

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **The uxorial lifecycle and female agency in Wales in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries**

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THE UXORIAL LIFECYCLE AND  
FEMALE AGENCY IN WALES  
IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH  
CENTURIES

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# ***ABSTRACT***

The political, social and cultural histories of Wales before 1282, which focus on themes associated with the evolution of nationhood — namely conquest, co-existence and change — are incomplete because treatments of a collective Welsh identity fail to address women's experiences. This thesis examines the sources largely associated with Wales during the Age of Princes, analysing how married women are identified and what types of agency are associated with them. An investigation into the uxorial lifecycle helps to highlight the gendered cultural and social expectations that women faced more generally. Comparing and contrasting conventional gender constructs found in medieval Welsh sources with evidence of women's employment of agency highlights the status of women in society and provides a more balanced assessment of Wales before 1282.

Chapter 1 discusses Welsh native sources and traditions. It examines the complexities of analysis concerning the dissemination of gender ideals found in sources composed largely during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many of which were influenced by oral tradition. Chapter 2 looks at the development of uxorial identity. It investigates the lifecycle of the wife defined in native law, including discussions on the commodification of gender and the practice of concubinage. An examination of how the uxorial lifecycle is constructed in the Welsh chronicles and the identification of the most idealized uxorial traits found across the sources is also discussed. Chapter 3 considers the concept of native Welsh queenship and the status of wives as queens. Three key issues are explored: to what extent there was an ideal of queenship in native Wales; the core ideologies and expectations of the office of the queen; and how the use of titles and other designations denotes status. Chapter 4 reviews evidence of Welsh

queenship in practice by looking at the political agency rulers' wives exercised. Chapter 5 examines charter evidence concerning female land ownership and women's involvement within their family lordships, localities and against a wider political backdrop.

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## ***ABBREVIATIONS***

- ABT*** *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogion Cymru*, in P.C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966), pp. 95-110.
- AC*** *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. William ab Ithel (Rolls Series, London, 1960).
- AnnCestr*** *Annales Cestrienses*, ed. R.C. Christie (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 14; London, 1887).
- Arch. Camb.*** *Archaeologia Cambrensis*
- AnnDunst*** ‘Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), iii, pp. 3-420.
- AM*** *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9).
- AnnMarg*** ‘Annales de Margan’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), i, pp. 3-40.
- AnnOsney*** ‘Annales Monasterii de Oseneia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), iv, pp. 3-5.
- AnnTewk*** ‘Annales Monasterii de Theokesberia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), i, pp. 43-180.
- AnnWav*** ‘Annales Monasterii de Waverleia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), ii, pp. 129-41.
- AnnWinch*** ‘Annales Monasterii de Wintonia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), ii, pp. 3-125.
- AnnWorc*** ‘Annales Prioratus de Wigornia’, *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), iv, pp. 355-564.
- AWR*** *The Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120-1283*, ed. H. Pryce (Cardiff, 2005).
- BBCS*** *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*
- BL*** British Library
- BM*** British Museum

- BS** *Brenhinedd y Saesson, or The Kings of the Saxons: BM Cotton Ms. Cleopatra Bv and The Black Book of Basingwerk NLW Ms. 7006*, ed. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1971).
- BT, Pen20** *Brut y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS. 20*, ed. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1941).
- BT, Pen20Tr** *Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes Peniarth 20 Ms. Version*, trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1952).
- BT, RBH** *Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1955).
- CCR** *Calendar of the Close Rolls*
- CPL** *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters, i. A.D. 1198–1304*, ed. W.H. Bliss (London, 1893).
- CPR** *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*
- CR** *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*
- CRR** *Curia Regis Rolls*
- CW** ‘*Cronica de Wallia and Other Documents from Exeter Cathedral Library MS. 3514*’, ed. T. Jones, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 12 (1946), pp. 27-44.
- CWR** ‘Calendar of the Welsh Rolls’
- EWGT** *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. P.C. Bartrum (Cardiff, 1966).
- Gir. Camb., Op.** Giraldi Cambrensis, *Opera*, (eds) J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner, 8 vols (Rolls Series, 1861–91).
- HGK** *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*, ed. D.S. Evans (Cardiff, 1978).
- HW** J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1912).
- LTMW** *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, ed. and trans. D. Jenkins (Llandysul, 1986).
- LW** *Littere Wallie: Preserved in Liber A in the Public Record Office*, ed. J.G. Edwards (Cardiff, 1940).
- NLW** National Library of Wales



- NWLJ** *National Library of Wales Journal*
- Pat. Rolls** *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1891– ).
- Rot. Chart.** *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati A.D. 1199–A.D. 1216*, ed. T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, London, 1837).
- Rot. Claus.** *Rotuli Litteratum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati A.D. 1204–A.D. 1227*, ed. T.D. Hardy, 2 vols. (Record Commission, London, 1832–44).
- Rot. Pat.** *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati, I.i., A.D. 1201–A.D. 1216*, ed. T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, London, 1835).
- THSC** *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*
- TNA** The National Archives
- TRHS** *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- TYP** *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, ed. and trans. R. Bromwich (Cardiff, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2006).
- Vita Griffini** *Vita Griffini Filii Conani, The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. and trans. P. Russell (Cardiff, 2005).
- WAR** *The Welsh Assize Roll 1277–1284*, ed. J.C. Davies (Cardiff, 1940).
- WGEMW** M. Roberts and S. Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000).
- WHR** *Welsh History Review*
- WKHC** T. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen and P. Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000).
- WLW** D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women: Studies presented to Professor Daniel A. Binchy on his Eightieth Birthday* (Cardiff, 1980).

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## *INTRODUCTION*

In the early twentieth century J. E. Lloyd observed in his article on the royal Welsh woman Gwenllian de Lacy (d. 1281) that the intrigue into finding out who she was, ‘at once invites inquiry, and curiosity is further stimulated by the thick veil which hangs over her early history’.<sup>1</sup> Lloyd’s statement about the uncertainty of one woman’s early history in medieval Wales can be easily extended to apply to our knowledge of the status and position of women in general.<sup>2</sup> Although very recent years have seen the emergence of select studies on women in Wales and on the Welsh borders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in comparison with studies that have been undertaken on gender and women’s history across Europe, surveys on women in medieval Wales are long overdue.<sup>3</sup> The socio-political and cultural histories of Wales that focus on themes associated with the evolution of nationality, identity and transformation<sup>4</sup> are incomplete as the appreciation of a collective Welsh identity generally fails to include women.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.E. Lloyd, ‘Who was Gwenllian de Lacy’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 74 (1919), p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> The term *position* is defined as the relation in which a person stands with respect to another or others; a person’s circumstances, condition, or situation, especially that which affects her/his influence, role, or power to act; i.e. social status, rank, standing. *Status* is defined in legal terms describing the legal standing or position of a person as determined by her/his membership of a class of persons legally enjoying certain rights or subject to certain limitations; in this case, a condition in respect to liberty or servitude and marriage.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. L. D’Arcens and J. Feros Ruys (eds), *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars* (Turnhout, 2004); M.C. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2003); B.A. Hanawalt and A. Grotans (eds), *Living Dangerously: On the Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Notre Dame, 2007); K. Kippen and L. Woods (eds), *Worth and Repute: Valuing Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Barbara Todd* (Toronto, 2011); C. Klapisch-Zuber (ed.), *A History of Women in the West: Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992); S. Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval History and Historiography* (Philadelphia, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> See A.D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (Houndmills, 1995); R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1991; first published as *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063–1415*, 1987); id., *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282–1400* (Clarendon, 1978); M. Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067–1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain* (Cardiff, 2008); J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London, 1912); K. Maund, *The Welsh Kings: Warrior, Warlords and Princes* (Stroud, 2006); J.B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998; repr. 2001); R. Turvey, *Llywelyn the Great* (Llandysul, 2007); id., *The Lord Rhys: Prince of Deheubarth* (Llandysul, 1997); id., *The Welsh Princes: The Native Rulers of Wales, 1063–1283* (London, 2002); D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge, 1990; repr. 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See critiques of traditional approaches in S.M. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 1-18; G. Richards, *Welsh Noblemen in the Thirteenth Century: An Historical Study of Medieval Welsh Law and Gender Roles* (Lewiston, 2009), pp. 1-22.

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the position and status of married women in the principalities of Wales under native rule in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The link between women's access to agency — a term used to refer to the powers and activities of women — and their established relationships with men means that their experiences should be contextualised within the framework of social hierarchies and power relationships.<sup>6</sup> This can be done by looking at the utilisation of female lifecycles in the sources of medieval Wales and examining how women are identified and in what contexts they appear. Female lifecycles are an important tool of assessment as women, more so than men, were constrained by the social expectations of their roles, which were largely assigned to them by their families and through marriage. The variable power of women and the acceptable parameters of their activities were concurrent with the uxorial lifecycle since most were expected to marry. Examining gendered constructs related to the uxorial lifecycle specifically, as well as attitudes to marriage and the experiences of married women help to measure their overall status and position in native society.

A discussion of the development and importance of uxorial identity through lifecycles is an important addition to scholarship. Although T. M. Charles-Edwards has provided a foundational discussion of male and female lifecycles in terms of the Welsh kinship system and, most recently, definitions used to identify middle-aged women have been explored by Sara Elin Roberts,<sup>7</sup> female (and male) lifecycle labels that are used across Welsh sources largely composed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have never before been analysed. This is a critical gap in the overall understanding of how native Welsh society operated. As this thesis will show, the lifecycle of the wife is the most prominently used identifier of women in medieval Welsh sources. In the wider historical context, usage of the uxorial lifecycle to name and identify royal and noble women suggests that the status and position of those who were married were considered by contemporaries to be crucial to the framework of a dynasty as a whole. Their positions as wives not only reflected 'the nature of the dynastic expansion',<sup>8</sup> but also the central roles they

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<sup>6</sup> J. Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe, 1200–1500* (London, 2002), pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993); S.E. Roberts, 'Seeking the Middle-Aged Woman in Medieval Wales', in S. Niebrzydowski (ed.), *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 25-36.

<sup>8</sup> D.E. Thornton, 'Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies', in K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Family Trees and Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Early Tenth to the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 38.

played in socio-economic, political and cultural terms. The contextualisation of female lifecycles, generally, shows that their use and meaning had an important function in the creation of family and ‘national’ identity.

Thematically, the centre of concentration for the scholarship of medieval Welsh history has been on conquest, co-existence and change.<sup>9</sup> Studies of ‘conquest’ discuss the concept of Wales and the idea of Welshness, particularly in the wake of Norman settlements in the 1100s and the Edwardian Conquest of 1282. The concept of ‘change’ encompasses the transformations in Welsh economic, social, church and political cultures that occurred between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and how these changes may or may not have shaped Welsh identity. ‘Co-existence’ explores the power struggles and conflicts that existed regionally in Wales, between the Welsh kingdoms and the Marcher lordships, and the increased involvement of the English Crown in Welsh affairs. Collectively, these issues contribute to a better understanding of medieval Wales in the wider context of British political and social history. However, it is important to ask where exactly women fit within these narratives and why their contribution to the development of medieval Welsh society has not yet been fully explored.<sup>10</sup>

Reconfiguring the traditional themes of conquest, co-existence and change by taking into account the identity and power relations between women and men, across gender, offers a more balanced historical view. This is what Sue Johns has recently accomplished looking at gender, nation and conquest in twelfth-century Wales. She has assessed the role that gender played in the construction of the narrative surrounding the abduction of Nest ferch Rhys ap Tewdwr, princess of Dyfed (*b.* before 1092, *d. c.* 1130) and her legacy.<sup>11</sup> Johns argues that concepts of imperialism and nationalism are interconnected with the use of gender. The sexualisation of this particular episode was used to structure a sense of national identity in a nation

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<sup>9</sup> The original version of R.R. Davies’s *Age of Conquest* is *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063–1415*. e.g. Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 4–19; Davies, *Age of Conquest*; H. Pryce, ‘Welsh Rulers and European Change, c.1100–1282’, in H. Pryce and J. Watts (eds), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 37–51; J.B. Smith and L.B. Smith, ‘Wales: Politics, Government and Law’, in S.H. Rigby (ed.), *The Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Malden, 2003), pp. 309–34.

<sup>10</sup> Historians generally highlight ‘outstanding’ women who defended their family’s territories and died in battle like Gwenllïan ferch Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1136) or those who actively intervened in Anglo-Welsh political negotiations like Joan of England (d. 2 February 1237). For examples see *HW*, ii, pp. 470, 635, 639, 665, 667 and n. 74, 685–6. See also Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 128–9; Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 56–9; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, pp. 161, 190–1, 193, 199–201; Turvey, *Llywelyn the Great*, pp. 86, 89–92; id., *Welsh Princes*, p. 61; Walker, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 107–08.

<sup>11</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*.

without a state. The retelling of Nest's story throughout the course of Welsh historiography from the thirteenth century to the present enforces the ideal that Nest acts as a symbol of Welsh nationhood.<sup>12</sup>

Gwyneth Richards has produced a prosopographical study of Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century, focusing on the roles certain women played in their families and lordships, localities and in Welsh politics.<sup>13</sup> She focuses on women like Joan, Lady of Wales (d. 2 February 1237), Senana ferch Caradog (d. after 11 July 1252) and Margaret of Bromfield (*fl.c.* 1241–1284), their interactions within their kin-groups and the implications of their social and political activities as a means of sustaining alliances. Richards argues that although medieval Wales was a largely patriarchal society, women were crucial to the success of the family power base as landholders and active participants in situations that directly affected them. Many were provided opportunities to exercise power and increase their status through political ventures with England. This study is the first real attempt to redress the historiographical gender balance for thirteenth-century Wales. Both Richards and Johns place gender and women's history within the traditional themes of national identity.

Kari Maund has also looked at the life of Nest within the political environment of late eleventh- and early twelfth-century Wales. However, her study follows a more traditional approach, with a much heavier emphasis on events and the men in her life than on Nest herself.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Louise Wilkinson has investigated the life of Joan, Lady of Wales, arguing that her involvement in early thirteenth-century Anglo-Welsh relations as described in contemporary sources suggests that Joan fulfilled the expectations of a woman of her royal status.<sup>15</sup> She emphasises the importance of Joan's relationships with the various men in her life by illustrating how these enhanced and even restricted her diplomatic career.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid; S. Johns, 'Nest of Deheubarth: Reading Female Power in the Historiography of Wales', in J.L. Nelson and S. Reynolds, with S. M. Johns (eds), *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the History of the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford* (London, 2012), pp. 91-100; ead., 'Beauty and the Feast: The Cultural Constructions of Female Beauty and Social Interaction in Twelfth-century Wales', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30 (2011), pp. 102-15.

<sup>13</sup> Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*.

<sup>14</sup> K. Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales: Seductress of the English* (Stroud, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> L.J. Wilkinson, 'Joan, Wife of Llywelyn the Great', in M. Prestwich, R. Britnell and R. Frame (eds), *Thirteenth Century England X: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 2003* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 81-93. This is also discussed by Richards in *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 127-37.

<sup>16</sup> These themes are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Gendered studies on the March of Wales provide a comparative cultural and social context by highlighting the practices and attitudes of those who ruled to the east of the Welsh border. Emma Cavell's research on noblewomen who lived in the border county of Shropshire and the adjacent region of the March of Wales from the mid-twelfth to the mid-fourteenth centuries is of a similar perspective to the above studies.<sup>17</sup> She concentrates on historiographical themes concerning regional studies and women's history as a means of exploring the relationship between locality and female agency in a frontier and 'masculine, militarised Marcher' society. Cavell shows how gender, status and locality helped to shape the lives of noblewomen in the March of Wales, with reference to female lifecycles and women's associated landholding and economic roles. She has shown that women directly helped shape the livelihoods of powerful families and were invested in long-term interests. Seminal works like Michael Altschul's investigation of the Clare family and R. R. Davies's more general approach to the Marcher lordships have shown that the public roles women played were not unique to their medieval societies and were related to their positions within their families, as wives, mothers and widows.<sup>18</sup> Altschul and Davies both provide evidence that indicates women were important players in marital customs and alliances and acquired individual power and influence. For daughters and sons, the familial and generational connections afforded mutual support and advancement. In their unique ways, all these works have shown the link between female agency, dynastic relations and power struggles.

The commonality found in all of these studies is that the status and position of women can often be identified through the symbol of the woman within a family context. As such, understanding family connections particularly through marriage is crucial to assessing the public roles of women and the wider avenues of female participation in society. Marriage, being 'one of the most powerful agencies of

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<sup>17</sup> E. Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: The Shropshire Evidence', The Rees Davies Prize Essay, *TRHS*, 17 (2007), pp. 57-82; ead., 'Intelligence and Intrigue in the March of Wales: Noblewomen and the Fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274-82', *Historical Research* (London, 2014), 1-19; ead., 'Noblewomen in Shropshire and the Adjacent March of Wales, 1150-1350', unpublished DPhil Thesis (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 17-52; Davies, *Lordship and Society*, pp. 40-3, 53-5, 418-19, 444-5. For women's positions within baronial households in England see M. Wade LaBarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1965), pp. 38-52.

cultural diffusion' and unity,<sup>19</sup> served to create and cement family networks within communities spread across regional, national and international boundaries.<sup>20</sup>

Research undertaken on marital customs in France, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland and England has used marriage as a means to better understand and appreciate history contextually through female and male power relations.<sup>21</sup> In Welsh scholarship, marriage has traditionally been assessed as having been a means of attaining power and authority for men only, principally based on the economics of marital transactions.<sup>22</sup> Most studies fail to recognise how greatly or to what extent wives (or women generally) influenced events and contributed to the interactions between families. They often go no further in their evaluation of women other than citing them as the daughters of X, the wives of Y or the widows of Z.<sup>23</sup> The social and theoretical discussions of Welsh marriage primarily revolve around the power of men and their gendered roles: how power was obtained and maintained; how it was

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<sup>19</sup> G. Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415–1642* (Oxford, 1993), p. 94. See A.J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066–1282', *WHR*, 4 (1968–9), pp. 3–20; H. Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations: Llywelyn the Great and Henry III', in B. Weiler (ed.), *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216–1272)* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 13–29. It was common practice for members of Welsh aristocracy to intermarry with members of other Welsh families. From the mid-twelfth century, it became increasingly advantageous to marry within the English nobility (i.e. Marcher lordships) in order to secure land and wealth. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> An example of this approach is a recent study that looks at society across gender in the later Middle Ages. This work reinterprets the political past whereby the focus is on gender relations, the contradictions of patriarchy and how women benefited from and were hindered by it. The author shows the contradictions between the strict patriarchal structures that were deep-rooted within the aristocracy and the reality of women's lives. B.J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> See J.M. Bennett, 'The Tie that Binds: Peasant Marriages and Peasant Families in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1984), pp. 111–29; E. Coleman, 'Medieval Marriage Characteristics', in T. Rabb and R. Rotberg (eds), *The Family in History* (New York, 1973), pp. 1–15; B. Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in Ireland and on the Continent in the Early Middle Ages', in E.C. Meek and M. K. Simms (eds), *'The Fragility of Her Sex'? Medieval Irish Women in their European Context* (Blackrock, 1996), pp. 16–42; T. Kuehn, 'Women, Marriage and *Patria Potestas* in Late Medieval Florence', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, 49 (1981), pp. 127–47.

<sup>22</sup> G. Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. B. Bray (London, 1984); id., *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. J. Dunnett (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> e.g. Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 40–1; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc', in D. Jenkins and M. E. Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women: Studies Presented to Professor Daniel A. Binchy on his Eightieth Birthday* (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 93–114; J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1993; first published as *Hanes Cymru*, 1990), pp. 103, 141; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 71, 73, 78, 82, 84, 102, 125, 127–9, 248–9; id., 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in Late-Medieval Wales', in D. Jenkins and M. E. Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 93–114; HW, ii, pp. 616, 644–5; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, pp. 181–3, 188–91; Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales'; Turvey, *Welsh Princes*, pp. 23–39, 61–1, 84–90.



inherently associated with access to land; what the economic, political and social repercussions and characteristics were.<sup>24</sup>

This thesis adds a valuable contribution to our understanding of Wales under native rule. It places women at the centre of discussion, drawing on a number of sources to paint a clearer picture of the condition of married women in native Welsh society. The ensuing examination highlights *their* gendered roles, how they obtained and maintained power through marriage and the types of agency they exercised, especially in terms of land administration. The emblematic connotations of a woman's identity associated with that of her husband<sup>25</sup> suggest ties to an older, more widespread tradition that associated an important link between women and land. The transference of power<sup>26</sup> through marriage meant that the position and status of the woman within her kinship networks helped establish legitimate Welsh dynastic rule. This is most observable in Welsh sources that use genealogy and pedigrees as a means of establishing the legitimate rule of Welsh dynasts where the majority of women are identified first by their marital status and often in conjunction with their natal status.

Though boundaries were never fixed, by 1100 Wales was largely divided between what is known as *pura Wallia*, lands ruled by native Welsh princes under the three principal dynasties Deheubarth, Powys and Gwynedd, and *Marchia Walliae*<sup>27</sup> ruled by Norman lords who owed homage and fealty to the English king, but remained independent in power. By the end of the eleventh century, Welsh rulers recognised that intermarital alliances with Anglo-Norman families were a strategic means of managing the colonization of Wales. In many ways, intermarriages also helped determine the legitimacy of power.

Although an early example survives from Powys in the marriage of the leader Cadwgan ap Bleddyn to the daughter of Picot of Say, earl of Clun,<sup>28</sup> the Lord Rhys

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<sup>24</sup> Certainly amongst the *uchelwyr* and *boneddigion*, marriage was a contractual pathway to power by means of extending the kinship network. The *uchelwyr* have been described as a class that was 'an integrated, closely intermarried group of men' who sought the power of influence and status over material gains. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*, p. 225.

<sup>25</sup> As well as father and sometimes even son.

<sup>26</sup> H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History in England 450–1500* (London, 1995; repr. 1998), p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Lands across the south-west and south-east of Wales, as well as lands along the border with England in the east stretching as far as Montgomery.

<sup>28</sup> *Brenhinedd y Saesson, or The Kings of the Saxons: BM Cotton Ms. Cleopatra Bv and The Black Book of Basingwerk NLW Ms. 7006*, ed. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1971), pp. 110-11; *Brut y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS. 20*, ed. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1941), p. 46; *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the*

(1131/2–1197) of Deheubarth became the first prominent Welsh ruler to fully use the marriage of his children to extend his dynasty and infiltrate the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. It was a constructive, if not affective, means to bind his Marcher neighbours closer to him.<sup>29</sup> Some of Gwynedd's rulers also married prominent Anglo-Norman women. The marriages of Dafydd ab Owain (d. 1203) to Emma of Anjou (*fl.* 1151–1212), Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (d. 11 April 1240), to Joan of England and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d. 1282) to Eleanor de Montfort (1258–1282) ensured that they tied themselves directly to the English Crown. It was clear by the middle of the thirteenth-century that intermarriage between the Welsh and English was the most effective means of assuring amity as the wider ambitions of other native rulers who looked beyond native Welsh dynasties for potential spouses attests.<sup>30</sup> Marriage became a tactic to temper warfare and was used to legitimise authority.<sup>31</sup> Alliances between kin groups offered more possibility of longer-term security than straightforward political negotiations.

To fit women within such a framework it is important to understand that, above all, their positions within the Welsh kinship system was multifaceted; wives were never fully integrated into their husbands' families, neither were they fully separated from their own natal kin.<sup>32</sup> A woman's own lineage was that of her paternal family, her legal status being dependent on that of her brothers'. Once married, her status was affected by that of her husband.<sup>33</sup> Although there are general variations in the surviving texts of native Welsh laws,<sup>34</sup> all imply that there

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*Princes Peniarth 20 Ms. Version*, trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1952), pp. 30-1; *Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1955), pp. 62-3.

<sup>29</sup> Turvey, *Lord Rhys*, pp. 78-82.

<sup>30</sup> H. Pryce, 'Church and Society in Wales, 1150-1250: An Irish Perspective', in R.R. Davies (ed.), *The British Isles, 1100–1500: Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 27-47.

<sup>31</sup> Turvey, *Welsh Princes*, p. 60. Also see P. Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000–1500* (Thrupp, 1998), p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> C. McAll, 'Normal Paradigms of a Woman's Life in the Irish and Welsh Texts', in *WLW*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Explorations into marriage have shown that it is wrong to think of marital unions in Wales in terms of the older Roman customs when women were removed from the *potestas* of their parents and transferred to that of their husbands. Marriage was a link between *gwelyau* (kin-groups) where women acted as the principal link. Legally, they did not fully belong to either kindred, but tied the two together to ensure the solidity of an alliance. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 186.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 42-5.

were distinct lifecycle stages for both sexes.<sup>35</sup> Marriage (loss of virginity) and menopause were the two indisputable demarcations between youth and old age for women.<sup>36</sup> These delineations were clear avowals of the vital importance of female sexuality and a woman's capabilities for bearing children, both of which were tied to perceptions of the married woman's status and position amongst her kin and within her social group. In contrast, a man's lifecycle was defined by his movements in society and public life, especially through acquiring land, and as a husband, becoming head of the household.<sup>37</sup>

Definitions of marriage in Wales were complicated and affect the evaluation of uxorial status.<sup>38</sup> In the main, the legal and religious elements that defined Welsh marital customs contravened the dictates of the papacy that were redefined from the late-eleventh century.<sup>39</sup> There were three main practices that differed: consanguinity, concubinage and the practice of inheritance of sons born outside of wedlock, and divorce.<sup>40</sup> Fundamentally, Welsh laws and customs held that marriage was a sexual union. The cohabitation of a couple based on mutual consent was a socially recognised marriage that gave a woman *de jure* status as a wife.<sup>41</sup> The fact that marriage was viewed as a contract in native Wales and not a sacrament meant that concubinage was commonly practised.

Previous to the changes that occurred in the thirteenth century, women enjoyed social and public acceptance as concubines and their status, especially as mothers, went largely unquestioned. Early medieval Irish laws distinguish the difference between a chief wife (*cétmuintir*) and a concubine (*adaltrach* or *dormun*) in which the concubine had the freedom to choose 'to be under the rule (*cáin*)' of her husband, where as it was expected that the chief wife would be.<sup>42</sup> Overall, the status of the concubine in Ireland was half that of the chief wife. In medieval Norse society

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<sup>35</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 175-6. For the differences and distinction between different versions of the Welsh law see Chapter 1, pp. 42-5; Chapter 2, *Married Women and the Laws*.

<sup>36</sup> See Roberts, 'Seeking the Middle-Aged Woman'.

<sup>37</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p.177.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 2 *Married Women and the Laws* for a full discussion.

<sup>39</sup> With the development of ecclesiastical courts applying canon law from the twelfth century onwards.

<sup>40</sup> R.R. Davies, 'English Synopsis: The Manners and Morals of the Welsh', *WHR*, 12/2 (1984), pp. 174-9; Pryce, 'Church and Society in Wales'; id., *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 82-112.

<sup>41</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> F. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (Dublin, 1988), pp. 70-71

where concubinage was also practised, it has been shown that concubinal unions were a very important part of the socio-political framework and women were politically significant. This was especially the case before the domination of church doctrine and the bureaucratisation of secular institutions.<sup>43</sup> Over time, concubinage came to be regarded as an inferior marriage, defined by evolving native and canon laws and by social tolerance. In these increasingly inferior relationships, women began to possess even fewer rights and eventually received less protection than legal, legitimate wives.<sup>44</sup> The position of the wife may have increased in conjunction with the fall in the practice of concubinage. All the same, it has been argued that in a society such as that of medieval Wales, the legally married woman faced a reduction in her own status with the increased rise in the practice of primogeniture.<sup>45</sup> Because the status of the son eventually far outweighed that of his mother, the married woman was deemed no more than a *procreatrix*. This belief is furthered by the legal inability of women in native Wales to inherit land.<sup>46</sup>

Before the conquest of 1282, the promise of fiscal worth that a woman brought to a marriage was seemingly minimal. In 1284, Edward I (r. 1272–1307) issued a royal charter known as the Statute of Wales,<sup>47</sup> which introduced a number of English common law writs to post-conquest Wales.<sup>48</sup> In terms of women, two major changes were made and both pertained to land law. One, women were given the legal right to land succession when the male line fell through. And, two, in contrast to Welsh law in which dower was generally defined through moveable goods, the Statute of

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<sup>43</sup> J.A. Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1993), pp. 1-17; B.E. Crawford, 'Marriage and the Status of Women in Norse Society', in E. Craik (ed.), *Marriage and Property: Women and Marital Customs in History* (Aberdeen, 1991), pp. 72. Also see Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in Ireland'; M.C. Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 108/1 (Aug. 1985), pp. 14-15; S. Shahar, *Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. C. Galai (London, 1993); P. Stafford, 'The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries', in J. Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 143-68; ead., *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, GA., 1998).

<sup>44</sup> Jaski, 'Marriage Laws', p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> The system of inheritance in which the first born, legitimate son had rights to succession.

<sup>46</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 107.

<sup>47</sup> Often referred to as the Statute of Rhuddlan.

<sup>48</sup> See *The Statutes of Wales*, (ed.) I. Bowen (London, 1908), pp. xxvii-xl. For discussions on the impact of the Statute of Rhuddlan, see Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 363-70; P.A. Brand, 'An English Legal Historian Looks at the Statute of Wales', in T.G. Watkin (ed.), *Y Cyfraniad Cymreig: Welsh Contributions to Legal Development* (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 20-56; G. Roberts, 'The Significance of 1284', in A. J. Roderick (ed.), *Wales Through the Ages: Vol. I: From the Earliest Times to 1485* (London, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression, 1971), pp. 129-37; L.B. Smith, 'The Statute of Wales, 1284', *WHR*, 10 (1980), 127-54.

Rhuddlan ensured a reasonable dower for wives so that in widowhood, a woman received a dower made up of a third of their husband's lands.<sup>49</sup>

In sharp contrast to the limited studies on wifehood, the popularity of widowhood in medieval studies as a subject of research stems from the powers seemingly inherent in a woman's new found 'freedom' once her lifecycle reached the stage of widowhood.<sup>50</sup> Discussions of widowhood in medieval and early modern Wales and on the borders have shown the complexity surrounding this lifecycle phase mainly because the role of the widow in society was ambiguous.<sup>51</sup> Because widows were subjected to legal ambivalence, many were offered great opportunities to create their own roles in society. The sources analysed for this study strongly suggest that it was not in widowhood that women possessed great levels of status and agency in native Wales, but in their lifecycle stage as a wife. This supposition is based on the evidence in which the lifecycle of the widow is largely absent in sources, whereas that of the wife, whose own roles and expectations were ill defined, is abundant.

Scholarly interpretations of later medieval Wales suggest that it was after the introduction of the Statute of Wales that (married) women enjoyed unparalleled access to exercise economic agency.<sup>52</sup> Arguably, the proliferation in the

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<sup>49</sup> *The Statutes of Wales*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii, 24-25.

<sup>50</sup> R. Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers', in A.J. Pollard (ed.), *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval History* (Gloucester, 1980), pp. 15-35; F.G. Buckstaff, 'Married Women's Property in the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Law and the Origin of the Common Law Dower', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 4 (1893-4), pp. 233-65; G.L. Haskins, 'The Development of Common Law Dower', *Harvard Law Review*, 26 (1948), 42-55; J. Senderowitz Loengard, "'Of the Gift of her Husband': English Dower and its Consequences in the Year 1200', in J. Kirshner and S. Wemple (eds), *Women of the Medieval World* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 215-55; ead., 'Rationabilis Dos: Magna Carta and the Widow's "Fair Share" in the Earlier Thirteenth Century', in S. Sheridan Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 59-80; L. Mirrer (ed.), *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval* (Ann Arbor, 1992); P. Ricketts, *High-Ranking Widows in Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire: Property, Power, Marriage and Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2010); S. Sheridan Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest: Suing for Dower in the Royal Courts, circa 1272-1350', in S. Sheridan Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 81-108.

<sup>51</sup> Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier'; ead., 'Noblewomen in Shropshire and the Adjacent March of Wales', pp. 131-186; L.E. Mitchell, 'Noble Widowhood in the Thirteenth Century: Three Generations of Mortimer Widows, 1246-1334', in *Upon My Husband's Death*; ead., 'Widowhood in Medieval England: Baronial Dowagers of the Thirteenth-Century Welsh Marches', unpublished PhD thesis (Indiana University, 1991); K. Warner Swett, 'Widowhood, Custom and Property in Early Modern North Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 18/2 (1996), pp. 189-227.

<sup>52</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women'; L.B. Smith, 'Towards a History of Women in the Late Middle Ages', in M. Roberts and S. Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000); E. Ratcliffe, 'The Property Rights of Women in Wales, 1282-1400', unpublished MA thesis (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1996); E. S. Reyes, 'Women in Glamorgan Society, circa 1271-circa 1450', unpublished MA thesis (University of Wales, Cardiff, 1995).

documentation of records of practice after 1300 has led to these conclusions. However, as this research will show, surviving material from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in which married women appear demonstrates that they were key figures in many economic and political transactions. The evidence shows that this was true of the situation throughout native Wales and not simply isolated to areas influenced by Anglo-Norman and English customs. This investigation is the first of its kind to assess a breadth of material produced in native Wales documenting the activities, status and position of married women.

There is an established line of reasoning which promotes the idea that the fundamental genderisation of laws in England and elsewhere allowed women to act as lords (or *viragos*<sup>53</sup>) in their own rights, enabling them to carry out their roles as defined by their positions within the conjugal family. It was an indissoluble arrangement because the family itself acted as a unit of lordship.<sup>54</sup> This is a stance taken by historians like Cavell, Altschul and Davies who have examined the baronial families of the Welsh Marches. Further, Sue Johns, who has examined the *acta* of a succession of Chester countesses, explains how acceptance of continuity and the traditional way of life were allied with the inherent understanding that the roles within the lordship were gendered.<sup>55</sup> Similar investigations also conclude that the nature of the Marcher lordships was gendered due to the natural changes that were made if and when they were headed by women.<sup>56</sup> In countries like France and England, families desiring to further their own supremacy endowed female family members with wealth, as heiresses or dowagers. In many cases, the abdication of large portions of familial resources to daughters and widows in return for profitable marital alliances offered women greater opportunities to act as agents in their own capacities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Women who possessed 'man-like' features, i.e. bravery, heroism and strength.

<sup>54</sup> See K.A. LoPrete, 'Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship', in C. Meek and C. Lawless (eds), *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women: Pawns or Players* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 90-110; ead., 'Gendering *Viragos*: Medieval Perceptions of Powerful Women', in C. Meek and C. Lawless (eds), *Victims or Viragos?* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 17-38; S. Johns, 'The Wives and Widows of the Earls of Chester, 1100-1252: The Charter Evidence', in C.P. Lewis and E. Cownie (eds), *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, vi (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 117-32.

<sup>55</sup> S. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester, 2003); ead., 'The Wives and Widows of the Earls of Chester', pp. 117-32.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell, 'Noble Widowhood in the Thirteenth Century'; F.A. Underhill, *For Her Good Estate: The Life of Elizabeth de Burgh* (New York, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> See Shahar, *Fourth Estate*, pp. 12-3, 81, 96, 127-32, 145-9, 171, 177, 179, 181, 182, 227, 237-9, 241, 244; L.M. Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 161-4, 188-9, 208-10, 256-7.

Was the absence of uxorial rights to land a crucial determinant of the wife's inferior position in native Wales or was the married woman of more value as an individual because she could not inherit? The legal denial of female inheritance led R. R. Davies to comment that under the most fundamental of terms in Welsh society and custom a woman was a 'non-person'.<sup>58</sup> He says that their powerlessness to become heiresses probably accounts for their non-appearance in Welsh history since territorial politics are a prominent feature. In contrast, Wendy Davies points out that even going as far back as the eighth century there is enough suitable material to ascertain the key roles of women in Celtic societies, including Wales. Evidence suggests that the common marriage property may have undergone a shared control between wife and husband.<sup>59</sup> This is similar to early medieval Ireland where marriage enhanced a wife's economic role through an exchange of property and a couple's joint responsibility to the 'union of equal property'.<sup>60</sup> The sharing of marital property equipped married women with the necessary tools to move beyond what can be mistakenly assumed to have been strict, unbending gender roles as defined by the laws.<sup>61</sup>

Charter evidence for the early Middle Ages shows that the convoluted nature of political power throughout Europe, which defined property rights and changing attitudes towards land ownership, was characteristic in Wales as well.<sup>62</sup> On the whole, the status of a family lordship was affected by social regulations and political relationships central to land ownership and rights of alienation,<sup>63</sup> at which wives were often at the centre. Welsh kindred and familial bonds were intrinsic to sustaining social control and this was particularly the case amongst the nobility.<sup>64</sup> The bonds of affinity did not just consist of the 'nuclear' family, but of the extended

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<sup>58</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> W. Davies, 'Celtic Women in the Early Middle Ages', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London, 1993), p. 148.

<sup>60</sup> Bitel, *Land of Women: Tales of Sex and Gender from Early Ireland* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), pp. 111-37, 147-48.

<sup>61</sup> Wendy Davies does suggest that in early medieval Wales, it does not seem likely that ordinary women (i.e. those of non-royal status) had anything to do with distributing or disposing of property. W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm* (London, 1978), p. 56. For the high and later Middle Ages, see also Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*; J. Beverley Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-century Wales: A Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273', *Studia Celtica*, XXX (1982-83), pp. 348-55; Smith, 'Towards a History of Women in the Late Middle Ages'; G. Richards, 'Medieval Welsh Noblewomen: The Case of Margaret of Bromfield', *Eras* [online journal], 3 (June 2002), <[http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition\\_3/richards.php](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition_3/richards.php)>, accessed 1 July 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Davies, 'Land and Power in Early Medieval Wales', *Past and Present*, 81 (1978), pp. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 146.

<sup>64</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 167-266, 274-303, 364-407.

family as there was a fundamental value placed on the wider kinship group.<sup>65</sup> This was largely due to the varied interests of different kinship factions, helping to maintain balance and social stability.<sup>66</sup> Many studies have shown that women were able to make the most of kinship ties and exploit them to further their families' political power. Female activities included the making of marital arrangements and supervising the distribution and transmission of lands for following generations.<sup>67</sup> Through the system for which Eleanor Searle has called 'predatory kinship', women derived power from their family's lofty ambitions.<sup>68</sup> The acceptance of conventional roles for wives elsewhere in Europe provided women with opportunities to expand their careers. They were crucial to sustaining and promoting the prosperity of their families.<sup>69</sup>

Many historians have concluded that European traditions heavily based on canon law and the decisive nature of land transference, namely primogeniture, negatively affected women's livelihoods; that established customs hampered their freedom to infiltrate public life and mired any significant achievements, great or small.<sup>70</sup> In the same way it has been claimed that, by the High Middle Ages, the social, legal and political exclusion of women from public authority meant that they were strictly bound to the family and domestic roles.<sup>71</sup> However, recent numerous studies have proven otherwise showing that medieval women held some form of power in marriage and, in many ways, were influential, certainly in familial affairs if not in wider politics.<sup>72</sup> This research shows how in native Wales, although married women may not have had the legal right to own and administer lands, they did do so

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<sup>65</sup> W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1982), p. 71.

<sup>66</sup> J.G. Jones has provided examples for early modern Wales that show how the importance of kinship strengthened bonds, but also incited familial and communal strife, violence and hatred. (id., *Early Modern Wales, c. 1525–1640* (New York, 1994), pp. 7-42).

<sup>67</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 6; J.A. McNamara and S. Wemple, 'The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500–1100', *Feminist Studies*, 1 (1973), pp.126-41.

<sup>68</sup> E. Searle, 'Possible History', *Speculum*, 61/4 (October, 1986), pp. 779-86.

<sup>69</sup> Harris focuses on aristocratic and noble families where evidence exists to prove that women's familial activities also had, in many cases, immense political significance. Ead., *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 5, 14.

<sup>70</sup> K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973); E. Power, *Medieval Women*, (ed.) M.M. Postan (London, 1976); D. Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (Philadelphia, 1932); *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry: 1066–1500*, trans. and ed. J. Ward (Manchester, 1995).

<sup>71</sup> See Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*; id., *Women of the Twelfth Century*, trans. J. Birrell, 3 vols (Chicago, 1998); McNamara and Wemple, 'Power of Women through the Family'.

<sup>72</sup> See especially T. Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, 1999); J.A. McNamara, 'Women and Power through the Family Revisited', in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, pp. 17-30.



as many were provided with dowries and dowers well before 1284 as a means of enhancing the authority of families and dynasties.

Gender, as a cultural construct(ion), is popularly accepted as the determinant that places women's duties, roles and work within the domestic setting. Regardless of a woman's class or social status, her work and contribution to both society and culture has often been deemed less than the efforts carried out by men. This is, in part, due to the underlying gender characterizations that predicated a woman's position within the social framework of her community.<sup>73</sup> Though, theoretically, women were relegated to a domestic sphere, the use of the term 'career' which has become synonymous with the defining stages in the female lifecycle, indicates otherwise. During a woman's career, she experienced many different transformations in both position and status that were dictated by the rules and customs afforded with marriage and childbirth, all of which affected her use of agency. A woman's position in marriage as a wife<sup>74</sup> was fundamental to medieval social networks and one contention of this thesis will be that this was also the case for Wales. Wifhood seems to have been the most prolific time in a woman's life, often offering her unprecedented access to agency.

## ***METHODOLOGY***

The aim of this thesis is to reassess traditional assumptions of Welsh power structures in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by using marriage and the gendered lifecycle of the wife as tools of assessment. By doing so, the valued role of married women in Welsh culture and society based on a general understanding of status, position and agency comes to light. Certainly, there are limitations and advantages to such an approach. The most noteworthy limitation is the fact that the sources examined reveal the ideals, expectations and roles of the noble and royal classes. A more general analysis that may highlight differences in class distinction is virtually impossible as the evidence is scant.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the main focus of this study is the upper echelons of Welsh society. It is important to note 'women' and 'married women'

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<sup>73</sup> M.E. Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> And later as a mother.

<sup>75</sup> This does not mean that ideals, expectations, norms, perceptions and gendered attitudes found in the written material discussed did not filter down or influence the lower classes, or vice versa. However, a comparative class analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.

refer to wives from noble and princely families because it is precisely this social stratum that the sources not only refer to, but who were also the intended audience.<sup>76</sup> Conversely, the advantages to such an approach lie in the evidence that highlights the very public roles and duties that married women assumed in Welsh society, as well as the levels of agency that wives could achieve on very real political and economic terms. This helps us to re-evaluate power structures in native Wales by placing women in the important socio-political and socio-economic context, as counterparts to their husbands, rather than being sidelined. Doing so draws long-overdue attention their collective contributions to society and culture.

The wives who appear in this research are classified in two ways: 1) female members of native Welsh dynasties and 2) the wives of men of native Welsh dynasties who came from the March and further beyond Wales. Looking at intermarriages between native and foreign families (primarily Anglo-Norman) who settled in Wales helps show that women in *pura Wallia* did not operate in a vacuum, but were exposed to many of the norms and influences of the Anglo-French world through both the wider process of acculturation<sup>77</sup> and marital connections. Although a woman brought many of her own familiar familial customs with her upon marriage, as a wife she, nevertheless, had to abide by the rules and customs of her husband's lands. The purpose of this thesis is to measure uxorial agency as a whole as it pertained to women who lived in native Wales, regardless of their origins.

The reasons for concentrating on the lifecycle of the wife in this study are twofold. First, and most simply, there was the general expectation in the Middle Ages that women were to marry; focusing on married women maximises the potential to produce a more authentic picture based on sheer numbers. Second, and more importantly in terms of specifically Welsh sources, wife is the most prominently featured of all the lifecycle stages. This thesis shows that the legal and cultural ambiguity of both the uxorial status and position allowed married women scope to carve out their own careers. Looking at married women identifies the types of agency women enjoyed at the height of their 'careers' and what responsibilities they possessed. Focusing on the uxorial lifecycle helps to highlight the gendered cultural and social expectations that women faced more generally and helps to define the acceptable parameters in which they were able to manoeuvre.

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 1 generally.

<sup>77</sup> e.g. the introduction of the dower in Wales.

This thesis is not intended as a comprehensive study of the whole medieval period and the chronological scope principally focuses on the period c. 1100 to the Edwardian conquest of 1282. The timeframe chosen is crucial as it places women at the heart of discussions prevalent in modern scholarship, which largely concentrates on this era known as the Age of Princes. Nevertheless, it is also important to consider the changes undertaken after the Edwardian conquest up to 1300 in order to understand the fuller context of the long-term continuity of the married woman's place, expectations and roles in Welsh society. Thus, although the main sources looked at for the thesis were composed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, sources written in the late-thirteenth, early-fourteenth centuries are also drawn on. The combination of sources helps highlight social and cultural ideals and expectations of gender that may be Welsh by design.

As a contextual backdrop, the discussion principally concentrates on the primary sources and traditions that are recognised as deriving from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Welsh culture and society. The sources analysed throughout were largely written during the era of native rule, or shortly after 1282. Although Wales was conquered from the late eleventh century onwards, and was exposed to Anglo-Norman, English and continental influences throughout the period of this study, the sources utilised reflect a degree of culture and society that are recognised as being identifiably Welsh in nature and construction. In the main, the various genres of sources include: chronicles such as *Brenhinoedd y Saesson*, *Brut y Tywysogion* and *Annales Cambriae*; the laws of Hywel Dda (*Cyfraith Hywel Dda*); narratives such as *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* and the two main works on Wales by Gerald of Wales, his *Itinerarium Kambriae* and *Descriptio Kambriae*; the Lives of Saints; and vernacular literary sources like the *Mabinogion*, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and poetry of the *Gogynfeirdd*, or court poets. Some fourteenth-century literary sources, such as Welsh proverbs and bardic grammar, or *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, are also used primarily as a means of providing reference to both continuing and newer ideals and expectations of women and wifehood in Welsh society after the conquest.<sup>78</sup>

In terms of records of practice, this thesis predominantly concentrates on the *acta* of the Welsh rulers up to 1282 and letters from kings of England and others to

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<sup>78</sup> The amount of relevant archive material for the time frame being investigated is very limited and most of the sources are available in modern editions. For a discussion on the limits of extant charter material especially see Chapter 5, pp. 249-50.

Welsh rulers.<sup>79</sup> The reasons for this are two-fold. First, focusing primarily on the acts of the Welsh rulers helps draw a more general and consistent picture of the types of agencies women were able to exercise across Wales under native rule. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it helps to ensure that the overall investigation remains consistent in terms of assessing the types of women who are visible in the literary and legal sources — all of whom are royal and aristocratic — and why and what their appearances suggest about uxorial status and position overall. Charter material concerning married women between 1282 and 1300 is surprisingly scant. As such, extents, lay subsidy rolls and assize court records for these dates have been consulted to help elucidate the types of agency women exercised as landholders immediately after 1282.

Issues concerning to what extent the sources used in this thesis simply offer a reflection of ideals and stereotypes versus a reflection of practice are discussed throughout. The term ‘normative sources’ is used to refer to the expression of norms in Welsh society, irrespective of ethnic identity, or identities, while the use of the term ‘native sources’ refers to ethnic context. It is important for the purposes of this research to begin with a discussion of the particular sources listed above because they are the most representative of Wales in the period under native rule. Indeed, it is because of this that they have been studied in depth by Welsh literary scholars and historians alike. However, as a whole, they have not been analysed in any comparative fashion *across* genres as a means of understanding either gender constructs or the position and status of women in native Welsh society. Moreover, married women, specifically, have never been a topic of consideration. Thus, this current study is innovative as it provides a new topic of discussion for Welsh scholarship based on a systematic reading of the different genres looking at how married women are portrayed and what they represent across the board.

The approach taken towards the Welsh sources so popular with literary and historical scholarship is different from what has previously been done — or, indeed, what has not been done in the case of the Welsh chronicles, triads, *Itinerarium Cambriae* and *Descriptio Cambriae*, where gender and women have not been subjects of historical or literary enquiry or analysis. As will be shown in the following chapters, comparisons across these specific Welsh sources regarding how

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<sup>79</sup> e.g. J.G. Edwards, ed., *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales* (Cardiff, 1935).

married women are identified and represented (primarily through their lifecycles and genealogical connections), provides insight into the uxorial gendered experience in Wales before the Conquest. This is based on an understanding of both cultural and gendered attitudes collectively demonstrated. Such a comparative analysis helps to fill the gap in the general awareness of the condition of married women in native Wales. It expands our understanding of their overall position and status in society based on perceptions and attitudes to gender and marriage represented in the various sources. Further, it helps to measure their contributions to the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of Welsh society. This, in turn, provides new avenues of research and, more importantly, provides a necessary, more inclusive perspective to ongoing debates concerning native Wales, conquest, co-existence and change.

Chapter 1 looks at Welsh native sources and traditions. It involves a discussion of complexities of dating the sources used, as well as authorship and provenance, and the overall impact of gender characterisations on a (royal and noble) female audience. Wales had a long oral tradition and many of the written sources derive from this much older oral convention. Added to the mix is that many of the sources were composed in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. Thus, they also reveal contemporary perceptions of gender, perhaps ideals adopted as a product of cultural assimilation with England and further afield. The issue of trying to extrapolate specifically long-standing Welsh ideals and perceptions is also discussed. The key features relating to married women in each individual source are reviewed.

Chapter 1 ends with a discussion of women's contribution to the oral and literary traditions of Wales and the dissemination of gender ideals. This is contextualised within a discussion of genealogy, which played a social, economic, political and cultural role in medieval Wales. A number of sources use pedigrees as a means of legitimising power and women feature prominently. The use of the term wife in some genealogical tracts and narratives, such as are found in the chronicles, Lives of Saints and *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*, denotes social status and position in kinship relations. It is argued that women played a role in the transition of oral to written sources because of their role in society as 'remembrancers' in medieval life.<sup>80</sup> The use of female lifecycles for the recollection of histories through family

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<sup>80</sup> G.A. Williams, *When Was Wales? : A History of the Welsh* (London, 1985), pp. 52, 75.

relationships and bonds of kinship are often crucial to both the content and context of the sources. The sources provide strong evidence that the identification of uxorial status was critical to developing a wider sense of ‘national identity’. Certainly amongst the royal and noble families, labels helped identify long-standing dynastic connections, thereby legitimising Welsh power through tradition and bonds of kinship.

Chapter 2 traces the development of uxorial identity. Female lifecycles are used in a way that connects them with Welsh masculine power and that of the wife is the most prominent. The discussion focuses on the use and meaning of the uxorial lifecycle and how it can be interpreted in a more comprehensive manner. This is done, first, by looking at definitions of ‘wife’ and marriage in the Welsh laws and how gender and women’s sexuality were legally commodified. There are striking ambiguities in the legal status of married women, compounded by the varying degrees of legally recognised unions and the open, cultural practice of concubinage.<sup>81</sup> A discussion of the uxorial lifecycle in this context adds a new and original discussion in terms of how the laws can be read and understood, with women and gender at the centre. This thesis demonstrates how the uxorial lifecycle and associated agencies can be the main focus of investigation, moving away from the traditional avenues in which legal discussions about married women have been in the context of men.

The second part of Chapter 2 analyses how the Welsh chronicles construct and use the uxorial lifecycle. The investigation concentrates on the entries pertaining to marital alliances and obituaries because these are the entries in which the largest number of women appears. I consider which women are visible, why and how they are identified (by names, lifecycles and titles) as a means of exploring what women symbolise in the narratives and what this tells us about perceptions of gender. This method helps elucidate contemporary attitudes towards the position and status of women in a specifically Welsh context. Women appear in narratives largely in a genealogical terms and always in relation to men. Delineations between ‘wife’, ‘married woman’ and ‘concubine’ feature in entries that lay emphasis on kinship connections during struggles for power and the use of the uxorial lifecycle

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<sup>81</sup> Evidence in Chapters 4-5 highlights that women also faced ambiguities in terms of their very real roles and expectations, both within their natal and marital families, and in wider society.

seems to have had its own importance in helping culturally create a sense of Welsh identity.

The last part of this chapter looks at the general norms and perceptions of married women and does so by discussing the most idealised uxorial traits found in the sources — chastity, independence and wisdom. Such as the ambiguities found in the laws, uxorial expectations and stereotypes found across the sources are contrasting and often ill-defined. Overall, these uncertainties suggest that the married woman's role, her duties, responsibilities and even expectations of behaviour in native society were fluid. This may have provided them means to construct their own positions and roles. An examination of how married women as a whole are represented across the range and breadth of the most well-known and greatly studied sources fills an important gap in Welsh scholarship. It provides a means of measuring women's overall position in society based on perceptions and attitudes to gender and marriage — two fundamental aspects of any culture, but neither of which have been examined in conjunction with one another in the scheme of medieval Welsh history.

Chapter 3 explores the ideals of native Welsh queenship and status of wives as queens. This is an important undertaking as the queen, primarily as a wife, was viewed as a role model for her contemporaries. By establishing the cultural and social expectations of royal women in Wales, we are better able to assess the status and agency of those from the noble classes. This chapter focuses on three key areas: one, exploring how far there was a notion of native queenship in Wales in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; two, determining the core ideologies and expectations associated with the position of the Welsh queen; and three, examining the use of titles and other designations as identifiers found in sources and what this tells us about the overall status of the queen in Welsh society. As Welsh queenship is a subject that has received very little scholarly attention until now, such an assessment will help to increase our understanding of the traditional and practical roles of the wife as queen and highlight the ways in which the office of the queen and the duties of the wife benefited the sovereignty of her husband as the king. This investigation will help inform a backdrop to future research on Welsh kingship by contextualising the ideals of Welsh royalty, and arguably governing polities, with a more gender balanced approach.

Chapter 4 develops many of the themes discussed in the preceding chapter, considering them in the light of surviving evidence regarding Welsh queenship in practice. This is a means of illuminating the types of political agency royal women as wives were able to employ. This chapter looks at documentary sources from medieval Wales, as well as chancery enrolments of the English government. It considers how far personal relationships, personalities and uxorial expectations played a part in providing women opportunities to exercise political agency. The primary case studies for this analysis are all royal women from Gwynedd who lived during the thirteenth century and have been chosen because of survival of evidence: Joan, Lady of Wales; Senana ferch Caradog; and Eleanor de Montfort. An assessment of their statuses as ‘queens’, positions as wives and roles as advisors and intercessors reveals that their kinship connections helped define their uxorial responsibilities and duties. Arguably, their activities helped elevate their royal statuses, which, in turn, provided them with more opportunities to intervene and influence highly political and contentious situations. The intention is to illustrate Welsh queenship in practice and to evaluate its significance.

These case studies from Gwynedd have been chosen because the greatest survival of documentary records pertaining to royal uxorial agency relates to them. The absence of evidence of Welsh queenship overall makes it difficult to assess the differences between norms and practice, as well as understanding how the three case studies were educated in the customs of the Welsh court, if at all. This chapter focuses on the issue of how far the examples from Gwynedd are representative of wider expectations of Welsh queenship. This is explored by reviewing the few references to the actions of Welsh queens and women of royal status from other principalities found in the sources.

Chapter 5 examines the scope of uxorial agency by looking at extant evidence pertaining to noblewomen’s economic and land-based powers over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, roughly up to 1300. Consulting the *acta* of the Welsh rulers in which women appear as witnesses, alienators of land (independently and jointly), and as litigants in cases of dower disputes, allows for consideration of how far uxorial participation in the administration of Welsh dynastic lordships was needed, desired and accepted. The main intention of this chapter is to highlight the challenges involved in assessing records of practice against socio-political and socio-economic realities and how far the appearance of and roles attributed to women in



written records actually reflects practice. This is especially important as the native laws give the impression that women were essentially denied access to landownership. Property ownership was certainly dominated by men in medieval Wales, but women, primarily as wives, are also documented as being major players in the administration of family lordships. This is demonstrated through regional case studies. Regardless of the complexities in assessing realities against the written word, what is important is that the evidence tells us that within native Wales there was a cultural acceptance of allowing female participation in the alienation of lordships, endowing women with lands and protecting their property rights under native rule. Further, evidence taken from records of practice emphasise problems in interpreting uxorial stereotypes found in normative sources.

This study will conclude with a re-evaluation of the power structures in medieval Wales as seen through marriage. Former explorations of power formations with references to marriage as a political, legal and economic process reveal the depth, but also the limitations of our current understanding of the definitions of wifehood, gender roles and the effects of marriage on women. By and large, it is accepted that women profited from their familial status and derived much power from their kinship contacts. It is also clear that there were competing powers within medieval societies that not only excluded women from public activities, but also weakened their positions and status within their communities and families.<sup>82</sup> As wives, women were able to take advantage of the many contradictory circumstances created by the rules of patriarchy. In fact, many were able to attain wealth, power and status whilst operating under the institutional and cultural constraints that dominated them.<sup>83</sup>

In recent years, the major development in women's history has been to reperiodise the past by questioning if eras of great change, like the Renaissance for example, actually affected women in the same ways as they did men. Discussions of change raise questions about how gender was constructed during these cultural and social revolutions, and these highlight the transformations or modifications in

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<sup>82</sup> Examples of these powers include the emergence of a more hierarchical church structure, the bureaucratisation of governments and the appointments of men to more important ecclesiastical and royal/governmental positions.

<sup>83</sup> Examples of such include men's divergent interests in their female kin to meet their own needs, female exploitation of the personal and emotive interactions with their partners, and the fact that many men found themselves dependent on women at various points in their lives. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 6, 244.

women's power through emphasising the idea of continuity.<sup>84</sup> Concentrating on continuity demands we pay closer attention to the co-existence and interactions between women and men to see how medieval patriarchy operated. For Wales, this approach helps move beyond the constraints of women's history as being hindered by a superfluous divide between 'public'<sup>85</sup> and 'private'.<sup>86</sup> Reviewing perceptions about the spheres of movement for women, the various changes that took place in Wales in regard to the experiences of married women and their employment of uxorial agency, we find that theirs was a history that happened at a much slower pace.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, this thesis adopts the *Annaliste* approach, being concerned with the long-term evolution of married women in medieval Welsh society. It readdresses and rethinks the periodisation of Wales before and just after the conquest to distinguish between the experiences of married women and their status. It shows that experiences may have changed, but status and position generally did not. I seek to move outside the presupposed isolation of women who lived in native Wales and position them within and against the experiences of other European women in order to encourage new ways of thinking about gender differences and gender relations in Wales before 1282, especially as regards social, political and economic expectations. This original research establishes the acceptable boundaries of uxorial agency and, in doing so, generates positive representations of women who made use of their marital positions and gendered identity to exercise power. Importantly, theirs was a power and authority intimately linked to that of their husbands as rulers and powerful lords.

Accordingly, this research fills a significant historiographical gap as it centres on women as historical subjects in their own rights and contextualises them within traditional cultural, socio-economic and socio-political historical frameworks. This provides a more nuanced and balanced perspective to ongoing scholarship and debates concerning the major themes of Welsh history, namely conquest, co-existence and change. An attempt to reconstruct the major themes of Welsh history to include women, through their family relationships and ties to men shows that gender constructs and expectations of native medieval Welsh society were both fluid

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<sup>84</sup> McNamara and Wemple, 'Women and Power through the Family Revisited'.

<sup>85</sup> Traditionally perceived as the male realm of politics and public life.

<sup>86</sup> The woman's domain within the household.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. J.M. Bennett, 'Medieval Women, Modern Women: Across the Great Divide', in A. Shapiro (ed.), *Feminists Revision History* (New Brunswick, 1994), pp. 47-72.

and flexible, especially in the wake of Anglo-Norman and wider European influences. This variability allowed married women the means to move beyond any patriarchal limitations commonly recognised as institutional oppression. Whether married women deliberately challenged the conventional ideas of what they should or should not have done cannot truly be known. What is known, and will be shown throughout this thesis, is that the key male players in Welsh history, the decisions they made and their participation in political and social events were, in part, defined by the women in their lives.

# CHAPTER 1

## *NATIVE SOURCES AND TRADITIONS*

### *INTRODUCTION*

Before an in-depth exploration of married women can take place, it is first important to be familiar with the milieu of literary, oral and genealogical traditions that are ostensibly Welsh in character. The complexity of the ways that married women and gender are portrayed and represented throughout these traditions reveals the interrelated issues of authorship and bias, as well as the perceived and intended audiences of the surviving sources. This chapter takes two main themes into consideration. First, it addresses the broader literary culture transmitted orally and in written texts. One challenge is determining how far a text composed in the thirteenth century, for example, preserved traditions or indeed texts deriving from an earlier period. The interplay between traditions, and the general conservatism of the 'authors' exhibited in the surviving sources, whose manuscripts until the mid-fourteenth century were largely produced in churches, affected the ongoing development of not only historical, but gendered discourse in native Wales.

The second theme of this chapter addresses oral and written traditions used to communicate social norms and ideals, and women's contribution to the dissemination of gender constructs. Genealogy played an important function in Welsh society and culture, especially within an ideological framework used to assert claims to dynastic power. Genealogical references to women found in a number of the sources discussed highlight the important practice of using female lifecycle identifiers to denote their status and positions amongst their kin and wider social circles. It is argued that women contributed to the preservation of genealogical memory and gendered ideals through the utilisation of lifecycles to identify female family members.

It is perhaps important to note here that no manuscripts containing texts only in Welsh survive from before the mid-thirteenth century and many of those

containing texts relevant to this research were copied after 1300.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between date of composition and date of copying helps define the chronological coverage of charters and other records used later in this thesis. Many originals were written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and as part of the written culture in native Wales, can be placed within the category of ‘native Welsh sources’. However, they do not necessarily reflect the concept of ‘traditional learning’ and some are known only from later copies.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, these types of documents are analysed separately, principally in respect of queenship and female landownership, whilst this chapter focuses on literary texts.

### ***ORAL TRADITIONS AND WRITTEN TEXTS***

Standard native Welsh sources provide an effective cultural backdrop to understanding the position and status of women in Welsh society during the High Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Yet, understanding how deep-rooted attitudes were based on an oral tradition is difficult. This is because oral tradition is convoluted by nature, appearing as an expression of the past, whilst documenting the present, because it is told in the present.<sup>4</sup> Assessing how far social norms and perceptions influenced literary traditions is also hard to fully appreciate.<sup>5</sup> Once oral traditions are written down, ‘a mixed period of transmission comes into existence’ because of the varied recordings of that very tradition.<sup>6</sup> Certainly for Wales, the concurrence of oral tradition and written texts is highlighted by the problematic nature in dating many native sources. It is believed that oral transmission, which is known to have been an important aspect of Welsh

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<sup>1</sup> D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 1-23, 57-64.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Royal inspeximus.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of ‘culture’ can be broken into two main definitions. The first relates to the intellectual and artistic activity that results in the production of works often associated with the development of intellectualism and enlightenment. This development is often carried out through specialist training and education. The second relates to how intellectual and artistic activities embody and transmit both institutional and social behaviour patterns and beliefs. In other words, the mode of expression found within the artistic and aesthetic developments of a society reflects the traits of an individual culture often defined by a particular period, class, community or population. ‘culture’, n., *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford, 2014), <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45746?rskey=M6L7o&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> , accessed 4 July 2014.

<sup>4</sup> J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, 1985), pp. xii, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, trans. by H.M. Wright (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 30, 66.

culture,<sup>7</sup> may have influenced the composition of their written forms.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in many ways, the boundaries between both traditions are almost impossible to identify<sup>9</sup> as for the period under consideration. This is because the Latin book learning of the Church, which will be discussed shortly, coexisted with the native *cyfarwydd*, or oral storytelling, tradition of learning.<sup>10</sup>

Sioned Davies, the leading scholar on oral tradition and storytelling in native Wales, has argued that the idea of ‘traditional lore’ not only helped Wales evolve culturally in its own way, but was, in fact, a necessity for Welsh society to function.<sup>11</sup> This is important as the combination of oral and written traditions help to preserve the ideals and expectations of every role and every status of the sexes, using examples as models ‘to which [the] holders must conform’.<sup>12</sup> Little is known about the *cyfarwyddiaid*, or storytellers, of Wales, but it is recognised that they were likely the transmitters of knowledge, instructing, advising and passing information according to both custom and tradition.<sup>13</sup> Although the term *cyfarwydd* could be an occasional functionary title rather than one denoting a profession or social class,<sup>14</sup> diverse classes of learned men, such as lawyers and bards, may have been responsible for various aspects of *cyfarwydd*. It may be that the term itself related to the concept of ‘traditional lore’.<sup>15</sup>

The particular impression, or perhaps one could even argue assumption, that the *cyfarwydd* tradition was dominated by a select class of men undoubtedly shaped the construction and depiction of gender expectations. Thus, the

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<sup>7</sup> See B.F. Roberts, ‘Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey’, *Oral Tradition*, 3 (1998), pp. 61-87.

<sup>8</sup> This is a topic that has been studied by Sioned Davies concerning the relationship between native prose and oral performance. Ead., *Crefft y Cyfarwydd: Astudiaeth o Dechnegau Naratif yn y Mabinogion* (Cardiff, 1995); “‘He was the Best Teller of Tales in the World’: Performing Medieval Welsh Narrative”, in E.B. Vitz, N. Freeman Regalado and M. Lawrence (eds), *Performing Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, 2005), pp.15-26 ; ead., ‘Performing Culhwch ac Olwen’, in C. Lloyd-Morgan (ed.), *Arthurian Literature XXI* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 29-51; ead., ‘Storytelling in Medieval Wales’, *Oral Tradition*, 7/2 (1992), 231-57; ead., ‘Written Text as Performance: The Implications for Middle Welsh Prose Narratives’, in H. Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 133-48. Also see Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 111-14; P. Sims-Williams, ‘The Uses of Writing in Early Medieval Wales’, in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, pp. 15-38.

<sup>9</sup> Davies, ‘Storytelling in Medieval Wales’, pp. 252, 254.

<sup>10</sup> Roberts, ‘Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature’, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, ‘Storytelling in Medieval Wales’, p. 233.

<sup>12</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 105.

<sup>13</sup> ‘... etymology of which suggests “seeing, perception, guidance, knowledge”’. Roberts, ‘Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature’, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, ‘Storytelling in Medieval Wales’, pp. 232, 237.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 233.

appearance of married women and the parameters of their actions, voices and movements throughout the extant written sources need to be measured against what seems to have been a very male-oriented and patriarchal background. Nevertheless, as will be discussed more fully in terms of the genealogical tradition, women's contribution to culture and the relating of traditional gender constructs needs to be kept in mind. The evolution of gender roles, stereotypes and expectations did not take place in a strictly male-dominated vacuum, but involved the interaction and interconnection between the sexes. Amorphous as they may be, theories and images of marriage and wifehood enable a reconstruction, to some degree, of the system of values that defined and determined gender constructs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For wives especially, expectations of behaviour and norms and perceptions of status are conveyed in even the most innocuous of illustrations. Uncovering a commonality across the sources regarding the uxorial lifecycle helps elucidate the moral framework under which the standards of married women were judged.

Many written Welsh sources are steeped in the oral tradition. For example, proverbs (*diarhebion*) are a popular category of oral tradition. As they are not designed as a means of providing historical information, they reveal long-standing attitudes of a society. However, because they are impossible to date with accuracy, they can only be used to provide a generalised idea of moral social norms.<sup>16</sup> Manuscript copies of proverbs written in the Welsh language are primarily found in the Red Book of Hergest (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*)<sup>17</sup> — the largest extant volume of Welsh medieval literature, c. 1382–c. 1425<sup>18</sup> — where wives are derided for their pride, dominance, and penchant for gossip and sexuality.<sup>19</sup> Misogynistic proverbial expressions about women were pervasive in the Middle Ages and identifying those that are specifically Welsh in nature and associated with native oral tradition is difficult.<sup>20</sup> As such, more fruitful sources for assessing native attitudes to married women have to be used.

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<sup>16</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 3, 5, 80, 146.

<sup>17</sup> These have now been published. *Diarhebion Llyfr Coch Hergest*, ed. R. Glyn Roberts (Aberystwyth, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 47, 60, 80-3, 86, 113-4.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Oxford, Jesus College, Ms. 111, ff. 241<sup>r</sup>–242<sup>v</sup> [online (Oxford, nd), <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=jesus&manuscript=ms111>>, accessed 30 June 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. M.S. Cichon, “‘As ye have brewd, so shal ye drink’: The Proverbial Context of Eger and Grime”, in (eds) M.S. Staveley Cichon and R. Purdie, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*

## The *Mabinogion*

The *Mabinogion*, a compendium of eleven localised Welsh tales, is highly regarded as a major contribution to the corpus of European medieval literature.<sup>21</sup> Although the *Mabinogion* is a nineteenth century creation to refer to the eleven Welsh tales, modern scholarship has shown that it seems to specifically refer to the first four tales, collectively known as the ‘Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*’. It is likely that *mabinogi* originally meant ‘youth’ or perhaps ‘story of youth’.<sup>22</sup> The earliest written texts of the collection tales likely represent a melding of the oral and literate cultures, oral tradition playing ‘an essential role in their composition’.<sup>23</sup> The tales of the *Mabinogion* are principally found in two manuscripts: the White Book of Rhydderch (*Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*), dated c. 1350, which was compiled in Ceredigion and is believed to be the earliest anthology of Welsh prose;<sup>24</sup> and the Red Book of Hergest.<sup>25</sup> The earliest surviving manuscript to contain a portion of the Four Branches (*Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*) — the first four tales which are the best known, most studied, and the only tales that are tenuously linked together<sup>26</sup> — has been dated to the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>27</sup> However, these were originally written at a much earlier date, between 1060 and 1200.

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(Cambridge, 2011), pp. 35-46; L.E. Mitchell, *Women in Medieval Western European Culture* (New York, 2012), pp. 315-16.

<sup>21</sup> *The Mabinogion*, trans. G. Jones and T. Jones (London, 1949; repr. 1982), p. 7. D. Luft, ‘The Meaning of *Mabinogi*’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 62 (Winter, 2011), 57–79.

<sup>22</sup> *The Mabinogion*, trans. S. Davies (Oxford, 2007), pp. ix-x; Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, ‘Storytelling in Medieval Wales’, pp. 233-4. Also see Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. xiii-xvii; Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> NLW, MS Peniarth 4-5. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 59, 83, 88-9

<sup>25</sup> Diplomatic transcriptions from manuscripts of Middle Welsh prose texts, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Jesus College 111, inclusive of an English language version, are online, <<http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/>>, accessed 17 July 2014; Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> The link between the tales is suggested by the recurring appearance of one character, Pryderi, and the fact that they all end with the colophon: ‘And thus ends this branch of the *Mabinogion*’ (*Ac y uelly y teruyna y geing hon yma o’r Mabyngogyon*). Pwyll *Pendeuic Dyuet*, ed. R.L. Thomson (Dublin, 1957), p. 23. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. ix-x; Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> NLW, Peniarth 4, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–28<sup>v</sup>; Oxford Jesus College, MS. 111, ff. 175<sup>r</sup>–190<sup>r</sup>. There are linguistic and historical arguments, which offer a range of dates for the production of the Four Branches, pre-1100 to the late-twelfth century. For a summary of the major arguments, especially those between Ifor Williams, who makes a case for the late-eleventh century, and Saunders Lewis, who claims the late-twelfth century see T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Date of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*’, *THSC* (1968-70, pt. I), pp. 263-98. Also see Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p. 58. For a recent discussion on provenance and dating of the Four Branches see P. Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno and the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*’, in B. Maier, S. Zimmer and C. Bakke (eds), *150 Jahre “Mabinogion”: Deutsch-Walische Kulturbeziehungen* (Tübingen, 2001), pp. 111-16.



There are four tales that have been categorised as ‘native’ that focus on themes related to the Matter of Britain and Wales specifically. What is believed to be the possible first rendition of an Arthurian cycle, ‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’ (*Culhwch ac Olwen*), is likely the earliest, dated to the eleventh century.<sup>28</sup> The composition of ‘Rhonabwy’s Dream’ (*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*), set during the reign of Madog ap Maredudd (d. 1160), prince of Powys, is debateable, ranging from the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century to the early-fourteenth.<sup>29</sup> ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’ (*Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*), previously dated to the second half of the twelfth century, has been more recently dated to the reign of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, prince of Gwynedd, between the years 1215–1217.<sup>30</sup> The oldest surviving form of ‘Lludd and Llefelys’ has been dated to 1225 × 1250.<sup>31</sup>

The three remaining tales are romances, which have obvious Norman-French influences and a close comparability to other types of twelfth-century chivalric romance literature.<sup>32</sup> ‘Geraint son of Erbin’ (*Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin*) may have been written by the late-twelfth century, perhaps earlier.<sup>33</sup> ‘Peredur son of Efrog’ (*Peredur vab Ewfroc*) is roughly dated between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and ‘The Lady of the Well’ (*Chwedl Iarlles y Ffynnon*) has been dated to the end of the twelfth century.<sup>34</sup> The acceptance of certain themes seen as germane to the Welsh culture and the rejection of those believed to be too foreign resulted in the culmination of these three hybrid texts with a unique Welsh identity.<sup>35</sup> All three encompass the broad characteristics defined by

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<sup>28</sup> B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, The Triads, Saints’ Lives’, in R. Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and B.F. Roberts (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-4.

<sup>29</sup> C. Lloyd-Morgan, ‘*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and Later Arthurian Literature’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, pp. 183-93.

<sup>30</sup> *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, ed. B.F. Roberts (Dublin, 2005), pp. xlix, lxxxv.

<sup>31</sup> Id., ‘*Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig*: Why? When?’, in J.F. Nagy and L.E. Jones (eds), *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition: A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 311-12.

<sup>32</sup> See C. Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Crossing the Borders: Literary Borrowing in Medieval Wales and England’, in R. Kennedy and S. Meecham-Jones (eds), *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (New York, 2008), pp 161-66.

<sup>33</sup> R. Middleton, ‘*Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin*’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, p. 147-9.

<sup>34</sup> I. Lovecy, ‘*Historia Peredur ab Efwrog*’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, pp. 171-2; R.L. Thomson, ‘*Owain: Chwedl Iarlles y Ffynnon*’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>35</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xxiv. It must be noted that the three Welsh romances are not similar to one another and were not copied together in any extant manuscripts. They do not share a common manuscript tradition with one another and are not considered to be an organic group. Ead., *Mabinogion*, p. xi.

chivalric values and modes of behaviour. In spite of its resemblance to European courtly literature, much of the original prose of the *Mabinogion* predates the origins of *chanson de geste* and chivalric literature of Europe and the romances themselves remain identifiably Welsh in style and structure. ‘Peredur’, ‘Geraint’ and ‘The Lady of the Well’ are regarded as loose retellings of Arthurian tales adopted and shaped to fit within native culture.<sup>36</sup> Irrespective of the origins of the material contained in the tales as a whole,<sup>37</sup> in their extant form, the tales of the *Mabinogion* are products of the Christian society of high medieval Wales.<sup>38</sup>

Overall, the lack of known authorship of the *Mabinogion* strongly suggests that the tales were related by the *cyfarwyddiaid*, thereby defying any sense of ‘ownership’.<sup>39</sup> It is unmistakable that the perspective of the sources is that of someone who was intimately aware of the ways of the court. Andrew Breeze has argued that the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion* were written, or at least commissioned, by a royal Welsh woman.<sup>40</sup> Breeze maintains that the strength and visibility of the female characters, and the display of presumably Welsh courtly ideals, indicates that the author was Gwenllïan ferch Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1136) of Gwynedd, wife of Gruffudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth.<sup>41</sup> Although this theory is widely rejected, the *Mabinogion* as a whole does clearly display the ideals, values and gendered expectations of the courts of the Welsh princes.<sup>42</sup>

The male authors define gendered values and standards believed to be prized in their social circles and these are similar to those traditionally associated with European chivalric code: honour and fidelity; masculine prowess and

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<sup>36</sup> Sioned Davies argues that this is due to the rejection of certain features believed to have been too ‘foreign’. A typical characteristic of a country that dealt with foreign invasion and settlement is that native literature becomes emblematic of a post-colonial society. Ead., *Mabinogion*, p. xxiv.

<sup>37</sup> Including the historical perspective of the Four Branches, set in the Brittonic world before the advent of the Romans and the connection with the older oral tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, pp. 12-15; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. ix-xii, xxv.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xiii.

<sup>40</sup> A. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 74-9; id., *The Origin of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Leominster, 2009); id., ‘Politics and the Court Branches of the Mabinogi’, *Memoria y Civilización*, 2 (1999), pp. 243-60.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. C. James, review of A. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature*, in *WHR*, 19/2 (December, 1998), pp. 342-5; Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 26-8; C. Lloyd-Morgan, review of A. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature*, in *Medium Aevum*, 67/1 (March, 1998), 140; D. Luft, review of A. Breeze, *The Origin of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, in *Celtic Studies Association Newsletter*, 27/2 (Beltane, 2010), 9-12.

<sup>42</sup> See H. Fulton, ‘The Mabinogi and the Education of Princes in Medieval Wales’, in H. Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 230-47.

largess; and uxorial chastity and beauty. Ultimately, the attributes of warrior-rulers are coupled with those of their female consorts and, yet, the women are also ‘inspirational’, acting as muses to their lovers, where relationships often culminate in marriage. To win their love, their male suitors undertake the major quests that act as the foundation for many of the tales of the *Mabinogion*. ‘Peredur son of Efrog’, ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’, ‘The Lady of the Well’, ‘Geraint son of Erbin’, ‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’ are all textbook examples. To a lesser extent, the principles of this philosophy are also found in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, with the character Pwyll’s determination to meet the mysterious and elusive Rhiannon who eventually becomes his wife. This is also understood in the Fourth Branch, in the character Llew’s quest to find a wife. A female audience of the *Mabinogion* would have understood, if not accepted, the traditional ideologies of marriage and wifedom that are represented throughout and would certainly have recognised the ideological values portrayed as those of stemming from the royal and noble classes.

### ***Trioedd Ynys Prydein***

The Triads of the Island of Britain, or *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (hereafter *TYP*) are collections of interrelated texts assembled in groups of three in which mythological, semi-historical and historical characters and events share a defining similarity.<sup>43</sup> They are often grouped together in indistinct epithets, the greater part of which celebrates names and traits of traditionally recognised British heroines and heroes.<sup>44</sup> They are secondary adaptations made up of fragments of much older material based on oral tradition that recounted popular elements of Welsh mythology, folklore, and specifically in the Triads, *ystoryaeu a hengerdd* or *aides memoires*, for the native learned classes.<sup>45</sup>

The provenance of the triads and original authorship are unknown. The earliest surviving manuscript to contain the Triads (1-46) is NLW, Peniarth MS.

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<sup>43</sup> Rachel Bromwich says that the triadic stories that refer to early mythological tradition can be explained as representing a Welsh view of pre-Saxon times. *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, ed. R. Bromwich (Cardiff, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2006), p. liv. This is similar to the Four Branches, which also seem to be set in an early period: just before *Roman* conquest in the first century.

<sup>44</sup> Women appear in thirty-one of the ninety-seven surviving triads (31.96%) — a greater percentage than the entries found in the Welsh chronicles. See Chapter 2, pp. 93-5.

<sup>45</sup> *TYP*, p.lxx.

16, dated between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> Triads 47-69 are found in the White Book of Rhydderch. However, these are also fragmentary and a complete version of the triadic set is found in the Red Book of Hergest. The following sixteen triads are presented in Peniarth 47 (triads 70-80) and Peniarth 50 (triads 81-6). The remaining triads 87-97 are miscellaneous added to versions of *TYP* found in later manuscript collections.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, it is probable that the date of the earliest collection of written triads, or the 'Early Version', which suggests strong connections to St David's, is the second quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>48</sup>

Like the assumption that extensive familiarity with a national tradition was a substantial part of bardic training has led to the belief that the Welsh Triads were devised as a mnemonic tool to help generations of bards compose and recite early Welsh tales, they were also used by poets and other native men of scholarship as part of the broader body of native learning.<sup>49</sup> The groupings of themes and subject matters into threes as a form of *ystoryaeu a hengerdd* also appear throughout the many literary genres of medieval Wales, such as poetry, the laws and bardic grammar texts.<sup>50</sup> Though the triads focus on a distant past, they also have contemporary relevance in Welsh literary culture. In fact, irrespective of their origins, they form part of the literary culture of the period considered in this thesis. As they were likely to have been in written collections from the twelfth century, appearing in extant in manuscripts certainly from the

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<sup>46</sup> Peniarth 16 (NLW), a composite manuscript. *TYP*, pp. xi, xvi, xvii, liv-lv. Triads 1-46, only less than half of the ninety-seven total, are believed to be representative of the oldest adaptations and have been dubbed by Rachel Bromwich the 'Early Version'. An exception to this is a fragment of four *Trioedd y Meirch*, or the Triads of Horses, which are found in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (Peniarth MS. 1, NLW), c. 1250. *Ibid.* xi.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* xi. Other manuscripts in which versions of *TYP* are found in are primarily fifteenth-century: Peniarth 47 (fifteenth century); Peniarth 50, *Y Cwta Cafarwydd* (early-fifteenth century); Peniarth 51 (c. 1470); Peniarth 27, Peniarth 77, Peniarth 240 and British Library Additional 31, 055 (later-fifteenth century); Cardiff 6 (c. 1550); Peniarth 252 (seventeenth century); Hafod 3 (early-seventeenth century); and Cardiff 18 (late-sixteenth, early-seventeenth).

<sup>48</sup> *TYP*, p. xci. Bromwich contends that these are centuries older than the actual written text. *Ibid.* xi, xvi, xvii, liv-lv, lviii-lxix.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* lviii-lxxx.

<sup>50</sup> N. Lloyd and M.E. Owen (eds), *Drych yr Oesoedd Canol*, pp. 76, 151, 208, 211, 215. The use of triadic literature was not a practice unique to Wales; it is found in texts primarily originating from places where Celtic language dominated, such as Brittany, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall and Wales. cf. F. Kelly, 'Thinking in Threes: The Triad in Early Irish Literature', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 125 (2003 lectures), pp. 1-18. For the triads of the law texts see S.E. Roberts, *The Legal Triads of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2007).

thirteenth century onwards, they are especially relevant for an understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of the court poets who drew on this material.

Both the Triads and the *Mabinogion* are similar in their approach to describing and portraying legendary and mythological married women. In many ways, they conform to the stereotypical literary descriptions of uxorial virtues, namely beauty, chastity, nobility and goodness.<sup>51</sup> Yet, there are also examples in which women are praised for features with more conventional ‘masculine’ connotations, especially those remembered for their leadership and martial qualities.<sup>52</sup> Specifically in the Triads, the identification of women is through their relationships to men. The use of female lifecycles is not only for means of description and identification, but seemingly as *aides memoires*.<sup>53</sup>

### Poetry of the *Gogynfeirdd*

The poetry of the Welsh court poets known as the *Gogynfeirdd* that was written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries has literary references exposing the familiarity of the bards with the techniques and the traditional stylistic methods of the Welsh *cyfarwyddiaid*.<sup>54</sup> The court poets are esteemed for their linguistic talents, artful manipulation of language and word play used to extol the virtues of a Welsh way of life and to glorify, amongst other things, nature, religion and god. The Welsh poetic tradition was one based on professionalism and patronage; the poets, bards, were craftsmen reliant on their courtly patrons to provide them with both funding and inspiration and the relationship between a prince and his chief poet has been likened to that of kinship, *carennnydd*.<sup>55</sup>

The Welsh poetic tradition glorifies the merits of the warrior-ruler and his ability to rule his lands<sup>56</sup> and is made up of three distinct eras. First is the period roughly before the year 1100, which is associated with the earliest poets or *Y Cynfeirdd* and ‘old poetry’, *Y Hengerdd*. The subject matter of the early poets is

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. triad 50, pp. 136-7; triad 56, pp. 161-3; triad 66, pp. 183-4; triad 70, pp. 195-8; triad 79, p. 209; triad 86, pp. 225-7; triad 99, p. 230; triad 95, p. 242.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. triad 35(R), pp. 82-9; triad 67, pp. 185-8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. triad 35, p. 81; triad 44, pp. 115-23; triad 70, pp. 195-8; triad 81(C), pp. 211-13; triad 86, pp. 225-7; triad 96, pp. 243-5. This is also a notable characteristic found in all the Welsh sources, especially the Welsh chronicles, which is discussed more in depth in ‘Genealogy’ below.

<sup>54</sup> Roberts, ‘Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature’, p. 63.

