. Previously in the early 1100s kin-strife had stopped such division even as it intensified disunity.

As a result of Powys' division in 1160 the kingdom could no longer withstand both Anglo-Norman and Gwynedd's assaults. From 1160 onwards Powys experienced frequent raids by their neighbors in Shropshire. The Anglo-Normans captured Pool, the capital of Southern Powys, in 1196.[1] Gwynedd annexed and lost the Penllyn, Iâl, and Edeirnion several times after 1160. [2] Furthermore, Powys continued to be divided over the twelfth and thirteenth century into smaller and smaller kingdom. Attempts to unify all of Powys failed. For example, in 1197 Owain Cyfeiliog, lord of Southern Powys attempted to reconstitute Powys and to expand territory by conducting raids into the southern central march.[3] He failed though, and his army was overwhelmed in 1198 by the Anglo-Norman army.[4]

Eventually the rulers of Powys became subservient either to the king of Gwynedd or to the Anglo-Norman king. For instance, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was denied his land by Gwynedd until he was able to garner the support of the Henry III in 1241, at which point he became the king of Southern Powys.[5] Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn sided with Edward I when the Welsh rebelled against Edward in 1282.[6] Gruffudd refused to bow to the rule of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Gwynedd. When the last large Welsh rebellion against Anglo-Norman conquest failed in 1283, Gruffudd was on the winning side, after having supported the conquerors. His family at least continued on, subservient to the Anglo-Normans.

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[1] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 123.
[2] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 231.
[3] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 229.
[4] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 229.
[5] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 233.
[6] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 349.

During the period of 1066 to 1160 Powys experienced a golden age in terms of the power of the ruling family; Bleddyn ap Cynfyn and his descendants presided over its greatest territorial expansion. Kin-strife despite its ability to create disunity was not the cause of Powys' loss of power after 1160. Rather kin-strife had little effect on the wellbeing of Powys. The bouts of kin-strife in Powys ended with the accession of stable rulers to the throne rather than instability, partly because Welsh culture was well versed in dealing with kin-strife. Henry I sought to manipulate this phenomenon to his advantage to weaken Powys to his control. This strategy did not work well for the English king, as the royal family of Powys was able to handle the chaos and reestablish unity. Rather it was Powys' enemies and the peaceful and legal division of Powys that weakened it and opened it to Anglo-Norman power.

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