<sup>55</sup> D.M. Lloyd, ‘The Poets of the Princes’, in (ed.) A.J. Roderick, *Wales through the Ages: Vol. I: From the Earliest Times to 1485* (3rd imp., Aberystwyth, 1971), p. 97.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 98-9; *Welsh Court Poetry*, ed. R.M. Andrews (Cardiff, 2007), pp. xxvii-viii.

one that generally eulogises great heroes of Britain the early Middle Ages. From the thirteenth century onwards, the use and knowledge of *ystoryaeu a hengerdd* was limited to the citation of names and characters whose attributes were used as standards in which to make favourable comparisons to patrons and members of Welsh princely families.<sup>57</sup> This second era of Welsh poetry, which is the primary focus for this study because it is known as the Poets of the Princes (*Beirdd y Tywysogion*) or *Y Gogynfeirdd* ('rather early poets'), is dated after 1100 and up to 1282. Among the most notable of these were Gwalchmai ap Meilyr (*fl.* 1132–1180), Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd (*fl.* 1140–1170), Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (*fl.* 1155–1195), Llywarch ap Llywelyn, also known as Prydydd y Moch (*fl.* 1174–1220) and Dafydd Benfras (*fl.* 1216–1258).

The third poetic era, the poetry from 1282 to the sixteenth century, is a period known as the Poets of the Nobility (*Beirdd yr Uchelwyr*). One of the many results of the Edwardian conquest was the disappearance of the native princely courts, and with them, the traditional role of the poet and the audience that was responsive to the type of panegyric verse the *Gogynfeirdd* were renowned for. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the professional features of the bardic tradition of the native court bards, *cywyddwyr*, changed due to their increased dependency on the patronage of the *argwlyddi* (lords) and *uchelwyr* (nobility).<sup>58</sup> This dependence significantly changed the content and subject matter of later Welsh poetry, separating it from 'the ceremonial pomp and stately dignity of the *awdlau* [odes] composed by the court poets'.<sup>59</sup> In this period, love poems and the recording of Welsh genealogy reached their zenith. Especially for the later Middle Ages, there are numerous poems and elegies that praise married (noble) women for their noteworthy virtues, namely chastity, charity, religious devotion and generosity. Nuns were also popular subjects of Welsh courtly love poetry, belonging, however, to imaginative erotica, as 'the

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<sup>57</sup> *TYP*, p. lxii. An example is the later twelfth century *Hirlas Owain*, which is indebted to the *Gododdin* highlighting extensive borrowing from *Y Hengerdd*. See G.A. Williams, 'Welsh Raiding in the Twelfth-Century Shropshire/Cheshire March: The Case of Owain Cyfeiliog', *Studia Celtica*, 40:1 (December, 2006), pp. 92-3.

<sup>58</sup> F. Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', *THSC* (1949 for 1948), p. 321; H. Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry', in (eds) R. Kennedy and S. Meecham-Jones, *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (New York, 2008), pp. 197-8.

<sup>59</sup> C.W. Lewis, 'The Content of Poetry and the Crisis in the Bardic Tradition', in (eds) A.O.H. Jarman and G.R. Hughes, *A Guide to Welsh Literature, vol. 2* (Swansea, 1979), p. 106.

forbidden fruit'.<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to determine how far the themes of women and love found in later medieval poetry drew on earlier material produced by the *Gogynfeirdd*, especially since the survival of poems to and about women written by the *Gogynfeirdd* are very few in number. It is possible, and arguably likely, that the introduction of the new themes from the fourteenth century onwards imply that these were largely unimportant in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Poems that do touch on love and women, such as those of Hywel ab Owain discussed below, are likely part of a wider European trend rather than an independent Welsh construction.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, to some extent, they may also cast light, albeit indirectly, on the perceptions and norms in Welsh literary culture, and its audience, in the period under investigation.<sup>62</sup>

There are three manuscripts in which the works of the *Gogynfeirdd* survive. These are the Black Book of Carmarthen (*Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*)<sup>63</sup>, dated to the mid-thirteenth century; the Hendregadredd manuscript,<sup>64</sup> dated to the early fourteenth century; and the Red Book of Hergest. Like the Red Book of Hergest, both the Black Book of Carmarthen and the Hendregadredd manuscript have associations with southern Wales. The Black Book, which contains six court poems, is connected to the priory of St John the Evangelist and Teulyddog and is believed to have been compiled by one scribe. The Hendregadredd manuscript, which is the main anthology of Welsh courtly poetry, seems to have been compiled in two stages at Strata Florida, a Cistercian abbey.<sup>65</sup>

Poets were at the centre of government, their positions, status and privileges were protected by the laws, and many used their craft to control royal propaganda by commending their patrons, proclaiming that there was none their

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<sup>60</sup> J. Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2008), pp.177-208.

<sup>61</sup> See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 219.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> NLW, Peniarth MS 1 [online, *National Library of Wales* (2014), <<http://digidol.llgc.org.uk/METS/DUC00002/physical>>, accessed 01 July 2014].

<sup>64</sup> NLW, MS 6680B [online, *National Library of Wales* (2014) <http://digidol.llgc.org.uk/METS/LLH00001/frames?div=0&subdiv=0&locale=en&mode=thumbnail>, accessed 01 July 2014].

<sup>65</sup> The first stage was completed by one scribe and the second stage seems to have involved nineteen different scribes. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p. 15; *Welsh Court Poetry*, pp. xxxvii-viii.

equal.<sup>66</sup> The Poems of the Princes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are generally the work of the *penceirddiaid*, chief court poets, under whose hands the genre of praise poetry reached its height. The *pencerdd*, the chief poet, was associated with the *gwlad*, or local district, rather than simply a ruler's court.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the *pencerdd* was in charge of glorifying his prince. A characteristic of Welsh courtly poetry is the poets' praise of the valour and generosity of their princely patrons in life and in death. The *awdlau* of the *Gogynfeirdd* promoted and elaborated upon a prince's exploits in order to celebrate the importance of the individual and his reign.<sup>68</sup> The household poet, or *bardd teulu*, was a poet of lesser status, but nonetheless, a member of the royal court. He had the task of venerating and entertaining the women of the court and the household troops.<sup>69</sup>

Out of the 34 known poets who wrote during the Ages of Princes — all of whom were male — seven composed surviving poetry in which women feature.<sup>70</sup> Of a total of 96 extant poems of the *Gogynfeirdd*, thirteen include women.<sup>71</sup> The poets whose poems for women survive are: Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, Peryf ap Cedifor (*fl.* 1170), Llywarch ap Llywelyn, Einion ap Gwalchmai (*fl.* 1202–1223), Goronwy Foel (*fl.* 1260), Iorwerth Fychan ab Iorwerth ap Rhotbert (*fl.* 1250). The small number of native court poems addressed to women, or those that commend the attributes of the female sex, are important because they convey the ideals and expectations of noble patrons, the values of the courts and offer a unique cultural perception of women generally within this context.

The Welsh odes and elegies dedicated to women are often amatory and so conventional in their structure that it is apparent they are drawn from, or at least, influenced by the *amour courtois*.<sup>72</sup> For example, Iorwerth Fychan's poem for Gwerfyl, describes her as a silent, regal, beautiful and fickle woman, handsomely

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<sup>66</sup> *Welsh Court Poetry*, p. xxviii; D. Jenkins, 'Bardd Teulu and Pencerdd', in T.M. Charles-Edwards, M.E. Owen and P. Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 142-66; id., 'Pencerdd a Bardd Teulu', *Ysgrifau Beirniadol*, xvi (1988), pp. 19-46.

<sup>67</sup> Jenkins, 'Bardd Teulu and Pencerdd', pp. 158-60; id., 'Pencerdd a Bardd Teulu'.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis, 'Content of Poetry', p. 53.

<sup>69</sup> Lloyd, 'Poets of Princes', p. 97; J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales: An Essay* (Lewiston, 1997), pp. 129-31.

<sup>70</sup> See *Appendix*, *Ibid.* 207-14.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 131.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 55-6; T.D. Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature* (Clarendon, 1955), p. 57.



dressed and undoubtedly a lady from a far-famed hall.<sup>73</sup> Despite similarities to contemporary European poetry, the Welsh poems to women that do survive, known as *rhieingerddi*,<sup>74</sup> largely differ in form making them unique in comparison. A *rhieingerdd* addressed to Gwenllian (*fl.* 1184–1217) daughter of Hywel ap Iorwerth (d. 1215 × Oct. 1217), ruler of Caerleon, written by Prydydd y Moch, is recognisable as a love poem.<sup>75</sup> The poet praises Gwenllian as a maiden worthy of praise, professing that knowledge of her esteemed qualities will spread throughout the realm and beyond as long as the sun rises and sets.<sup>76</sup>

Yet, the conversational tone of the poems of the *Gogynfierdd* concerning women are combined with boastful and exaggerated rhetoric. They serve as a reminder of the duty defined by the office of the poet<sup>77</sup> was to entertain and glorify the ideals of the masculine Welsh court rather than simply to venerate the status of the noble woman. Einion ap Gwalchmai's elegy to Nest (*fl.* before 1223) daughter of Hywel ap Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1216) of Meirionnydd refers to this noble woman as a fair and gentle virgin, a woman who held true wisdom.<sup>78</sup> She is praised for her pedigree, her gifts of goodness and as a source of inspiration. Enion claims that he was a true favourite of Nest, alluding to her previous patronage. Nest's father was a supporter of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Einion's chief patron, and the poet emphasises that Nest's esteemed qualities enhanced the honour of Gwynedd itself.<sup>79</sup> Although some noble women were commemorated, their presence is principally defined by ideals of sovereignty and masculinity promoted by the warrior-poets and their princely patrons. Not all the women to whom such poems are written can be identified, but it is clear that they are from the aristocratic and princely classes. Their status and positions as noble

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<sup>73</sup> 'Gwaith Iorwerth Fychan', ed. C. James, in R.M. Andrews *et al* (eds), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Aberystwyth, 1996), p. 316.

<sup>74</sup> In Middle Welsh *rhian* may have originally meant 'queen' or 'royal woman', but it also may refer simply to 'lady'. Williams, *Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, pp. 131-2, n. 303. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the title of 'queen', *Titles and Other Designations*.

<sup>75</sup> For records of practice concerning Gwenllian, see Chapter 5, pp. 263-4.

<sup>76</sup> *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'*, ed. E.M. Jones (Caerdydd, 1991), p. 136. This particular poem, known as a *llattai* poem, where the man sends a messenger, usually in the form of an animal to his lover, is important in some respects because it focuses on where the lover and the woman come from, what state is she to be found in when the messenger finally reaches her and her beauty, which often surpasses the beauty of the women of legends.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

<sup>78</sup> *Welsh Court Poems*, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

women and maidens are defined by their ties to Welsh courts and the bards' patrons.<sup>80</sup>

It is remarkable that no poems survive dedicated to the wives of Wales's most well-known and most esteemed rulers, especially in light of the fact that 75 per cent of the poetry from the Ages of Princes is made up of elegies and eulogies dedicated to ruling members of the dynastic elite from the kingdoms of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys.<sup>81</sup> In fact, it is unknown whether any such poems were dedicated to women such as Angharad (d. 1162), wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137); Gwenllian (*fl.* 1184 × 1188), wife of the Lord Rhys; Emma of Anjou, wife of Dafydd ab Owain; Joan of England, wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth; Senana, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1244); and Eleanor de Montfort, wife of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. They are distinctly absent in poems composed in praise of and often commissioned by their husbands or those that can be defined as more general 'love' poems.

It is difficult to determine why this is the case. The absence of Joan could be seen as a sign of the poets' disapproval of her, as a daughter of an English king, an active political envoy and an accused adulteress.<sup>82</sup> One scholar has argued that even if they were written, poems to the wives of rulers were likely not perceived as significant in importance as those addressed to their male counterparts.<sup>83</sup> It may be that the surviving corpus and creation of editors of major collections after the Edwardian conquest, especially the *Hendregadredd* manuscript, were less likely to preserve poems to rulers' wives. However, as other poems to women exist, and a poem to a ruler's wife could have been used to praise the ruler, it is likely they simply may not have survived. It is also equally plausible that the poems of the *Gogynfeirdd* addressed to women were primarily composed and recited orally.

The influences of bardic laws, which prescribed the narrow duties of the poets and predetermined the types of poetry to be written, may have also played

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<sup>80</sup> e.g. Dafydd Benfras, '*Mawl Marared ferch Rhys Fychan*', ed. R.G. Gruffydd, in (eds) N.G. Costigan *et al*, *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill* (Caerdydd, 1995), p. 337. Examples also found in *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, (eds) N.A. Jones and A. Parry (Caerdydd, 1991), p. 55; '*Gwaith Iorwerth Fychan*', pp. 312, 320; *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn*, pp. 137-8, 144.

<sup>81</sup> M.E. Owen, 'Literary Convention and Historical Reality: The Court in the Welsh Poetry of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Etudes Celtiques*, 29 (1992), p. 71.

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 208-11.

<sup>83</sup> Williams, *Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p. 133.

a factor in the composition in the number of poems to rulers' wives. The *pencerdd* and *bardd teulu* were formally recognised in the laws as royal officials<sup>84</sup> and in the court of Gwynedd, they may have made up a portion of the 'ministerial elite'.<sup>85</sup> It has been argued that the political climate, and target audience of the Welsh court dominated by the warband, may have had significant influence on the type of poetry that was composed.<sup>86</sup>

Guidance on writing praise poetry is found in a fourteenth century text known as *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*.<sup>87</sup> It is a textbook of bardic grammar and poetics aimed at professional poets as a source for teaching, the earliest version of which is found in the Red Book of Hergest.<sup>88</sup> Einion Offeiriad (*fl. c.* 1320–*c.* 1349) is attributed the authorship of the list of triads found at the end of the textbook, which discusses 'how all things should be praised'. These triads provide a list of the most praiseworthy attributes and qualities of both women and men, based on social status. The three types of women to be praised are noblewomen, maidens and religious women. Details on how the noblewoman in particular should be praised included their 'wisdom, and propriety, and chastity, and generosity, and beauty of countenance, complexion and form, and guilelessness of speech and actions'.<sup>89</sup> These were, by no means, new virtues to be lauded. In the twelfth-century Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, queen Anghard is eulogized with the exact same qualities.<sup>90</sup> Although by the fourteenth century there was a decline in the knowledge of early Welsh narrative tradition, after which the bards turned to foreign literary sources for comparison,<sup>91</sup> it is possible that Einion Offeiriad's list of specific attributes ascribed to noblewomen was taken directly from this source. More importantly, these triads offer a clue as to

<sup>84</sup> Jenkins, 'Pencerdd a Bardd Teulu'.

<sup>85</sup> D. Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff, 1984), pp. 124-6. See also P.I. Lynch, 'Court Poetry, Power and Politics', in *WKHC*, pp. 167-90.

<sup>86</sup> J. Rowland, 'Early Welsh Saga Poetry', in (ed.) B.F. Roberts, *Studies in the Book of Aneirin: Early Welsh Poetry* (Aberystwyth, 1988), p. 188.

<sup>87</sup> *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, (eds) G.J. Williams and E.J. Jones (Cardiff, 1934).

<sup>88</sup> J.T. Koch, ed., *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, 5 vols (Santa Barbara, 2006), i, p. 181; Lewis, 'Content of Poetry', p. 93; M. Stephens, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 171-2; B.F. Roberts, 'Einion Offeriad (*d.* 1353?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <  
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48544>>, accessed 1 July 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Translation in Lewis, 'Content of Poetry', p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> *Vita Griffini Filii Conani, The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. and trans. P. Russell (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 76-9; *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*, (ed.) D. S. Evans (Cardiff, 1978), p. 22.

<sup>91</sup> Lewis, 'Content and Poetry', p. 95.

the idealised gendered traits of the noble, and assumed married woman likely praised by the *Gogynfeirdd*.

Specifically, there are no surviving Welsh poems that portray an expression of woman, even through the voice of man.<sup>92</sup> Unlike the female experience as it is portrayed in Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, like *Beowulf* for example, or in the French troubadour tradition of the *fin amors*, the female experience in Welsh poetry is ancillary, both in heroic poetry sagas and in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*. Women, when they are mentioned, by and large act as metaphoric expressions for the emotions of man.<sup>93</sup> Whereas the portrayal of man is active, usually expressed in terms of the warrior ethic, woman acts as an allegory of male emotion and a symbol of male power.

That there is very little poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries dedicated to women or that have love as a subject matter is very telling of Welsh society. It highlights the dominance of the warrior-ruler ethos in all aspects of society, including culture. The similarities that are made between the virtues of a patron, his retinue or members of his family with those of a more heroic age, draw attention to poetry's affinities with the prose of the *Mabinogion* and the Welsh Triads.<sup>94</sup> It was more important to glorify a prince and his ability to rule his lands as a matter of political propaganda than it was to speak of love and the virtues of women. The political climate of Wales, and the marked status of the *pencerdd* fed this view. The thematic uniformity of the praise-poetry and the odes that have come down, specifically the eulogies and elegies dedicated to princes, highlight a particular poet's relationship with a specific patron.

### ***Cyfraith Hywel***

In the main, the native court poets, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and the tales of the *Mabinogion* all present a view stemming from interactions, dealings and status within the princely royal courts or *llysoedd*. The law codes of medieval Wales,

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen, *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'More Written about than Writing? Welsh Women and the Written Word', in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, pp. 149-50. See also Damico and Olsen, *Women in Old English Literature*, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> It has been suggested that some of the Poets of the Princes may have even been the redactors of at least some of the Welsh tales found in the *Mabinogion*. Williams, *Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p. 40.

known as *Cyfraith Hywel*, or the Law of Hywel Dda, are comparable.<sup>95</sup> The codified laws were dictated by the beliefs and professional experiences of educated men from the higher, if not elite classes who modified the rules according to their social standards and the needs of the native courts. It is generally understood that the lawbooks were written by professional lawyers for lawyers, ‘working out the application of the customary principles of their people’ by outlining ‘the obligations of the people towards the state’ or king.<sup>96</sup> Although the codification of the laws is attributed to Hywel Dda (d. 950) the tenth-century king who ruled much of Wales at this time,<sup>97</sup> the laws as they have been passed down in written form largely dating from the late-twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.<sup>98</sup> Even in the likelihood that the law texts may have been copied for antiquarian purposes, thus revealing more about the pre-Norman period in Wales, they provide insight into the attitudes towards the status of married women for the period under investigation as the most significant surviving compilations of the lawbooks were made for contemporary purposes in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> For a contextualised study see A. Harding, ‘Legislators, Lawyers and Law-Books’, in *Lawyers and Laymen*, (eds) T.M. Charles-Edwards, M.E. Owen and D.B. Walters (Cardiff, 1986), pp. 237-57.

<sup>96</sup> *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, ed. and trans. D. Jenkins (Llandysul, 1986), p. xi.

<sup>97</sup> D. Jenkins, ‘The Significance of the Law of Hywel’, *THSC* (1977), pp. 54-76; D.E. Thornton, ‘Hywel Dda (d. 949/50)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), < <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13968>>, accessed 11 Sept 2013.

<sup>98</sup> There are approximately 40 manuscripts of native Welsh law texts that exist, both in fragmented and complete forms, and although the manuscripts all differ in their presentation of the laws, they more or less share the same core contents, providing important insight into some of the legal and judicial characteristics of native Wales. *LTMW*, pp. xi, xv, xxi; Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 57-64; *Llyfr Iorwerth: A Critical Text of the Venedotian Code of Medieval Welsh Law Mainly from BM. Cotton MS Titus Dii*, ed. A.R. Wiliam (Cardiff, 1960), p. xxi-xxiii. For the most recent discussion of the origins of lawbooks see T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 267-73; P. Russell, ‘The Arrangement and Development of the Three Columns Tractate’, in T.M. Charles-Edwards and P. Russell (eds), *Tair Colofn Cyfraith: The Three Columns of Law in Medieval Wales: Homicide, Theft and Fire* (Cardiff, 2007), pp. 60-91. In 1841 Aneurin Owen classified these manuscripts based on their apparent derivations, which he believed represented the customary laws of three historic divisions of Wales, Gwynedd, Dyfed and Gwent: *Dull Gwynedd* (‘The Version of Gwynedd’ also known as the *Venedotian Code*); *Dull Dyfed* (‘The Version of Dyfed’, or the *Dimetian Code*); and *Dull Gwent* (‘The Version of Gwent’, or the *Gwentian Code*). The Latin redactions were given the simple title of *Leges Wallicae*. These groupings have been subsequently renamed (and are now referred to) based on their putative authors: Cyfnerth (*Gwentian*), Blegywryd (*Dimetian*) and Iorwerth (*Venedotian*).

<sup>99</sup> See H. Pryce, ‘The Context and Purpose of the Earliest Welsh Lawbooks’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 39 (Summer 2000), 39-63.

The lawbooks survive in both Latin and Welsh, which are distinct from each other. Of the Latin manuscripts, five are closely related to one another (accordingly named Latin A, B, C, D and E).<sup>100</sup> Latin A, B and C are all believed to be mid-thirteenth-century manuscripts, while Latin D has been dated between the mid- to late-thirteenth century. Latin E is likely the latest written version, dated to the fourteenth century.<sup>101</sup> The provenance of Latin A remains in question, though it is possible that it originates from southern Wales, similar to that of Latin D (south-west), whilst lawbooks B, C and E derive from North Wales.<sup>102</sup>

The Welsh law books include the Cyfnerth Redaction, which was probably a single lawbook made up of a ‘family of redactions’.<sup>103</sup> Although it contains the least developed core out of the main three Welsh lawbooks, is believed to be the earliest rendition.<sup>104</sup> It is known that redactions of *Llyfr Cyfnerth* existed in the thirteenth century and, moreover, the original lawbook is believed to be more accurately dated to the last quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>105</sup> Cyfnerth may have a southern provenance as the prologue and the laws refer to Deheubarth, which may imply a political hegemony with the Lord Rhys.<sup>106</sup> The Blegywryd Redaction is mostly a Welsh translation of Latin D and forms part of the Latin tradition of the Welsh law codes.<sup>107</sup> It exhibits religious influences and perhaps some English legal procedures.<sup>108</sup> Its origins have been linked to southwest Wales, namely Dyfed. Although the oldest extant copies are dated to the early fourteenth century, the original is believed to have been written in the

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<sup>100</sup> Only four are complete, Latin Redactions A, B, D and E. For a useful introduction providing a guide to most recent thinking of nature and inter-relationships of Latin versions as a whole see *Welsh Law in Medieval Anglesey: British Library Harleian MS 1796 (Latin C)*, ed. P. Russell (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>101</sup> Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>102</sup> *The Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws*, ed. H.D. Emanuel (Cardiff, 1967), pp. 2-12, 40-4, 48-9, 73-82, 172, 269; T.M. Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws* (Cardiff, 1989), p. 20; D. Huws, ‘*Leges Howelda at Canterbury*’, *NLWJ*, 19 (1975-6), pp. 341-2; Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 7, 23-6.

<sup>103</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, p. 20.

<sup>104</sup> *LTMW*, p. xxv.

<sup>105</sup> Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 5-6; Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, p. 20.

<sup>106</sup> *LTMW*, p. xxv; Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 18-19. Cyfnerth has been named as such due to references in some versions that the lawbook was assembled by Cyfnerth ap Morgenau. For discussions on Cyfnerth ap Morgenau see Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 5-6 and n. 15; Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 46-8. Also see H. Pryce, ‘The Prologues of the Welsh Lawbooks’, *BBCS*, 33 (1986), pp. 151-87.

<sup>107</sup> Latin D, itself, is partly based on Latin A and B. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, p. 7;

Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>108</sup> *LTMW*, p. xxv.

last quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>109</sup> By the middle to late thirteenth century, versions of Blegywryd and Latin D, which were drawn from the Cyfnerth Redaction, appeared and are thought of as being later developments of a more southern tradition.<sup>110</sup> The Iorwerth Redaction is dated to the mid- to late-thirteenth century and displays elements of a northern tradition as the four surviving manuscripts were compiled in Gwynedd. Although there are differences in the various texts, these are not as great as those found in Cyfnerth, which implies that the Iorwerth Redaction had a more condensed textual history than that of its southern predecessor.<sup>111</sup> The Iorwerth Redaction is derived from the Book of Iorwerth, or *Llyfr Iorwerth*.<sup>112</sup>

The core of the lawbooks are made up of what are known as tractates, in which numerous topics are covered and, in the main, portioned out into specific collections of material pertaining to a single subject.<sup>113</sup> Such principal tractates include the rules of the royal court, suretyship and *galanas* (homicide and bloodfeud). The lawbooks also comprise a tractate concerning the laws of women, *Cyfraith* (or *Cyfreithiau*) *y Gwragedd*, which is primarily concerned with the rules of marriage and the status of women in Welsh society based on their relationships to men. It is also within this tractate that the set of conventions concerning payments related to female sexuality and the legal perspective of the lifecycle of the wife are found, which is discussed in the following chapter.<sup>114</sup>

### ***Authorship***

In many societies in which the oral tradition is prevalent, authorship does not exist for most types of genres.<sup>115</sup> Save for the surviving court poetry and certain

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. xxv.

<sup>110</sup> It may have been the main lawbook used in south Wales in the later middle ages. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, p. 9; Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 21. Blegywryd is named after one of Hywel Dda's supposed clerics, whom the prologue attributes with helping the tenth-century ruler with his legal reform. Pryce, 'Prologues', pp. 162-5.

<sup>111</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, p. 20.

<sup>112</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. xxii, xv. This is named after an identified thirteenth-century jurist, Iorwerth ap Madog (*fl.* c.1240), whose authorship is attributed to the Test Book.

<sup>113</sup> D. Jenkins, 'The Lawbooks of Medieval Wales', in R. Eales and D. Sullivan (eds), *The Political Context of Law: Proceedings of the Seventh British Legal history Conference, Canterbury 1985* (London and Roncerverte, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 78-89.

<sup>115</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 55.

redactions of the Welsh laws, none of the sources discussed have a definitively recognised authorship. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the viewpoints from which the sources themselves were written. Comparable to medieval Ireland, most of the surviving manuscripts of the medieval Welsh literary culture that embodies the ideals, norms and perceptions of native Wales were produced by the religious establishment.<sup>116</sup> Before the twelfth century, key religious communities, *clasau*, were centres for learning that preserved various elements of Welsh culture, from scientific to liturgical tracts, exegetical to literary. Social, economic and political changes that occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, largely beginning in south Wales under the patronage of both Norman lords and native Welsh rulers, generated a new ecclesiastical structure that took charge of transmitting and preserving Welsh culture and tradition.<sup>117</sup> It is this bias that is advantageous to understanding gender attitudes of the past. In terms of this study, this is important when determining how far authorship of the written sources and the perceived audience had an effect on the dissemination of gender ideals and uxorial expectations.

Written texts were composed by a class of learned men made up of two specific, but interrelated groups who contributed to the conservation and distribution of native learning and tradition that featured both Christian and secular influences.<sup>118</sup> It is important to remember that the writers, clerics and learned members of secular society, including bards, lawyers and storytellers, were ‘not simply scribal automatons’.<sup>119</sup> Their roles required them to contribute to a culture of learning and conserve ideals often associated with their social (aristocratic) class and Christian beliefs. There was an established link between ecclesiastical influences and the moral standards that medieval societies prized. The successful, widespread infiltration of Christian mores into European culture was due to the Church adopting many of the values and ‘colours’ of the various societies it penetrated. Medieval Wales was no different. The Church was fundamental to the proliferation of the written word, certainly amongst the higher classes. In Wales it is evident that native written culture received ecclesiastical

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<sup>116</sup> Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 10-11; H. Pryce, ‘Lawbooks and Literacy in medieval Wales’, *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 29–67.

<sup>117</sup> Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>118</sup> Pryce, ‘Introduction’, in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 12.



support. R. R. Davies has contended that the assimilation of ecclesiastical and native values taken on by the Church in Wales was perhaps more pervasive than in other places, asserting that ‘rarely had a church so submerged itself into the local social landscape as in Wales’.<sup>120</sup> This submergence of ecclesiastical and native culture is observed in the normative Welsh sources.

How did this far-reaching Christian influence affect how women and marriage were portrayed in sources? Throughout Western Europe, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, gender constructs heavily influenced by Christian dogma and patristic ideals found in religious discourse and the genres of courtly love were used to define the status and reputation of women and men.<sup>121</sup> The sweeping contradictions in the ‘nature’ of women promoted by clerical and lay writers alike augmented the belief that female subjugation was natural to the power structure between the sexes. This principle was reinforced by the gendered dichotomisation of what were purported to be ‘natural’ characteristics for women, namely dependency, chastity and purity, in contrast to those of men, protection and virility.<sup>122</sup> Warrior-ruler societies like Wales endorsed these types of sexualised stereotypes by promoting specific traits as being masculine (aggression, intelligence, force and generosity) and feminine (virtue, docility, patience and charity). Such literary imagery was used to extol societal values and encourage social order. Further, the compartmentalisation of the sexes ensured that the reputation of individuals were dependent upon them remaining within the boundaries defined by their gender. The two main genres for native Wales that are exclusive in their Christian outlook and stereotypical ecclesiastical portrayal of married women are the narratives by Gerald of Wales and the Lives of Welsh Saints.

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<sup>120</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 175; Pryce, ‘Introduction’, pp. 2, 3, 5, 7.

<sup>121</sup> A. Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 10, 91; G. Duby, ‘The Courtly Model’, in C. Klapish-Zuber (ed.), *A History of Women in the West: Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 257.

<sup>122</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum has aptly summed up the basic differences and similarities by saying that ‘*Male* and *female* were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgment/mercy, and order/disorder’. C. Walker Bynum, “... And Woman His Humanity”: Female Imagery in the Religious Writings of the Later Middle Ages’, in C. Walker Bynum, S. Harrell and P. Richman (eds), *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston, 1986), p. 257.

### *The Lives of Saints*

Throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, hagiography, or the composition of saints' *Lives*, was a popular genre of literature that had a spiritually didactic purpose. The combination of histories with legends associated with saints was used to promote Christian ideals, saints being role models of behaviour for the spiritually deficient.<sup>123</sup> Like the *chansons* of courtly love, hagiography was designed to influence by providing examples of women and men who embodied virtues that were not unattainable.<sup>124</sup> Hagiographic works unveil many attitudes about women's place within the church and, as they are highly localised, within individual societies.<sup>125</sup>

The hagiographic literature of medieval Wales is a tradition for which a good number of *vitae* and Middle Welsh prose lives, or *bucheddau*, survive for male saints, such as David, Cadog, Illtud, Brychan and Padarn.<sup>126</sup> For native female saints the numbers are much fewer. The lack of female *vitae* may be due to traditions associated with feminine sanctity that were based more in oral than written form.<sup>127</sup> The earliest surviving female saint's *Life* is that of Gwenfrewi (St Winifred). Two Latin versions are dated to the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. One anonymous Latin version is positioned within a collection of saints' *Lives* that includes the *Life* of St. Wulfstan.<sup>128</sup> The provenance of this collection is believed to be Worcester.<sup>129</sup> The second Latin *Life* is attributed to Robert, prior of Shrewsbury.<sup>130</sup> It is from this version that a sixteenth-century Middle Welsh *buchedd* is closely related.<sup>131</sup> Gwenfrewi's

<sup>123</sup> J. Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500–1000* (Chicago, 1998), p. 17.

<sup>124</sup> Duby, 'The Courtly Model', p. 255.

<sup>125</sup> Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, pp. 17-18, 22, 25.

<sup>126</sup> See Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality*, pp. 67-70. Rhygyfarch, *The Life of St. David*, ed. and trans. R. Sharpe and J. Reuben Davies, in J. Wyn Evans and J.W. Wooding (eds), *St David of Wales* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 107-55; *Vitae Sanctorum, Britanniae et Genealogiae*, ed. and trans. A.W. Wade-Evans (Cardiff, 1944), p. ix; K. Hughes, 'British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A. XIV (*Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*): its Purpose and Provenance', in K. Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources*, ed. D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 53-66.

<sup>127</sup> Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>128</sup> British Library, Cottonian MS A. v.

<sup>129</sup> The *Life* of Gwenfrewi is dedicated an abbot of Worcester, Guarin. *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>130</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 114.

<sup>131</sup> Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality*, pp. 72-6. The legend of Gwenfrewi's martyrdom is also found in the *Life* of Beuno, or the fourteenth-century Middle Welsh *Buchedd Beuno*.

story of a woman who was beheaded by a local prince because she scorned his unwanted sexual advances and who was miraculously healed by St. Beuno, was so fashionable that it was translated into English. It is found in popular hagiographical collections like versions of the *South English Legendary* (late-thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) and Caxton's the *Golden Legend* (1483).<sup>132</sup>

The only other complete female saint's *Life* to survive is that of St. Melangell. Melangell was an Irish princess who fled an arranged marriage and devoted herself to God in quiet prayer in the Welsh countryside. There are varying viewpoints on when the *Life* of Melangell is believed to have been composed, ranging from the late-fourteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth.<sup>133</sup> The most recent argument suggests that the composition although most likely written no earlier than the late-fifteenth century, was drawn from earlier oral folklore tradition and other written sources.<sup>134</sup> The story of St. Melangell is associated with Powys and there are five surviving copies of her Latin *Life*, *Historia Divae Monacellae* — three complete and two incomplete copies.<sup>135</sup>

Although the attributes often associated with female saints are also qualities portrayed as being compatible and harmonious with being a mother and wife,<sup>136</sup> as this project is concerned with married women, it is the Lives of the male saints, focusing on texts from the late-eleventh to thirteenth centuries that give insight into perceptions of married women. In the main, the Welsh Lives of saints were put down in written form between the late-eleventh and thirteenth

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> See C.A.R. Radford and W.J. Hemp, 'Pennant Melangell: The Church and the Shrine', *Arch. Camb.*, 108 (1959), pp. 81-113.

<sup>134</sup> 'A New Edition of the *Historia Divae Monacellae*', ed. Huw Pryce, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 82 (1994), pp. 28-30.

<sup>135</sup> They are found in Cardiff MS 3.11, p. 1 (late-sixteenth century); British Library, Harley MS 2059, fo. 111 (late sixteenth, early-seventeenth centuries); NWL, MS 3108B, fos. 76-77 (late-seventeenth century); NLW, MS 1506C, part iii, pp. 8-41 (c. 1700); and NLW, MS 1641B i, pp. 63-8 (early-nineteenth century). Other popular female saints *Lives* that are found in Welsh, believed to be thirteenth-century redactions, are those of Katherine, Margaret, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary of Egypt. J. Cartwright, 'The Harlot and the Hostess: A Preliminary Study of the Middle Welsh *Lives* of Mary Magdalene and Her Sister Martha', in J. Cartwright (ed.), *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults* (Cardiff, 2003), p. 74.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality*, p. 176.

centuries<sup>137</sup> and the principal collection is extant in a manuscript containing them associated with Brecon Priory in south Wales.<sup>138</sup>

The (presumably male) authors of most hagiographies promote a religious viewpoint regarding gender and attitudes towards married women. Nonetheless, to some extent, the function of hagiographical works falls between the genres of both religious and secular writings.<sup>139</sup> Hagiographers were not historians and biographers *per se*, but their writings are similar to the panegyrics found in eulogistic poetry. The similarities with other types of literature also relate to the idea that the authors praised the values of an assumed audience and social class they had in mind whilst composing his work.<sup>140</sup> The portrayal of women and men in the Lives of Saints, therefore, not only sheds light on the mind-set of the hagiographers, but on the gender stereotypes prevalent in their own worlds.<sup>141</sup> The hagiographer was moved to emphasise the individual characteristics that made each saint special and to portray individuals in terms that would be understood by his contemporary audience.<sup>142</sup> Though *vitae* generally served to connect with an audience of all social classes, earlier *Lives* were primarily written in Latin, thereby narrowing the audience to those who had a level of proficiency and education in Latin.<sup>143</sup> As such, many *Lives* have a bias that promotes the values of a socially elite audience, regardless of the high-born saints whose humble deeds and actions would allow them to identify with the lesser classes of audience members.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Gerald of Wales***

Gerald of Wales was born about 1146/7, the youngest son of a Norman lord, William de Barri and his wife, Angharad, who was of Cambro-Norman descent.

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<sup>137</sup> See Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>138</sup> Rhygyfarch, *The Life of St. David*, pp. 107-55; *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, p. ix; Hughes, 'British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A. XIV', pp. 53-66.

<sup>139</sup> An example of the difference between the ecclesiastical outlook of Lives and that of Gerald of Wales, is found in his rewriting of the Life of St David compared with Rhygyfarch's earlier text. See R. Bartlett, 'Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales', *Speculum*, 58/3 (July, 1983).

<sup>140</sup> K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London, 1972), p. 219.

<sup>141</sup> Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, p. 52.

<sup>142</sup> O. Davies, *Celtic Christianity in Early Medieval Wales: The Origins of the Welsh Spiritual Tradition* (Cardiff, 1996), p.12.

<sup>143</sup> Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, pp. 24-5; Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, p. 26.

Angharad was the daughter of the princess Nest of Deheubarth and her husband Gerald of Windsor. Through his maternal side, Gerald was connected to many Welsh and Marcher families, including the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth who was his mother's cousin. After ecclesiastical training in Paris, he acted as an English royal clerk for many years and early on in his vocation became archdeacon of Brecon. He spent much of his career in a struggle to obtain the bishop's seat and autonomy of St David's from the supremacy of Canterbury.<sup>145</sup> In 1203 Gerald retired from active politics and spent the remainder of his life focusing on his writings and reflecting upon what he saw as a disappointing career. He died c.1223.<sup>146</sup>

It is his literary reflections on his travels through Wales in the late-twelfth century for which Gerald is best remembered. In 1188, at the height of his career, he joined the archbishop of Canterbury, Baldwin (c. 1125–1190), on a campaign through Wales to find recruits for the Third Crusade. Similar to his earlier ethnographic studies of Ireland, *Topographia Hiberniae* (*Topography of Ireland*, c. 1187) and *Expugnatio Hibernica* (*Conquest of Ireland*, 1189),<sup>147</sup> it is Gerald's musings over the Welsh people and their culture during this expedition that culminated in two widely celebrated works on native Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae* (*The Journey through Wales*, 1191) and *Descriptio Cambriae* (*Description of Wales*, 1194).<sup>148</sup>

For this study, these surveys of Wales are important for two reasons. First, although they represent Gerald's own attitude towards the native Welsh and their customs, they are written in a way that highlights the eccentricities and differences of the Welsh people for his assumed (royal and clerical) Anglo-Norman audience.<sup>149</sup> Though he did not consider himself a Welshman, having

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<sup>145</sup> This is documented in *De Jure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae* (*Rights and Privileges of the Church of St David's*, c. 1218) and his own autobiography, *De Rebus a Se Gestis* (1208–1216). Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, eds. J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner, 8 vols (Rolls Series, 1861–91), i and iii. An English translation of many of Gerald's works is found in T. Wright, *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London, 1905). *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, (ed. and trans.) H.E. Butler (Woodbridge, 2005).

<sup>146</sup> R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 2006); B.F. Roberts, *Gerald of Wales* (Cardiff, 1982).

<sup>147</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Topography of Ireland*, trans. T. Forster, revised and ed. by T. Wright (Cambridge, Ontario, 2000); *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978).

<sup>148</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, vi; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. L. Thorpe (London, 1978; repr. 1988).

<sup>149</sup> Roberts, *Gerald of Wales*, p. 83.

been born and raised in Wales, Gerald had intimate knowledge of how Welsh society operated.<sup>150</sup> These works are especially important to scholars of Welsh history as his concerns with pastoral and moral issues reveal a social awareness of the material, cultural and historical realities of his time which is unrivalled.<sup>151</sup> Robert Bartlett has contended that Gerald did not allow his moralistic tendencies to override his awareness and appreciation of the social and physical factors that dictate human behaviour.<sup>152</sup> This is perhaps most true of *Descriptio Kambriae*. In contrast, as a reforming clergyman, his sense of ‘moral civilising superiority’ is instantly recognizable in *Itinerarium Kambriae*,<sup>153</sup> especially as far as married women are concerned.

This is the second reason why Gerald’s works on Wales are important to this research. In the ways that married women are portrayed in *Itinerarium Kambriae*, Gerald, the cleric, does not desist from expressing his opinions about the nature of womankind generally.<sup>154</sup> His treatment of married women in particular is especially acerbic. In his quest for clerical power, Gerald sought to reform the Welsh church, seeking to purge it from distinctive Welsh customs he regarded as ignominious. Issues of clerical continence and sexual laxity, especially in the form of concubinage, were at the heart of Gerald’s life-long campaign, which was one that mirrored the changes in theological developments across Europe in the twelfth century.<sup>155</sup> While the Gregorian reforms imposed clerical celibacy, marriage amongst the clergy was one of a handful of traditions in medieval Wales that continued to flout major ecclesiastical changes. It was Gerald’s desire to rid the Welsh clergy of their marital practices and bring them more in line with the Roman practice of celibacy.<sup>156</sup> ‘This sexual police work was a specific symptom of Gerald’s wider obsession with regularizing the Welsh

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<sup>150</sup> See H. Pryce, ‘A Cross-Border Career: Giraldus Cambrensis between Wales and England’, in R. Schneider (ed.), *Grenzgänger*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Saarländische Landesgeschichte und Volksforschung, 33 (Saarbrücken, 1998), 45-60.

<sup>151</sup> Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 153.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 81, 84.

<sup>154</sup> *Gir. Camb., Op.*, vi, pp. 30, 70; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 90. See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 49-82.

<sup>155</sup> Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 30, 32-4.

church'<sup>157</sup> and ridding the Welsh of one of many of their contentious customs.<sup>158</sup> The changes in attitudes towards spiritual and sexual integrity also meant a more fundamental shift in the ways women generally were depicted in theological literature. The dubious salvation of women subsequently occurred after the introduction and imposition of clerical celibacy<sup>159</sup> and Gerald's works reveal the misogynistic trends fashioned by Gregorian propaganda.<sup>160</sup>

Gerald believed that there was a definitive link between the ideal, pious Christian life, a well-ordered society and the absence of women.<sup>161</sup> The only way for society to progress was to regulate sexuality and remove womanly influences from the male domain. The pains of marriage, or *molestia nuptiarum*, were popular literary themes amongst many religious men whose polemics often represent women unfavourably; portraying them as 'contentious, prideful, demanding, complaining and foolish ... uncontrollable, unstable and insatiable'.<sup>162</sup> Gerald's overall treatment of women in *Itinerarium Cambriae* especially follows much in the same footsteps portraying wives as the usurpers of social order and control. Although he juxtaposes commonplace inconsistencies by playing with medieval attitudes towards women as Eve and Mary and in many ways vacillates between the popular dichotomies of attraction and repulsion,<sup>163</sup> there are more anecdotes of shameful wives, than there are virtuous women in general.

Although Gerald's own personal agenda influences modern interpretations of his writings and affects deciphering the accuracy of representation of Welsh society and culture, his writings on married women in *Itinerarium Cambriae*, in particular active and independent wives highlight his clerical beliefs, viewing women as a source of constant anxiety, social disorder

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<sup>157</sup> J.J. Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales', in J.J. Cohen (ed.), *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 91. Also see Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 176-8.

<sup>158</sup> Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands', p. 91.

<sup>159</sup> N. Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100-1300* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 14.

<sup>160</sup> T. O'Loughlin, 'Giraldus Cambrensis and the Sexual Agenda of the Twelfth-century Reformers', *The Journal of Welsh Religious History*, 8 (2000), p. 15.

<sup>161</sup> O'Loughlin, 'Giraldus Cambrensis and the Sexual Agenda', pp. 13, 15.

<sup>162</sup> R.H. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago, 1991), p. 14; cf. Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 30; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 90.

<sup>163</sup> Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands', p. 93; cf. Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, pp. 23-5, 28-30, 31-3, 57-61, 75-7, 79-80, 112-13, 131-2.

and dissatisfaction.<sup>164</sup> In this light, Gerald's writings are typical of the wider clerical view of married women. More importantly, as will be seen, Gerald provides examples of uxorial agency not found any other native Welsh source. Thus, in many ways, in both *Itinerarium Kambriae* and *Descriptio Kambriae* Gerald reveals some of the norms and perceptions reflective of gender expectations and roles in native Wales in the late-twelfth century. This helps illuminate some of the expectations married women were faced with, arguably as a result of native Welsh attitudes and an acculturation of wider European gender ideals.

### ***Chronicles***

The Welsh chronicles are another type of source that were conserved and transmitted through religious houses, but they also provide a secular perspective.<sup>165</sup> The commemoration and narration of the specific events found in the chronicles, and key characters, provide insight into the political issues and gendered ideals germane to the aristocratic classes of native Wales.<sup>166</sup> The earliest chronicles are known generically as *Annales Cambriae*, extant in three texts (A, B and C), one surviving in a manuscript of c.1100, the other two in late thirteenth-century manuscripts.<sup>167</sup> The provenance of *Annales Cambriae* A and C has been shown to be the ecclesiastical centre of St David's.<sup>168</sup> The provenance of the B-text is also associated with St David's up to 1202.<sup>169</sup> The text known as *Cronica de Wallia* appears to be related to *Annales Cambriae*<sup>170</sup> and is believed to have been composed around 1277, probably at Whitland abbey

<sup>164</sup> Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 14. See Chapter 2, pp. 120-22.

<sup>165</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 200-01.

<sup>166</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 94-112.

<sup>167</sup> These are BL, MS. Harley 3859 (c. 1100); BL, MS. Cotton Cleopatra A.i and TNA, MS. E 164/1 (the annals found on the flyleaves of the Breviate Domesday Book), both dated to the late-thirteenth century. *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. Williams ab Ithel (Rolls Series, London, 1860). The A text ends in 954, whereas both texts B and C end in the late thirteenth century.

<sup>168</sup> Known as the B- and C-texts. TNA, MS. E 164/1 and BL, MS. Cotton Cleopatra A.i.

<sup>169</sup> Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 74-75; O. Wyn Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales', unpublished PhD thesis (Bangor University, 2014), pp. 192-4.

<sup>170</sup> Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 77. Kathleen Hughes has worked out how the *Annales Cambriae* and *Cronica de Wallia* were developed and stresses the importance of tracking down the sources that the Welsh Latin annals are based on in order to fully understand and interpret events. Ead., *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 86-100.



(using a Strata Florida text).<sup>171</sup> It is, in fact, *Cronica de Wallia* covering the years 1190–1266, which is viewed as the ‘definitive chronicle composed in the last years’ of an independent Wales.<sup>172</sup> This has to do with its explicit Welsh content and context.<sup>173</sup>

Two chronicles that are likely representative of native Wales are written in the Welsh vernacular, *Brut y Tywysogion* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. The earliest versions of both likely originated at the houses of Valle Crucis and Strata Florida due to the number of localised references, which point to this.<sup>174</sup> *Brut y Tywysogion* or ‘the Chronicle of the Princes’ is not a single text, but a generic term for related chronicles in Welsh, likely based on a putative lost Latin version, that cover the seventh century to the year 1332. The likely lost Latin chronicle was composed at Strata Florida, but the surviving Welsh versions, *Brut y Tywysogion*, were composed at various Welsh Cistercian houses, including Valle Crucis. The two main manuscripts for these are Peniarth MS. 20, dated later half of the fourteenth century and the Red Book of Hergest.<sup>175</sup> The Peniarth 20 version originally finished in 1282, with a later continuation added in the early fourteenth century. The Red Book of Hergest version also ends in 1282.

There are two important textual versions of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, or ‘The Kings of the Saxons’, which are related to *Brut y Tywysogion*. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* has a substantial continuation of history up to 1461, though mainly based on English sources. Two main versions survive and cover the years 683 to 1197 and 1461 respectively. The first manuscript is dated to the early fourteenth century, and it covers the years 683 to 1197.<sup>176</sup> The second, found in the Black

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<sup>171</sup> Exeter Cathedral Library, MS. 3514 or *Cronica de Wallia* (thirteenth century); ‘*Cronica de Wallia* and Other Documents from Exeter Cathedral Library MS. 3514’, ed. T. Jones, *BBCS*, 12 (1946), pp. 27–44. Numerous years are missing. *CW*, p. 28. Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 67–8. See J. Crick, ‘The Power and the Glory: Conquest and Cosmology in Edwardian Wales (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514)’, in O. D. Rold and E. Treharne (eds), *Textual Cultures: Cultural Texts* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 21–42.

<sup>172</sup> J. Beverley Smith, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales: The Composition of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*’, *Studia Celtica*, XLII (2008), 57–8; Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 77, 79, 80, 84–5.

<sup>173</sup> It primarily focuses on the kingdom and dynasty of Dinefwr, namely the Lord Rhys and his descendants. J. Beverley Smith, ‘The *Cronica de Wallia* and the Dynasty of Dinefwr: A Textual and Historical Study’, *BBCS*, 20 (1962), 261–82.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* 67–8; Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p. 12.

<sup>175</sup> *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. xiii, xxxvi, xxxvii; J.E. Lloyd, ‘The Welsh Chronicles’, The Sir John Rhys Memorial Inaugural Lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 14 (1928), p. 375.

<sup>176</sup> BM Cotton MS. Cleopatra B v.

Book of Basingwerk or *Llyfr Du Basing*,<sup>177</sup> is dated to the later fifteenth century and covers the years 683 to 1461.<sup>178</sup>

One of the most defining features of all the Welsh chronicles is the fact that the majority of them, in their extant form, were all likely written soon after the Welsh conquest in 1282. There was a single Latin chronicle composed at Strata Florida<sup>179</sup> that drew on texts similar to *Annales Cambriae* and *Cronica de Wallia*, of which the *Brutiau* are believed to be Welsh translations. The key issue of debate is how far Welsh translators expanded and amended the underlying Latin text, and how far they were faithful to it. Debates also concern how far the Latin text stuck to earlier Welsh-Latin annalistic sources.<sup>180</sup> David Stephenson and Owain Wyn Jones persuasively argue for minimal editorial amendments at both stages, preserving ‘British’ terminology for the period down to the mid-twelfth century, rather than modernizing to ‘Welsh’.<sup>181</sup> In the context of the debate concerning the composition of the Welsh chronicles, this thesis shows that the consistency in which women are identified throughout the different versions highlights a long-term continuity in gendered perceptions towards the status of married women, irrespective of the time the sources were composed.

It is important to think about the literary nature and reliability of these sources, the accuracy of events, the intended readership and the role gender plays in the creation of the narratives. The goal for most chroniclers was a stylised

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<sup>177</sup> NLW, MS 7006.

<sup>178</sup> Both the *Brut y Tywysogion* and *Brenhinedd Saesson* were likely intended to be a continuation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Smith, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales’, p. 56. *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, like *Brut y Tywysogion*, picks up from where *Brut y Brenhinedd* (*The History of the Kings*), the Welsh version of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ends. Linguistic evidence strongly indicates that both the Welsh version of Geoffrey’s *Historia* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* were translated into Welsh by the same Galfridian scribe. *BS*, pp. xi-xii. See Jones, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales’, pp. 9-17, 51-70.

<sup>179</sup> Continued to (early) 1282.

<sup>180</sup> K.L. Maund, ‘Owain ap Cadwgan: A Rebel Revisited’, *Haskins Society Journal*, 13 (2004 for 1999), pp. 65-74; Smith, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales’; D. Stephenson, ‘The Chronicler of Cwm-hir Abbey, 1257–63: The Construction of a Welsh Chronicle’, in (eds) R.A. Griffiths and P.R. Schofield, *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 29-45; id., ‘The “Resurgence” of Powys in the Late Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries’, in C.P. Lewis (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 182-95; id., ‘Welsh Chronicles’ Accounts of the Mid-Twelfth Century’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 56 (Winter, 2008), pp. 45-58.

<sup>181</sup> Jones, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Wales’ pp. 184-286; Stephenson, ‘Welsh Chronicles’ Accounts’.

attempt to provide correct chronologies, genealogies, names, dates and places.<sup>182</sup> For this reason, the chronicles appear in a linear, chronological format. Events are largely organised to fit within a fixed format that relates to the wider cultural and social worlds in which the authors lived and worked. For monastic chroniclers the expected audience was made up of their peers, namely fellow monks and canons. Secular clerks or lay authors generally wrote for an audience made up of friends, family, colleagues or certain households and administrative offices under whose influence and patronage they resided.<sup>183</sup> The assumed readership for secular clerks and lay authors was likely that of princely and noble courts, who are often the focal points of the stories themselves.<sup>184</sup> To an extent, all writers chose events and familiar characters to promote certain behavioural and cultural ideals.<sup>185</sup> The authors of the Welsh chronicles were most likely swayed by their political alliances, personal loyalties to patrons and personal beliefs that directly affected the type of information they documented concerning events and individuals.<sup>186</sup>

Descriptions of women in the native Welsh chronicles are scant and at first glance, their roles appear to be cursory. Upon further scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that the recording of women in these types of sources have a purpose. They are largely represented through their connections with men and as symbols of masculine power as is evidenced by the wide spread use of genealogical ties that underline many of the entries.<sup>187</sup> By looking at how individual women are recorded and comparing them as groups, patterns start to

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<sup>182</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>183</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. xxi.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 2-3. This is further exemplified in the fact that all the major historical texts were, by the fourteenth century, translated into the Welsh vernacular. Although the exact purpose behind the production of these texts from Latin to Welsh is not entirely clear, it is apparent that the intended audience is one of the deciding factors in their reception. Many medieval historical sources were translated from Latin into the vernacular in an attempt to make them more widely available to a lay audience. Roberts, 'Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition', pp. 132, 141.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Noteworthy obits highlighting the proximity and intimacy of the chronicles' author(s) at Strata Florida with Lord Rhys' family who were buried there. Naturally, there was a long-term invested interest in the monasteries that produced the Welsh chronicles to be kind to the prince's family as a whole as they were patrons to the religious houses of Strata Florida and Valle Crucis. It was politic for generations of monks to know who their benefactors were. Extant genealogies, as they appear in these sources, also show the direct relations and influences between members of the aristocratic and hereditary clergy who worked in monasteries and their concerns with their secular, familial connections. See Thornton, 'Orality, Literacy and Genealogy', p. 83.

<sup>187</sup> See Chapter 2, *Lifecycles*.

appear. It quickly becomes apparent that the most important determinant factor in defining women was not by naming them, but by identifying them through their natal relations, i.e. as daughters, sisters, mothers, mothers, nieces and kinswomen. Furthermore, in every context, regardless of the lifecycle label used to identify individual women, their marital status and connections are implicit.

### *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*

The last native Welsh source stands alone in its unique secular perspective and authorship, the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan, the twelfth-century ruler of Gwynedd. The original version of *The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* was most likely written soon after Gruffudd's death in 1137. It was almost certainly commissioned during the reign of Gruffudd's son and successor, Owain Gwynedd, and the dates of composition have been narrowed down between the years 1137 and 1171; the most likely period in which it was written is 1137 × 1148.<sup>188</sup> The earliest, yet fragmentary, surviving example is a vernacular medieval Welsh version (*Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan*) dated to the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>189</sup> However, it has been long understood that the Welsh text is based on a considerably earlier though lost Latin version (*Vita Griffini Filii Conani*). The earliest surviving Latin text is dated 1575 × 1585.<sup>190</sup> Although heavily annotated and riddled with corrections, Paul Russell has recently reconstructed a version of what is believed to be the twelfth-century Latin text from this later copy. He argues that the underlying text of the later, extant version is actually representative of the lost Latin original.

*Vita Griffini filii Conani*, or *The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, is a melding of factual information and romantic panegyric that promotes the ethos of the warrior ruler<sup>191</sup> and draws attention to the gendered ideals of the Welsh nobility. Gruffudd's biographer was clearly well versed in the composition of biographies

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<sup>188</sup> The proposed dates are related to a period just after Gruffudd's death in which Gwynedd's influence over the diocese of St David's, and the pontificate of Bernard (d. 1148), was central. *Vita Griffini*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>189</sup> NLW, Peniarth MS 17 is the oldest extant version, predating other versions by three hundred years. The earliest surviving complete version is from the sixteenth century (NLW, Peniarth MS 267), a time when there was a renewed interest in the life of Gruffudd and which also led to the creation of Latin texts and later versions that appear to be more closely related to original material. *Vita Griffini*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>190</sup> NLW, Peniarth 434.

<sup>191</sup> *The History of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. and trans. A. Jones (Manchester, 1910), p. 1; *HW*, ii, p. 379.

as is evidenced by allusions to and parallels with classical and biblical figures. This stylistic manipulation of the prose explicitly diminishes the claims and triumphs of Gruffudd's adversaries.<sup>192</sup> The roles and profiles of his leading contemporaries are either reduced in value or their actions are attributed to Gruffudd himself. As for his rivals, they are 'deliberately depicted ... in the worst light possible'.<sup>193</sup> In turn, Gruffudd's own failings and weaknesses are smoothed over or ignored.<sup>194</sup>

Importantly for this research, the author provides insight into the attitudes and perceptions of a native Welsh court, including the importance of the ruler's wife as queen.<sup>195</sup> Similar to the chronicles, the few women that appear in *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* seem to be minor in importance to the elementary purpose of the work. The ways that they are depicted, as the feminine personification of Gruffudd's powers and authority as a warrior ruler, serve to underline the legitimacy of his rule. As the basic descriptions of the women in the *Life* are largely consistent with the gendered imagery found in the other literary sources considered in this thesis, their collective value can often be overlooked. However, the married women who appear in this biography are ascribed with considerable levels of agency and influence, which may offer clues as to the perceived uxorial status and expectations of the noble Welsh classes, and more explicitly, the *llysoedd*, providing insight to the uxorial agency of the queen.<sup>196</sup>

### ***Gendered Perceptions***

As the production of the material discussed was primarily designed for a specific noble and elite audience, written by members from the same social classes, it is

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<sup>192</sup> *Vita Griffini*, p. 48; K.L. Maund, "'Gruffudd, Grandson of Iago': *Historia Gruffudd Vab Kenan* and the Construction of Legitimacy', in K. L. Maund (ed.), *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 110.

<sup>193</sup> N.A. Jones, '*Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan*: The First Audience', *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography*, p. 155.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 155. K.L. Maund has argued that the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* acted as a manifesto to establish the authority of the reign of the kings of Gwynedd, namely Gruffudd and his progeny, and that issues of identity work within the text to verify legitimacy. However, Maund's arguments for original composition in order to legitimate position of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth need to be revised in light of Russell's reconstruction of the twelfth-century text. The Welsh translation might have been stimulated by the circumstances of Llywelyn's rise, but the *Life* originated in a mid-twelfth-century context. Maund, "'Gruffudd, Grandson of Iago'".

<sup>195</sup> Discussed in depth in Chapter 4. Also see Johns, 'Beauty and the Feast' and ead., *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 216-18.

<sup>196</sup> See Chapter 4 on the ideals of queenship.

important to think about how their values concerning gender and attitudes towards women were conveyed and how these ideals were likely received by a female audience. Increasingly, women and especially those of the higher classes, were subject to pressures of conformity concerning the idealisation of the female sex, specifically the virtues attributed to virginity, chastity and femininity. These traits are the nucleus of the iconography concerning female Welsh saints and the women associated with male Welsh saints, but are also found in the tales of the *Mabinogion*, *TYP*, the poetry of the *Gogynfeirdd*, the laws of Hywel Dda, the chronicles, *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* and the works of Gerald.

What most, if not all, of the native Welsh sources have in common is a didactic purpose, whether clerical or secular. They offer insights into prescriptions of behaviour and expectations based on the oral tradition, but also those during the time they were written. In many ways, traditions are used by societies to establish and maintain ideals of how the individual society should operate and how women and men should behave. The written tradition of medieval Wales represents the continuities in native oral tradition. The conservative nature of the sources concerning the heroic ideal and the status and position of women based on their relationships to men may, in part, be a by-product of the standards promoted by the *cyfarwydd* school of learning. The conservatism also must surely be a product of contemporary attitudes preserved by the writers themselves, as custodians of native tradition and custom; some of whom may have been anxious to defend fundamental ideals, including gender, in the wake of the changes during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Similar to the literati in early medieval Ireland, the professional writers of medieval Wales presumed the dominance of their small, but powerful social groups.<sup>197</sup> These learned men — there is little to no evidence to suggest that women were provided with similar means to education, literacy or employment<sup>198</sup> — were aware of their influential positions and used their writings to communicate values and ideals they believed their societies and

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Bitel, *Land of Women*, p.16.

<sup>198</sup> As is discussed in Chapter 2, there are references to ‘wise’ women, which seems to have been a particular idealised trait associated with the uxorial lifecycle. Also see Lloyd-Morgan’s ‘More Written about than Writing?’ for a discussion on women and written culture in later medieval Wales.

classes should embrace.<sup>199</sup> Because very little is known about women in general in native Welsh society, caution needs to be taken when identifying and comparing representations and roles that are portrayed. Traditions can be, and have been, used as a means of preserving control over society and as a justification for the existence of certain conditions.<sup>200</sup> Attitudes towards gender are most certainly included. Often the way characters are represented in sources is distorted because of the traditional preservation of ideals, expectations, norms and perceptions. Characters tend to function as models of prescribed behaviour for people of a certain status, occupation or sex.<sup>201</sup>

‘Authorial’ or ‘scribal’ prejudice, however, does not preclude an exploration of standard patterns that may reveal contemporary perceptions and expectations, nor does it prevent us from thinking about how to approach such sources responsible for the dissemination of gendered expectations and stereotypes.<sup>202</sup> Literature was an instrument that has been used by societies to re-evaluate basic institutions and social structures.<sup>203</sup> Although many of the Welsh sources likely underwent numerous changes through oral transmission and one of their main functions was to provide entertainment, their instructive purpose remains. In many cultures around the world, myths, tales and poetry are designed to instruct the audience about contemporary culture and society as they deal largely with the cultural traits, ideals and expectations of the present. Some of these features may become distorted, rationalised and idealised as a means of both satisfying the expectations of the listeners and for moral and didactic purposes.<sup>204</sup>

Despite problems concerning the dating of the written sources (which reflect both pre-and post-Conquest attitudes) and their connection to the oral tradition that characterised native Welsh culture, the transmission of texts in both written and oral forms led to the diffusion of widespread gender ideals and expectations that reflect the basic norms and perceptions of Welsh society.

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<sup>199</sup> Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 12.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.103.

<sup>201</sup> Although this does not seem to be the sole means of preserving tradition. Cf. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 106.

<sup>202</sup> M. Innes, ‘Introduction: Using the Past, Interpreting the Present, Influencing the Future’, in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 11.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 157-60.

Tales, poetry, laws, hagiography, narratives and chronicles alike often provide a lifelike setting in which various accounts take place. The value of this shared setting provides evidence of beliefs, trends and attitudes.<sup>205</sup> Thus, in many ways, such sources are seen as being ‘aimed at recording history’ and the history of beliefs are transmitted with care.<sup>206</sup>

Irrespective of how far the sources used for this thesis preserve or reflect earlier medieval norms, many do reflect attitudes to gender current at the time the texts were composed. In this way, the sources can be used as legitimate evidence for uncovering mentalities towards married women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They offer a unique insight into the social and cultural values of Wales during the Age of Princes, providing unparalleled examples of native attitudes to gender, marriage and the position of married women in society. Native norms and perceptions will be discussed throughout the rest of the thesis, as will just how far stereotypes and attitudes shed light on external influences. The assimilation of foreign influences into Welsh literary culture is known to have occurred before the eleventh century, which can be seen in early Welsh poetry and religious texts.<sup>207</sup> In the face of exigent change and an influx of outside influences, Wales was a country that maintained a hold over some of its own culturally identifying traditions, many of which had to do with kinship connections highlighted through genealogy, and attitudes towards honour and shame. These elements appear throughout the normative sources and are widely linked to the multiple images of women portrayed as symbols of men’s power seen all types of literature. The wife, especially, faces a dualistic representation as both the subordinate and the personification of her husband’s (and often, as a woman, her father’s) power, and that of the wise council woman and emissary — often assuming the role of key player in the strengthening of political and kinship bonds.

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<sup>205</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 32.

<sup>206</sup> See Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 154, 157.

<sup>207</sup> See Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Crossing the Borders’, p. 161. M. SurrIDGE, ‘Romance Linguistic Influence on Middle Walsh’, *Studia Celtica*, 1 (1966), 63-92; L.B. Smith, ‘Yr Iaith Gymraeg syn 1536’, in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *Y Gymraeg yn ei disgleirdeb* (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 15-44.



## **GENEALOGY**

Simply because the appearances of women in sources are largely from the masculine perspective, we should not assume they did not participate in the transmission of ideals. Women's literature was quite often an oral tradition in many cultures and Wales was no exception.<sup>208</sup> The preservation of genealogical information from native Wales is integral to understanding Welsh culture and is a genre that likely involved the participation of women.<sup>209</sup> The predominant texts composed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are: *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, *Vita Griffini Filli Conani*, *Brut y Tywysogion*, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and tales of the *Mabinogion*.<sup>210</sup>

Genealogies are complex sources based on a combination of 'biological intervals' that are used to determine the origins of a family and the social justification of kinship connections. These are often used to validate dynastic patterns of succession and power, legitimising sovereign rule for a particular dynasty, which, in turn, affected issues of inheritance and proprietorship.<sup>211</sup> In this light, they legitimised forms of government by presenting specific rulers as the rightful holders of office.<sup>212</sup> In a wider Celtic context, records of memory and histories of lineage are important to societies that had no form of centralised government.<sup>213</sup> Genealogical tracts were used to manage personal relations, social interactions and political interests, across borders.<sup>214</sup> It is believed that many of the Welsh genealogies composed before the end of the thirteenth century may represent only a small percentage of what was passed on through

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<sup>208</sup> Lloyd-Morgan, 'More Written About than Writing?', p. 163.

<sup>209</sup> Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 454. Cf. discussions on women and the transmission of memory in later medieval England see B. Kane, 'Custom, Memory and Knowledge in the Late Medieval English Church Courts', in R. Hayes and W.J. Sheils (eds.), *Clergy, Church and Society in England and Wales, c.1200–1800* (York, 2013), pp. 61-81; ead., 'Memory and Gender in the Late Medieval Church Courts of York', unpublished DPhil Thesis (York, 2008); ead., 'Social Representations of Memory and Gender in Later Medieval England', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, 46/4 (2012), 544-558.

<sup>210</sup> *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. P. C. Bartrum (Cardiff, 1966), p. vii-viii. Older Welsh genealogies are found in British Library, Harleian MS. 3859 contains a set of appendices that includes 'Welsh Genealogies' not found in any other manuscript. Ibid. 9-13.

<sup>211</sup> N.M.W. Powell, 'Genealogical Narratives and Kingship in Medieval Wales', in R.L. Radulescu and E.D. Kennedy (eds), *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Late-Medieval Britain and France* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 175-204; Thornton, 'Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies', pp. 23-40.

<sup>212</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 101-02.

<sup>213</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 156.

<sup>214</sup> Powell, 'Genealogical Narratives and Kingship', pp. 176, 191-2; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 57; Thornton, 'Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies', p. 24.

memory. Recorded genealogies of Welsh dynasts found in historical narratives and chronicles may pertain to ‘extraordinary political circumstances’ and are useful in understanding the nature of social interaction between rulers and kin as they offer more reliability in dates and chronological events. This often helped confirm legitimate authority; pedigrees being frequently updated, even manipulated, to promote specific interests and the development of new relationships.<sup>215</sup>

The importance of genealogy in native Welsh culture is recorded by Gerald of Wales who refers to ‘bardi Kambrenses, et cantores, seu recitatores’, noting these preserved genealogies partly in their ancient books and partly in their memory. He also observes how the Welsh valued ‘distinguished birth and noble descent more than anything else in the world’, preferring to ‘marry into a noble family than into a rich one’.<sup>216</sup> Questions and concerns of descent equalled in importance because they emphasised and defined familial relationships. In the social and economic foundations of early modern Wales, for instance, it seems that the status of one’s [noble] family was enhanced through the promotion of ‘good ancestry’. Gerald’s remarks help define a culture that prided itself on lineage.

Two main types of genealogies that survive for the period of Wales under native rule are royal pedigrees and the pedigrees of saints, who themselves were often closely connected to royalty.<sup>217</sup> In fact, a number of royal pedigrees for native ruling dynasties survive and the examples that are preserved in all forms of Welsh literature ‘formed the backbone of all early written histories’.<sup>218</sup> This is predominately the case in the Welsh chronicles, which are dominated by dynastic genealogies. The narratives are concerned with the transference of dynastic power, which ‘was the conventional method of recording early national history’.<sup>219</sup> The construction and survival of royal pedigrees were important in establishing and maintaining rights to rule. It also provided a sense of common

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<sup>215</sup> Jan Vansina argues that dynastic genealogies, especially, are subject to confusion because of the manipulation of information, affecting records of memory ‘unless they are backed up by mnemonic devices’. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 24

<sup>216</sup> Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 313-23; *Vita Griffini*, pp. 52-9; *HGK*, pp. 1-6. See *EWGT* generally. Jones, ‘An Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, pp. 309-10.

<sup>218</sup> Jones, ‘An Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, p. 319.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

identity in a land where kinship connections were so important. This is most observable in pedigrees of Gruffudd ap Cynan and his wife, Angharad, in *Vita Griffini filii Conani*<sup>220</sup> and of the descendants of the Lord Rhys found at the end of the manuscript of *Cronica de Wallia*.<sup>221</sup>

The laws of Hywel Dda stress the necessary importance of maintaining family trees and the purity of descent on both the mother's and father's sides.<sup>222</sup> They even demonstrate that *galanas* (payment made by a killer to the victim's family) was associated with female descent.<sup>223</sup> Accurate lineages secured the Welsh their rights and privileges 'and were the title-deeds' to property.<sup>224</sup> There are similar examples from Ireland in which kinship (*cairde*) was manipulated by genealogists to ensure that 'free' or 'cousin' tribes, descended from royal lines. A 'proper descent' was recorded, showing the appropriate genealogical reasons behind tribal relationships and the status that tribes enjoyed because of kinship connections.<sup>225</sup> Similarly, in Wales after 1282, with the fall of the native dynasties, emphasis on the pedigree of the *bonheddig*, literally a man with a pedigree, increased in literature. None survive prior to 1282.<sup>226</sup> Under Welsh law, the *bonheddig* without a pedigree was a social, political and economic 'nobody'.<sup>227</sup> This was because it was the membership of the family group that assured rights and status.<sup>228</sup>

Genealogies were preserved by the bards, the *cyarwyddiad* and clergy, acting as historians. The authors laud the pedigrees of their patrons (along with their prowess), sometimes tracing their lineage back to the legendary kings of the North who ruled Britain after the Roman occupation.<sup>229</sup> Genealogy was often allied with a pride in common descent from the ancient Britons (*Brytaniaid*), from whom the Welsh claimed their origins. The value of this common heritage

<sup>220</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 52-9; *HGK*, pp. 1-6.

<sup>221</sup> *CW*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>222</sup> The *bonheddig canhwynol* (innate noble), especially, must have noble pedigree on both father's and mother's side.

<sup>223</sup> 'The laws show that glanas had a bearing on female descent "y uelly y cerda yr alanas o uamwys y uamwys hyt y seythvet uamwy". The literal translation of ach ac edryd is paternal and maternal descent'. Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 328, n. 1. *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 57, 101, 102; *LTMW*, p. 110, 134, 135.

<sup>224</sup> Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 316.

<sup>225</sup> Stacey, *Road to Judgment*, pp. 100, 103, 111, 266, n. 106.

<sup>226</sup> Jones, 'Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 319.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.* 316.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* 318.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 314-15. Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), pp. 787-8.

can be seen in the defining genealogies of many Welsh dynasties — common blood equalled common status.<sup>230</sup> For Welsh genealogies in particular, traced descent to early important rulers such as Beli Mawr and Rhodri Mawr provided further proof of rights to rule and also show the connection between the many lines of Welsh ruling families.<sup>231</sup> Genealogies of rulers also follow a biblical descent tracing pedigrees to the descent of Adam. This is found in Irish and English pedigrees and, in a similar vein, Norse families are often traced to Odin.<sup>232</sup>

The genealogical tradition of the late medieval and early modern period in Wales has been labelled as the ‘Golden Age’ of Welsh genealogy. This was when the pure Welsh genealogical tradition flourished. This ‘Golden Age’ was a continuance of a practice largely established by the new school of poets at the beginning of the fourteenth century who developed genealogy and heraldry as part of poetical convention.<sup>233</sup> Nonetheless, the importance of genealogy as a cultural tradition was not new as the poets had inherited the tradition from the *Gogynfeirdd*. The *marwnadau* and *cywyddau moliant* of the native court poets bear a striking resemblance to later poetry in which genealogy features.<sup>234</sup> The rise in the promotion of one’s ancient genealogy allowed her/him to establish beneficial connections beyond familial relationships. This helped to develop a sense of regional identity and it was through this regional identity gentry families achieved ascendancy.<sup>235</sup>

In terms of records of lineage, there is no native Welsh comparison to the Irish tract known as *Banshenchas* (‘Women History’), which provides female genealogies related to important Irish dynasts. This follows the assumption that power and authority were passed on through the male line.<sup>236</sup> Nor are there genealogies similar to those produced during the ‘Golden Age’ of Welsh pedigree, which produced the *achau y mamau*, mother’s family history.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Welsh men of Welsh blood were seen as common gentlemen (*bonheddig cynhwynol*). Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 15.

<sup>231</sup> Jones, ‘An Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, p. 324.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* 322 and note 2.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* 310. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* 310, 342.

<sup>235</sup> Jones, *Early Modern Wales*, p. 8.

<sup>236</sup> Thornton, ‘Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies’, pp. 24, 26. ‘The Ban-Shenchas’, (ed.) M. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique*, 47 (1930), 282-339; 48 (1931), 163-234; 49 (1932), 436-89.

<sup>237</sup> Jones, ‘Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, p. 311.

However, in native Welsh sources, it is clear that the female line was crucial in legitimating claims to power and contestable rule. This indicates that ‘in terms of visibility, efficacy, and recognition’ women’s presence was not only accepted,<sup>238</sup> but related to deeper connotations associated with a legacy that is distinctly Welsh in structure.

In his seminal work on Welsh genealogies up to 1400, Peter Bartrum states that ‘wives’ names are notoriously variable in the manuscripts<sup>239</sup> because women could be ‘known by two distinct names’.<sup>240</sup> Bartrum also notes that in the older narrative pedigrees it was more common to use the lifecycle of the mother rather than wife to identify women. This seems largely to have been associated with the practice of recognising illegitimate children, where stating the name of the mother tempered questions of legitimacy if they arose.<sup>241</sup>

The appearance of women in genealogical tracts all over the world, often only the ‘principal’ wife or female member of a family is mentioned.<sup>242</sup> In the earlier Middle Ages, evidence suggests that in many regions in Western Europe, social status was determined by both maternal and paternal lines.<sup>243</sup> In fact, in many places the status of nobility was handed down through the maternal line.<sup>244</sup> However, with the increased importance of the practice of patrimony, the patrilineal, or agnatic, line eventually came to dominate genealogical tracts.<sup>245</sup> Nonetheless, though the importance of maternal ancestry decreased, the matriarchal line still remained a useful tool to assess one’s social status and often a noted marriage between a woman of a higher social status had the ability to elevate that of the man the woman married.<sup>246</sup>

A fourteenth-century genealogical tract known as *Achau’r mamau* records the ancestry of the mother of the legendary Brychan Brycheiniog and the

<sup>238</sup> G. Eddy, ‘Culture, Nation and Gender’, in I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>239</sup> P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies, AD 300–1400*, 8 vols (Cardiff, 1974), i, p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, 12 vols (London, 1854–60), ii, 116, n. 31.

<sup>241</sup> Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, i, p. 5.

<sup>242</sup> See Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 182–3.

<sup>243</sup> Shahar, *Fourth Estate*, p. 126.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. Similarly, it has been shown that around the ninth century in France, the peasant class sought their legal status through their maternal lines and there have been suggestions made that dependent men (‘slaves’) who married free women were in fact able to secure the freedom of their offspring. McNamara and Wemple, ‘Sanctity and Power’, p. 107.

<sup>245</sup> In France during the late thirteenth, early fourteenth centuries a prohibition was imposed that denied the succession of a kingdom through the female line, based on a prevarication of an old Frankish Salic law. McNamara and Wemple, ‘Sanctity and Power’, p. 113.

<sup>246</sup> Shahar, *Fourth Estate*, p. 136.

agnatic line of other dynasties traced through the female.<sup>247</sup> The survival of this shows the cultural importance of a woman's lineage by the late medieval era and recording the mother's line remained characteristic of Welsh pedigrees.<sup>248</sup>

Perhaps an interest in recording women's pedigrees increased with need to preserve a common identity and history. Sometimes pedigrees were produced that emphasised the maternal line because it was more important in cementing ties than the agnatic line. And, sometimes, it was used to praise the Welsh blood of patrons. In the late fourteenth century the poet Iolo Goch, acclaimed his feudal lord Roger Mortimer (d. 1398), the Earl of the March, in a poem praising his Welsh ancestry through his grandmother, Gwladus Ddu (d. 1251), daughter of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth.<sup>249</sup>

This link is apparent in the types of lifecycle labels used to identify women in native Welsh sources. In England woman's primary importance was as a daughter, wife, mother, or widow, the lifecycle being synonymous with inheritance issues.<sup>250</sup> In Wales, the emphasis on the womanly lifecycle in sources lies not with inheritance since women could not legally inherit land, but with the genealogies used to emphasise widespread familial connections and the social and political prominence of the masculine elite. The categorisation of women by their lifecycles through references to genealogy highlights their important positions within the setting of princely power and legitimate rule. Their appearance in Welsh genealogical tracts is crucial to understanding their position and status in society.<sup>251</sup> Blood connections to women allude to the transference of power.<sup>252</sup> Certainly, for Welsh genealogies, the establishment of social status through the female line is generally predicated on the identification of the woman through her lifecycles as a daughter — her connection to a previous generation — and as a mother — her connection to a subsequent

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<sup>247</sup> Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 344. This is found in two manuscripts: Oxford, Jesus College MS. 20, fourteenth-century and Peniarth MS. 191 (c. 1450).

<sup>248</sup> Jones, 'An Approach to Welsh Genealogy', p. 326.

<sup>249</sup> *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, ed. D. Johnston (Cardiff, 1998), no. 20. Fulton, 'Class and Nation', pp. 96, 98.

<sup>250</sup> Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p. 65.

<sup>251</sup> David Thornton has raised the issue of the meaning behind names in genealogical tracts and what they infer about status and office of an individual. Genealogies rarely record these and also often remain silent on geographical, political and social origins. Id., 'Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies', pp. 29, 38.

<sup>252</sup> Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p. 65. For a full discussion on women and land rights, see Chapter 5.

generation. In this way, like gender, genealogy is manipulated to fit a purpose and promote a change in relationships and power.

The majority of the sources consulted provide texts which refer or allude to genealogical relationships, rather than full pedigrees. As is demonstrated in *Vita Griffini filii Conani*, in the chronicles genealogical ties play a socially and culturally important role for providing a sense of Welsh identity. The importance in Welsh genealogies relates to the circumstances in which they were produced and is especially relevant to the history of native and Anglo-Norman land tenure practices.<sup>253</sup> Keeping this in mind, helps provide a more complete picture of ‘national life’.<sup>254</sup> The authors of the chronicles focus on familial connections underlining the link between women and land in association with Welsh power.<sup>255</sup> It should be remembered that the main chronicles are believed to have been written soon after 1282, though most of the contents could well have been composed earlier. Marital alliances and female obits represent changes in social structure. They are similar to those found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which always appear in a context that does not act as a guide to a single life, but in one that is useful for the historian trying to interpret contemporary meaning.<sup>256</sup>

It is important to consider other contributions to the tradition than the simple written word provides and ‘to these may be added the memory of the people themselves’.<sup>257</sup> It has been noted in other cultures around the world that important family members are the official preservers of their dynastic traditions.<sup>258</sup> In her seminal study on medieval memory and gender, Elisabeth Van Houts has shown that women passed on their genealogical information orally, which was often cemented in written form by male family members. It is quite possible, then, that in some cases scribes incorporated information they received from their female kin straight into documents concerning political

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<sup>253</sup> This is also demonstrated in records of practice discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>254</sup> Jones, ‘Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, pp. 307-08, 309. The importance of lineage and married women in records of practice and land transference are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

<sup>255</sup> See Chapter 2, *Lifecycles*.

<sup>256</sup> P. Stafford, ‘Writing the Biography of Eleventh-Century Queens’, in D. Bates, J. Crick and S. Hamilton (eds), *Writing Medieval Biography, 750–1250: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 103.

<sup>257</sup> Jones, ‘An Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, p. 333.

<sup>258</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 156.

events they were working on in their various institutions.<sup>259</sup> For example, there are differing presentations of Gruffudd ap Cynan's descendants in *Vita Griffini Filli Conani*, where only Angharad's children are named and in *Achau Brenhinoedd at Thywysogyon Cymru*, where his illegitimate children are included.<sup>260</sup> The latter text was compiled in the time of or just after the reign of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and it is perhaps significant that it also lists the pedigrees of the mothers of various rulers, starting with Llywelyn himself. Who preserved the memory of these? It has been shown that the gendered roles in the distribution of information were often complementary. The importance of women's roles for passing on genealogical memory differed from men's roles of passing on political memory. The passing of genealogical information was linear and straightforward in its approach, providing direct knowledge about kin groups. The passing on of political memory was more circuitous and reached back farther in time.

One particular gendered role for (aristocratic) women, from the early Middle Ages, was to pass down family information and stories of their ancestors, to their own children and grandchildren.<sup>261</sup> There is extensive, albeit implicit, evidence from various types of sources found in other countries that highlight women's positions as transmitters of information and contributors to genealogical tradition. It has been shown that 'women were crucial links in the chain of traditions binding one generation to another'.<sup>262</sup> Recent research on narratives from France, Germany and England has shown that closer examination of oral testimonies, found in sources like chronicles, exposes the nature of the female contribution and demonstrates that women played a much larger role in the transmission of memorable events and people 'than men were prepared to credit them with'.<sup>263</sup> Evidence of the role women played in oral tradition and historical composition is largely circumstantial, but it is clear that their

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<sup>259</sup> E. Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 90, 147.

<sup>260</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 54-9, 78-9; *HGK*, pp. 2, 21-2; '*Achau Brenhinoedd at Thywysogyon Cymru*', in *EWGT*, pp. 95-110.

<sup>261</sup> In *Medieval Memories* Van Houts refers to an in depth study conducted on the Merovingians: R. LeJan, 'Famille et pouvoir dans le monde France (VIIe-Xe siècle)', *Essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995), pp. 31-58. (E. Van Houts, *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700–1300* (Harlow, 2001), p. 32.

<sup>262</sup> Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 90, 147.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 142, 149.



contribution was vital in cementing links in historical information.<sup>264</sup> Although they may have been denied official places in public life, as ‘remembrancers’ to the medieval community, they helped define a collective memory. Gwyn A. Williams notes the *achau* of Wales were secured through the memory of women. Further, he suggests that the wives of the *pencenedl* must have been far more important figures than is expressed in laws that dictated society. He refers to them as the “‘wise women” who preserved the records of the community in their heads and staffed the embryonic jury ...’.<sup>265</sup>

The emphasis on the gendered expectations of women, whose own lineage and codes of behaviour were often used to further elevate distinguished men, would not have been lost on a female audience reading or listening to any of the sources looked at. This is especially relevant when keeping in mind the probability that in some form or another, women were active participants in the transmission of genealogical memory and, most likely, associated gendered ideals. Considering their involvement in such undertakings is just as important as thinking about the transmission of the material themselves.

## ***CONCLUSION***

The evidence of female patronage in medieval Wales is vague at best.<sup>266</sup> Thus far there is not even evidence to suggest that communities of religious women had libraries or were in possession of manuscripts specifically designed for them.<sup>267</sup> There is even less evidence of book possession for women amongst the laity in Wales, although one surviving example from the third quarter of the thirteenth century does indicate some aristocratic women owned books and were literate in Welsh, if not Latin.<sup>268</sup> Thus, it is nigh on impossible to ascertain whether or how far women acted as patrons in their own right. This is especially difficult to assess for native Wales. With exception of female patronage being

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid. 148.

<sup>265</sup> Williams, ‘When Was Wales?’, pp. 52, 75.

<sup>266</sup> A recent study by Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan discusses women’s access to literacy and education, with reference to female patronage in medieval Wales. Ead., ‘More Written about than Writing?’, pp. 162-3.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. For the most recent work on female houses see C. Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Manuscripts and the Monasteries’, in J. Burton and K. Stober (eds), *Monastic Wales: New Approaches* (Cardiff, 2013), pp. 209-27.

<sup>268</sup> Lloyd-Morgan, ‘More Written about than Writing?’, pp. 157-8.

briefly alluded to in the poet Enion ap Gwalchmai's elegy to Nest,<sup>269</sup> all other evidence is speculative at best. For example, it has recently been argued that Hywel ab Owain's mother, Ffynnod Wyddeles, Owain Gwynedd's concubine, may have had a significant influence on the individual style and tone of his poems to women, but it is a theory that cannot be either proved or disproved.<sup>270</sup> Along these lines, it is also possible to argue that Angharad (Owain Gwynedd's mother), who survived in widowhood for almost thirty years after the death of her husband Gruffudd, may have contributed to the patronage of his biography, especially given the portrayed attributes of her own character.<sup>271</sup> Further, given the status of the queen in the Welsh laws as one of the three most important members of the Welsh court, and the fact that she had her own court poet,<sup>272</sup> it seems more than likely that noble and royal women, themselves, aided in the patronage of Welsh oral and literary traditions and the dissemination of cultural gendered ideals.<sup>273</sup>

Part of the examination of the sources for this project relates to the recent debate concerning gender and memory and the roles of women in preserving knowledge through oral communication. The transmission of native attitudes, ideals and perceptions of gender, women's places in their families and wider kinship connections was most likely undertaken by women as well as men. Women's contribution to culture is infrequently recorded in most medieval societies, but this does not mean that they did not participate in the construction of culture itself. It is important to take into account the influence of oral culture in medieval Wales and speculate what women's 'hidden' contributions may have been.

It is impossible to know if literature and laws actually shaped the lives of medieval people, or how far real lives acted as models of exempla, we must

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<sup>269</sup> See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 158, 222.

<sup>270</sup> P. Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 2011), p. 19.

<sup>271</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 112, 123.

<sup>272</sup> See Chapter 4 for discussion, pp. 131-49.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Damico and Hennessey Olsen, *New Readings*, p. 3. Although only briefly touched upon here, further research needs to be undertaken on these normative Welsh sources to address the imbalance and the overwhelming male-dominated subject matters across the genres by asking questions that centre on women's concerns in general. Doing this will produce a clearer picture of women's overall roles and positions in Welsh society, their participation and function within Welsh culture and hopefully highlight their experiences and the meanings attached to them.

accept that interplay is the point.<sup>274</sup> As can be seen, there are many different considerations to keep in mind when thinking about the portrayal of married women and their place in Welsh society. In two very clear ways, the Welsh sources that are the primary focus of this research can be viewed as evidence of (a) an expression of the values shared by their authors (and patrons) and (b) those of the aristocratic echelons of native Welsh society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many characters are faced with various situations that demand intimate knowledge and acceptance of the cultural expectations of both their social rank and their gender.

As will now be seen, that married women were viewed as symbols of men's power is evident in the most of the works found in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The motif of the feminine symbol of masculine power appears in works where women are depicted as the personification of land and riches, such as in praise poetry.<sup>275</sup> Given the view that women likely contributed to some of these works in some way by providing family histories if nothing else, there is a need to recognise two very important things. Firstly, the stereotypical gendered representations of married women as symbols of masculine Welsh power that are to be discussed are not simply misogynistic ideals constructed solely by men. Women, too, may well have conformed to the idea of creating a sense of 'national identity', 'nationality' or 'Welshness' in the ways they transmitted information and told their own stories about their families, female kin, ancestors and friends. Perhaps they stressed the links they deemed important and necessary to their livelihoods. Although it was left to the authors to edit the information they were given and impose their own objectives, female informants, too, played a part in the construction of gender identity. Secondly, while married women are more often than not portrayed as symbols of male power, the fact that any of these women are named and remembered at all is indicative of the central roles they played within their kinship groups, culture and society.

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<sup>274</sup> Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p. 65.

<sup>275</sup> S.L. Aronstein, 'Wales: Culture and Society', in S.H. Rigby (ed), *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Malden, 2003), pp. 552-4.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Development of Uxorial Identity*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been said that in medieval Wales the principal attributes a woman brought to marriage were her status, reputation and beauty.<sup>1</sup> Depictions of Angharad, wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Rhiannon in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, Joan, wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and Efa, the eulogised wife by Gwalchmai the poet, are just some examples of how Welsh writers conformed to the widely standardised prescriptions of the female sex and wifely behaviour that are familiar; attributes centring around physical appearances, social refinement, noble status and often spiritual piety. Even as late as the sixteenth century the noblewoman in Wales was praised for her ‘wisdom, and propriety, and chastity, and generosity, and beauty of countenance, complexion and form, and guilelessness of speech and actions’.<sup>2</sup>

However, married women are portrayed in conflicting ways. The laws make it clear that the woman’s legal status was dependent on male kin: father, brother and husband. They also deny female inheritance and suggest that divorce was a situation in which the woman would be the biggest loser. Yet, wives were allowed to instigate divorce themselves in specific occasions and be in control of lands as ‘lords’. The function of gender in the Welsh laws has been explored to move beyond such contradictions as a means of assessing the true status of women. Nerys Patterson argues that a closer look at medieval Welsh law, one that is not influenced by patriarchal definitions of oppression and inequality, reveals that both sexes were treated in a proportionate fashion. There was a symmetry that treated both sexes equally in which the status of women and men were structured against the characteristic relationships of freemen and lords. Gender was represented through

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cartwright, ‘Virginity and Chastity Tests in Medieval Welsh Prose’, in A. Bernau, R. Evans, and S. Salih (eds), *Medieval Virginites*, (Cardiff, 2003), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> This is found in the grammar-book of poets found in the treatise known as *Graduelys*. *Gramadegau’r Penceirddiaid*, pp. 198-203. Translation in Lewis, ‘Content of Poetry’, p. 91.

forms of vassalage and Patterson suggests that men (husbands) only had a degree more autonomy as social agents than women (as wives).<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, legal texts, especially the tractate *Cyfraith* (or *Cyfreithiau*) y *Gwraedd* found in most redactions of *Cyfraith Hywel*, essentially codify women's inferiority.<sup>4</sup> Morfydd Owen has looked at the status of women's positions in their natal and marital kinship groups through payments of the *sarhaed* (insult price) and *galanas* (life price). Payments of *sarhaed* and *galanas* have been used as examples of how the unexpressed assumptions behind social relationships were bound to monetary issues that ultimately defined one's status.<sup>5</sup> Some theories have argued that the *sarhaed* is the most useful tool in deciphering changes in the status of women because of its interchangeable condition based on a woman's marital standing.<sup>6</sup> Others have suggested that the *amobr* (payment for loss of virginity by a territorial lord), can be used as the most defining factor of a woman's position in marriage and in society as it demonstrated her inferiority by making her virginity the property of her husband.<sup>7</sup> These pecuniary constituents made tangible women's dependent and inferior status by directly tying them to the men with whom they were bound either by blood or by marriage.<sup>8</sup>

Dorothy Dilts Swartz has found that there were two critical variables related to women's legal status in medieval Welsh and Irish laws: those of property rights and marriage arrangements. These two factors, which are found in most European and Mediterranean societies, suggest that there were varying degrees of independence for women. Swartz argues that the status of women in early societies like Wales and Ireland reflected her usefulness in society.<sup>9</sup> Legal bonds of marriage are discussed in the laws that make allowances for divorce, even though there is very little information on circumstances in which divorce might occur.<sup>10</sup> Similar to Patterson,

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<sup>3</sup> The terms and definitions of feudalism (vassalage) are problematic concepts in relation to the structure of Welsh society. N. Patterson, 'Woman as Vassal: Gender Symmetry in Medieval Wales', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 8 (1990), p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike Irish law that defined women as equal to men, even if it was only at a very young age, Welsh law offered no such generosity. Welsh women only have an equal status to men whilst they remain indistinguishable, i.e. from birth to baptism. McAll, 'Normal Paradigms', p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Jenkins and Owen, *WLW*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Owen, 'Shame and Reparation: Women's Place in the Kin', in *WLW*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 110; Williams, *When was Wales*, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Owen, 'Shame and Reparation', p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> D. Dilts Swartz, 'The Legal Status of Women in Early Medieval Ireland and Wales', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 13 (1993), pp. 108-10.

<sup>10</sup> A wife could separate from her husband for three reasons: if he was 'leprous', 'of stinking breath' or could not 'copulate with his wife'. *LTMW*, p. 46; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 25.

Robin Chapman Stacey argues (with emphasis on the Iorwerth Redaction) that there was a genderisation in the Welsh laws that treated the sexes comparatively equally as pertains to divorce and the distribution of property at the end of a marriage. She contends, nevertheless, that the portion of the laws devoted to divorce was largely geared towards married women as a didactic lesson in the negative cost of divorce and how much a woman had to lose if she acted inappropriately, or against the trajectory of the cultural and gendered expectations of the wife. Through the gendered division of goods in divorce, the hierarchy of medieval Welsh ideals are revealed.<sup>11</sup> The resulting conclusions of these studies point to the idea that though women in medieval Wales seem to have had less prestige than their male counterparts, this did not preclude them from participating in society. They were, in fact, judged by the same moral framework and not placed in a separate social world with different standards. This thesis does not proceed from the assumption that the laws grant generous rights to women, but will argue that a critical reading of the law texts in terms of the commodification of female sexuality throws valuable light on gender expectations and uxorial status.

In Welsh prose, there is also a dualistic style used to describe married women. From the overtly active and dynamic and, yet often passive, wife Rhiannon in the First and Third Branches of the *Mabinogi*, to the subversively insubordinate wife of Enid in ‘Geraint son of Erbin’; from the submissive and unquestioning wife of Arawn in the First Branch to the scheming and deceptive adulteress, Blodeuwedd wife of Lleu in the Fourth, these illustrations greatly conform to the polarisations of the female sex popular in medieval literary tradition Europe.<sup>12</sup> Roberta Valente and Fiona Winward have focused on the main female characters in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* arguing that the women are memorable for their independence and strength.<sup>13</sup> Sioned Davies has recently contended that they are characters that come alive with dialogue and their importance lies within the situations that they and their husbands find themselves in — situations that require extraordinary decision-making skills to determine the fate of everyone.<sup>14</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan has argued that

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<sup>11</sup> R. Chapman Stacey, ‘Divorce Medieval Welsh Style’, *Speculum* (October, 2002), pp. 1107-27.

<sup>12</sup> Blamires, *Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> R. Valente, ‘*Merched y Mabinogi*: Women and the Thematic Structure of the Four Branches’, unpublished PhD dissertation (Cornell University, 1986); ead., ‘Gwydion and Aranrhod: Crossing the Borders of Gender in *Math*’, *BBCS*, 45 (1988), pp. 71-9; F. Winward, ‘Some Aspects of the Women in *The Four Branches*’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 34 (Winter, 1997), pp. 77-106.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xxvi.

the masculine response to female independence and sexuality in the Four Branches results in violence, both psychological and physical.<sup>15</sup> Jeanie Watson has examined the tale 'Geraint', claiming that it educates the audience in the proper roles for women and men. The wife Enid, portrayed as the feminine ideal, also insists on having her voice heard, and moves beyond the constriction of separate spheres by taking action both within the 'home' and without, thus evolving the feminised ideal to a more androgynous zone. The husband Geraint learns that overt aggression and failure to fulfil his husbandly duties contributes to social disorder and loss of status. This lesson results in the masculine ideal also becoming androgynised.<sup>16</sup>

This research breaks new ground showing that the development of uxorial identity found across the wide spectrum of native and normative Welsh sources is directly linked to woman's relationship with man. Praise of the wife often acts as a metaphoric expression of masculinity and prowess. This impression is directly linked to the employment of female lifecycles used to identify and categorise women, which is the focus of this chapter. The primary sources examined are those that focus on native society. They have a thread throughout that helps define the symbolic nature of the lifecycle of the wife. This thread highlights cultural mores and expectations of rank and gender often steeped in Welsh attitudes towards honour and shame and the bonds of kinship. This is a new and important addition to the burgeoning scholarship on women in medieval Wales. Considering the symbolism and meaning behind the use of the uxorial lifecycle in sources provides a clearer picture of the position of wives in society. The sources imply that it was in wifhood the woman enjoyed status and exercised most agency.<sup>17</sup> This is one overriding way Welsh sources differ from well-established Continental norms in their portrayal of women.<sup>18</sup>

The first section of this chapter discusses the definitions of 'woman', 'wife' and 'marriage' as found in the laws. Although the term 'wife' or 'wedded wife' is used to identify women in many medieval Welsh sources, the concept of 'wife' in

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<sup>15</sup> C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*', in *150 Jahre 'Mabinogion'*, pp.67-76.

<sup>16</sup> J. Watson, 'Enid the Disobedient: The *Mabinogion's* Gereint and Enid', in C. Levin and J. Watson (eds), *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Detroit, 1987), pp. 114-32.

<sup>17</sup> The practice of uxorial agency is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Vestiges and Images of Women', in *Silences of the Middle Ages*, pp. 319-22.

medieval Wales was multi-layered.<sup>19</sup> The legal ambiguities in the terms used to denote wife, the different types of marriages recognised and the practice of concubinage all offer conflicting representations and views in accordance to a married woman's place in Welsh society.

Ownership of her sexuality is tied to both her natal and marital families, as a daughter and as a wife. Female sexuality legally remained in the hands of men and was commodified through different types of payments associated with different lifecycle stages. However, the payments were also used as a socially recognised appreciation of sexual rites of passage that offered women more freedoms and more social respect the further up the lifecycle scale they moved. The commodification of gender in the Welsh laws has not been explored before. This is an important discussion as women were viewed as symbols of male power and in the laws the importance of, and rights affixed to, female lifecycles were clearly joined to the position and status assigned to men. This thesis challenges the approach of relying solely on lawyers' categories to determine status, developing a different form of analysis that also works with illustrations found in other native sources.

The second section of this chapter looks at the use and construction of the uxorial lifecycle, primarily as it is found in the Welsh chronicles. All the women mentioned are referred to in terms of their relationships to male kin and their relevant lifecycle phases. Though the authors of the chronicles focus on familial connections, the underlining tones intimate the important link between woman and land, an approach similar to English legal and royal records, in which the transference of power is highlighted.<sup>20</sup> In addition, contextually, the pedigree of married women and the emphasis on kinship connections found in the chronicles play a socially and culturally important role for providing a sense of Welsh identity. The categorisation of women by their lifecycle stages with reference to their genealogy highlights their positions within the setting of princely power and legitimate rule. Marital alliances and female obits represent changes in social structure.

Building on the themes of the commodification of gender and the power of symbolism of the uxorial lifecycle, the third section of this chapter assesses the generalised norms and perceptions of the married woman across the Welsh sources,

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<sup>19</sup> The institutions and cultural practices that defined married women and gave them power are discussed in the following chapters.

<sup>20</sup> J. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1992), p. 4.



with reference to ideals of honour and shame. The consistency in which the identification of the superlative traits of the married woman is based on the glorification of masculine ideals implies that the wife is generally represented as the personification of her husband's power — as a symbol thereof, or as a prize to be won or a pawn to be played.<sup>21</sup> This impression is expressed in the ideals of uxorial chastity. Nevertheless, uxorial attributes, such as the wise, vocal woman or the woman as a female sovereignty figure also make numerous appearances. Such differences in how uxorial identity is portrayed suggests a culture in which gendered boundaries were ill-defined, thus allowing for fluidity both in terms of the perception of the wife's status and position and in her exercise of agency in practice, as is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The labels 'women' and 'married women' discussed refer to those of the noble and royal classes, as these are the classes portrayed in the sources and the social strata from which much of the material derived.

One assumption of this thesis is that the sources written between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries can throw valuable light on how married women were perceived in native Wales, their roles, status and gendered expectations. Such sources are effective in gauging gender assumptions in native society and attitudes that governed them.<sup>22</sup> The melding of recurring motifs, such as the caluminated wife or the woman as a figure of sovereignty, interpolated with Welsh mythological and historical traditions reveals many native customs and attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Importantly for this study, the combination of these themes with contextualised use of the uxorial lifecycle also reveals foreign influences linked to the political and cultural changes during the period in question.

## ***MARRIED WOMEN AND THE LAWS***

Georges Duby argued that medieval society was based on the *familia* and expectations for each sex were defined by the structure of power relationships that 'placed marriage at the core of all social institutions'.<sup>24</sup> The ideologies of medieval marriage were established by two very different systems of belief. The lay model

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<sup>21</sup> cf. Aronstein, 'Wales: Culture and Society', pp. 552-4.

<sup>22</sup> For the value of twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources in assessing the norms and mentalities of native Wales see especially Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 111-14 and id., 'Status of Women', pp. 93-100.

<sup>23</sup> G. Jones, 'The Prose Romances of Medieval Wales', in *Wales through the Ages, Vol. 1*, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> G. Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-century France*, trans. E. Forster (Baltimore, 1978), p. 3.

was concerned with marriage as a means of preservation of family and patrimony, often inciting the practices of endogamy, digamy (the possibility of divorce and remarriage), and in some cases, concubinage. The religious model focused on the idea of individual choice, or consent, and the transition of marriage from a social contract to one that was more spiritually based.<sup>25</sup>

In most western societies, a woman's body was the largest contribution to a marriage, and theoretically, was not her own. Her reproductive organs and sexual exploits were of concern to both her family and her husband, chiefly as pregnancy with another man's child was always a probable threat.<sup>26</sup> As marriage was linked with issues of inheritance and patrimony, increasingly for women, secular and religious institutional restrictions focused on guaranteed virginity in girls and chastity in wives.<sup>27</sup> The loss of a woman's legal ownership over her sexuality, emphasised by the (unrealistic) expectation that all women be virgins at the time of marriage, affected the social status of women generally. A non-virgin entering the marriage market was 'damaged goods', perhaps even irrevocably so. A Welsh proverb states that a woman who is sexually experienced before marriage, is one that will marry late.<sup>28</sup> Entering a union as a non-virgin jeopardised a woman's economic and social future as it put her natal family's investments and status at stake.<sup>29</sup> The *twyllforwyn*, or false virgin, appears in the Welsh legal tracts, which state that a woman was of no value as a wife if she came to her marriage sexually experienced.<sup>30</sup> Further, a fine for a wife's unfaithfulness before marriage was the *amobr*, in essence, a virginity fine.

Similar to an early Irish law tractate known as *Cáin Lánamna*, Welsh law defines nine different types of legally binding unions or 'nine rightful couplings'

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<sup>25</sup> The religious sanctioning of lawful marriage in opposition to the political and social acceptance of more loosely defined sexual unions like concubinage permitted a society to sustain and perpetuate itself 'without endangering its structural stability'. Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, p. 11; id., *Medieval Marriage*, pp. 3-4. Also see L. Paterson, 'Gender Negotiations in France during the Central Middle Ages: The Literary Evidence', in P. Linehan and J.L. Nelson (eds), *The Medieval World* (London, 2001), p. 249.

<sup>26</sup> Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity', pp. 63-4. Such emphasis on the reproductive responsibilities of the woman to produce a legitimate heir is one of the primary reasons the practice of concubinage waned after the early Middle Ages in most western European societies. See pp. below. 85-9.

<sup>27</sup> Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *E gont a del yw frovi hwyr e daw y friodi*. Oxford, Jesus College, Ms. 111, f. 265<sup>v</sup>. Translation in Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity', p. 56.

<sup>29</sup> N. Patterson, 'Honour and Shame in Medieval Welsh Society: A Study of the Role of Burlesque in the Welsh Laws', *Studia Celtica*, 16/17 (1981/2), p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 26; *LTMW*, pp. 49.

(*nau kynwedi teithiauc*).<sup>31</sup> The tractate, which appears in several law books, is likely archaic in form, originating much earlier than its appearance in the thirteenth-century Iorwerth Redaction suggests.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible that the composition of the redactions in their present form, including the ‘nine rightful couplings’ and the tractate on women, may reflect contemporary practice,<sup>33</sup> rather than simply as an expression of much older ideals. The first two types of marriage listed hold greater promises of economic and social advancement: ‘unions by gift of kin’, the *priodas* and *agwedi/agweddi*. Second are three types of ‘unions not by gift of kin, but with the consent of kin and of the woman herself’. Of these, *caradas* is the most prominent. Though the woman does not leave her home, she is openly visited by the man. *Deu lysuab* perhaps relates to marital unions between step-children or families. *Llathlut goleu* is an elopement that results in the couple living together anywhere but the woman’s family home. It is believed that the publicity of the act implies consent by the woman’s kin. Third are the ‘unions to which the woman’s kin do not consent, but to which the woman herself does’. These are twofold: *llathlut twyll*, a secret elopement and *beichogi twyll gwreic lwyn a pherth* a secret union, one where the woman continues to live at home and not with her husband. The fourth category deals with lack of consent by the woman or her family. These generally refer to abduction or deception. *Kynnywedi ar liw acar oleu* probably refers to abduction by force and *twyll morwyn* is the deception of a virgin, tricking and/or forcing her to intercourse.

The ‘union of gift of kin’ is assumed to be the most honourable, and the first based on the gift of kin, *priodas*, was perhaps the most legally binding.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century *priodas* was regarded as the definitive type of marriage recognised not only by Welsh jurists, but also by ecclesiastics. Literary readings of ‘gifts of kin’ suggest that the goods the woman brings to the union (*argyfrau*) are not the most important gifts presented to the man, but that the ‘gift’ of the woman herself is. This is illustrated in the marriage between Branwen and Matholwch in the

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<sup>31</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘*Nau Kynwedi Teithiauc*’, pp. 23-39. Cf. D.A. Binchy, ed. *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1978), p. 505; W.N. Hancock et al., eds, *The Ancient Laws of Ireland*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1865-1901), ii, pp. 356-7; Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 70-3.

<sup>32</sup> *WLW* pp. 3-4; Charles-Edwards, ‘*Nau Kynwedi Teithiauc*’, pp. 23-6. The oldest law manuscripts in Welsh are found in the Iorwerth redaction.

<sup>33</sup> Pryce, *Native Law and Church*, pp. 108-12.

<sup>34</sup> It appears that these unions are listed in order of declining legal and honourable status. Charles-Edwards, ‘*Nau Kynwedi Teithiauc*’, p. 27.

Second Branch of the *Mabinogi*, for example. It is also demonstrated in the Welsh chronicles where *priodas* is used to stress the status of the political union through marriage.<sup>35</sup> The question remains whether it is right to think of the woman as the gift of her kin. Because the union of ‘gift by kin’ was tied to property and moveable goods, it is difficult to determine the actual position of the woman in either the *priodas* or the *agweddi*; this confusion is also apparent in the vocabulary used to denote the status of woman as a wife.

In eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon culture, marriage was the quintessential transition in a woman’s life. The terms of ‘wife’ and ‘woman’ were used interchangeably to simply describe a woman of adult status.<sup>36</sup> This was also true of Wales for the period under investigation. The most common term used in association with the label of wife is that of *gwraig*. *Gwraig briod* suggests the meaning of wife in the highest form of marriage (*priodas*). Its use in the later Iorwerth redaction indicates that canon lawyers recognised a woman as being legally married. This is further substantiated by the portion of the law that states a woman cannot buy or sell (property) unless she is of the status of *priod*.<sup>37</sup> Although the word *priod* means proper or appropriate, *gŵr priod* and *gwraig briod* implying a married man and married woman respectively (or a proper husband and a proper wife), the meanings of the terms are still ambiguous.<sup>38</sup> Because a woman is a *gwraig briod* does not automatically mean that she is of the same status of her husband, that he is a *gŵr priod*, or that their union as that of a *priodas*.<sup>39</sup> This is fundamentally related to the fact that *gwraig* has different connotations ranging in meaning from a ‘female of any age’, to a ‘sexually experienced female’, to the modern definition of ‘wife’.<sup>40</sup> Depending on what type of union is implied, *gwraig* could just as easily refer to a woman in a casual relationship, one based on any form of cohabitation, as is found in similar terms like *gwraig wriog*, ‘woman having a man’, or simply, *gwriog*, ‘having a man’.<sup>41</sup> The laws further acknowledged the difficulty in assessing

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<sup>35</sup> See *Lifecycles* below.

<sup>36</sup> P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women’s Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 66.

<sup>37</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘*Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc*’, p. 28. *LTMW*, p. 58; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> See various definitions of ‘wife’ (‘*gwraig*’), ‘marriage’ (‘*priodas*’) and ‘husband’ (‘*gwr*’) in *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru Online* (Cardiff, 2014): < <http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html> />, accessed 4 February 2014.

<sup>39</sup> *WLW*, p. 214.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 206.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 206-07.

the status of a woman because of her sexuality stating that once a girl reaches puberty ‘no one knows what she is, whether maiden or woman, because the signs of childbearing have appeared on her’.<sup>42</sup> All of the above suggest that that the term *gwraig* seems to intrinsically indicate a woman who has reached sexual maturation and, most likely, is sexually experienced.

Does the way the list is ordered intimate general attitudes towards women and marriage and, if so, when? Do the types of marriages increase in importance in terms of women’s positions as they decrease in honourable and legal importance? Are the lower tiers of marriage, namely those that require a woman’s consent, less honourable? They not only require a woman’s consent, but does that consent imply a more egalitarian union? Or, do they say more about the honourable reputation of a man who actively seeks a woman’s consent to be his wife? The legal couplings that emphasise the consent of the woman are interesting in their promotion and recognition of a woman’s sovereign right to choose her spouse and/or cohabitate in a way that she permits. This is a subject that is very prominent in the First Branch in Rhiannon’s campaign to choose her own husband and is also found in other tales like ‘Peredur’ and ‘The Lady of the Well’.<sup>43</sup>

Any type of marriage was associated with the legal control of women’s sexuality as marriage involved the exchange of material wealth. If a husband was satisfied that his new bride was indeed a virgin, he rewarded her with a morning gift known as the *cowyll* in recompense for taking her virginity. In Ireland, women received a bride-price from the groom, known as the *coibche*. However, it was required that the woman share the marriage gift with her father or oldest male agnate, otherwise she faced a penalty. Subsequent gifts, either from the same marriage or succeeding ones, belonged to the woman herself. In contrast, the Welsh woman’s *cowyll* was hers and hers alone, regardless of what happened over the course of the marriage.<sup>44</sup> Similar to the *cowyll*, the *amobr* was a one-time payment made to a lord when a woman was given in marriage, became pregnant or was found

<sup>42</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 26; *LTMW*, p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 75-6, 126-8.

<sup>44</sup> Swartz, ‘Legal Status of Women’, pp. 111-12. ‘‘Texts of the Tractate on the Law of Women: I. The ‘‘Cyfnerth’’ Text’, ed. and trans. D. Jenkins, in *WLW*, p. 137; ‘Texts of the Tractate on the Law of Women: II. The Text of Latin Redaction A, Taken from *The Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws*, edited by Hywel David Emanuel, Cardiff, 1967’, in *WLW*, pp. 150-8; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 25, 27, 28-9, 30-3; *LTMW*, pp. 46, 50, 51, 53, 58, 60, 61.

to be publicly cohabitating with a man.<sup>45</sup> Both the *amobr* and *cowyll* were essentially payments that recognised the legal transition in the female lifecycle, from being a virgin to a sexually active individual. As both payments were directly connected to female sexuality, the evolution of lifecycles from maidenhood to womanhood, it is important to recognise the symbolic nature of the *amobr* and the *cowyll* in the context of the positions of and attitudes towards women.

Legally, these types of payments in relation to female sexuality are, effectively, the commodification of gender. A woman's sexuality becomes a marketed commodity, something to be bought and sold instead of something given freely. Payments made in the form of the *amobr* and the *cowyll* gave credence to the legally sanctioned assertion that a man, the husband, had private ownership rights to the commodity, his wife. It has been argued that the *amobr* was a badge of degradation for Welsh women because it made something as personal as virginity, in essence, a form of male property.<sup>46</sup> Assigning an economic value to something as individualistic as female sexuality ensured that legal ownership of it remained in the hands of men, thus underscoring women's legally subordinate status and making them inherently unequal. In the social context, the *cowyll* and *amobr* are more figuratively representative of a woman's position within her community. This is because the 'commodification' of goods is never influenced by economic reasons alone. Cultural and political factors play a part, especially in terms of property and resources. These social influences are what give commodities their real value.

That false virgins suffered a diminution of the economic rights supporting a woman's social status as an adult, namely the *agweddi*, is also important to note. The *agweddi* is another form of payment linked to the sanctity of marriage as a contracted sexual union.<sup>47</sup> Essentially, it refers to a common pool of matrimonial property (moveable goods) that a wife was entitled to upon a legal separation from her husband before the seven-year threshold was met. The appraisal of the sum of the goods was dependent on the natal status of the woman.<sup>48</sup> If a marriage lasted seven years or more, the wife was entitled to half the goods upon separation because

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<sup>45</sup> "'Cyfnerth' Text', p. 137; 'Latin Redaction A', pp. 158-9; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 27-32; *LTMW*, pp. 49-61.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> "'Cyfnerth' Text', p. 137; 'Latin Redaction A', pp. 149-50; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 24-28; *LTMW*, pp. 45-52, 61.

<sup>48</sup> The woman's status was directly connected to her father's status.

her status was legally that of her husband's.<sup>49</sup> The legal triads state that the *agweddi* is also a shame payment for 'when she goes for the first time from the bed amongst men'.<sup>50</sup>

Neither the *cowyll* nor the *amobr* were wholly economic by nature. Recent scholarship has argued that because the *cowyll* was a payment made to the new bride as an acceptance or an acknowledgement that she was a 'free person of honour', it suggests a level of importance surrounding the woman's consent to a marital union; that a woman 'was not given way like a chattel'.<sup>51</sup> This level of independence is also elucidated in the second honourable category of Welsh marriages, in which the consent of the woman is the defining criterion. It may be that the nature of the *cowyll* and the *amobr* was most likely symbolic in gesture, an act of acknowledgement that the rites of passage from maidenhood to womanhood had taken place.<sup>52</sup> They were connected to the important networks of exchange in regards to the rites of passage that were so prevalent in medieval Wales — an observance of transition from one lifecycle stage to another.<sup>53</sup>

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the increased and tightened control over a woman's sexuality due to the transformation of the *amobr* from a monetary 'rite of passage' to a money making scheme by the greater lords after the Edwardian conquest surely affected the position of women within their families and communities by tightening further control over sexual freedoms. The expense was just too substantial.<sup>54</sup> It may be that the post-1282 practices concerning *amobr* were changes imposed under colonial rule that reveal 'the most telling symptom of an alien-imposed Welsh racial inferiority'.<sup>55</sup> However, the fact that the *cowyll* and *amobr* were always used as economic remunerations for the use of female sexuality should not be overlooked. Such commodification naturally negated a woman's individuality by denying her legal control over her own, very intimate actions.

<sup>49</sup> This rendered her natal status void. "'Cyfnerth" Text', p. 137; 'Latin Redaction A', pp. 149-50; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 24-28; *LTMW*, pp. 45-52, 61.

<sup>50</sup> ... *el gyntaf o'r gbely ym plith dynyon*. *The Legal Triads of Medieval Wales*, (ed.) S.E. Roberts (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 152-3.

<sup>51</sup> Patterson, 'Honour and Shame', p. 78.

<sup>52</sup> This is suggested in the actual meaning of the word as it related to a veil/headress, similar to the English *cowl*. A change of head-covering was probably a symbolic act that marked the finality of the marital union. See *WLW*, p. 196.

<sup>53</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 89-90. Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> It was also most likely the last nail in the coffin in regards to the public acceptance of the practice of concubinage in Wales.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 52; Davies, 'Status of Women'. Also see Charles-Edwards, *Welsh Laws*, pp. 89-90.

These payments made her legally a subordinate subject. The practice of concubinage, however, intimates more relaxed attitudes towards a woman's control over her own sexuality.

Comparable to Ireland and Iceland, Wales did not have corresponding notions of 'wife' and 'husband'; the relationship was identified and recognised based on the consensual sexual union between both partners.<sup>56</sup> Concubinage is usually referred to as the cohabitation of a couple living as husband and wife, but not formally married. It also refers to the relationship between a woman and man in which the man is typically of higher status and who may already have an official wife.<sup>57</sup> According to *Naw Cynweddi* a man could have a wife and also a concubine, the latter union of which would be delegated to one of the nine categories.<sup>58</sup> Gerald of Wales relates that concubinage was practiced in Wales as late as the twelfth century: 'In most cases they will only marry a woman after living with her for some time, thus making sure that she will make a suitable wife, in disposition, moral qualities and the ability to bear children'. But, he also refers to the 'long custom of buying young girls from their parents ... not in the first instance with a view to marriage, but just to live with them'.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the conflicting notion of a woman's status as predicated by her sexual experiences was something that concubines also faced. Although concubinage itself is perhaps suggestive of a woman's sexual autonomy, buying girls to 'test' in a concubinous union before formal marriage intimates that position of the Welsh concubine, too, was subordinate. This is further supported by the monetary exchange between the 'husband' and the woman's natal family for her body.

In early medieval Europe, concubinage was a deep-rooted tradition and one that many rulers were disinclined to forsake. Although considered transient relationships, concubinous unions were proper, albeit informal, marriages and the position of a concubine within the community was often protected by law. Drawing on the examples of Roman law, ecclesiastical and lay lawyers alike conferred upon concubines a status very similar to that of married women, as long as the relationship was bound by 'marital affection' and not sexual lust — 'marital affection'

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<sup>56</sup> Charles Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 462.

<sup>57</sup> 'concubinage', n., *Oxford English Dictionary Online*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38420?redirectedFrom=concubinage#eid>>, accessed 3 March 2014.

<sup>58</sup> This is similar in comparison with the sexual classification of unions in Irish and Hindu societies, both of which recognised polygamy. Charles-Edwards, 'Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc', pp. 36-7.

<sup>59</sup> Gir. Camb. *Op.*, vi, pp. 133-4; Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, p. 262.



insinuating either a future contracted marriage or love.<sup>60</sup> That concubines enjoyed limited rights (which distinguishes a concubine from a mistress or a prostitute) is evidenced not only by the social acceptance of the practice of concubinage itself, but also by the reassurance that offspring resulting from such unions were publicly acknowledged as the man's children. In Merovingian Francia, rulers believed that the strength and purity of the Merovingian blood could not be tainted. This rendered concerns about the status of a concubine moot as the acceptance of the custom signified her elevated rank as a member of the royal household, especially if children were born from the union.<sup>61</sup> In Denmark, children of concubinous unions were recognised by their fathers and some sons of Danish kings were even offspring of such established unions.<sup>62</sup>

In theory, a concubine should have enjoyed the same status as that of a legal 'wife', in that she was able to retain gifts and legacies from her partner and was able to hold property in her own name.<sup>63</sup> In Anglo-Saxon England the status of a 'marital' union was generally established at its inception, based on a series of property exchanges, or lack thereof. Concubinous relationships generally did not see the exchange of property. However, property exchanged at some point in the union resulted in a conversion of the concubinous union into an established, legitimate marriage — one that removed doubts concerning claims to inheritance by any offspring. Though 'formalised' unions may have downgraded concubinous relationships to a degree, there appears to have been large expectations that the sons of concubines would succeed in inheritance claims.<sup>64</sup>

In Ireland and Iceland, concubinage (the cohabitation of a woman and man without legal or formal marriage) and polygamy (the practice or condition of having more than one spouse, especially a wife, at one time) were often coexistent and openly accepted. Marriage to more than one woman in medieval Norse society was an acceptable means of allying kindreds,<sup>65</sup> while in Danish culture, there may have been a fusion of concubinage with polygamy, though in theory marriage was

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<sup>60</sup> J.A. Brundage, 'Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 1 (1975), pp. 9-10.

<sup>61</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (London, 1962), pp. 203-04.

<sup>62</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 73.

<sup>63</sup> Lands often included testamentary bequests from her partner's estate. Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 13-34.

<sup>64</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>65</sup> Crawford, 'Women in Norse Society', p. 73.

supposed to be a monogamous union.<sup>66</sup> It is uncertain whether the Welsh explicitly sanctioned polygamy, but the more archaic origins of *Naw Cynweddi* and its inclusion in the thirteenth-century Iorwerth Redaction, suggest it was practised to some extent.<sup>67</sup>

The ideologies of marriage that were instigated by numerous reforms of twelfth century Europe increased an awareness of and an attention to the nature of the relationships that structured medieval society.<sup>68</sup> Some of the larger and more complicated issues concerning the position and status of wives in Wales revolve around the different types of recognised unions codified in the laws, the cultural practice of concubinage, and the recognition and inheritance of illegitimate children. Over time, in places where concubinage was practised, religious influences and changes in political necessity warranted that the distinction between married wives and concubines be more clearly demarcated.<sup>69</sup> This eventually led to a downgrading of the concubinous relationship to one of a more socially inferior union, under which concubines were afforded even fewer rights and certainly less protection than legal, legitimate wives.<sup>70</sup> Church law directly influenced European laws and many forms of literature that focus on wifely loyalty and sexuality resonate such influences.<sup>71</sup> It has been noted that in Anglo-Saxon society there is an interesting correlation between the change in the vocabulary concerning marriage and sexual roles and the Church's increasing dominance over rulings on legitimacy and marital unions that marks a clear indication of a change in attitudes towards concubinage.<sup>72</sup> It seems likely that with the wane in the practice of concubinage throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, women's sexual freedoms became more limited. Matters of virginity became more concerned with issues of patrimony and inheritance since technically women were not allowed to inherit under Welsh law.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 73.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 7; id., *Medieval Marriage*, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in Ireland', p. 33.

<sup>70</sup> This can be appreciated in the transference of sole responsibility of illegitimate offspring to the woman. See J.T. Noonan, 'Marital Affection in the Canonists,' *Studia Gratiana*, 12 (1967), pp. 459-509; id., 'Power to Chose,' *Viator*, 4 (1973), pp. 419-34.

<sup>71</sup> C.J. Clover, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe', *Speculum*, 68/2 (April 1993), p. 365.

<sup>72</sup> Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 18. This is perceptible in the Welsh laws and the focus on female sexuality and loyalty.

<sup>73</sup> Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Tests', p. 64.

The question remains whether women's status was debased by polygamy and/or concubinage. More specifically, whether or not the status of a woman as 'wife' was more significant than that of a woman as 'concubine' in a society where rulers had multiple partners, whose offspring were not considered illegitimate and could inherit.<sup>74</sup> In the Norse societies all wives were considered equal, as is evidenced by the inheritance of their sons, but they also maintained a more formalised legal status that separated them from concubines.<sup>75</sup> Legitimacy became important with the growth of wealth and the increased concern of passing possessions on to legitimate offspring. Yet, in Ireland there does not appear that this concept was heavily applied as an heir could be legitimate if openly accepted by the putative father. The increased importance of legitimacy in Ireland was associated with political power and the securing of successors.<sup>76</sup>

There are regional differences in the gradual changes made to the Welsh laws regarding marriage, although only the jurists of southern Wales assimilated ecclesiastical norms in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the *Cyfn*, *Blegywryd* and *D* redactions favouring legitimacy and prohibiting brothers from inheritance. The *Iorwerth* redaction used in the north of Wales retained the policy of recognising illegitimacy and the patrimonial rights of illegitimate children.<sup>77</sup> The increased need for Welsh rulers to conform more to the marital ideals promoted by the papacy in the thirteenth century meant that the practice of concubinage, certainly amongst the rulers themselves, was largely curtailed. Proverbs found in the *Red Book of Hergest* indicate that the worth of man was to ensure a wife.<sup>78</sup> *Priodas* or *rhodd ac estyn cenedl* ('gift and investiture of kin') came to be recognised as the superlative form of marriage.<sup>79</sup>

Above all, Welsh law implies that the status of the wife was, indeed, more significant than the concubine. This is evident in *Cyfraith y Gwraedd*, which states

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<sup>74</sup> It was not necessarily against canonical law for an illegitimate son to inherit, proof of which materializes in ecclesiastical court rulings that favoured the claims of illegitimate children. See Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, p. 99; J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), p. 408.

<sup>75</sup> Crawford, 'Women in Norse Society', p. 73.

<sup>76</sup> Swartz, 'Legal Status of Women', p. 114.

<sup>77</sup> Latin B, composed in North Wales, drew on a variety of sources and gives different view from *Iorwerth*. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 83-112, especially 111-12.

<sup>78</sup> *Gweb mared gŵr; 6noc un gŵreic* and *Gwala gwedw; gwreic vnbenn*. Oxford, Jesus College, Ms. 111, f. 241<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Comparative further research focused on concubinage in Wales, looking at regional practices, may reveal some differences in theory and practice and may even show a tradition of concubinage distinct to Wales. The topic is beyond the scope of this study.

that no man is entitled to have two wives and that there is no recourse to punishment if a wife beats her husband's concubine, even if it results in death.<sup>80</sup> The legal triads also specifically refer to concubinage. One of the 'thrusts' for which reparation cannot be made is that of the 'married woman at her [husband's] concubine with her two hands when they meet'. Though the concubine may die, the wife neither receives punishment nor compensation for being shamed.<sup>81</sup> The difference in status between *gwriag* and *cywyres* is also indicated in examples found in various sources like *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*, the Welsh Triads, *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogon Cymru* and the chronicles that differentiate a ruler's 'wife' from his 'concubine'.<sup>82</sup> Evidence of how the laws were applied in terms of the practices of marriage and concubinage, as well as the uxorial status in Wales is scant. There is one tantalizing copy of a charter that survives from the thirteenth century in which a grant of land was made to Margam Abbey by Margeria, daughter of Roger, a former concubine of Roger, the clerk of Kenfig (*Margaria filia Rogeri q[u]ondam c[on]cubina...Ricardi cl[er]ici de Kenefeg*).<sup>83</sup> Whether Margeria had rights to these lands as a daughter, or in fact as a former concubine is unknown. Nevertheless, it is clear that her identifying label of concubine is one that helped to establish her status as a patron.

In isolation, no discernible or explicit changes were made to the laws over a two hundred year period concerning the commodification of female sexuality. This strongly suggests a diachronic, long-term continuity in the legal status of women. The endurance of the different types of marital unions, the ambiguity in definitions of 'wife' and the pervasive practice of concubinage presented married women with conflicting instructions and notions of what their positions, roles and expectations were. An investigation of the use of the uxorial lifecycle in sources helps to illuminate attitudes further. Marriage, especially as portrayed in the Welsh chronicles, is a metaphor for survival: the survival of culture, customs, alliances, submission, conquest and compromise.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 30; *LTMW*, p. 57.

<sup>81</sup> *Eil y6 h6rd g6wreic brya6c yn y chybyres a'e d6y la6 yny kyfarffont; kyt bo mar6, ny di6ygir. The Legal Triads*, pp. 144-5. Also see pp. 70-71.

<sup>82</sup> ... *fuere illi ex concubinis liberi aliquot* ... *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-9; *HGK*, p. 22. *TYP*, triads 56 and 57, pp. 161-4. *ABT*, pp. 98-9, 95-103.

<sup>83</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, 289 (60) roll.

<sup>84</sup> S. Aronstein, 'When Arthur Held Court in Caer Llion: Love, Marriage, and the Politics of Centralization in *Gereint* and *Owein*', *Viator*, 25 (1994), p. 227-8.

## ***LIFECYCLES***

The status and positions of women in most cultures changed in accordance with basic societal needs, effecting gender expectations. In warrior-aristocratic cultures, the political requirements of a kinship system that used marriage as a solution to many situations and women, as the conduits of interaction between two families, were representative of men's power, potency and wealth. Law codes that define stages of the female lifecycle through physiology (rather than by status and accumulative wealth based on birth and marital rights as for men) and that endorse monetary compensation in return for female sexuality reveal the discerning, yet varying levels of cultural gendered expectations and constructs.<sup>85</sup> Pauline Stafford has shown that the large difference in the influences of the lifecycle over women and men were down to opportunities and choices that men were presented with. The roles and choices of men were not as defined by their biological development in the same ways women's were.<sup>86</sup> In fact, the medieval cultural categorizing of man does not exist in the same way as it does for woman. The categorization of woman as good or bad or even as wife, mother, widow is an implied appropriation for the female sex only.<sup>87</sup>

The unexamined basis behind the use of female lifecycles as markers of identification in medieval sources perhaps gives the perception that medieval misogyny had much more clout than is warranted,<sup>88</sup> creating false representations of collective female activities and identities.<sup>89</sup> It is important to understand that the labelling and categorising of the female sex draws attention to their respective gendered roles, position and status in society. This helps elucidate the social and

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<sup>85</sup> This is further augmented when bearing in mind that marriage was used in many ways as a form of social control.

<sup>86</sup> P. Stafford, 'Writing the Biography', pp. 100-01.

<sup>87</sup> This is a theme discussed in detail by R. Howard Bloch in his tome on medieval misogyny, which he describes as 'the expression of a negative opinion'. Id., *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Peter Coss stresses the need to rethink ideas of misogyny to stop scholars from falling victim to anachronisms when discussing what it has meant at different stages in history. Caroline Walker Bynum and Jacqueline Murray tend to agree with Coss, reminding scholars of the need to question the hegemony of primarily ecclesiastical discourse concerning medieval misogyny and accept that there was no one medieval attitude towards women. Joan Scott appropriately advises historians to think more widely about the symbiotic relationship between gender constructs and the status of women in any society, stating that 'Subsequent history is written as if these normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than of conflict'. P. Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500* (Thrupp, 1998), p. 29; C. Walker Bynum, "... And Woman His Humanity"; J. Murray, 'Thinking about Gender: Diversity of Medieval Perspectives', in J. Carpenter and S. MacLean (eds), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (Urbana, 1995), pp. 2-3.

legal positions of women at various stages in their lifecycles. An intriguing facet found amongst all the Welsh sources analysed for this thesis, is that women, at any stage in their lifecycles, are perceived strictly through their relationships with men as their fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and kinsmen. Moreover, regardless of what specific lifecycle is used as a means of identifying individual women, the uxorial status is generally implied. In this respect, it becomes clear that marriage was not only a powerful tool to acquire power and social control, it was through marriage that the status and agency of the woman in native Welsh society was at its height. This is most observable in how the female lifecycles are used the Welsh Triads and chronicles.

The repetitive descriptions in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* of women as sisters, daughters, wives, mistresses, concubines and mothers demonstrate the marked importance of a woman's lifecycle as her most defining feature. Female lifecycles also likely aided the memorization techniques of the *cyfarwyddiad*.<sup>90</sup> This is emphasised in the first instance by the titles of specific triads that actually identify women by lifecycles. Some examples include the Three Wives [of] Brychan Brycheiniog (*Tair Gwraedd a fu i Vrychan Vrycheiniog*), Three Fair (Holy, Blessed) Womb-Burdens of the Island of Britain (*Tri Gwyndorllwyth Ynys Prydein*) and the triad of the Three Families of Saints of the Island of Britain, by Welsh mothers (*Tair Gwelygordh Saint (ii) Ynys Prydain o Vam Gymreig*), although none are actually named.<sup>91</sup> Proportionately, it is the lifecycle of the daughter that is used most to identify these women and many are the daughters of legendary and mythological Welsh heroes and 'ancestor deities', such as Beli Mawr, Maelgwn Gwynedd, Llŷr and Brychan Brycheiniog.<sup>92</sup>

The number of women who are defined as wives is comparatively smaller. Those that appear are largely associated with Arthurian lore.<sup>93</sup> In the triad of the three wives of Brychan Brycheiniog, the women are not identified by any other lifecycle phase or by title.<sup>94</sup> This is in direct contrast to the last triad concerning the

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<sup>90</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> *TYP*, triad, 70, pp. 195-8; triad 81, pp. 211-13; triad 96, p. 243.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* triad, 35, pp. 81-9; triad 115-23; triad 44, pp. 150-2; triad 70, pp. 195-8; pp. 284-5, 288-9, 293-5, 352, 418-21, 428-32, 463.

<sup>93</sup> Gwenhwyfar, Essyllt and the Empress of Constantinople. *Ibid.* triad 56, pp. 161-3; triad 80, p. 210; triad 86, pp. 225-7; pp. 292-3, 350-2, 376-80.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* triad 96, p. 243. The Empress of Constantinople, Peredur's paramour as told in the tale of the *Mabinogion*, daughter of King Brangor, is the only woman not to be given personal name. Yet, this silence is mitigated by the fact that she is one of the few women who is given a title, indicating her

three times when the lordship of Gwynedd was held by the distaff (side) (*Llyma y tri lle y daliwyd Arglwyddiaeth Gwynedd o gogail*) where all women are identified as daughters, wives and mothers.<sup>95</sup>

The triads also make a distinction between wives, concubines and mistresses. Of the *gorderchau*, or mistresses, who are mentioned in the triads, there are only two.<sup>96</sup> The triad of Arthur's three queens is contrasted by that of his three concubines (*cariadwraig*), all of whom are further defined by their filial lifecycles.<sup>97</sup> Other sources also make similar distinctions. Gerald relates a tale of Tegeingl, who was once the mistress of both Dafydd ab Owain of Gwynedd, and his brother as well.<sup>98</sup> *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* distinguished between the ruler's named children by his wife, Angharad, and his unnamed children born to unnamed concubines. The same use of the term *cariadwraig* (*caryatwraed*) in the Middle Welsh version of the Life perhaps suggests that the author was familiar with the triads.<sup>99</sup> The narrative of the abduction of Nest of Deheubarth in the Welsh chronicles, discussed below, makes a differentiation between the legitimate children of Nest and her husband, Gerald, and the child that Gerald had by his concubine.<sup>100</sup> Contrasts between wives, concubines, legitimate and illegitimate children also appear in Welsh pedigrees, such as *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogon Cymru*, where children by legal wives are listed first.<sup>101</sup>

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royal status (*verch Brenyn Brangor, yr honn a vu Ymherodres yn Constinobyl*). Ibid. triad 86, p. 225. The only other three women given a designation are Arthur's Three Great Queens (all named Gwenhwyfar) as is specified in the title itself, *Teir Prif Riein Arthur*. Ibid. triad 56, pp. 161-3. Perhaps significantly, these women appear as two of the three mentioned in the triad titled the Three Fair (Royal) Ladies of the Island of Britain (*Teir Gwenriein Ynys Prydein*), possibly providing a glimpse of one of the core traits that defined royal status based on the matrilineal line. It is clear that one's maternal lineage was an important aspect in emphasising rights to rule and noble status. Also see the daughters of Creirwy merch Ceridwen and Arianrhod ferch Dôn. Ibid. triad 78, p. 208; pp. 284-5, 312-13, 315-16.

<sup>95</sup> Stradweul, daughter (*merch*) of Cadfan ap Cynan ab Eudaf ap Caradog ap Brân ap Llyr Llediaith, the wife (*gwraig*) of Coel Hen, mother (*mam*) of Cenau ap Coel and Dyfyr (otherwise called Seradwen, daughter of Cynan ab Eudaf ap Caradog); Gwawl, daughter (*merch*) of Coel Godebog, mother (*mam*) of Cunedda Wledig, wife (*gwraig*) of Edyrn son of Padarn Peisrudd ('Red Tunic'); and Eryllt, daughter (*merch*) of Cynan Tindaethwy, mother (*mam*) of Rhodri Mawr and wife (*gwraig*) of Merfyn Vrych ('Freckled'). Ibid. triad 97, pp. 244-5.

<sup>96</sup> Diadema (Dido?), the mistress of Eneas White-Shield (*Diadema, gorderch Eneas Yscbydwyn*) and Eryllt Fair-Hair who is the first of the three faithless (unchaste) wives and referred to as Tristan's mistress (*Essyllt (F) yngwen, (gorderch Trystan)*). Ibid. triad 50, pp. 136-7; triad 80, p. 210.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. triad 57, p. 164.

<sup>98</sup> Gir. Camb. *Op.*, vi, pp. 190-1; Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, p. 243.

<sup>99</sup> I would like to thank Huw Pryce for this input. *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-9; *HGK*, pp. 95-110.

<sup>100</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, the children of Gruffudd ap Cynan, *ABT*, pp. 98-9.

Numerous examples of the more nuanced meaning behind the use of female lifecycles in Welsh sources appear in the chronicles. Chronicles are not usually concerned with providing information that is useful or even essential to the historian trying to reconstruct a medieval life.<sup>102</sup> The brief remarks about women in particular often make it difficult to recognize their contributions to events and their social roles. There are avenues of exploration, however, that help draw a clearer picture. Pauline Stafford has demonstrated in her study of royal women in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages, that the condition of the individual woman can often be determined by looking at groups of women and generalising their experiences. Creating groups of those for whom little information is available allows us to construct a sense of the individual through a better understanding of the generalisations that bind them together. This type of approach informs better interpretations of laconic sources.<sup>103</sup>

A recent investigation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has shown that women are connected in a way that goes beyond a simple representation of events. Many entries are shaped to include women making them 'literally metaphorically central'.<sup>104</sup> This was most clearly done by the author who fits in the information about women between the often violent and unscrupulous actions of men.<sup>105</sup> By looking at the contexts in which women appear in the Welsh chronicles, it is apparent that the entries concerning them are defined by a world dominated by the masculine activities of the Welsh princely families. Because the majority of women who make appearances in the Welsh chronicles are not associated with specific gendered roles, observing the female lifecycle has particular relevance. It helps with an understanding of the status and position of these women who are under represented by the sources and highlights how gender was used for a more informative purpose.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Stafford, 'Writing the Biography', p. 102.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 100-01.

<sup>104</sup> P. Stafford, 'Chronicle D, 1067 and Women: Gendering Conquest in Eleventh-Century England', in S. Keynes and A.P. Smyth (eds), *Anglo-Saxons: Studies Presented to Cyril Roy Hart* (Dublin, 2006), p. 212.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 215.

<sup>106</sup> In total, out of the 1725 entries (entries referring to one account for an entire year) found in the chronicles, 263 (15.25%) have references to women, all of whom are of royal or noble blood. Entries relating to royalty are heavily concentrated in terms of geographical scope and time frame. The majority of entries are for the eleventh and twelfth centuries and are concerned with women of Anglo-Saxon origin, such as in *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, as well as Scottish and Anglo-Scottish origin; namely, queens Margaret, Edith/Matilda and the Empress Matilda. Later fourteenth-century entries in the



The Welsh chronicles have not been studied in the same way. As such, this original discussion concerning the women that appear in the Welsh chronicles focuses on coverage specifically for the period under investigation and relates to women of Welsh origin and those concerning Anglo-Norman women who were married to Welsh men up to 1282;<sup>107</sup> all generalisations to ‘women’ hereafter refer only to these. In terms of the chronicles, by examining the list of individuals and looking for group patterns, it becomes clear that the contexts in which women appear are symbolic representations of Welsh masculine power. All the women who are named or referred to are married or are recognised as being part of a concubinous relationship. What is interesting is that although these women retain their natal identities after marriage, their most identifying characteristic is their connection to Welsh men, first and foremost.<sup>108</sup>

The ways that women are identified in the major events that define the human lifecycle (births, marriages and deaths) draw attention to their status and positions in society. There are many different types of events in which women are found in the Welsh chronicles that can be categorised in a way that shows how the entries were shaped to include women for very specific reasons. Examples of the types of events where women are mentioned include: abduction, incest, intercession, pacts, protection, scandal, seizure, treachery and warfare.<sup>109</sup> Only two references are found relating to births, but this is not unusual in medieval chronicles generally. The

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*Brutiau*, for example, are primarily concerned with England’s queen Isabella of France. Entries concerning noble women are largely those of Anglo-Norman origins. *BS*, pp. 138-9, 146-7, 156-7, 180-1, 202-03, 204-05, 220-21, 226-7, 230-3, 238-9, 252-3, 262-3, 264-5, 266-7, 268-9, 272-3, 274-5, 276-7; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 7, 25, 30, 78, 89, 126, 152, 154, 180, 196, 198, 204, 206, 222, 223, 226, 232-7; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 6, 19, 22, 47, 52, 70, 83-5, 97, 101-02, 104-06, 108-09, 117, 119, 124-6; *BT, RBH*, pp. 8-9, 32-3, 40-41, 104-05, 116-17, 164-5, 186-93, 211-18, 228-9, 232-5, 236-7, 242-5, 262-5, 268-9. In Peniarth 20 the entry for the year 1193 pertains to King Richard’s imprisonment and the collection of taxes imposed upon England to meet the ransom for his release stating that the monks and churchmen were forced to give up gold, silver and relics ‘entirely to the queen and the servants of the king’, referring to Eleanor of Aquitaine’s status as regent during his absence. The Red Book and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* do not refer to her at all, simply stating that all taxes were placed ‘into the hands of the officers of the king and the realm’ (*oll ymedyant swydogyon y brenhin a’r teyrnna*). *BT, RBH*, pp. 172-3; *BS*, pp. 188-9; *BT, Pen20*, p. 133; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 74.

<sup>107</sup> There are forty-six entries. This number is inclusive of entries that appear in more than one record for the same event and also of the number of women who have subsequently been identified based on references to ‘many daughters’.

<sup>108</sup> This is in contrast to women who appear in Anglo-Saxon sources whose links to their birth families are essentially forgotten; the emphasis being on woman as the wife, a member of her new family. I would like to thank Elisabeth van Houts for her comparative input on this matter.

<sup>109</sup> There is one reference to each category of abduction, incest, pacts, protection, scandal, treachery and warfare, all of which are only found in the *Brutiau*. *BS*, pp. 59, 104-07, 110-11, 126-8, 172-5, 180-3, 188-91, 226-7, 236-7, 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2, 46, 65, 118, 134, 142-3, 198, 203-04, 212-13, 222-3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9, 31, 40-1, 67, 69, 75, 79, 101-2, 108, 112, 117; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-9, 62-3, 86-9, 154-5, 160-1, 174-5, 180-1, 228-9, 242-3, 252-3, 262-5.

*Brutiau* record the birth of a child in 1173 through an incestuous relationship between the Lord Rhys and one of his (unnamed) nieces and the birth of Gwenllian, daughter of Eleanor de Montfort and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282.<sup>110</sup> Version C of the *Annales Cambriae* also records the latter.<sup>111</sup>

There are a number of references to marital alliances, including betrothals and entries where marriages are implied. These make up a total of ten out of forty-six entries in all the sources concerning women.<sup>112</sup> Three references pertain to Welsh women and seven to Anglo-Norman women married to Welsh men. The definition of marriage has been determined by the sources themselves. Legitimate unions, including betrothals and recognised acts of concubinage, are largely recognised by the use of the lifecycle identifier of the ‘wife’ (*gwraig, uxor*) and ‘wedded wife’ (*gwraig briod*), although there are genealogical entries that allude to the familial and social status of women as mothers. Obituaries, or references to deaths of women, are larger in number making up eighteen entries. There are twelve references to Welsh women and six references to Anglo-Norman women.<sup>113</sup> An additional six references to women are found in male obits.<sup>114</sup>

In a separate text, which immediately follows the *Cronica de Wallia* and is a part of the same manuscript, there appears a list of the daughters and sons of the Lord Rhys. In this genealogical list, marital alliances are emphasised in a manner that is similar to the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* in which women are recognised as the connecting force between kingroups. In contrast to the list of the sons of the Lord Rhys, which also appears and identifies the men through their territorial domains, the list of daughters identifies them through their wifely lifecycles.<sup>115</sup> The direct reference to the eight daughters of Lord Rhys is revealing. It tells something of the importance of marital unions, connections between kin

<sup>110</sup> *BT, Pen20.*, pp. 123, 223; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 69, 117; *BT, RBH*, pp.160-1, 262-5.

<sup>111</sup> *AC*, p. 107.

<sup>112</sup> There are six marital alliances found in the *Brutiau, Brenhinedd y Saesson, BS*, pp. 148-9, 180-1, 212-13, 220-1, 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 90, 126, 167, 180, 222-3, 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 53, 70, 91, 97, 117, 119; *BT, RBH*, 119, 165, 205, 219, 263-5, 269. Two are in the *Annales, AC*, pp. 77, 105. Seven are found in *Cronica de Wallia, CW*, pp. 41-3.

<sup>113</sup> Six are found in the *Annales Cambriae, AC*, pp. 17, 81, 82, 88, 90, 107. Ten are in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson, BS*, pp. 30-1, 162-3, 188-9, 202-03, 230-1, 238-9, 240-1, 244-5, 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 8, 108, 126-7; 132, 154, 198, 205, 206-07, 222-3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 6, 62, 74, 84, 104, 109, 110, 112, 117; *BT, RBH*, pp. 12-13, 142-3, 172-3, 190-1, 234-5, 242-3, 244-5, 246-7, 252-3, 262-5. Two are in the *Cronica de Wallia, CW*, pp. 38.

<sup>114</sup> Women appear in two male obits in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson, BS*, pp. 232-3, 240-1; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 197, 227; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 105, 109; *BT, RBH*, p. 236-7, 245-7. Three are in the *Annales Cambriae, AC*, pp. 83, 89. One is found *Cronica de Wallia, CW*, p. 38.

<sup>115</sup> *CW*, pp. 41-2.

groups and women's places in genealogies. It also provides insight into the attitudes towards the positions and status of noble women.

It is clear that these women were crucial to cementing alliances as the offspring of the Lord Rhys as they are identified, first, as his daughters. Moreover, through these marriages it was expected that they were to produce heirs and continue the esteemed line of the dynasty of Dinefwr. This is obvious in the naming of children and the declaration that Susanna (*fl.* before 1191), who married Einion o'r Porth (d. 1191), prince of Elfael, had no children. Only six of the eight sisters are actually identified as wives and two husbands, those of the first named Lleucu (*fl.* before 1195) and Susanna, are not named at all.<sup>116</sup> In the case of Lleucu it is likely due to the fact that her husband, Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd (d. 1195), was exiled from his domains in Anglesey and Arfon by his younger nephews in 1190. This type of dishonour was not befitting a child of the Lord Rhys. It is apparent that the author's first priority was to focus on the progeny of the Lord Rhys as representatives of his widespread authority long after his death.<sup>117</sup>

Strong marital alliances were the necessary means to ensuring the survival and progress of families and peace between neighbours. Records of marital partnerships highlight the power struggles behind specific unions. One example is that of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn (d. 1111) of Powys who, in 1109, lost his lands and authority as a consequence of his son's abduction of the princess Nest of Deheubarth. The only lands that Henry I (r. 1100–1135) permitted Cadwgan to hold were those by right of his marriage to the unnamed daughter (*fl.* before 1112) of Picot de Sai (*fl.* 1070), lord of Clun on the Welsh March. This woman is not named but identified through her lifecycle stages first as a wife and then daughter (*y wreic aoed Frages merch y Pigod o Saesis*).<sup>118</sup> She is also identified as a Frenchwoman, clearly marking her as 'other' or 'foreign'. However, calling her French clearly highlights her status as the connecting force between Powys and the Marcher lordship of Clun. The labelling of her as a Frenchwoman through whom Cadwgan not only held rights to lands, but was allowed to keep them, may also be indicative of the acculturation of Anglo-Norman and Welsh customs regarding uxorial agency and land ownership.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> This Lleucu is referred to as Gwenllian in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. *BS*, pp. 188-9; *BT, Pen20*, p. 132; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 74; *BT, RBH*, pp. 172-3.

<sup>117</sup> Smith, '*Cronica de Wallia*'.

<sup>118</sup> *BS*, pp. 110-11; *BT, Pen20*, p. 46; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 30-1; *BT, RBH*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter 5 generally.

More central to the theme of this thesis, the key emphasis is plainly on her position as the wife of a Welsh leader. The lands that Cadwgan acquired and held through her helped him to maintain some semblance of status and authority.

This unnamed woman appears again in another entry dated 1113=16 recording the slaying of Owain ap Cadwgan. As the entry is written, this woman's lifecycle as a wife sets her apart from Cadwgan's concubines (*Fragas ywreic merch y Bigot tywyssawc Yfreig*).<sup>120</sup> The fact that she is recognised as a (legal) wife indicates the importance of this Anglo-Norman-Welsh alliance. The primary emphasis is on her connection to Cadwgan. Opposite to this, the other women were most likely recognised concubines as none of them are defined as a wife. These other women are more celebrated as the mothers of many of Cadwgan's children, a new generation of Welsh power, and as their fathers' daughters, an already established and influential generation. The definitive emphasis is on their Welsh connections and identities, which perhaps underscores the significance of not naming Picot's daughter who was of Anglo-Norman descent.

Often marriages and betrothals are placed in context with ongoing wider events, thereby emphasising the needs that prompted certain coalitions to form. This is exemplified in a reference to a union between the houses of Gwynedd and Deheubarth found in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* for 1143=44.<sup>121</sup> It was the desire of both Owain Gwynedd and Anarawd ap Gruffudd (d. 1143) of Deheubarth to unite their families through the marriage of Owain's unnamed daughter and Anarawd. If the marriage had proceeded as planned, it had the potential to be mutually supportive to both parties. Yet, the consequences of such alliances being jeopardised are clear as Anarawd was killed by Cadwallon ap Gruffudd (d. 1132), Owain's brother. Neither Owain's daughter, who remains unnamed, nor Anarawd are central to the narrative, which is significant. It underscores that the desired union was between two dynastic rulers, or kin groups, and not individuals. It also draws attention to the key players in the events, Owain and Anarawd, and the causes and effects of these types of contracts in the social and political milieu of the mid-twelfth century.

The *Brutiau* records the marriage of Dafydd ab Owain of Gwynedd and Emma of Anjou for the year 1175: 'That same Dafydd then married the king's sister —

<sup>120</sup> *BS*, pp. 134-5; *BT, Pen20*, p. 75; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 45; *BT, RBH*, pp. 98-101.

<sup>121</sup> *BS*, pp. 148-9; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 89-90; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 53; *BT, RBH*, pp. 118-19.

Emma was her name — because he thought that he could hold his territory in peace thereby'.<sup>122</sup> This entry deliberately refers to the fundamental purpose of this marriage: to act as a means to maintaining peace between Gwynedd and England. This is also noted by Gerald of Wales who comments that Dafydd was strongly supported by the English because of his marriage to Emma, the king's sister.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps more importantly, it was an attempt to ensure that Dafydd would be better able to retain his territories throughout the long-lasting dispute with his brothers for control of Gwynedd by maintaining a strong and powerful connection with the English crown. In his *mawl* to his former patron Dayfdd, the poet Prydydd y Moch makes reference to Emma's status as Dafydd's wife and mother of his heir.<sup>124</sup> In the chronicles, Emma is named and identified as being the sister of the English king. Further, she is one of only two women in these particular sources to be given a title, that of *dam* or lady.<sup>125</sup> This calls attention to her international status as a royal woman and likely indicates an expectation that Emma would intervene in affairs if called upon to do so.<sup>126</sup>

Some alliances were deemed to be so essential that events that threatened to end relations were tempered by diplomacy. The greatest example of this is found in the *Annales Cambriae*, which records another union that Llywelyn ap Iorwerth formed with the de Braose lords. As part of a peace settlement made in 1230 between Llywelyn and William de Braose the Younger (d. 1230), lord of Brycheiniog, Dafydd (d. 1246), Llywelyn's son and legitimate heir by his legally recognised wife, Joan, was to be married to Isabella de Braose (*fl.* 1226), William's daughter.<sup>127</sup> Isabella's dowry promised the house of Gwynedd considerable land and power, including the critical de Braose lordship of Builth.<sup>128</sup> However, the *Brutiau*

<sup>122</sup> *Yr vnryw dauyd hwnw a briodes chwaer y brenhin yna emm oed y henw o achaws tebygu o honaw gallel kael y gyfoeth yn hedwch drwy hyny.* *BS*, pp. 180-1; *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 126; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 70; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>123</sup> *Gir. Camb. Op.*, vi, p. 134; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 193.

<sup>124</sup> *Efy'e'r gorau a fu'n fab I dad | Ac yn fab I wraig: ffynnodd ei fwriad. Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn*, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Joan, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's wife, is the other woman who was also directly connected to the English crown, being the daughter of King John (r. 1199–1216). *AC*, p. 82; *BS*, pp. 230-3; *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 196; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 104; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 234-5. The significance in assessing the status of women through use of titles is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, *Titles and Other Designations*.

<sup>126</sup> See Chapter 4 for the discussion on uxorial political agency.

<sup>127</sup> *Lewelinus princeps Nordwalliae Willielmum de Breusa pro magna summa pecuniae et pro castellis de Buelth de carcere liberavit, ad augmentum etiam foederis Willielmo de Brusa filiam suam cum provincialibus et castello de Buelth dedit in uxorem.* *AC*, p. 77.

<sup>128</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 208-09.

record that in the year 1230, Isabella's father was hanged by Llywelyn, after being caught in the prince's bedchamber with Joan.<sup>129</sup>

It is clear that this alliance was vital to Dafydd's legitimacy as Llywelyn's heir and his hold over his future domain.<sup>130</sup> This is the focal point of the narrative; not the marriage that was to take place between Dafydd and Isabella as individuals. Both Isabella and Joan go unnamed in these two separate entries and are solely defined and identified as daughters and, in Joan's case, as wife, drawing attention to their relationships with the men involved, rather than to their own identities and individual statuses. Moreover, none of the Welsh chronicles refer to Joan's own punishment after being found to be having an affair with William de Breos, which resulted in a year-long incarceration for her. This silence may point towards the authors' collective veneration if not for Llywelyn himself, then, at least, for the model of strong Welsh rulership he personified.<sup>131</sup>

Entries that refer explicitly to marital alliances may emphasize the importance of the union between kin groups, but they may also outline the greater significance of certain alliances to the time the texts were actually written. There is no more powerful example than that of the marriage between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Eleanor de Montfort because it appears in all sources.<sup>132</sup> The record of this particular union works within a wider framework. It shows that as the daughter of Simon de Montfort (c. 1208–1265), Eleanor (*Elenor verch Symwnt Mwnfort*) was a

<sup>129</sup> *Yny vhwrdyn honno y kroget Gwilyam Jeuag o Brewys arglwyd Brycheinyawc ygan yr arglwyd Lywelyn y Gwyned wedy ydaly yn ystauell Lywelyn gyt amerch brenhin Lloegyrgwreic Lywelyn. BT, Pen20*, pp. 190-1; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 101-02; *BT, RBH*, pp. 228-9. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* further identifies Joan's social status by stylising her as 'princess' (*tywysoges*). *Id.*, pp. 226-7. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the use of titles to identify women and Chapter 4 for the details of the affair, pp. 208-11. Although not recorded in any of these sources, the marriage of Dafydd and Isabella occurred around 1232. 'Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia', *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols. (Rolls Series, London, 1864-9), iii, p. 117.

<sup>130</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 208-11.

<sup>131</sup> See Chapter 3 for ideals of Welsh rulership, *General Ideals of Welsh Queenship*.

<sup>132</sup> *AC*, p. 105; *CW*, p. 43. In fact, the union is so noteworthy that it is recorded twice in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. *BT, Pen20*, pp. 222-3, 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 117, 119; *BT, RBH*, p. 262-5, 268-9. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* says that 'on the feast of St. Edward, prince Llywelyn married her at Winchester, with the king Edward there and then making provision for the wedding feast (*A Gwyl Saint Edward y priodes Llywelyn dywysoc hi yn Ghaer Wynt, ac Edwart vrenin yn y lle yn gwnevtur y gost ar y neithior*)'. *Id.*, pp. 252-3. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* also states the natal relationship between Eleanor and king Edward. Her mother, Eleanor (d. 13 April 1275), the 'daughter of king John, was Simon Montfort's mother, sister of king Henry, father of Edward (*kanis Elenor verch Jevan vrenin oedd vam Simwnt Mwnffordd, chwaer Henrri vrenin, tad Edwart Gynntaf*)'. Reference to Eleanor as Simon de Montfort's mother is most likely a mistake, wife being the more correct lifecycle identifier, given contextual background concerning Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's involvement with Simon de Montfort and the Baron's Rebellion. However, Eleanor and Simon's second son was named Simon (1240–1271), so the possibility that the use of the term mother is correct should also be taken into consideration. *BS*, pp. 256-7.

powerful symbol of Llywelyn's willingness to ally himself with the rebellion against the English crown. The narratives themselves, in the ways events are told, highlight the power struggle that took place between Llywelyn and Edward I. Eleanor is defined by many different lifecycles in these entries: wedded wife, daughter and kinswoman. The fact that Eleanor is described as a *gwraig briodas* indicates the political, social and cultural importance of the alliance.<sup>133</sup> Crucially, her status as wedded wife to the Welsh leader, daughter to the baron rebel and kinswoman to the English king all signify her position as the embodiment of male supremacy, authority and control.<sup>134</sup> The use of lifecycles to identify her create a form of pedigree and reflect her status in both the English and Welsh dynasties.

In the illustration of the events surrounding the life and death of Eleanor, she is portrayed not only as a symbol of power and the embodiment of a Welsh identity, but also as a victim. She was captured and imprisoned by the English king, released only after intervention from the pope and then died in childbirth. This is comparable to other instances found in the chronicles in which the depiction of the female sex is in terms of victimisation.<sup>135</sup> The *Brutiau* tell us of Gwladus (*fl.* 1175), sister of the Lord Rhys, wife of Seisyll ap Dyfnwal (d. 1175) of Upper Gwent who was seized by Norman lords after her husband and sons were slain at Abergavenny in 1175.<sup>136</sup> There is the seizure of Philip fitz Wizo and his unnamed (and unidentified) wife (*gwraig*) and two (unnamed) sons by Maelgwn ap Rhys (*c.* 1170–1230) in 1193.<sup>137</sup> One of the more descriptive entries found in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* concerns the tragic seizure and death of Trahaearn Fychan of Brycheiniog by William de Braose in 1197. *Peniarth 20* refers twice to Trahaearn's wife as being the niece (*nith*) of the Lord Rhys, whilst *Brenhinedd y Saesson* also refers to her as Rhys's niece, but further emphasises Trahaearn's connection with (and the de Braose degradation of) the family of the house of Dinefwr by describing her as a wedded wife (*gwraig briod*).<sup>138</sup> The *Brutiau* also tells of the capture of Hywel ap Meurig (*fl.*

<sup>133</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 119; *BT, RBH*, p. 268-9.

<sup>134</sup> See Chapter 4 for a full discussion on Eleanor de Montfort, pp. 224-37.

<sup>135</sup> See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 19-48.

<sup>136</sup> *BS*, pp. 180-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 127; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 71; *BT, RBH*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>137</sup> *BS*, pp. 188-9; *BT, Pen20*, p. 134; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p.75; *BT, RBH*, pp. 174-5.

<sup>138</sup> *BS*, pp. 194-5; *BT, Pen20*, p. 142; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 79; *BT, RBH*, pp. 180-1.

1262), his unnamed (unidentified) wife, unnamed sons and daughters (*ay wreic ay veibyon ay verchet*) in 1262.<sup>139</sup>

All of these women as wives and daughters are examples of the feminine symbolic value of masculine power and authority. Their captivities represent a marked domination over the power of their (marital) families. As unnamed mothers to unnamed children they are the ‘anonymous’, ‘helpless’ victims of war. That none of these women save one are named suggests the overall value of women as they are portrayed in these entries is as victims of war. In all of these cases, these women are not only figures of political power play and masculine authority, they are, in many ways, the winning prizes, sexual objects. It may not have been a conscious decision to portray them as such, but women have special places and uses in terms of depicting stories of warfare and conquest. This is similar to women in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* who are symbolic of the changing of social order, ‘the passing of the old order and the coming of the new’.<sup>140</sup>

The use of the uxorial and motherhood lifecycles in Eleanor’s obituaries is especially important in terms of victimisation and gendered imagery. The consequent deaths of Eleanor, who died in childbirth, and Llywelyn, who was slain, and a daughter who was taken into forced captivity in England, all work together in the narrative to underscore the decisive change over and demise of Welsh power.<sup>141</sup> Highlighting the death of Eleanor whilst giving birth to a daughter is symbolic portrayal of the ‘inherently’ weak characteristic associated with the feminine (Eleanor and Gwenllian) used to define the waning of masculine (Llywelyn) and, in this extreme case, Welsh power and identity. This particular manner of description serves to accentuate the seriousness of the situation for Wales as a whole.

<sup>139</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 212-13; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 112; *BT, RBH*, pp. 252-3. This entry does not appear in *Brenhinedd y Saesson*.

<sup>140</sup> Stafford, ‘Chronicle D’, p. 213.

<sup>141</sup> In the *Annales Cambriae* Eleanor’s death is fused with the events surrounding Llywelyn’s own demise and the fate of their one and only child, a daughter, Gwenllian (d. 1337), who Edward condemned to an English nunnery for life after Llywelyn’s death and the conquest of Wales. Comparatively, in the *Brutiau*, Eleanor’s death is interspersed with the events surrounding her capture by Edward, the alliance between her husband and father, the protracted separation of the couple after their betrothal, their subsequent marriage and the birth of Gwenllian. The death notices for Llywelyn in the *Annales* and the *Brutiau* state that along with a handful of his men, he was killed without warning, by the king’s host and neither source has a eulogy. It can be argued that the simplicity of the accounts of Llywelyn’s death imply both the impact it had over Wales and the subsequent consequences. The records of events detailing Eleanor’s circumstances further enhance the gravity of the situation. *AC*, p. 107; *BS*, pp. 252-3, 258-9; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 222-3, 228; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 117, 120-1; *BT, RBH*, pp. 262-5. Llywelyn’s death is not recorded in the Red Book of Hergest as this ends 25 March 1282.



Another example is the narrative of the abduction of the princess Nest of Deheubarth, wife of Gerald of Windsor, daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr (d. 1093), found in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. The entries emphasize her reputation as a Hellenic beauty and the desire of powerful men to have control over her. The *Brutiau* record that in 1106=09 Nest was abducted, at night, by Owain ap Cadwgan, one of her kinsman who was driven by desire to have her. Nest's husband, Gerald, awoke to commotion in his castle courtyard and, fearing for his life, turned to his wife for guidance.<sup>142</sup> She helped him escape through the privy and confronted the intruders herself. Owain violated Nest, then seized her, her children and a daughter of Gerald's by a concubine. He kept her captive, but she was able to negotiate the release of the children. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* does not give Nest a voice and heavily plays upon gendered stereotypes concerning her physical appearance and roles as wedded wife and mother.<sup>143</sup>

This is the only entry in any of the chronicles that provides a sense of narrative for either women or men and it is important to take notice of the fact that, at least in the telling provided in the *Brutiau*, Nest is clearly the quick-thinking subject of action. It is possible that this portrayal of Nest may be reflective of her own person or how contemporaries perceived her. It could also be a manifestation of the authors' own personalised view of Nest. Above all, in the way the story is told, there seems to be a relaying of common stereotypes concerning the detrimental effects of feminine beauty as a means to provide a lively narrative.<sup>144</sup> Thus, in this instance the author(s) manipulate gender in order to embellish the narrative for the sake of drama. Nest functions as the outlet through which (masculine) power is transferred. She is portrayed as the symbolic representation of her husband and her violation is also the symbolic violation of his power and authority.<sup>145</sup> The image of Nest as the symbol of masculine power in the very clear guise as the desired prize is coupled with the emphasis on her lifecycle stages as daughter, wife and mother. Through all three labels, Nest is portrayed as the ultimate feminine ideal. The description of her

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<sup>142</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7. See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 19-48.

<sup>143</sup> *BS*, pp. 104-07.

<sup>144</sup> See Johns, 'Beauty and the Feast' and ead., *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 19-48, 209-28.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's letters to Eva de Braose and William Marshal after the hanging of William de Brose, Eva's husband, in 1230. *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers, 1120-1283*, ed. H. Pryce (Cardiff, 2005), nos. 261 and 262, pp. 428-31. See Chapter 4, pp. 209-10.

actions, as a dutiful wife and mother, helps to secure her reputation in the face of events that focus on her as a sexual object.<sup>146</sup>

Recent readings of the Scandinavian text *Hrolfs Saga Kraka* (c. 1230–c. 1450) suggests that sexual desire and the transgression of specified gender roles implies a disruption of and threat to the order of society, especially one that is primarily based on strife amongst kindred groups. This is because kinships have a sexual basis. Attitudes to sexual behaviour are gendered and the ideologies are greatly unequal.<sup>147</sup> The sexualised themes in the *Hfols Saga* are structured within accepted gendered ‘norms’ and social perceptions that ‘naturalize’ the division of inequality regarding power between the sexes.<sup>148</sup> Nest did not transgress her expected gendered role. She, in fact, embodied it, as is evidenced through her wifely and motherly devotion, devising the means for her husband’s escape and the release of her children from captivity. However, the implications of sexual desire (for her) and her inferior position as the object are clear. Her abduction represents a threat to ordered society. It instigated a blood feud that also had the potential for more wider reaching consequences in the persistent threat of recourse to avenge her honour by Henry I. ‘Women as the cause of war and as the sorrowing victim are as old as classical tragedy’.<sup>149</sup>

Like Eleanor, Nest is portrayed as the symbol of her husband’s power. Her violation is also the symbolic violation of his power and authority. She is, however, not only a symbol of masculine supremacy, but she is also the winning prize, a sexual object to be dominated. This is reminiscent of the narrative in *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* when the messenger Einem brings news of the defeat of King Cenwric to Gruffudd. Einem asks for Dylad, the defeated king’s mistress and ‘beautiful woman’ as his reward.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, in ‘Geraint’, the wife Enid plays a silent role whose importance lies in the fact that she is both the prize and the symbol of lordship.<sup>151</sup> This is a subject that also appears, for example, in the First Branch of

<sup>146</sup> For a detailed discussion on this episode of Nest’s life in the political context see Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 19-25; Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp. 83-118.

<sup>147</sup> C. Phelpstead, ‘The Sexual Ideology of the *Hrolfs Saga Kraka*’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 75 (2003), p. 2. Cf. G. Ruben, ‘The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex’, in R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York, 1975), pp. 157-210.

<sup>148</sup> Phelpstead, ‘Sexual Ideology’, p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> Stafford, ‘Chronicle D’, p. 213.

<sup>150</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 61-3; *HGK*, p. 8.

<sup>151</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 139-78.

the *Mabinogi*, ‘Lludd and Llefelys’ and ‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’.<sup>152</sup> In ‘Lludd and Llefelys’ particularly, the married woman remains unnamed and makes no defined appearance.<sup>153</sup> This points to the traditionally recognised socio-political and socio-economic position of women in marital alliances, as the conduit between families and a means to obtaining more lands and power.

In the context of narratives in the chronicles, like those of Eleanor and Nest, other married women symbolise power struggles and changes. Entries concerning the captivity of married women represent a marked domination over the power of their (marital) families. No women save one are named, suggesting the overall value of women as they are portrayed are as the ‘anonymous’, ‘helpless’ victims of war; similar to the episode of Dylad above. Thus, there appears to be a correlation between the woman’s status as a symbol of men’s power and honour and her substandard position as the marital prize. In short, changes in the position of women are recognisable in the transition of political metaphors once readily recognised in the form of the unprotected woman symbolising unprotected land, to portrayals of the woman as the prize or pawn; the transition from the woman as the primary source of political gain, to the function of marriage itself.<sup>154</sup>

The many female obituaries demonstrate the importance of combining the symbolic transfer of power with women’s lifecycles. All the obituaries associated with Wales in the chronicles are for women who were attached either by blood or marriage to the rulers of Deheubarth and Gwynedd.<sup>155</sup> Although she lies outside the period of this study, the death of Elen (d. 929), the wife of Hywel Dda is important to consider within the context of the group as a whole. Elen’s death is recorded in the *Annales Cambriae*, the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*.<sup>156</sup> She was the daughter of Llywarch ap Hyfaidd (d. 904), the last recorded ruler of the kingdom of Dyfed before it was incorporated as a part of Deheubarth. It was through his marriage to Elen that Hywel Dda consolidated his hold over Dyfed. The entries of Elen’s death are the only Welsh ones that do not explicitly define her in the context

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 3-21, 111-15, 179-213.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>154</sup> Aronstein, ‘Culture and Society’, p. 553.

<sup>155</sup> In the *Annales Cambriae* there are a total of nine obits for women and in the *Brutiau*, twelve. The entries are roughly split between the deaths of women of Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Scottish and Norman descent and women of Welsh descent. The *Annales* have more entries for Anglo-Saxon and Norman women than Welsh, with a strong focus on the deaths of reigning queens and women of royal blood.

<sup>156</sup> *Pan aeth howel dda vrenhin vab kadell yrufein. Ac ybu varw elen. BT, Pen20*, p. 8; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 6; *BT, RBH*, pp. 12-13; *BS*, pp. 30-1; *AC*, p. 17.

of men. Though the simplicity of the entries indicate more that her death was noteworthy because she was ‘queen’, her symbolic role and connections to powerful men are implied.

This is also seen with the obituary of Angharad, wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan. Though she was Gruffudd’s widow for twenty-five years, her obit, which only appears in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* for the year 1160=62, simply refers to her by name and her uxorial lifecycle (*Agharat wreic Ruffud*).<sup>157</sup> Interestingly, the entry found in *Brenhinedd y Saesson* says that Angharad’s son Owain was greatly grieved by her death and that after his grief had passed, he gathered a host to attack the cantref of Arwystli.<sup>158</sup> Identifying Angharad as Gruffudd’s wife in her formal obit illustrates that this was a legally recognised and honourable union.<sup>159</sup> The royal status and position of both women are implied through their marital relationships. This notion is further evidenced by the allusion to (in Elen’s case) and the overt statement of (in Angharad’s case) their gendered lifecycles as wives. The fact that the obits are noted at all is, of course, noteworthy. They are honoured in death, not because of their leadership skills,<sup>160</sup> individuality or use of agency, but because the author assumes common knowledge of who they were: the wives of rulers. In Elen’s case, this detail is certainly underlined by the fact that we know little to nothing of her from other sources.

A number of obituaries are found for women linked to the dynasty of the Lord Rhys. The first, dated 1190, is distinctly different in content and imagery from

<sup>157</sup> *Blwydyn varw agharat wreic ruffud*. *BT, Pen20*, p. 108; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 62; *BT, RBH*, pp. 142-3; *BS*, pp. 162-3. Thomas Jones argues that the correct date for Angharad’s death is probably given in *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 181-2.

<sup>158</sup> *BS*, pp. 162-3. Jones also argues that the source of the *Brutiau* probably linked the attack on Arwystli to Owain’s grief at his mother’s death, though it is seemingly linked by Hywel ab Ieuafr’s seizure of Tafolwern. *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 181-2, n. 62; *BT, RBH*, p. 293, n. 143.

<sup>159</sup> Similar to Elen’s recorded death, the *Brutiau*, verify Angharad’s importance as a feminine figure complementary to Gruffudd’s rule and an increased sense of Welsh identity. This is confirmed by comparing the obits between the rulers and their wives. Gruffudd ap Cynan’s obit is found in the same sources as Angharad’s. The *Brutiau* have an encomium that further stresses his virtues as a warrior-ruler. *BT, Pen20*, p. 88; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 52; *BT, RBH*, pp. 116-17. Both *Brenhinedd y Saesson* and the *Annales Cambriae* have brief entries. Whereas *Brenhinedd y Saesson* states that the prince of Gwynedd died the same year as Gruffudd ap Rhys, lord of Deheubarth, ‘after many good deeds (*a Gruffud ap Kynan, tywyssawc Gwyned, gvedy llawer o weithredoed da*)’, the *Annales* just says that Gruffudd the son of Cynan, died (*Grifinus filius Conani obit*). The greater focus on Deheubarth may reflect the provenance of the chronicle underlying the *Brutiau* in the mid-twelfth century, which was possibly Llanbadarn Fawr. *BS*, pp. 146-7; *AC*, p. 41.

<sup>160</sup> Hywel Dda’s obits are found in both types of chronicles, which laud his goodness and his leadership as ‘the head and glory of all the Britons’. *Ahowel Da vab Cadell vrenhin pen amolyant yr holl vrytanyeit a vu varw*. *BT, Pen20*, p. 9; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 7; *BT, RBH*, pp. 12-13; *BS*, pp. 32-3; *AC*, p. 18.

the two above: ‘In that year ... Gwenllïan, daughter of Rhys, the flower and beauty of all Wales, died’.<sup>161</sup> *Brenhinedd y Saesson* further uses traditional gendered ideals to eulogize Gwenllïan as a means of further promoting her status: ‘And Gwenllïan, daughter of Rhys, died — the flower of the women of Wales for beauty’.<sup>162</sup> The emphasis in all the entries is strictly on Gwenllïan’s relationship with Rhys and there is no mention of her marital relationship with Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd, grandson of Gruffudd ap Cynan. This is most likely due to the circumstances of Rhodri’s enforced exile given the chronicle’s preferential treatment to the dynasty of Dinefwr and the southern provenance of the *Brutiau*, which was probably at Strata Florida by this time. Consequently, the descriptive nature of the entry is all the more powerful for its feminine and masculine symbolism because it relates directly to the noble repute of Lord Rhys himself.

Describing Gwenllïan as ‘the flower and beauty of all Wales’ signifies the stereotypical gendered, feminine attributes embraced by a warrior-ruler culture. ‘Flower’ especially denotes popular features assigned to women such as purity and chastity. Of course, there is every possibility that Gwenllïan was, in fact, a beauty of her time and this should not be, by any means, discounted. However, when compared with the obit and encomium for Lord Rhys found in both the *Annales* and the *Brutiau*, this illustration uses Gwenllïan’s ascribed traits and lifecycle stage as a daughter as tools to further complement Rhys’s own revered, but conventional qualities.<sup>163</sup> He is described as noble, valiant, generous, worthy, ‘a second Achilles’ (*eil achel*).<sup>164</sup> *Brenhinedd y Saesson* even refers to Rhys as ‘the flower of knights, and the best that had ever been of the race of the Welsh’.<sup>165</sup> As his daughter, Gwenllïan’s ascribed femininity strengthens her value as a corresponding symbol of Rhys’s masculine power over ‘all Wales’.<sup>166</sup> A Welsh identity is representative in the figure of Rhys himself .

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<sup>161</sup> *Ac y bu varw Gwenlliant verch Rys blodeu athegwch Kymry oll. BT, Pen20, p. 132; BT, Pen20Tr, p. 74; BT, RBH, pp. 172-3.* Compare with Hywel Dda’s and Gruffudd ap Cynan’s obits above. Also compare with the obit for Owain ap Gruffudd ap Cynan, or Owain Gwynedd. *BT, Pen20, p. 115; BT, Pen20Tr, p. 65; BT, RBH, pp. 150-1.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ac y bu varw Wenlliant verch Rys, blodev gwaged Kymre o tegwch. BS, pp. 188-9.*

<sup>163</sup> *AC, pp. 60-1; BT, Pen20Tr, pp. 76-9; BT, RBH, pp. 178-81.*

<sup>164</sup> *BT, Pen20, p. 139; BT, Pen20Tr, pp. 77-8; BT, RBH, pp. 178-81.*

<sup>165</sup> ... *blodeu y marchogion, a’r gorev o’r a uu o genedyl Gymre eroet. BS, pp. 192-3.*

<sup>166</sup> It is an interesting note that there is no obit for Rhys’s own wife, Gwenllïan, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys, found in any chronicle.

This concept is illustrated in an additional entry found in both the *Annales* and *Cronica de Walliae*, for another one of Rhys's daughters, who was also named Gwenllian (d. 1236). This particular entry focuses on Gwenllian's female lifecycles as daughter and wife (*Guenllian filia Resi Magni, uxor Ednevethe Vethan*).<sup>167</sup> It is most likely that the authors of the *Annales* saw her passing as important to note because she was Rhys's daughter and also because she was married to Ednyfed Fychan (1215–1246), the *distain*, or seneschal, of Gwynedd.<sup>168</sup> Her death marked a distinct change in familial influences and connections. Whatever the case may be, these two entries focus on female lifecycle stages to promote men's power.

The remaining three entries pertaining to women associated with the line of the Lord Rhys perform a similar function. Matilda de Braose (d. 1210) was married to Gruffudd ap Rhys (1197–1201), son of the Lord Rhys. These entries focus on her career as a mother (*mam meibydon Gruffud vab Rys*) and as Gruffudd's wedded wife (*Gruffud ygwyr priawt*). There is an equal balance in representation between the feminine and masculine with Matilda's career as mother (and wife) tempering the obituary of her warrior husband.<sup>169</sup> It is noteworthy that Matilda survived her husband by almost a decade and that her obituary appears in the chronicles at all. This may indicate a perception of her own status at the time of her death. Two other examples are found in the *Brutiau* for the deaths of Gwenllian (d. 1254)<sup>170</sup> and her brother, Rhys (d. 1255),<sup>171</sup> children of Maelgwn Fychan (d. 1257), another son of Lord Rhys. There is a record of the death of Gwenllian's sister, Margaret, wife of Owain ap Maredudd (d. 1261) of Cydwain, who died in 1255. In death she is

<sup>167</sup> *Guenllian filia Resi Magni, uxor Ednevethe Vethan, obit. AC*, p. 81.

<sup>168</sup> Ednyfed Fychan's obit does not appear in any of the chronicles.

<sup>169</sup> This entry does not appear in *Annales Cambriae*. Perhaps the chronicler has revealed popular sentiment by focusing on Matilda's role as a mother to the descendants of Lord Rhys, who promised potential, rather than focusing on her position as a wife to two men who were either ineffectual in holding the power of their inheritance, like Gruffudd, or who, like her father William de Braose (d. 1211), was greatly hated amongst the Welsh. Similarly, there is no record of their marriage in any chronicle. *BT, Pen20*, pp. 146-7, 154; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 81, 84; *BT, RBH*, pp. 184-5, 190-1; *BS*, pp. 198-9, 202-1; *AC*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>170</sup> *BS*, pp. 240-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 206; *BT, Pen20*, p. 206; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 109; *BT, RBH*, pp. 242-3.

Interestingly, Gwenllian is not recognised as the wife of Maredudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1255) of Meirionydd, who died a year after her. His own death is recorded in both chronicles, which concentrate on him leaving his only heir by Gwenllian. *Y bu varw Mredudd ap Llywelyn o Veirionydd; a'i vn mab o'r Wenllian honno a wladychodd yn i ol. BS*, pp. 240-1. The *Annales Cambriae* describes him as a good and robust youth (*probus et robustus juvenis*). *AC*, p. 89.

<sup>171</sup> The obituary for Rhys in the *Brutiau* is similar to Gwenllian's and Matilda de Braose's stating that he died after assuming the habit of Strata Florida and was buried in the chapter-house beside his sister. *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 109; *BT, RBH*, pp. 244-7. Maelgwn Fychan's death recorded in *Brutiau* for the year 1257=58, stating that he, too, was buried in the chapter-house of Strata Florida. *BT, Pen20*, p. 210; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 111; *BT, RBH*, pp. 248-9; *BS*, 242-3.

referred to in the context of her lifecycle stages as daughter and wife.<sup>172</sup> Another entry found in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* is the 1261 death of Gwladus, wife of Rhys Ieuanc (Fychan) ap Mechyll (d. 1271),<sup>173</sup> daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. She too is plainly identified through her lifecycle stages as daughter and wife (*Gwladus verch Gruffud aoed wreic yRys Yeuag vab Rys Mechyll*).<sup>174</sup> It is not difficult to understand why the deaths of these women were recorded. For the sisters Gwenllian and Margaret being presented as the children of Maelgwn Fychan and Angharad (*fl. d. before 1260*), herself the daughter of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, the prestige of their blood and the ties between the two kingdoms are stressed.<sup>175</sup> That they were buried honourably shows the importance of their lineage. For Gwladus, it is most likely that she is recorded because she is representative of the successive generations of both the houses of Deheubarth and Gwynedd. She signifies the power and longevity of both dynasties.

Two obits, other than Eleanor de Montfort's, are found for women connected to Gwynedd, and focus on their lifecycle phases and their noble status. However, it is clear that the greater emphasis resides in the transference of power that occurred upon the deaths of these specific women. These are for Joan, the wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, and one of his daughters, Gwladus Ddu. As a Welsh prince, Llywelyn's marriage to Joan, illegitimate daughter of King John and thus a Plantagenet, was not the first of its kind. As noted above, Llywelyn's uncle Dafydd married Emma an illegitimate sister of Henry II in 1175 in an attempt to secure power and ties with the Angevin rulers. However, Llywelyn was the first Welsh ruler to marry a daughter of an English king, illegitimate or not. As such, this marital alliance intimately and directly connected the house of Gwynedd to the English crown. Joan played a crucial role in events that took place between Llywelyn and King John in the early half of the thirteenth century, fulfilling her expected and gendered role as an

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<sup>172</sup> *BS*, pp. 240-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 207; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 110; *BT, RBH*, pp. 246-7. Owain's death is recorded in both chronicles. In the *Annales* it is recorded in the same entry as the death of Lord Rhys's daughter, Gwenllian, wife of Ednyfed Fychan. *AC*, p. 81. In the *Brutiau*, it is recorded twice, in 1236 and 1261. The first entry is erroneous. The second entry is found with the obit for Gwladus, daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and wife of Rhys Ieuanc ap Rhys Mechyll. *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 104, 112; *BT, RBH*, pp. 232-3, 252-3. *Brenhinedd y Saesson* simply states that he died: *Yn y vlwyddyn honno y bu varw Owain ap Mredudd ap Rotpert o Gydwain*. *BS*, pp. 230-1.

<sup>173</sup> Rhys Fychan's obit also appears in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*. *BS*, pp. 248-9; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 200-01; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 106; *BT, RBH*, pp. 238-9.

<sup>174</sup> *Blwydyn wedy hynny y bu varw Gwladus verch Gruffud aoed wreic yRys Yeuag vab Rys Mechyll*. *BS*, pp. 244-5; *BT, Pen20*, p. 212; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 112; *BT, RBH*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>175</sup> For Angharad, see Chapter 5, p. 260.

intermediary between the two rulers.<sup>176</sup> She was also at the centre of the (marital) political scandal in 1230.

In spite of the explicit differences between Joan's actions in the two separate instances, her obits in both the *Annales* and the *Brutiau* are befitting a woman of royal blood, and certainly of a woman who was married to one of the most powerful princes in medieval Wales.<sup>177</sup> The chronicles state that Joan was honourably buried at the monastery of Llanfaes, which Llywelyn founded in her name after her death. Such an act openly symbolised the importance of her person and position within Llywelyn's household. Joan's obituaries are the longest and most honourable of their kind, which is perhaps indicative of Joan's actual character or popularity and which suggests that, at some level, she was recognised as an individual in her own right. Her title (*domina/dam/arglwyddes*) stresses her status and position as Llywelyn's wife and suggests that her Welsh connection (and her symbolic importance as a wife to a powerful Welsh leader) was deemed more important than even that of her relationship to the English crown.<sup>178</sup> This is in contrast to much later Welsh chronicles that have a more English influence, like the fifteenth-century Aberconwy Chronicle,<sup>179</sup> which does not mention Joan's death at all, and David Powel's *The Historie of Cambria, Now Called Wales* (1584), which emphasises Joan's lifecycle as daughter of King John first, then referring to her as 'princess of Wales', rather than as Llywelyn's wife.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> See Chapter 4 for an in depth discussion on Joan's involvement in thirteenth-century Anglo-Welsh relations, pp. 196-216.

<sup>177</sup> *Blwydyn wedi hyny ybu varw arglwydes Gymry gwreic Lywelyn vab Ior a merch y vrennin Lloegy. Jon oed y henw yn llys Lywelyn yn Aber mis chwefrawr ac y kladpwynt ychorf mywn gard gyffegredic a oed yglan ytraeth. BT, Pen20, p. 196; BT, Pen20Tr, p. 104; BS, pp. 230-3; AC, pp. 82-3. The Red Book identifies Joan first as the daughter of king John, then wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. BT, RBH, pp. 234-5.*

<sup>178</sup> It is interesting that the two examples found in the Welsh chronicles for the title *Domina* are for Angevin women. The difference in the use of the title for Joan and her predecessor, Emma of Anjou, may lie in the fact that in Emma's case *Domina* may have been a title that she used before marriage, indicating her status as the king's sister, whereas for Joan, it may have been a title used to indicate her status as the king's daughter. See Chapter 4 for further discussions, *Titles and Other Designations*.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. D. Stephenson, *The Aberconwy Chronicle* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>180</sup> *The Register and Chronicle of the Abbey of Aberconwy*, ed. H. Ellis, *Camden Miscellany*, 1:39 (London, 1847), p. 10; D. Powel, *The Historie of Cambria, now Called Wales: a Part of the Most Famous Yland of Brytaine, Written in the Brytish Language aboue Two Hundreth Yeares Past* (London, reprint for John Harding, 1811), p. 210. Joan's obits mirror those for Llywelyn found in the *Brutiau* and *Annales Cambriae* for the year 1240. Like the Lord Rhys, Llywelyn is compared to classical and mythological heroes, is lauded for his justice and skills as a warrior and is also praised for his devotion to God. Together both their obits serve to further the noble and honourable status of their legitimate son, Dafydd, Llywelyn's successor, by focusing on the valued virtues of their class, namely honour and religious devotion. This idea is furthered by the entries in *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, which refer to Llywelyn as prince of Wales and Joan as princess of Wales, signifying their pre-



A record of death for Llywelyn's daughter, Gwladus, in 1251 is also found in the *Brutiau*, *Brenhinedd y Saesson* and the *Annales*. Gwladus married into two powerful Marcher families, first as wife to Reginald de Braose (d. 1228) and after his death, Ralph Mortimer (d. 1246). The entries are different in their wording in that the *Brutiau* and *Annales* refer to Gwladus as Llywelyn's daughter (*filia/ferch*) who died at Windsor, whereas *Brenhinedd y Saesson* specifically refers to her as Ralph Mortimer's wedded wife (*gwraig briod*).<sup>181</sup> They are, however, similar in context to which they are found — along with the notice of the death of Morgan, son of Lord Rhys. Gwladus is identified solely as Llywelyn's daughter probably for two main reasons. Firstly, her obit appears with one of Lord Rhys's sons, highlighting the passing of the descendants of great Welsh leaders. This serves as a genealogical note and underscores a change in the power relations in play at the times of their deaths. Secondly, both Gwladus's husbands were direct heirs of Anglo-Norman families who carried much stigma and infamy in Wales. It seems likely that the intimate connection between the Welsh author and Welsh religious houses that produced the chronicles, with leading Welsh rulers of the time, negated any interest in the glorification of such political and often sullied inter-marital unions.<sup>182</sup> This is especially pertinent when recognising that conflicts usually arose over lands in south Wales and that Mortimer specifically set about with military campaigns against the Welsh after Llywelyn's death.

Although her status as Llywelyn's daughter is significantly more important than as a wife, the *Brutiau* do describe Gwladus as a *gwraig briod*, indicating the significance of her union with Mortimer. Nonetheless, genealogy and natal ties are stressed and gender is managed in a way that underlines the significance of a Welsh identity. It seems as if Gwladus's obit appears to reflect the changes made to the wider structure of the Venedotian dynasty and its relationship with Marcher families. The transference of power is implied in the recording of her death. This idea is

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eminent status. Moreover, Joan is labelled as King John's daughter and Dafydd's mother (*y vab o jon verch Jeuan vrenhin Lloegyr / I vab o Sioned, verch Jevan vrenin, i vam*), giving prominence to Dafydd's connection to the English Crown. *AC*, pp. 82-3; *BS*, pp. 232-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 198; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 105; *BT, RBH*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>181</sup> *AC*, p. 88; *BS*, pp. 238-9; *BT, Pen20*, p. 205; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 109; *BT, RBH*, pp. 242-3.

<sup>182</sup> The *Annales Cambriae* record Reginald's death in 1224 and state that he was succeeded by his son, William. They also record Ralph's death in 1246. The *Brutiau* do not, however, mention Reginald's death, only, and perhaps more significantly, his marriage to Gwladus in 1215. Yet, they do record the death of Ralph, who was succeeded by Roger, his son by Gwladus. *AC*, pp. 76, 86; *BS*, pp. 236-7; *BT, Pen20*, p. 202; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 107; *BT, RBH*, pp. 240-1.

further strengthened in the knowledge that Gwladus is the only one of Llywelyn's daughters to receive such an honour.

The entries in which women are found in the Welsh chronicles are similar to those found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Women always appear in a context that does not act as a guide to a single life, but in one that is useful for the historian trying to interpret contemporary meaning.<sup>183</sup> Use of and reference to the uxorial lifecycle explains a wider historical context tying the subjects of the narratives through bonds of kinship. The female lifecycle stressed in individual entries is the one that links the woman to masculine Welsh power. These are found in examples of marital alliances, obituaries and episodes of abduction. Yet, that the majority of the women are named at all implies a level of respect and their importance as individuals. This is furthered by the fact that the recorded deaths of women clearly entail descriptions of honourable status and are at times augmented with small, but fitting eulogies.

## ***NORMS AND PERCEPTIONS***

General feminine virtues extolled by Welsh sources are similar to many of the conventionally established terms reminiscent of western European literature. Certainly, the feminine features that are epitomised across the Welsh sources easily conform to the widely standardised imagery of women that centred on physical appearances, social graces, noble reputation and honour. In *Vita Griffini filii Conanii*, Angharad, a *gwraig briod*, is a beautiful woman of noble birth, who was good natured, hospitable and righteous in all things, being both merciful and charitable to the needy.<sup>184</sup> Gwladus, the daughter of St Brychan, wife of St. Gwynllyw and mother of St Cadog is portrayed in the Lives of saints as the epitome of virtue and as the idealised role model, within each of her feminine lifecycles. As a bride she is depicted as being gentle and beautiful, worthy of character to be a wife to Brychan and ensure that he was able to 'delight in lawful marriage'.<sup>185</sup> And, after the birth of her son, Cadog, Gwladus is lauded for her chastity as a noble, married woman.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Stafford, 'Writing the Biography', p. 103.

<sup>184</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76, 78; *HGK*, pp. 21-2. See Johns, 'Beauty and Feast'.

<sup>185</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 172-5.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* 176-9.

Married women in the *Mabinogion* are almost all uniformly described by their physical attributes: most are depicted as being the ‘most beautiful’ in the world.<sup>187</sup> The 1190 obituary for Gwenllian in the *Brutiau* is distinct in its imagery referring to her as ‘the flower and beauty of all Wales’ and ‘the flower of the women of Wales for beauty’.<sup>188</sup> Although Gwenllian is not identified as a wife, with emphasis on her position as a daughter of the Lord Rhys being explicit, the assumption of her uxorial status is implied, thus epitomising the stereotype of the ‘beautiful’ wife. The symbol of the flower denotes popular features assigned to married women such as purity and chastity, which is also found in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi* in the character of Blodeuwedd. Prydydd y Moch’s *rhieingerdd* to Gwenllian of Caerlon extols her as a model of similar womanly virtues to be glorified throughout the realm.<sup>189</sup> Likewise, Cynddelw’s *rhieingerdd* dedicated to Efa ferch Madog ap Maredudd, describes her with altruistic expectations of her sex as being a virtuous and shy maiden, innocent and prudent, who is as bright as the dawning day and brilliant as snow.<sup>190</sup> Yet, in both his poem to Efa and in another *awdl* to an unknown woman, the poet also refers to the fickleness of women, saying that Efa, for instance, has not done justice to his love for her and that the unknown girl, though beautiful and bright, was also proud, unwelcoming and cold.<sup>191</sup> Poems such as Cynddelw’s *rhieingerdd* to Efa ferch Madog ap Maredudd have a strong resemblance to the works of continental troubadours, although this piece might be a timely manifestation of the themes connected to *amour courtois* of the Provençal poets, which were fashionable in England in the twelfth century. It is also possible that its creation was largely independent from foreign influences given its similarity to the traditional *mawls* of the Welsh poets and the placed emphasis on the Welsh court rather than solely on the woman herself. Such an approach highlights a conservatism that may have been associated with the Welsh bard at a period when the office of the court poet was at its zenith.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>187</sup> e.g. descriptions of Culhwch and Olwen. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 180, 192.

<sup>188</sup> *BT, Pen20*, p. 132; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 74; *BT, RBH*, pp. 172-3; *BS*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>189</sup> *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn*, p. 136. This particular poem, known as a *llattai* poem, where the man sends a messenger, usually in the form of an animal to his lover, is important in some respects because it focuses on where the lover and the woman come from, what state is she to be found in when the messenger finally reaches her and her beauty, which often surpasses the beauty of the women of legends. For Gwenllian, see Chapter 5, pp. 262-5.

<sup>190</sup> *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn*, pp. 53, 67-70.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* 53-4.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* 56-7.

The worth of married women based on expectations of uxorial chastity (*diweirdeb*) and marital loyalty are recurrent themes found in portrayals of marriage.<sup>193</sup> Examples include triads that contrast chastity with infidelity, highlighting Gwenhwyfar's downfall and weaknesses in Three Faithless (Unchaste) Wives of the Island of Britain (*Teir Aniweir Wreic Ynys Prydein*), which follow the Three Chaste (Wives) of the Island of Britain (*Tri Diweirwreic Ynys Brydein*).<sup>194</sup> Of all the tales in the *Mabinogion*, 'Geraint son of Erbin' tells of a hero's fixation with his wife's chastity. Geraint's love becomes distorted when he misconstrues Enid's anxieties about his failure to rise to his chivalric duties and the gendered expectations of his rank, for the love of another man.<sup>195</sup> In the First Branch of the *Mabingoi*, the unnamed wife of Arawn, lord of Annwfn (the Underworld), is memorable for her role as the chaste wife.<sup>196</sup> In Hywel ab Owain's *Gorhoffedd*, or boasting poem, he describes his relationships with a number of named women, referring to their 'fair white flesh', beauty and modesty. Most importantly, he refers to his frustration at the uxorial chastity of 'fair Gweirfyl ... the king's foster-brother's wife' who refused him.<sup>197</sup>

The ideal of the chaste wife naturally appears in the religious literature of native Wales. Gerald of Wales praises Matilda de St. Valery (c. 1150–1210), wife of William de Braose (d. 1211), whom he commends for being 'a prudent and chaste woman', one who, with her husband, should be justly rewarded for living a devout life.<sup>198</sup> In the Life of St Illtud, the saint's wife, Trinihid, appears later in the *vita* as a chaste woman (*feminarum castissima*) who no longer desires conjugal intercourse after her separation from Illtud.<sup>199</sup> This is a common description of formerly sexualised women as the wives of saints, by association, cannot be seen to be sexual.

<sup>193</sup> There is not much evidence to suggest that women in Welsh society (as widows) were actively encouraged to live celibate lives in religious houses. They were, however, encouraged to live chastely and piously throughout their married lives. Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality*, pp. 194-9.

<sup>194</sup> *TYP*, triad 66, pp. 183-4; triad 80, p. 210. Also see Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Tests', p. 67.

<sup>195</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 153-78.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* 4-7.

<sup>197</sup> *Gweirfyl deg, fy rhodd, fy nghyfrinach, na chefais [mohoni], | Na chafodd neb o'm llinach; | Er fy nharo I â llafnau daufiniog, | Gwraig brawd maeth brenin sydd wedi fy nhristáu. Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, eds. K.A. Bramley et al (Caerdydd, 1994), p. 124.

<sup>198</sup> *Horum etiam omnium et sponsa ejusdem, Matildis de Sancto Walerico, consuetudinem habuit; mulier, inquam, prudens et pudica, mulier domui suae bene praeposita, mulier non tantum intus conservando, verum etiam extra multiplicando providentissima. Qui utinam ambo tam finale in tempore felicitatem et gratiam, quam aeternitatis gloriam fuerint ex devotione consecuti.* Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 23; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 83.

<sup>199</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 216-19.

Similarly, in the Life of St Gwynllyw, Gwladus recognises her husband's holiness and eventually agrees to live a separate, eremitical life so as to not violate the vows of chastity.<sup>200</sup> There appears to have been a different criteria established for female and male saintliness, especially in the form of chastity. Male saintliness evolved at birth, whereas female saintliness was something that had to be achieved during the course of a woman's life, or after — usually in the form of resistance to becoming a wife or repudiating her uxorial status for a holy existence. Gwladus is a clear reminder to what even married (sexualised) women can attain if they choose to follow a spiritual and pure path, explicitly chastity.<sup>201</sup> In the Life of Cadog, although Gwladus herself is still the model of pureness, beauty and virginity, she is taken by force by Gwynllyw who 'desired her with ardent affection'. The reasons for why her union with Gwynllyw is depicted in two contrasting ways are difficult to make out, but there is a likely supposition. Both portrayals are unwavering in their determination to depict Gwladus as being pure from sin. The purity of a woman who is happily given to a man in marriage, and who dutifully bears him a son, is not such a great contrast to the purity of a woman who is forced into a union not of her choosing, but who still bears her husband the desired son and remains chaste in marriage.

The chaste wife remained a prevalent theme after the Conquest. One Welsh manuscript, NLW Peniarth 47 dated around 1330, combines the triads of Eve, Three Chaste (Wives) of the Island of Britain, Three Fair (Royal) Ladies of the Island of Britain, Three Lively (Royal) Ladies of the Island of Britain and Three Faithless (Unchaste) Wives of the Island of Britain to form *Trioedd y Gwragedd*, or the Triads of the Women.<sup>202</sup> Fourteenth-century Welsh proverbs also extol the proven virginity of a wife the morning after her wedding,<sup>203</sup> while the sixteenth-century grammar-book for poets found in *Grduelys* states that a noblewoman should not be praised 'for prowess in love-making or dalliance, for amatory verse is not seemly to her'.<sup>204</sup>

In the Welsh Triads, Tegau Eurfron, or Tegau Gold-Breast, is renowned for being faithful to her husband and is considered one of the Thirteen Treasures of the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. 24-7.

<sup>202</sup> *TYP*, p. 184.

<sup>203</sup> *Bore coch; a mabred gbreic*. Oxford Jesus College MS. 111, f. 240<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. f. 285<sup>r</sup>. Translation found in Lewis, 'Poetry and the Crisis in the Bardic Tradition', p. 91.

Island of Britain (*Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*).<sup>205</sup> The length of her mantle is remembered as a chastity-testing object for other women. It is said that the mantel ‘would not serve for any (woman) who had violated her marriage or her virginity’.<sup>206</sup> If the mantel reached the ground, the woman was faithful, but if it only reached her lap it meant that she violated her marriage. Dafydd ap Gwilym uses Tegau’s mantel as a reference for comparison,<sup>207</sup> whilst allusions to her mantle are found in a version of the Bardic Grammar that may also have been quoted from a love-poem.<sup>208</sup> The later poet Guto’r Glyn (*fl. c.1435–c.1493*) compares his patron’s wife to Tegau<sup>209</sup> and in his request poem to Elen, the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn of Llannerch, the gift of the mantel is a focus.<sup>210</sup>

References to chastity testing are also found in literature and the laws. In the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*, the virginity of the Aranrhod (who is a maiden rather than a married woman) is tested by king Math, who asks her if he is a virgin, to which she replies ‘That is my belief’. Aranrhod is proven to be a ‘false virgin’ (*twyllforwyn*) and returns to her own lands.<sup>211</sup> In the laws, if it was believed that the bride was in fact a ‘false virgin’ (*twyllforwyn*), retribution was called for and the punishment consisted of shameful exposure and a humiliating loss of legal rights. Inviting the bride’s immediate family (*cyfneseffaid*) to the bedchamber, the groom had the right to demand that they pledge that she had been a virgin when given in marriage. If it transpired that she was not, either through her family’s unwillingness to commit to a pledge or by their acknowledgment that she was a false virgin, the woman was to suffer public humiliation in front of the wedding guests (*neithiorwyr*). Her gown was cut to expose her genitals and she was made to hold the greased tail of a year-old steer. If she was able to hold on, she was allowed to keep her *agweddi*. If she failed to hold on, she suffered the loss of rights to any legal financial settlement entailed in her separation from her husband. This physical exposure and public shaming was a symbolic show of retributive justice; a mirror punishment for the

<sup>205</sup> *TYP*, p. 258-65.

<sup>206</sup> ... *ni wasanaethai i’r neb a dorrai i ffriodas na’i morwyndod*. *TYP*, triad 66, pp. 183, 259-60.

<sup>207</sup> For example, Dafydd ap Gwilym, ‘Gofyn Cymod’, *DafyddapGwilym.net* (Swansea, 2007), <<http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/eng/3win.htm>>, accessed 2 February 2014.

<sup>208</sup> NLW, Peniarth 20, f. 324. Also see *TYP*, pp. 503-06.

<sup>209</sup> *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, ed. I. Williams and J. Llywelyn Williams (Cardiff, 1961), no. 105.

<sup>210</sup> Guto’r Glyn, ‘Gofyn ffaling gan Elen ferch Robert Pilstwn o’r Llannerch’, *Guto’r Glyn.net* (Aberystwyth, 2013)

<<http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem=053>>, accessed 2 January 2014.

<sup>211</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 54. Also see notes p. 242.

groom's humiliation at being tricked.<sup>212</sup> The legal reference to the length of the woman's gown may be linked to the Welsh motif of Tegau's mantel.

It may be possible to identify a quality of uxorial chastity as being particularly Welsh in design. Across a series of Welsh sources, honour and shame are prevalent and important themes. Honour correlates with the idea of one being able to command the respect of others. As such, that person should be able to live up to the expectations of her/his position in society.<sup>213</sup> Recent studies relating to the burlesque in the Welsh laws and readings of the laws as literature have provided insight to the interconnecting relationships between honour, shame and categorisation of gendered social positions.<sup>214</sup> Welsh laws recognised that in order for social harmony to be maintained, it was necessary for the offender to 'save face' within the community. Shame for a woman, wife (or one to be), meant exposure of her failures as a dutiful wife, presenting her as an image of failure and disobedience.<sup>215</sup>

Although concubinage was practised in native Wales, it is likely that it was expected that the legal wife, or *gwraig briod*, remain sexually loyal to her husband as a matter of honour. Interestingly, the Three Chaste and Three Unchaste Wives are contrasted with the Three Faithful and Unfaithful War-Bands of the Island of Britain (*Tri Diweir Deulu Ynys Brydein /Tri Anyweir Deulu Enys Prydein*), highlighting masculine attributes concerned with honour, the physical stamina of the warrior and loyalty.<sup>216</sup> They may have been written in imitation of each other<sup>217</sup> and are important as a group where idealised gender traits are concerned. For both sexes, chastity was an attribute, but in different ways. In context, the use of *diweir* ('unbending', 'constant, faithful and loyal')<sup>218</sup> appears to relate to women's sexual chastity and men's political allegiances.

Concepts of honour and shame were largely influential in assuring that people stayed within their culturally created gendered boundaries. In the main, passages concerning shame and punishment for men focus on their dereliction of duty.<sup>219</sup> As a woman's sexuality and reputation are interrelated, in some but not all the Welsh

<sup>212</sup> Patterson, 'Honour and Shame', p. 75. *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 26; *LTMW*, p. 49.

<sup>213</sup> Patterson, 'Honour and Shame', p. 87.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* 103. Also see R. Chapman Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling* in the Laws of Court', in *WKHC*, pp. 29-62 and ead., 'Divorce Medieval Welsh Style'.

<sup>215</sup> Patterson, 'Honour and Shame', p. 95.

<sup>216</sup> *TYP*, triad 28, pp. 62-5; triad 30, pp. 66-9.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* 184; triad 80, p. 210.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

<sup>219</sup> Patterson, 'Honour and Shame', p. 74.

sources, shame was often associated with female sexual transgression. Universally, a woman's sexual behaviour and ideals of honour were inter-connected and native Welsh laws explicitly refer to the punishment of women who have dishonoured themselves through sexual transgression.<sup>220</sup> The *Blegywryd* redaction of the laws states a man can leave his wife for adultery and the wife is bound to pay his *sarhaed* or her husband may freely repudiate her.<sup>221</sup> Saving honour in the wake of marital infidelity was apparently not a one-sided gendered expectation though. The *Iorwerth* text says that wife finds her husband with another woman, she is to receive compensation and after the third occurrence, can leave him without losing what is hers.<sup>222</sup>

Although, the rituals associated with honour and shame reinforce 'the desired norms of social behaviour', they are not motifs singular to Welsh tradition. They are also found in different versions of Arthurian lore from the continent.<sup>223</sup> The depiction of the shamed married women is often recognised in the motif of *The Calumniated Wife*.<sup>224</sup> This theme is popular in the genre of courtly love where ladies were subject to strict rules of behaviour and 'protected by the sternest of taboos'. Rules regarding inheritance and the lawfulness of the legitimacy of an heir depended on her behaviour. The lady had to be fertile and faithful.<sup>225</sup> In Welsh sources, one married woman in particular receives a bad reputation in the Welsh Triads, namely Arthur's infamous queen, Gwenhwyfar. It is because of her (sexual) betrayal as a wife that the Battle of Camlan took place where the illustrious Arthur met his death. The Triads note that through her faithlessness, Gwenhwyfar 'shamed a better man than any (of the others)'.<sup>226</sup> However, Gwenhwyfar's part as the dishonourable wife

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>221</sup> *Cyfreithiau Hywel Dda Yn ôl Llyfr Blegywryd*, (eds) S.J. Williams and J.E. Powell (Caerdydd, 1967), p. 45; *LTMW*, p. 48.

<sup>222</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 28; *LTMW*, p. 53.

<sup>223</sup> Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Tests', pp. 67-69.

<sup>224</sup> Winward, 'Some Aspects of the Women in *The Four Branches*', p. 77; See J. Hemming, 'Sellam Gestare: Saddle-Bearing Punishments and the Case of Rhiannon', *Viator*, 28 (1997), pp. 45-64; J. Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife in Medieval Welsh Literature', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 10 (1985), pp. 25-38.

<sup>225</sup> Duby, 'Courtly Model', p. 259.

<sup>226</sup> These are found in the triads of the Three Sinister (Ill-omened) Hard Slaps of the Island and Britain (*Teir Gwith Baluawt Ynys Prydein*) and in *Teir Ouergat Ynys Prydein*, or the Three Futile Battles of the Island of Britain. Gwenhwyfar's faithlessness is also noted for 'she shamed a better man than any (of the others)'. *Ac un eod aniweirach nor teir hynny: Gwenh6yuar gwreic Arthur, kanys gwell g6r y gwnai hi gyweilyd ida6 no neb. TYP*, triad 80, p. 210. Also see reference to the battle of Camlan in which Arthur died being brought about by a feud between Gwenhwyfar and her sister Gwenhwy(f)ach. *TYP*, triad 84, pp. 217-22.



does not appear in any of the tales of the *Mabinogion*.<sup>227</sup> Additionally, it may also be of note that there are not any specific Welsh triads in which women brought shame and dishonour to the island of Britain. Only triads lamenting men who are remembered for their dishonour and causing disgrace are found.<sup>228</sup>

Comparably, it is interesting that the Welsh chronicles omit reference to the imprisonment of Joan in 1230 because of her infidelity. Joan's incarceration is only recorded in the Chester annals.<sup>229</sup> She was released after a year and resumed her former role as the ruler's consort and envoy.<sup>230</sup> Silence over such an event, and Joan's position as a 'dishonourable' wife likely has to do with Llywelyn's overall status in Wales. Although the authors may not have looked kindly on Joan's 'misbehaviour' as a wife, and the possible reason behind not naming her, it was more important to keep the tone neutral, perhaps, as a way of ensuring Llywelyn's status remained. As his legal wife, Joan still remained a symbol of Llywelyn's power and reminded people of direct relations with the Angevin dynasty.<sup>231</sup> The violation of a wife, or a betrayal by her, was directly associated with threats to masculine power and any descriptions of such underscore the political context of the entry.<sup>232</sup>

Many married women in Welsh sources are portrayed as being both active and reactive, always within the context of preserving honour. The cunningness of married women, their quickness to think on their feet and outwit their male opponents is represented in various sources. The characters Rhiannon, Branwen and Enid in the *Mabinogion* are the primary literary examples. But the chronicles also reveal married women to be effective in their actions where family honour and power struggles are at stake. Nest is noted for her finesse and ability to outsmart her abductor on two occasions in which she devises the means for her husband's escape

<sup>227</sup> Neither is she castigated for being a 'barren queen'. See Chapter 3, *Motherhood and Succession*.

<sup>228</sup> This is verified by the triad entitled, Three Men of Shame were in the Island of Britain (*Trywyr G6arth a uu yn Ynys Prydein*). *TYP*, triad 51, p. 138. Another example concerns the Three Fortunate Concealments of the Island of Britain (*Tri Matkud Ynys Prydein*) within which it emphasised that one of the Three Unfortunate Disclosures was the fault of Gwrtheyrn the Thin, who disclosed the bones of Gwerthefyr the Blessed for the love of a woman, Rhonwen the pagan woman. In this respect, a woman is indirectly responsible for causing shame and dishonour. *Ibid.* triad 37, p. 94.

<sup>229</sup> *Annales Cestrienses*, ed. R. C. Christie, *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 14 (London, 1887), p. 57.

<sup>230</sup> See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion, pp. 208-11.

<sup>231</sup> The chronicles also omit reference to the relationship between Nest and England's Henry I, with whom she had a child. Gerald discusses at length, Nest's relationships and offspring as a means of promoting his heritage. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 49-82, especially pp. 50-54.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's letters concerning the hanging of William de Braose. *AWR*, nos. 261 and 262, pp. 428-31. See Chapter 4, p. 210.

and secures the release of her sons from captivity.<sup>233</sup> Similarly, Joan is noted for her direct involvement in procuring Llywelyn's honour during events in 1210 and 1212.<sup>234</sup>

That married women are often depicted as being independently active and vocal may perhaps be a unique expression of female independence that was recognised and even accepted in Welsh society. The Iorwerth Redaction states that if a man wants to take a woman as a wife, he is to take surety from her parents that 'she will not cause him shame by her body', but, more interestingly, that 'she will not be offensive towards him, which is the custom of the Welshwomen'.<sup>235</sup> Correspondingly, the laws also call for both a monetary and physical retribution by the husband upon his wife if she happens to say 'shameful words' to him ('such as wishing a blemish on his beard or dirt in his teeth, or calling him a cur').<sup>236</sup> On the other hand, these types of punishment are also symbolic declarations of a woman's inferior status. Retribution is found in the themes of the calumniated wife who deals with public shame and ritual humiliation for over-stepping the gendered boundaries, however ill-defined they seem to be.<sup>237</sup> Chastity testing was not just an attempt to control female sexuality, but it was also a recognition that a woman's word was not to be trusted.<sup>238</sup>

Most religious didactic works zealously impresses upon the reader the notion that a woman's obedience in marriage is implicit.<sup>239</sup> The popular image of woman as a species of man, and the wife as species of woman, served to naturalise woman's subjugation in marriage, as well as in society.<sup>240</sup> The assumed 'natural' power of the husband over the wife is also recorded in the laws, which say a woman's husband is her lord.<sup>241</sup> Gerald habitually portrays wives (more pointedly, women who were

<sup>233</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7.

<sup>234</sup> *BT, Pen20*, p. 85; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 85.

<sup>235</sup> *LTMW*, p. 52.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* 52.

<sup>237</sup> See T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status in Some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales,' *Ériu*, 29 (1978), pp. 123-41; Hemming, 'Sellam Gestare'; Patterson, 'Honour and Shame'; Watson, 'Enid the Disobedient'.

<sup>238</sup> Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Tests', pp. 56-57.

<sup>239</sup> In the Old Testament, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was celebrated by many clerical scholars as the exemplar of the good wife. As a model for women she was seen as a figure that all wives could aspire to: respectful and faithful to her husband and in-laws, a thoughtful and benevolent mother and a 'thrifty housekeeper'. Sarah was not an exceptional wife, but the literary representation of how all wives should behave. S. Vecchio, 'The Good Wife', trans., C. Botsford, in *Silences of the Middle Ages*, p. 106.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> *Llfyr Iorwerth*, p. 28; *LTMW*, p. 53.

sexually active) as the usurpers of social order and control, illustrated in the various wives who prevent their husbands from taking the cross.<sup>242</sup> Yet, his silence on the rape and abduction of Nest who was his maternal grandmother is of interest. The significance may lie in his deference to her noble status, as Nest's multiple partners and resulting progeny are celebrated by Gerald in order to prove the power of Geraldines.<sup>243</sup>

Gerald also adhered to the ideas based on the feminisation of the flesh and used his writings, and the scriptures, to sermonize against femininity and the female body. He uses the narrative of Nest, wife of Bernard de Neufmarché as a case in point. Nest is portrayed as an exposed and committed adulteress. She shamed her family further by denying her son his patrimonial rights and furthering her own needs.<sup>244</sup> Any reference to wifely influence or opinions in respect to martial relationships reflects the moral and spiritual weakness of men.<sup>245</sup> Only women who are devoted to their duties as a selfless, passive wife and caring mother receive any kind of approval. The fact that he uses many anecdotes to promote the vices of vocal, dominant wives and few to extol the virtues of passive ones does not suggest that women in Welsh society were any more liberated or autonomous than in any other medieval society. His views towards wives and marriage in particular correspond with many of his (celibate) contemporaries who considered active and independent wives to be a source of constant anxiety.<sup>246</sup> Many theoretical writings define gender polarities and often present negative images of women.<sup>247</sup> In this light, Gerald's conservatism does little to highlight the condition of married women in Welsh society.

Examples from Scandinavian and Icelandic normative literature are abundant with stories of women wielding unexpected and aggressive authority, unparalleled to

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<sup>242</sup> Gir. Camb. *Op.*, vi, pp. 15, 20, 48-9; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, pp. 76-6, 80, 109. Also see, Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands', p. 93.

<sup>243</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 49-82.

<sup>244</sup> Gir. Camb. *Op.*, vi, pp. 28-9; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>245</sup> Gir. Camb. *Op.*, vi, pp. 15, 20, 48-9; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, pp. 76-6, 80, 109.

<sup>246</sup> Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 14.

<sup>247</sup> Caroline Bynum questions the notion that women simply accepted negative images of their sex based on clerical misogyny. She argues that, based on evidence of women's own writings in the later Middle Ages, they saw themselves as almost genderless; that the female was closer to the conception of humanity, 'woman' as synonymous with 'human being'. This is in contrast to the conflicting ideals that many clerical writers advocated, namely the juxtaposition between male power (reason, judgement and discipline) and female weakness (lust, mercy and irrationality). Ead., "... And Woman His Humanity", p. 257.

elsewhere in Europe.<sup>248</sup> The literature of these societies promulgated earlier ideals that elevated the role of women and held out against the increased Christian influences regarding women's 'natural' inferiority. In cases like Ireland where Christian influences were kept at bay and old customs held on to, 'the status of women improved and in some cases the laws granted her equality with men'.<sup>249</sup> The recorded differences between *de jure* and *de facto* status of women in Norse societies suggest that there was a much larger scope for women to follow their ambitions, aided by their hold on money and power, thereby transcending notions of female and male 'nature'.<sup>250</sup> Woman as a sovereignty figure is a notable subject found in much Welsh material, who is often portrayed 'in true Welsh fashion', as the symbols of sovereignty.<sup>251</sup> Characters such as Rhiannon likely represent earlier origins of Celtic goddesses, themselves revered as a sovereignty figures. In the triads, two women are identified as daughters through their matrilineal lines, both of whose mothers are the celebrated Celtic mother goddesses, often associated with rebirth and transformation: Creirwy merch Ceridwen and Arianrhod ferch Dôn.<sup>252</sup> Even the Welsh proverbs suggest there were plenty of prayers for the sovereign wife.<sup>253</sup> Most importantly, sources impress that the king's marriage to a female sovereignty figure, legitimised his rule.<sup>254</sup>

The wisdom of female sovereignty is a marked feature of Welsh literary sources. The queen, as consort, is often portrayed as a figurehead of intelligence and perception; one who is independent and wise in word and action. In the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan two very different married (royal) women are credited for their wise counsel. The first is in the prophetess, Tangwystyl, who plays a small, yet memorable role, foretelling Gruffudd of his future as king.<sup>255</sup> Similar in concept to the female sovereignty figure motif, Tangwystyl's prophetic wisdom is assuaged by her womanly and wifely duties. Her powerful and symbolic importance is intimately associated with her role as a charitable woman (sharing information and gifts), a

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<sup>248</sup> P.K. Ford, 'Celtic Women: The Opposing Sex', *Viator*, 19 (1988), p. 424; Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 367.

<sup>249</sup> Ford, 'Celtic Women', pp. 432-3.

<sup>250</sup> Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 369.

<sup>251</sup> Aronstein, 'When Arthur Held Court in Caer Llion', pp. 227-8.

<sup>252</sup> *TYP*, triad 78, pp. 208; pp. 284-5, 312-13, 315-16.

<sup>253</sup> *Gwala gwedw; gwreic vnbenn*. Oxford, Jesus College Ms. 111, f. 241<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>254</sup> J. Doan, 'Sovereignty Aspects in the Roles of Women in Medieval Irish and Welsh Society', in P. Jefferiss and W.J. Mahon (eds), *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 5 (Harvard, 1985), p. 90.

<sup>255</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 60-1; *HGK*, p. 7

provider (presenting him with knowledge and confidence) and a carer (looking out for his interests). These are conventional virtues associated with married women and attention is drawn to the fact that Tangwystyl's social position is that as the wife to Gruffudd's chief chamberlain. It is also pointedly noted twice over that she is also related to Gruffudd himself. Tangwystyl is, in essence, defined by her gendered attributes and relationships to men and her actions are approved because of this. Angharad is noted for being wise and prudent, but, more importantly, as a woman of good counsel as her status as Gruffudd's wife requires that she be judicious and resourceful.<sup>256</sup>

It has been argued that in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* female independence slowly disappears over the course of the women's lifecycle stages, especially once they become married or are no longer sexually innocent. Single women or estranged wives appear to have more power (and equality) than wives themselves do. This is due to uxorial preoccupations with conforming to socially created and accepted roles. Teyrnon's wife in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi* can be viewed as an example of a married woman whose inflexibility with speech indicates that even though her marriage may give the appearances of being equal, she still 'conforms to the deferential wife'.<sup>257</sup> Similarly, the images of the warrior-ruler are frequently tempered by 'natural' passive symbols of the subordinate wife as consort.<sup>258</sup> In 'How Culhwch Won Olwen', the female protagonist, Olwen is characterised as a passive participant in the fate of her future. She is the object of the story, the end prize. Although Culhwch's quest to marry Olwen provides the backbone of the narrative, it is his heroic deeds and military successes that dominate the theme and the structure of the story.<sup>259</sup> Olwen is the subordinate character. In terms of literature, it has been argued that in the Four Branches there is a comparative discrepancy in the individuality of women who are identified by the uxorial lifecycle. This is apparent in the characters introduced in the tales who are not given names, just referred to as 'the wife of ...'. This invites the reader to immediately view them as 'decorative chattel', passive and accepting. Examples are also found in the Welsh chronicles where the uxorial lifecycle is the prominent, and sometimes only, means of identifying women. Branwen's femininity in the Second

<sup>256</sup> Watson, 'Enid the Disobedient', pp. 114-32.

<sup>257</sup> Winward, 'Some Aspects of Women', p. 91.

<sup>258</sup> See Blamires, *Case for Women*, p. 48, 138, 141-2, 215-16, 236, 238.

<sup>259</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 180, 195-200.

Branch bars her from fulfilling her role as peace-weaver because of her compassion and her physical limitation to retaliate.<sup>260</sup>

Individually and collectively, these sources educate the audience in the proper social positions for women and men. Attitudes towards gender expectations are revealed.<sup>261</sup> What were most defining norms and perceptions of the uxorial ideal? Was the ideal of the chaste wife the most prominent influence? Or, was it the feminine ideal in which the power of the female voice was recognised? However positive the Welsh images of wives who enjoy identities and independence in their actions and speech may be, they are usually mitigated by images of the wife in the inferior position. No matter how flexible the positive imagery of the feminine ideal can appear in Welsh sources, it has to be recognized that the superlative traits of woman were largely based on the glorification of masculine ideals. Many female personalities are portrayed as being strong and independent, their actions celebrated and revered because their unifying quality is the responsibility they have taken on themselves to ensure that honour remains intact. As such, it appears that normative perceptions of a wife's position were essentially linked to the preservation of honour — through her loyalty and wisdom in marriage. The wife's sexual transgressions do not lead to social chaos, but chaos to the individual and the family. The acceptable parameters of the married woman's movements, behaviour and speech appear to have been fluid in her attempts to ensure or safeguard the reputation of her husband, her family or even herself.<sup>262</sup>

## ***CONCLUSION***

It is important to assess the position and status of the married women found amongst Welsh sources. Scribes recorded individual women and identified them in ways considered important in defining the terms of their perceived position and status within Welsh society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This offers an overall glimpse into attitudes and perceptions towards the married woman. The function of the uxorial lifecycle as it appears in native Welsh sources is to identify individual women, but more importantly, to draw attention to the men they are linked to and the legitimacy of masculine power and Welsh identity. Categorising women by their

<sup>260</sup> See Winward, 'Some Aspects of Women', pp. 89, 94.

<sup>261</sup> See Watson, 'Enid the Disobedient'.

<sup>262</sup> The narrative of the capture of Nest in the chronicles is a strong case in point.

uxorial lifecycles in the face of individual events and personalities, real or fictive, serves to draw attention to the changes in authority as it relates to political and social alliances usually created through marriage.

Marriage was used as a form of social control, in both literary and very real terms, and any perceived insubordination, violation or death of a wife always indicated a change in power structures and alliances between kin groups. The value of women as seen through their marital relationships is found in numerous sources from *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* to the *Brutiau* to the laws. This is also apparent in the tales of the *Mabinogion*, or in praise poetry where the ‘praise of women functions as displaced praise of men’,<sup>263</sup> and in the Lives of saints where the moral failings (weakness) of many women highlight the spiritual piety (power) of the male saints. The laws stress the legal status of woman as dependent on men; her sexuality is legally controlled through monetary payments. The *amobr*, *sarhaed*, *galanas*, *cowyll*, and *agweddi* are all examples of symbolic gestures towards the preservation of a woman’s sexual honour. Issues of honour and shame were many and a woman’s sexuality was directly linked to her social reputation, but, in the Welsh sources, it does not seem linked to sexual or social chaos.

The measured change in the woman’s position as a symbol of male power to her figurative function as the ‘marital prize’ or commodity, also reflects changes in social order. Though the basic set-up of marital alliances in medieval Wales, to some extent, always hinted at the role of woman as the ‘pawn’, it was not until the Age of Princes, when marital security often meant political security. The position in the value of women changed from symbol to commodity. Whereas the twelfth-century depiction of Angharad as a wifely queen is symbolically complementary to Gruffudd’s warrior-king, the social change hinted at in the Arthurian romances of ‘Geraint’ and ‘Lady of the Well’, is interconnected with clashes of old and new social orders where alliances are carefully manipulated via marriage.<sup>264</sup> As has been seen, this is also evidenced in the Welsh chronicles through the employment of the uxorial lifecycle used to emphasise widespread familial connections and the social and political prominence of the masculine elite.

On the surface, it appears that married women in many Welsh sources are sidelined by the emphasis on the warrior-ruler persona. Underneath, there is much

<sup>263</sup> Aronstein, ‘Culture and Society’, p. 553.

<sup>264</sup> Aronstein, ‘When Arthur Held Court in Caer Llion’, p. 216.

more depth to the ways in which women are represented. However bewildering the conflicting images of married women are, these normative sources instil an appreciation that although wives are on the margins, their roles, albeit small in many sources, are not insignificant. This investigation has revealed that the perceived social worth and position of a woman seems to have been defined by her uxorial lifecycle stage and is recognised as being relative to her connection with men. The many examples from the various literary and ‘historical’ types of sources are informative. It becomes clear that the characterizations and portrayal of married women, specifically, are largely based on a cultural notion that suggests they were principally perceived as symbols of men’s power. These are the most explicit ways in which wives in particular are represented in the major normative sources of medieval Wales. They illuminate some norms and perceptions concerning gender constructs and women’s place in their social and kin groups in native Wales.

The emphasis on marriage in all sources doubtless acted as a moralizing means to remind both sexes of the integral role they played in marital, political and social unity. This was likely accentuated by the motif of the woman as a sovereignty figure of the man’s ‘power base’. Fictional marriages emphasise the importance of political agendas in metaphoric terms and convey a social ideal of Wales; an ideal based on the co-operation of all kingdoms using political marriages as symbols of alliance. The Arthurian romances in the *Mabinogion* tell stories of ‘annexation not by conquest but by marriage’,<sup>265</sup> but so do sources like *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* and the chronicles.

It may be more significant to suggest, at this point, that attempts made to discover or even uncover such generalised norms concerning women and gender over such a broad range of material are intrinsically misguided. Conceivably, a better focus for future research could be to analyse how the individual genres and even the individual texts depict women and gender overall as a means of achieving a more nuanced view. Based principally on the particular circumstances regarding the composition of the texts, themselves, the contrasts found in the literary constructs of women may be even more revealing and most worthy of note. This angle would certainly allow for a better degree of understanding and appreciation for the particular perspectives of the different sources that have been considered here and

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. 221. This can be seen in ‘Lady of the Fountain’ and his political ‘alliance’ to the widow.



could even possibly allow for a greater appreciation of the impact that the written conveyance of social and moral codes had on a wider and perhaps more female focused audience.

The question remains whether or not it is possible to interpret the overall silences or absences regarding uxorial individuality and identity in the sources native to Wales. It is a difficult task that is further exacerbated by the fact that feminine attributes are used in a complementary manner to the more pervasive idealised masculine qualities characteristic of a warrior-ruler society. Definitions and examples of ‘masculinity’ in any culture frequently carry implications for ‘femininity’ and women’s experiences.<sup>266</sup> It is clear that the key assumptions and themes found in these sources stress the importance of married women, not as individuals, but as they are related to men. This is observable in the omnipresent descriptions of the uxorial lifecycle used to identify them. It is important to recognise that the categorization of woman as wife provides an insight to the perceived attitudes regarding their positions and status within their kin and social groups. It also helps expose some of the idealistic expectations of female-male, wife-husband relationships.<sup>267</sup> Looking beyond simple categorisations of ‘wife’ spotlights the career of the married woman, which will now be explored in the remaining chapters.

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<sup>266</sup> Roberts, ‘Introduction’, in *WGEMW*, p. 8.

<sup>267</sup> Jones, ‘Prose Romances’, pp. 141-2.

# CHAPTER 3

## *WELSH QUEENSHIP AND STATUS*

### *INTRODUCTION*

Unravelling the protean layers of medieval queenship is an elaborate process because the subject itself is a complicated one. Predominately, scholarship on the status and agency of queens in the Middle Ages has a nationally idiosyncratic slant; the range of experiences of individual queens is centred on the construction of monarchy within individual countries.<sup>1</sup> Interpreting medieval sources regarding queenship is also problematic. Many are often vague about the roles, duties and expectations of queens, often implying that the queen's responsibilities were no different than those of ordinary wives. In fact, it has recently been revealed that the political commentators of the late Middle Ages were able to 'ignore the potentially subversive implications of an office at the heart of the political structure which could only be filled by a woman' by avoiding defining queenship in specific terms.<sup>2</sup> Overall, it appears that across Western Europe there was an ambiguity in the figure of the medieval queen. This was a product of the flexible nature in the construction of monarchy itself and expectations of the queen's office in context.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1960s Marion Facinger argued that the early medieval king's true partner in governance was the queen whose status evolved because of her activities

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<sup>1</sup> For British examples see M. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford, 1991); M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998); L.L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge, 2003); Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*; H.E. Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003); P.A. Stafford, 'Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century', in A.J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 3-26; ead., 'The King's Wife in Wessex, 800-1066', *Past and Present*, 91 (1981), pp. 3-27.

<sup>2</sup> J. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445-1503* (Oxford, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The most informative overview are found in A.J. Duggan, 'Introduction', in Anne J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College, London, April 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. xv-xxii; L.O. Fradenberg, 'Introduction: Rethinking Queenship', in L.O. Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 1-13; L.L. Huneycutt, 'Images of High-Medieval Queenship', *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, 1 (1989), pp. 61-71; ead., 'Medieval Queenship', *History Today* 39/6 (1989), pp. 16-22; J.L. Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', in L.E. Mitchell (ed.), *Women in Medieval Western European Culture* (New York, 1999), pp. 179-207.

and position of influence within the court. Facinger also noted a deterioration in the overall status of the medieval queen that corresponded with the rise of bureaucratic institutions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This resulted in a change of the public face of queenship; one that became more symbolic of office than one with official duties.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation was further developed by Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple in the late 1980s who claimed that the development of bureaucracies dissolved the power of the family as a unit, condemning women to the household.<sup>5</sup>

The latter conclusions are pertinent to the study of medieval queenship as the queen's role within the royal household as wife and mother, and the traditional rituals and symbols associated with these lifecycle stages, developed to enhance the position of the queen in ways that allowed her to exercise considerable levels of power in official and unofficial capacities. In Britain, research on Anglo-Saxon queens by Pauline Stafford and Janet Nelson, and studies on later medieval English queens by Margaret Howell and John Carmi Parsons, has shown that the intimacies of the royal family were crucial to the individual queen's status.<sup>6</sup> Some of these approaches have been criticised, however, for their failure to recognize the office and the status of the medieval queen as being unique in her experience as a woman, choosing, instead, to focus on her lifecycle stages and circumstances largely surrounding marital negotiations and her childbearing role.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is remains essential to recognise that the importance of the king's power within the familial context 'set a premium' on the relationships between the ruler, his wife and their children. The idealised union between queen and king was expected to be harmonious as its constancy helped promote good government.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M.F. Facinger, 'A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France, 987–1237', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 5 (1968), pp. 1–48.

<sup>5</sup> McNamara and Wemple, 'Power of Women through the Family', pp. 126–41.

<sup>6</sup> Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*; J.L. Nelson, 'The Queen in Ninth-Century Wessex', in S. Keynes and A.P. Smyth (eds), *Anglo-Saxons: Studies Presented to Cyril Roy Hart* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 69–77; J. Carmi Parsons, 'Family, Sex and Power: The Rhythms of Medieval Queenship', in J. Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 1–11; id., 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England', in J. Carpenter and S. MacLean (eds), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (Urbana, 1995), pp. 147–77; Stafford, 'Emma'; ead., 'The King's Wife in Wessex, 800–1066'; ead., 'Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the Early Middle Ages', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M.T. Hill on the Occasion of her Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 79–100.

<sup>7</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 4; Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 182.

<sup>8</sup> J.F. O'Callaghan, 'The Many Roles of the Medieval Queen: Some Examples from Castile', in T. Earenfight (ed.), *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 21–2.

In terms of the male-dominated political structure of the medieval world, the position of the queen was an anomaly, especially as she was the one individual who was intimately more connected to the king than anyone else.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, the structure and resources associated with the queen's household is important to the understanding of the wider administrative history of individual monarchies.<sup>10</sup> In terms of the ideologies and practice of monarchy, there was a 'plasticity in gender' that was manipulated by rulers to gain political and power advantages. This resulted in the enhanced positions, status and roles of women as queens. As such, a clear understanding of the concept and rules of medieval kingship can only be reached by recognising the queen's fundamental position in court life and culture, even though her power may not have been all inclusive.<sup>11</sup> This is crucial because medieval monarchy was gendered. The variety of practical and ideological roles of the woman as queen enhanced and supported the sovereignty of her husband and king.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, besides the queen's political influences, the ideological constructs of queenship are important in assessing the value of the position and status of the queen as a whole. Cultural expectations concerning the queen's lifecycles, and function of her household, were intimately connected to and integrated within the royal court and such ideologies may have helped form monarchy in practice.<sup>13</sup>

Some Welsh historians have observed the commanding roles of queens and royal wives in the most general of terms. Although Gwyn A. Williams waxes lyrical about the visible roles of queens and the higher status of women in historic times in Wales, which 'sets the brain to race', he tempers this view with the remark that the role of women in medieval Welsh society was very ambiguous to say the least.<sup>14</sup> Jane Aaron states that there is a common misconception of Welsh women as embodying femininity and all its passive virtues. She says this ideal is not indigenous to a Welsh culture where women have traditionally been expected to be tough and 'to fight for what they hold dear'.<sup>15</sup> Glanmor Williams declares that wives in the Middle Ages were especially forces to be reckoned with because of their need

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<sup>9</sup> Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>11</sup> Fradenberg, 'Rethinking Queenship', pp. 1-13.

<sup>12</sup> Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, p. 263.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> J. Aaron, 'A Review of the Contributions of Women to Welsh Life and Prospects for the Future', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 8 (2002), p. 201.

to have to survive in a society that was easily provoked and ruled by warfare: ‘Second-class citizens women may have been in the eyes of the law of Hywel Dda, but they could bear themselves with first-class spirit and courage when their blood was up’.<sup>16</sup> These highly romanticised and generalised contemporary views are undoubtedly founded in a tradition in which the strength, resources and self-sufficiency of royal and noble women have been revered. This chapter seeks to unravel the layers that have shrouded the core ideals of medieval Welsh queenship and uncover the foundations behind such a time-honoured view that values queenly ingenuity.

This chapter investigates Welsh queenship from four perspectives. First, it assesses how far concepts of Welsh kingship accommodated a notion of native queenship with particular reference to the royal *llys* and the Welsh Laws of the Court (*Cyfraith Llys*). This includes a discussion of the movements of the queen within the court and whilst on circuit. Second, evidence is used to establish a core ideology associated with the queen specifically within a Welsh court. Native customs concerning hospitality and the woman’s role in gift-giving are particularly applicable. Third, the overall status of the Welsh queen is considered in the context of titles and other designations used by contemporaries to identify individual women in such a position. A woman’s position as queen afforded her more privilege in marriage than those of lesser unions.<sup>17</sup> Fourth, although the issue of motherhood is too large to be discussed at length in this thesis, it is important to highlight salient points regarding Welsh marital and inheritance practices and consider how they may have affected the perceived status and agency of the queen as mother.

An investigation of queenship in native Wales is important for two reasons. First, detailed research considering ideals, perceptions and practice in a Welsh context has, until now, not been undertaken in any great depth. An increased awareness of the variety of roles associated with the queen and how her position supported the sovereignty of the king<sup>18</sup> contributes to a fuller understanding of Welsh kingship and can help inform future research. Second, the medieval queen was the most visibly powerful member of the female sex. Thus, she was not only

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<sup>16</sup> Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup> Owen says that it may have been the survival of an archaic state where women were more fully integrated into husband’s kin, signifying the most honourable degree of marriage. Owen, ‘Shame and Reparation’, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> See Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, p. 263.

exposed to public criticism, ridicule and judgement, but was pressurised to conform to the idealised gender roles concerning the wife.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the fears and expectations associated with the king's wife as queen helped to shape the roles and duties of her office.<sup>20</sup> The queen-consort was viewed as a role model for her contemporaries and the status conferred upon her in sources provides insight into contemporary attitudes towards wives whose roles and activities were public and influential.<sup>21</sup>

### ***GENERAL IDEALS OF WELSH QUEENSHIP***

There are gender specific traits associated with the medieval queen that defined her status; common feminine qualities that defined both her queenship and position as the king's wife. Early illustrations of idealized forms of Welsh queenship and female royalty are found in the twelfth-century Welsh Triads, which categorise individuals based on ideals associated with femininity and nobility. Examples include the Three Fair (Royal) Ladies (*Teir Gwenriein Ynys Prydein*), the Three Lively (Royal) Ladies of the Island of Britain (*Teir Gohoybriein Ynys Prydein*), the Three Splendid or Famous Maidens of Arthur's court (*Tair Rhiain Ardderchog Llys Arthur*), Arthur's Three Great Queens (*Teir Prif Riein Arthur*) and his Three Concubines (*A'e deir Karedicwreic oed y rei hynn*).<sup>22</sup> The defining attributes associated with the women named are, first and foremost, their lineage — they are all identified as daughters.<sup>23</sup> However, they are also identified by physical beauty and wealth. The categorisation of women in such a courtly context perhaps suggests that their status was enhanced by idealised perceptions of gender.

Other examples provide more detailed, but stereotypical descriptions of Welsh queens. In the Four Branches queens are described as the most beautiful women ever seen and in the Lives of Welsh saints they are noted for their beauty,

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<sup>19</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>20</sup> Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Establishing a firm understanding of the cultural and social expectations of royal women helps in estimating the agency of married women in the upper social strata more generally, as is discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>22</sup> *TYP*, triad 56, p. 161; triad 57, p. 164; triad 78, p. 208; triad 79, p.209; triad 88, p. 230. In all but the last example, the basic noun used here is the Modern Welsh 'rhiain', rather than 'brenhines' (the more formal term to denote queen). It may be significant of the broader category of 'royal lady'. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru Online* <<http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>>, accessed 18 June 2014.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 32-4.

noble lineage, chastity, temperance and empathy.<sup>24</sup> St Illtud's mother is even named Rieningulid 'when Latinized ... means *regina pudica*, modest queen'.<sup>25</sup> The *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* uses stereotypical descriptions of both sexes to emphasize Gruffudd's sovereign rule.<sup>26</sup> Gruffudd is illustrated as a physically strong and educated king, generous towards his soldiers, spirited towards his enemies and brave in battle.<sup>27</sup> Angharad is a wise, noble and modest woman, elegant in habit and speech, kind to friends and generous to the poor.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Angharad is described as *cyngorwreic*, or counsel-woman.<sup>29</sup> Literary queens portrayed as counsellors and advisors to their husbands are stereotypically lenient and merciful in all judgements. The medieval king was widely associated with justice and physical strength, whilst the idealised traits of the queen were allied with mercy and moral strength.<sup>30</sup> In the late-twelfth-century prose tale 'Geraint', Gwenhwyfar has the power to cast merciful judgement on the knight who insulted her.<sup>31</sup> Taken as a whole, these sources act as a didactic compendium outlining the principal ideals associated with Welsh queenship. The highlighted attributes suggest that, as elsewhere in Europe, perceptions of the Welsh queen were highly romanticised and standardised for a woman of her rank.<sup>32</sup>

As these sources were compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they do reflect some contemporary attitudes towards the ideals of Welsh queenship. However, it is important to recognise that many stem from the oral tradition, which reflects earlier conventions and attitudes. This may be particularly relevant given the

<sup>24</sup> e.g. *Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet*, pp. 2, 3; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 4, 5; *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 136-9, 172-3, 193-7, 200-03, 216-9.

<sup>25</sup> ... *quando Latinetur, sonat hoc regina pudica* ... Ibid.194-5.

<sup>26</sup> Johns, 'Beauty and the Feast', pp. 109-15.

<sup>27</sup> ... *doctrinae fuerat perpolitus et externarum linguarum excellens; in milites clementem et munificum, in hostes magnanimum, in proeliis fortissimum. Vita Griffini*, pp. 72-3; HGK, p. 17. cf. obituary for Rhun ab Owain, 1146. *BS*, pp. 150-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 93; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 55; *BT, RBH*, pp. 122-3.

<sup>28</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-9; HGK, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> HGK, p. 22. The term 'council-woman' is absent about in the Latin Life. See Chapter 4 for a discussion on queens as counsellors, *Counsellors and Advisors*.

<sup>30</sup> To some extent, there was a long-term continuity in the model of the queen as an intercessory figure, enhanced by Christian ideals based largely on Marian associations with mercy and kindness to the poor and oppressed. Parsons, 'Family, Sex and Power', pp. 7-9; Stafford, 'Portrayal of Royal Women', pp. 144-8, 156-7. Mercy was not a trait unique to queens as some of the male obituaries found in the thirteenth-century Welsh chronicles describe merciful kings, indeed a key attribute for clerical authors of such obituaries. cf. *BS*, pp. 80-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 22; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 17; *BT, RBH*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>31</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 151-2.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. L.L. Huneycutt, 'The Idea of the Perfect Princess: the Life of St. Margaret in the Reign of Matilda II (1100-1118)', in M. Chibnall (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 12 (1989), pp. 81-97; ead., 'Images of High-Medieval Queenship'.

little surviving evidence concerning Welsh queenship in practice.<sup>33</sup> The ideals associated with the queen echo those of an earlier society in which the king's wife was also revered for her office as queen. Whether the woman enjoyed the status of queen in her own right rather than the ideological, gendered equal of her husband as the king is debatable. As will be demonstrated, the queen's status was largely a combined veneration for the position itself, but in a clear warrior-ruler context in which the married woman was feminine complement to her husband's status and power.

The valued traits of masculine power that were stressed by the literati of medieval Wales were predominantly associated with the warrior-ruler ethos and the military might of a leader whose royal power and rights to rule heavily depended on success in warfare.<sup>34</sup> A ruler's supremacy within his social group was dependent on a number of factors, ranging from his individual personality and ambitions, to leadership abilities, wealth and the ability to exploit relationships.<sup>35</sup> Unlike countries such as England and France that had evolved into single monarchical institutions with developed centralised governments by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Wales remained largely fragmented. Even amongst the three leading kingdoms Powys in central Wales was split after 1160 and Deheubarth in the south-west after 1197. Gwynedd in the north alone remained relatively unbroken, but not without its own disputes.<sup>36</sup>

A significant issue of Welsh kingship concerned succession and rights to patrimony. The laws have rules, albeit unclear, and it is uncertain how far rulers felt constrained by them to determine a successor. Legally, a ruler was not necessarily succeeded by his eldest son, but had the power to choose any member from the extended royal family.<sup>37</sup> A leader dying without proclaiming an heir, or whose

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 4 generally.

<sup>34</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 66. See K.R.L. Kapphan, *Constructions of Gender in Medieval Welsh Literature* (unpublished MA thesis, Aberystwyth, 2009), pp. 6-29.

<sup>35</sup> 'The contemporary Welsh noun *cyfoeth* referred significantly to land, to a kingdom and to wealth'. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 64-5; Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> *HW*, ii, pp. 573-611; Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 27-82; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 1-16, 213-51;

<sup>37</sup> No less than the great-grandson of a king. It seems that over the course of the various law texts jurists believed there to be one successor who was chosen by the reigning king amongst his close relations. 'Dynastic Succession in Medieval Wales', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 33 (1986), pp. 201-02. The laws from Gwynedd say that the king's heir shall be his son, nephew, brother or brother's son — a member of the king's *aelodau brenin* or *membra regis* who enjoyed an exclusive privilege through designation by the reigning king. The main laws texts from Deheubarth state that the king's son or brother should succeed as heir, but variations also suggest that the king's heir could



chosen successor had his rights challenged by other legal contenders were the underpinnings of many of the conflicts that characterised Wales before 1282 and disputes of succession militated against the unification of Welsh polities and Wales as a whole under one dynasty.<sup>38</sup>

These problems are often reflected in the changes in titles employed by rulers as individual designations changed with successor and circumstance.<sup>39</sup> It was essential for rulers to establish their positions of power and validate their authority within Wales, and for some of them within the wider political structure of medieval Britain and beyond. The various styles they adopted were often carefully chosen to reflect their territorial statuses and political aspirations at given times. Titles used by contemporaries to identify individual rulers often echo the continuous cycle of defining and re-defining power and status amongst Welsh leaders.<sup>40</sup>

By the twelfth century, Welsh kingship began to evolve into a more defined structure.<sup>41</sup> Attitudes towards the ‘simplification’ of the political geography of Wales that focused on the status and more idealised, centralised power of dynastic kingship are found in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century redactions of the legal texts.<sup>42</sup> These emphasise the significance and position of the king and his court, and the ability of both to dispense justice. It is the Laws of the Court, the first tractate found in the laws of Hywel Dda, that tell most about the highly structured hierarchy of the Welsh court, or royal *llys*, the headquarters of the king’s power from which ‘flowed all honour’.<sup>43</sup>

Studying Welsh kingship and queenship by looking at the laws in isolation is problematical. The Welsh law texts were written by lawyers and used, for the most part, as a means of teaching. Material from a variety of different sources was added to the Hywelian nucleus of each redaction and much deliberately omitted. Thus, it is important to tread carefully when thinking about the laws as examples of ‘living law’ or as accurate portrayals of the state of affairs in the twelfth and thirteenth

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be a brother, son, nephew or the son of a brother of the king. ‘The Laws of the Court from Cynferth’, ed. and trans. M.E. Owen, in *WKHC*, pp. 440-41; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 2-3; *LTMW*, pp. 6-7, 110, 318.

<sup>38</sup> For the example of Gwynedd after the death of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth see G.A. Williams, ‘The Succession to Gwynedd, 1238–47’, *BBCS*, 20 (1962–4), pp. 393-413.

<sup>39</sup> Discussed below, *Titles and Other Designations*.

<sup>40</sup> See Turvey, *Lord Rhys*, pp. 87-93.

<sup>41</sup> This was, in large part, due to the consolidation of smaller territories in the southern, middle and northern parts of Wales by leading rulers from Deheubarth, Powys and Gwynedd.

<sup>42</sup> For outline of different redactions see Chapter 1, pp. 41-4.

<sup>43</sup> ... *ac o honoi y dechreuit pob anryded. Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, (ed.) I. Williams (Cardiff, 1930: repr. 1974), p. 51; Davis, *Mabinogion*, p. 36; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 62.

centuries.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the Laws of the Court primarily deal with the norms and ideals associated with establishing the status of individual members of the royal household than with defining rules of administration or roles for the highest members of court, namely those of the king and queen.<sup>45</sup>

In isolation, however, it is through the Laws of the Court in which Welsh queenship has been principally assessed.<sup>46</sup> This is by no means an exceptional approach as studies of native laws are often an effective means of determining individual aspects of medieval rulership and is commonly used to examine the values and attitudes of indigenous peoples and their expectations of kings and queens. The greatest example for the High Middle Ages is to be found in the laws of Castile. Under the command of King Alfonso X (1252–1284), a comprehensive set of codified laws known as the *Siete Partidas* were produced. The didactic nature of the laws defines the office, function and expectations of the queen in medieval Castile-Leon asserting that she was not only the king's confidant, but clearly his reigning partner. These laws stress that in order for a kingdom to be stable and to practice good government towards its people, it was necessary for the king and the queen to have a harmonious union. These laws also focus on the expectations of the queen in context of the dynasty, which, in turn, imply her responsibilities to the kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

Although the 'unofficial' laws of Hywel Dda reveal little about the actual duties and expectations of either royal office, they do have 'a strong royalist flavour'.<sup>48</sup> This research approaches the person of the queen in the Welsh laws by focusing on the importance of her status as found in all three chief redactions, combined with additional evidence from other native sources that highlight her traditional position as a core member of the royal family. Inferred duties of the queen found in the laws and elsewhere suggest that her role and position as the ruler's wife helped define and strengthen Welsh monarchy. The gendered divisions between the expectations of the queen and king worked to reinforce sovereign power.

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<sup>44</sup> D. Jenkins, 'The Medieval Welsh Idea of Law', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, 49/3-4 (1981), pp. 324-5; *LTMW*, p. xi.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *WKHC*.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. Stacey, 'King, Queen, and *Edling*', pp. 55-62.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 179. O'Callaghan, 'Many Roles of the Medieval Queen', pp. 21-2.

<sup>48</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 252-3.

The level of the queen's status is in the laws directly indicated by fiscal provisions made to her, such as the king sharing with her a third of his goods 'from land and earth', a third of any booty he acquired whilst on campaign in his own territories, and paying her one-third of his *sarhaed* for insults done to her.<sup>49</sup> The number and types of officers assigned to her are also a principal marker for her status.<sup>50</sup> The prologue to the Cynferth redaction states that the Laws of the Court are arranged in a way that reflects the importance of both the king and queen. The queen, herself, 'has a share of all the profit of the king from his rightful land'.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, some historians have emphasised that the importance accorded to the king and queen was done to 'strengthen the kingship', rather than to define the rank of royal office.<sup>52</sup> This perception is also palpable in the assessments of Welsh kingship and queenship that have been drawn from evidence provided in the Iorwerth redaction in which the Laws of the Court are further elaborated on and the members of the royal court conferred greater status.<sup>53</sup>

The Iorwerth redaction provides more substance regarding the queen's household, primarily because there is a marked increase in the number of officers assigned to her. Perhaps the rise in number of the Welsh queen's officers is better understood in comparison with similar developments in England in the fourteenth century when the English queen's household expanded in size. Lisa Benz St John has recently argued that the expansion was partially a reaction to the needs of the queen's household itself, and partially a replication of the changes and advancements made to the king's own household at this time. In this context, both factors helped shape the composition of the queen's domestic establishment in two crucial ways. The first was its existence as an independent unit in its own right and second was its integration into the king's household.<sup>54</sup> Although mirroring the image of the king's own household and largely seen as a subsidiary to it, the creation of separate households and offices allowed English queenship to exist as a separate institution. This provided the queen a means of exercising agency similar to that of the king's or

<sup>49</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, pp. 2-8; 'Cynferth', pp. 438-9; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 2; *LTMW*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>50</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen, and *Edling*', pp. 55-7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ran o holl enill y brenhin o'e wlat dilis a geiff y vrenhines*. 'Cyfnerth', pp. 438-9.

<sup>52</sup> D. Jenkins, 'Prolegomena to the Welsh Laws of Court', in *WKHC*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> This status is a likely reflection of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's own achievements and political successes. The influential status of Joan within Llywelyn's court and its impact on the Iorwerth redaction is discussed below, p. 182. Jenkins, 'Medieval Welsh Idea of Law', pp. 323-4.

<sup>54</sup> L. Benz St John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-century England* (New York, 2012), p. 66.

other great magnates of the realm (whose own households were similar in size to the queen's). For later medieval England, such an increase in the queen's status has also been linked to the personality and political maturity of the individual woman.<sup>55</sup>

With such a comparison in mind, a more nuanced reading of the Laws of the Court through gender helps to show that the Welsh queen's position was one that reflected both her own status and promoted that of her husband, the king.

In the opening paragraph of Laws of the Court of the Iorwerth redaction it is stated that 'the first officers enumerated above are those of the court, and the last eight are those of the queen'.<sup>56</sup> This seems to imply that the queen is separate from the court, which is defined by the king and his officers. Yet, the queen's officers help to make up the total of the twenty-four of the court's members, illustrating that the queen and her officers were recognised as fundamental components of the royal household, helping to define the *llys*. Not only is it directed that the king give his consort a third of his goods, the laws state that it is right 'in the same way [for] the King's officers [to give] to the Queen's officers'.<sup>57</sup> The number of officers and gifts assigned to the queen may have been a means of paying further tribute to the status of the king, but they must also represent that of the office of the queen in her own right. If the king's power was associated with land and by the number of his followers, or officers, then accordingly it seems reasonable that the queen's own status and agency were also based on similar criteria, even if to a lesser degree.

For the Welsh queen, there are four 'lower grade' functionary officers found in the earlier redactions (steward, priest, maid of the chamber and groom or equerry), which Iorwerth doubles to eight. Two broad interpretations have been made of this. The first is that the increase in the queen's officials reflected and promoted the status of the 'queen'. J. Goronwy Edwards suggested that the rise in the number of the queen's officers was a schematic change to make the proportions between the king and queen's officers more level.<sup>58</sup> Further, Huw Pryce's study on the office of the royal priests concludes that even though the queen's priest had various roles and entitlements similar to, but less than the household priest, the status afforded the queen in the laws meant that the role of the 'Lady's priest' was hardly 'an artificial

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>56</sup> *A'r svydogyon kyntaf a ryuassam ny uchot yv rey y llys, a'r vyth dywethaf yv rey y urenhines. Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 1-2; *LTMW*, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> *E brenhyn a dely rody y'r urenhynes tryderan a gaffo o da o tyr a dayar ... ac yuelly svydwyr y brenhyn y svydwyr y urenhynes. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 2; *LTMW*, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> J.G. Edwards, 'The Royal Household and the Welsh Lawbooks', *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 13(1963), p. 174.

creation', but one that reflected the status of the queen in practice.<sup>59</sup> The second understanding is that the rise in officials promoted the status of the king. Dafydd Jenkins has argued that the raising of the queen's officers in Iorwerth works to complement those of the king. Although they maintained fewer roles and responsibilities, the augmentation of the queen's officers, nonetheless, boosts the king's own status.<sup>60</sup> More recently, Robin Stacey has elaborated on this stating that the greater prominence given to the queen's household in the Iorwerth redaction may have been a means of simply exalting the power of king rather than providing a true reflection of the status of the queen herself.<sup>61</sup>

Although it has been suggested that the most defining element of the figure of the queen in the Welsh Laws of the Court is her discernible absence,<sup>62</sup> a comparison with and reference to the king's own appearance reveals that the laws are equally reserved in telling us much about him or his office. It is significant the queen appears at all in the legal tracts of medieval Wales<sup>63</sup> and it is perhaps more fitting to turn Stacey's assertion around suggesting that the most defining element of the Welsh queen is her discernible appearance as a figure of honour within the Laws of the Court. Looking at secondary scholarship on the Welsh laws in isolation it is easy to presuppose that the queen's status was merely symbolic and of little weight in terms of exercising power. However, a more comprehensive exploration into how the queen appears in the different types of primary sources distinctive to Wales sheds new light on the duties and expectations of the king's wife.

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<sup>59</sup> H. Pryce, 'The Household Priest (*Offeiriad Teulu*)', in *WKHC*, pp. 92-3. Examples of the roles and entitlements are offering the power of protection (*nawdd*), being housed with the king's priest and receiving a third of the queen's tithes and payment for every 'open seal' that the queen herself issued. *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 5-6, 16; *LTMW*, pp. 11-12, 28-9.

<sup>60</sup> Jenkins, 'Prolegomena', p. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', pp. 53-62.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 61. For a discussion on likely authorship and perspective of the Laws of Court Pryce, 'Context and Purpose of the Earliest Welsh Lawbooks'.

<sup>63</sup> Her presence and the status she is bestowed become especially noteworthy when compared with the total absence of the queen in the earliest surviving English political tract known as 'Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical', written by the early-eleventh-century Archbishop Wulfstan II of York. Stafford, 'Queens and Queenship', p. 469.

## ***THE ROYAL LLYS***

Debates concerning the gendered space of women and men, traditionally referred to as ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres, have surfaced in recent years.<sup>64</sup> It has generally been shown that, contrary to previous belief that women were marginalised to a domestic sphere while men acted in the public realms of authority, boundaries were far from rigid. Much of the ‘private’ sphere of female domesticity was incorporated with the ‘public’ sphere of masculine authority. Recent studies have shown that the concept of court and household was one that remained flexible based on circumstance and individual relationships.<sup>65</sup> Often a queen’s legitimate power was derived from her role as mistress of the household. Yet, many were able to exercise real power through influence and often counsel.<sup>66</sup> In many ways, especially in terms of the relationship between wife and husband, the domestic and political spheres were not clearly demarcated. Although on the surface it seems that queens were ‘fully functioning members of royal families’ who were narrowly ‘marginalised’ to the ‘private’ domain by the rise of administrative bureaucracy and the patrimonialisation of authority, it is clear that they retained power in ‘unofficial’ or informal forms, performing the balance between the two supposedly gendered realms.<sup>67</sup>

The Laws of the Court are ambiguous as to their stance on definitions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres and the expected location of the queen within the court itself. The Cyfnerth redaction places emphasis on the queen’s chamber, primarily endowing her with her own ‘officers of the chamber’ or *swydogyon yr ystauell*,<sup>68</sup> and the later Iorwerth redaction predominately situates the queen in the peripheries of the

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, 1994); P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Household and the Organisation of Labour in Late Medieval Towns: Some English Evidence’, in M. Carlier and T. Soens (eds), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities, Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Louvain-Apeldoorn, 2001), p. 61; J. Grenville, ‘Houses and Households in Late Medieval England: An Archaeological Perspective’, in *Medieval Women: Text and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne et al. (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 309-28; B. Hanawalt, ‘“Of Good and Ill Repute”’: *Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 70-87; S. Rees Jones, ‘Women’s Influence on the Design of Urban Homes’, in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, pp. 190-211; F. Riddy, ‘Looking Closely: Authority and Intimacy in the Late Medieval Urban Home’, in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, pp. 212-28.

<sup>65</sup> Parsons, ‘Family, Sex, and Power’, p. 10. Fradenberg, ‘Rethinking Queenship’; Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*; Nelson, ‘Medieval Queenship’; J. Carmi Parsons, ‘Ritual and Symbol in the English Medieval Queenship to 1500’, in *Women and Sovereignty*, pp. 60-77.

<sup>66</sup> Stafford, ‘The Portrayal of Royal Women in England’, pp. 144-5.

<sup>67</sup> Parsons, ‘Family, Sex, and Power’, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Stacey, ‘King, Queen and *Edling*’, p. 57; ‘Cynferth’, pp. 442-3, 446-7, 466-7.

court and within the privacy of the chamber.<sup>69</sup> The setting apart of male officers from the queen's quarters at night and the emphasised attendance of female servants on the queen in her own chamber help strengthen the view that the queen was expected to live in a particularly feminised domestic, or privatised world. This is in contrast to the remainder of the royal household that was more masculine in nature and presupposed the king visiting the queen in her space, but not inhabiting it himself.<sup>70</sup> The conventional placement of the queen within the chamber indicates that both her role and her office were of secondary importance and that her status was principally symbolic. This is an image familiar and even customary to many contemporary Western European sources where the queen often finds herself largely isolated and detached from the public activities of the court and the authority of her husband as king.<sup>71</sup>

The queen, and royal women more generally, are often located within the 'private' sphere, within the confines of dwellings associated with domesticity such as the bedchamber and kitchen. Principal examples are found in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, with the unnamed wives of Arawn and Teyrnnon, the Second Branch with Branwen, Goewin in the Fourth Branch and in the grieving, widowed countess in the late-twelfth-century story the 'The Lady of the Well'.<sup>72</sup> In the Lives of Welsh saints, queens are repeatedly, but not exclusively, isolated within the royal bedchamber (either in the act of childbirth or fulfilling the role of the temptress) or the confines of religious houses.<sup>73</sup> Entries in *Brut y Tywysogion* concerning the abduction of Nest, Joan's affair with William de Braose and the simultaneous birth of Gwenllian and the death of her mother, Eleanor de Montfort, are visibly structured around events taking place in private chambers.<sup>74</sup> However, Joan was allegedly found in Llywelyn's chamber, suggesting an accepted placement of the queen at the heart of the political sphere. Above all, the image of the purely domestic queen is one that has affected perceptions of her.

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<sup>69</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', pp. 53-62.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 42-6, 57-9; Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> Parsons, 'Ritual and Symbol' p. 69; J. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 31-77; Schulenberg, 'Female Sanctity'.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 5, 18, 27-8, 50, 126, 132; *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, pp. 4-6, 19-20.

<sup>73</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 136-9, 198-201, 216-19.

<sup>74</sup> *BS*, pp. 104-07, 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2, 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9, 117; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7, 262-5.

Although the queen is closely linked to the chamber, this does not mean that the chamber was solely her domain.<sup>75</sup> Studies on medieval queenship have found that the royal chamber was neither necessarily a domestic space, nor a precinct that was the exclusive sphere of the queen.<sup>76</sup> The earlier redactions of the Welsh laws, such as *Cyfnerth*, indicate that the chamber (*ystafell/camera*) was more than simply a domestic space and that the distinction between the *ystafell* and the hall (*llys/curia*) was blurry.<sup>77</sup> In the earlier Middle Ages, the Welsh king's chamber was defined by the personal and public duties associated with his office and administrative duties were undertaken there. The constant comings and goings of officials within this 'private' sphere in fact emphasize the extent of the overlapping boundaries 'private' and 'public'.<sup>78</sup> One particular illustration of this is found in the lodgings of the court justice, which are within the king's chamber itself.<sup>79</sup> Further, *Cyfnerth* identifies the *ystafell* as being far more than a privatized domestic environment and one that was shared by the queen and king.<sup>80</sup>

Archaeological evidence has shown that in terms of the structure of the royal *llys*, the queen's own chamber was not separated from the king's, but was most likely attached.<sup>81</sup> The queen's chamberlain conducted errands 'between the chamber and the hall', was in charge of her coffers and, more interestingly, his lodgings were in the queen's chamber 'with his bed in the garderobe, so as to be ready to serve the needs of the King and Queen' implying that the royal chambers were connected.<sup>82</sup> The queen's close proximity to the king within the chambered setting surely meant that she was hardly on the periphery of action. Although the *Iorwerth* redaction implies a division between the private chamber of the queen and the public space of the king, it also presumes that the king and queen will be together within the royal household.<sup>83</sup> The general presumption given in the Welsh laws is that the royal

<sup>75</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp. 42-6, 93.

<sup>77</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 59; '*Cyfnerth*', pp. 444-5.

<sup>78</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> '*Cyfnerth*', pp. 450-1; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 9-10; *LTMW*, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 58.

<sup>81</sup> G.R.J. Jones, '*Llys and Maerdref*', in *WKHC*, p. 299.

<sup>82</sup> ... *ef a dele guneythur negesseu ervg er estauell a'r neuad ... E lety yb estauell e urenhynes, a'ie wely en e geuty, vrth uot en paravt e wneythur kyureyt e brenhyn a'r urenhynes...* . *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 16; *LTMW*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>83</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', pp. 55-6, 61.



household, and to an extent it can be argued attendance in the court, was one that expected the king and queen to be together.<sup>84</sup>

The fluidity of movement within the *llys* helped maintain the wife's status within the royal court. This is suggested in the life of St. Cadog in which the future queen Gwladus, described as a virgin, is found sitting with her sisters before the door of her chamber.<sup>85</sup> In spite of the silence in the laws regarding a seat for the queen within the hall, there are many other normative examples that make it clear that she was expected to be visibly present at royal gatherings. The most overt example is from the Triads, which tell us that Gwenhwyfar received an insult by being struck from her royal chair in Arthur's hall.<sup>86</sup> There are also numerous references to seating arrangements according to status found in the stories of the *Mabinogion* in which royal women are located within the heart of the royal hall, often seated at the high table. Some of the many examples are found in the First and Second Branches, 'How Culhwch Won Olwen', 'Geraint son of Erbin', 'The Lady of the Well' and 'Peredur'.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it is conceivable that the queen enjoyed such status. The Laws of the Court state that the household bard (*bardd teulu*) is to sing to the queen 'quietly so the hall is not disturbed by him',<sup>88</sup> which could be an indication that the queen is not situated in the *ystafell*, a room in a separate building, but within the vicinity of the court itself.<sup>89</sup>

Cyfnernth and the Latin B redactions, however, situate the queen within the chamber at feasting time.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, the queen's presence in the *llys* was not only accepted but expected for she, too, was the public face of the kingdom and her official status was one that was clearly adjunct to that of the king's. This is evidenced in the Blegywryd redaction, which suggests the queen's presence within

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 32, 55-6.

<sup>85</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 136-9. Also see Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 68, 81, 139-40, 153.

<sup>86</sup> *TYP*, triad 54, pp. 153-55. In 'Peredur' a goblet is struck from her hand. Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 68.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 5, 11-15, 32, 68, 75, 78, 83, 90, 93, 98, 99, 117, 118, 128, 135, 137, 140, 149, 150, 176.

<sup>88</sup> ... *ar henny en araf, mal nat aulonedo e neuad ganthav ...* . *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 10; *LTMW*, p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> Jenkins, 'Bardd Teulu and Pencerdd', p. 150; Jones, 'Llys and Maerdref', p. 299.

<sup>90</sup> *Cum regina uoluerit audire carmina in camera sua, poeta familie debet ei cantare tria carmina, scilicet, kerd amgaru, et hoc sine clamore ne disturbetur aula.* 'The Laws of the Court from Latin B', (ed. and trans.) P. Russell, in *WKHC*, pp. 500-01. *Ban uynho y vrenhines g6aranda6 kerd yn yr ystauell, canet y bard teulu tri chanu o kerd Camlan yn disson rac teruyscu y llys.* 'Cyfnernth', pp. 466-7.

the court and her associated status by stating that the steward casts the protection of the king and queen within the hall, over court and gathering.<sup>91</sup>

The term *llys y brenin*, the royal court, has multiple meanings. It refers to the mobility of the royal household throughout the royal demesne, the movements of the king, queen, royal family, servants and guests, as well as the structure and layout of the buildings of the royal court themselves.<sup>92</sup> According to Welsh legal texts it was of primary importance for the royal household to be adaptive and develop a functioning administration centred on collaboration — an administration that worked with both a mobile and static household.<sup>93</sup> There are prominent Welsh examples of queens working in collaboration with their husbands, sharing royal responsibilities and expectations associated with their royal status. In the Life of St Illtud, Queen Rieingulid accompanies King Bicanus on circuit.<sup>94</sup> The First Branch of the *Mabinogi* describes how Rhiannon and Pwyll make plans to go on circuit around the realm of Dyfed together and distinctly declares that ‘*They* [my emphasis] ruled the land successfully that year, and the next’.<sup>95</sup> The image of the Welsh ruler and his consort sharing the public limelight and appearing as a couple actively partaking in the governance of the realm is one that emerges in the various sources.

‘Peredur’ and ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’ provide illustrations of concerted gender responsibilities of rule and the complementary statuses of queen and king. Peredur rules with the empress of Constantinople for a period of fourteen years.<sup>96</sup> A notable ‘queen-consort’ long associated with Welsh native tradition is Elen, the legendary wife of the fourth-century Emperor Maxen Wledig. Elen, known as Elen of the Hosts (*Elen Luydaŵc*) is a character who appears in both the Welsh Triads and ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’.<sup>97</sup> She is noted for her creation of the infrastructure of Roman roads linking the corners of Britain, known as *Sarn(au) Helen*, thus uniting the island through sovereignty.<sup>98</sup> In the *Mabinogion*, specifically, she is referred to as the Empress of Rome and she is renowned for

<sup>91</sup> *Llfyr Blegywryd*, p. 6; *LTMW*, p. 8.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Introduction’, *WKHC*, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>94</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 198-201.

<sup>95</sup> *Gweledychu y wlat a wnaethont yn llwydannus y ulwydyn honno, a’r eil. Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. 16. Davies, *Mabinogion*, p.16.

<sup>96</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 94.

<sup>97</sup> *TYP*, Triad 35, pp. 81-9; see notes pp. 342-4; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 108, 250.

<sup>98</sup> It seems that early in the tradition the identity of Elen Llyddog was confused with St Helen, the renowned mother of Constantine the Great. See notes in *TYP*, pp. 342-5.

accompanying her husband Maxen and his host in the siege on Rome and advises on matters of polity.<sup>99</sup>

Illustrations are also found in the Life of St Cadog when the chief men of his father's realm met 'speedily acquiescing in his counsels, [with] both of them, namely Gwynllyw and his wife'.<sup>100</sup> The most outstanding example appears in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*. King Math, after finding out his virgin saviour Goewin was raped offers to arrange recompense first for her, then for himself. Afterwards, he promises to take her as his wife and give her authority over his kingdom.<sup>101</sup> The authors of the sources, many of whom were ecclesiastics familiar with the nature of secular culture, were experts in Welsh law, lore and culture (lawyers, *cyfarwyddiaid* and poets). Compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries they represent some of the attitudes of the times. Nevertheless, many stem from the oral tradition, also demonstrating that the queen's status in earlier times was significant.

The level of shared responsibility to the kingdom between husband and wife, queen and king, is also manifest in the reality that the royal couple often held separate courts.<sup>102</sup> As the royal household was central to a warring king, becoming his army when needed, separate sections of the royal household went on circuit to 'spread the [administrative] burden'. The political weight of the royal circuit was split amongst the different officers as a means ensuring that representations of the king's power could spread further afield.<sup>103</sup> More importantly, on such occasions that the king was required to campaign outside his territory, unable to 'continue the normal pattern of court life' the queen's household was left the responsibility of conducting her own circuits known as *rhieingylch* around the royal demesne.<sup>104</sup> The term *rhieingylch* is defined in the *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* as being fourteenth-century in origin, relating to the 'occasional progress of a queen or a king's daughter through the country, payment made or food provided for such a progress'.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps the shared responsibility of the queen and king to go on circuit was a mobile

<sup>99</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 108-09.

<sup>100</sup> ... *consiliis eius otius adquiescentes, eidem Cadoco uterque, silicet, Gunliu et uxor eius. Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 122-5.

<sup>101</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 52; *Y Mabinogion*, (eds) D. Ifans and R. Ifans (Llandysul, 1980), p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> Pryce, 'Household Priest', pp. 92-3; Stacey, 'King, Queen, and *Edling*', p. 55.

<sup>103</sup> 'Introduction', *WKHC*, p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Food, Drink and Clothing', in *WKHC*, pp. 323, 325.

<sup>105</sup> *Geiriadur Prifysgo Cymru Online* <<http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>>, accessed 12 December 2013. Also see R. Andrews, 'The Nomenclature of Kingship in Welsh Court Poetry 1100–1300, Part II: The Rulers', *Studia Celtica*, 45/1 (2011), pp. 90-91.

and public extension of their honourable hospitality. Their status was further symbolised in the giving of food whilst on circuit, as is discussed below.

In the mid- to late- twelfth-century poem *Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*, the poet Cynddelw declares that not only did the inhabitants of Powys have concerns about the over-reaching excesses and powers of their princes, but that they also had to protect their long-standing rights on another front and resist a second shame from ‘A second tyranny, [the] oppressive circuit of the queen’.<sup>106</sup> An interpretation of the Welsh proverb *Gwala gwedw; gwreic vnbenn* can also be one that suggests plenty of prayers are needed because of the tyrant, royal wife.<sup>107</sup> These examples suggest a high level of authoritative and administrative power undertaken by the Welsh queen and her office, either in the capacity of executing her own orders or, in the least, orders under the directive of the king.<sup>108</sup> The level of the Welsh queen’s authority and responsibilities as the king’s wife is found in the Blegywryd redaction, which states that the queen has the power to offer protection (*nawdd*) from prosecution and pursuit over the boundary of the kingdom.<sup>109</sup>

Only the king and queen could give protection (*nawdd*) and though ‘the protection of the King is the highest’, the queen’s protection is also noteworthy. *Nawdd* was an important concept in medieval Wales. The definition is similar to the Old Irish, *snádud*, meaning one has ‘the power to accord to another person immunity from all legal processes ... which varies according the rank of the “protector”’.<sup>110</sup> It may also relate to offering physical protection.<sup>111</sup> In terms of the law, the protection of *nawdd* was temporary — the scope of which varied based on specific officers of the court, geographical extent and the duration of time for which protection is to last. The fact that the geographic scope of the queen’s protection is defined as being ‘over the boundary of the country’ indicates that the queen, on occasion, enjoyed an element of designated and accepted authority throughout the king’s territories and beyond. This example also hints at expectations of the queen to use her position as

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<sup>106</sup> *Eilwaith gwarth gwrthodes cynrain, / Ail gormail, gormesgylch rhaiain*. T.M. Charles-Edwards and N.A. Jones, ‘*Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*: The Liberties of the Men of Powys’, in *WKHC*, p. 220; Lynch, ‘Court Poetry, Power and Politics’, p. 172.

<sup>107</sup> Oxford, Jesus College, Ms. 111, f. 241<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, p. xli.

<sup>109</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 6; *LTMW*, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Crith Gablach*, ed. D.A. Binchy (Dublin, 1941), p. 106. On violation of protection as an important principle of Irish law, see Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>111</sup> It is believed that the similarity in origins of *nawdd* and *snádud* (both deriving from the Celtic root *snáid*, to protect) means they may represent a concept that was common during the Celtic period. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 165-6.

the king's wife, and surely at times as a representative of her natal family, to act as an official mediator.<sup>112</sup> It may also be evidence of the queen's *rhieinglych*. Above all, the queen's *nawdd* certainly denotes her privileged and maybe even institutional status.

These examples are indicative of the Welsh queen's status overall within the *llys y brenin* and kingdom. In theory, the separation of households would have imposed a division of responsibilities upon their mutual offices, even if a crucial role of the queen was to act as the visible face of the king whilst she was on circuit. There is no evidence that the Welsh queen did go on circuit, but such references abovementioned indicate she did. The queen had her own patent seal, coffer and officers associated with certain administrative duties. This implies that the perceived office and status of the queen was one that was comprised of very real public (political) responsibilities and prerogatives,<sup>113</sup> undertaken whilst on circuit. Perhaps the importance of *nawdd* and the laws stating the queen's power to grant protection augments this idea further.

The status of the medieval queen in many countries was connected to her access to land and her ability to hold and administer it.<sup>114</sup> This is proven to have been the case with some Anglo-Saxon queens and noble women who had access to and free disposal of 'the raw material of political power', land.<sup>115</sup> Iorwerth states that the queen (not the king's wife) was to receive one third of the king's 'goods he gets from land and earth', as well as a third of the booty from his Welsh lands.<sup>116</sup> Cyfnerth states that the 'queen has a share of all the profit of the king from his rightful land'.<sup>117</sup> Both early and later redactions imply that the queen was legally entitled to a large amount of wealth.<sup>118</sup> That the Welsh queen was allowed to alienate greater portions of land than women of lower social classes further indicates the types of associated roles and responsibilities that were connected with forms of official female power and status.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>112</sup> See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

<sup>113</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 55; *LTMW*, pp. 29, 30.

<sup>114</sup> Stafford, 'The King's Wife', p. 12.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* 21-2.

<sup>116</sup> *E brenhyn a dely rody y'r urenhynes tryderan a gaffo o da o tyr a dayar. Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 2, 5; *LTMW*, pp. 5, 10.

<sup>117</sup> *Ran o holl enill y brenhin o'e wlat dilis a geiff y vrenhines. 'Cyfnerth'*, pp. 438-9.

<sup>118</sup> D. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284* (Oxford, 2003), p. 319.

<sup>119</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 29; *LTMW*, p. 54.

There is circumstantial evidence of this in practice as the biographer of Gruffudd ap Cynan relates that at the end of Gruffudd's life Angharad was bequeathed with half his moveable possessions, two portions of land and harbour dues.<sup>120</sup> This singular illustration tells something not only of Angharad's status as queen-consort, but also something of expectations associated with the status, roles and responsibilities of a queen-dowager. This is also related in 'Peredur', whose widowed, wise and clever mother had control over the future of her young son's patrimony.<sup>121</sup> A queen's control of resources, primarily through her dowered lands,<sup>122</sup> was not only administratively profitable to the kingdom, but allowed her opportunities to effectively exercise both political and economic power.<sup>123</sup> These activities helped to strengthen her individual position and that of her own family by providing the significant resources and finances needed to maintain status and successfully defend borders.<sup>124</sup> Access to moveable wealth, including the alienation of lands, was likely a critical source of agency and of income to the Welsh queen.<sup>125</sup> It possibly strengthened her own position within the court<sup>126</sup> and may have helped her sustain her status and independent economic, and perhaps even political, activities as a widow. The reality of the queen being in legal possession of her own coffers and her own seal further corroborate this view as do the small number of examples that distinctly illustrate the status of the queen as a ruler relating to her control over lands.

*Trioedd Ynys Prydein* states that no less than three times was the lordship of Gwynedd ruled or 'held by the distaff'.<sup>127</sup> This triad is an expansion of material found in *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd* and is important because of its explicit claims that it was through the female line of Cunedda Wledig that the dynasty of Gwynedd was

<sup>120</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 88-9; *HGK*, p. 32.

<sup>121</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 65.

<sup>122</sup> For a full discussion of the granting of dower in native Wales see Chapter 5.

<sup>123</sup> H.J. Tanner, 'Queenhip: Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc?: The Case of Queen Matilda III of England (1135–1152)', in B. Wheeler and J. Carmi Parsons (eds), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York, 2002), p. 142.

<sup>124</sup> C. Owens, 'Noblewomen and Political Activity', in L.E. Mitchell (ed.), *Women in Medieval Western European Culture* (New York, 1999), p. 216. Although it has been argued that after the twelfth-century institutional changes to monarchy negatively affected and diminished the status and positions of queens, it has recently been pointed out that this was a 'highly contingent variable and no generalization about this holds true'. See Nelson, 'Medieval Queenhip', p. 202.

<sup>125</sup> Women and rights to land alienation are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>126</sup> Stafford, 'The King's Wife', p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> *Llyma y tri lle y daliwy Arglwyddiaeth Gwynedd o gogail. TYP*, triad 97, pp. 244-5.

descended.<sup>128</sup> Although this triad likely refers to times when male rulership was claimed through the maternal line, there is an argument to make that it may also refer to times when Gwynedd was ruled by women. Early poets commemorate Esyllt by referring to Gwynedd as the land of Esyllt.<sup>129</sup> The laws of thirteenth-century Gwynedd also allude to some form of recognised female (over?) lordship stating that ‘Every female lord is entitled to the *amobr* of her realm’ and there are documented examples of historical women being endowed with great powers over lands under their direct control.<sup>130</sup> It cannot necessarily be assumed that the use of the term *argluydes*, significant though it is, implies the Welsh queen had seignorial powers. However, other types of literary illustrations help support the idea that some women may have had opportunities to function in some form of ruling capacity.

It has already been noted in the Fourth Branch that King Math promised to take Goewin as his wife and give her authority of his kingdom. Other characters and circumstances found in the *Mabinogion* also give credence to the idea of female rule. In the Fourth Branch, Aranrhod holds her own court at Caer Aranrhod, as does the Lady in the ‘Lady of the Well’.<sup>131</sup> However, the Lady is defined by her widowhood, whereas Aranrhod’s status as a ruler of her own domain is simply autonomous in nature. Even after moving into the phase of motherhood no reference is made to her holding her lands as a ‘queen regent’. In ‘Peredur’, the Empress of Constantinople is an overt illustration of a queen exercising rights of sovereign power in her own foreign lands, long before and presumably well after the male protagonist enters and leaves the picture.<sup>132</sup> There is another strong reference to independent female rule found in ‘Peredur’ in the tale of the maiden who is left control of her father’s kingdom. As the maiden remained unwilling to marry a persistent suitor even after her father’s death, the suitor waged war on her. When Peredur overthrows the men that had taken much of the maiden’s kingdom, he makes them her prisoners. More interestingly, he forces them to return her realm in full, along with profits made, food, drink, weapons and horses for hundreds of men, all to be held under her authority. Peredur remains with the maiden for three weeks arranging tributes and

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<sup>128</sup> *TYP*, p. 244.

<sup>129</sup> ... *tir Esyllt, brodir Esyllt, gwlad Esyllt* ... See *TYP*, pp. 244-5, 351; *HW*, ii, pp. 323-4 and notes.

<sup>130</sup> *Pob argluydes a dele amober gwraged e kyuoeth. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 32; *LTMW*, p. 60. The problems associated with investigating written records and evidence of practice are discussed throughout Chapter 5.

<sup>131</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 55-8, 124-8, 130-4, 136-7.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 92, 94, 100.

submission to her, only seeking her permission to leave once her realm was settled and secured.<sup>133</sup> In ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’, Elen Luyddog chooses as her maiden fee both the North and Irish Seas and the three islands within, to be held by her as empress of Rome, as well as three major forts to be built in the locations of her choice within Britain.<sup>134</sup> In ‘Lludd and Llefelys’, Llefelys seeks to marry the daughter of the late king of France who ruled his kingdom as heiress in an attempt to increase the honour and status of his own people.<sup>135</sup> These literary models of women exercising ‘sovereign power’ likely stem from the tradition of the woman/queen/goddess as the symbol of land; a concept itself that intimates both the uxorial position and status of the woman as the king’s wife.<sup>136</sup>

These examples show it may have not been beyond imagination, nor perhaps necessity, for a royal woman in medieval Welsh society to function in a sovereign capacity. For how long, how little or under what circumstances remain moot points. For this argument, the symbolic nature of these illustrations is indicative of the wider scope concerning the exercise of female agency more generally. They demonstrate another strand of female activities visibly set beyond the bounds of traditional gender constructs that often defined a masculine-centred, warrior-ruler society such as medieval Wales.<sup>137</sup> Similar to these atypical examples of female rulership, others go further to suggest that the roles and activities of royal women were, indeed, closely associated with the gendered rules of sovereignty — attributing revered masculine orientated qualities to fictional and historical women; traits or attributes intimately associated with the warrior ethos of prowess and valour.

Elen Lluyddog’s own epithet means ‘having an army’, ‘host, mustering’ or ‘having a host, warlike’<sup>138</sup> and she appears in the triads as hosting an army with her husband Maxen.<sup>139</sup> The tale of the ‘Emperor Maxen’ relates that the men of Britain assembled the largest armies for no one but Elen and that she was with the Emperor when he laid siege to the city of Rome.<sup>140</sup> *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* lists the three Amazons of the island of Britain, indicating that the strength, stamina and bravery

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 76-7.

<sup>134</sup> *Y Mabinogion*, p. 72.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>136</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 121-2.

<sup>137</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5 for further discussion on agency.

<sup>138</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 251; *TYP*, pp. 342-4.

<sup>139</sup> *TYP*, triad 35, pp. 81-90.

<sup>140</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 108-09.



associated with the Welsh warrior ideal were also noteworthy traits to be found in the female sex.<sup>141</sup> Gerald of Wales also provides an example in his relation of the military feat of the princess Gwenllïan, daughter of Gruffudd ap Cynan and wife of Gruffudd ap Rhys (c. 1090–1137), prince of south Wales. Gwenllïan died near Kidwelly in battle against the Normans in 1136. Gerald describes her actions as the wife of Gruffudd to those of Amazonian proportions, calling her a ‘Queen of the Amazons and second Penthesilea’ (*uxor ejus Guendolena, tanquam Amazonum regina et Penthesilea secunda*).<sup>142</sup> In ‘Peredur’ there are the nine witches of Gloucester who possess the fighting capabilities and armour of warriors. One unnamed witch, who presides over her own court, is fated to teach Peredur the arts of warfare so he can obtain the remaining third of his strength.<sup>143</sup> The protagonist Owain in ‘The Lady of the Well’ falls under the protection of many women, one of whom tells him that it is only right for a woman to help and rescue him.<sup>144</sup> That there are also many examples of royal women in the *Mabinogion* who are in possession of great sovereign wealth, huge retinues, the best horses and armour in the world<sup>145</sup> evokes an image of the royal woman who possessed the valued traits attributed to the warrior-ruler ideal and who was customarily accepted as being visible and active within the governance of the realm and possibly even expected to be so.<sup>146</sup>

The indistinct nature of and function between the ‘chamber’ and the ‘court’ that had been established allowed for more freedom of movement for both royal members than has been recognised.<sup>147</sup> Examples of the Welsh queen and royal women going on circuit, ruling territories, jointly or independently, even fighting or mustering troops for battle are opposite to the legal directives that the queen remain within the chamber. As far as the laws are concerned, there is little evidence either way to suggest that the queen, or any royal women for that matter, was exclusively

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<sup>141</sup> *TYP*, triad 58, pp. 165-70.

<sup>142</sup> ... *uxor ejus Guendolena, tanquam Amazonum regina et Penthesilea secunda* ... . The Latin is ambiguous and this translation is an interpretation. *Gir. Camb., Op.*, vi, pp. 79; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 137. Penthesilea was killed by the Greek warrior Achilles, dying an honourable death fighting in the battle to defend Troy.

<sup>143</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 78-9, 247.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* 88, 92, 132. Also see *TYP*, triad 67, p. 185.

<sup>146</sup> Masculine traits are also associated with other female characters found in the *Mabinogion*. See the giant Cymidei Cymeinfoll in the Second Branch, the Very Black Witch in ‘Culhwch’ and the ‘masculine hag’ (*Gwrwrach*) in ‘Rhonabwy’s Dream’. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 26-7, 212-3, 215.

<sup>147</sup> Stacey, ‘King, Queen and *Edling*’, pp. 55-6, 58.

restricted or separated from the political forum of the royal *llys*. Iorwerth's greater establishment of the queen's own household does not indicate that it was wholly separated; neither does it indicate an elevated independent nature.<sup>148</sup>

### ***ROLES OF THE WELSH QUEEN***

The laws and other literary sources provide illustrations of the queen's official position within the royal household that entail the responsibilities of hospitality.<sup>149</sup> Hospitality was an important function in many cultures in western Europe. In early Ireland for example, women had formal responsibilities regarding hospitality, which was one of the main occasions for public, social, political and legal gatherings. The legal texts even deprive a woman of her honour-price if she failed in her duties as a host.<sup>150</sup> The importance of hospitality is recorded in many medieval sources relating to Wales.<sup>151</sup> Gerald of Wales states that for 'the Welsh generosity and hospitality are the greatest of all virtues' and that hospitality was the responsibility of the family who were expected to wait upon the guests. It was the obligation of the host and hostess to be present to make sure that everything was being attended to.<sup>152</sup> Walter Map (*d.* 1209/10), English royal clerk, recounts a Welsh story about the breach of the hospitality code by a wife, which resulted in a family feud.<sup>153</sup> Although no wife is mentioned, the poet Cynddelw praised the hospitality of Prince Owain Cyfeiliog of Powys and Cadwallon ap Madog ab Inerth of Maelienydd in the late-twelfth, early-thirteenth century. Cynddelw lauds both courts as dwelling places of hospitality where all were made welcome.<sup>154</sup> Honour associated with hospitality is a subject found in the works of the fifteenth century Welsh poets, Guto'r Glyn (1440–1493) and Lewys Glyn Cothi (*fl.* 1447–1486). Guto'r Glyn's *awdl*, or ode, to Dafydd ap Tomas praises the hospitality of his patron and his patron's wife,

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 464.

<sup>150</sup> Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>151</sup> See L.B. Smith, 'On the Hospitality of the Welsh: A Comparative View', in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies*, (eds) H. Pryce and J. Watts (Oxford, 2007), pp. 181-94.

<sup>152</sup> ... *quibus nec cœnæ nec vestium ulla sumptuositas, sed in equis solum et armis, eorumque apparatibus, tota versatur intentio.* Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, pp. 182-3; Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>153</sup> Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. M.R. James, rev. C.N.L. Brooke and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp. 184-5.

<sup>154</sup> *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr*, i, nos 16 and 21.

Gwenllian, who made the poet so comfortable he felt as if he travelled home.<sup>155</sup>

Lewys Glyn Cothi also praises his patrons, Llywelyn Fychan and his wife, Edudful, in a like manner.<sup>156</sup>

Gerald's commentary is especially important. Although he is speaking of Welsh hospitality in general and not specifically within a courtly context, if the royal *llys* was the exemplary representation of how a Welsh household should be managed and the royal couple models of behaviour, then the rules of hospitality certainly applied to the princely courts above all. As hospitality was an important Welsh custom the apparent responsibilities taken on by the Welsh queen to ensure that guests were welcomed in an honourable fashion is evidence of her prominence within the *llys*. A significant illustration can be found in the differences in how Angharad, the wife of Gruffud ap Cynan, is described in both the Latin and Welsh versions of his biography. The Latin version describes her as a woman 'decorous in habit and gesture' (*habita ac gesta quam decoram*) and 'kind to friends, [and] generous to the poor' (*in familiars clementem, in egenos libealem*).<sup>157</sup> The latter infers Angharad's presence in the court. In context, Cynddelw's acclaims for the court of Cadwallon ap Madog ab Inerth of Maelienydd also refer to the court's generosity with the needy (*Agored y lys I les eilwyon byd, Eithid y esbyd y ysborthyon*).<sup>158</sup> Thus, it seems that Angharad's role as a hostess was a role of the queen. In fact, the thirteenth-century Welsh version refers specifically to her hospitality (*a da o uwyt a llyn*).<sup>159</sup> There are numerous examples in the tales of the *Mabinogion* in which the wives of rulers, and nobles alike, perform duties of hospitality.<sup>160</sup> As the collection of Welsh sources indicate, it appears that the royal household was an arena in which the king's wife was able to exhibit agency, often in the forms of hospitality, as well gift giving, consultation and conversation, all of which worked to reinforce her position as queen within the royal court.

Formal bonds of friendship were often strengthened through the acts of gift-giving and gift-receiving, which help 'make sense of early Welsh royal ...

<sup>155</sup> Guto'r Glyn, 'Awdl foliant i Dafydd ap Tomas o Flaen-tren', *Guto'r Glyn.net*, <<http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem=012&first-line=%23>>, accessed 2 January 2014.

<sup>156</sup> *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, ed. D. Johnston (Cardiff, 1995), pp. 369-71. Also see id., 'Lewys Glyn Cothi: Bard y Gwragedd', *Taliesin*, 74 (1991), 66-77.

<sup>157</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-7, 154; *HGK*, p. 22.

<sup>158</sup> *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr*, i, no. 16.

<sup>159</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-7, 154; *HGK*, p. 22. .

<sup>160</sup> e.g. Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 5, 11, 27, 57, 117-8, 124-6, 128, 135, 66-8, 75, 78, 82-3, 88, 98.

society'.<sup>161</sup> In terms of gift giving, the Laws of the Court state that it was the role of the king and the queen to present their officers with gifts. All twenty-four officers in the Iorwerth redaction were to receive offerings of clothing, whilst a select few such as the court justice (*ynad llys*) and bard of the household received additional 'idle trinkets' (*ouertlesseu*).<sup>162</sup> Garments of wool were to be given by the king and garments of linen by the queen.<sup>163</sup> Robin Stacey has argued that the types of garments specified in the laws associated with the queen and the king are indicative of their locations within the royal *llys*. The king was expected to give woollen, or outer garments, symbolic of his placement within the hall, whereas the queen's gifts of linen, under garments, was representative of a more privatized province.<sup>164</sup>

However, other examples of gift giving in the laws contradict this idea. The Iorwerth redaction states that the queen's chamberlain is entitled not only to wool and linen, he is also entitled 'to the Queen's old cape' (*hen capan e urenhynes*) and the queen's priest is 'entitled to the Queen's clothes, those in which she does penance during Lent'.<sup>165</sup> The queen's handmaid is not only entitled to 'the Queen's old clothing', including her 'old shifts', 'old kerchiefs and her old shoes', but, in the same manner, even her old bridles and saddles.<sup>166</sup> According to Stacey's argument, all of these examples of clothing gifts could suggest that the 'domestic' domain of the queen was more than simply within the 'private sphere' of the chamber but inclusive of the royal household in its entirety.

Upon closer examination of the Welsh laws, the queen was expected to play a visible role within the court carrying out this particular gift giving ritual. The Laws of the Court have a strong emphasis on the ritual of feasts, most specifically those of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, the importance of which is reflected in the fact that they are mentioned in the first article of the Iorwerth text.<sup>167</sup> This emphasis on the

<sup>161</sup> Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100–1300* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 54.

<sup>162</sup> *Ef a dely atavlbvrd o ascvnrn moruyl e gan e brenhyn amodrve eur e gan e urvenhynes. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 8, 10; *LTMW*, pp. 16, 20. 'The Justice's Test Book' in the Blegywryd redaction refers to the king's gift as a throwboard. *Llyfr Blegywryd*, pp. 17, 96.

<sup>163</sup> 'Cyfnerth', pp. 438-9; *Llyfr Blegywryd*, pp. 10-23; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 4-17; *LTMW*, pp. 8-32.

<sup>164</sup> R. Chapman Stacey, 'Clothes Talk from Medieval Wales', in *WKHC*, pp. 338-46.

<sup>165</sup> *Ef e dele dyllat e urenhynes: e rey e penyteo endvnt en hyt e Garawys. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 16; *LTMW*, p. 29;

<sup>166</sup> ... *hy a dely ... hen dyllat e urenhnes: e hen krysseu a'e hen llenllyeynnyeu a'e hen funenneu a'e hen eskydyeu a'e hen frynyeu s'e hen kyurvyeu. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 16; *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 22; *LTMW*, p. 30.

<sup>167</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 1-2; *LTMW*, p. 5. Also see Owen, 'Court in the Welsh Poetry', p. 72.

importance of feast time is similar to early Irish legal texts known as *Heptads*.<sup>168</sup> The Welsh queen is not only expected to be present in the royal hall during important occasions, but also to play a considerable role in Welsh customary rituals used to strengthen the ideals of kingship. Examples, in context, help move beyond the preconceived notion that women played nominal roles in courtly customs. The presence of the royal, or noble, wife at court during feast time continued to remain an important feature in Welsh culture after the Conquest. For example, Guto'r Glyn's poem to Meurig Fychan ap Hywel Selau of Nannau and his wife Angharad, daughter of Dafydd, praises his hosts for their hospitality during a feast, referring to the fair Angharad specifically as being most generous (*hael*).<sup>169</sup>

Additional examples stressing the queen's role as a gift giver are found in twelfth and thirteenth-century written sources. In 'Culhwch', Queen Goleuddydd tells her husband Cilydd that wives are the ones who dispense gifts.<sup>170</sup> In the First and Second branches, Rhiannon and Branwen are depicted as bestowing gifts in a very public manner, usually within the precincts of the royal hall, as a means of further establishing their positions within the royal household.<sup>171</sup> In the *Life of Gruffudd*, Tangwystl, the 'wise woman' (*mulier sapiens / gureic brud*), though not a queen but a royal woman who was herself related to Gruffudd, publicly greets her kinsman Gruffudd and offers him the best gift she had, which was of great symbolic importance. This public display of gift giving relates to the royal, historic and dynastic symbolic value which was Tangwystl's alone to give as the widow of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn's treasurer.<sup>172</sup>

Another aspect of hospitality and, it could be argued, domestic management, largely under the remit of queen was as drink bearer and cup holder. One of the prevailing illustrations from the early Middle Ages is that of the 'lady with the mead cup'. Found in examples ranging from literary texts like *Beowulf* to Norse and Icelandic drawings, the image of the queen as the intercessor offering a chalice of

<sup>168</sup> See Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, Appendix 1, no. 3, p. 266; Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>169</sup> Guto'r Glyn, 'Moliant I Feurig Fychan ap Hywel Selau o Nannau, ei wraig Angharad ferch Dafydd, eu mab Dafydd a'I wraig yntau Elen ferch Hywel', *Guto'r Glyn.net*, <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem=049>, accessed 4 January 2014.

<sup>170</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 179.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* 15-16, 27.

<sup>172</sup> *Itaque dono illi obtulit camisiam perpulchram et quam optimam ex Griffini ap Llywelyn ap Seisill quondam regis contextam / a rodi idav y kryd meinhaf a goreu, a pheis wedy y gvneithur o ysgin Gruffud vrenhin, m. Llwelyn vrenhin, m. Seisill. Vita Griffini*, pp. 60-1; HGK, p. 7. See Chapter 2, pp. 121-2.

mead as a symbol of peace not only celebrates the symbolic function of queen as a high-ranking representative of her family, but also her very real role as mediator.<sup>173</sup> Further, the image of the ‘lady with the mead cup’ was also often associated with the woman, queen, as the sovereignty goddess figure, such as in Irish tradition where the woman/queen/goddess dispenses ale as a symbol of sovereignty.<sup>174</sup> Medb, the queen of the Connachta found in the early Irish legendary tales *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and other Ulster Cycle tales, is a name that is etymologically connected to the Celtic word for ‘mead’, itself, referring to ‘she who intoxicates’. In fact, her origin is believed to be that of the sovereignty goddess whose role it was to offer a libation to the chosen king who married the land.<sup>175</sup> The gift of offering a drink in native Welsh society, especially mead or wine, was an act of bestowing honour and likely a means of bridging an alliance through a public act of recognising friendship.<sup>176</sup> Such an example is found in the tale of ‘Peredur’ in which queen Gwenhwyfar is in possession of the goblet of wine.<sup>177</sup> It has been argued that this particular image is reminiscent of the sovereignty imagery of the goddess and the land; the queen, or lady with the ‘mead’ cup.<sup>178</sup>

Although dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, *Canu i Swyddogion Llys y Brenin*, a series of verses dedicated the officers of the court, offers the most explicit example of the Welsh queen as the cup bearer. *Canu i Swyddogion Llys y Brenin* is important because it is one of the rare instances in which court officials are listed, separate to the law texts.<sup>179</sup> In addition, it may be a remnant of early native Wales given verses that can be attributed to the sixth-century bard, Taliesin.<sup>180</sup> As the first section regarding the queen differs from the rest of the poem, it may be more appropriate to consider it as being independent. Certainly, in such a context, the court officials belong to the queen herself. The author starts the

<sup>173</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 469. See Chapter 5 generally.

<sup>174</sup> See, for example, Ford, ‘Celtic Women’; M. Herbert, ‘Goddess and King: The Sacred Marriage in Early Ireland’, in *Women and Sovereignty*, pp. 264-75; P. Mac Cana, ‘Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature’, *Études Celtiques* 8 (1958-9), pp. 59-65.

<sup>175</sup> *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, (ed.) J.T. Koch (Andover, MA, 1997), p. 396; ‘Medb Cruachna’, (ed. and trans.) T. Ó Máille, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 17 (1927), pp. 129-46; Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 70; P. Berresford Ellis, *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic Society and Literature* (Constable, 1995), pp. 41-5.

<sup>176</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Food, Drink and Clothing’, pp. 328-30, 332-3.

<sup>177</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 68.

<sup>178</sup> G. Goetinck, *Historia Peredur vab Efracw* (Caerdydd, 2012), pp. 137, 176-85, 289-90.

<sup>179</sup> P. Russell, ‘*Canu i Swyddogion Llys y Brenin*’, in *WKHC*, pp. 552-3.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid; G.C. Thomas, “‘Kanu y Swyddogion Llys y Brenin’: Verses Attributed to Taliesin”, *BBCS*, 32 (1987), pp. 132-3. Also see M. Haycock, ‘Taliesin’s Questions’, *CMCS*, 33 (Summer, 1997), pp. 19-79, 70, no. 260.

poem greeting the queen, her bright maidens and chosen ones and says that in the palace he ‘saw honour ... feast and hand-maidens ... which they brought, drinks without ceasing (?) with a silver cup in hand’. Most importantly, a daughter of ‘Maig’, perhaps named Sanant (?), is called ‘the noble-faced queen’ who brought the cup to him, ‘Fair is she who bring to me gifts every day’.<sup>181</sup>

This later medieval example, with its seemingly obvious ties to a much earlier native tradition, highlight the importance in the status of the Welsh queen as a hostess, cup-bearer and gift giver. However, such imagery does not provide definitive proof that the role of the cup bearer was simply that of the queen’s. Later in the poem, in *The Song of the Butler*, the author states that ‘The wine is dispensed in the hand of the king not ... of the queen’.<sup>182</sup> Thus, the gift of drink may have not been solely queen’s responsibility. Certainly, mead was one of the common food-renders for which payments were exchanged between king, or his local officers, and townships. It may be that the act of this form of gift giving was divided between *rhoddi*, a transfer of ownership of the gift, and *estyn*, the physical act of handing the gift over.<sup>183</sup> It is difficult to assess exactly what the queen’s role in the Welsh court was during this ritual, but the Cyfnerth redaction does certainly emphasise that the act of the queen providing the captain of the king’s household, the *penteulu* (a close relative of the king, perhaps son or nephew, but not necessarily related to the queen) with a hornful of mead was evocative of the role of the queen found in Anglo-Saxon literature.<sup>184</sup>

Robin Stacey has proposed that although the images of the Welsh queen offering drink in the laws are based on the supposition that she is actually located in the hall, it is equally valid to consider that the queen may have been located in her chamber, sending drinks to the hall instead. She suggests that ‘the stipulation in some Cyfn manuscripts that she is to be seated across from her priest works best if she is imagined as dining in the chamber’.<sup>185</sup> The image of the queen in the chamber should not be entirely synonymous with the notion of domestic separateness or

<sup>181</sup> *Dyd day t, riain, | a’ t aur uylain | a’ t dewis vacain ... Gwelais organ gain, | [ ] wled | a lauforynion ... a dygant, | wirodu d[ ] gwant | a ffiol ariant | yn adaf[ ] | [San]ant ferc Faig, | y rhiaian eurffaig. | Ys hi am dyryd | ys [ ] | Ys kain I dyryd | ym rodion beunydyd.* Russell, ‘*Canu I Swyddogion Llys y Brenin*’, p. 554.

<sup>182</sup> *Diwalau y gwin | yn lau y brenin | na [ ] brenhines.* Ibid. 554.

<sup>183</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Food, Drink and Clothing’, pp. 328-9, 330.

<sup>184</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Food, Drink and Clothing’, pp. 328-9.

<sup>185</sup> Stacey, ‘King, Queen and *Edling*’, p. 59, note 118.

female isolation. Indeed, it is likely that the queen dined in the chamber on many occasions, but literary sources portray the chamber as a common place for entertaining amongst the social and political elite.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, in the Laws of the Court, just as the queen and king were to publicly bestow gifts upon the members of their court, officers such as the *penteulu*, the chief groom (*pengwastrawd*) and the chief huntsman (*pencynydd*) were all to be provided with privileges of drink, receiving three hornfuls of mead, the first two from the king and queen. The laws infer that this is likely done during the festive occasions at which both king and queen were present.

It is important to highlight the problems of an assessment of Welsh queenship that largely focuses on evidence provided in literary sources and the different genres of texts that seem to attribute more autonomy to royal women than the laws do. Literary sources like *TYP* and the stories of the *Mabinogion* may be reflective of customary practice and the queen's role within the court before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As many of these sources are localised, paying tribute to the kingdoms of south Wales, they could be literary manifestations of courtly practice confined to that area. Yet, the Second and Fourth Branches in the *Mabinogi* portray the royal women from Gwynedd as being strong and assertive, ideals that may have been associated with queenship in Wales more generally. Alternatively, literary examples of influential and independent queens could be deliberately subversive in the face of normal practice meaning that the customary position of the Welsh queen in practice was one that was marginalised.<sup>187</sup>

The models of kingship and monarchy found in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion* in particular seem to reflect the more mainstream European political traditions practised by Anglo-Norman and English kings. Such models highlight the influences of feudalism and ideals of centralised monarchy increasingly adopted by the Venedotian rulers in the thirteenth century. Certainly, by the fourteenth century England's political structure, with its two-tiered system of overking and baronage, provided gentry families after 1282 an archetype of rulership.<sup>188</sup> Ideals of queenship

<sup>186</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 5, 11, 27, 57, 66-8, 75, 78, 82-3, 88, 98, 117-18, 124-6, 128, 135.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. H. Fulton, 'A Woman's Place: Guinevere in the Welsh and French Romances', *Wuondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations*, 3/2 (1993), 1-25; L. Jillings, 'The Ideal of Queenship in Hartmann's *Erec*', in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.B. Grout *et al* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 123.

<sup>188</sup> See Fulton, 'The *Mabinogi* and the Education of the Princes', especially pp. 232-34. Also see Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 18.



and how women are portrayed should also be taken under consideration.

Throughout Western Europe, the roles and expectations of the queen were often nebulous. Women who found themselves queens frequently had to balance the precarious gendered line between the idealistic and more practical expectations of their positions as ‘the king’s wife’. Such contradictory representations in how Welsh queens are portrayed also reflect wider European influences concerning gender, which makes it difficult to differentiate native traditions of queenship and how reflective the illustrations found in Welsh literature are of actual queenship in practice.

Although the use of literary sources and a focus on fictional characters can be highly problematic in calculating the status of royal women in Welsh society, the portrayals of queens, nevertheless, are a valuable means in establishing normative expectations and ideals associated with her and her royal office.<sup>189</sup> Little to nothing is known about the patronage practices of royal women in Wales,<sup>190</sup> yet it is reasonable to consider some level of female patronage in the production of Welsh stories. The exaltation of queenship found in some of the tales of the *Mabinogion*, for instance, may have been a means of flattery of the ruler’s wife. Additionally, like the Lives of saints in which queens are generally praised for their modesty and submissiveness, stories which functioned as both a form of entertainment and spiritual edification, tales of the *Mabinogion* may have had a didactic purpose as well. Helen Fulton has argued that the normative expectations of political leadership are so explicit in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* that they act as a Welsh version of a ‘mirror of princes’ (*speculum principum*) or an educational tome concerning native models of kingship.<sup>191</sup> A similar case could be made concerning queenship.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 23; K. Pratt, ‘The Image of the Queen in Old French Literature’, in A.J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King’s College London April 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 235.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Stober, K., ‘The Cistercians and the Bards – Praise and Patronage in Fifteenth-century Wales’, in D. Foster Evans, B.J. Lewis, A.P. Owen (eds), *Gwalch Cywyddau Gwŷr’: Ysgrifau ar Guto’r Glyn a Chymru’r Bymthegfed Ganfrif* (Aberystwyth, 2013), pp. 305-26.

<sup>191</sup> Fulton, ‘Education of Princes in Medieval Wales’.

<sup>192</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, advice literature offering moral and political guidance to princes was a popular genre. Didactic material aimed at royal women also appeared. The best British example is the twelfth-century English biography written about St. Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093), which is an important source for understanding the construction of the office of the medieval queen in Britain. The *Life of St. Margaret* is believed to have been written and used expressly as an instructive tool on the behaviour and model of queenship. Ideals of queenly behaviour include the queen’s role as an intercessor, as a person of influence over the king, the royal court and the wider kingdom, as well as the importance of the queen’s lifecycle stages of wife and mother. This particular *vita* hones the

This is especially pertinent when considering the prospects of female patronage — for example, the possibility of Angharad as the patron for *Vita Griffini* — female authorship of some of the sources<sup>193</sup> and the distinctive nature in how queens are portrayed by clerics (like in the Lives of Saints) in comparison to those found in the prose tales, poetry and the laws, written by the lay members of learned orders. The varied depiction of queenly agency found in the different kinds of sources, written by different kinds of authors, may possibly reflect wider norms or even reality. The Laws of the Court, for instance, are not a full and complete picture of either kingship or queenship, nor are they meant to be.

The literature of the Middle Ages reflects the complicated and sundry aspects of royal and courtly life and is a source that is valuable in its illumination of gender ideals and expectations.<sup>194</sup> What is clear from the Welsh sources is that in the persona of the queen the highest form of status is envisaged, based not only on her position within the royal *llys*, but also on her activities, roles and use of agency. It is important to remember that both the king's and the queen's roles are minimized in the laws, even though they do exaggerate the authority of the king and the royal court. Overall, the Laws of the Court are about the courtly sphere, a sphere in which the queen is unquestionably present.

D. B. Walters compared the roles of queens in the ninth-century Frankish courts with those of thirteenth-century Wales saying that the Welsh queen is given an honourable position within the court, even if, legally, she appears not to have as independent a role as Frankish royal women.<sup>195</sup> In the Frankish court, it was the role of the queen and her chamberlain to be in charge of the domestic management of the household, as well as oversee the gift-giving to officers. In the Welsh court, the laws state that it was the *distain* that controlled domestic management. Walters argues the queen played a more marginal role.<sup>196</sup> Sources suggest, however, that ideals of Welsh courtliness were closely linked with domestic details. Welsh governance

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image of the 'perfect princess' and highlights the woman's role within the royal court. No such material exists for medieval Wales. Huneycutt, 'Perfect Princess', pp. 88-9, 97.

<sup>193</sup> Although highly controversial, Andrew Breeze's argument that the princess Gwenllïan, daughter of Gruffudd ap Cynan and wife of Gruffudd ap Rhys of Dyfed, was the author of the Four Branches, sets a precedent for thinking about both female patronage and authorship in medieval Wales. Id., 'Politics and the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*'.

<sup>194</sup> Pratt, 'Image of the Queen', p. 236.

<sup>195</sup> D.B. Walters, 'Comparative Aspects of the Tractates on the Laws of Court', in *WKHC*, p. 385. See also Edwards, 'The Royal Household'.

<sup>196</sup> Walters, 'Comparative Aspects', pp. 393-4.

seems to have been a household matter to a significant degree<sup>197</sup> and one in which the queen seems to have played a role.

Recent studies have recognised that the medieval queen enjoyed considerable levels of agency within her own informal or unofficial realms by being able to employ and even manipulate the rituals and symbols associated with her.<sup>198</sup> These rituals and symbols provided many with household (as opposed to strictly chambered) activities that were both accepted and recognised as being highly important. There are plenty of examples found in the tales of the *Mabinogion* where entertaining, eating, drinking and official administration take place within the royal chamber; examples in which the chamber is the hub of activity where both women and men appear together.<sup>199</sup> Although poetry from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries does not refer to women dispensing hospitality, images of the court where the poor and needy are welcomed infer the presence of the lady of the court. The intimacy that the chamber, and similarly the high table in the hall, afforded as a venue for social and earlier on, political, circles was integral to the essential networking of politics and the fulfilment of obligations defined by the court itself; definitions that included a supposed partnership between queen and king that helped strengthen the ideals of rulership.<sup>200</sup>

The above examples are centred upon the Welsh customs of hospitality, eating, drinking and gift giving, highlighting the organizational structure of the royal household that combined domestic and courtly rituals.<sup>201</sup> The rituals are duly important to the understanding of social persona and the status of both the ruler and his wife as the laws are silent on crowning and other symbols of royal office. Although there are scant references, there is little to no documented evidence of characteristically Welsh coronation ceremonies or anointments of rulers as a means of establishing their status as kings once they achieved power.<sup>202</sup> References that do exist concern Welsh rulers, like Gruffudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth who, upon the death of his father the Lord Rhys in 1198, went to the king's court and was 'made

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<sup>197</sup> 'Introduction', *WKHC*, p. 6; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Food, Drink and Clothing', in *WKHC*, p. 319.

<sup>198</sup> Parsons, 'Ritual and Symbol', p. 69.

<sup>199</sup> See for example Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 124, 145, 148.

<sup>200</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 33.

<sup>201</sup> 'Introduction', *WKHC*, p. 7.

<sup>202</sup> The Tewkesbury Annals say that Dafydd ap Llywelyn 'carried' or 'bore' a coronet, but do not specifically state that he was crowned. 'Annales Monasterii de Theokesberia', in *AM*, i, p. 115; Walters, 'Comparative Aspects', pp. 386, 388.

heir',<sup>203</sup> or rulers from Gwynedd in the thirteenth century who obtained recognition from the kings of England as a means of inaugurating themselves as rulers and establishing authoritative rights over their dynastic competitors.<sup>204</sup> The anointing of medieval queens often increased their positions, provided them with more formal or 'official' powers and promised security of their status within the royal household, especially as the mothers of future heirs.<sup>205</sup> The lack of evidence for such iconic public rituals in Welsh sources makes assessing the status of the queen even more challenging. A more tangible way of further gauging her status is through use of titles.

### ***TITLES AND OTHER DESIGNATIONS***

Examining titles and other designations used by contemporaries to identify royal women is key to measuring the importance and status of the Welsh queen. The employment of certain titles and lifecycle terms varied from woman to woman and source to source. Official styles in documents issued by women, and to some extent, used in addresses of documents sent to them, are 'lady', 'princess', 'the king's wife' and even 'the king's daughter/sister/kinswoman'. These are also titles and identifiers used in literary sources, where 'queen' is also sometimes used. The variety of identifiers used tells us little about normative perceptions of royal women without considering the contexts in which they are used.<sup>206</sup>

The title of 'queen' evokes the impression that the person, office and class status were recognised as being superior and uncontested. Yet, the use and meanings of the terms themselves were highly variable, depending on the individual woman in question. *Brenhines* is the most recognised Welsh term of 'queen' relating to the highest form of status. Other terms used to indicate queenship are more adaptive.

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<sup>203</sup> *Grifinus filius Resi statim post obitum patris sui curiam Regis adivit, ibique factus hæres domum rediit. AC*, p. 61.

<sup>204</sup> A.J. Roderick, 'The Feudal Relations between the English Crown and the Welsh Princes', *History*, XXXVII (1952), pp. 201-12; Smith, 'Dynastic Succession', pp. 212, 215, 218-9. There is an eighteenth-century source that refers to an anointing ceremony pertaining to the twelfth-century rulers of Gwynedd that was allegedly officiated by the bishop of Bangor, though the veracity of this account is uncertain. Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, p. 3, citing Thomas Pennant, *Tours of Wales*, (ed.) J. Rhys, 3 vols (Caernarvon, 1883), III, p. 428.

<sup>205</sup> Stafford, 'King's Wife', pp. 10, 16-18.

<sup>206</sup> Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 203.

*Rhiain* is applied on occasion to mean queen<sup>207</sup> and is translated by Rachel Bromwich in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* as such. This may rather be an archaic term as definitions of *rhiain* evolved to mean ‘maiden’, ‘royal lady’ and even ‘virgin’.<sup>208</sup> Twelfth and thirteenth-century examples of this evolution are found in Hywel ab Owain’s *Awdl i ferch* and Einion ap Gwalchmai’s *Marwnad Nest ferch Hywel* who both use *rhiain* to refer to the young age and maidenhead of beautiful noble women.<sup>209</sup> Cynddelw’s poem to Efa the daughter of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys is entitled ‘*Rhieingerdd Efa*’. It has been suggested that the poem, may have been written upon the marriage of Efa to Cadwallon ap Madog (d. 1179) of Maelienydd, reflecting the occasion when Efa became ‘queen’, which is indicated in the nature of the type of poem as a *rhieingerdd*, or ‘a poem for a queen’ or a ‘royal poem’.<sup>210</sup> Similar to the complex nature of the term *gwraig*, the changeability in term usage and meaning makes it challenging to pinpoint whether or not the king’s wife was really perceived to have been as esteemed as the use of the term ‘queen’ implies.<sup>211</sup> This is a problem that is not unique to Wales. In Anglo-Saxon England the term *cwen* was used as both a title for queen and more generally to mean noblewoman or wife.<sup>212</sup>

Literary sources reveal that there was a notion of queenship in medieval Wales based on the use of the formal title of ‘queen’. This is evidenced in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, which eulogise Arthur’s Three Great Queens whose symbolic status complements that of the great king’s.<sup>213</sup> Arawn’s wife in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi* is referred to as ‘queen’ (*brenhines*), whilst the name Rhiannon itself means ‘Great Queen’.<sup>214</sup> In ‘Culhwch’, Gwenhwyfar is given the epithet of ‘chief of the queens of this Island’ (*penn rained yr ynys hon*), paralleling Arthur’s status as ‘chief of princes of this Island’ (*yn Pen Teyrned*),<sup>215</sup> whilst Culhwch’s own mother is

<sup>207</sup> Cf. *rhi* (*arglwydd, brenin; king*) and Irish *rí* (king). See R. Andrews, ‘The Nomenclature of Kingship in Welsh Court Poetry 1100–1300, Part I: The Terms’, *Studia Celtica*, 44/1 (2010), pp. 90–1, 92, 97, 101.

<sup>208</sup> The semantics of the Modern Welsh *rhiain* relate to ‘maiden’. See *TYP*, notes, pp. 161–2.

<sup>209</sup> *Welsh Court Poems*, pp. 31–3.

<sup>210</sup> *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, no. 5. See J. Lloyd-Jones, *The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes* (London, 1948), pp. 190–01.

<sup>211</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 81–2.

<sup>212</sup> Klein, *Ruling Women*, p. 8.

<sup>213</sup> *TYP*, triad 56, pp. 161–2.

<sup>214</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 5; *Pwyll Penueic Dyuet*, p. 4; *TYP*, triad 56, p. 161; triad 79, p. 209.

<sup>215</sup> *TYP*, triad 1, p. 1; triad 56, p. 161; triad 79, p. 209.

referred to as Queen (*brenhines*) Goleuddydd.<sup>216</sup> Further, on occasions when Gwynhwyfar is referred to as the king's wife she is always named, openly signifying her own personal status and not just as a consort to the king.<sup>217</sup> Although in Welsh hagiography the mothers of saints are mostly referred to as the king's wife there are instances in which the title 'queen' is directly used.<sup>218</sup>

The variability in terms used to denote a person of royalty is not a problem unique to Welsh queenship. Diverse titles such as *brenin* (*rex*), *arglwydd* (*dominus*) and *tywysog* (*princeps*) were used to denote a ruler's status, either by self-designation as appear in the *acta* of Welsh rulers or as designations attributed to individuals in a variety of narrative and other sources.<sup>219</sup> In Welsh texts, like *brenhines*, *brenhin* was the title conferring the highest status, although *tywysog* is the term most used to refer to Welsh rulers by the thirteenth century. The types of power associated with these titles remains largely ambiguous as their use fluctuated according to circumstance and they were employed differently by and within the numerous ruling dynasties.<sup>220</sup> Personal names and patronymics are the most common type of identification used to distinguish individuals, whether 'overlords' or 'sub-kings'<sup>221</sup> and though by no means used consistently, many rulers adopted specific place names as part of their designations to establish authority.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>216</sup> *Y Mabinogion*, pp. 80-1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 179, 188.

<sup>217</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 117.

<sup>218</sup> *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 193-7, 198-9.

<sup>219</sup> See D. Jenkins, 'Kings, Lords, and Princes: the Nomenclature of Authority in Thirteenth-Century Wales', *BBCS*, 26 (1974-6), pp. 451-62.

<sup>220</sup> For the use of styles found in Welsh charters and what charter production reveals about the power of the native Welsh princes see C. Insley, 'From *Rex Wallie* to *Princeps Wallie*: Charters and State Formation in Thirteenth-Century Wales', in J.R. Maddicott and D.M. Palliser (eds), *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campell* (London, 2000), pp. 179-96.

<sup>221</sup> This is the only form of consistency amongst the styles found in the *acta* of the Welsh rulers and is a general practice that pertains to the identification of both men and women. See examples, *AWR*, pp. 74, 90, 93, 96-8, 104, 109-10, 117, 129. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 58.

<sup>222</sup> Sometimes rulers used sobriquets to identify themselves. Morgan ap Morgan in thirteenth-century styled himself 'Morgan Gam' (*Morganus Kam/Cam*) meaning 'Morgan the crooked' or 'Morgan the hunch-backed'. In a unique example, the twelfth-century ruler of Powys, Madog ap Maredudd, referred to himself as the king of his people, i.e. 'Madog, king of the Powysians' (*Madauc rex Powissensium*). Examples of rulers establishing authority with territorial names include Hywel ap Iorwerth of Gwynllŵg whose style in the thirteenth century changed from 'Hywel ap Iorwerth ap Owain' (*Hoelus filius Ioruerthi filii Oeni*) to 'Hywel of Careleon' (*Hoelus de Karliun*). This was further amended to include a title, 'Hywel, lord of Caerleon' (*Hoelus dominus de Karliun*). This example is in contrast to those used by the rulers of Gwynedd who included in their titles references to whole regions under their authority. There are other examples of place names used found by the twelfth-century ruler Hywel ab Ieuaif, who styled himself 'Hywel, king of Arwystli' (*Hoelus rex Arguestli/Arewestil*) or Maredudd ap Rhobert in the thirteenth century who styled himself 'son of Robert, lord of Cedewain' (*Mareduth filius Roberti dominus de Kedeweinc*). *AWR*, pp. 90, 93, 109-10, 117, 129; nos. 1-2, pp. 144-5; no. 19, p. 163; no. 20, p. 164; no. 176, pp. 304-05; no. 177, pp. 305-06; no. 180, pp. 308-09; no. 181, pp. 309-10; no. 469-76, pp. 667-76; no. 480, pp. 680-1.

By the twelfth century, the title of ‘king’ (*rex*) and the defined powers associated with the term by Welsh rulers was more or less devalued due to the number of petty or lesser rulers using it to define their authority. It is not clear if the same is true for *brenhin* given its treatment in the laws and court poetry, which are written in Welsh and are of a genre that pays tribute to the warrior-ruler. Even after the term ‘king’ was no longer commonly used and was replaced by the rulers of Gwynedd with that of *princeps* or *tywysog*, the status of kingship still applied; ‘their position in their respective spheres tended to be, both in actual practice and in legal theory, fully royal’.<sup>223</sup> For the rulers of Powys and Deheubarth, as well as other rulers of the smaller territories, lord (*dominus* / *argwlydd*) was the commonly adopted title.<sup>224</sup> The use of such titles most specifically by the rulers of the three principal dynasties of Deheubarth, Powys and Gwynedd unquestionably implied increased levels of centralised power within these kingdoms.<sup>225</sup> R. R. Davies notes

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See Andrews, ‘Nomenclature of Kingship in Welsh Court Poetry’, I and II, and Charles-Edward and Jones, ‘*Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*’, pp. 193-97.

<sup>223</sup> *Littere Wallie: Preserved in Liber A in the Public Record Office*, (ed.) J.G. Edwards (Cardiff, 1940), p. xxxvi.

<sup>224</sup> Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog of Powys sometimes used a combination of two titles and territorial names to establish their supremacy — ‘prince of Aberffraw, lord of Snowdon’ (*Lewlinus princeps de Aberffraw, dominus Snaudon*), was a deliberate change in title by Llywelyn from 1230, and Gruffudd’s title was ‘prince of Powys, lord of Arwystli’ (*Wennunwen Powisie princeps et dominus Arwistili*). In the case of Llywelyn, reference to the court of Aberffraw further established his dynastic connections and played on his hereditary rights to govern lands traditionally associated with the ancient court in Gwynedd, the principal seat of Welsh overlordship. This, too, may have been the case with the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth who at one point styled himself *proprietary princeps Deheubarth / Sudwallia* and as Prince of Wales (*Resus Walliarum princeps*), conceivably referring to his hereditary right to the patrimonial kingdom. Llywelyn’s newly adopted title in 1230 was one that reflected his ascendancy as the most powerful ruler in Wales at that time. It was a title that was connected to privileges of status and power that went largely unchallenged by Welsh rulers and the English government alike. Aberffraw was the chief seat of the rulers of Gwynedd, steeped in political mythology as the celebrated court of Brân the Blessed. The overlordship status of Aberffraw was promoted by lawyers from Gwynedd who state in Latin redactions B and C of the Welsh laws — written during Llywelyn’s reign — that the king of England receives gold from the king of Aberffraw, who, in return, receives gold from the other Welsh kings, thus indicating that the native rulers of Wales were dependent on the king of Aberffraw. The combination of ‘prince of Aberffraw’ with ‘lord of Snowdon’ was a tactic used by Llywelyn to establish territorial and political authority and shows his wider-Welsh ambitions as leading ruler. Although the examples from Powys and Gwynedd are different with Llywelyn’s title referring to both the ancient court of Aberffraw and the kingdom of Gwynedd, signifying two aspects of established authority, whilst Gwenwynwyn’s title refers to two distinct territories, Powys and Arwystli, they serve a purpose. They highlight how titles were used by different leaders to signify status based on regions under their domain. *AWR*, pp. 76-7, 93, 96-8; no. 28, pp. 171-5; no. 256, pp. 419-21; nos. 258-63, pp. 422-33; nos. 266-72, pp. 434-42; no. 274, pp. 443-4; nos. 548-9, pp. 753-4; no. 565, pp. 764-5; Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, p. 323; Lloyd, *HW*, ii, p. 682; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, p. 197; Pryce, ‘Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations’, p. 19; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 17-18, 188, 284; Turvey, *Lord Rhys*, pp. 90-1.

<sup>225</sup> *AWR*, pp. 74-9, 96-8, 129-30; D. Crouch, ‘The Slow Death of Kingship in Glamorgan, 1067–1158’, *Morgannwg*, 29 (1985), p. 30. For Powys, specifically, see Charles-Edward and Jones, ‘*Breintiau Gwŷr Powys*’, especially pp. 193-5.

that the adoption of the title of prince by the rulers of Gwynedd denoted their ‘special status and dignity’ in native Wales and was used in correlation with the propaganda campaign by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth to justify the hegemony of Gwynedd and the house of Aberffraw.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, the variable use of titles by male rulers, especially before the thirteenth century, offers limited value in assessing their status. As such, this should also temper expectations in assessing female status based on the use (or lack) of titles for ‘queens’.

Two surviving examples from historical sources employ the title ‘queen’ in association with the wives of Venedotian rulers. The first comes from the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan. At the end of Gruffudd’s life the author uses a combination of royal title, personal name and uxorial lifecycle in reference to ‘the queen Angharad, his wife’ — identifiers of which appear in both the Latin version (*regina Angharat eius uxor*) and the Welsh version (*Angharat vrenhines, y wreig briawt ynteu*). The Welsh version further stresses Angharad’s status as a *gwraig briod*, a wife of the highest status.<sup>227</sup> This may show the significant status of the wife of a husband who had numerous partners, and one who bore him children, at least in the twelfth century. The ordering of female partners found in *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogion Cymru* also appear to highlight the status of the wife.<sup>228</sup>

These characterizations are equally important in assessing Angharad’s individual status and that of her office. According to the author’s description of her, she was recognised as being Gruffudd’s symbolic equal.<sup>229</sup> Use of the term *regina* and *brenhines* in this later context not only points to the retention of her position as his figurative counterpart throughout their marriage, but also suggests a more elevated position in her later years. Identifying her by name is an unmistakable mark of respect for her person, alluding to her reputation as an individual in her own right. In addition, referring to Angharad as Gruffudd’s wife is symbolic of the personal, intimate connection between queen and king, as wife and husband. The merging of these identifiers reinforces her royal standing.

The title used in the *Life of Gruffudd* to denote Angharad’s status is in stark contrast to her 1162 obituary as it appears in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*,

<sup>226</sup> A campaign to promote this status was furthered by the adoption of the royal plural and terms like ‘most excellent’ or ‘most illustrious’ used in *acta* issued by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth after 1209. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 246, 253.

<sup>227</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 88-91; *HGK*, p. 32.

<sup>228</sup> *ABT*, pp. 95-110.

<sup>229</sup> Johns, ‘Beauty and the Feast’, pp. 108-15.



in which she is referred to as the wife of Gruffudd rather than as queen. Although no designation is used, the simplicity of the entry assumes a familiarity with her and probably indicates the royal rank that she seems to have retained throughout her twenty-five years of widowhood.<sup>230</sup> Nonetheless, the narration of Gruffudd's death found in his biography is duly important for what little it reveals about the status and expectations of the queen-dowager in medieval Wales. Angharad was dowered lands, possessions and dues, which she was legally entitled to.<sup>231</sup> That she was given portions of land and income implies that there was the expectation that she was to maintain her royal status in widowhood and likely undertake similar roles and responsibilities associated with wifehood.

The second example of the use of the title 'queen' comes from Gerald of Wales. In his *De rebus a se gestis*, there is a chapter devoted to a letter he received from the 'queen of North Wales' in the summer of 1202. It is unfortunate that the content of the chapter headed '*Litterae reginae Norwalliae Giraldo directae*' itself does not survive and the individual woman bestowed this magnanimous title has yet to be identified.<sup>232</sup> However, this in itself is interesting. Undoubtedly for Gerald, his connections with the office of the Welsh queen and its associated status were significantly more important than to the individual woman in the position at that time, as otherwise he would have named her. Conferring the title of 'queen' is an obvious display of recognition by a contemporary that the king's wife enjoyed a status of some repute.

These examples are the only references to historical royal women being referred to as 'queen' in the Welsh normative sources analysed, which is in large part due to the small number of such sources available and the general lack of references to women. The want of examples can also be equally attributed to the change in the royal title used by the rulers of Gwynedd in the mid-twelfth century. By 1163, and perhaps already by 1140, Owain Gwynedd, son of Angharad and Gruffudd, formally used the title 'king of Wales' (*rex Walie*) — a style that Gruffudd himself appears never to have assumed.<sup>233</sup> By 1165 Owain dropped the title of 'king' and adopted 'prince of Wales' (*Waliarum princeps*) or 'prince of the Welsh' (*Wallensium*

<sup>230</sup> *BS*, pp. 162-3, *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 108; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 62; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>231</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 88-9; *HGK*, p. 32.

<sup>232</sup> *Gir. Camb., Op.*, i, p. 13; see *AWR*, pp. 444-5.

<sup>233</sup> H. Pryce, 'Owain Gwynedd and Louis VII: the Franco-Welsh Diplomacy of the First Prince of Wales', *WHR*, 19 (1998-9), p. 20; *AWR*, pp. 74-5.

*princeps*) instead. The decision was a likely reflection of Owain's rise in status as leader of Wales and was a style that was singular to his reign.<sup>234</sup>

How the change in style affected the perceived or even real status of Owain's wives is particularly hard to assess. Little to nothing is known of his first wife and his second wife is better known for her incestuous connection to Owain and her suspected involvement in the death of her step-son, which gave rise to the supremacy of her own sons over Gwynedd. Owain's first wife, Gwladus (*fl.* mid- twelfth century), was daughter of Llywarch ap Trahearn of Arwystli (d. 1081) and it is believed that their two sons were Iorwerth Drwyndwn (d. probably c. 1174), father of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, and Maelgwn (d. after 1173). His second wife, Cristin (*fl.* mid- to late-twelfth century), was the daughter of Gronw ab Owain ab Edwin (d. 1124), Queen Angharad's niece and Owain's first cousin.

The marriage between Cristin and Owain is referred to in Gerald's *Journey through Wales*, as a cautionary tale against 'public incest' and marrying within the prohibited realms of consanguinity. Gerald does not refer to any type of noteworthy title conveying Cristin's status as 'queen', although Owain is referred to as the 'prince of North Wales' (*princeps Norwalliæ*). Gerald calls her Owain's 'first cousin' (*consobrina*) and denies the legitimacy of their sons, Dafydd and Rhodri.<sup>235</sup> Gerald does, however, refer to Cristin by name in a later passage (*consobrina sua cui nomen Christiana*),<sup>236</sup> which, in this context, like the use of Angharad's personal name in the *Life of Gruffudd* and the *Brutiau*, may signify deference to her royal status and reputation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury lamented the Welsh practices of concubinage and the marriage of first cousins, claiming that Owain's marriage to Cristin was the crowning horror of the plague, and that Owain abused his cousin by maintaining a marital relationship with her.<sup>237</sup> This suggests that Cristin's position, as viewed by high-ranking ecclesiastics who were more concerned with Owain's position as an important Welsh ruler, was that as a casualty of circumstance. In February 1169,

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<sup>234</sup> Pryce, 'Owain Gwynedd', pp. 21, 23; AWR, pp. 74-5; J.B. Smith, 'Owain Gwynedd', *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, XXXII (1971), p. 16. The authenticity of this 1140 letter remains questionable. See AWR, pp. 322-3.

<sup>235</sup> Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 133; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 192.

<sup>236</sup> Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 134; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 193.

<sup>237</sup> John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury (1153-1161): Volume One, The Early Letters (1153-1161)*, (eds and trans) W.J. Millor and H.E. Butler, revised by C.N.L. Brooke (London, 1955), pp. 135-6.

Pope Alexander (1159–1181) wrote to Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury (1162–1170) with regards to Owain’s punishment for ignoring ecclesiastical mandates stipulating his separation from Cristin. Cristin is not named in the letter, but referred to as Owain’s cousin (*consobrina sua*) and wife (*uxorem*).<sup>238</sup> A letter issued by Thomas Becket to Owain in the late spring of 1169 provides a simple yet notable line that gives an inkling of Cristin’s perceived status amongst some of her contemporaries. Becket tells Owain that although he should cast Cristin aside, he should take care to provide for her financially as is due a woman of her status.<sup>239</sup> This concern for Cristin’s economic well-being may perhaps suggest that contemporary perceptions of her position as ‘queen’ consort were commensurate with the honourable status she enjoyed as Owain’s wedded wife, regardless of the close degree of kinship. The tone of the letter makes it known that Owain should provide for Cristin because of his love for her as a relative.

Amongst her fellow Welsh, however, attitudes towards her royal position are much harder to discern. She remains unnamed in the 1175 entry in the Red Book version of *Brut y Tywysogion* that describes Dafydd ab Owain’s rise to power through treachery and imprisonment of his uterine brother, Rhodri.<sup>240</sup> The only native source in which Cristin appears is the late twelfth-century elegy written by Peryf ap Cedifor entitled *Marwnad meibion Cedifor*, lamenting the death of the poet’s foster brother, Hywel ap Owain who was believed to be murdered by his step-brothers, Dafydd and Owain, sons of Cristin and Owain, in the battle of Pentraeth in 1170.<sup>241</sup> Peryf ap Cedifor refers to Dafydd and Owain as the ‘unchristian Cristin’s brood’ and the poet illustrates the ruin that befalls when the bonds of kinship and blood alliances fail.<sup>242</sup> Cristin’s appearance suggests a number of things. Dafydd and Owain are identified as her children, thus setting the genealogical constructs at play. Her identifying lifecycle phase as a mother is marked as separate from that as Owain’s wife or widow — Owain, himself, is not mentioned in the elegy. In this context, Cristin is portrayed as the ‘wicked’ step-mother. A gendered reading of

<sup>238</sup> *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162–1170*, (ed. and trans.) A.J. Duggan, 2 vols (Oxford, 1999), ii, pp. 842-3.

<sup>239</sup> *Correspondence of Thomas Becket*, ii, pp. 875-7.

<sup>240</sup> *BT, RBH*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>241</sup> *Meibion Cedifor, cyd, ehelaeth – blant, |Yn y pant uch Pentraeth, | Buant brwysogion, braisg arfaeth, | Buant briw ger eu brawdfaeth | Yn y berwid brad Brython – anghristiawn | O Gristin a’i meibion, | Ni bo dyn ym myw ym Môn | O’r Brochfaeliaid brychfoelion. Welsh Court Poems*, p. 26.

<sup>242</sup> *Welsh Court Poems*, p. 114. On the importance of kinship bonds see Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 78-82.

‘unchristian’ also suggests the perception, by the poet at least, that as a woman of royal status in practice, Cristin was not conforming to the stereotypical traits of the ideal woman and queen, who was to be gentle, kind, merciful and motherly. There is also a play on words with the juxtaposition of *anghristiawn /O Gristin*. It is possible that this reference to Cristin specifically may be a reflection of her status and position as a ‘queen’ dowager and the political activities she may have undertaken, which remain unknown. Kari Maund has argued that because of her position within the Venedotian court, she possessed great knowledge of how it worked, perhaps even more so than her step-son and Owain’s likely designated heir, Hywel, who was absent for long periods.<sup>243</sup> It is challenging trying to assess the status of someone who is so poorly documented, but the fact that Owain refused to end his marriage to her in itself suggests affection, of course, but also that her position as his consort was important to him as well.

The positions that many queens obtained within their respective royal courts were centred on their lifecycle phases and roles within their own families. Uxorial and queenly roles helped many to establish a more elevated status as mistresses of royal households who had their own followers and servants and which often entailed a standing of some authority. *Domina* or ‘lady’ was a common term used to identify and address women in these positions and is how well-known Anglo-Saxon queens like Emma appear in contemporary sources.<sup>244</sup> Examples are found in the *Mabinogion* in which royal women are often referred to as ‘lady’, not just out of a gendered mark of respect, but from perspectives that relay female agency and responsibilities.<sup>245</sup> By the late-twelfth century, *domina* is also a term that became greatly associated with the queen-consorts of Gwynedd and often in a context associated with the agency of foreign wives.

Of the two surviving grants issued by Emma of Anjou to Haughmond Abbey, the earlier one dated between 1186 and 1194, she refers to herself as ‘Lady Emma, sister of king Henry, wife of Dafydd son of Owain prince of North Wales (*Domina Emma soror Henrici regis, uxor David filii Owini principis Norwallie*).<sup>246</sup> In a charter issued by Dafydd around the same time, although Emma is simply referred to as Dafydd’s wife (*Emma uxoris mee*), Dafydd styles himself prince of North Wales

<sup>243</sup> Maund, *Welsh Kings*, p. 182.

<sup>244</sup> Stafford, ‘Powers of the Queen’, pp. 8, 12; Coss, *Lady in Medieval England*, pp. 5-9.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. ‘Lady of the Well’, Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 124-8.

<sup>246</sup> *AWR*, no. 202, p. 335.

(*princeps Norwallie*), implying Emma's own possible status in Wales by her marital association with him. In contrast, in the second grant issued by Emma, dated between 1194 and 1203, she refers to herself as the 'wife of Dafydd son of Owain' (*Emma sponsa David filii Owini*).<sup>247</sup> This is similar to the grant issued by Dafydd after 1194 in which he simply uses his patronymic to identify himself. Although this approach was common amongst Welsh rulers, these two were issued after Dafydd lost hold on his power over Gwynedd and the lack of titles likely represent the family's fall in status within Wales.<sup>248</sup> Emma is still named in Dafydd's later charter, indicating her hold over her own personal rank and importance as an individual, especially as half-sister to the king of England.

In the narratives in which Emma appears, she styled as *domina*, but is also defined by her lifecycles. Gerald of Wales refers to her as 'the sister of King Henry II' (*sororem regis Henricis secundi*) as a means of signifying the importance of her association with the Angevin rulers of England by saying that it was through this marriage to her that Dafydd gained support of the English.<sup>249</sup> On the other hand, the *Brutiau*, which also refers to Emma as 'the king's sister' (*chwaer yr brenhin*), goes further by addressing her as the 'Dam' Emma' who was married king Dafydd (*Brenhin Dauyd*).<sup>250</sup> The poet Prydydd y Moch refers to her as Dafydd's wife (*gwraig*) and mother of Owain.<sup>251</sup> As a whole, it seems that the term *domina* as it is associated with Emma suggests that she had a status and responsibilities of some authority as the wife of a ruling Welsh prince, especially as the title is dropped in the charters that were issued after Dafydd's fall from grace. The title of *domina* also likely reflected her own standing as a member of the English royal family, as it did with Joan of England, the most prominent and well evidence example of Welsh queenship in practice.<sup>252</sup>

Joan is referred to in English chancery records as the 'lady of North Wales' in the 1220s, but by 1230 she is presented as the 'lady of Wales' (*domina*

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. no. 203, pp. 235-6.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. 334, 336.

<sup>249</sup> ... *licet etiam propter hoc David Anglicano fulciretur auxilio, puta qui sororem regis Henricis secundi sibi matrimonio copulaverat*. Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 134; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 193.

<sup>250</sup> *BS*, pp. 180-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 126; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 70; *BT, RBH*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>251</sup> *Ef ye'r gorau a fu'n fab I dad | Ac yn fab I wraig: ffynnodd ei fwriad. Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'*, p. 14.

<sup>252</sup> Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p. 20.

*Walliae*).<sup>253</sup> This is the title conferred upon her in the obituary found in the *Brutiau*, as well as in other annals such as those of Tewkesbury and Chester.<sup>254</sup> The change in title for Joan, as Llywelyn's consort, was, thus, associated with the change in elevated status of the rulership of Gwynedd.<sup>255</sup> Her title, however, was not parallel to Llywelyn's own as prince of Aberffraw, lord of Snowdon, but corresponding nonetheless.<sup>256</sup> Combining the title of *domina* with 'Wales' was something not only new, but noticeably reminiscent of the titles used by Queen Matilda of England in the mid-twelfth century to identify her position and status as 'lady of England' or 'lady of the English'.<sup>257</sup> For Llywelyn, Joan's own title helped reinforce his claims and status as prince of Wales.<sup>258</sup> It is difficult to know whether this change in style indicates a change in her own, individual status, especially as there is only one surviving document issued by her. In a letter addressed to her half-brother, Henry III, probably dated between 1230 × 1231, Joan styles herself 'Lady of Wales' (*domina Wall(ie)*),<sup>259</sup> but the context of the letter (discussed in the next chapter) indicates that she used her own position as a member of and status within the Angevin dynasty as a means of being able to represent 'her husband's aspirations to Wales-wide authority' rather than employing any real constitutional or politically significance her new title may have implied.<sup>260</sup>

It is also possible that this change of style does reflect an elevation of Joan's status, given that the evidence of its use appears once she was reinstated to her former status as Llywelyn's wife and sometimes emissary after a year of incarceration following the hanging of William de Braose in 1230. It could even be a possibility that Llywelyn's own change in style was a reflection of his need to further assert his hegemony in a way that would help to revive his own reputation. The change in title may have worked to remind contemporaries of his hereditary claims to Aberffraw and authority over Wales, and thus his inalienable rights to

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<sup>253</sup> AWR, nos. 280, 281, pp. 447-8; Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p. 19; Wilkinson, 'Joan', pp. 83-9.

<sup>254</sup> BS, pp. 230-3; BT, *Pen20*, p. 196; BT, *Pen20Tr*, p. 104; BT, *RBH*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>255</sup> Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', pp. 19-20.

<sup>256</sup> See contrast with Eleanor de Montfort below, pp. 174-5.

<sup>257</sup> Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p. 20; Chibnall, *Empress Matilda*, p. 102; Coss, *Lady in Medieval England*, p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> AWR, p. 78.

<sup>259</sup> AWR, no. 280, pp. 447-8.

<sup>260</sup> Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p. 20.

judge as he saw fit.<sup>261</sup> Perhaps a change of title for both Llywelyn and Joan was a means of redefining themselves and Llywelyn's rule, a consequence of which just may have been an elevation of status for both.

In the marriage agreement of 1222 pertaining to her daughter, Helen and John the Scot, Joan is referred to as 'Lady' and 'wife'.<sup>262</sup> Llywelyn is referred to as lord throughout, demonstrating that the terms were used in more general form to denote a noble and honourable status. Joan's personal authority is intimated as she appears in the context of presenting the married couple with her own charter granting them a marriage portion.<sup>263</sup> This may simply be by virtue of estates in the marital agreement between Llywelyn and Joan, deriving from John's gift in free marriage to the couple when they were wed. English Common Law indicates that when both parties are equally represented in a deed, the land usually belonged to the wife.<sup>264</sup> As such, it is noteworthy that Joan is documented as issuing grants of land in her own right and not simply consenting to Llywelyn's grant.

In a grant and confirmation by Dafydd ap Llywelyn made to Basingwerk Abbey 25 July 1240 for the salvation of the souls of himself, father and mother, Joan is again styled as *domina*, complementing Llywelyn's *dominus*.<sup>265</sup> What needs to be considered is how far *domina*, like *dominus*, is used as a title of courtesy when coupled with a woman's name. Indeed, the style of Lady Joan is less exalted than that of Joan, Lady of Wales and the *Brutiau* are the only chronicles to refer to her as 'Lady of Wales'.<sup>266</sup> Such usage in her obituary signifies a status that was rightfully her own by the time of her death; Llywelyn is given no title and is only referred to as her husband. In contrast, both the *Annales Cambriae* and *Cronica de Wallia* identify her as 'Lady Joan, daughter of the king of England and wife of Llywelyn prince of Wales' (*Domina Johanna, filia regis Anglie et uxor Lewilini principis Wallie*).<sup>267</sup> Her official status was not underestimated by the style used, however, as both

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<sup>261</sup> A problem lies in the dating and authenticity of the earliest extant document that accredits Llywelyn with the style of 'prince of Aberffraw, lord of Snowdon', which may be as early as 1225, in which case Llywelyn's change in designation was not a consequence of events in May 1230. If this document is discounted, the earliest dated document is 1 May 1230, the day before William's execution. *AWR*, no. 256, pp. 419-21; no. 260, pp. 424-8.

<sup>262</sup> *AWR*, no. 252, pp. 412-14.

<sup>263</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 87. See Chapter 5, p. 275-6.

<sup>264</sup> F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2 vols. (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Cambridge, 1911), ii, pp. 410-11.

<sup>265</sup> *AWR*, no. 292, pp. 460-1.

<sup>266</sup> *BS*, pp. 230-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 196; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 104; *BT, RBH*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>267</sup> *AC*, p. 82; *CW*, p. 38.

sources reveal Joan's importance as the prince's consort, which was suitably demonstrated by her burial at Llan-faes, a Franciscan friary founded by Llywelyn in memory of her.

Other examples related to Joan in the Welsh chronicles also demonstrate this. The description found in the C text of the *Annales Cambriae* of her intervention in 1211 styles Llywelyn 'prince of Venedotia' (*principi Venedotiae*) or 'prince of Gwynedd' and although she is named, her importance is that as the 'king's daughter' (*Annam [sic] filiam suam*) and Llywelyn's wife (*uxorem*).<sup>268</sup> This is also the case for the same entry found in the *Brutiau*.<sup>269</sup> Perhaps a mark in the brief decline in Joan's status amongst her social peers and Welsh contemporaries emerges in the 1230 entry in the *Brutiau*, detailing her affair with William de Braose. 'Lord Llywelyn' hanged the 'lord William de Breos the younger' 'after he had been caught in Llywelyn's chamber with the king of England's daughter, Llywelyn's wife'.<sup>270</sup> It is striking that Joan is not named and that she is first referred to as the king of England's daughter, rather than as Llywelyn's wife.

Perhaps the most important issue concerning how Joan is identified has to do with the slight to Llywelyn's reputation and status as the leading ruler of Wales. The laws make it clear that biggest offence a woman could commit was that of adultery.<sup>271</sup> Adultery was a threat to the man, not only as a husband, but to the man as a ruler. To commit adultery with a king's wife was seen as 'sexual mastery', a usurpation of the ordering of political power in which the king's hold on the realm becomes threatened.<sup>272</sup> Feudal disorder and the possible loss of sovereign power due to female infidelity are explored in many medieval tales, not least in the Arthurian stories concerning Guinevere and Lancelot, and those of Iseult and Tristan.<sup>273</sup> Thus, it is possible that Joan's name was deliberately omitted from the entry as a means of shaming her for her participation in events. Of course, the affair was a public matter and Joan's involvement so integral to the story that perhaps the scribes of the

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<sup>268</sup> AC, p. 67.

<sup>269</sup> BS, pp. 204-05; BT, *Pen20*, pp. 156-7; BT, *Pen20Tr*, p. 85; BT, *RBH*, pp. 190-3.

<sup>270</sup> BS, pp. 226-7; BT, *Pen20*, pp. 190-1; BT, *Pen20Tr*, pp. 101-02; BT, *RBH*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>271</sup> "'Cyfnerth' Text'", pp. 140-1; 'Latin Redaction A', in *WLW*, pp. 156-7; *Llyfyr Iorwerth*, p. 26; *LTMW*, p. 48. Owen, 'Shame and Reparation', pp. 52-4.

<sup>272</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 208-11.

<sup>273</sup> A.E. McCannon, 'Two Capetian Queens as the Foreground for an Aristocrat's Anxiety in the *Vie de Saint Louis*', in K. Nolan (ed.), *Capetian Women* (New York, 2003), p. 174. Also see P. McCracken, 'The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body', in L. Lomperis and S. Stanbury (eds), *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia, 1973), p. 43.



*Brutiau* saw no need to identify by name or confer a status on her through use of a designation.

In spite of her short reign, Eleanor de Montfort is the only surviving example of a royal woman who categorically used her title in an official capacity on a number of known occasions. In 1262 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd changed his style to that of ‘Prince of Wales and lord of Snowdon’ (*princeps Wallie et dominus Snowdonie*), adapted from Llywelyn ap Iorwerth’s later title and one that emphasised the ‘dual nature of his power’, as was demonstrated earlier in the 1258 agreement made between him and Scottish lords.<sup>274</sup> It was a title that was subsequently recognised by the English Crown in 1267, under the Treaty of Montgomery,<sup>275</sup> and one that Llywelyn retained for the rest of his life, even after his defeat by Edward I in 1277. Upon her marriage to Llywelyn, Eleanor de Monfort acquired the title ‘princess of Wales, lady of Snowdon’ (*principissa Wallie, domina Snaudon*)<sup>276</sup> and styled herself as such in five letters that were sent to Edward I between March 1279 and February 1282.<sup>277</sup> Her use of an official title in her correspondence with the English king, her first cousin, demonstrates the perceived weight of her status as the wife of the ruling prince of Wales. It also reveals a level of diplomatic responsibilities associated with her personal status as ‘queen’.<sup>278</sup>

Documentary and historical sources always identify her via her lifecycles as ‘the prince’s wife’ and the daughter of Simon de Montfort — she is never referred to as the ‘princess of Wales’. This is unlikely to be a reflection of how she was perceived by her contemporaries, but more to do with the very little time she spent this capacity before she died. Eleanor remains unnamed in her two appearances in the *Annales Cambriae* citing her marriage to Llywelyn and her death. The marriage entry dated 1277 calls Eleanor ‘the daughter of earl Simon de Montfort’ (*filiam comitis Symonis de Monte forti*) and the entry for her death dated 1282 she is called Llywelyn’s ‘wife, daughter of earl Simon’ (*uxor sua filia comitis Symonis*).<sup>279</sup>

<sup>274</sup> AWR, no. 328, pp. 499-501; no. 353, pp. 525-6; no. 354, p. 526; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 117, 145.

<sup>275</sup> AWR, no. 363, pp. 536-42. Only ‘Princeps Wallie’ is used in this example and does not include the rest of the title ‘dominus Snaudon’.

<sup>276</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 189, 398, 448-9.

<sup>277</sup> AWR, nos. 432-436, pp. 629-33.

<sup>278</sup> See Chapter 5 for the discussion on female agency and family politics.

<sup>279</sup> The marriage entry in *Cronica de Wallia* is exactly the same. AC, pp. 105, 107; CW, p. 43.

All the entries in the *Brutiau* in which Eleanor appears describe her status according to her lifecycle phases. The 1275 record of her capture by Edward I, subsequent marriage to Llywelyn and death, she is named and simply called the sister of Amaury, son of Simon de Montfort (*Emri vab Fymwnt o Mwrfort ... ac Elenor y chwaer*).<sup>280</sup> In 1278 she is named and referred to as ‘daughter’, ‘kinswoman’ and ‘wedded wife’.<sup>281</sup> In the memorandum of offers and petitions made by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Edward I in 1277, Llywelyn, as ‘prince of Wales’, appeals to the king for the release of ‘Lady Eleanor’ Llywelyn’s ‘wife and consort’ (*domine Alienore uxoris sue et sue comitive*), rather than ascribing her the title of ‘princess’.<sup>282</sup> Referring to Eleanor as both ‘wife’ and royal ‘consort’ indicates an elevated, and perhaps separate, status of both positions, although later in the document she is again referred to as ‘the prince’s wife’ (*uxorem principis*). The repetition of her connection with the prince as his marital partner stresses that this was, indeed, perceived as being the one that offered the highest form of status. Above all, it is important to note the contrast in how Eleanor styles herself in her letters with how she is identified in the chronicles and documentary records. The latter may be a reflection of how gender is used in the different genres of the sources themselves — defining a woman’s status based on her lifecycle phases and relationships to men. The designation she uses in her own *acta* perhaps indicates the increase in her status in practice after her marriage was solemnized at Worcester in 1275.

All of the examples from the Welsh chronicles refer to actions and situations in which royal women of Wales are definitively defined by their lifecycle stages and not their titles as ‘queens’.<sup>283</sup> The possible significance in different titles used in different types of sources may lie in the perspectives of authorship. The chronicles likely reflect ecclesiastical observations in which the status women and men were tied to their pedigrees, whereas ‘official’ titles were used in documents to denote legal authority. However, this does not mean that royal women of Wales were singularly viewed as ‘the king’s wife’. The nature of their statuses as *legal* wives

<sup>280</sup> *BS*, pp. 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 222-3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 117; *BT, RBH*, pp. 262-5.

<sup>281</sup> *BS*, pp. 256-7; *BT, Pen20*, p. 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 119; *BT, RBH*, pp. 268-9.

<sup>282</sup> *AWR*, no.398, pp. 583-5.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Pauline Stafford’s note of Anglo-Saxon sources in which ‘[t]he only native West Saxon women to make an impact on ninth-century history did so as wives of Mercian rulers’. Stafford, ‘The King’s Wife’, p. 4. This is an impression that is also found in examples from thirteenth-century Castille. See O’Callaghan, ‘Many Roles of the Medieval Queen’.

evokes the impression that they enjoyed the superiority of the office of ‘queen’, exemplified by the use of the term *gwraig briod* as in Angharad’s case.

Genealogies often also distinguish between wife and concubine, inferring the status of the ruler’s wife.<sup>284</sup> To medieval contemporaries, the nature of the importance of the royal woman as queen was variable and could change over time according to circumstance.<sup>285</sup> The powers associated with the queenship title and female lifecycles were in many ways very gender specific that were ‘peculiar to a woman who was *domina*, wife, mother *and* queen’.<sup>286</sup> Expectations of agency were in some ways defined by her prescribed social status and genealogical connections, but more largely defined by her personal relationship with her husband.

### ***MOTHERHOOD AND SUCCESSION***

Although beyond the scope of this research, it is important at this point to raise some questions regarding the status of the Welsh queen as a mother; a topic that has been neglected. Detailed research needs to be undertaken as the roles and ideals associated with motherhood were often predicated on the queen’s role and her political significance within royal spheres. The values and expectations behind royal marriages and the woman’s position as queen were dominated by expectations of childbearing.<sup>287</sup> It seems that as the practice of polygamy lessened the status of the royal wife and, but with the increased practice of primogeniture, the woman’s role as mother of a potential heir afforded her power.

Evidence ranging from Merovingian to thirteenth-century France, for instance, indicates an established trend which recognised motherhood as the predominant lifecycle stage that defined queenly agency. The woman’s status was much more significant as the mother of a king than as the wife of one thus allowing her to create her own political identity and thereby on occasion wield significant power, principally as the preferred regent, like Blanche of Castile (1188–1252).<sup>288</sup> Similarly, and despite family tensions and outside pressures that stopped some

<sup>284</sup> Cf. *Vita Griffini*, pp. 76-9; *HGK*, pp. 95-110; *BS*, pp. 134-5; *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 75; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, pp. 45; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 98-101; *ABT*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>285</sup> Stafford, ‘Powers of the Queen’, p. 8. See also Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>286</sup> Stafford, ‘Powers of the Queen’, p. 10; M. Howell, ‘Royal Women of England and France in the Mid-Thirteenth Century: A Gendered Perspective’, in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III*, pp. 163-82.

<sup>287</sup> See M. Shadis, ‘Blanche of Castile and Facinger’s “Medieval Queenship”: Reassessing the Argument’, in *Capetian Women*, pp. 143-4; Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 134.

<sup>288</sup> Shadis, ‘Blanche of Castile’, p. 144; Stafford, ‘Sons and Mothers’, p. 91.

queens from exercising their full political potential, many queens in Anglo-Saxon England were able to exert their own influence and power through the advancement of their sons' claims to succession.<sup>289</sup> Younger rulers may have been subject to the will of their mothers or desires of their maternal kin especially when the early death of the father as the ruler may have secured the prospects for further advancement as far as the maternal kin was concerned. Most significant was the mother's role and her power of influence, which was likely to have been crucial in the early establishment of her son's reign.<sup>290</sup>

The motif of 'the fertile queen' unsurprisingly appears in the literary sources of medieval Wales. The most prolific examples are found in the Lives of Welsh saints where queens are portrayed as joyfully conceiving and giving birth.<sup>291</sup> The pain and suffering of a barren queen is also a theme in the Lives of saints and in the *Mabinogion*.<sup>292</sup> The woman's position as a mother does feature in the triads, but this lifecycle is not a defining trait. Similar to the appearance of Ceridwen and Dôn, Modron is another female mythological figure associated with Celtic deityship. In the triad concerning the Three Exalted (Supreme) Prisoners of the Island of Britain (*Tri Goruchel Garchara6r Ynys Brydein*), Modron is the mother of Mabon.<sup>293</sup> Modron is also referred to as one of the Three Fair (Holy, Blessed) Womb-Burdens of the Island of Britain (*Tri Gwyn Dorll6yth Ynys Brydein*), being the mother of three children by two different men. Her status within either of these two conjugal unions is unclear and she is only further identified as a daughter of Afallach.<sup>294</sup> Some women appear more than once as mothers. The character of Arianrhod figures as a mother in two particular triads: a) the Three Levies that departed from this Island (*Tri Chyuoar a aeth o'r Enys hon*), in which she is also described the daughter of Beli Mawr (*Aryanrot merch 6eli eu mam*);<sup>295</sup> and b) the Three Noble (lit. Golden) Shoemakers of the Island of Britain (*Tri Eur Gryd Ynys Brydein*), in which capacity

<sup>289</sup> Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers', p. 91.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. 81, 91.

<sup>291</sup> Primary examples concern queen Rienigulid, St Illtud's mother, and queen Gwladus, the mother of St Cadog. *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 136-9, 172-3, 194-7.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. 54-5; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 16, 27, 179; *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. 17; *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 37.

<sup>293</sup> *TYP*, pp. 146-9, 424-8, 449-51.

<sup>294</sup> *A'r eil, Owein mab Bryen a Moruud uerch Vryen ac Anarun Archesgob Llydaw, o Vordron merch Auallach eu mam*. Triad 80 differs slightly in content in the various manuscripts, but the context referring to the saintly lineages of the Isle of Britain remains the same. Motherhood is a key feature, especially with the version that refers to the triad as the Three Families of Saints of the Island of Britain, by Welsh Mothers (*Tair Gwelygordh Saint (ii) Ynys Prydain o Vam Gymreig* Ibid. triad 70, pp. 195-9; triad 81, pp. 211-13; pp. 449-51.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. triad 35, pp. 81-9; pp. 284-5.

as a mother she is sought out to provide her son Llew Skilful-Hand with a name and arms.<sup>296</sup> Two other women defined as mothers are Elen, the mother of Custennian, or Constantine the Great (*Chustennin uab Elen*)<sup>297</sup> and the Empress of Constantinople from whom the ‘greatest race in the world’ was descended.<sup>298</sup>

Historical sources refer to the importance in status of the royal mother simply by listing genealogical trees in which women appear.<sup>299</sup> This is clear in the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan where his matrilineal connections are emphasised and Angharad is acclaimed for being the mother of his eight named children.<sup>300</sup> This is in contrast to Gruffudd’s illegitimate children, and their mother(s) who remain unnamed. The names of these individuals appear in the *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogyon Cymru*, a text originally from the time of the reign, or just after, of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth.<sup>301</sup> The significance of this contrast may lie in who remembered the names of these illegitimate children and what this remembrance suggests about their standing in the eyes of some circles in Welsh society. Their status may have perhaps been influenced by traditional, or even a traditionalist culture, where concubines and illegitimate children were noted in genealogies, whereas the *Life of Gruffudd* stresses Angharad’s own status. There are also references to the Three Fair (Holy, Blessed) Womb-Burdens and the Three Families of Saints of the Island of Britain by Welsh mothers, all of whom are the royal mothers of revered kings and saints.<sup>302</sup>

Ideals of the ‘fertile queen’ do not dominate either the content or context of any of the normative sources. The author of Gruffudd’s biography states that he had many children by concubines, referring to king’s own virility and, thus, potency as a leader.<sup>303</sup> There are entries found in the *Brutiau* concerning concubinal parentage such as the examples of the named mothers of the children of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn and reference to a child of Gerald of Windsor by a concubine.<sup>304</sup> Moreover, in the tales of the *Mabinogion* there are numerous childless queens and married royal

<sup>296</sup> *A Llew Llaŷgyffes, pan vu ef a Gŷdyon yn keissio henw ac arueu y gan (Aran)riot y vam*. Ibid. triad 67, pp. 185-8.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid. triad 51, pp. 138-45; pp. 318-19, 342-4.

<sup>298</sup> ... *o’r honn y deuth y Genedlaeth vŷyaf or byt* ... Ibid. triad 86, pp. 225-7.

<sup>299</sup> See Chapter 1, *Genealogy*.

<sup>300</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 54-9, 78-9; *HGK*, pp. 2, 21-2.

<sup>301</sup> *ABT*, pp. 98-102.

<sup>302</sup> *TYP*, triad 70, p. 195; triad 81, p. 211.

<sup>303</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 78-9; *HGK*, p. 22.

<sup>304</sup> *BS*, pp. 134-5; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2, 75; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28, 45; *BT, RBH*, pp. 56-7, 98-101.

women. Gwenhwyfar is neither castigated nor shamed as a barren queen in the Welsh Triads or in the tales of the *Mabinogion* in which she appears. The same can be said for the various other female characters who appear in the *Mabinogion*. That Arawn and his wife in the First Branch are childless bears no reflection on either status, but this is in contrast to the suggested fate of Rhiannon who as a barren wife was to be divorced by her husband.<sup>305</sup> In ‘The Dream of the Emperor Maxen’, ‘The Lady of the Well’, ‘Culhwch’, ‘Peredur’ and ‘Geraint’ the subject of the married woman producing an heir never arises.

Further, the women who do bear children are the literary characters who face the greatest shame and suffering. Rhiannon is accused of killing her child and undergoes ritual, public humiliation. Branwen faces the insult of being sent from her husband’s chamber to the kitchen, where she is physically assaulted on a daily basis and eventually has to endure the death of own son. Culhwch’s own mother went mad during her pregnancy and died after his birth.<sup>306</sup> A study on the three cases of motherhood found in the Four Branches argues that once the royal women reach this defining lifecycle stage, they undergo a considerable change in their status: ‘motherhood adversely affects standing and influence, since the independence of the mother is directly threatened by the child’.<sup>307</sup> The power of queens and noble women seems to lie solely within their potential to provide heirs to the throne rather than as actual mothers for once they fulfil their reproductive function, it is the child who enjoys the elevated status as the king’s presumed successor.<sup>308</sup>

Gerald comments that marriage took place only after a period of co-habitation, during which time it was hoped the woman proved to be ‘a suitable wife, in disposition, moral qualities and the ability to bear children’.<sup>309</sup> How did such a practice effect the consort’s position as a concubine or step-mother and her status as queen? The laws provide a tantalizing clue. The *penteulu* was a close relative of the king, perhaps his son or nephew.<sup>310</sup> In some cases the queen may certainly have been the *penteulu*’s mother, but given the practice of concubinage, it is also likely that many cases she may have been his step-mother. It is under the role of the

<sup>305</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 4-7, 16; *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet*, pp. 2-5, 17.

<sup>306</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 179.

<sup>307</sup> Winward, ‘Some Aspects of Women’, p. 97-101.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* 100-01.

<sup>309</sup> *Gir. Camb. Op.*, vi, pp. 213-14; Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, p. 263.

<sup>310</sup> ‘Cyfnerth’, pp. 444-7; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 2; *LTMW*, p. 8.

‘queen’ specifically that the woman offers the *penteulu* a drink.<sup>311</sup> As such, her position as the ruler’s wife seems more important than her biological connection with the chosen heir. It seems likely that the ‘queen’s’ lifecycle stage as mother would have gained further prominence with the increased practice of primogeniture amongst the more powerful Welsh princes during the thirteenth century, especially in Gwynedd. Combined with the traditional importance of lineage used to legitimate rule and the use of pedigrees to reinforce kinship connections, the status of queen as mother rose. Examples stem from the Angevin women, Emma of Anjou and Joan of England, whose lifecycle positions as mothers are noted in the chronicles and in records of practice. Yet, it is primarily through the use of designated titles that they are identified.

It is worth considering how far this literary indifference or disinterest concerning the motif of the ‘fertile queen’ was in part related to Welsh customary practices of concubinage and laws regarding succession and the inheritance rights of illegitimate children. It is hard to determine what the expectations were of the royal Welsh concubine in terms of motherhood. Perhaps even harder is distinguishing status. Comparisons with medieval Denmark may offer clues. Like Wales, the kings of Denmark recognised illegitimate sons as successors. This practice came to an end in 1170 when Valdemar the Great (r. 1157–1182) embraced the Christian order of succession.<sup>312</sup> What little is known about royal concubines is that they came from prominent families and their children were recognised as being ‘wholly legitimate in the secular sense’, whereas illegitimate children of low-born mothers had very few rights.<sup>313</sup> Although there are examples of high-born concubines who enjoyed royal status, it cannot be taken as certain that this was the social norm. However, evidence supports the idea that the Danish royal family, and those of the upper social strata, preferred concubines who came of the right bloodlines or who had valuable, inheritable property.<sup>314</sup> Thus, in Danish law, similar to the Welsh laws, the concubine was legitimate.<sup>315</sup> Nevertheless, as the practice of concubinage decreased, so did the status of women in these positions, even as mothers. Consequently, it appears that the status of the *married* royal consort, in practice, was one of the

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<sup>311</sup> Charles-Edwards, ‘Food, Drink and Clothing’, pp. 328-9, 330.

<sup>312</sup> T. Nors, ‘Illegitimate Children and Their High-Born Mothers: Changes in the Perception of Legitimacy in Mediaeval Denmark’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 21 (1996), p. 18.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.* 19, 21, 37.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.* 22-3.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.* 27-8.

defining factors that helped to develop and conceivably secure her position even into motherhood.<sup>316</sup> This is demonstrated in the chronicles, which list Cadwgan ap Bleddyn's partners who seem to come from leading Welsh lineages, and Tangwystl, mother of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Iorwerth.<sup>317</sup> The *Life of Gruffudd* also stresses the status of the queen as mother. His maternal genealogy focuses specifically on his grandmother's royal line. The women are identified by their lifecycle stages as daughters and mothers, but in context to the imperial titles of men, emphasising their status. Maelmorda, who produced a son for Murchadh, king of Leinster, is called 'queen' in reference to her motherhood (*ex hac regina Maelmordan filium*).<sup>318</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The general lack of reference to queens in narrative sources has led to an underestimation in the importance of the status of the medieval queen and has marginalised her position.<sup>319</sup> This is a mistake that few medieval people would have made because 'virtually everyone would have known that the queen's proximity to the sources of royal authority made her a person well worth the attention lavished upon her'.<sup>320</sup> The perceived shortage of queenly imagery in Welsh sources could be reflective of a general indifference to the overall position and influence that a queen had in the king's household and in political circles in this warrior-ruler dominated society. However, it could also be a deliberate moralizing silence used by literati to call attention to the gendered and personal expectations of a queen as a woman whose place was not within the king's court or the masculine realm of politics. Queens, after all, were still subjected to the same gender stereotyping and gender assumptions that all women faced, although they were confronted with more paradoxes. The medieval royal consort had access to and was expected to operate within the magisterial authority, which increased her power and status. Such a position, however, was challenging as it exposed the queen to ridicule and public circumspection largely associated with the inconsistencies between theory and reality as concerned the 'women's place' and the queen's standing as a model for all

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<sup>316</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 85-9.

<sup>317</sup> *BS*, pp. 134-5; *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 75; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, pp. 45; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 98-101.

<sup>318</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 56-9; *HGK*, p. 3.

<sup>319</sup> Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>320</sup> Huneycutt, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 22.



women.<sup>321</sup> The suffering of Rhiannon and Branwen in the First and Second Branches of the *Mabinogi* as calumniated wives is evocative of this.

It is widely believed that the lofty position of the queen found in the Iorwerth redaction specifically reflects the status of Joan of England and her ‘special prestige’ within the court of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth.<sup>322</sup> Evidence of this is reflected in various ways, including the appearance of French terms found within the Iorwerth text, which possibly indicate Joan’s own cultural influences at court.<sup>323</sup> It has been argued that in spite of the queen’s elevated presence in Iorwerth, there are other aspects in this redaction that strongly imply that the queen’s status was associated primarily with her role as the king’s wife, rather than as a member of the royal family in her own right. It is a view that is emphasised by the placement of the queen in her chamber, maintaining that she was clearly expected to enjoy the opulence that her position as the king’s wife and her status as a member of a Welsh royal family demanded, but that she was to remain well clear of any involvement in government.<sup>324</sup> Iorwerth’s interpretation of the office of the Welsh queen has been read as a reproach aimed at Joan’s very public and very real involvement in the relations between Wales and England during her lifetime.<sup>325</sup>

However, based on the evidence provided in this chapter, there is an alternative interpretation of the Iorwerth’s stance on the queen, which needs to be taken under consideration. It is possible that the moralizing tone of Iorwerth may not have been aimed entirely at Joan as an individual, but at the office and public visibility of the Welsh ‘queen’ in general. Iorwerth was written at a time of increased bureaucratisation within native Welsh courts and Gwynedd in particular, with rulers like Llywelyn assimilating Welsh court culture with more continental conventions.<sup>326</sup> These cultural influences surely included conventions defined by gender specific stereotypes and expectations associated with the medieval offices of queen and king. The Welsh laws had the ‘capacity to adapt to changing

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<sup>321</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 10.

<sup>322</sup> *LTMW*, p. 220; Jenkins, ‘Prolegomena’, p. 16; Pryce, ‘Household Priest’, p. 93; Stacey, ‘King, Queen, and *Edling*’, p. 55; D. Stephenson, ‘The Laws of Court: Past Reality or Present Ideal’, in *WKHC*, p. 402.

<sup>323</sup> Jenkins, ‘Prolegomena’, p. 16.

<sup>324</sup> Stacey, ‘King, Queen, and *Edling*’, pp. 61-2.

<sup>325</sup> Pryce, ‘Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations’, p. 23; Stacey, ‘King, Queen, and *Edling*’, pp. 61-2.

<sup>326</sup> Stacey, ‘King, Queen, and *Edling*’, pp. 45-6, 48; H. Pryce, ‘Welsh Rulers and European Change’ pp. 37-51. There is comparative evidence to show that royal Welsh households like those of medieval Scotland, were influenced in some ways and at different times by examples set in England. ‘Introduction’, *WKHC*, p. 6.

circumstances' and Llywelyn's court especially had moved considerably beyond the antiquated features of the native laws.<sup>327</sup> It is likely that the acculturation of ideals and values that helped to shape the face of Welsh rulership in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also included the widespread shift of visible and official queenly power to the more unofficial, domesticized ambit that had become traditionally associated with queenly activity by the High Middle Ages.

Hyperbole surrounding the activities and personalities of some individual women was used to justify and set limitations on the roles that queens, or more specifically, king's wives, played in the political culture of the times.<sup>328</sup> Thus, there is no irony lost in the writings of Iorwerth that emphasise both the domestic realm of the queen and her status as a statutory and symbolic figurehead at a time when the 'queen' consort of Gwynedd was in fact an extremely visible and mobile individual, renowned for her part in political manoeuvring between Llywelyn and the kings of England.

Continental influences and aspirations of certain Welsh rulers to adhere to various European court customs are also important factors in determining the status of the Welsh 'queen'. The fact remains that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw a dramatic increase in intermarriages between ruling Welsh dynasties and Anglo-Norman families. For Gwynedd, especially, a number of influential and active women who held the position of 'queen' were of Anglo-Norman royalty and surely brought with them contemporary European principles and expectations of queenship. The examples exhibiting the imagery and ideals associated with the Welsh queen found in the native sources advocate a characteristically Welsh concept of queenship. The sources reveal detail regarding the expectations and status of the native queen. Evidence also indicates an ongoing visible and public role of the king's wife, both in official and unofficial capacities, as a valued member of the royal household. The public movements of the Welsh queen through which she was able to demonstrate her status were widely associated with ideals of courtliness and expectations of hospitality and were complementary to her husband's roles.

Literary evidence cited relating to the Welsh queen moving between the 'public' and 'private' spheres, acting in different capacities as a royal hostess to joint ruler to the public face of her husband on circuit seem to be founded in deep-rooted

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<sup>327</sup> *LTMW*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>328</sup> Stafford, 'The King's Wife', p. 4.

native traditions in which the queen as woman was seen as a sovereign symbol of the land. The symbolic value of the queen as the king's wife alone endowed her with an elevated status. Moreover, the expected roles and responsibilities associated with the Welsh queen suggests a semblance of recognised and accepted Welsh queenly autonomy and authority. The overall presence of the royal consort in the court, as the lady, wife and mother of the future heir, means that the obligations of her office and responsibilities sometimes were acquired through specific circumstances. Some of the recurrent roles constituted the more formal expectations of office based on practicalities and functionalities influenced by political and social expectations. This perception is further reinforced by the notion that the king and queen held separate households and by the existing examples of royal women who were in charge of their own lordships and territorial kingdoms. All of these impressions helped to broaden the symbolic value and status of the Welsh queen.

In a Welsh context, primary consideration needs to be given to the differences in the status of the married and unmarried consort, or royal concubine. The names of some concubines are remembered because of their positions as mothers and can be found in genealogies in the sources. This suggests concubines enjoyed status because of their connections to rulers, not so much as consorts, but as mothers. Nevertheless, the sources advocate that the queen was the *gwraig briod*, whether she was a mother or not. This is apparent in the twelfth century *Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, the *Brutiau*, and *Achau Brenhinoedd a Thywysogyon Cymru*. As the ruler's wife, the queen had a much more elevated status than the royal concubine and/or mother of the king's first born child.

There is no sense of continuity in the terms used to identify the royal consorts of Wales, which makes assessing the overall status of the Welsh queen challenging. However, it appears that regardless of the title or style used, the wives of Welsh rulers enjoyed a status commonly appropriated to the medieval queen, one that was, in the least, concomitant with that of her husband's. Joan is the only woman afforded the title and status of 'Lady of Wales' in any of the historical sources, which may say just as much about her undertakings and responsibilities as the holder of the office of the Welsh 'queen' as it does about her own personal identity and perhaps even personality. Angharad was clearly revered as a queen by her husband's biographer, but does this give us licence to assume that her contemporaries viewed her in the same light? Assessing the roles attributed to these women, and the extent

to which these correspond with the roles of queens elsewhere helps highlight to what extent ruler's wives were considered 'queenly'. The responsibilities of the queen who had her own seal, rode on circuit and was generous in hospitality, especially in terms of the poor, were conventional across western Europe. The lack of the use of title 'queen' in Welsh sources does not negate the status of the ruler's wife. Perceptions of the sources suggest that contemporaries considered her status to be pre-eminent and that there were expectations of office.

The titles associated with the royal women of Gwynedd certainly offer suggestions as to contemporary perceptions of their collective status and importance. Often, the context in which titles and lifecycles are used further strengthens the focus of the source, highlights the position and status of power of the male ruler. Moreover, the ways in which they are used in these sources demonstrates that contemporary opinions of women in such powerful roles were gender specific. Examples of female activities and even demonstrations of female agency and power, especially seen in the examples of Angharad and Joan, were associated, and we could argue even dominated by their lifecycle stages. This is discussed in depth in the following chapter.

The cyclic nature of customs influencing reality and reality influencing customs has shown that throughout Europe the office of the queen became comparatively institutionalized.<sup>329</sup> The inescapable relationship between the personal and political made it possible for women, in reality, to exercise more visible forms of agency than are found in formal political treatises that discuss the intricacies of court administrations, governance and the duties associated with royal offices, which often exclude direct commentary on the ubiquitous roles of the queen.<sup>330</sup> Medieval sources, like those of Wales, are often centred upon family politics, the royal household and issues of inheritance. It is within these perspectives that queens appear and that help to assess the status of an integral member of the royal family whose position fluctuates from being centre-stage to inconsequential to one of complete anonymity.<sup>331</sup> Consequently, a combined analysis of the symbolic readings of queenship and associated status with examples of social realities and political situations is central to appreciating the status of the married woman within

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<sup>329</sup> Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 184.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. 182.

<sup>331</sup> Stafford, 'The King's Wife', p. 6; ead., 'Queen and Queenship', p. 462.

the Welsh court and twelfth and thirteenth-century society.<sup>332</sup> The authority of many queens depended on their positions as the kings' wives and the extent to which their husbands valued their political contributions.<sup>333</sup> Thus, the office of queenship was 'an idea that took its relative meaning from the particular context in which it was enacted'.<sup>334</sup> This will now be explored in Chapter 4 that assesses queenship in practice.

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<sup>332</sup> Stafford, 'Queen and Queenship', p. 462.

<sup>333</sup> Klein, *Ruling Women*, p. 11.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* 10; Stafford, 'Queen and Queenship', p. 472.

# CHAPTER 4

## *WELSH QUEENSHIP AND POLITICAL AGENCY*

### *INTRODUCTION*

It has been shown that the expectations of medieval queenship in Western Europe were loosely defined and the office of the queen was institutionally weak. Queenship was, for most purposes, an ‘intensely personal’ concept.<sup>1</sup> The wielding of female power was characterised by circumstance and relationship. Making allowances for the different choices and opportunities faced by different individuals and their effects on specific situations has led some scholars to emphasise the value of the queen as a passive contributor to events, rather than as an active and direct participant.<sup>2</sup> Impressions of the medieval queen as the ‘passive female’ have been exacerbated by the fact that they were more often than not outsiders, married into foreign establishments. This may have worked to further marginalise expectations of their public presence and contributions to medieval politics.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, however, scholars have demonstrated that queens were able to exercise significant informal forms of authority defined by expectations and activities associated with their lifecycle stages. It has been shown that the continually changing political and social climate of the Middle Ages provided queens, as wives and mothers, with flexible outlets to effectively exercise power through relationships, in spite of the rigidity of ideological constructs that seemingly suppressed female agency.<sup>4</sup> A focus on relationships works to illuminate the types of power and authority queens enjoyed in practice. Women’s access to power was linked to kinship relationships and social interactions, allowing them to create and

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson, ‘Medieval Queenship’, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> P. Strohm, *Hochon’s Arrow: the Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, ‘Medieval Queenship’, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> L.E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage and Politics in England, 1225–1350* (New York, 2003), p. 125. A good, early example is the Anglo-Saxon queen, Emma, who acquired power (and faced limitations) through her relationships with the official body of the king and her participation in family politics (not to be defined as ‘private politics’). Through her lifecycle stage as a wife and her public persona as the queen-consort, Emma enjoyed a status and authority that was closely associated with what can be defined as an office of queenship. Stafford, ‘Powers of the Queen’, p. 10.

nourish connections that were politically important to their families.<sup>5</sup> A series of familial and extra-marital networks presented queens with access to the political (male) decision makers, maximising the potential for them to extend their influences beyond the so-called domestic sphere.<sup>6</sup> The queen was particularly well placed to take advantage of her nearness to the king (*königsnähe*) to express both influence and power. Since women's activities largely overlapped with their social movements,<sup>7</sup> it comes as no surprise that the exercise of female political agency was linked to an individual's social status and lifecycle position. Personal relationships were the foundation of strengths and weaknesses for many queens.<sup>8</sup>

To generalise about medieval queenship in a Welsh context is difficult. Normative literary sources bestow a pre-eminent status upon the queen and provide clues as to the types of agency a royal consort may have exercised. As was shown in the previous chapter, it seems as if native expectations concerning hospitality and the queen's gendered position as the king's wife were important to establishing her overall status.<sup>9</sup> Symbolic images found in Welsh literature were not the only means used to characterize queenship. The accounts of the actions of real women were also evocative in conveying expectations and establishing acceptable parameters of queenly agency. Yet native historical sources remain exceptionally restrained concerning the activities and even the movements of Welsh queens.<sup>10</sup> The roles and functions of the wives of rulers are largely absent from native chronicles, political histories and court poetry,<sup>11</sup> as are recorded instances in which married women used their powers of influence to help strengthen political careers.<sup>12</sup> Such absences make it very difficult to establish how far norms were reflected in practice.

In order to come to a better understanding of the natural relationship between norms and practice and their effect on the overall status and perceptions of the Welsh

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<sup>5</sup> For a comparison of clerics in late-twelfth-century Capetian France who used networking and the creation of personal groups to effect power see W. Ysebaert, 'The Power of Personal Networks: Clerics as Political Actors in the Conflict between Capetian France and the County of Flanders during the Last Decade of the Twelfth Century', in B.M. Bolton and C.E. Meek (eds), *Aspects of Power and Authority in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 165-83.

<sup>6</sup> B.A. Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, p. 189.

<sup>7</sup> J. Ward, *Women in England in the Middle Ages* (London, 2006), p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; Stafford, 'Powers of the Queen', p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> This is also suggested by the lawyers of Gwynedd whose views on the proper role of the queen can be interpreted in the Iorwerth redaction.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chapter 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor', p. 188.

queen, it is important to investigate the existing documented activities of the women who found themselves in this position. Establishing their public roles and responsibilities helps to determine whether these were based on customary expectations of office or on a more impromptu basis when circumstances arose.<sup>13</sup> In this light, surviving evidence from thirteenth-century Gwynedd dominates. In fact, very little detail on the practice of ‘queenship’ in the principalities of Powys and Deheubarth and how the wives of rulers interacted on the political stage can be found. This is also true of the lesser principalities.

Gerald of Wales tells us of Gwenllïan ferch Gruffudd ap Cynan who died in battle at Cydweli in 1136,<sup>14</sup> whilst the Welsh chronicles provide an elaborate narrative on the abduction of the outspoken, quick thinking Nest in 1106=1109.<sup>15</sup> The most information concerns Gwenllïan, the wife of the Lord Rhys. Gerald tells us that she exercised her ‘womanly charms’ and stopped her husband from going on Crusade.<sup>16</sup> According to Gerald, Gwenllïan’s influence denied the Lord Rhys the opportunity to follow the path of righteousness, taking possession of his manhood in doing so.<sup>17</sup> This commentary alludes to uxorial agency being expressed in a public and arguably political forum, where the opinions of women were voiced and perhaps listened to.<sup>18</sup> Gwenllïan also appears in two surviving *acta* of the Lord Rhys, consenting to grants of land made to Strata Florida Abbey. They suggest that as Rhys’s wife and ‘queen’ she had some form of joint control over significant lands in the principality of Deheubarth.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, these acts of patronage are the only surviving examples of Welsh ‘queenship’ in practice relating directly to the administration of a dynastic lordship within native Wales. As such, it may be the Welsh queen was more economically active than previously understood.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Tanner, ‘Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc?’, p. 133.

<sup>14</sup> Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 79; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7.

<sup>16</sup> Gir. Camb., *Op.*, vi, p. 20; Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Gwenllïan and Rhys are additionally castigated for their incestuous union (related by the fourth degree).

<sup>18</sup> ‘The implication is clear: a great prince like Rhys would be stronger, wiser, more virile, and more holy if he ignored the opinions of women and prevented their involvement in society’. O’Loughlin, ‘Sexual Agenda’, pp. 7-8.

<sup>19</sup> Possibly as a portion of her dower. For a full discussion, see Chapter 5, pp. 257-8.

<sup>20</sup> Although not a ‘queen’, Hawise Lestrangle, wife of Gruffudd ap Gweynwyn of Powys, is believed to have been involved in the 1274 plot against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. A letter from the dean and chapter of Bangor to Archbishop Robert of Canterbury dated 18 August 1276 makes references to Owain ap Gruffudd’s mother (*mater sua*) keeping documents that recorded agreements made by the conspirators amongst themselves in her own chest at Welshpool castle (*in quadam cista sua*). *Littere Wallie*, ed. J.G. Edwards, p. 137. Emma Cavell has recently assessed the key role that Hawise and



The underlying focus of this chapter is on three specific case studies from Gwynedd across the thirteenth century: Joan of England, Senana, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and Eleanor de Montfort. That these women appear in records whilst their contemporaries and predecessors do not suggests that they played important roles associated with ideals and expectations of Welsh ‘queenship’, or at least how it was perceived by some rulers of Gwynedd. The deliberate employment of the term ‘queen’ is used to refer specifically to a royal wife, a woman married to an especially important ruler. Further, the word is applied to these three married women whose pre-eminence in Welsh society was comparable to that of queens in other countries. Their documented activities clearly indicate that their positions and status surpassed all others in rank and authority within their social sphere. Thus, the use of the title of ‘queen’ in this chapter is an analytical concept based on roles and does not necessarily imply that the women were seen as queens or saw themselves as following a tradition of Welsh queenship.

Although none of these women are called ‘queen’ in the sources and the title (or lack of such) used is significant, this does not preclude us from regarding these women as enjoying a distinctive queenly status that made them different from other noblewomen in Wales.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, some of their pre-thirteenth-century predecessors such as Angharad, wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Gwenllïan, wife of Gruffudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth and Nest, wife of Gerald of Wales, are all historical figures of distinguished Welsh royal status who are attributed with varying degrees of uxorial agency<sup>22</sup> and in the case of Angharad who is explicitly referred to in the Welsh version of *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* as ‘queen’ (*Angharat vrenhines*), to be sure, agency and traits associated with Welsh ideals of queenship.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to determine how far these women and others were viewed as ‘queenly’ precursors to the case studies this chapter. However, it is important to remember that the Welsh version of the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, and the lawbooks, were composed in the

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other Marcher baronial wives played in the conquest of Wales, arguing the conquest cannot be fully understood without consideration of women’s contributions to events. Ead., ‘Intelligence and Intrigue in the March of Wales’. Hawise’s alleged connection to the 1274 plot provides further evidence of how directly some women were involved in very politically volatile situations. Also see Chapter 5 for Hawise’s economic agency, pp. 268-9, 288.

<sup>21</sup> This concept is similar to replacement of *rex* by *princeps* in princely styles in documentary and narrative sources that did not necessarily mean a denial of royal status, as exemplified by (conservative?) thirteenth-century lawyers who continued to use *brenhin* / *rex*. See Andrews, ‘Nomenclature of Kingship in Welsh Court Poetry’, Part I and II.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Chapter 2, p. 102-04, 122; Chapter 5, pp. 257-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 88-91; *HGK*, p. 32.

early thirteenth century, during the reigns of Joan and Llywelyn.<sup>24</sup> Equally, estimating just how far Joan, Senana and Eleanor were aware of native traditions of queenship in Wales is based on speculation as no evidence survives to indicate that they were educated in the cultural expectations of the Welsh court. However, referring back to native traditions associated with queenship discussed in the previous chapter, and taking into consideration the general development of uxorial agency, helps explain the extent to which these women were likely aware of native ‘queenship’ and their expected uxorial roles.

This chapter begins with an assessment of the roles of the ‘queen’ as an advisor or counsellor, intercessor and petitioner. Such a position indicates that uxorial status and kinship connections were key to the achievements and exercise of agency for these women, as were the political situations that necessitated their intervention. By applying and adapting existing interpretations developed by previous scholars who have looked at medieval monarchy as a gendered concept, coupled with the understanding that public roles for women were influenced and often dictated by personal (political) relationships, Welsh evidence reveals an intrinsic, and complementary, link between the roles and duties of some rulers with those of their wives.<sup>25</sup> This is highlighted by the subsequent, chronological, individual analyses of the three case studies, which makes up the greatest part of this chapter.

Although the women from the Venedotian court at the centre of discussion of Welsh ‘queenship’ in practice is dictated solely by the survival of records, an attempt to fill the gap concerning the practice of ‘queenship’ and an overall understanding of how women were educated in cultural expectations of ‘queenship’ within the Welsh courts, is carried out by highlighting generational and familial connections of women between the three main princely dynasties of Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth. This helps to distinguish whether or not the experiences of Joan, Senana and Eleanor can be viewed as being representative of ‘queenship’ in native Wales generally or atypical.

The aim of this chapter is two-fold: one) to assess what documentary sources reveal about relationships and expectations of the royal uxorial lifecycle and how far these contributed to the Welsh ‘queen’s’ political agency; and two) how far the

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<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 41-4, 57-8.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Owens, ‘Noblewomen and Political Activity’, p. 213.

uxorial influences of the ‘queen’ helped to legitimise Welsh polity (i.e. the concept of a distinctive Welsh political sphere) before 1282. The practice of Welsh ‘queenship’ has never been studied and this chapter is an important addition to scholarship helping to highlight the political importance of the queen in Wales and analyse her significance. Welsh norms suggest that the idealised role of the ‘queen’ broadly corresponded to those elsewhere in medieval Europe. To an extent, specific examples documenting the activities of the women found in records reveal how far norms were followed in practice. They also indicate how far norms and practices were distinctively Welsh and how far they reflected a wider, highly varied, European pattern. Furthermore, they allow for a better understanding of the gender roles and uxorial lifecycles of Welsh ‘queens’ and the types of agency they employed. Such an assessment highlights the effectiveness of women’s actions within the context of Anglo-Welsh relations and helps define the parameters of female activities and political careers in a particularly male dominated environment.<sup>26</sup>

### ***COUNSELLORS AND ADVISORS***

In late medieval England it has been shown that in terms of policy and politics, a seigniorial council, if chosen wisely by a lord who often involved kinsmen and supporters, could become an impressive and influential political weapon.<sup>27</sup> Rulers often chose counsellors based on their social status and connections, knowledge and experience, all of which could be exploited for maximum benefit, especially in situations in which tact and discretion were required.<sup>28</sup> Counsellors were crucial components of the extended governmental machine whose advisory roles often behind the scenes, rather than in an executive capacity, influenced the wider gamut of local and international politics.<sup>29</sup>

It was not uncommon for members of a king’s council<sup>30</sup> familiar with the affairs of the realm to be sent on diplomatic missions in search of political partnerships or to partake in the drawing up and finalising of treaties.<sup>31</sup> The royal ambassador was the most formal type of diplomatic agent, one who was bestowed

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 125.

<sup>27</sup> C. Rawcliffe and S. Flower, ‘English Noblemen and their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages’, *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (April 1986), pp. 157, 159.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 172.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 167, 175.

<sup>30</sup> Usually a person of the higher nobility or a (higher) clergyman.

<sup>31</sup> G.P. Cuttino, *English Diplomatic Administration, 1259–1339* (Oxford, 1940), pp. 87, 90.

with the powers to represent king and country.<sup>32</sup> Pierre Chaplais has discussed how rulers only entrusted significant and highly secretive messages to envoys who had proven both their loyalty and prudence over time to avoid any risks of indiscretion or treachery. For extremely sensitive and confidential messages many envoys were immediate members of the king's entourage, often from the royal household (*familia*).<sup>33</sup>

The role of the queen and wife as counsellor, advisor, negotiator and intermediary is found in many European examples spanning from eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England to fifteenth-century Portugal.<sup>34</sup> Michael Enright has argued that the medieval motif of 'the lady with the mead cup' encompassed a much more prominent and loosely defined set of responsibilities for royal women as was seen in early Germanic society. Enright reasons that the term 'weaver of peace' alludes to a much broader range of functions that royal women played beyond the traditionally understood role as the bearer of drink, gifts and 'words of praise'.<sup>35</sup> As the natural link between families, communities and countries, the queen's role was hardly a passive one; as counsellor, diplomat and 'peaceweaver' she was crucial to the formulation of bonds between a lord, his followers, his warband and his alleged

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>33</sup> P. Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London, 2003), pp. 164-5, 167.

<sup>34</sup> Some famous examples from the twelfth century onwards include [Empress] Matilda of England (1102–1167) whose first husband, the Holy Roman emperor Henry V (d. 1125), described her and even addressed her as his 'helper' and pleaded with her to continue her helpfulness and assistance at his court whilst they were married. Contemporaries recognised the value in Matilda's power of influence over her husband and it appears that Matilda herself recognised the extent of the powers of influence she was able to wield if she was successful in using her position as the king's wife to intercede in decisions made by her husband. Other examples include, Matilda (c. 1103–1152), the wife of England's King Stephen (c. 1092–1154), who participated in the administration of royal affairs during the civil war of the twelfth century, persuading her husband to make peace and later acting as his representative at a peace conference. Later in the Middle Ages, in the fifteenth century, Isabella of Portugal (1392–1471), duchess of Burgundy parleyed for peace on behalf of her husband, Philip the Good (1396–1467). There are also two examples from fifteenth-century England in which Anne Neville (1456–1485), duchess of Buckingham, and queen Margaret of Anjou (1430–1482) negotiated terms over control of the city of London. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos', in *Power of the Weak*, pp. 127, 135; Tanner, 'Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc?', pp. 139, 142; Owen, 'Noblewomen and Political Activity', p. 214; A. Rabin, 'Female Advocacy and Royal Protection in Tenth-Century England: The Legal Career of Queen Ælfthryth', *Speculum*, 84 (2009), pp. 261-88; M. VanLandingham, 'Royal Portraits: Representations of Queenship in the Thirteenth-Century Catalan Chronicles', in *Queenship and Political Power*, pp. 109-19.

<sup>35</sup> M. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tene to the Viking Age* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 21-22. Also see L. Eshleman, 'Weavers of Peace, Weavers of War', in D. Wolfthal (ed.), *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Turnhout, 2000), p. 18.

enemies.<sup>36</sup> Much of the medieval queen's political and public power was dependent upon her intimate proximity to the king and his court.<sup>37</sup> This position ensured the value of wives as allies and their positions as advisors, intercessors, envoys, petitioners and advocates for the oppressed.<sup>38</sup>

It appears that 'counselling the prince in thirteenth-century Wales was ... a many-sided affair'.<sup>39</sup> The ministerial structure of the Venedotian courts in north Wales, with the prince at the centre, was not only very adaptable, but was regularly tailored to meet the needs of political requirement and circumstance.<sup>40</sup> The thirteenth-century princes of Gwynedd had a retinue of officials who made up what has been identified as a 'working council'. The structure of the council itself was not clearly defined, nor does it seem that members were formally distinguished by their titles, such as 'magnate' or 'official'.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, native sources reveal that the rulers of Gwynedd took counsel (referring specifically to a prince's council), which David Stephenson says strongly suggests 'that the tradition of counsel had crystallized into some institutional form by the thirteenth century'.<sup>42</sup>

Documentation pertaining to the members of the prince's *curia* suggests that they performed official duties based on their individual capacities and talents. This impression, however, comes with the caveat that the limited survival of records associated with these roles may not correctly reflect the true nature of activities and

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<sup>36</sup> Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup*, pp. 34-5. Enright contends that social occasions themselves, such as feast times, offered a forum in which negotiation and a settling of differences could be reached. Ibid. 19-22.

<sup>37</sup> In the case of Eleanor (d. 1244), daughter of Alfonso VIII of Castile (1155–1214) and Eleanor of England (1162–1214), who was queen consort to Jaume of Aragon (d. 1276) and his foremost trusted advisor, a rare example survives of a king's own attitude towards his wife and his expectations of queenly duty. In his autobiography, *Llibre dels feits*, Jaume portrays his wife as his chief and most trustworthy counsellor who understands both the political and military contexts of his circumstances and is the one he depends on to unreservedly support his political goals. The stressed importance of the queen's indirect authority as a counsellor and helper to the king emphasised in Jaume's *Llibre* highlights the wife's role as a mediator or intercessor as a necessity to the stability and maintenance of power. Nonetheless, it is a role determined and controlled by the needs of the king, based on his judgement. Eleanor's intercessory role is situated against the gendered framework of the woman's responsibility as a safe-guarder of her family's wellbeing; her function as the peaceful protector helped to redefine the role of the family as a whole. Saying that, it is clear that Eleanor represents the model of queenship where the role of the queen is as 'a reliable political associate rather than merely a childbearer'. T. Earenfight, *The King's Other Body: Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp. 131-8, 144; VanLandingham, 'Royal Portraits', pp. 110, 116-7.

<sup>38</sup> Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen', p. 126.

<sup>39</sup> K. Hurlock, 'Counselling the Princes: Advice and Counsel in Thirteenth-Century Welsh Society', *History*, 34 (2009), p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 9, 24; Hurlock, 'Counselling the Princes', p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Stephenson, *Governance*, pp. 6-7; Hurlock, 'Counselling the Princes', p. 29.

types of service associated with the prince.<sup>43</sup> In fact, it is important to consider the possibility that the ‘queen’s’ notable absence from the lists of counsellors was precisely because her position as an intimate counsellor to her husband, the prince, was both assumed and expected. The fifteenth-century Blegywryd version of the Legal Triads state: ‘The three private meetings the king is entitled to have without his justice: with his priest, and with his wife, and with his mediciner’.<sup>44</sup> Although on the surface, these private meetings seem to pertain to interests of a personal nature, it should be considered that this may also pertain to the wife’s position as counsellor.

The Laws of the Court name the *distain* as the chief advisor in the king’s court and evidence of practice endorses that this was general convention.<sup>45</sup> The *disteiniaid* in Gwynedd enjoyed a prestigious position in the courts of the princes and had a variety of official responsibilities.<sup>46</sup> As the administration of the courts of Gwynedd was complex and ‘almost wholly non-departmentalized’, it was essential that princely advisors and counsellors remained both knowledgeable and versatile in their approaches to government polity.<sup>47</sup> Kathryn Hurlock has recently argued that as the powers of the rulers of Gwynedd increased throughout the course of the thirteenth century, the modes of political counsel sought by them evolved from a confederacy made of up Welsh princes to a more distinct assemblage of hand-picked counsellors originating from the princes’ own lands and households. Traditional methods concerning the advice provided by the *disteiniaid* and, more publicly, by the court poets were upheld, but were combined with an approach more akin to European methods involving leading magnates and prelates.<sup>48</sup> Some leading Welsh rulers adopted customs established in Europe as a means of creating connections (often with the Anglo-French), enhancing their status within Wales and achieving objectives set by native polity. The assimilation of foreign cultural ideals and practices was often managed through marital contracts, trade and diplomatic negotiations.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Hurlock, ‘Counselling the Princes’, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> *Tri chyfr6ch dirgel a dily y brenhin y gaffel heb y ygnat: gyt a’e offeirat, a chyt a’e breic, a chyt a’e uedic. Legal Triads*, pp. 138-9.

<sup>45</sup> Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, pp. 207-08.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 24-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

<sup>48</sup> See Hurlock, ‘Counselling the Princes’.

<sup>49</sup> Pryce, ‘Welsh Rulers and European Change’, pp. 40, 45.

Although there is scant evidence available in which to identify counsellors and servants of the Gwynedd courts, David Stephenson has argued that the objectives of the princes in the thirteenth century required that they establish a position within the wider framework of European polities. This necessitated the ‘careful management’ of choosing a counsellor and envoy whose talents and skills matched the requirements of diplomatic missions and whose qualifications reflected the prominent status of the prince.<sup>50</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that Joan’s name does not appear in the lists used by Stephenson to identify counsellors and the significance of such an absence may, indeed, indicate a general view amongst the prince’s ministerial elite that such a responsibility was not one to be undertaken by a woman.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, it is also likely that her name does not appear because her position as an advisor was well known. However, there are some very prominent examples of influential ‘queen’ consorts directly involved in Welsh polity who, as Stephenson rightly points out ‘cannot be dismissed as exceptions to a general rule of passivity amongst the consorts of Welsh rulers’.<sup>52</sup> The services of Joan, Senana and Eleanor were employed in situations when their status as ‘queens’ and positions as ruler’s wives far outweighed those of the other members of the Venedotian ministerial elite and the absence of the ‘queen’ in the list of counsellors may be that her position as a counsellor and advisor was assumed and expected.

## ***JOAN OF ENGLAND***

Joan of England is the principal figure who dominates any discussion of Welsh ‘queenship’ for many reasons. As the illegitimate daughter of King John, half-sister of Henry III and the wife of one of the leading rulers of medieval Wales she played an integral role in thirteenth-century Anglo-Welsh relations. Her marriage to Llywelyn ap Iorwerth was a political manoeuvre that presented her with opportunities to be an active, and at times crucial, participant in tempering affairs. J. E. Lloyd concludes that Llywelyn ‘had one emissary whose diplomatic services far outran those of the seneschal and who helped him in this capacity for the greater part

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<sup>50</sup> Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, p. 193; see Appendices, pp. 205-88.

<sup>51</sup> In comparison, surviving evidence from thirteenth-century Scotland provides no indication that the role of the queen as an advisor or counsellor was one that was firmly established. J. Nelson, ‘Scottish Queenship in the Thirteenth Century’, in *Thirteenth-Century England XI, Proceedings of the Gregynog Conference 2005* (Woodbridge, 2009) p. 71 and n. 76.

<sup>52</sup> Stephenson, ‘Laws of the Court’, pp. 401-02.

of his reign. To the assistance of his wife Joan, both as advocate and counsellor, there can be no doubt he was much indebted'.<sup>53</sup> This is a consensus amongst most historians who have long recognised Joan's place in Welsh history, but until the recent assessments by Louise Wilkinson and Gwyneth Richards, have not focused on her specifically.<sup>54</sup>

Joan's career lasted almost thirty years, and comparatively speaking, is quite well documented in English chancery records, suggesting that she enjoyed the highest of statuses in comparison to any of her successors or Welsh contemporaries. Welsh and English sources intimate that Joan's activities as 'queen' were tied to her position as a member of the Angevin dynasty and as the wife of the ruler of Gwynedd.<sup>55</sup> The overlap of cultures that Joan was exposed to, her own personality, those of her male relatives — and possibly even attitudes of Welsh lawyers who revised customs and laws concerning 'kingship' and by extension, 'queenship' — defined the degrees of her 'queenly' influence. They may have defined the ways in which she conducted her own unique practice of Welsh 'queenship'.<sup>56</sup> It is possible that she was exceptional and that evidence relating to her activities does not necessarily reflect Welsh 'queenship' in practice *per se*. Nevertheless, examples of her agency help pinpoint some genuine activities associated with a ruler's wife and how these were viewed by contemporaries. This discussion, which helps elucidate a model of Welsh 'queenship' in practice, focuses on the broad sequence of events in which Joan participated, according to her appearance in sources.

Joan was the only known illegitimate daughter of King John by a woman identified by the Tewkesbury annals as 'queen Clemencia' (*reginae*), though it is unknown who this woman was.<sup>57</sup> Nothing is known of her childhood, but it appears that in 1203 she sailed from Normandy to England at the expense of the king.<sup>58</sup> Her journey may have been a result of her father's desire to marry her to Llywelyn to

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<sup>53</sup> *HW*, ii, p. 685.

<sup>54</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan'; Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 127-38.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Parsons, 'Family, Sex and Power', pp. 2-9.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Earenfight, *King's Other Body*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>57</sup> *AnnTewk*, p. 101. Wilkinson notes that this is an erroneous style used by the author revealing his uncertainty of Joan's maternal line. Ead, 'Joan, Wife of Llywelyn the Great', p. 82, n. 6. C. Given-Wilson and A. Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London, 1984), pp. 127-31. For Joan's position as an illegitimate daughter in the *familia regis* see D.R. Messer, 'Medieval Monarchs, Female Illegitimacy and Modern Genealogical Matters: Part II: Joan of England, c. 1190-1237', *Foundations*, 1/4 (July 2004), pp. 294-8.

<sup>58</sup> *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae sub Regibus Angliae*, ed. T. Stapleton, 2 vols (London, 1840-4), ii, p. 569.



establish a more permanent alliance between Gwynedd and England.<sup>59</sup> Previously to this, Llywelyn was in negotiations to wed a daughter of Reginald, the king of Man (d. 1229). Apparently, this unnamed woman had wed, or was at least betrothed to, Llywelyn's uncle, Rhodri. In April 1203, Llywelyn received a papal dispensation for the marriage, but withdrew his request in February 1205 probably due to the more advantageous prospect of marrying a daughter of the king of England.<sup>60</sup> Royal letters close state that Joan and Llywelyn were betrothed in 1204.<sup>61</sup> The Chester annals say that it took place that same year, but the Worcester annals state it as 1206.<sup>62</sup> It seems most likely that they were married in 1205 for in March of that year the manor of Ellesmere was formally given as a marriage portion.<sup>63</sup>

The relationship between Gwynedd and England rapidly deteriorated within five years of Joan's marriage to Llywelyn.<sup>64</sup> After a series of disputes, Llywelyn proved himself an unremitting opponent to the Welsh policies of the English government. His expansionist ambitions provoked the king into a demonstration of power. Of the two royal campaigns made in May and August 1211, the latter was successful.<sup>65</sup> John wielded a display of political skills that isolated Llywelyn from almost all other native Welsh rulers.<sup>66</sup> As a result, the prince of Gwynedd was forced to capitulate, submitting to the English king as overlord.<sup>67</sup> This is the first recorded episode of Joan's role as a political mediary.

Version C of the *Annales Cambriae* relays an account of the events in which Joan appears, if only by name and by her connections to Llywelyn and John (*Annam*

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<sup>59</sup> Relations were initiated in 1201 in the first written agreement between a Welsh ruler and the English Crown. Wilkinson, 'Joan', pp. 82-3; I.W. Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', in S.D. Church (ed.), *King John: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 278-9; id., 'The 1201 Peace between King John and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth', *Studia Celtica*, 34 (2000), pp. 149-66; Turvey, *The Welsh Princes*, p. 87.

<sup>60</sup> Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, pp. 264-70; *The Letters of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) Concerning England and Wales: A Calendar with an Appendix of Texts*, (eds) C.R. Cheney and M.G. Cheney (Oxford, 1967), nos. 168, 469, 600; *HW*, ii, p. 616; Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 84-5; Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati A.D. 1204-A.D. 1227*, ed. T.D. Hardy, 2 vols (Record Commission, London, 1832-44), i, pp. 12, 226.

<sup>62</sup> *AnnCestr*, pp. 48-9; 'Annales Prioratus de Wigornia', in *AM*, iv, p. 394.

<sup>63</sup> *Rot. Claus.*, i, p. 23; *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati A.D. 1199-A.D. 1216*, ed. T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, London, 1837), i, p. 147.

<sup>64</sup> See Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 292-97; *HW*, ii, pp. 631-40.

<sup>65</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 295.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 295.

<sup>67</sup> *AWR*, no. 233, pp. 386-8; *BS*, pp. 204-05; *BT*, *Pen20*, pp. 156-7; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 85; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 190-3. See J.B. Smith, 'Magna Carta and the Charters of the Welsh Princes', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 344-62.

*filiam suam in uxorem dederat*).<sup>68</sup> The entry reveals nothing of her mediation and it is uncertain if *Annam* is an error for *Joannam*. What it does reveal through the use of her lifecycles is the well-placed status that her position as daughter and wife afforded both sides. Evidence concerning Joan's predecessor, Emma of Anjou, suggests that she was 'a prominent and influential consort in a Welsh polity'; that her own status and position as a member of the Angevin dynasty and wife of a Welsh ruler was valued by both her husband, Dafydd ab Owain and half-brother Henry II.<sup>69</sup>

The *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* offer a more informative account of Joan's involvement, reporting that she was sent as a political envoy to parley for peace:

And then Llywelyn, being unable to suffer the king's rage, sent his wife, the king's daughter, to him by the counsel of his leading men to seek to make peace with the king on whatever terms he could. And after Llywelyn had accepted safe conduct to go to the king and to come away from him free, he went to the king and was reconciled to him on condition of his giving the king hostages from amongst the leading men of the land, and of his binding himself to give the king twenty thousand cattle and forty steeds.<sup>70</sup>

This entry does not state that Joan was successful in her mission, but the king did grant Llywelyn safe conduct and allowed him to maintain his freedom. Kathryn Hurlock suggests that this entry stresses the decision-making process of the prince's ministerial elite and attributes the success of her mission to both Llywelyn and his advisors.<sup>71</sup> While this may be true, given the traditional role of the queen consort as a counsellor of peace, coupled with examples of Welsh queens portrayed as advisors found in normative Welsh sources already discussed, it is likely that Joan was directly involved in counselling Llywelyn as one of his leading advisors in this particular instance.

It appears that Joan may have been present at the grant, though as there is no mention of her participation.<sup>72</sup> However, as a royal consort whose role it was to act as an official intermediary, it is worth considering the terms negotiated and the

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<sup>68</sup> The *Annales Cambriae* state that twice John led an army to Wales and upon the second invasion, Llywelyn retreated to the mountains for protection. The conflict was resolved with the king withdrawing after receiving a handsome payment of costs on behalf of Llywelyn. *AC*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>69</sup> Stephenson, 'Laws of the Court', p. 402.

<sup>70</sup> *BS*, pp. 204-05; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 156-7; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 85; *BT, RBH*, pp. 190-3.

<sup>71</sup> Hurlock, 'Counselling the Prince', p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> No witnesses are recorded, but the final clause does name the men on John's side, who placed their seals on the document along with Llywelyn's seal.

possibility that some may have been initiated by her. It is most likely that Joan was pregnant with her first born, Dafydd, during the summer of 1211.<sup>73</sup> This factor alone may have played a part in Llywelyn's acquiescence to the harsh terms outlined.<sup>74</sup> The prince was forced to concede that if he died without any legitimate heirs by Joan, all of his lands would escheat to the English crown<sup>75</sup> — thus denying his first-born but illegitimate son, Gruffudd, his patrimony.<sup>76</sup>

It is important to question how far Joan may have tried to influence such a directive. Wilkinson rightly contends that in spite of the lack of evidence it is probable that she was directly involved in ensuring her son's future as Llywelyn's legitimate heir.<sup>77</sup> This is especially pertinent given that Joan may have been pregnant before the treaty was agreed. Although as far as can be told, it was very much Llywelyn's own aspiring policy that a son by Joan be deemed his successor, it may be that she provided impetus for Llywelyn's plans of succession. In some ways the terms favoured Joan: her stepson, Gruffudd, was effectively sidelined because of her newly emphasised role of producing a male heir. Moreover, Joan's position within the Angevin court, namely her status as a royal daughter, surely allowed Llywelyn more intimate access to the workings and policies of the English court. It is possible that this connection further enhanced Llywelyn's awareness of the strategies needed to ensure the success of his reign and secure the future of his successors. By agreeing to adhere to changes in customary practices regarding Welsh succession, Llywelyn began to drive the management of Gwynedd more in line with established European traditions. This move essentially elevated Gwynedd's status over other Welsh kingdoms through the adoption of primogeniture. It is possible that the Lord Rhys set a precedent for this, wanting his eldest legitimate son by Gwenllian to succeed him and not his eldest illegitimate son.

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<sup>73</sup> D. Stephenson and C. Owen Jones, 'The Date and Context of the Birth of Dafydd II Ap Llywelyn', *Flintshire Historical Journal*, 29 (2012), pp. 29-30, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 85. The document is in the form of a charter issued by Llywelyn, who made concessions as the weaker party, in contrast to a bipartite chirograph or exchange of letters patent later in the thirteenth century, which at least gave the impression of equality between parties. cf. *AWR*, no. 236, p. 393.

<sup>75</sup> Including those he had recently obtained through his own campaigns in Wales.

<sup>76</sup> *Faciam etiam habere domino meo regi ligantias omnium hominum meorum de quibus voluerit, et liberabo ei filium meum Griffinu(m) tenendum semper et ad faciendum inde voluntatem suam, ita quod si de filia domini regis uxore mea heredem non habuero, concedo ipsi domino meo regi tanquam heredi meo omnes terras meas tam illas quas retinui quam illas quas et dimisi preter terras quas ei placuerit dare eidem filio meo et meis.* *AWR*, no. 233, p. 387.

<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 87.

This, too, could have had implications on the types of political influence Gwenllïan may have exercised.<sup>78</sup>

It is obvious by the wording of this agreement that Joan's own position was defined by her gendered and social responsibilities. Even though Llywelyn is identified by his title *princeps Norwall(ie)*,<sup>79</sup> Joan is identified strictly by her lifecycle stages as the king's daughter and Llywelyn's wife.<sup>80</sup> These lifecycle identifiers seem to imply that as a daughter given in marriage she was the personification of the bonds of peace agreed upon between two rulers. Her position allowed her to move between the two courts primarily as her husband's representative. Nevertheless, her sole responsibility was to fulfil her social and gendered function by producing a legitimate heir to the house of Gwynedd. Wilkinson argues that this agreement 'had an important bearing on, and arguably elevated, the political significance of Joan's maternity', but it also brought into question Joan's own illegitimate status and its effects on the status of her family.<sup>81</sup>

After the birth of their son, Dafydd, probably in the spring of 1212,<sup>82</sup> Llywelyn took many vital steps to ensure that Joan's son was his accepted successor. The greatest example of this was in 1222 when Henry III, the archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton (c.1150–1228), and the papal legate Pandulf (d. 1226) approved a statute through which Dafydd was recognised as Llywelyn's legitimate heir at the expense of Gruffudd's customary rights.<sup>83</sup> Dafydd's blood relationship to the English crown via Joan is deliberately underscored, highlighting his formal status through his maternal line. This is further elucidated by the identification of Joan through her own gendered status as wife, mother and sister.<sup>84</sup> Llywelyn also petitioned Pope Honorius III (1216–1227) c. April × -26 May 1222 asking for confirmation of a statute he had previously issued declaring Dafydd's legitimacy. The statute proclaims that Dafydd, Llywelyn's son by his legitimate wife Joan, daughter of the late king of England (*David filius tuus quem ex Iohanna filia clare*

<sup>78</sup> Smith, 'Dynastic Succession', pp. 212-13.

<sup>79</sup> Similar to the entries in the *Annales Cambriae*, *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*.

<sup>80</sup> For Joan's titles see Chapter 3, pp. 170-4.

<sup>81</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 86.

<sup>82</sup> After 25 March. Stevenson and, 'Date and Context of the Birth of Dafydd II'.

<sup>83</sup> AWR, no. 253, pp. 414-16.

<sup>84</sup> ... *karissimum nepotem nostrum David, filium Lewelini principis Norwalliae, natum de Johanna uxore suâ, & sorore nostrâ* ... . *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae etc.*, ed. T. Rymer, 4 vols in 7 (revd edn, Record Commission, London, 181-69), I, i. 159. Also see AWR, pp. 415-16; Stephenson, *Governance of Gwynedd*, pp. 153-4; Smith, 'Dynastic Succession', pp. 218-19.

*memorie regis Anglie uxore tua legitima*), was to succeed the prince by hereditary right, Llywelyn having abolished the ‘detestable custom’ (*detestabilis consuetudo*) that recognised illegitimate children as heirs.<sup>85</sup> Dafydd’s claims to his father’s patrimony were further secured in 1226 when a petition for papal dispensation likely sent by Joan herself regarding her own illegitimate status was successful.<sup>86</sup>

The real reasons behind Joan’s request for legitimisation are unknown, yet we can speculate. The king of England offering his illegitimate daughter in royal marriage to the leading Welsh ruler was pointed, indeed. Joan’s illegitimate status was used by her father as a demonstration of power. Although the marriage was a diplomatic compliment that elevated Llywelyn’s status to an extent, Joan’s own illegitimacy further certified Llywelyn’s position as a vassal to the English crown.<sup>87</sup> By no means was he regarded an equal to his contemporaries such as Alexander II (1198–1249), king of Scotland, who married Joan’s legitimate half-sister, also named Joan (1210–1238).<sup>88</sup> Besides having to endure the label of ‘bastard’ and her likely desire to be more accepted and perhaps even better integrated amongst her non-Welsh social peers, Joan’s legitimisation further strengthened Dafydd’s claims to his patrimony and his position as Llywelyn’s rightful heir, initially set out in 1211. Joan’s legitimisation also likely reinforced her own status within the Plantagenet dynasty and Llywelyn’s.

It is difficult to estimate how far, or even if there was a change in the perception of Joan’s status amongst peers after legitimisation. As her newly acquired status undoubtedly enhanced those of her husband and her son, in all probability Joan also benefitted. The coupling of the legitimised authority of her husband and son with her newly defined position within the English royal family must have helped her achieve the unprecedented level of rank she did. Evidence of this is suggested in the set of achievements in Llywelyn’s own governing, which culminated in 1229 with Dafydd finally paying homage to the king of England as his successor and the change in Joan and Llywelyn’s official titles shortly afterwards.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> AWR, no. 253, pp. 414-16.

<sup>86</sup> *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, i. A.D. 1198–1304, ed. W.H. Bliss, 5 vols (London, 1893), i, p. 109; AWR, no. 279, pp. 446-7.

<sup>87</sup> Messer, ‘Medieval Monarchs, Female Illegitimacy’, p. 295.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. J. Nelson, ‘A Queen and her Sister: Joan, Wife of Alexander II of Scotland, and Sister of Henry III of England’, *Fine of the Month*, May 2011, Henry III Fine Rolls Project, <<http://finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-05-2011.html>>, accessed 3 June 2014.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 170-3.

Such a move leads to a number of questions concerning the long-term status of the Welsh ‘queen’ especially as the agreement 1211 lays emphasis on legitimate succession, by a child from a legal marital union: how did this change the overall significance and role of the Welsh ‘queen’ more generally, which was now emphasised by her gendered and social responsibility to become a mother? Would Joan or another woman of her position have retained an exclusive status if she became a widow or if she remained heirless? What would her role have been if Gwynedd had, in fact, escheated to the Crown? Although these questions are impossible to answer, they are important as they raise issues about the roles and status of the Welsh ‘queen’ based on gender assumptions and the expectations of married women in medieval Wales in general. They illuminate the responsibilities, status and position of a Welsh ‘queen’ as member of royal office, a wife and a mother as perceived by contemporaries.

Two English sources in particular emphasise her filial loyalties in the summer of 1212. Depicted as a key player in events, it appears that Joan used her status as a Welsh ‘queen’, to influence English royal prerogative. In his *Flores Historiarum*, written between 1220 and 1236, Roger of Wendover (d. 1236) recounts that in August King John, then at Nottingham preparing to invade Wales for the second time, received two letters. These warned of plans to take him as a Welsh hostage or be killed by his own magnates. The first letter was apparently from William the Lion, king of Scots (r. 1165–1214). The second is said to have been from Joan.<sup>90</sup> This instance is also recorded by Matthew Paris (d. 1259) in both his *Historia Anglorum* (completed by 1255) and *Chronica Majora* (1240–1259). Although largely taken from Wendover, Paris’s *Chronica Majora* records that John disregarded the warnings from William and his daughter, the wife of Llywelyn, king of Wales (*filiae ejusdem regis uxoris videlicet Loelini regis Walliæ*), and only abandoned the campaign once he reached Chester when additional alarms were raised.<sup>91</sup> Wendover and Paris both state that as a consequence of these letters, John halted his plans and returned to London.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *Rogeri de Wendover, Liber Qui Dicitur Flores Historiarum Ab Anno Domini MCLIV. Annoque Henrici Anglorum Regis Secundi Primo*, (ed.) H.G. Hewlett, 3 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1887), ii, p. 61.

<sup>91</sup> *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, (ed.) H.R. Luard, 7 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1874), ii, p. 534.

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion on the interpretation of events by Paris and Wendover see Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 97.

Although the veracity of these accounts cannot be confirmed, that Joan is recorded as, and subsequently remembered for being an initial instigator in stopping the English campaign of 1212 is important. Royal women appear in sources ‘when aristocratic fortunes are made and unmade; at moments when change makes way for both ambition and failure, gain and loss’.<sup>93</sup> Both the *Brutiau* for the year 1211 and these two English chroniclers stress that it was as a daughter and wife, rather than as a *de facto* political player or even as ‘queen’ that Joan intervened, underlying the personal nature of significant political developments. Interestingly, only *Brenhinedd y Saesson* identifies Joan by name, whereas neither the *Brutiau* nor the English sources do. This perhaps suggests that, in the eyes of the authors if not many of her contemporaries, her individual importance lay in her gendered role as a mediator between families, rather than in an official role between governing states. Nevertheless, Paris refers to Llywelyn’s status as ‘king’, thereby revealing Joan’s own by association.

The Welsh chronicles remain silent on her intervention in 1212. It is possible that the writers were unaware of what happened or were unacquainted with this particular aspect of the story. Yet, this seems unlikely given that John called off the offensive for which his entire northern army had been rerouted.<sup>94</sup> In comparison, none of the political activities of Senana and Eleanor (or Gwennllian) are recorded in the Welsh chronicles. The silence regarding this event is not particularly unusual, especially as the chronicles tend to focus on female lifecycles, rather than deeds for purposes of promoting Welsh masculine power and authority.<sup>95</sup> The most likely deduction is that the silence regarding the affairs in 1212 reflects a criticism of Joan in particular who, as the king’s daughter, helped him escape a fate that could have changed, rather dramatically, the course of Welsh history.

Similar to the chronicles, documentary sources also demonstrate that Joan’s career as an intercessor was linked to her lifecycles as a wife and member of the Angevin family. This is evident by looking at her petitions to the English Crown for the release of Welsh hostages between the years 1214 and 1215. Chancery enrolments reveal that Joan successfully petitioned King John for the release of five of her husband’s men who were likely handed over under the terms of Llywelyn’s

<sup>93</sup> Fradenburg, ‘Rethinking Queenship’, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> The army was much bigger in numbers than that used for Edward’s successful attempt in 1282. W.L. Warren, *King John* (New Haven, 1981), p. 200; R. Turner, *King John* (London, 1994), p. 139.

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 2, *Lifecycles*.

submission in 1211. In a letters patent dated 18 December 1214, King John notifies the sheriff of Gloucester, Engelard de Cigogné, to release hostages to Llywelyn's envoy 'at the petition of our daughter, the wife of Llywelyn'.<sup>96</sup> On 7 January 1215, a fifth hostage was released to the king's 'beloved daughter' shortly after the king received another petition from her.<sup>97</sup> Ten years later, Joan still enjoyed a position of influence with the English crown as a successful petitioner in her position as 'queen'. A letters patent dated November 1235 acquiesces to a successful request made by her for the pardon of Robert, son of Reginald, accused in the death of William, son of Ralph of Credenhill.<sup>98</sup> Although there is no evidence that any of Joan's requests were received in written form, they most likely were based on the official style used in the enrolments to identify her.<sup>99</sup>

From these examples it can be seen that Joan, in her uxorial role, successfully operated in the very traditional role of the 'queen' as a petitioner and 'peace-weaver'. Certainly, over a twenty-year span there is a great deal of evidence to suggest the importance of Joan position as Llywelyn's wife and the activities associated with her status as 'queen'; roles she used to achieve the political objectives of the Venedotian court as a person with 'an important bargaining counter'.<sup>100</sup> Between 1216 and 1224, sources remain silent about Joan. It is perhaps not coincidental that this was the period during which Llywelyn enjoyed his ascendancy in Wales, reclaiming the authority and lands denied him in the treaty of 1211, and of Henry III's minority.<sup>101</sup> By the mid-1220s, after Henry reached maturity, Joan once again entered centre stage.

In 1222 Joan and Llywelyn's daughter, Helen (*fl.* 1222–1237), was contracted to marry the heir and nephew of the earl of Chester, John of Scotland (d. 1237). The surviving agreement made between Ranulf (III), earl of Chester (d. 1232) and Llywelyn is discussed in detail in the following chapter, but is important to mention here.<sup>102</sup> The agreement states that individual charters by Llywelyn and

<sup>96</sup> ... *quod ad petitionem filiae nostrae, uxoris Lewlini* ... . *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati*, I.i., A.D. 1201–A.D. 1216, ed. T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, London, 1835), i, 125a; AWR, no. 277, p. 446.

<sup>97</sup> *Rot. Pat.*, i, 126a; AWR, no. 278, p. 446.

<sup>98</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 1232–47* (London, 1891–), p. 130; AWR, no. 281, p. 448.

<sup>99</sup> AWR, no. 277, p. 446.

<sup>100</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 86.

<sup>101</sup> See Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 88, n. 45.

<sup>102</sup> AWR, no. 252, pp. 412–14. See Chapter 5, pp. 275–7.



his wife, Lady Joan (*domine Ioh(ann)e uxoris sue*) will be delivered to John and Helen on their wedding day confirming gifts in free marriage of the manors of Bidford in Warwickshire, Suckley in Worcestershire and Wellington in Shropshire. These were manors that Llywelyn and Joan, themselves, received from King John in free marriage (*liberum maritagium*). This agreement highlights a number of important facets of Joan's status and position as 'queen': her independence as a land holder, the facility to issue her own *acta*, her participation in alienating marital lands,<sup>103</sup> and her involvement in the arrangement of marital alliances for her own children.<sup>104</sup>

Although there is little evidence of marital negations and contracts made for her other children, and even confusion as to who Llywelyn's children by Joan were, it is noteworthy that Gwladus Ddu's second husband, Ralph Mortimer, received the lands of Knighton and Norton in Shropshire from Llywelyn sometime 1230, (?), mid-June × 11 April 1240.<sup>105</sup> These lands were also apparently given to Llywelyn and Joan in free marriage.<sup>106</sup> It is likely that, akin to the lands granted to Helen and John upon their marriage, Joan may have, at least, consented to the alienation of Knighton and Norton. That these manors were a part of Joan and Llywelyn's marriage portion may, indeed, indicate that Gwladus was Joan's daughter. Llywelyn's daughters by Tangwystl, his former (?) concubine, such as Angharad (d. before 1260), wife of Maelgwn Fychan, and Gwenllian de Lacy, were given Welsh lands by Llywelyn in dowry.<sup>107</sup> Most importantly, however, the particular contract between Helen and John is central to discussions of Welsh 'queenship' in practice, not just because of Joan's self-regulating hold over certain English lands, but because it is the only existing evidence of Joan and Llywelyn acting together in a capacity as husband and wife, 'king' and 'queen'.<sup>108</sup>

By the mid-1220s, relations between Gwynedd and England were amicable and royal officials met a number of times over the course of two years, presumably

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<sup>103</sup> Under English common law, the wife's consent to alienation of the *maritagium* was not necessarily required. Bracton, *On the Laws and Customs of England*, ed. and trans. S.E. Thorne, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1968), ii, pp. 76-84.

<sup>104</sup> See Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 87, n. 40.

<sup>105</sup> *AWR*, no. 259, pp. 423-4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* no. 244, pp. 402-3. It is also evidence of lands held by a wife in *maritagium* being endowed to her daughter. *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 94.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* no. 66, pp. 202; no. 251, p. 412; no. 285, pp. 454-5; no. 454, pp. 651-3. Discussed in detail in Chapter 5, pp. 276-7.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Grants made by Gwenllian and Lord Rhys, Chapter 5, pp. 257-9.

as a means of establishing a permanent agreement.<sup>109</sup> Joan was the pre-eminent envoy during these years and in 1224 she was given safe passage to meet with the king to help lay the groundwork for a conference.<sup>110</sup> Joan did not travel on her own in every instance as in 1226 it is recorded that she was accompanied by Llywelyn and Dafydd.<sup>111</sup> It seems, however, that Joan's personal contributions to peace negotiations in her role as political envoy in 1225 and 1226 were recognised by her brother. She was rewarded with the manors of Rothley in Leicestershire and Conover in Shropshire soon after her meetings with him.<sup>112</sup> Later, in 1227 Joan was excused from paying a tallage tax on these manors, the king recommending to her tenants that they, instead, reimburse his sister with reasonable aid.<sup>113</sup> It was also during this period, in 1226, that Henry offered to sponsor Joan's legitimisation, which, too, may have been a symbol of royal friendship and support.<sup>114</sup>

Louise Wilkinson argues that the sources suggest the gifts and support bestowed upon Joan by Henry are evidence of the familial bond felt between brother and sister and that Henry held Joan in high regard.<sup>115</sup> This is certainly a reasonable assessment given the lifecycle identifiers used to describe Joan and her family in chancery records. Although the designation of 'Lady of North Wales' is used in close juxtaposition with that of Llywelyn's title as 'Prince of North Wales' in examples from 1224 and 1226, it is her personal relationships that are used to clearly identify her. In 1224 she is referred to as sister of the king and wife of Llywelyn (*Johanna Domina de Northwallia sorore Regis ac nuper uxor Lewlini Principis Northwall*),<sup>116</sup> whilst in 1226 when safe conduct was granted to her and her family, she is described simply as Llywelyn's wife and the king's sister (*uxore ejus sorore Regis; uxorem suam sororem nostrum*).<sup>117</sup> In these instances, even the familial connections between the king and Llywelyn (*Lewlino Principe Northwall' fratre Reg'*; *dilectum fratrem Lewlinum principem Norwalliae*) and Dafydd (*filijs suis*

<sup>109</sup> K. Norgate, 'Joan (d. 1237)', rev. A. D. Carr, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14819>>, accessed 8 May 2014.

<sup>110</sup> *Rot. Claus*, i, p. 622; *HW*, ii, p. 665.

<sup>111</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, pp. 52, 56, 59.

<sup>112</sup> *Rot. Claus*, ii, 18, 135; *HW*, p. 665. It is possible that this prominent diplomatic role relates to the request for Joan to be legitimized at precisely this time.

<sup>113</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, p. 112.

<sup>114</sup> Norgate, 'Joan'; Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 88.

<sup>115</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', pp. 88-9.

<sup>116</sup> *Rot. Claus*, i, p. 622. Reference to Joan as 'formerly' the wife of Llywelyn in this contemporary source is highly unusual. Most likely, it is a scribal error.

<sup>117</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, pp. 52, 56, 59.

*nepotibus Regis; filium suum nepotem nostrum*) are emphasised. Joan's status as Lady of North Wales is clearly recognised and such acts were issued because of her status. However, it seems that the lifecycle identifiers in these documents were employed as a means of emphasizing the personal nature of the relationships between the king of England and the family of the prince of Gwynedd, Joan being at the centre. That is to say, it seems that particular family relations, both natal and uxorial, played a large role in her successful dealings with the English Crown.

Further evidence of the bond between sister and brother appears from 1228 when Henry reclaimed the manors of Rothley and Condober as a likely consequence of inflamed hostilities between Llywelyn and Henry's justicar, Hubert de Burgh (d. 1243).<sup>118</sup> Although Joan lost ownership over the manors, Henry sanctioned the removal of her livestock and chattels situated at Condober and also ensured that the corn she had given instructions to be sown there remained in her possession.<sup>119</sup> Rothley was restored to her later that year<sup>120</sup> after she and her own officials met with Henry at Shrewsbury to initiate proceedings for another Anglo-Welsh truce.<sup>121</sup> It is evident that Joan successfully negotiated an armistice given the cordial correspondence that subsequently passed between the prince and the king.<sup>122</sup> Further, and most significantly, the Patent Rolls record that on 13 October 1228, Joan accompanied Dafydd when he paid homage to the king at Westminster on behalf of Llywelyn.<sup>123</sup> It is likely that in this instance she appeared in all the capacities mother, wife and sister. However, it was most likely as queen that she officially stood; as the most pre-eminent member, and representative, of Llywelyn's court in his absence.

It was during the campaign against de Burgh in 1228 that William de Braose, the marcher lord of Builth, was captured by Llywelyn and ransomed. Part of the negotiations for his release, entailed the betrothal of Dafydd with William's daughter, and heiress, Isabella who was to bring the lordship of Builth as her dowry.

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<sup>118</sup> *HW*, ii, p. 667. Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 89. See D.A. Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', *Journal of British Studies*, xix (1980), pp. 1-17; R.F. Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales, 1218-1232', *English Historical Review*, 87 (1972), pp. 465-94.

<sup>119</sup> *Rot. Claus.*, i, pp. 51, 68-9.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 123; *HW*, ii, p. 669.

<sup>121</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1225-32*, p. 201. See also *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1902-38), 1227-31, p. 114.

<sup>122</sup> *HW*, ii, p. 667.

<sup>123</sup> *David Fil' Lewlini Principis Northwall' ac Joh' uxor' ejus soror Regis fecerunt Regi homagiu' apud Westmonastu. Pat. Rolls, 1227-32*, p. 263.

This was a contract that promised Llywelyn greater authority throughout the southern provinces. In 1230, de Braose visited Llywelyn to finalize the marriage arrangements and it is likely that during this time he and Joan began their liaison. The *Brutiau* tells us that ‘In that year William de Breos the Younger, lord of Brycheiniog, was hanged by the Lord Llywelyn in Gwynedd, after he had been caught in Llywelyn's chamber with the king of England's daughter, Llywelyn's wife’.<sup>124</sup> *Brenhinedd y Saesson* actually designates Joan as princess (*tywysoges*), possibly reflecting perceptions of her status by the scribes of the fourteenth-century, or even those of her nearer contemporaries in a version of the Latin original of the *Brut*.<sup>125</sup> The entry dated 13 January 1230 in the Chester annals is more informative as it tells us that Joan's repercussion was imprisonment: ‘Also William de Braose was charged by Llywelyn, prince of Wales, with adultery with his wife, and was hanged. And the woman was imprisoned for a long time’.<sup>126</sup> Llywelyn's response to the situation is recorded in many contemporary annals, English and Welsh alike<sup>127</sup> and as Llywelyn did not suffer politically from any ramifications for his dealings with this matter, this may illuminate a general consensus that contemporaries agreed with Llywelyn's judgement because de Braose's abuse of his hospitality.<sup>128</sup>

Louise Wilkinson discusses the curious neutrality of both the English and the Welsh sources in reporting this event in regards to Joan, especially given that adultery was viewed largely as a female offence by churchmen and the Welsh laws, themselves, impose harsh penalties on unfaithful wives.<sup>129</sup> Robin Stacey suggests that Joan's actions directly affected the content of the Iorwerth redaction<sup>130</sup> and it is perhaps not insignificant that the Iorwerth redaction states that the infidelity of a

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<sup>124</sup> *BT, Pen20*, pp. 190-1; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 101-02; *BT, RBH*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>125</sup> *BS*, pp. 226-7.

<sup>126</sup> *Willelmus de Breaus inculpatus est a Lewelino principe Wallie de uxore sua, et suspenditur. Et mulier carcerata custodia diu. AnnCestr*, p. 57.

<sup>127</sup> *AC*, p. 77; *Brut, RBH*, pp. 228-9; *AnnCestr*, p. 56-7; *Annales de Margan*, in *AM*, i, p. 38; *AnnTewk*, p. 101; *AnnWav*, in *AM*, ii, pp. 308-9; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, ii, p. 383; *AnnWinch*, in *AM*, ii, p. 85; *AnnWorc*, p. 421. Also see J.J. Crump, ‘Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose: A Letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave’, *Historical Research* 73 (2000), pp. 197-212.

<sup>128</sup> In spite of this episode, Llywelyn maintained contact with de Braose's widow, Eva, and her brother, William Marshal the earl of Pembroke and the marriage between Dafydd and Isabella took place in 1229.

<sup>129</sup> Wilkinson, ‘Joan’, pp. 90-3. Also see Owen, ‘Shame and Reparation’, pp. 40-68; Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, p. 91. For an overview of ecclesiastical attitudes towards and legalities concerning sexuality see J.A. Brundage, ‘Sex and Cannon Law’, in V.L. Bullough and J.A. Brundage (eds), *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality* (1996), pp. 33-50.

<sup>130</sup> Stacey, ‘Divorce, Medieval Welsh Style’.

wife was the greatest of all disgraces a ruler could face.<sup>131</sup> Gender was often used by religious writers to exaggerate both the positive and negative attributes of the sexes, but especially women. Joan is neither blamed for the affair, nor her fate commented upon except for in the Chester annals, which simply identify her as ‘the woman’ (*mulier*).<sup>132</sup> Wilkinson points out that even in his own letters to William’s widow, Eva de Braose (*fl.* 1230–1246) and her brother William Marshal (d. 1231), Llywelyn does not refer to Joan’s participation in the affair, himself deflecting responsibility by stressing that his council insisted that de Braose be hanged.<sup>133</sup> However, neither does he directly point the finger at William. It is probable that the political advantages following the division of William’s lands amongst his daughters, including Isabella his prospective daughter-in-law, swayed sentencing. Llywelyn may also have found popular support with the Welsh in making a move against a member of a Marcher family seen as cruel and oppressive. In addition, it needs to be argued that de Braose’s fate was very likely influenced by Llywelyn’s reaction to Joan’s betrayal and his loss of confidence in her as his foremost political partner, not to mention wife.<sup>134</sup>

In native society, a married woman’s involvement with a man other than her husband was seen to be the definitive form of shame (*gwarthrudd*) and insult, the wife having to pay her husband *sarhaed*.<sup>135</sup> It was a shame that both husband and kin felt. Such a scandal, or *enllib*, could be refuted by the accused wife, who needed the oaths of compurgators (*rhait*) to help clear her name.<sup>136</sup> The swearing of compurgators furthered the wife’s disgrace. If found guilty of the offence (*cyflafan ddybryd*), she could be formally rejected by her husband and lose all her rights as a married woman.<sup>137</sup>

Versions of the laws that discuss *ysgar*, or separation, may be noteworthy. Some comments on the practice of divorce in native Wales, believed to have originated in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, were integrated into

<sup>131</sup> *LTMW*, p. 154; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 73.

<sup>132</sup> *AnnCestr*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>133</sup> Wilkinson, ‘Joan’, p. 92.

<sup>134</sup> *HW*, ii, p. 670.

<sup>135</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 31-2; *LTMW*, p. 60. There are different degrees of the offense of adultery and different rules of compensation. For a discussion, see Owen, ‘Shame and Reparation’, p. 52.

<sup>136</sup> Compurgators were called on to swear to the good name of the accused, in essence swearing that the accused was someone whose evidence was trustworthy.

<sup>137</sup> Owen, ‘Shame and Reparation’, p. 52.

Iorwerth Redaction's Test Book by c. 1250.<sup>138</sup> The time frame of the original composition on *ysgar* is contemporary to the events of 1230. Much like Robin Stacey's theory about the Iorwerth Redaction's emphasis on the queen's restricted role being a reflection of Joan's political career,<sup>139</sup> it may be that the emphasis on the repudiation of the adulterous wife also reflects current political commentary. Legal Triads refer to the *sarhaed* of the King of Aberffraw, stating that the first of the three things that constituted *sarhaed* had to do with shame concerning his wife.<sup>140</sup> Legally, Llywelyn had the right to repudiate his wife, especially since the affair became public knowledge. Having done so, he would have been free to marry again. Pragmatically speaking, however, divorce from Joan for her alleged adultery meant risking Dafydd's claims to Gwynedd. It could have been argued by adversaries, namely the English Crown, that he would no longer have been a legitimate heir because his mother was no longer the prince's legitimate wife.

The leniency of Joan's punishment is crucial. Above all, surviving evidence suggests that, regardless of personal opinions about her, Joan's public role as Llywelyn's political emissary seemed to far outweigh the personal consequences of her sexual infidelity. The Chester annals record that by the end of 1231, Joan, as Llywelyn's wife (*uxorem suam*) and King John's daughter (*filiam Johannis Regis*), had been released from custody.<sup>141</sup> By 1232, she is recorded acting in Llywelyn's interests as his public representative with the English Crown.

In 1231 tensions flared between Llywelyn and Hubert de Burgh, the latter gaining unprecedented authority in southern Wales. Whilst Joan was still in prison, Llywelyn's representatives failed to find a solution when meeting the king at Worcester and in early summer, war broke out. In mid-summer the king led an army into Wales, only being forced to withdraw at the beginning of winter, after which a year's truce was contracted. It is likely that Joan's release at this time was not coincidental. It is more than likely that her experience as a political envoy was needed to help procure a permanent settlement; one that recognised Llywelyn's pre-

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<sup>138</sup> *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, ed. A. Owen, 2 vols (Record Commission, 1841), i, p. 218. The preface to the Test Book found in the mid-thirteenth-century manuscript (C) of the Iorwerth Redaction, attributes the earlier comments on adultery to the lawyer, Goronwy ap Moriddig, who is named as the author of Latin D and the Blegywryd Redactions. Owen, 'Shame and Reparation', p. 53; Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>139</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and Edling', pp. 61-62.

<sup>140</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 1; *LTMW*, p. 5. See Owen, 'Shame and Reparation', p. 46.

<sup>141</sup> *Lewelinus princeps Wallye recepit uxorem suam filiam Johannis Regis quam antea incarceravit. AnnCestr*, pp. 56-7.

eminence as the prince of Wales. Although three times in 1232 the king was at Shrewsbury, Llywelyn did not meet with him, sending Joan and other officials in his stead. On 27 May 1232 Joan was accompanied by Dafydd and Llywelyn's *distain* Ednyfed Fychan who met with Henry to negotiate peace.<sup>142</sup> The extant agreement states that Llywelyn settled to make amends to the king for his insurgency, including the restoration of lands he took during the war. This included an assignation of de Braose lands to his own son and successor Dafydd and his wife, Isabella de Braose.<sup>143</sup> In December of that year, Joan and Dafydd again met with the king after having been promised safe conduct to do so.<sup>144</sup>

It is clear from the sources in which Joan appears that she was a significant figure in maintaining a diplomatic relationship between Gwynedd and England. There is one surviving letter sent by her to Henry III between 1230 and 1231, which helps to illuminate her own awareness of the importance of her role in an official and personal capacity.<sup>145</sup> Joan's letter adheres to standard diplomatic practice of the Middle Ages for both private and diplomatic correspondence. Acknowledging the different levels of their relationship, she addresses Henry as her lord (*domino*) implying their feudal relationship and the king's status as her overlord. This is further supported by placing the king's title first as a means of respect and in acknowledgement of his sovereign power.<sup>146</sup> Yet, Joan also immediately addresses him as her brother (*fratri suo*). This was common practice in correspondence between relations, but important in light of the fact that Joan's letter skips the

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 56; *Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, p. 476; *HW*, ii, pp. 685-6.

<sup>143</sup> *AWR*, no. 267, pp. 435-6.

<sup>144</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1225–32*, p. 476.

<sup>145</sup> [*Karis*]simo suo domino et fratri suo karissimo H. Dei gratia regi Angl(ie), domino Hib(er)n(ie), duci Norm(annie) et Aquit' et comiti And' I. domina Wall(ie) salutem et se ipsam. Sciatis, domine, quod tanta anxietate contristor quod nequaquam possem exprimere, eo quod inimici nostri immo et vestri prevaluerunt seminare discordias inter vos et dominum meum. Super quo non minus doleo propter vos quam propter dominum meum, presertim cum sciam quam sincerum affectum habebat et adhuc habet dominus meus erga vos, et quam inutile sit nobis et periculosum, salva reverentia vestra, veros amicos amittere et inimicos pro amicis habere. Hinc est quod, tanquam flexis genibus et fusis lacrymis vestram rogo maiestatem quatinus in melius mutare consilia velitis et eos qui inseparabili dilectionis vinculo coniunguntur vobis reconciliare non omittatis, quo facilius possitis et discatis et amicos diligere et inimicos gravare. Ad hec sciatis, domine, quod iniustissime suggerunt vobis nonnulli suspicionem habere de Inst(ru)cto et vestro et domini mei clerico, quo non credo vos posse habere in Angl(ia) vobis fideliozem clericum, sic me Deus adiuvet; nec ideo minus fidelis est vobis, si fideliter agit negocia domini sui, quia eodem modo se habet in agendis vestris coram domino suo; nec vos nec aliquis in ipso posset confidere, si domini sui tepide vel negligenter negocia tractaret. Si itaque in aliquo mihi credere velitis, in hoc mihi fidem adhibere velitis. Valet. *AWR*, no. 280, pp. 447-8. Translated in *Letters of Medieval Women*, ed. A. Crawford (Stroud, 2002), p. 54.

<sup>146</sup> Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice*, pp. 102,105-06.

common *supersalutatio*.<sup>147</sup> Instead of the petition following a more formulaic protocol in which particulars relevant to the context are addressed first, Joan jumps to the heart of the matter.<sup>148</sup>

She is ‘grieved beyond measure’ that the king has chosen to allow Llywelyn’s enemies to sow discord between them and dismayed that their mutual fondness has altered to enmity. She begs ‘on bended knee and shedding tears’ that the king reconciles with Llywelyn and trust that the clerk Instructus is faithful to both parties. The letter’s conclusion omits any reference to the type of result she is looking for, or what the consequences may be if Henry ignores her plea. She beseeches her brother to trust her above all else and ends the request; the importance of her plea thereby not being negated or lost within the diplomatic wording of a more formal *subsalutatio*, or final valediction.

Joan’s letter appears to have a dual purpose, one that recognises the relationship between vassals (herself and her husband) and overlord (her brother). It adheres to the widespread gender expectations that allowed women a place in politics and polity by being involved in the personal. She is respectful and her tone, humble. She adopts the position of the ‘queen’s’ accepted role as the subservient intercessor founded in biblical ideology.<sup>149</sup> In spite of her modest overtones, however, Joan’s political point is clearly addressed — she believes that one, as a ruler, Henry has made the mistake of listening to the misgivings of his advisors, which was detrimental to the already precarious political relationship; and two, that she has the right to say so according to her status and position.

In this context, Joan appeals to Henry as her king and her brother, playing on the emotions and importance of familial ties and political associations, making her role as mediator clear. This is furthered by her demonstration of conventional epistolary practice in using her title Lady of Wales to indicate that she is writing to him with a diplomatic aim, in her official capacity as the wife of the prince of Wales.<sup>150</sup> Joan’s title as ‘Lady of Wales’ is important in dating this letter. In April 1230 she is referred to as ‘Lady of North Wales’ by the royal exchequer, but her title was recognized as ‘Lady of Wales’ by 8 November 1235 when she petitioned the king for the pardon of Robert, son of Reginald. The use of the title ‘Lady of Wales’

<sup>147</sup> Additional phrases used to wish success upon the addressee and confirm a friendship.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 111-12.

<sup>149</sup> See Huneycutt, ‘Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen’, pp. 126-46.

<sup>150</sup> See *AWR*, pp. 447-8.



surely must have corresponded with Llywelyn's change in title from prince of North Wales to 'Prince of Aberffraw and lord of Snowdown', which probably took place around 1230.<sup>151</sup> If this is the case the earliest possible date for the adoption of the title is 1231 when Joan was released from prison.

The 'personal as political' elements underscoring the sovereignty of Gwynedd carried considerable weight throughout Joan's career. This is something that becomes clear in the sources where she is always referred to by her lifecycles and relationships to her husband, her father, her brother and her son. During his reign, Llywelyn faced countless obstacles on several fronts and needed a trusted member of his household to assist him in administrative duties of the realm that he was unable to carry out in person. In some situations, such as the events of 1211 proved, the collaboration between 'queen' and 'king' facilitated a more practical and constructive way of ruling a territory and against this backdrop, Joan was particularly useful.<sup>152</sup>

Generally, the rulers of Gwynedd tended to favour the use of their own clerks, members of their ministerial elite as political envoys. This demonstrated in Owain Gwynedd's letters sent to Louis VII (d. 1180) king of France c. October 1163 × early March 1166 soliciting an alliance<sup>153</sup> and Llywelyn's use of his *distain*, Ednyfed Fychan, who himself was a respected emissary receiving gifts from the English king. Interestingly, records from the English chancery suggest that the clerk *Instructus* who is the subject of Joan's letter (perhaps referring to two individuals of that name over the course of time), was a royal messenger employed by Llywelyn, used at both English and Welsh courts, who Joan herself used on occasion. Wilkinson advocates the idea that *Instructus* was an individual who 'helped Joan to keep in touch with her father'.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, this may have been the case, but there is a more important point to make. If Joan and Llywelyn shared a royal messenger, this implies a level of duties associated with the office of the Welsh 'queen' in the court of Gwynedd and even provides an image of the 'king' and 'queen' working together in various capacities.

Evidence for the years in which Joan acted as a political envoy is doubly important in assessing Welsh 'queenship'. First, it offers a glimpse of the types of

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<sup>151</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 170-4.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 10, 27-30, 71.

<sup>153</sup> *AWR*, nos. 193, 194, 196, pp. 324-5, 327-8; Pryce, 'Owain Gwynedd'.

<sup>154</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 89, n. 29.

actions taken by a royal Welsh family acting as a unit in the political dealings that shaped the nature of their authority. This is illustrated in the examples from 1225 and 1226 in which the family travelled together to meet the king. Moreover, the recorded instances in which Joan and Dafydd alone met with the king emphasise Joan's maternity and the important role she played as a mother in ensuring the future of her children.<sup>155</sup> Above all, they are *the* principal surviving examples pertaining to the uxorial agency of a Welsh 'queen'-consort from the Middle Ages. That Joan travelled both on her own and with her family to partake in key discussions underscores the value of her position within her two families, her status as a 'queen' and an individual in her own right. In the long run, even her affair with William de Braose did little to tarnish her reputation or her singular importance to the Anglo-Welsh cause.

Joan was not always used as a diplomat, as in the case of 1218 when Llywelyn's authority in Wales was recognised through a series of agreements signed in Worcester. It is to be expected that Joan was used on occasions when her personal status and ties to the English court could be used to represent Llywelyn in a way that members of his ministerial elite or clerics could not. This is made clear in her surviving letter to Henry. Certainly, her change in title to 'Lady of Wales' in the 1230s suggests her position and capacity to act as an alter ego for Llywelyn, representing the Wales-wide authority he sought.<sup>156</sup> The prince's direct relationship with the English Crown via Joan was clearly an important, influencing factor in outcomes of arbitration.

Perceptions of Joan's personal qualities, her relationship with Llywelyn and political circumstances should be taken into account when assessing the impact of her role as an envoy of Gwynedd. Circumstances certainly played a large role in Joan's opportunities to exercise agency on such an important political level helped support her career. What is interesting is the absence of criticism in sources, Welsh and English, concerning Joan's divided political and personal loyalties. Similar to the problems that plagued the careers of many papal legates,<sup>157</sup> medieval queens

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 92-3.

<sup>156</sup> Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p. 21.

<sup>157</sup> On the whole, the careers of papal legates who acted as personal representatives of the Pope were shaped by the informality of diplomatic officialdom and one's necessity to serve two opposing parties, in this case, secular and religious.

struggled with a constant division of loyalties.<sup>158</sup> Even though on the outside it may have seemed that a division of loyalties appeared contrary to individual political interests, sources indicate, and as Joan's own examples show, the partition of allegiances could prove particularly useful.<sup>159</sup> However, as foreigners, many wives often received unwanted, negative attention as popular scapegoats for their husband's follies or as a result of their own vanquished ambitions. Xenophobia further weakened the position of queens who were generally foreigners 'suspected of pursuing inimical interests'.<sup>160</sup>

For Joan, particularly, coupled with her intimate relations with the English Crown, her affair with William de Braose surely must have reinforced the reservations of some powerful Welsh contemporaries regarding her fidelity to her husband as a wife and as a trustworthy political partner. Joan, herself, is not addressed or even mentioned by the court poets.<sup>161</sup> Stacey has argued that she was a controversial figure<sup>162</sup> and Wilkinson says that in the very least, the commentaries by Wendover and Paris concerning her involvement in 1212 suggest she was 'politically sympathetic' towards her father,<sup>163</sup> which could have affected attitudes towards her. Gwyneth Richards develops this view by pointing out that Joan and Llywelyn's marriage goes unrecorded in the Welsh chronicles, whereas her affair with William de Braose and her betrayal of Llywelyn is documented.<sup>164</sup> Joan, as a foreigner and one with clear influence in the English court, could have been used as a scapegoat for Llywelyn's failings — especially as the mother of the son chosen over a legally recognised heir. Yet, Welsh sources are surprisingly mute as regards to any suspicions concerning her loyalty to Llywelyn and dedication to the Welsh cause. Collectively, they indicate that native opinions of Joan varied, and conceivably so may have attitudes towards or opinions on the practice of 'queenship'.

The instance of 1232, in which Joan acted as the diplomatic envoy, participating in political discourse with the king is of particular interest because it is

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<sup>158</sup> Cf. Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice*, p. 104.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Rawcliffe and Flower, 'English Noblemen and their Advisers', p. 167.

<sup>160</sup> McNamara and Wemple, 'Sanctity and Power', p. 113. For an Anglo-Saxon example in which the status and natal connections of the queen concerned many contemporaries who feared that her own personal interests husband's reputation and rule, see Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 39-41.

<sup>162</sup> Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling*', p. 62.

<sup>163</sup> Wilkinson, 'Joan', p. 86.

<sup>164</sup> Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 132-3.

only a year after she was released from prison. The chroniclers' absence of opinions strongly suggests that, like Llywelyn, himself, contemporaries recognised and respected Joan's position as 'queen'-consort. Additionally, her status as the king of England's half-sister was too important to be abandoned for the sake of remonstrating her for marital infidelity. Llywelyn was an astute ruler who manipulated the 'bonds of fictive kinship for political advantages'.<sup>165</sup> His pragmatic attitude towards the function of marriage, and thus his recognition of the important role that women played in such alliances, was indicative in his release of Joan after only a year. From that time forward 'she continued ... to be of great service in a diplomatic capacity'.<sup>166</sup>

Without a doubt, contemporary records reveal that Joan played an important role during her thirty-year reign. Her natal and marital status helped define many of the known parameters that she moved in. This is most obvious in the consistency of the use of female lifecycles to identify her. The analysis of the sources suggest that Joan also benefitted from her status as a Welsh 'queen' — as the 'Lady of Wales' she exercised political clout. Her subsequent legitimacy helped strengthen her son's patrimony and likely secured her standing as a legitimate wife and 'queen'. Furthermore, it reinforced her connection to the English crown and thus, that of her descendants. The familial-political context of Joan's interventions may be an example of a defined boundary wherein a 'Welsh queen' was expected to operate as a diplomat and counsellor. In many ways, Joan's activities are similar to those of Senana and Eleanor, suggesting that in practice there were native expectations of Welsh 'queenship' akin to more widespread European standards that readily accepted queenly intervention — the woman as an advisor or political envoy — in situations when the fate of the royal family or lordship was at stake.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Crump, 'Repercussions', p. 205.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 205.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. The gendered role of the queen as a petitioner and advocate is demonstrated in Anthony Rabin's study on the Anglo-Saxon queen Ælfthryth (*d.* 999X1001), consort of King Edgar (943/4–975). Rabin argues that Ælfthryth's adoption of the role of a *forespeca*, or advocate, helped her to create parameters for queenly movement that were seen as acceptable by her contemporaries. She used her advocacy in a way that fit comfortably within the established limits of her gender and marginal legal status. The political acceptance of her influence as an intercessor in legal disputes, for example, was tempered by her ability to stay firmly within the culturally defined social roles for women. Ælfthryth ensured that her support was defined by domesticity and kinship ties and thereby presented her influence as informal or unofficial. As a result, she was able to 'capitalize upon normative gender expectations in order to develop a version of female agency acceptable, or at least possible, in the masculine world of Anglo-Saxon law'. Rabin, 'Female Advocacy and Royal Protection', pp. 274, note 62; 287.

## ***SENANA FERCH CARADOG***

To an extent, it is possible to assess Welsh ‘queenship’ in practice by looking at the activities undertaken by one Welsh woman of royal rank, Senana ferch Caradog, wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn.<sup>168</sup> Senana is known to historians for her political dealings with Henry III in an attempt to secure her husband’s freedom from prison in 1241. The agreement, discussed below, is the largest and most important extant document related to Senana and the wording of it crucial in measuring how her status was viewed by peers.<sup>169</sup> Gwyneth Richards has noted that the politics of 1241 has been considered at length by scholars, but for gender history it is significant as it illuminates the types of female agency associated with Welsh noblewomen.<sup>170</sup> Sue Johns has recently argued that the significance of Senana’s involvement in the production of the agreement demonstrates her diplomatic agency, which was critical to the process. Moreover, in context, the agreement reveals Senana as a key player in the complicated socio-political relationship between Gwynedd and England.<sup>171</sup> Building on both of these viewpoints, using Senana as a case study for this thesis in the contexts of social and gender history is useful for two particular purposes. First, it reveals the types of agency a married woman exercised as head of the familial lordship during the absence of her husband. Second, it is singular in importance as Senana was a member of Welsh royalty<sup>172</sup> and her circumstances provide a particularly Welsh slant to understanding native ‘queenship’ in practice. As there is little to no information referring to her life,<sup>173</sup> this section is structured to provide historical context to her documented achievements.

As a legal contender for the succession of Gwynedd, although illegitimate, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn spent much of his adult life contesting his father’s choice of heir apparent (his legitimate son by Joan, Dafydd). The father-son relationship

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<sup>168</sup> Gruffudd was the son of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and his concubine Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch of Rhos. See Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. V, p. 447.

<sup>169</sup> Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen*, pp. 23-42; Stephenson, ‘The Laws of Court’, p. 402; Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p. 104.

<sup>170</sup> Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 32; Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 100-08.

<sup>171</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 103.

<sup>172</sup> She was a descendant of Gruffudd ap Cynan. See Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. V, p. 455.

<sup>173</sup> Nothing is known of Senana’s early years or even when her marriage to Gruffudd took place, probably between 1215 and 1228. J.B. Smith suggests that their first two sons, Owain and Llywelyn, were born in the early 1220s and Gwyneth Richards suggests that they were likely married sometime between 1215 and 1228, between the intervening years in which Gruffudd remained incarcerated. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 39; Richards, *Welsh Noblewomen in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 26.

appears to have been fraught with inconsistencies, Gruffudd often being rewarded with, then stripped of authority.<sup>174</sup> For example, Llywelyn gave him lands in Meirionydd and Ardudwy soon after Gruffudd was released as a political hostage from the English crown in 1215, but these were retracted by 1221.<sup>175</sup> Two years later, Gruffudd fought against William Marshal junior, the earl of Pembroke, on campaign for his father in southern Wales<sup>176</sup> and by 1226 he held the whole of southern Powys and Llŷn peninsula. Nonetheless, in 1228 he was imprisoned for six years by his father in Deganwy castle and released in 1234.<sup>177</sup>

By 1238, Dafydd received fealty from the Welsh barons and was effectively in control of his father's realm and it was during the last years of Llywelyn's life and soon after his death, between 1240 and 1241, that conflict between the half-brothers intensified. Gruffudd was stripped of all his lands save for Llŷn and eventually imprisoned at Criccieth castle, along with his eldest son Owain (d. c.1282).<sup>178</sup> Many Welsh magnates favoured Gruffudd as Llywelyn's rightful successor, including the bishop of Bangor who excommunicated Dafydd, subsequently travelling to England, promising to pay the king a weighty tribute for his support in Gruffudd's cause.<sup>179</sup> This expedition ended in failure and soon after Senana is recorded acting for Gruffudd in the presence of the king.

The Curia Regis Rolls record that Senana, as Gruffudd's wife (*Sauan uxor Griffini filii Lewelini*), appeared in person at the king's court at Westminster in May 1241 appealing for aid in obtaining Gruffudd's release from Welsh prison.<sup>180</sup> Senana argued that her husband was unjustly detained and should be treated as a tenant of the crown. She declared that Gruffudd was willing to prove his faith by

<sup>174</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 12-14, 28-9, 31-4, 48-9, 76; Williams, 'Succession to Gwynedd'.

<sup>175</sup> *BS*, pp. 222-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 182-3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 98; *BT, RBH*, p. 220-1.

<sup>176</sup> *BS*, pp. 224-5; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 187-8; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 99-100; *BT, RBH*, pp. 224-7. T. F. Tout, 'Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1244)', rev. A.D. Carr, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online, 2004), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11696>>, accessed July 2013.

<sup>177</sup> *BS*, pp. 230-1; *BT, Pen20*, p. 194; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 100; *BT, RBH*, pp. 232-3.

<sup>178</sup> Tout, 'Gruffudd ap Llywelyn'; Williams, 'Succession to Gwynedd'.

<sup>179</sup> *BS*, pp. 232-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 197; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 104-05; *BT, RBH*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>180</sup> *Sauan uxor Griffini filii Lewelini venit apud Westmonasterium coram rege a die Pasce in quinque septimanas et peccit quod dominus rex deliberare faceret predictum Griffinum virum suum, qui homo domini regis et fidelis esse debet et quem David filius Lewelini frater ejus injuste cepit et captum in prisona sua detinet contra justiciam, desicut idem Griffinus paratus est per se et per bonos obsides quos inveniet domino regit ad faciendum domino regi quicquid ei facere debet sicut homo secus et libenter stabit recto in curia domini regis omnibus que versus eum loqui voluerit et bonam securitatem inveniet per obsides et alio modo, secundum quod dominus rex providerit, quod pax domini regis non sit per ipsum perturbata set quod in omnibus melius conservetur et manutenatum sicut per hominem domini regis, qui esse debet, ut dicitur. Curia Regis Rolls, (London, 1923 - ), xvi, no. 1595. *Sauan* may be a mistranscription of *Sanan*.*

way of hostages and freely answering any claims made against him in the king's own court. As proof of his loyalty to the crown and promise to keep peace, pledges of surety were offered. Perhaps by coincidence, representatives for Dafydd, Einion Fychan (*Aynnanus Wokehem*) and others, happened to be in court on the same day.<sup>181</sup> They declared that after hearing the Lady Senana's (*domina*) claims, they were to take Gruffudd's case to Dafydd and appeal for justice.<sup>182</sup>

Senana is described simply as Gruffudd's wife and Gruffudd himself is only identified by his patronymic. Although patronymics was the common form of identification and status used in Wales, its employment in chancery records may indicate how the English crown comparatively viewed the status of Senana and Gruffudd in relation to the social hierarchy at play. The use of *domina* in the context of Einion Fychan's intervention is most likely one of general terms, that of courtesy. It may have been the title used in court by Dafydd's Welsh representatives to denote Senana's actual status in Wales as recognised by members of her own native social group, including her husband's supporters. This occasion is crucial in understanding the socio-political position of native Welsh royal women, at least in the thirteenth century, because even though it is not clear whether Senana was acting of her own accord or at the behest of Gruffudd (likely a combination of the two), the fact remains that she herself appeared at Westminster as Gruffudd's spokesperson rather than another member of his own *llys*. It was not merely in her capacity as his wife, but surely as lord in his absence that she acted. This becomes especially noteworthy when the list of sureties for the 1241 agreement reveals that Maredudd ap Rhobert (d. 1244), lord of Cedwain, who was renowned for his role as the 'eminent' or 'chief counsellor of Wales' (*arderchawc kygorwr kymry / pemnkyghorwr Kymry / penn kyngor holl Gymry*)<sup>183</sup> acted on Senana's behalf.<sup>184</sup>

Later that summer Senana again appealed in person to the king at Shrewsbury for Gruffudd's release.<sup>185</sup> After negotiations, an agreement dated 12 August 1241 was produced. Senana promised on behalf of her husband to pay the king a sum of

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<sup>181</sup> This was presumably to hear the case brought by Gruffudd's sister Gwenllian concerning lands that Dafydd had confiscated from her.

<sup>182</sup> *Et Aynnanus Wokeham et socii nuncio predicti David filii Lewelini venerunt et dicunt quod non venerunt pro dominio suo ad presens pro predicta causa ad curiam nec propter hoc domina ... dixit, et querelam suam libenter ostendent dominio suo et illum rogabunt quod exhibeat ei justiciam.* CRR, xvi, no. 1595.

<sup>183</sup> BS, pp. 234-5; BT, Pen20, p. 201; Brut, Pen. 20, p. 106; RBH, pp. 238-9.

<sup>184</sup> He did not appear in court with her as far as it is known.

<sup>185</sup> See Williams, 'Succession to Gwynedd', pp. 399-401.

600 marks in exchange for securing his release from Welsh captivity.<sup>186</sup> She also submitted to the king's wishes to transfer Gruffudd to one of his own prisons. Additionally, Senana consented to handing over three of her sons Owain, Dafydd (d. 1283) and Rhodri (d. c.1315), as hostages in assurance that she and Gruffudd would adhere to the terms of the agreement. This requisite was tempered with a promise that upon the untimely death of either Senana's husband or her son Owain, Dafydd or Rhodri would be returned to her. The king asserted his rights as overlord to oversee judgement of Gruffudd's patrimony in accordance with the 'custom of Wales'.<sup>187</sup> Senana agreed to pay 300 marks annually, in moveable chattels such as oxen, cattle and horses, if the king judged in Gruffudd's favour. She also consented to the stipulation that her family maintain a 'firm peace' with Dafydd and promised that her husband and sons would take action against any who rebelled against the king.

Senana swore upon holy relics that they would abide by the terms outlined. This is not a wholly unusual example of a woman swearing on holy relics as a means of agreeing to observe the conditions of an agreement. Charter evidence from Margam abbey provides examples of noblewomen, Welsh and English, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries doing so with their husbands.<sup>188</sup> What makes it unusual is that it is the only example found so far of a woman undertaking such an oath of her own accord and, most importantly, in a highly political capacity. This, in itself, is indicative of Senana's recognised 'queenly' status. She pledged that Gruffudd would swear to conditions, in writing, upon his release. Her own assurances were certified through the presentment of pledges from prominent men of both Welsh and Anglo-Norman origin who agreed to undertake all the terms on Senana's behalf and provide the king with charters saying as much.<sup>189</sup> The number and variety of power

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<sup>186</sup> AWR, no. 284, pp. 452-4.

<sup>187</sup> J.B. Smith argues that it was Henry III who first defined partible succession as the 'custom of Wales'. Id., *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>188</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 261, 293. Also see Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 41-44.

<sup>189</sup> In addition to Maredudd ap Rhobert, Roger of Mold, seneschal of Chester appears as a surety. Sureties like Ralph Mortimer (d. 1246) and Walter Clifford (d. 1263) were related to Gruffudd by marriage to his sisters, Gwladus Ddu and Marared respectively. Both men were powerful and influential in English royal circles. Mortimer had extended and consolidated the family lordship and by 1241 had control of Gwrtheyrnion and Maelienydd making the Mortimers the most prominent of Marcher families. Clifford had close social links to the English crown, his father being the former High Sheriff of England. Maelgwn ap Maelgwn (d. 1257), also known as Maelgwn Fychan, was the lord of Ceredigion and a strong supporter of Gruffudd, who was also related to Gruffudd through marriage to his sister Angharad. Gruffudd ap Madog (d. 1269) of Bromfield, ruler of Powys, was one of the Gruffudd's main supporters. He and his brothers Hywel (d. c.1268) and Maredudd (d. 1256)



holding advocates symbolised Gruffudd's distinguished status as prince and, in this particular instance, Senana's own status as his wife 'ruling' in his stead.

Both Senana's first unsuccessful petition and the subsequent agreement say a great deal about the agency connected to a Welsh woman's position as a wife and status as a royal consort. Circumstances dictated that Senana negotiate the interplay between the personal and political, appearing before the English king's court as a wife and woman of royal Welsh stature. Like Joan and as we will see with Eleanor de Montfort, Senana's success was also due to her conformity to the necessities associated with vassalage and recognising, as a Welsh representative, the distinguished status of the English king as overlord. This situation put Senana in a strong position of formal authority, forcing her to negotiate a deal with the English king personally. It is clear that she acted as a representative of her husband's authority as a prince of Gwynedd by agreeing to the large sums of money required by the king. She also acted in her own right as a 'queenly' advocate in an exclusive Welsh political matter. The fact that she affixed her own seal, and that of her husband's, has even more significant connotations associated with her own individual power and authority as a woman of Welsh royalty.

The use of her seal was a symbolic mark of her personalised, female identity, displaying her name and independent status. It was a recognised and accepted legal declaration of authority associated with rights to and ownership of lands, wealth, status and power. Matthew Paris, who recorded the agreement in detail in his *Chronica Majora*, even states that it was sealed by the king and that Gruffudd's seal was affixed 'by the hand of Senana'.<sup>190</sup> That Senana did this on Gruffudd's behalf is indicative of the acceptance of her rule as lord in her husband's stead. The fact that she was able to use his seal matrix is noteworthy, though it is unknown whether it was in her possession from the start of Gruffudd's imprisonment or if it was brought to her on behalf of Gruffudd by the royal side to be used in negotiations. It could be

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also pledged in Senana's name. The last surety, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn (d. 1286), was himself a newly recognised baron, owing no service to the princes of Gwynedd as he had acquired the seisin of his father's estates of Powys Wenwynwyn after paying homage to the king that same year, making him a powerful Welsh ally. J.B. Smith thinks Mortimer was a key figure in 'formulating the agreement' due to his claims to Gwerthrynion and Maelienydd and J.J. Crump has argued that it is unlikely Mortimer acted as one of Senana's sureties purely based on familial bonds or obligations. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 42; J.J. Crump, 'The Mortimer Family and the Making of the March', in M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell and R. Frame (eds), *Thirteenth Century England VI, Proceedings of the Durham Conference, 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 126.

<sup>190</sup> Matthæi Parisiensis, *Chronica Majora*, iv, pp. 316-18.

argued that the need to use Gruffudd's seal showed that hers was not sufficient and that her position was dependent on her husband's. This claim, however, is in contrast to the laws of court that state the queen can issue documents under her own seal for land and earth.<sup>191</sup> Senana's actions and seal seem to be lasting reminders of the manifestations of women's secular power and the extent to which they employed independent and formal acts of agency.<sup>192</sup>

The Welsh chronicles mention nothing of Senana in the events of 1241.<sup>193</sup> Matthew Paris, however, records Senana's involvement in negotiations as Gruffudd's wife (*uxor Griffini*).<sup>194</sup> More interestingly, it seems that her status as a Welsh magnate is also implied (*quod confecit Senena uxor Griffini, et alii terræ magnates Walensium*) if, indeed, the terminology used refers to her rather than Gruffudd. The silences of the Welsh chronicles concerning her intervention in the years 1240–1241 is remarkable. It is possible that in the opinions of the scribes or patrons involved in the production of the Welsh chronicles, a woman's place was not in politics and perhaps, more significantly, on the international stage. Joan, in fact, is the only woman to appear in the chronicles who is active within a Welsh political framework. However, concentration is on her lifecycle stages as King John's daughter and Llywelyn's wife, rather than her function as 'queen'. Thus, the silences concerning Senana's activities and central role in the formation of the agreement with Henry III may, indeed, be pointed.

Senana faced a particularly difficult position as the wife of the rejected illegitimate son of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. She must have been under extreme pressure to uphold and preserve the royal status of her family in the midst of a dynastic conflict and to ensure, by any means necessary, existing and future prospects of authority and power. Maybe at this point it is more relevant to question

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<sup>191</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 146, 147, 185.

<sup>192</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 103–08. B. Bedos-Rezak, 'Women, Seals, and Power in Medieval France, 1150–1350', in *Women and Power*, p. 61. Senana's seignorial status is further underlined when contrasting this particular instance with the example of ordinary freemen who had to ask their lord to seal charters in their names.

<sup>193</sup> Although version C of *Annales Cambriae* has the most detailed account of 1241, it still only records that Dafydd and Gruffudd warred with one another, ending in Gruffudd's incarceration and subsequent handover to the king of England. AC, note 3, p. 83. The *Brutiau* says that the king 'took Gruffudd, son of the Lord Llywelyn, and all the prisoners who were with him, and brought them to London to his prison'. *Achymrut Gruffud vab yr arglwyd Lywelyn ar holl garcharoryon a oed gyt ac ef ay dwyn hyt yn llundein yw y garchar ef. BT, Pen20*, p. 199; *Brut, Pen. 20*, p. 106; *RBH*, pp. 236–7; *BS*, pp. 234–5.

<sup>194</sup> *Matthei Parisiensis, Monarchi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum*, ed. F. Madden, 3 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1866–9), ii, p. 483.

not the silences of women's activities in the chronicles, but why the sources do not refer to Joan or Senana as 'queen' or even 'princess'. Both women were royal by blood and their statuses amongst their Welsh contemporaries were likely further enhanced by their marriages into the house of Gwynedd.<sup>195</sup> For Senana, at least, it is possible that she is not referenced (and, thus, obviously no title conferred) because the status of her husband, even as Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's recognised son, was questionable. The evidence for both women suggests that the particular background and circumstances of each individual 'queen' shaped their use of political agency.

Although Welsh sources are silent as to the fate of Senana after the agreement, chancery enrolments record that, as the wife of Gruffudd son of Llywelyn (*Salente uxori Griffini filii Lewelini*), she was looked after by the king. She received ten marks of gift on 24 October 1241;<sup>196</sup> from May 1242, she was to receive 100 shillings in maintenance and a robe worth two marks annually.<sup>197</sup> In July 1242 she received another *liberate* of payment worth 100 shillings for her maintenance.<sup>198</sup> Gruffudd remained imprisoned in the Tower of London for the three years he was incarcerated, but it seems his confinement was comfortable and that Senana was granted permission to visit him and her sons.<sup>199</sup> In 1244, while trying to escape from a prison window, Gruffudd fell to his death. All sources are silent about Senana's fate. She was still alive in 1252 as she heads the witness list as Lady Senana (*domina Senana*), former wife of Lord Gruffudd (*quondam uxore domini Griffini*) to an agreement between her youngest son, Dafydd, and the monks of Bardsey, discussed in the following chapter.<sup>200</sup>

Hence, eight years after Gruffudd's death it seems as if Senana's status as his wife, widow and mother to his heirs, still held sway. It may be that in widowhood Senana operated with even more authority, but as records are limited, this is only speculation. Perhaps compared with the one other example of a Welsh 'queen dowager', that of Angharad, wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan, it may be that it was expected that widowed 'queen' would possess the remit to control lands connected to

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<sup>195</sup> As seen in Chapter 2, the overriding identifiers of women are based on their lifecycle stages and relationships to leading Welsh men.

<sup>196</sup> *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office for the Reign of Henry III*, 6 vols (London, 1917-64), ii, p. 81.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* ii, p. 134.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 141.

<sup>199</sup> Matthei Parisiensis, *Flores Historiarum*, ii, p. 272.

<sup>200</sup> *AWR*, no. 440, pp. 635-8.

the family lordship.<sup>201</sup> After all, Welsh laws did not make any assurances of security for widows thus, ensuring a widow's right to exercise economic agency. This was only legally instigated with the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284. Conceivably, the political position Senana carved for herself in the preceding years as a wife and arguably 'queen' helped her maintain influence and significance in widowhood<sup>202</sup> — at least within her locality, as her appearance as a witness in 1252 seems to indicate.

Like Joan, Senana's position as mediator was influential in achieving a means to an end. Although her initial petition to the king failed to have any outcome, the prolonged situation coupled with Senana's public activities as Gruffudd's wife must have elevated her status. She took on socio-political roles associated with the office of the Welsh 'queen', certainly those established by Joan in the early thirteenth century, if not by their predecessors at an earlier date. The acceptance of her position may also have been enhanced by her lifecycle stage as mother. In the 1241 agreement, Senana's agency is connected to her role as a female lord in her husband's absence, but more universally as a wife and mother acting in the best interest of her family.<sup>203</sup>

This raises questions of the Welsh 'queen' and her role as a mother. A possible comparison could be made with Gruffudd ap Cynan's widow, Angharad, and expectations she may have faced as the mother of his heirs. While it is impossible to identify native contemporary attitudes towards Senana and her involvement in politics, it seems appropriate to presuppose that her direct participation in securing her family's fortunes was, by and large, encouraged by her husband's supporters. The sealing of the agreement by both Senana and Gruffudd, and not just Gruffudd alone, signifies Senana's singular status as a native Welsh royal woman; this particular feature is the only existing example of a Welsh ruler and his consort openly acting as a collaborative force in a political context. Most importantly of all, this agreement is the only surviving piece of evidence to showcase the very real level of political agency that a Welsh 'queen' employed at any time during the Middle Ages.

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<sup>201</sup> The Librate Roll for 1247 makes mention of the executors of Isabella de Braose's will. It is unfortunate that neither her will nor the entry for the Liberate Roll, which is fragmentary, survive. *Liberate Rolls*, vol. 3, p. 147.

<sup>202</sup> Senana was given a dower, which, in the least, must have strengthened her economic position after Gruffudd's death. See Chapter 5, pp. 281-2.

<sup>203</sup> 'Her authority was rooted in her position as wife'. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 103.

## ***ELEANOR DE MONTFORT***

Eleanor de Montfort is the third example of Welsh ‘queenship’ to be drawn on for this analysis and her similarities with both Joan and Senana make her a useful subject for discussion. Like Joan, she was a French woman, directly related to the English crown, whose marriage by proxy to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1275 was highly political. Eleanor also intervened in situations using her kinship connections to her natal family as a means of achieving political ends. More importantly, like both Joan and Senana, Eleanor used her position as the wife of a ruler and status as a Welsh ‘queen’ to successfully interact with the king of England. Although there is little knowledge of Eleanor’s own activities before and after her marriage, evidence that does survive is singular in comparison to that for either Joan or Senana. There are a handful letters issued by her and an analysis of the diplomatics of these letters tells much in the way of how Eleanor perceived her role as a Welsh ‘queen’. The historical context behind the union of Eleanor and Llywelyn is complex. As such, an attempt to summarize the history of the relationship between Gwynedd and England is carried out by way of focusing, above all, on the episodes and conflicts surrounding the marriage of Eleanor and Llywelyn.

Eleanor was the only daughter of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester and his wife, Eleanor (d. 1275), countess of Pembroke and Leicester, sister of Henry III. In 1263, an alliance was made between de Montfort and Llywelyn through which the prince of Wales and Eleanor, who was under the age of seven, were betrothed.<sup>204</sup> Although Eleanor and her mother were exiled to France in 1265 after Simon’s death at the battle of Evesham, the marital alliance remained intact. Pope Clement IV (1265–1268) issued two mandates to the earl’s former associates, including Llywelyn. The first warned him to detach himself from any remaining links to the earl of Leicester under threats of excommunication and interdict. This was followed by a promise of absolution to Llywelyn and all other nobles from any oaths, promises, fealties and homage that bound them to de Montfort.<sup>205</sup> In spite of these directives, the marital alliance of Eleanor and Llywelyn remained in place. J. B. Smith convincingly argues that Llywelyn’s reasons for going ahead with his marriage to Eleanor was a means of retaliation against Edward who harboured his

<sup>204</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 390, 393-8.

<sup>205</sup> *CPL*, pp. 425-435.

fugitive brother Dafydd and others who had conspired to kill him in 1274.<sup>206</sup>

Eleanor's subsequent imprisonment appears to have been the final straw in the long-standing conflict between the two rulers.<sup>207</sup>

In 1275, she sailed from France, accompanied by her brother Amaury (d. 1301), to wed Llywelyn. Her ship was seized by the king's men on the west coast of Britain and Eleanor was imprisoned for three years.<sup>208</sup> This extraordinary event is recounted in numerous contemporary sources in which Eleanor appears as both the subject and the object of the narratives. Her primary status is associated with her natal family as Amaury's sister or as the daughter of the earl of Leicester.<sup>209</sup> More importantly, however, what all Welsh and English sources alike emphasise is the nature of Eleanor's marital relationship with Llywelyn. The annals of Worcester abbey, for example, utilize gender as a means of enhancing the drama of the situation, describing Eleanor as the most elegant young-girl (*juvencula elegantissima*) to whom the prince of Wales was bound to by marriage (*quæ Leulino principi Walliæ matrimonialiter debuerat copulari*).<sup>210</sup> The Red Book of Hergest and Peniarth 20 versions of *Brut y Tywysogion* and the annals of Dunstaple priory in Bedford report that Eleanor and Llywelyn had been married by proxy prior to her capture.<sup>211</sup> The Red Book of Hergest identifies Eleanor's status as a *gwraig briod* already having been attained 'by words of the present'.<sup>212</sup> By sending envoys to France to ensure that he and Eleanor were married by proxy before she even left the Monfort refuge in Montargis, Llywelyn ensured that their union would receive

<sup>206</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 394, 397; J.B. Smith, 'Offra Principis Wallie Domino Regi', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 21 (1964–6), pp. 363–5.

<sup>207</sup> See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 390–450, especially pp. 410–12, 449. In the face of Dafydd's defection, Llywelyn faced an increased urgency to produce an heir as his successor, for which the marriage may also have been expedited.

<sup>208</sup> See *HW*, ii, p. 757; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 393.

<sup>209</sup> *AnnDunst*, pp. 259, 266; *Annales Monasterii de Oseneia*, in *AM*, iv, pp. 266–7; *AnnWav*, p. 388; *AnnWorc*, pp. 469–70; *AnnWinc*, p. 121; 'Chronicon Thomæ Wykes', in *AM*, pp. 4, 267–8; Nicholas Trevet, *Annales Sex Regum Angliæ, 1135–1307*, ed. T. Hog (London, English Historical Society, 1845), p. 294.

<sup>210</sup> *AnnWorc*, p. 469.

<sup>211</sup> *Brut y Tywysogion* Peniarth 20 and the *Annales Dunstaplia* are similar, stating 'that Eleanor and the prince had married through words uttered by proxy' (*Leulinus, princeps Walliæ, Alienoram duxit in uxorem per nuntios*). *BS*, pp. 252–3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 222–3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 117; *BT, RBH*, p. 262–5; *AnnDunst*, pp. 259, 266.

<sup>212</sup> *Ar Elianor honno a gymerassei [raffei] Lywelyn yn wreic priawt idaw drwy eireu kyndrychawl*. *BS*, pp. 252–3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 222–3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 117; *BT, RBH*, p. 262–5. A marriage *per verba de presenti* was recognised as a permanent contract, immediately effective and did not require the need for consummation of the union for it to be binding. This is opposed to a marriage created *per verba de future* by which consummation was a necessary means of cementing the union. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, pp. 237, 262–8, 333–5, 351–5; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 397–8.

ecclesiastical support.<sup>213</sup> The marriage became a matter of deep-rooted controversy and a political power struggle between the prince of Wales and the king of England.<sup>214</sup>

The prince of Wales, who amongst other things failed to pledge his unconditional homage and fealty to the king of England no less than four times, was branded a rebel in November 1276.<sup>215</sup> In 1277 he sent a series of letters, petitions and proposals to Edward as a means of forging some form of reconciliation. In a memorandum of proposals dated January or February 1277, Llywelyn offered to pay the king homage at Montgomery or Oswestry, to act justly to the barons of Wales and the English barons in the March according to their rights defined by laws and customs and pay the king a large sum of money for the homage of Rhys ap Maredudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth (d. 1292), a man loyal to the English crown. Llywelyn also offered to compensate the king 6,000 marks fifteen days after paying homage if he restored his wife and consort, the Lady Eleanor (*domine Alienore uxoris sue et sue comitive*).<sup>216</sup> It was not the first time that Llywelyn had offered money in exchange for Eleanor's freedom. The Waverley annals state that in 1276 the prince had been summoned to Parliament, but had been unwilling to go, instead sending messengers on his behalf to make peace and offer money for his wife's release.<sup>217</sup> The king, however, deemed Llywelyn's proposals insufficient<sup>218</sup> and remained unwilling to recognise the marriage between the couple or agree to Eleanor's freedom.

It seems that Edward's biggest problem with the marriage was its potential to generate discord throughout his kingdom.<sup>219</sup> Llywelyn had sided with Simon de Montfort during the barons' wars and marrying Eleanor ten years later was a continued demonstration of his rebellious nature towards the Crown. The king expressed these concerns in a letter addressed to Robert Kilwardby, archbishop of Canterbury (1273–1238), claiming that Eleanor, herself, believed her marriage

<sup>213</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 394, 397-8.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* 393-99; Smith, 'Offra Principis Wallie', pp. 363-5.

<sup>215</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1900– ), 1272–79, pp. 359-60. See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 402-10.

<sup>216</sup> AWR, no. 398, pp. 583-5. Also see AWR, no. 399, p. 586; Smith, 'Offra Principis Wallie'.

<sup>217</sup> *AnnWav*, p. 386.

<sup>218</sup> AWR, no. 400, pp. 586-7.

<sup>219</sup> *HW*, ii, pp. 756-7; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 401-2.

promised the support needed to take up her father's cause.<sup>220</sup> The king's distrust of the union and his desire to keep the two parties separated is also referred to in the chronicles of Thomas Wykes (*fl.* 1258–1293), Nicholas Trevet (1258?–1328) and the annals of Worcester abbey.<sup>221</sup>

Edward's refusal to meet Llywelyn half way was one of the reasons the prince requested that his safe conduct to England in 1277 (to finally pay homage) be overseen by powerful men such as the archbishop of Canterbury and the earls of Cornwall and Gloucester. Llywelyn cites Edward's wrongful arrest and imprisonment of an innocent Eleanor as cause for concern for his own liberty and safety.<sup>222</sup> During this time, between December 1276 and January 1277, Llywelyn informed the pope of Eleanor's unlawful detention.<sup>223</sup> In February 1277, Pope John XXI (1276–1277) intervened on Llywelyn's behalf, urging Edward to restore Eleanor's liberty as she was his lawful wife, the couple having been married by proxy.<sup>224</sup> This intervention, too, went unheeded. The chronicles record that 'Llywelyn frequently sent messengers to the king's court to seek to arrange peace between them, but he did not succeed at all'.<sup>225</sup> Llywelyn's letters sent between January and February 1277 humbly beg for the king's peace and friendship,<sup>226</sup> with offers to pay homage, fealty and an enormous sum of 25,000 marks.<sup>227</sup> These demonstrate his increased desperation to come to terms with the English king.<sup>228</sup> Threats of war and excommunication reinforced this need. In the end, Llywelyn suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the king and was forced to submit under the Treaty of Aberconwy, November 1277.

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<sup>220</sup> ... *quod de tali coniunctur a principi posset antiquum malicie seminarium quod pater suus conceperat, quod per se spargere non poterat ... per huius principis potestatem*. *The Liber Epistolaris of Richard de Bury*, (ed.) N. Denholm-Young (Roxburghe Club, London, 1950), no 85; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 395.

<sup>221</sup> *Chronicon Thomæ Wykes*, pp. 267-8; Trevet, *Annales Sex Regum Anglie*, p. 294; *AnnWorc*, iv, pp. 469-70

<sup>222</sup> *AWR*, no. 398, pp. 583-5. Also see no. 399, p. 586.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* no. 396, p. 580.

<sup>224</sup> *CPL*, i, pp. 451-4.

<sup>225</sup> *Blwydyn wedy hyny yr anuones Llywely kenadeu yn vynych ylys y brenhin y geissyaw furyshau hedwch yrygthunt. Ac ny dygrynoew dim*. *BT, Pen20*, p. 223; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 118; *BT, RBH*, pp. 264-5; *BS*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>226</sup> *AWR*, no. 399, p. 586; no. 400, pp. 586-7; no. 401, p. 588.

<sup>227</sup> 14,000 marks he had already been obliged to pay. *Ibid.* no. 399, p. 586.

<sup>228</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 412, 414-45.



The extent of Llywelyn's dishonour and removal from power is elucidated in the treaty.<sup>229</sup> Effectively, he lost sole control over Wales and the rights with his status as 'prince of Wales' formally defined by the Treaty of Montgomery in 1267.<sup>230</sup> Llywelyn tendered his homage during the Christmas celebrations in London in 1278<sup>231</sup> and it is likely that during this time the two rulers reached an agreement concerning Eleanor, though there is no evidence of this. However, Goronwy ap Heilin, a high-ranking member of the prince's entourage, was given permission to privately consult with Eleanor on Llywelyn's behalf, which suggests an extreme level of leniency and compromise on the king's behalf.<sup>232</sup> The Waverley annals state that it was not long after this that Eleanor was released and her protection transferred to Llywelyn.<sup>233</sup>

Eleanor's release in January 1278 was likely an act of conciliation by the king, in recognition of Llywelyn's obedient behaviour, although the *Brutiau* suggest that it was actually due to the intercession of the pope and the leading men of England that Eleanor was finally liberated.<sup>234</sup> The Dunstaple annals relate that the king allowed the prince's wife her freedom and that she returned with him to Wales.<sup>235</sup> Following their return, Edward sent officials to ensure that arrangements were made for Eleanor to receive a dower,<sup>236</sup> which as J. B. Smith says, was a sign of Edward's interest in his cousin's future<sup>237</sup> and hints at the king's own future intentions of recognising their marriage.

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<sup>229</sup> Llywelyn's rightful jurisdiction was confined to Gwynedd, west of the Conwy. He lost the rights of homage to be made to him by other Welsh rulers and had to pay £50,000 for his disobedience and injuries done to the king, free his brother Owain and allow him to recover his patrimony, turn hostages over to the king and pay homage to him at London. *AWR*, no. 402, pp. 589-94; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 438-45. Llywelyn's brother Owain was reinstated in the cantref of Llyn and given joint control of Gwynedd with Llywelyn.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* 180, 394-5.

<sup>231</sup> *BT, Pen20*, p. 226; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 119; *BT, RBH*, pp. 266-7.

<sup>232</sup> 'Calendar of the Welsh Rolls', in *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls, Supplementary Close Rolls, Welsh Rolls, Scutage Rolls, preserved in the Public Record Office A.D. 1277-1326* (London, 1912), p. 170.

<sup>233</sup> *Non multo post Alienora filia comitis quondam Leycestriae, quae tunc in custodia domini regis apud Wyndleshores extiterat detenta, ad ipsum Leulinum in Walliam est transmissa. AnnWav*, p. 388.

<sup>234</sup> *BS*, pp. 252-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 222-3; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 117; *BT, RBH*, p. 262-3.

<sup>235</sup> *Natale Domini apud Londoniam dominus rex celebravit ipso anno; et Leulinus, princeps Walliae, interfuit tunc ibidem; et postea in Walliam pacifice est reversus. Postea dominus rex Alienoram de Monteforti, uxorem principis, deliberavit a prisona; et eam cum honore et conductu nobelium ad ipsum principem destinavit. AnnDunst*, p. 276.

<sup>236</sup> *CWR*, pp. 162-3.

<sup>237</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 446-7.

It was a further nine months after Eleanor's release, in October 1278, that the two were finally married.<sup>238</sup> The ceremony took place at Worcester cathedral and was attended by Edward and his queen, Eleanor of Castile (d. 1290), the king and queen of Scotland and many noble magnates. The festivities were paid for by Edward.<sup>239</sup> He and his wife gave Eleanor a handkerchief and Llywelyn a marker for his prayer-book.<sup>240</sup> The Worcester annals claim that it was the king who gave Eleanor away at the ceremony,<sup>241</sup> while the *Brutiau* exclaims that 'king Edward and Edmund, his brother, gave Eleanor, daughter of Simon de Montfort, their kinswoman, as wedded wife to the prince'.<sup>242</sup> Thomas Wykes offers a more romanticised version of events declaring Llywelyn the winner 'with a heart that leapt for joy' in reclaiming 'his beloved spouse, for whose loving embraced he had so long yearned'.<sup>243</sup>

The marriage between Eleanor and Llywelyn as it appears in the Welsh chronicles has already been discussed,<sup>244</sup> nevertheless it is important to emphasise the significance of the union in terms of Eleanor's own position. Chronicles, chancery documents and ecclesiastical records convey that Eleanor's status, even before the formal wedding ceremony, was that of a de Montfort and immediate relative of Edward I, but, more interestingly, also as Llywelyn's lawful wife. Edward clearly believed that she had the acumen to recognise that the pairing of the two ranks promised her considerable political leverage in creating a large following that would cause dissension in his realm. This is likely one of the key reasons he kept her imprisoned for so long.<sup>245</sup> It seems that his perception of Eleanor's position changed once Llywelyn's own power was significantly weakened and allowed them to marry. Although technically her status as princess of Wales was regarded by royal officials as being in name only, commensurate with Llywelyn's own newly

<sup>238</sup> e.g. *AC*, p. 105; *AnnWav*, p. 389; *BT*, *RBH*, p. 383.

<sup>239</sup> ... *a phriodas a wneath pwyt yrwg Llywely ac Elenor digwyl Sein Edward vrenhin ygkaer wynt ac Edward vrenhin nny lle yngwneuthur ydreul yn eheleath dros y neithyawr*. *BS*, pp. 252-3; *BT*, *Pen20*, pp. 222-3; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 117; *BT*, *RBH*, p. 262-3.

<sup>240</sup> See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 449.

<sup>241</sup> *AnnWorc*, p. 476.

<sup>242</sup> *BT*, *Pen20*, p. 226; *BT*, *Pen20Tr*, p. 119; *BT*, *RBH*, pp. 266-7.

<sup>243</sup> *Renovato igitur inter regem Angliæ et Lewelinum fœdere, princeps ipse in festo Translationis beati Edwardi, in quindena videlicet Sancti Michaelis, annuente rege Anglorum, desideratissimam sibi sponsam, ad cujus amplexus diutius asperaverat, filiam Symonis de Monteforti quondam comitis Leycestriæ, in civitate Wygórniensi, procerum regni hujus ibidem multitudine convocata, non sine magno cordis tripudio desponsavit*. 'Chronicon Thomæ Wykes', p. 277. Translation in *HW*, ii, p. 761.

<sup>244</sup> Chapter 3, pp. 99-101.

<sup>245</sup> Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 390-7, 401-02.

debased status, surviving evidence shows that she successfully used the traditional agency associated with ‘queen’, and as a ruler’s wife, to implement her authority as a means of influencing royal procedures. Eleanor may have not used her rank to overtly political ends or in a way that explicitly threatened the Crown, but, like Joan, she appears to have been very adept at manipulating personal relationships for political capital.

Eleanor’s first act of agency is recorded in March 1279 when she petitioned Edward for the pardon of abjuration of the realm for ten men who accompanied her from France and who were still imprisoned. The pardon was granted ‘at the instance of Eleanor, the king’s kinswoman, princess of Wales and lady of Snowdon’.<sup>246</sup> As with Joan’s petitions to King John in 1214 and 1215, Eleanor’s original petition does not survive, but it is likely to have been submitted in written form given the use of her official title.<sup>247</sup> This is evidenced by the survival of another petition issued by her as princess of Wales (*devota Alienora principissa Wall(ie), domina Snaudon’*) probably sent in October 1279 asking the king to show clemency towards the fate of Amaury.<sup>248</sup> Eleanor refers to Edward as ‘lord’ and ‘king of England’ (*principi necnon consanguineo suo karissimo domino Ed(wardo) Dei gratia regi Anglie*), and tells him that she yearns for news of his well being and prosperity before pleading with him on bended knees and with tears — similar to Joan — that he act compassionately and mercifully towards her brother and receive him into his grace. Having been informed that the king proposed to discuss his case, Eleanor took it upon herself to remind him that as he had acted reasonably and with clemency towards strangers, so should he be expected to do so for close relatives.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1272–81*, p. 306.

<sup>247</sup> See *AWR*, no. 432, p. 629, notes.

<sup>248</sup> *Excellentissimo principi necnon consanguineo suo karissimo domino Ed(wardo) Dei gratia regi Anglie, domino Hib(er)nie, duci Aquitann(ie) sua devota Alienora principissa Wall(ie), domina Snaudon’ salutem cum ea que decet sincera dilectione tanto domino et consanguineo tam propinquo. Excellencie vestre constare facimus per presentes nos, benedictus Deus, bona sanitate et prosperitate gaudere, quod de vobis scire non solum cupimus sed sitimus. Et quia nobis ab aliquibus est relatum quod in instanti parlamento de karissimi fratris nostri domini Amalrici status relevatione proponitis habere tractatum, ideo complosis manibus genibusque flexis ac gemitibus lacrimosis maiestati vestre supplicamus quatinus, divinam clemenciam ex vestri cordis intimo respicientes, que omnibus manum pietatis extendit, precipue hiis qui se ex toto corde requirunt, prefatum fratrem nostrum et consanguineum vestrum, benignitatem vestram, ut intelligimus, suppliciter postulantes, ad gratiam et pacem vestram misericorditer velit recipere. Si enim exelencia vestra, prout sepius novimus, clementer extraneis condescendit, multo magis, ut credimus, nature vestre tam propinque manum debetis porigere pietatis. Valeat in domino per tempora longiora.* *AWR*, no. 435, pp. 630–631. English translation [found] in Crawford, *Letters of Medieval Women*, p. 137.

<sup>249</sup> *AWR*, no. 435, pp. 630–1.

The similarity in the surviving letters issued by Eleanor and Joan may be a coincidence. More likely, however, is that Eleanor had either seen a copy of Joan's letter or was at least aware of it. The structure of the letters themselves, especially in reference to the shedding of tears, may indicate that both women were following conventional codes of practice concerning Welsh 'queenly' behaviour. Yet, that they are the only two surviving letters exemplifying Welsh 'queenship' in practice makes it difficult to determine with certainty. Nonetheless, the resemblance between the two does denote an awareness by Eleanor, or at least her officers, of queenly diplomatic expectation and tactics that were likely to work. In many ways, these two letters appear to be a very strong example, and certainly the only record of 'queenly' instruction and education being passed down through generations of women within a princely dynasty.

Eleanor used the rights and obligations associated with her relationship to Edward (*principi necnon consanguineo suo karissimo domino Ed(wardo)*), as well as those as princess of Wales, lady of Snowdon (*Al(ienora) principissa Wall(ie), domina Snaudon*), to intercede in affairs concerning her mother's will. She wrote to the king on 10 October 1280 after Edward's refusal to allow Nicholas de Waltham, a canon of Lincoln, to act as executor.<sup>250</sup> Waltham previously represented the countess of Leicester at court in 1275, but was suspected of being involved in a conspiracy against the king, having joined forces with Guy and Amaury de Montfort and Llywelyn. Eleanor intervened lest her mother's last wishes were not met and implored her kinsman and king to inform her when her mother's goods, Eleanor's legacy, would be ready to be collected from the royal treasury.

In one of her last letters to the king, sent on 2 February 1282, again in her designated capacity as princess of Wales (*principissa Wallie, domina Snaudon'*) Eleanor confronted her lord and beloved cousin (*domino suo et karissimo consanguineo*) stating her surprise at the news that he allowed certain merchants to harass her husband over a matter of little significance when Llywelyn was

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<sup>250</sup> *Excellenti suo domino ac consanguineo, si placet, confidentissimo domino Ed(wardo) Dei gratia illustri regi Angl(ie), domino Ybern(ie) ac duci Aquitt' sua devotissima Al(ienora) principissa Wall(ie), domina Snaudon' salutem cum affectibus intime dilectionis. Quia non placet vestre excellentie ut magister Nichol(as) de Whatham prosequatur testamentum bone memorie Alienore amice vestre et matris nostre in regno vestro, ideo rogamus dominationem vestram humiliter et attente quatinus vos ipsi, si placet, faciatis levare seu colligere res suas testatas in scacario vestro, quibus levatis et collectis, si placet, premuniatis nos de die et loco, quibus possimus partem nobis legatam recipere, ne ultima voluntas prefate vestre amicce careat fine debito. Ibid. no. 434, p. 630.*

judiciously acting in accordance to the customs of his lands. She tells Edward it is strange that complaints concerning her husband were listened to before the case was even discussed in the prince's land.<sup>251</sup> She then petitions for the release of three Englishmen who accompanied her to Wales from France, arguing over the harshness of king's judgement to send them into exile, being poor men who would be offered more opportunities to earn a living in their homeland than elsewhere. Eleanor refers to the free status of one John Becard, who had been captured along with her and the other men, but who had recently been restored to the king's peace due to the intervention of others even though she had long pursued a pardon for him, without results, or even 'without being heard'.<sup>252</sup> Eleanor continues with an admonishment of Edward's disregard of their personal relationship and her own personal authority, stating that 'she did not believe that she was so estranged from the king that he would not more quickly receive them into his peace for her sake than for the sake of others'.

In all of these cases, which are similar to the examples concerning Joan, Eleanor's reasons for her interventions had a dual purpose. Certainly, her personal ties to the English king date to Eleanor's childhood, as evidenced in the household roll of her mother in the year 1265 and Eleanor's delivery of letters to 'the lord Edward' (*domino Edwardo*).<sup>253</sup> It does seem they had an affectionate bond. Using her identity as the princess of Wales and referring to Edward as her cousin and lord king, Eleanor employed a form of agency that was associated with her status as

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<sup>251</sup> *Excellenti domino suo et karissimo consanguineo domino Edwardo regi Anglie, domino Hibernie et duci Acquitann(ie) sua devota Eilenora principissa Wallie, domina Snaudon' salutem cum ea que decet sincera dilectione tanto domino et consanguineo tam propinquo. Quia multum desideramus prospera scire de statu vestre quem Deus semper salvet et gubernet, ideo excellenciam vestram requirimus quatinus pro amore nostro statum vestrum et si que vestre excellencie placuerint nobis significetis. Ad hec non modicum admiramur de hoc quod dominum nostrum principem sustinere velitis vexari per quosdam mercatores, qui sibi in nullo perisicantur, benedictus Deus, ex quo enim dominus princeps paratus est omnem iusticiam exhibere secundum consuetudines terre sue de hiis que in terra eadem fiunt vel contingunt. Extraneum videtur quod cuilibet querelanti de se credatur ante quam res ipsa luculentur in terra sua discussiatur. Ideo propter Deum remedium in hac patre efficac si placet apponatis. Ceterum quia intelleximus quod aliqui de hominibus nostris et unus quem bene noscitis, scilicet Iohannes de Becar, qui nobiscum fuerunt capti per preces aliquorum sunt paci vestre restituti, et nos pro eisdem sepius vos requisivimus nec adhuc sumus exaudite, nec credebamus a vobis aliquo modo tantum elongari, quin citius pro nobis eos ad pacem vestram reciperetis quam pro aliis; ideo nichilominus vobis supplicamus ut Hugone(m) de Pu(n)fred, Hugone(m) Coquem et Philipu(m) Cissorem ad pacem recipere velitis, si placet, ex quo enim pauperes sunt, et de A(n)glia oriundi ubi melius possunt quam alibi victitare, durum esset eis a proprio solo exulari. Valet. Ibid. no. 436, pp. 631-2.*

<sup>252</sup> This refers to her petition in 1279 discussed above.

<sup>253</sup> *Manners and Household Expenses of England in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. T.H. Turner (London, 1841), pp. xxxv-xxxvi, 18.

Edward's vassal and his kinswoman. With this level of personal appeal in a very diplomatic form, as is evident by the address used in each example, followed by the *supersalutatio*, Eleanor shows her ability to meet the expectations defined by gendered status and her social position or, certainly, had the services of a letter secretary capable of expressing these expectations. Further, her consistent use of her own title implies that she was fulfilling the duties of her role as consort and supports the idea that she possessed an understanding of the type of authority she could wield in such a position.

The outcomes of her petitions suggest they were a direct result of Eleanor's influence. It seems likely that Eleanor's intervention on behalf of her brother helped to expedite matters.<sup>254</sup> Although John Becard may have been pardoned at the instance of Luke de Tany in January 1282,<sup>255</sup> the Patent Rolls for 1282 state that it was due to Eleanor's insistence (as the princess of Wales and the king's kinswoman) that Hugh de Punfred, Hugh Cook and Philip Taylor were pardoned from allegations made against them.<sup>256</sup> That Eleanor plays on the personal and political in the surviving evidence makes for a convincing argument that she understood the remit of activities and influence associated with her status as a Welsh ruler's consort and combined this authority with her position as a member of the English royal family. Looking at these petitions, it is clear that Eleanor was acting both in an official and unofficial capacity.

One of her surviving letters, written sometime between 1279 and 1281, emphasises that role as mediator was still one that the Welsh 'queen' was expected to play.<sup>257</sup> Eleanor requests word of Edward's good health and state of affairs. She

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<sup>254</sup> The endorsement in Amaury's case tells that his circumstances were examined and that the results of the discussion suggested that his release was much closer to becoming a reality. Queen Margaret of France also sent a letter, datable to 7 October 1279, asking for mercy in Amaury's case. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 400 and n. 42.

<sup>255</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1272–81*, p. 423.

<sup>256</sup> *Pat. Rolls, 1281–92*, p. 11.

<sup>257</sup> *Excellenti domino suo et consanguineo predilecto domino E. Dei gratia regi Angl(ie), domino Hib(er)n(ie) et duci Aquitann(ie) sua devote consanguinea Alianora principissa Wallie, domina Snaudon' salute cum ea que decet sincera dilectione consanguineo tanto et tam proprinquo. Noverit vestra excellencia quod de vestro statu bonos et prosperos rumores scire desideramus. Ideo vestram excellenciam humiliter rogamus et attente quatinus pro amore nostro statum vestrum, et si que penes nos volueritis que vestro cederint honori vel placuerint maiestati, nobis sicut consanguinee vobis humili et promte ad vestra beneplacita significare velitis, quamquam, ut audivimus, hiis contraria ab aliquibus vestre excellencie de nobis sint relata. Et tamen nullo modo credimus vos aliquibus de domino nostro vel nobis sinistra referentibus fidem adhibere donec a nobis sciretis si talia dicta continent veritatem, ex quo tantum honorem tantamque familiaritatem domino nostro et nobis, quando ultimo Wigorn' fuimus, vestra gratia exhibuistis. Quocirca quicquid circa hec vel alia que volueritis nobis demandare parate erimus semper pro viribus exequi et complere. Dat' apud*

then pleads with him to disregard unfavourable reports that he has heard regarding the couple's reverence of him as their kin and king, asking him to address the issue directly with them so they can prove otherwise. She urges him to remember their friendliness and good natured relations when they last met at Worcester, stating that whatever he demands from them they will 'execute and accomplish' according to their ability to do so.

In very specific ways, this letter is analogous with that written by Joan to Henry III some forty years earlier. Both women, perhaps self-consciously, underscore their personal relationships with the kings of England, as a means of exerting (more constructive?) political influence through the more 'informal' avenue of 'family context' often circumscribed to women of their stature, defined by gender expectations and the bonds of kinship. In these two instances, this was, perhaps, the most effective route in terms of establishing trust. More importantly, both women underscore their formal political roles through the use of their designations as ladies/princesses of Wales, and not simply as the wives of Welsh rulers. Eleanor is a singular example to be used for a discussion of the practice of Welsh 'queenship' as the survival of evidence concerning *acta* issued by her are examples of how women used personal relationships to political advantages — utilising the bonds of kinship as a measuring stick in which to procure objectives — and how a woman in such a position viewed herself and her responsibilities.

None of the chronicles refer to Eleanor's movements or activities once she formally married Llywelyn, only her death in childbirth is recorded.<sup>258</sup> Chancery records reveal that her role and influence as princess of Wales was a positive force in the dealings she was personally involved in. The above evidence provides a good indication that Eleanor deliberately used her position as the prince's wife and the king's cousin to exercise agency that befitted her 'queenly' status and position within the English royal family. It is unfortunate that her life was cut so extremely short. Certainly, if she had lived longer, such a role may have significantly changed the outcome of events in 1282 and perhaps beyond. Indeed, the examples of Joan and Senana are proof that the wives of Welsh rulers were politically active and used their uxorial status as a means of authority. Eleanor's case is not entirely different.

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*Lannmaes viii<sup>o</sup> die iulii*. AWR, no. 433, pp. 629-30. Translation in *Letters of Medieval Women*, ed. by Crawford, p. 137.

<sup>258</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 99-101.

Although her activities were more ‘behind the scenes’, and associated more with her own situations rather than Llywelyn’s, they are yet useful examples in which to assess the political activities Welsh ‘queens’ working within the remit prescribed by gender ideals and expectations for women of their status, acquiring public acceptance concerning the duties of the ‘queen’ and her office in the process.

### ***WELSH QUEENSHIP IN PRACTICE***

It may be that the agency exercised by Joan, Senana and Eleanor was in correlation with Gwynedd’s prominence during their reigns. Certainly it seems that it was precisely within Anglo-Welsh relations that Joan and Eleanor, and perhaps Senana to an extent, had the greatest scope for agency. There is no real evidence that Joan and Eleanor were marginalised or considered aliens (*alltudion*) because of their backgrounds. In fact, it may be that the language and customs of the Anglo-Norman courts Joan and Eleanor brought with them as consorts of the princes of Wales helped to establish their political roles as ‘Welsh queens’. Because the sources are silent about female political intervention within Wales — as envoys to other Welsh rulers — it is not possible to tell how far such active, diplomatic roles for royal women were acceptable in Welsh society itself. Neither is it straightforward to consider *a)* how far as outsiders Anglo-Norman women were able to integrate into the customs of the Welsh courts in ways that allowed them to take active roles associated with native queenship and *b)* how far they were able to embrace the cultural expectations of native queenship that helped them wield power. Likely, it was a combination of the two. Surely they were educated in Welsh courtly expectations and they may have pooled other resources, such as drawing on their previous education in Anglo-Norman custom and understanding of family obligations to exercise the agency they did. It is important to recognize that lack of evidence may not demonstrate lack of activity or integration.

Of the three main case studies, Joan was likely of the youngest age when she married and entered Llywelyn’s court as his consort around the age of 15. Although a bastard daughter of King John, she was both acknowledged and provided for in early life and though she may not have been raised in the king’s court, she was surely aware of the duties and expectations of queenship and those of a royal wife. It must not be forgotten that her paternal grandmother was, after all, Eleanor of



Aquitaine (c. 1122–1204) and her great-aunt was Emma of Anjou. Upon entering Llywelyn's court Joan was likely educated in the traditional expectations of Welsh queenship, surely to do with hospitality and gift-giving and the 'queen's' role at festive occasions. It is also more than likely that she was educated about traditions of the *rhieingylch*<sup>259</sup> and the administrative expectations of the 'queen' regarding her own treasury and production of documents. It seems as if Joan grew into her role and was able to better establish her status as 'queen' and exercise serious diplomatic agency as she matured.

Eleanor was older when she arrived at Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's court as his wife at the age of 20. Having spent her life in the midst of political and family oriented turmoil,<sup>260</sup> it seems likely that she, too, was educated in political diplomacy at an early age, as many of her extant letters demonstrate. It is probable that the activities of Joan (and likely Emma of Anjou) were explained, or in the least known, to Eleanor as models of queenly agency and expectations of the Welsh court. Although she was only 24 when she died, her surviving *acta* suggests that, had she lived longer, her diplomatic acumen would have evolved to help her achieve an effective, if not formidable, level of political agency. Of the three, perhaps Senana — who was native Welsh and, like her husband, descended from the lines of Gruffudd ap Cynan and Owain Gwynedd — was educated in the Welsh tradition from an early age.<sup>261</sup> However, as nothing is known of her early life, it is difficult to estimate her age when she met with Henry in late summer 1241. Nevertheless, Senana's negotiations with the Crown provides evidence of a woman who was mature and pragmatic.

These recorded examples from Gwynedd may be ones that highlight the fundamental roles the Welsh 'queen', acting as a counsellor and diplomat. Unfortunately, there is no record of Isabella de Braose fulfilling the office of 'queen' whilst she was married to Dafydd ap Llywelyn. Elizabeth de Ferrers (*fl.* 1265–1283),<sup>262</sup> who was for all practical purposes the last 'reigning Welsh queen', married Dafydd ap Gruffudd (d. 1283), Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's youngest brother, sometime

<sup>259</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 151-60.

<sup>260</sup> See J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge, 1994); L. Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort: A Rebel Countess in Medieval England* (London, 2012), especially pp. 72-125.

<sup>261</sup> See Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, iii, p. 447. Bartrum notes that Senana seems to have been unfamiliar to early Welsh genealogists, but given her role in 1241, this seems unlikely.

<sup>262</sup> Elizabeth was the widow of William Marshal (*d.* 1265) and sister of the earl of Derby, Robert Ferrers (*d.* 1279).

after 1265. The only recorded instance of her exercising ‘queenly’ political agency is for the year 1283 when Dafydd, who was then prince of Wales, sent her to the English king to plead for mercy at the historical height of conflict, resulting in the end of native rule in Wales.<sup>263</sup> Elizabeth’s attempt was unsuccessful and her husband was soon captured by English forces, put on trial as a traitor and executed.<sup>264</sup> The London Annals state that Elizabeth and their children were also taken into custody at the same time as Dafydd.<sup>265</sup> Their children remained in custody for the remainder of their lifetimes, but the fate of the ‘queen’ Elizabeth herself remains obscured. Although Elizabeth de Ferrers was not successful in her political endeavours, as has been seen, neither were the other women on certain occasions. For Elizabeth, especially, extenuating political circumstances probably played a crucial role in the result of her diplomatic mission. Joan and Eleanor’s blood ties and close lifecycle connections to the English kings may have enhanced their authority in situations, but Senana’s success also shows the level of policy a Welsh ‘queen’ could achieve in her own right, as wife and consort. The activities of these ‘queens’, especially tempered with the knowledge that neither Senana, nor Elizabeth, had direct blood relations to the English Crown, provides enough evidence to suggest that perhaps an expectation of the Welsh ‘queen’ was on par with her European contemporaries, acknowledging that the ‘queen’ had a functional and potentially successful role as a diplomat.

The diplomatics of the examples found amongst the *acta* of the Welsh rulers pertaining to the agency of all three case studies<sup>266</sup> suggest these women understood their roles as defined by royal uxorial status. This helped them develop the valuable political connections necessary for the successful preservation of their families authority by ‘cultivating an independent circle of influence’.<sup>267</sup> For Joan and Eleanor, certainly, their direct and personal contact with the English Crown provided a forum for influence and intervention founded in their own circle of familial intimacy. For Senana, as a wife in control of the family lordship during the

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<sup>263</sup> Cotton Vesp. B xi, f. 29<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>264</sup> *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls, 1277–1326*, p. 281.

<sup>265</sup> *Annales Londoniensis, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, vol. I, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series, London, 1882), p. 90.

<sup>266</sup> A total of 13 out of 618 acts (2.10%): 6 related to Joan (0.97%), 5 related to Eleanor (0.81%) and 2 related to Senana (0.32%).

<sup>267</sup> Rabin, ‘Female Advocacy and Royal Protection’, p. 265.

prolonged absences of her husband, she, too, would have had to create and sustain affiliations to achieve the results needed to protect her family's interests.

It is worth addressing the issue of how far the view of Welsh 'queens' in practice is skewed by the surviving evidence that highlights the roles of the Venedotian 'queens' in negotiations with kings of England. The paucity of sources available on the political practices of royal women in other parts of Wales makes it difficult to assess how far their actions are representative of the Welsh 'queen's'. The diplomatic aspects of the twelfth-century narrative of Nest in the *Brutiau*, in which she mediates for the release of her children for example, may offer a southern example of 'queenship' in practice. As such, it may be that the activities of the 'queens' from Gwynedd were not necessarily innovative. This seems unlikely, however, as evidence suggests family connections and their lifecycle stages offered them an accepted scope for intervention in the political context in which they and their husbands found themselves. Nonetheless, circumstances and scope for intervention are, in some ways, reminiscent to the case of Nest who can arguably be viewed as an image of the royal married woman acting as a mediator and even counsellor in a very political affair a century before Joan.<sup>268</sup>

References to queenship in practice regarding mid and south Wales are speculative. Literary images of queen's going on circuit come from sources with connections to mid and south Wales, which may highlight a duty expected of a queen from those areas, especially.<sup>269</sup> Gerald's reference to the princess Gwenllian dying in battle may also be an evocative means of describing the expectations of a 'queen' in practice. Was the royal woman as a 'warrior-ruler' a trait that, at least in earlier times, had been associated with the Welsh 'queen'? Was this a more southern characteristic if it was actually a glorified attribute? Or is it just another example of circumstance dictating agency? Gwenllian and her sister Susanna, who married Madog ap Maredudd, ruler of Powys, certainly understood the ways of the Welsh court and the duties of the Welsh queen as their mother was, after all, Angharad, the renowned queen of Gwynedd. Through her own father, Owain ab Edwin, Angharad was descended from the royal lines of Hwyl Dda and Bleddyn ap Cynfyn of Powys.<sup>270</sup> It should also be remembered that Angharad was the aunt of Cristin,

<sup>268</sup> See Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 42.

<sup>269</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 143-6.

<sup>270</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 54-5; *HGK*, pp. 2.

Owain Gwynedd's wife. From such an example, it is important to consider that an understanding of the ideals of native queenship must have been facilitated through generations of women intermarrying into and communicating between native courts and not simply provided within the husband's court and, thereby, masculine context.

Medieval Welsh genealogical tracts highlight the complexity of links between the three principal Welsh dynasties, as well as with lesser principalities, made through marriage. There must have been expectations and education in native Welsh queenship that passed through each generation, as is perhaps exemplified across dynasties, like through Angharad and her daughter Gwenllian and in the similarity in the letters written by Joan and Eleanor. Further, Senana was Eleanor's mother-in-law, so Eleanor, herself, may have had a more intimate understanding of the customs of Welsh queenship than Joan, for example. Such an education must have involved a need for the understanding of how far and useful it was to develop and maintain influential networks to solidify the bonds of kinship, and using familial relationships as a means of attaining success and agency.

## ***CONCLUSION***

A clear understanding of the office of queenship (and kingship) cannot exist separately from notions of gender and bonds of kinship. The interplay between gender expectations and ideals of sovereignty define the most common traits of queenship.<sup>271</sup> As daughters, sisters, wives, mothers and kinswomen, queens had to find ways to manoeuvre within the context of male authority and power in order to exercise their own.<sup>272</sup> Though this may have socially limited their abilities to intervene in some affairs, many were able to manipulate expectations and their environment to achieve their goals. By and large, many of the circumstances that opened doors for women to exercise agency in a public and political realm were familial, which is especially evident when dynastic issues and powers of the state were closely involved.<sup>273</sup>

For the three case studies, one question is particularly pertinent: how far did the Plantagenet royal standing of Joan and Eleanor help raise their status and make them more 'queenly'? Of course, all three women were central to the support of

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 205.

<sup>272</sup> Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor', p. 188.

<sup>273</sup> Fradenburg, 'Rethinking Quenship', p. 4.

their husbands and were recognised as such by their husbands. For the two Llywelyns, their marital associations with the Plantagenets at times helped justify their use of force and display of power within Wales itself by means of nominal, if not very real, support of the English Crown at certain points in their careers. As there is no surviving evidence to the contrary, it seems that neither Joan nor Eleanor had specific claims to Welsh lands — the authority exclusive to ‘queenly’ status and identity — it seems their status and political influences rested with their kinship associations. Indeed, the very notion that they were Plantagenets, themselves, was the principal reason the marriages took place, especially in the case of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Their ‘queenly’ status exhibited in their activities as ambassadors and intermediaries reflect this. As outsiders, it is possible that Joan’s and Eleanor’s status and practice of ‘queenship’ was exercised in a way distinctive to their situations and their origins.<sup>274</sup> How far, if at all, their Plantagenet status differed from Senana’s status as a member of the Venedotian dynasty is difficult to assess. Although it is not possible to determine how far her status as a native Welsh woman of royal blood shaped her use of agency, on the most crucial of levels, like Joan and Eleanor, Senana’s status, certainly as Gruffudd’s wife, ensured her direct audience with the king of England. Moreover, her involvement in the formation of the 1241 agreement decided the fate of her family.

R. R. Davies comments that in medieval Wales, ‘Political ambition and military competition were essentially dynastic and familial’.<sup>275</sup> Politics were built around cognatic kinship, which not only affected the status of individuals and couples, but worked to create a complex social organisation. Welsh society used the multiplication of different loyalties as a strategy for keeping peace and instigating healing.<sup>276</sup> The bonds of power were both diplomatic and personal and intimately connected to the acquiescence of women’s public activities.<sup>277</sup> The public roles that Joan, Senana and Eleanor played, the policies and initiatives they introduced when provided with opportunities to do so, were often a product of their marital status and

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. S. Maclean, ‘Making a Difference in Tenth-Century Politics: King Athelstan’s Sisters and Frankish Queenship’, in P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (eds), *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester, 2008), p. 187.

<sup>275</sup> R.R. Davies, ‘Law and National Identity in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, in Id. *et al* (eds), *Welsh Society and Nationhood: Historical Essays presented to Glanmor Williams* (Cardiff, 1984), p. 13.

<sup>276</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 469-70.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Parsons, ‘Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power’, pp. 77-8.

what stage they were at in their lifecycles.<sup>278</sup> Support for this lies in the fact that on certain occasions they were used as political envoys, rather than other traditional members of the royal *llys* or ministerial elite like the *distain* or rulers' own preferred clerics.

There may have been tensions within the royal *llys* associated with the public activities of foreign wives, like Emma of Anjou, Joan and Eleanor which may account for the 'hit-and-miss' entries of their activities in the Welsh chronicles — inconsistencies may reflect native attitudes towards the intermittent function of the office of the foreign 'Welsh queen' as practised in Gwynedd and to these women in particular. Yet, it is surely significant that there are no other entries to be found detailing life events or the activities of native Welsh 'queens' or royal women in any of the chronicles, save for the entry concerning Nest's abduction in 1106=1109<sup>279</sup> and the deaths of Elen in 929 and Angharad in 1162 found in the *Brutiau* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*.<sup>280</sup>

It is important to recognise that the uxorial roles of Joan and Eleanor who served as 'imported princesses' also worked to enhance the status and position of Welsh rulership. These women had important diplomatic roles within the courts of their natal and marital families and their general demonstrations of power were associated with the roles assigned to them as royal women. It has been argued that the smaller the court a woman resided in as queen, the more numerous the opportunities for her to exercise valuable influence as was the case in England and France by the thirteenth century.<sup>281</sup> The courts of the princes of Gwynedd were relatively small in comparison to that of the kings of England, which may have helped to explain why Joan, Senana and Eleanor played such prominent roles in particular situations. It is clear that, regardless of the size of their individual courts, their positions, status and authority were all legitimised through the exercise of their influence to the benefit of their husbands' realms.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Cf. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p. 196.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Gruffudd ap Lywelyn's seizing of Hywel ab Edwin's wife after battle in the eleventh century. *BT, Pen20*, p. 36; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 13.

<sup>280</sup> *BS*, pp. 104-7, 162-3; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 41-2, 108; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 28-9, 62; *BT, RBH*, pp. 55-7, 142-3. See Chapter 2, pp. 102-05.

<sup>281</sup> M. Wade LaBarge, *The Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life* (Boston, 1986), pp. 47-8.

<sup>282</sup> Parsons, 'Ritual and Symbol', p. 67.

Evidence cited above strongly suggests that the primary lifecycle stage as a wife, rather than as a mother, ensured a politically acceptable means of the employment of female agency in medieval Wales. All three women, insofar as they were women of recognised status and the wives of Welsh rulers, exercised powers associated with their uxorial lifecycles and royal positions to bridge gaps in diplomacy in situations ‘where traditional male social hierarchies proved inadequate’.<sup>283</sup> As ‘weavers of peace’ they bound together opposing sides creating ‘a tapestry of friendship and amnesty’.<sup>284</sup> Their collective emphasis on kinship relations was used to generate circles of influence and increase support for their own families. These connections emphasised their own statuses and positions within both the Welsh and English courts, the former helping to increase the powers of the office of queen itself.<sup>285</sup> Their roles as mediators (or negotiators) and petitioners highlight their abilities in exercising traditional gendered forms of justice, underscored by ideals of feminine mercy and compassion.<sup>286</sup> Medieval writers often emphasized that the duty of the queen, as a wife, was to petition her husband, as the king, as a way of modifying his decisions, usually on behalf of those seen as being poor or oppressed.<sup>287</sup> The three examples given above show that these women employed uxorial agency to intercede for their husbands on the international stage, which, in some cases, resulted in the realisation of Welsh political and diplomatic objectives.

As the wives of princes of Gwynedd, these women created a forum in which their presence and involvement in events were unique amongst their Welsh social group, but not necessarily unique to Welsh ‘queenship’. The kinds of social and political connections these three particular women had warranted their public roles whose influences were far reaching. In their positions as ‘queens’, they took different avenues to achieving diplomatic and political goals in ways that neither negated nor lessened the positions of the men they were intimately connected to.

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<sup>283</sup> Rabin, ‘Female Advocacy and Royal Protection’, p. 285.

<sup>284</sup> Eshleman, ‘Weavers of Peace, Weavers of War’, p. 18; also see L. John Sklute, ‘Freoðuwebbe in Old English Poetry’, in H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen (eds), *New Readings in Old English Literature* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 208. ‘The arrangements were reciprocal; one expected to perform the same service for those within one’s power in exchange for the friendship. For both men and women, contacts were not exclusively male or female, although for some matters the connections of one sex could be more useful than those of the other’. Hanawalt, ‘Lady Honor’, p. 192.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Rabin, ‘Female Advocacy and Royal Protection’, pp. 279-80. This has already been discussed in terms of Joan’s own status in connection with the Laws of the Court. Chapter 3, pp. 182.

<sup>286</sup> See LaBarge, *Trumpet*, p. 46.

<sup>287</sup> Huneycutt, ‘Medieval Queenship’, p. 20.

The advocacy of these three women helped to promote the status of their husbands amongst their peers, overlords and even lesser subjects. The social and political office they held had a dual purpose: to remind the men they were to honour the bonds of kinship and the relationship between vassals and overlords.

Documentary evidence makes it clear that though these women intervened in very public and political cases, they did so with humility, loyalty and respect for the English kings as their overlords, thereby readily conforming to the cultural expectations of sex and their status as vassals. Further, and more importantly, the formal styles used by Joan and Eleanor, and in Senana's case the use of her own seal, are a reminder of their own statuses, not only as wives, sisters or cousins, but as 'queens' of Gwynedd in their own uxorial rights. Although Joan and Eleanor were integrated members of the English royal family,<sup>288</sup> their actions still provide an insight as to how women in Welsh society exercised agency and the expectations of married royal women in such capacities.

Certainly, in terms of thirteenth-century Gwynedd, the movements of the 'queen'-consorts were adapted to the specific situations at hand, but evidence of their successful employment of agency is obvious. It seems that the status of the Welsh 'queen' increased as Welsh polity evolved into a more centralised entity. The fact that documentary sources survive, which provide an outline of the direct political activities of these women is highly significant when faced with the awareness that no material exists for their Welsh counterparts save for Senana, and strikingly little for any of their twelfth-century predecessors, except for the deaths of Gwenllïan in the battle of Cydweli in 1137 noted by Gerald of Wales and Angharad noted by the *Brutiau* in 1162. This observation is given further weight by the fact that all three women appear in contemporaneous English chronicles.

Thus, the major question that looms over the subject of female political agency is not whether women participated, but how they contributed to events.<sup>289</sup> The Welsh queen seems to have been expected to fulfil certain roles associated with her uxorial lifecycle. Norms and perceptions suggest that both the queen's office and publicly sanctioned activities were largely defined by her feminised embodiment

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<sup>288</sup> This perhaps abetted the chances of the survival rate of documents, most of which are found within the official records of the English government and the chancery archives, namely enrolments and letters sent out. See Jack, *Medieval Wales*; G.R. Elton, *England 1200–1640* (London, 1969), pp. 31–82.

<sup>289</sup> Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', pp. 200, 201.



of masculine rule, a theme that seems to be constant in the assessment of singularly Welsh material from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There are strong indications that this was also the case in practice. As the public face of their husbands' authority the 'queens' of Gwynedd played important roles. Their positions within the Venedotian courts and uxorial status helped establish the parameters through which, as 'queens', they were able to successfully operate — as guardians of 'the royal home and hence, by extension, of the realm'.<sup>290</sup> Ultimately, the Welsh 'queen's' intimate link with the physical body of the king ensured her some constancy in being given opportunities to exercise power and authority with great effect.<sup>291</sup>

The concepts and ideals of medieval queenship were often associated with the personal and were subject to change according to individual levels of confidence and aspirations.<sup>292</sup> Although there is a danger in assuming that the conclusions of the many scholars with respect of medieval queenship in other parts of Europe apply to Wales, as this chapter has demonstrated and as the next one will also bear out, the institution of marriage provided women in the upper echelons of Welsh society with considerable scope for effectively exploiting their own forms of agency. As with royal and aristocratic women in late medieval England, Welsh documentary evidence shows that familial relationships frequently allowed royal and noble women in Wales a means of participating in politics — on the wider stage as exhibited here or within in their localities as will now be seen — and a chance to create their own destinies<sup>293</sup> by building on familial connections and their positions within their own marriages to generate a real source of female power.

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid. 205.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Stafford, 'Powers of the Queen', p. 10; Parsons, 'Ritual and Symbol', p. 60.

<sup>292</sup> Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', p. 203.

<sup>293</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 241.

# CHAPTER 5

## *LAND, LORDSHIP AND AGENCY*

### *INTRODUCTION*

The success of lordships in the Middle Ages was shaped by a family's ability to maintain control over areas under its jurisdiction, which largely involved the transmission of family property.<sup>1</sup> Issues of inheritance were important in the economic and political sustainability of the ruling elite and often followed strict rules that determined rights to patrimonies.<sup>2</sup> The laws of inheritance may have varied from region to region, yet the rights of sons always prevailed over those of daughters, especially in the regions where primogeniture was a decisive factor.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, charter studies on the Middle Ages reveal that women, too, had control over lands, through dowries, dowers and sometimes as heiresses. Endowing women with land autonomy was often preferred to the loss or breakup of the family lordship by passing titles and rights through the female line rather than through those of indirect male heirs. Primarily, as wives and widows, many aristocratic women ran estates, exercised property jurisdiction and worked to promote the reputation and power of their marital families.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter investigates the status and position of married women in Wales in the context of documented land ownership during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It assesses what charter evidence reveals about the nature and extent of uxorial agency in native Wales as far as can be ascertained by surviving evidence. The principal source based for this survey is the *acta* of the Welsh rulers in which women appear. Focusing on the *acta* ensures that the investigation remains connected to the previous chapters that have determined which married women are visible in other Welsh sources, why and what their appearances say about gender expectations of the Welsh ruling classes and families. Furthermore, a

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Goody, 'Inheritance, Property and Women: Some Comparative Considerations', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (eds), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Societies in Western Europe 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 10-36.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Shahar, *Fourth Estate*, pp.128-29.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*; Cavell, *Noblewomen in Shropshire*; Ricketts, *High-Ranking Widows*.

comprehensive analysis of the *acta* helps identify more clearly opportunities afforded to married women in Welsh dynasties before the Edwardian conquest. This has not been looked at before and is a critical addition to current and future scholarship.

Before 1282 very little source material survives that could be termed administrative documents. After the Edwardian conquest, however, there was a major change in the nature of documentation and material such as extents, lay subsidy rolls, court rolls and a proliferation of private deeds were produced, though especially from the fourteenth century onwards.<sup>5</sup> In 1284, Edward I instigated an assessment of manorial lands in three newly created English-style shires in north Wales: Merionethshire, Caernarfonshire and Anglesey. Known as extents, these surveys were carried out to measure the worth of lands or property, largely for the purpose of taxation and include the value of rents and moveable chattel. Extents for Merioneth and Anglesey<sup>6</sup> still survive and can be used to evaluate the economic conditions of pre-conquest Wales.<sup>7</sup> Although women do not appear in the surviving extents, they can still be used as a general reference to understanding the economic situation just after 1282, from which a narrow estimation of uxorial agency can be made. Similarly, taxes levied by the English Crown concerning the property of individuals in the form of moveable goods (such as beasts, grains and crops and other possessions) are found in the 1292–3 lay subsidy roll from Merioneth. These goods were valued by local assessors and then the aggregate value taxed. Women do appear in such rolls and a number are identified as ‘the wife of’ their respective husbands.<sup>8</sup> The data provides a broad list of the foremost taxpayers in the area, thus reflecting their economic status.

Charter evidence between 1282 and 1300 in which women generally appear is surprisingly minimal.<sup>9</sup> For married women, specifically, and not those in

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<sup>5</sup> While such sources written after 1282 can cast a retrospective light on native Wales, they belong to a different world that falls outside the remit of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Both have been published. ‘Extent of Merionethshire. Temp. Edward I’, (ed.) M.C.J., *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, third series, 51 (1867), pp. 183-92; R. Smith, ‘The Extent of Anglesey, 1284’, *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (2009), 70-119.

<sup>7</sup> See Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* and id., ‘The First Extent of Merioneth’, in J.B. Smith and L.B. Smith (eds), *History of Merioneth*, vol. 2 (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 702-16.

<sup>8</sup> *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll, 1292–3*, ed. K. Williams-Jones (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 4, 6, 10-11, 14, 17, 19, 22, 25, 27-8, 30-4, 36-7, 40-2, 44-6, 50, 53-4, 57-60, 62-3, 65, 69, 70, 73-4, 76-8, 80, 83-6, 89-90.

<sup>9</sup> A number of archives and collections have been consulted, through online catalogues, typed catalogues in the archives themselves and examination of documents. The appearance of women’s

widowhood, material seems to be in very short supply.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that they played lesser roles in land administration, or that they were marginalised after the conquest. For the fourteenth century, scholars like R. R. Davies and Llinos Beverly Smith have examined later court rolls as evidence to prove otherwise.<sup>11</sup> The scarcity of documentary sources about married women before and directly after the conquest of Wales makes it difficult to draw conclusions about regional variations and similarities within Wales itself and in comparison to Marcher communities. As will become apparent, many of the accompanying land settlements that are discussed throughout this chapter have strong associations with prominent Marcher families. Simply put, this is because better evidence survives for this group. However, keeping in line with the premise of this thesis, all references to and associations with Marcher families are primarily related to the women of Welsh ruling dynasties (or who at least appear to be of Welsh origin) who married into Marcher families and Marcher women who married into native Welsh dynasties. How far Marcher influences were felt in native Wales and how far Welsh dynasts especially may have faced expectations to adopt English property customs as part and parcel of a marital arrangement can only be based on supposition. Furthermore, the lack of sources makes it problematic to assess *a*) how far the cases that do exist are actually examples of Welsh practice and *b*) if it was easier for women to manoeuvre around legal customs in the border areas than native Wales itself.

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names, generally, is very limited, including in witness lists. The majority that do appear are clearly from Marcher families who were *not* intermarried with Welsh families. Repositories and collections searched include: *Bangor University Archives*: General Collection of Bangor MSS, Mostyn MSS, Penrhyn Castle Further Additional MSS; *Denbighshire Record Office*: Wynnstay MSS; *Flintshire Record Office*: Kenyon MS, Nerquis Hall MSS, Plas Teg MSS; *NLW*: Aston Hall Estate Records, Bachymyd Estate, Bettis Field Estate Records, Bodrhyddan Estate, Bodwenni, Bonwydd Estate, Brogynton Estate, Coed Coch and Trovarth Estates, Crosswood Deeds, Dowenni Estate, Egerton Phillimore Papers, Francis Green Papers and Deeds, Llangibby Castle, Milbourne Family Papers and Documents, Mynde Estate Records, Penrice and Margam Estate Records, Picton Castle, Plas Iolyn, St Pierre, Welsh Church Commission Papers, Wigfair Estate, Wynnstay Estate Records; *TNA*: medieval petitions; *West Glamorgan Archives*: George Grant Francis Collection.

<sup>10</sup> For examples found in widowhood see: NLW, Badminton Estate Deeds and Documents, 407; NLW, Penrice and Margam, 29, 464, 290 (17) roll, 290 (42) roll, 290 (46) roll, 290 (52) roll; NLW, Picton Castle, 75, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women'; Smith, 'Towards a History of Women in the Late Middle Ages'. Also see Ratcliffe, 'The Property Rights of Women in Wales' and Reyes, 'Women in Glamorgan Society'. Although fourteenth-century court rolls for Gwynedd in particular are prolific, they provide evidence in new context of post-conquest Wales and are outside the remit of this thesis. Cf. M. Barrell *et al*, 'The Dyffryn Clwyd Court Roll Project, 1340–1352 and 1389–1399: a Methodology and Some Preliminary Findings', in (eds) Z. Razi and R.M. Smith, *Medieval Society and the Manor Court* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 260-97.

As a means of teasing out any regional differences in a larger attempt to expose uxorial land ownership practices that may be identifiably Welsh in nature, the structure of this chapter is geographical in scope. On the whole, kinship ties and access to land appear to have been the key determinants in women's influential status and direct involvement in both family ventures and affairs of the locality.<sup>12</sup> Moving beyond the legal codes that state a husband's interest in property was for life, whilst a wife was, essentially, to have neither her own lands, nor share his,<sup>13</sup> a more complex picture of female agency in general emerges. The charter evidence analysed challenges the idea of the married woman as a legal 'non-person',<sup>14</sup> and the following analysis shows that, although property ownership may have been dominated by men, women, too, had possession of and authority over family lands and participated in rights of alienation. Upon close inspection, the sources confirm that there was a cultural acceptance of women's involvement in fulfilling the responsibilities of lordships and estate management in Wales under native rule.

Importantly, the existence alone of property settlements concerning women from Welsh dynasties, whether entered into by marriage or by birth, leads to fundamental questions about married women's activities within their families and, more crucially, their involvement and investments within the greater familial lordships. The issue concerning records of practice and socio-political and socio-economic reality — the problems of how far women's appearances in records reflect practice and the nature of written records themselves — is addressed throughout. All the same, evidence analysed helps draw attention to various types of uxorial activities that, in theory, were sanctioned by husbands and peers as necessary for the continued existence of the Welsh family lordship.

Following a comparative discussion of property rights of women in medieval Europe and Wales, the chapter is, thereafter, divided into three regional case studies: south, mid and north Wales. It should be stressed that the numbers of married women who appear in this analysis are by no means comprehensive. A sample has been extracted from existing records for each region to provide context and continuity in terms of assessing uxorial land-based agency within native Wales, and

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, pp. 53-164; ead., 'Wives and Widows of the Earls of Chester'; A. Livingstone, 'Noblewomen's Control of Property in Early Twelfth-Century Blois-Chartres', *Medieval Prosopography*, 18 (1997), p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> D. Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', in *WLW*, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', pp. 101, 107.

principally, the Welsh dynasties. The foremost concentration is the practice of granting dower. This is crucial to understanding uxorial agency especially as the various examples of dower litigation found for the time frame in question emphasise women's own concerns for their economic livelihoods and rights as authoritative members of the family lordship. The case studies are followed by an analysis of the findings.

## ***EUROPEAN COMPARISONS***

Welsh legal limitations regarding female ownership and rights to alienation are similar to statutes from cities in medieval Occitania, which reveal an unease concerning women's positions as land holders and, more decisively, women's agency in alienating land beyond the family group.<sup>15</sup> The customs of the area promote masculine oriented power structures 'wherein women are truly exceptional' and are defined in many ways beyond their legal identities as *femina* and *mulier*, but always in relation to their roles and associations with men.<sup>16</sup> The legal positions and agency of women in these areas were limited as customs sought to define set circumstances in which women might have to dispose of property, although denial of female authority was by no means denied absolutely.<sup>17</sup> Documentary evidence suggests that 'The representation of women in the customs, is ... ambiguous'.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, the laws of Hywel Dda suggest that women experienced a general inability to legally inherit and own land in Wales. This is in contrast to the situation that married women found themselves in the Welsh March where female inheritance was based on her English or Welsh status<sup>19</sup> and the custom of partible inheritance amongst male heirs. These were similar to systems known as 'gavelkind' practised in Kent and Ireland, effectively denying daughters inheritance rights and making little provisions for widows.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, it appears that the practice of granting

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<sup>15</sup> J. Smith, 'Unfamiliar Territory: Women, Land and Law in Occitania, 1130–1250', in N. Menuge (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Law* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 27, 30.

<sup>16</sup> In other words, the laws of Occitanian cities identify and recognise women primarily through their lifecycles as wives, daughters and widows, which supported the power of men. *Ibid.* 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 28–34.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>19</sup> If she was English, she could, indeed, inherit.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 58. Only with the introduction of English common law into Wales through the 1284 Statute of Rhuddlan were legal provisions for widows made. For a discussion on women and property rights after the Edwardian Conquest, especially for the Dyffryn Clwyd area, see Ratcliffe, 'Property Rights of Women in Wales'.

dowers to women of lands held in Welsh tenure was in place in native Wales, well before the establishment of the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284.<sup>21</sup> This research expands on those findings.

Unlike daughters in many other western European countries, a woman living under Welsh law had little claim to the lands of her natal family, only being entitled to half the share of moveable wealth received by her brother.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, claims to family lands through the female line were customarily disallowed.<sup>23</sup> Land passed through the female line was considered acceptable only if no male relative survived. It was then acknowledged that new dynastic lines could be established under which future sons and heirs would assume their Welsh identities and connections through their matrilineal side.<sup>24</sup> As such, women were effectively barred from inheriting any real property from their natal families.

The importance of matrilineal connections and status have been discussed by Nerys Patterson who says that women did bring property and social ties to their marriages, which were crucial to the status of their children once they reached adulthood. Similarly, Antony Carr refers to the nomenclature and matronymics found in the later medieval deeds of Anglesey, which illustrates women's rights to lands. Numerous examples of women as landholders are found in fourteenth-century amercement lists from county courts.<sup>25</sup> Wendy Davies has shown that in the early Celtic societies circumstances dictated a woman's claims to inheritance allowing them to pass lands down through successive generations.<sup>26</sup> As will be seen, a number of examples bring to light the importance of matriarchal and generational connections in sustaining the power of native lordships. There was no legal obligation to provide a daughter with a dowry upon her marriage. Although the *argyfrau* is a close equivalent, it was not a legal right. The *argyfrau* was not to be

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, 'Dower in the Thirteenth-Century', pp. 348-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 31; *LTMW*, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, pp. 160-7; "'Cyfnerth" Text', pp. 137-45; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 56-7; *LTMW*, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> The laws also define patrimony by mother-right if the Welshwoman is given to a foreigner in marriage and they have children. *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 111; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 56-7; *LTMW*, pp. 58, 107-10, 114-15.

<sup>25</sup> Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, revd. ed., 2011), p. 111-14, citing TNA SC2/251/11, mm. 1-5 specifically. The idea that the power of a family could be greater established through matrilineal claims has already been ascertained in the examination of the Welsh chronicles and the *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*, establishing how matrilineal links served to further the needs and ambitions of many lordships by underlining genealogical, and thus generational, claims. See Chapter 1, *Genealogy*.

<sup>26</sup> Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 152.

used within the first seven years of marriage, after which it became part of the ‘common pool’, or *agweddi*, of the marital property.<sup>27</sup>

The social and cultural emphasis on kinship ties in medieval Wales shows how families were expected to provide for one another. The legal view that women were neither full members of their natal nor marital families may be steeped in the principle that they were to be provided for by both kin groups upon marriage.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, examples exist that provide clues to cultural expectations in which fathers were to provide for their daughters with forms of dowry and husbands to make arrangements for the economic solvency of their widows and heirs. Such expectations may have strengthened marital alliances as both parties were invested in some forms of economic and, it could be argued, emotional security of women.<sup>29</sup> The Welsh Laws of Women clarify that the only economic privileges wives had were those associated with moveable goods, or chattels, which they brought to their marital unions.<sup>30</sup> Even after a marriage failed, the woman still legally remained the owner of the property and goods which she brought to the marriage.<sup>31</sup>

The legal concept of the dower is non-existent in the Welsh laws. The closest equivalent is the *cowyll*, or morning-gift (often a monetary payment), promised to a virgin wife by her husband upon their marriage. Dafydd Jenkins argues that the public declaration and support of a woman’s close kin regarding the bride’s virginity, a requirement for the receipt of a *cowyll*, is parallel to the English version of the dower declared at the church door.<sup>32</sup> If the marriage endured, the couple shared this ‘community of goods’. If the couple separated after seven years — the timeframe which signalled that the marriage had become a *priodas*<sup>33</sup> — the

<sup>27</sup> See *LTMW*, p. 240, n. 46.23-6; p. 245, n. 59.26-33; *WLW*, pp. 187-88, 191. The laws have a term, *agweddiol*, meaning a woman whose marital relationship is recognised as being established, though not matured by the seven-year regulation, but who, nonetheless, is entitled to *agweddi*. See *WLW*, p. 188.

<sup>28</sup> See Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 186; McAll, ‘Normal Paradigms’ p. 15. Examples of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth’s involvement in negotiating marriage portions and securing of dowers for his daughters indicates that it may well have been an expectation of the father to ensure the livelihood of his daughter upon her husband’s death. *AWR*, no. 252, pp. 412-4; no. 251, p. 412.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Livingstone, ‘Noblewomen’s Control of Property’, p. 61

<sup>30</sup> “‘Cyfnerth’ Text”, pp. 138-43; ‘Latin Redaction A’, pp. 150-5; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 24-32; *LTMW*, pp. 45-61.

<sup>31</sup> “‘Cyfnerth’ Text”, pp. 138-43; ‘Latin Redaction A’, pp. 150-5; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 25; *LTMW*, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Jenkins, ‘Property Interests’, pp. 76-7.

<sup>33</sup> For the nine types of marriages defined by Welsh law see Charles-Edwards, ‘Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc’, pp. 7-22. See Chapter 2, pp. 79-81.



goods were divided between the woman and the man.<sup>34</sup> However, land was not amongst the ‘community of goods’ to be shared; property was in the husband’s interest for life, whilst a wife was to have neither her own land, nor share his.<sup>35</sup>

It has been shown across different parts of Europe that by the twelfth century, customs increasingly limited women’s opportunities to control lands.<sup>36</sup> The laws of medieval Italy, or Lombard law, for instance, greatly excluded women from (feudal) inheritance.<sup>37</sup> For medieval England debates continue over changes to women’s land from the twelfth century onwards. Dower could only be given in a valid marriage and was essentially a gift, but one that ‘a free man was bound to give’.<sup>38</sup> Under English common law there were two forms of dower defined. *Dos rationabilis*, a reasonable marriage portion, was a gift that the woman was to hold for her natural life, for the sustenance of herself and the education of her children. The second and most common kind of dower was the *dos nominata*, consisting of specified lands that the husband usually gifted to his new wife at the church door on the day of their marriage. A wife’s right to dower was further specified by later reissues of Magna Carta. The great charter states that a widow should receive in dower one third of her husband’s lands that he held during his lifetime, unless she had been assigned a lesser portion upon their marriage at the church door. If the wife was not dowered, upon her husband’s death she was legally entitled to a maximum of one-third of his

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<sup>34</sup> “‘Cyfnerth’ Text”, pp. 138-41; ‘Latin Redaction A’, pp. 150-3; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 25; *LTMW*, pp. 45-7; Pryce, *Native Law and the Church*, pp. 89-95; Stacey, ‘Divorce Medieval Welsh Style’.

<sup>35</sup> Jenkins, ‘Property Interests’, p. 85. The laws state that there are three privy things a woman owns: *cowyll* (‘morning-gift’), *gowyn* (compensation to a wife for her husband’s infidelity) and *sarhaed* (insult payment). “‘Cyfnerth’ Text”, pp. 138-9; ‘Latin Redaction A’, pp. 156-7; *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 118; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 28-9; *LTMW*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> Many studies focus on the political and social implications of marital practices and female succession particularly in the context of feudalism and lordship, and female inheritance in the forms of dower or *maritagium* as revealed in common law. See J.C. Holt, ‘Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England’ IV, ‘The Heiress and the Alien’, *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 35 (1985), pp. 1-28; Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*; Loengard, “‘Of the Gift of her Husband’”; ead., ‘*Rationabilis Do*’; S.F.C. Milsom, ‘Inheritance by Women in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries’, in M.S. Arnold, T.A. Green, S.A. Scully and S.D. Whites (eds), *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne* (Chapel Hill, 1981), pp. 60-89; S.L. Waugh, ‘Women’s Inheritance and the Growth of Bureaucratic Monarchy in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 34 (1990), pp. 71-92.

<sup>37</sup> Herlihy, ‘Land, Family, and Women in Continental Europe, 701–1200’, in S. Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. p.32.

<sup>38</sup> Loengard, “‘Of the Gift of her Husband’”, pp. 217-18.

estate held in seisin at the time of marriage.<sup>39</sup> In Wales, such legal assurances were not made until 1284.

J. B. Smith states that Welshmen who made dower provisions for wives who came from English or Marcher lineages were likely influenced by the demands of their in-laws, whilst others, whose wives were not of Anglo-Norman origin, may have been urged to do so because of their familiarity with the practice itself.<sup>40</sup> Smith's argument should be measured against the understanding that the ideals of kinship in Wales were also largely defined by the needs of the greater lordship. Many family members, female and male, were given the appropriate tools in which to perform gendered roles in a manner that worked to safeguard the power of the family.<sup>41</sup> Adopting and exploiting practices that were not customarily native, such as granting lands to women, assured the long-term goals of family lordship, locality and inter-regional rule. The acceptance of differing cultural practices was a mutual necessity for the survival of English and Welsh lordships within Wales and achievements were associated with the lengthy assimilation process of both Welsh and Anglo-Norman cultures.<sup>42</sup>

Welsh law explains that only in very rare occasions was it recognised that a woman could be privy to land and only under exceptional circumstances was she able to alienate property — this was principally the status of the woman as a *gwraig briod* who was able to dispose of her property in any way she wanted. *Tir prid*, one of the three kinds of purchases of land<sup>43</sup> was viewed as a form of chattel, thus allowing for the possibility of a woman to receive a divisible share of goods if the owner wished to add to the land or its status.<sup>44</sup> The Iorwerth redaction states that 'according to the men of Gwynedd, a woman is not entitled to have patrimony',<sup>45</sup> whilst the Blegywryd redaction states that similar to a brother being entitled heir to his patrimony, a sister is also entitled to her endowment. If no male heir survives,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 217-20. If she was dowered with more than one-third by her husband, the courts had the right to reduce the excess. Glanvill, *Tracatus de Legibus et Consuetudinibus Regni Anglie qui Glanvilla Vocatur*, ed. and trans. G.D.G. Hall (Oxford, 1965), pp. 59, 60, 66-7.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', pp. 351, 353.

<sup>41</sup> An example is the practice of granting appanages to younger brothers. Smith, 'Dynastic Succession', pp. 200-01, 205-32.

<sup>42</sup> R.R. Davies, 'The Law of the March', *WHR*, 5 (1970-1), pp. 25-8.

<sup>43</sup> Conveyed in the form of a continuous mortgage.

<sup>44</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 78; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 40; *LTMW*, pp. 113, 266 n. 113.9, 374. For an analysis of land tenure in *prid* see L.B. Smith, 'The Gage and the Land-Market in Late Medieval Wales', *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., xxix (1976), pp. 537-50.

<sup>45</sup> *Herwyd guyr Guynedd ny dele gureyc caffael tref tat ... . Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 56; *LTMW*, p. 107.

the daughter is to be the heir of all the land.<sup>46</sup> Less explicit, but still evocative nonetheless, is the law in which an individual who wishes to claim lands by mother-right must come to court and declare his rights as an alien's son through the entitlement of his mother as a Welshwoman.<sup>47</sup> More explicit is the tractate in *Iorwerth* that states that 'every female lord is entitled to the *amobr* of her realm', implying that some women were, indeed, in control of very large estates.<sup>48</sup>

Overall, the Welsh laws themselves are, on many levels, indefinite in terms of women's control over lands. R. R. Davies has asserted that the absence of women's rights to land is a crucial determinant to the social and economic set up of a rural society and the movement of territorial wealth.<sup>49</sup> Yet, Dafydd Jenkins notes that the size of the woman's share of the marital property if the couple separated would have been affected by the transactions that took place during marriage and wives would have had an economic interest in ensuring the success of the family lordship.<sup>50</sup> The charters of Welsh rulers in particular are illustrative of a practice concerning female participation in land management not mirrored in the laws. They suggest an invested interest in and by women to secure the economic success and longevity of familial lordships, which may have supported the social and economic organisation of their localities.

## ***SOUTH WALES***

The first examples of uxorial agency and women's involvement in estate management are from the south-western territories of Deheubarth<sup>51</sup> and Glamorgan and Gwynllŵg in the south east. Surviving charters, especially from Deheubarth which relate to the family of the Lord Rhys, highlight uxorial power and activities across generations of women in a native dynasty. Many of these women were in possession of lands and townships in their own rights. These are demonstrated through surviving grants of lands made to them, grants in which they gave consent to distribute family wealth, often in the form of religious benefaction, and in the appearance of their names in grants made by male members of the extended dynasty.

<sup>46</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 72; *LTMW*, p. 107.

<sup>47</sup> *Llyfr Blegywryd*, p. 118; "'Cyfnerth' Text', pp. 142-3; *Llyfr Iorwerth*, pp. 30-1; *LTMW*, p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> *Pob argluydes a dele amober gwraged e kyuoeth. Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 32; *LTMW*, p. 60. Cf. Chapter 3, *Roles of the Welsh Queens*.

<sup>49</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 103.

<sup>50</sup> *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 30; *LTMW*, pp. 58, 245, note 58.11-13.

<sup>51</sup> Comprised of the three regions Dyfed, Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi.

Collectively, they help to establish a better understanding of the importance in the status of the wife, trust in her position within the family and use of agency as a means of managing the wider lordship.

In 1184, the Lord Rhys issued a grant and confirmation of lands to the abbey at Strata Florida.<sup>52</sup> One of the territories confirmed was the township of *Ardiscinkiwet*. Rhys's charter states that Gwenllian had previously granted the township to the monks in perpetual alms by counsel of Rhys and his sons.<sup>53</sup> A charter issued fourteen years later, on 22 January 1198, in which Rhys's son Maelgwn confirms the above grant, verifies that Gwenllian was Maelgwn's mother and, thus, Rhys's wife.<sup>54</sup> However, in contrast to the first charter, the confirmation made in 1198 states that the township of *Ardiscinkywet* was granted by Maelgwn's father Rhys with the consent of his wife and Maelgwn's brothers. Because Gwenllian's original grant does not survive, it is impossible to tell whether she issued the gift of land with her family's consent or if they issued it with her consent. What is important is that both grants signify Gwenllian's joint control over a township associated with the greater lordship. These lands may have, in fact, been a portion of her dower from the Lord Rhys as they are near Aberarth and Aberaeron in Ceredigion, rather than a dowry from her father, Madog ap Maredudd of Powys.

The display of patronage in Gwenllian's own name hints at a level of power associated with her personal involvement in the administration of the family estate as Rhys's wife. This is perhaps further intimated by the use of her name to identify her in the first charter rather than the use of a lifecycle, indicating her uxorial and 'queenly' status.<sup>55</sup> It also hints at the breadth of agency that Welsh women may have enjoyed concerning property ownership and the span of female influence in determining the future of lordships and family possessions through alienation.<sup>56</sup> However, it is also crucial to consider that the emphasis on the consent of her male family members simply means that her involvement in these grants may have been at the behest of her husband. Gwenllian is not mentioned along with Rhys's three sons in the 1184 chart as participating in the grant, which may suggest she played a more

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<sup>52</sup> AWR, no. 28, pp. 171-5.

<sup>53</sup> ... *villam que vocatur Ardiscinkiwet quam optulit Gwenlliant predictis monachis in perpetuam elemosinam cum consilio nostro et filiorum nostrorum* ... . AWR, no. 28, pp. 171-5.

<sup>54</sup> ... *villam que vocatur Ardiscinkywet quam dedit pater meus pie memorie Resus predictis monachis consilio coniugis sue et filiorum fratrum meorum* ... . AWR, no. 35, pp. 180-183.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Chapter 3, *Titles and Other Designations*.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Livingstone, 'Noblewomen's Control of Property', p. 68.

marginal role. It is likely that, similar to evidence found in twelfth-century English charters, women such as Gwenllian followed the diplomatic patterns of their husbands and fathers, recognising the advantages of having an heir's consent, especially, to the grants they made. Such an action constituted a familial, and even political, responsibility.<sup>57</sup>

Matilda de Braose, wife of Gruffudd ap Rhys, was a member of the Marcher de Braose family. In 1202, Matilda witnessed a grant of perpetual alms also made to Strata Florida by her son, Rhys Ieuanc ap Gruffudd (d. 1222).<sup>58</sup> This was a grant of all the gifts made to the abbey by his father (who died the previous year), grandfather and paternal uncles.<sup>59</sup> This is comparable to a thirteenth-century charter in which a Welsh mother of four sons consented to a grant to Margam Abbey of lands formerly held by boys' grandfather.<sup>60</sup> Matilda appears first on the witness list and is identified only through her lifecycle stage as Rhys's mother (*Matill' matre mea*). Conceivably, her recognised position as a mother denotes her gendered role as a guardian to Gruffudd's heirs and of the family estate. This seems likely to be the case as Rhys's charter ends with a declaration that it is the first he has issued and the first time he has used a seal.<sup>61</sup> Like Gwenllian's charters, these demonstrate the importance of the position of the married woman in establishing and confirming relationships that strengthened dynastic power.<sup>62</sup>

In a grant dated between 1236 and 1244, Gwenllian, the daughter of Gwenllian and the Lord Rhys, is mentioned as a landholder in her own right. Her son Gruffudd (d. c.1256), and his heirs, were granted lands by his cousin, Rhys Mechyll ap Rhys Gryg (d. 1244), including the township of Taliaris 'which was the land of Lady Gwenllian'.<sup>63</sup> This charter stresses Gruffudd's matriarchal descent and

<sup>57</sup> Ward, *Women in England*, pp. 106-07.

<sup>58</sup> AWR, no. 55, pp. 193-4.

<sup>59</sup> The unidentified township of *Ardischyn Keuet*, which has various spellings, is listed amongst the number of lands granted to the abbey, which had originally been granted by Rhys's grandmother, Gwenllian above, around or before 1184. Cf. *Ardiscinkywet* above, pp. 257-8. AWR, no. 28, pp. 171-5; no. 35, pp. 180-3.

<sup>60</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, Ch. 128; *Cartae et alia munimenta quae ad dominium de Glamorgancia pertinent, vol. II: MCXCVI – circ. MCCLXX*, ed. G. T. Clark (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Cardiff, 1910), no. 408.

<sup>61</sup> *Hanc autem donationem primo sigillo quod habui confirmavi et ante hanc cartam nullam aliam alicui homini dedi nec aliquod sigillum ante hoc habui quo hanc cartam confirmavi*. AWR, no. 55, pp. 193-4.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Senana's appearance as a witness to a charter issued by her youngest son below, pp. 281-2.

<sup>63</sup> ... *que fuit terra domine Wenlliant* ... . AWR, no. 84, pp. 223-4.

his mother's own status.<sup>64</sup> Gwenllian, as a daughter of the Lord Rhys, was Rhys Mechyll's aunt (*consobrina*) on his father's side. The charter intimates that any of Gruffudd's heirs were socially and politically important because they were direct descendants of Gwenllian, and thus the Lord Rhys. Gwenllian's lifecycle stage as Gruffudd's mother, as well as the use of the title of *domina* to identify her social standing, promote both Gruffudd's status as a member of the dynasty of Deheubarth and his personal connection to Gwenllian.<sup>65</sup> This strongly indicates that the lands were likely inherited from her, which may have made up Gwenllian's marriage portion on her union with Ednyfed Fychan, as he held the lands by October 1229.

A similar example is found in a letters patent dated 23 February 1260, which states that certain townships in Ceredigion were given by Rhys Fychan ap Rhys ap Maelgwn Fychan (d. 1271) to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd, with sureties in the annual sum of £60, £20 to be paid three times a year. The letters patent reveal that Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's daughter Angharad was previously in possession of the townships in her husband's own territory of Ceredigion.<sup>66</sup> These lands passed from Angharad's grandson, Rhys Fychan, to her nephew, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. It is likely that they had been given to Angharad in dower upon her marriage and the lifecycle identifier as Llywelyn's daughter used in this context fosters the idea that both party's claims to these lands were tied to Angharad and her relationships to Llywelyn and Maelgwn.

In areas of south Wales that were primarily under Marcher control, there still remain illustrations of Welsh families where married women seem to have been active participants in the distribution of lordship lands and wealth. For example, in the thirteenth century, a grant made by Iorwerth ap Philip to Goronwy Sais of lands in *Treykik*, was made with the consent of Iorwerth's wife, *Heltheylon*.<sup>67</sup> Earlier, between November 1186 × June 1199, Maredudd ap Caradog of Glamorgan (d. 1211) took Margam Abbey and all its possessions under his protection. With the consent of his wife, Nest (*fl.* 1186 × 1199), and his heirs,<sup>68</sup> he granted the abbey in perpetual alms, for the salvation of his soul, that of his father Caradog ab Iestyn and his wife Nest (*uxoris mee Nest*), the right to take timber and fuel from woods and use

<sup>64</sup> For other examples of matriarchal descent see below, p. 274.

<sup>65</sup> AWR, p. 224.

<sup>66</sup> Maelgwn Fychan ap Maelgwn, d. 1257. ... *pro villis que fuerunt bone memorie Angarad filie Lewel(ini)*... . Ibid. no. 66, p. 202.

<sup>67</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, Ch. 147; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 797.

<sup>68</sup> *Et tunc concessi et dedi assensu uxoris mee Nest et heredum meorum* ... . AWR, no. 150, pp. 281-2.

of a common pasture, in exchange for 100s. As this is the only extant charter of Nest's husband and her own heritage unidentified, it is unknown how many rights she had pertaining to these lands. However, Nest, identified as Lady Nest, wife of Maredudd (*domina Nest uxore predicat Moradub*), is the third witness listed, but the first of lay individuals, signifying her perceived uxorial status.<sup>69</sup>

Two unique examples survive concerning the agency of daughters in Welsh families. In the late 1190s, *Thatherch*, daughter of *Katherech* ap John Ddu, used her own seal in a quitclaim of family lands she made to Margam Abbey upon which she made an affidavit on the altar.<sup>70</sup> Around the same time, c. 1197, Thaderech (*Thatherch*) identifies herself as *filia Ketherici Du* in an agreement in which she confirmed that lands she held *in feudo Peiteuin* (Poitevin) were to be granted to the abbey for her lifetime, as well as a render of half a mark to be paid annually for services. In return, the monks agreed to a render of six years in three silver marks.<sup>71</sup> As Sue Johns points out, the significance of this latter charter is found in the stipulation that Thaderech would only begin to receive payments of render after the capture of Gruffudd ap Rhys, revealing the political turmoil of the time.<sup>72</sup> Thaderech swore on holy relics and sealed this document with her own seal. Both examples suggest that she was the heiress of family lands, which is revealed in the use of seals and the utilization of the lifecycle of daughter.<sup>73</sup>

In a charter issued between 1208 and 1217 by Gwenllian ferch Morgan ap Caradog (*fl.* c.1200–c.1217) of Glamorgan, Gwenllian, acting in her position as a daughter, issued a quitclaim also to Margam Abbey of her lands of Spinis, by the boundaries between her own lands and those belonging to the religious house.<sup>74</sup> Her grant acknowledges that the monks had charters already concerning the lands, which they had held during her father's lifetime and which had also been previously granted by her brothers, Lleision and Owain.<sup>75</sup> Like Thaderech, that Gwenllian

<sup>69</sup> For discussion of women as witnesses see below, pp. 263, 264, 281-2, 292-4, 297.

<sup>70</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam Ch. 69; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 239.

<sup>71</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam Ch. 206; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 226. For a discussion of the family of John Ddu see M. Griffiths, 'Native Society on the Anglo-Norman Frontier: the Evidence of the Margam Charters', *WHR*, 14/2 (1988), pp. 191-6.

<sup>72</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation, and Conquest*, p. 91.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*; ead., *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>74</sup> ... *ego Wenthlian filia Morgani Deo et Sancte Marie et monachis de Margan quietum clamavi totum ius meum et clamum quod habui in prato et terra de Spinis quam predicti monachi tenuerant tempore patris mei, quam Leisan(us) et Owein fratres mei postea dederant eis in puram et perpetuam elemosinam ...* . AWR, no. 169, pp. 297-8.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* no. 161, p. 291.

identifies herself as Morgan's daughter is, in itself, interesting. Given that her brothers were likely alive at the time this charter was written, Gwenllian issued the quitclaim independently, in her own name and affixed her own seal as confirmation. It is unknown whether Gwenllian was married at the time she issued her grant, but it was clearly her status as a daughter that provided her with the power to act as an independent agent. The notion that Gwenllian produced this act of her own accord is further strengthened by the fact she affixed her own seal and that the names of witnesses differ from those of her brothers' charters issued at a similar time.<sup>76</sup>

Both examples show the important roles female kin played in the alienation of family lands, as well as the participation of Welsh women landholders in the granting of benefactions to religious houses established by the Anglo-Normans.<sup>77</sup> The inclusion of daughters in grants of land and homage are also found for Gwynllŵg, in the lordship of Caerleon in south Wales. Between 1154 and 1158 the brothers Morgan (d. 1158) and Iorwerth ab Owain (d. 1179 × c.1184) made a grant to Goldcliff Priory in Monmouthshire that confirmed all the gifts made up of lands in Wales that had been previously given in perpetual alms by Robert de Candos, founder of Goldcliff, his wife Isabel and their heir Walter in the twelfth century when they possessed the honour of Caerleon.<sup>78</sup> These original gifts included grants of lands, churches, tithes and renders and both King Henry I and Henry II confirmed the charters.<sup>79</sup> Later, between 1184 and 1217, Hywel ap Iorwerth, son of Iorwerth ab Owain and nephew of Morgan, further confirmed the original grant by Robert, Isabel and Walter.<sup>80</sup>

Around the same time, with the consent of Morgan (d. 1248), his son and heir, and his (unnamed) wife and daughter, Hywel granted further lands and rights to the priors, community and their men for control of all liberties and free customs.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Out of the 18 charters issued by Lleision c.1186 × 1217, only three names appear in the witness lists that match Gwenllian's: Gronw ap Philip (Ibid. no. 162, p. 292; no. 165, p. 294), Richard Waleis (Ibid. no. 165, p. 294) and William of Lichfield (Ibid. no. 168, pp. 296-7). None of the witnesses in the three extant charters issued by Owain c.1203 × c.1217 are the same as Gwenllian's.

<sup>77</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> ... *in puram et perpetuam et liberam elemosinam omnes donationes quas Rob(ertus) de Candos et Isabel uxor eius et Walt(erus) heres eorum eis dederunt in Wall(ia) dum adhuc dominium honoris de Karl(ium) optinuerunt et per longum tempus pacifice possiderunt ...* . AWR, no. 463, pp. 661-3.

<sup>79</sup> See D. Crouch and G. Thomas, 'Three Goldcliff Charters', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 24 (1985-6), pp. 153-63.

<sup>80</sup> AWR, no. 469, pp. 667-8.

<sup>81</sup> *Universitatī vestre notificetur me concessisse assensu et voluntate Morgani filii et heredis mei et uxoris mee et filie mee concessisse et presenti carta confirmasse Deo et ecclesie Sancte Marie Magd(alene) de Golcl(ia) et monachis ibidem Deo servientibus in puram et perpetuam et liberam*



Another charter was issued by the same family to their seneschal, Iorwerth, son of Caradog (*fl.* 1184 × 1217) sometime between 1184 and October 1217.<sup>82</sup> Hywel, lord of Caerleon, with the assent of his family granted Iorwerth lands that had been held free and quit by his father in hereditary right. This grant is interesting as it was made with the assent of his sons, Owain and Morgan, his wife Gwerful and his daughter Gwenllian, in return for Iorwerth's service and homage.<sup>83</sup> Although the charter ends by stating that Hywel granted all the lands, as is laid out by the writing of the charter and confirmed with his seal indicating that the act was his final decision, it is noteworthy that those he consulted and who gave their consent to the grant were not only his sons and heir, but also his wife and daughter. It is possible that the inclusion of Gwerful and Gwenllian was as equal consenters with Owain and Morgan and may indicate that, in some cases, female and male family members had rights to the property.

Three comparable examples can be found in grants made to Margam Abbey. A Welsh example comes from an early-thirteenth century grant made by William Gillemichel to Margam. This grant of lands in Kenfig was witnessed by his wife, Angharad, and Gwerful, his daughter.<sup>84</sup> The second example from the late-twelfth century, although Anglo-Norman in origin, records a daughter giving assent to a grant of her mother's lands.<sup>85</sup> The third example is also Anglo-Norman in which Alice, daughter of Alexander, granted lands in the mid-thirteenth century that were given to her by her mother, Cecilia.<sup>86</sup> Such documentation of both wives and daughters of Welsh families sanctioning grants of land implies that they, like their Anglo-Norman counterparts, may have had a say in property alienation because of their lifecycle positions as wives and daughters,<sup>87</sup> but perhaps also because of their

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*elemosinam omnes libertates et liberas consuetudines quas ego ipse in terra mea habeo ...* . Ibid. no. 474, pp. 673-4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. no. 473, pp. 671-3.

<sup>83</sup> ... *ego Hoelus dominus de Carlyon assensu et voluntate filiorum meorum Oweni et Morgani et uxoris mee Wervelli et Wenlliane filie mee concessi et presenti carta mea confirmavi Gervardo filio Cradoci dapiferi omnes terras et possessiones, omnes libertates et liberas consuetudines quas tenuit et libere et quiete possedit Cradocus pater eius iure hereditario ... ego iam dictus Hoelus predicto Gervardo concessi et confirmavi presentis scripti testimonio et sigilli mei impressione pro servitio et homagio suo.*

<sup>84</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, 289 (3) roll.

<sup>85</sup> Alice, the widow of Geoffrey, son of Deware, granted her house in Kenfig, to the abbey and a rent of 12d. to the earl of Gloucester with the consent of her daughter Alice. NLW, Penrice and Margam, Ch. 29; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 775.

<sup>86</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, 289 (53) roll.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Livingstone, 'Noblewomen's Control over Property', p. 69.

rights to the lands themselves.<sup>88</sup> This is further supported by a charter issued between 1150 and 1200 by Walter, son of Cunor, and Ivor his stepson. Lands were quitclaimed to Margam with the assent of Tangwystl, Walter's wife and Ivor's mother. More importantly, the quitclaim was also given with the assent of Tangwystl's mother, Keneris, suggesting that the lands had passed from mother to daughter.<sup>89</sup>

For the Goldcliff Priory grant, even if the names of Gwerful and Gwenllian were included by the beneficiaries drafting the charter, the monks themselves deciding who was important to mention (which may have also been the case in listing Angharad and Gwerful as witnesses to the grant to Margam), it is worth questioning how far-reaching the influence of the original grant made by Robert de Candos and his wife, Isabel, was on Hywel ap Iorwerth and his desire to include the consent of his own wife, Gwerful, in respect to his grants. It is also worth questioning why the consent of his wife and daughter were included in some of the charters issued by him, but not all. These types of inquiries are intrinsically related to the problems associated with the recording of actual practice, where women may have been physically present at these ceremonies, verbally giving their consent, and the nature of the written record itself in which some scribes recorded women's consent whilst others did not.

As these examples show, married women consented to the distribution of family lands, usually in the form of religious benefaction, and the release of some administrative rights associated with those lands. In the donations made to Goldcliff Priory, Gwerful and Gwenllian consented the relinquishment of familial control over the receipt of payments of tithes, renders, secular services and exactions that the lordship was owed. They consented to allowing the monks to be in charge of holding court and agreed for the monks to have access to their private lands for hunting, fishing and harvesting crops from the family orchard.<sup>90</sup> Married women also participated in granting rewards for homage and loyalty, as can be seen from the other charter from the family of lordship of Caerleon.<sup>91</sup> The grant to the family seneschal confirms that women, too, were involved in rewarding loyal subjects and

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<sup>88</sup> Another Margam Abbey charter from the thirteenth century highlights the lifecycles of widow and sister in which a quitclaim made by Matlida, widow of Hugh of Cardiff, was given with the assent of her sister Cristina and sworn on relics. NLW, Penrice and Margam, 290 (52) roll.

<sup>89</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, Ch. 8; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 418.

<sup>90</sup> AWR, no. 474, pp. 673-4.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. no. 473, pp. 671-3.

acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between subjects and the continuous power of the family. This is also exemplified in two charters issued by Owain Brogyntyn ap Madog (d. 1215 × 1218) of Powys, his wife and heirs in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century state first. The homage of the men of Gwernhefin was transferred to Basingwerk Abbey, as was the homage of their tenant, Rhys Crach and his heirs.<sup>92</sup>

Illustrations of uxorial agency show what is arguably a melding of Anglo-Norman and native Welsh land practices. The most prominent examples are those that have to do with the granting of dower. Shortly before 27 August 1246, a grant in dower of the commote (*cwmwd*)<sup>93</sup> of Gwynionydd in the southern region of Ceredigion was made to Elen de Vall (*fl.* 1246), wife of Maredudd ab Owain ap Gruffudd (d. 1265).<sup>94</sup> There is no indication that the grant itself was presented in written form, but the royal ratification of it by Henry III at Woodstock 27 August 1246 may have been a means of providing an official record.<sup>95</sup> This is likely to be the case as the ratification refers to the dower being granted at the church door upon their marriage. It is described as *dos nominata*.<sup>96</sup>

Rulership of Ceredigion in the thirteenth century was divided between the families of Maelgwn ap Rhys, illegitimate son of the Lord Rhys, and Maelgwn's nephew, Owain ap Gruffudd ap Rhys (d. 1235), son of the Lord Rhys's eldest legitimate son and chosen successor. Maelgwn Fychan, Maelgwn ap Rhys's successor, moved the rule of his lordship to northern Ceredigion and in 1236 successfully sought an exchange of the commote of Pennardd in eastern Ceredigion under his control, for the commote of Mefenydd, north of Anhuniog, under the rule of Maredudd ab Owain.<sup>97</sup> A result of this exchange meant that by the 1240s Maelgwn Fychan had much control over northern Ceredigion and also probably held two commotes, Creuddyn and Perfedd, just north of Mefenydd. In April 1246, however, Maredudd ab Owain and Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg (d. 1271), backed by royal forces, ousted Maelgwn from Ceredigion. Maelgwn was subsequently

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* no. 492, pp. 688-9; no. 493, pp. 689-90.

<sup>93</sup> The Welsh commote, *cwmwd*, a subdivision of a territorial administrative unit known as a *cantref*, had a royal centre, *maerdref*, or demesne township, as well as its own court.

<sup>94</sup> *AWR*, no. 69, p. 204.

<sup>95</sup> *CPR 1232-47*, p. 487; *AWR*, p. 204.

<sup>96</sup> Glanvill, *Tracatus de Legibus et Consuetudinibus*, pp. 64-5; Pollock, *History of English Law*, p. 420.

<sup>97</sup> *AWR*, p. 11.

reinstated with two commotes split between the northern- and southern-most reaches of Ceredigion, Genau'r-glyn and Is Coed. Is Coed immediately bordered Gwynionydd, thus making Gwynionydd an important strategic stronghold for Maredudd ab Owain against his adversary. It was this commote that was given to Elen in dower.

On 24 January 1273 Elen's granddaughter, Angharad, daughter of Owain ap Maredudd of Cedewain,<sup>98</sup> received the whole of the commote of Anhuniog in free marriage (*in liberum maritagium*) from her husband Owain ap Maredudd ab Owain (d. 18 July 1275) of Deheubarth to be possessed freely by her and her heirs by Owain.<sup>99</sup> This document is an amalgam of a nominated dower, *dos nominata*, and grant of a marriage portion, *maritagium*, but in context is more a dower than dowry.<sup>100</sup> The gift states that if a future grant or exchange of lands made between Angharad's sons, or other co-heirs, ultimately deprived her of her full possession of Anhuniog, Owain is to provide her with land of equal value.<sup>101</sup> The charter concludes that if Angharad and Owain are subsequently separated, by the Church or any other cause, the lands are still to remain in her possession — the exceptions being if Angharad dies without an heir by Owain, enters a nunnery or takes another man in marriage; under these circumstances the lands will revert back to Owain.<sup>102</sup> Owain affixed his seal to the charter to ensure the permanence of the grant, which was ratified by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd as prince of Wales in that same year.

In 1278, as a widow, Angharad was involved in dower litigation. Her husband died in 1275 and was succeeded by their youngest son, Llywelyn ap Owain (d. 1309). Llywelyn, and his uncles Gruffudd ap Maredudd (d. 1319) and Cynan ap

<sup>98</sup> Granddaughter of Maredudd ab Owain and Elen above.

<sup>99</sup> *Sciunt presentes et futuri has litteras visuri vel audituri quod ego Owen(us) filius Maredut filii Oweni dedi et concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi totum comotum Annvnuauc integrum cum omnibus suis pertinentiis et liberatibus ... ac aliis liberis consuetudinibus Agarad filie Oweni uxori mee in liberum maritagium in omnibus terminis predicti comoti ... sibi et heredibus suis de me procreandis libere et quiete, pacifice et sine ulla contradictione tenendum et habendum et etiam possidendum ...* AWR, no. 71, pp. 205-07.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', p. 350.

<sup>101</sup> *Et si contingat quod alienatio inter me et fratres meos vel aliquos alios coheredes meos fuerit vel terrarum transmutatio ita quod ipsa Agarad prefati comoti dominio et possessione plenaria gaudere non poterit, ego Owen(us) tantam terram et equivalentem predictae Agarad et heredibus suis de me fideliter et mera voluntate lucrari promisi.* AWR, no. 71, pp. 205-07.

<sup>102</sup> *Si autem similiter per ecclesiam vel aliquo alio casu predictam Agarad a me separari contingat nichilominus comotus ille superius nominatus a predicta Agarad et heredibus suis procreatis de me erit possidendus, istis tamen tribus casibus dumtaxat exceptis, videlicet si sine herede de me procreato descesserit vel si ad religionem migraverit vel ab aliquo viro ducta fuerit in uxorem, in quibus casibus sepredictus comotus ab heredibus suis de me si sint erit possidendus, sin autem sicut prius fuit antedictus comotus ad me revertetur.*

Maredudd (d. 1328), were caught up in the conflict between Wales and England in 1277, jeopardizing the stability and authority of the family estate.<sup>103</sup> Angharad lost control of Anhuniog when her son and brothers-in-law surrendered the commote to Edward I. Angharad sought to reclaim Anhuniog that she held in by right seisin until ‘ejected by the King’s power’.<sup>104</sup> With her second husband Walter de Pedwardyn, she appeared in the assize courts to claim the wardship of Llywelyn and his lands from the king. Angharad argued that her rights were established by the laws and customs of Wales and the *patria*.<sup>105</sup> The king’s representative claimed the lands were not in the name of wardship, but by pure demesne as Llywelyn submitted himself entirely to the king’s will. Angharad contended that Llywelyn did so under the guise of her wardship as the law and custom of the country required and that her lands should not be forfeited on that account. Her attempt to reclaim her dower was unsuccessful and may have had much to do to the fact that she was remarried.<sup>106</sup>

## **MID-WALES**

Other examples of grants of dower and disputes of dower litigation found for mid-Wales help elucidate a practice in native Wales in which generations of women received lands through the maternal line. A dower provision made by a Welsh husband to his wife is found in the person of Juliana de Lacy (*fl.* 1205 × 1252) between 1205 and 1220.<sup>107</sup> The letters patent refers to the protection of unspecified lands and liberties held by Maredudd Sais (*fl.* 1252) and Juliana (*uxorem ejus*), which Juliana received in dower by her former husband, Maredudd ap Rhobert (d. 1244) of Cedewain.<sup>108</sup> The commote of Cedewain was one of the two key border districts south-west of Powys that held a prominent place in the political tensions of the thirteenth century between the kingdoms of Powys, Gwynedd and Deheubarth.<sup>109</sup> While much of his rule is indefinable, Maredudd ap Rhobert, whom the *Brutiau* refer to as ‘the most eminent counsellor of Wales’<sup>110</sup> is the only known ruler from

<sup>103</sup> *BS*, pp. 252-5; *BT, Pen20*, pp. 224-5; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 118; *BT, RBH*, p. 262-6.

<sup>104</sup> *The Welsh Assize Roll 1277–1284*, ed. J.C. Davies (Cardiff, 1940), pp. 156, 159, 213, 242-3.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 243.

<sup>106</sup> *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls*, p. 171; Smith, ‘Dower in the Thirteenth Century’, p. 353.

<sup>107</sup> *CR 1251–3*, p. 185; *AWR*, no. 15, pp. 157-8.

<sup>108</sup> ... *quam Mereduk filius Roberti, quondam vir ipsius Juliane, ei assignavit in dotem ... . CR 1251–3*, p. 185. On the marriage of Juliana de Lacy and Maredudd ap Rhobert see *AWR*, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 231.

<sup>110</sup> *BS*, pp. 234-5; *BT, Pen20*, p. 200; *BT, Pen20Tr*, pp. 106; *BT, RBH*, pp. 238-9.

Cedewain to have issued any acts.<sup>111</sup> Although Juliana's dower is unspecified in the Close Rolls, the lands included the vill and manor of *Bahaithlon* in Cedewain,<sup>112</sup> which she then quitclaimed to her son Owain (d. 1236). Owain enfeoffed it back to her to hold for his daughter Angharad (Anhuniog case above) until Juliana died. Upon her death, the vill was to revert to Angharad to hold in seisin 'according to the form of grant'.<sup>113</sup> Juliana de Lacy's dower is particularly noteworthy as the Close Rolls state that the assignation of lands was according to the laws and customs of Wales<sup>114</sup> and appears to be an early example of the adaptability of Welsh law and custom under English common law influence.

A detailed illustration concerning another provision dower of a Welsh commote made to an English wife is found in a letters patent, dateable to 12–16 March 1218. This example concerns the inheritance of Gwenwynwyn ap Owain Cyfeiliog (d. 1216) of Powys Wenwynwyn, and references the dower of his wife, Margaret Corbet (d. c. 1251).<sup>115</sup> The letters patent state that the lands are to be maintained by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, as overlord, until Gwenwynwyn's heirs come of age, during which time Llywelyn promises to find reasonable maintenance for Gwenwynwyn's children from the revenues of the land. One stipulation was that the revenues were not to be taken from the reasonable dower of unspecified lands belonging to Margaret, widow of Gwenwynwyn (*salva M. quondam uxori ipius W. rationabili dote sua*).<sup>116</sup>

The lands given in dower to Margaret by Gwenwynwyn are most likely the whole of the commote of Deuddwr and the areas of Llannerfyl, Llysyn and Cnewyll in the commote of Caereinion as these were granted in dower by Margaret's son, Gruffudd ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn (d. 1286) on 12 March 1277 to his English

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<sup>111</sup> AWR, pp. 4-5.

<sup>112</sup> *The Welsh Assize Roll 1277–1284*, ed. J. C. Davies (Cardiff, 1940), pp. 241, 255. Gwynedd sought to make Cedewain a client-state and eventually succeeded. According to the Wigmore chronicle, Cedewain and the neighbouring commote of Ceri were given as a marriage portion to Ralph Mortimer by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, after Ralph's marriage of Gwladus Ddu in 1230. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, (eds) J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Baninel, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1817–30), vi: i, p. 350; AWR, p. 424; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 216-17, 231, 241, 244.

<sup>113</sup> Angharad made claims to this vill and other lands in Cedewain in the assize courts in 1278.

<sup>114</sup> ... *quas habere debent secundum legem et consuetudinem Wallie* ... . CR 1251–3, p. 185.

<sup>115</sup> AWR, no. 240, pp. 396-8.

<sup>116</sup> As an act of assurance that he would fulfil his obligation to Margaret and her children, Llywelyn swore on holy relics in the presence of the bishop of Winchester, the earls of Pembroke, Chester, Winchester and other prominent magnates of King Henry III.

wife, Hawise Lestrangle (d. 1310).<sup>117</sup> He also granted Hawise control of three additional townships in the commote of Gorddwr, the township of Argyngroeg and three townships in Caereinion. Hawise held both the township of Argyngroeg and lands in Arwystli, which were re-granted to her in the same charter. All lands were to revert to Gruffudd's first-born son Owain after Hawise's death.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, Gruffudd granted Hawise free burgage<sup>119</sup> in his newly established market, Trefnant, to be possessed freely by her forever,<sup>120</sup> saving Gruffudd's own demesne and the township of Llandybo in Mawddwy and without exaction, service or demand, cattle tribute or other tallages, the maintenance of *gweision bychain* ('young servants')<sup>121</sup> or other forms of hospitality rendered when a lord was on circuit.<sup>122</sup> A year later, Hawise's ownership of these lands was confirmed in a grant made by her husband to their first born son, in which it was laid out how her inheritance is to be divided amongst her sons on her death.<sup>123</sup> The grant of dower made to Hawise Lestrangle in 1277 refers to lands held by her mother-in-law, Margaret Corbet in which Hawise was to hold as freely as Margaret did during her lifetime.<sup>124</sup>

Similarly, Emma Audley (*fl.* 1258–1278), the legitimate English wife of Gruffudd ap Madog of Powys Fadog, received a grant of lands that previously had been bought, and presumably managed, by her mother-in-law, Iseult.<sup>125</sup> Emma was granted the lands of Llwythder and *Prestimand'*, which her mother-in-law, Iseult (Ysota) bought from Cadwgan, Rhirid and Einion, sons of Dwywg, with the consent

<sup>117</sup> Gruffudd granted Hawise, his legitimate wife, all the land of Deuddwr that he or his mother, Margaret had held. *Noveritis nos dedisse et concessisse et hac presenti carta confirmasse domine Hawise legitime uxori nostre totam terram de Deudouor ... quibus umquam eam possedimus seu pie recordationis mater nostra dominium tenuit vel possedit Margar(eta) ...* AWR, no. 606, pp. 800-01. Also see Smith, 'Dynastic Succession', p. 226, n. 1.

<sup>118</sup> ... *eodem modo villam de Argegroec in suis omnibus terminis melioribus que quidem villa post mortem dicte Hawise(ie) ad Owenu(m) primogenitum nostrum revertetur ... in Aruistrey quas consuevit habere dicta Hawis(ia), que due pasture post mortem dicte H. ad dictum Owenu(m) revertentur.*

<sup>119</sup> For conditions of burgage tenure see S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), p. 99.

<sup>120</sup> ... *quibus dictas terras umquam possedimus vel possidere debuimus libere, pacifice, quiete, bene et in pace ...* AWR, no. 606, pp. 800-01.

<sup>121</sup> This likely refers to the Welsh custom of fosterage. See L.B. Smith, 'Fosterage, Adoption and God-parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales', *WHR*, 16/1 (1992), pp. 1-35.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Chapter 3 on hospitality and circuits *Roles of the Welsh Queen*.

<sup>123</sup> AWR, no. 607, pp. 802-06.

<sup>124</sup> AWR, no. 606, pp. 800-01. This is similar to a grant made to Hawise's son, Llywelyn, by her husband, Gruffudd ap Gwenwywyn, dated 1 March 1270 or 1271. AWR, no. 602, p. 794.

<sup>125</sup> ... *villam de Lanarmon cum suis pertinentiis in Kenlleiton' una cum terris illis quas domina Ysota avia nostra ex consensus domini Madoci avi nostril ...* Ibid. no. 526, pp. 727-8.

of her husband Madog ap Gruffudd (d. 1236), and son and heir Gruffudd.<sup>126</sup> In a charter dated 1222 a grant and confirmation of lands to Valle Crucis Abbey in the Dee valley in Denbighshire, including three whole townships and eight half townships, was made by Madog with the consent of his wife, Lady Iseult (*fl.* 1222) (*domine I. uxoris mee*).<sup>127</sup> This charter is a confirmation of earlier grants made to Valle Crucis<sup>128</sup> and although there is confusion as to the identity of Iseult (*Ysota / Yseuda*) the important details are that Madog's wife is recorded as giving consent to the alienation of family lands and is also referred to by the title of *domina*.<sup>129</sup>

Emma received two significant grants of dower between the years 1257 and 1269. The first grant is for specific lands in the commote of Maelor Saesneg, namely the manor of Overton and townships of Hanmer, Llannerch-panna and Knolton, which Emma received free possession of for the duration of her lifetime, with the consent of their heirs.<sup>130</sup> The grant states, however, that she is not allowed to give, sell, pledge or alienate the land.<sup>131</sup> The second grant in dower made to Emma, as Gruffudd's legitimate wife (*domine Emme uxori mee legitime*), is for the manor of Eyton in Maelor Gymraeg, again made with the consent of his heirs.<sup>132</sup> This particular grant is warranted, Gruffudd and his heirs promising to defend Emma's title to the manor for as long as she lives.<sup>133</sup> As a further surety that Emma had legal rights to these lands, on 22 December 1279, her sons Madog Fychan (d. 1277), Llywelyn (d. 1282), Owain and Gruffudd (d. 1289) confirmed their father's initial grants, with an additional grant of life tenure to the township of Llanarmon.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>126</sup> ... *villam de Lanarmon cum suis pertinentiis in Kenlleiton' una cum terres illis quas domina Ysota avia nostra ex consensus domini Madoci avi nostri et domini G. patris nostri emit de Cadegon et Ririt et Einon filiis Doyoc que vocantur Lloytteir et P(re)stimand' ...* . AWR, no. 526, pp. 727-8.

<sup>127</sup> *Ego Madocus filius Griffini consensu et assensu domine I. uxoris mee ...* . Ibid. no. 506, pp. 706-7.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. no. 499, pp. 698-700; no. 505, p. 706; no. 511, pp. 712-13.

<sup>129</sup> The same style used in the grant and confirmation to Emma Audely that refers to lands bought by Lady Iseult.

<sup>130</sup> *Ego Griffinus filius Madoci dominus de Bromfeld assensu et consensu heredum meorum dedi et concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi domine Emma uxori mee legitime filie domini Henr(ici) de Audidele totam patriam que vocatur Malorseysnec quoad vixerit...* . AWR, no. 515, p. 718.

<sup>131</sup> ... *ita tamen quod non possit dictam patriam vel aliquam partem eiusdem dare, vendere vel invadiare vel aliquomodo alienare, set post obitum illius predicta patria ad me vel heredos meos revertet et quod dicta terra a domino Wall(ie) non subtrahatur...* .

<sup>132</sup> *Ego Griffinus filius Madoci dominus de Bromfeld' assensu et consensu heredum meorum dedi, concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi domine Emme uxori mee legitime filie domini Henr(ici) de Aldedeleg' totum manerium meum de Eytune in Malauorkemeraec cum omnibus pertinentiis suis ...* . AWR, no. 516, p. 720.

<sup>133</sup> *Ego vero dictus Griffinus et heredes mei predictum manerium cum omnibus pertinentiis suis sicut predictum est predicte domine Emme quamdiu vixerit contra omnes homines warrantizabimus et defendemus.*

<sup>134</sup> AWR, no. 526, pp. 727-8.



All of the above grants stipulate that the lands given in dower are to revert to Gruffudd or his heirs at Emma's death. The commote and *patria* of Maelor Saesneg was 'on the very frontier of the principality of Wales' and, as such, it was important that it remain in Welsh hands; thus, the insertion of the clause that the lands were to revert to the heirs of Gruffudd upon Emma's death. This was not only in the best interest in ensuring the longevity of the family lordship, but was also in the best interest for the prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.<sup>135</sup> Denying Emma the agency to alienate the lands may be a genuine illustration of practice mirroring customary ideals restricting women's property rights. Nevertheless, the fact that Emma was denied permission to alienate lands in the first place strongly suggests a recognised practice in native Wales amongst some of the ruling elite in which women did have such powers, contrary to codified ideals. Moreover, Emma clearly had the power to rescind the regulation as she quitclaimed all her lands in Maelor Saesneg to the king of England between 10 and 15 November 1278.<sup>136</sup>

This move was politically charged as the borderlands of Maelor Saesneg were a great issue of importance to both the Welsh and English sides. Although her husband Gruffudd was the second most powerful Welsh ruler supporting the Welsh cause (after Llywelyn ap Gruffudd), after his death in 1269, their sons, including his successor, Madog Fychan, submitted to the king during the first Welsh war of independence in 1277. Subsequent to the family's declaration of English allegiance, Llywelyn furnished himself with more control in Powys by disposing Emma of her rights to her dowered lands. This was a concern to Edward I who wanted to preserve royal control over Maelor Saesneg. The quitclaim was not the first instance in which she expressed an interest in alienating the lands. It appears that Emma had made it clear as early as February of that year that she was willing to make such an exchange with the king and by October an agreement had been reached.<sup>137</sup> In exchange for

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<sup>135</sup> Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', p. 352.

<sup>136</sup> *Ego Emma de Brumfeld' concessi, remisi et imperpetuum quietumclamavi magnifico principi domino Edward(o) regi Ang(lie) illustri omnes terras et tenementa cum pertinentiis que habui vel aliquot modo habere potui in Maylorseiseneich, habenda et tenenda eidem domino regi [et] heredibus vel assignatis suis libera, quieta et solute, ita quod nec ego nec aliquis per me vel pro me in dictis terris et tenementis cum pertinentiis aliquid habere, clamare vel exigere possimus in futurum.* AWR, no. 519, p. 722.

<sup>137</sup> WAR, pp. 239, 244-5; CWR, p. 162; *Calendar of Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326* (London, 1927), i, p. 4.

Maelor Saesneg, the king granted her life tenure in farms in England, from Derby to the manors of Claverley in Shropshire and Tettenhall in Staffordshire.<sup>138</sup>

Emma also found herself in engaged in a row with one of her sons over Maelor Saesneg.<sup>139</sup> Her son, Llywelyn, had taken Emma's township of Llanarmon claiming it was his heritable right. Twice Emma had her lands restored to her and at the second hearing at Oswestry in February 1278, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd restored all of Llanarmon, but only half of Trefor. An agreement was made between Emma and her son, sometime between February 1278 and 11 December 1282, Llywelyn holding the township of Llanarmon in Cynllaith, including the 30 shillings of rent from the township of Trefor, and rents of *amobr*. This grant was in return for £7 to be paid annually to Emma until her death, on the condition that if her son died before her, the lands would revert back to her control.<sup>140</sup> Emma allowing Llywelyn to hold the lands during her lifetime may have been an act of conciliation as a greater means of stabilising the nature of the lordship.<sup>141</sup>

Emma petitioned king Edward in 1282 or 1283, this time in defence of her dowered rights against Roger Mortimer, first Lord Mortimer of Chirk.<sup>142</sup> Emma proved that her husband enfeoffed her with the township of Llanarmon in Cynllaith, 30s. rent in the township of Trefor in Nanheudwy and rents of *amobr* from all the above lands. She provided evidence that the charter from her husband for the township of Llanarmon and rents of *amobr* were confirmed by one of her sons. Upon the death of her son Llywelyn, the lands she granted to him reverted back to her, as was stated in the terms of the agreement laid out between them. However, Roger Mortimer seized all the aforesaid lands and rents, depriving Emma of her rights of ownership. Emma pleaded to Edward I, as her chief lord, for assurances that he could do justice to all and enable her to have her seisin of the lands and rents owed to her.<sup>143</sup>

Another politically charged example of dower litigation stems from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister, Margaret (*fl. c.* 1241–1284), wife of Madog Fychan of Bromfield. Between 12 February 1283 and May 1284, Margaret petitioned Edward I

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<sup>138</sup> *CPR, 1272–81*, pp. 282-3.

<sup>139</sup> *AWR*, no. 518, p. 721.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* no. 518, p. 721.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 723.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* no. 520, p. 723.

<sup>143</sup> Maelor Saesneg was eventually surrendered to the English Crown and remained under personal control of the king, his family and familiars after the conquest of Wales.

‘to do her right’ regarding different her dowered lands, which were being claimed by two separate parties.<sup>144</sup> Margaret argued that her brother-in-law, Gruffudd Fychan, kept her out of two townships, namely Corwen and Cilmaen-llwyd, which she could prove by charter were given to her by her husband. She also petitioned that Emma Audley made claims to the manor of Eyton, which Margaret had taken in exchange for an annual payment of 10 marks for the term of her life. She claimed that John de Warenne, the earl of Surrey (d. 1310), had disseised her of the manor and kept her out wrongfully. Margaret declared the same wrongs in regards the township of Sontley, which was also being held from her by the earl of Warenne. As the protracted case of Margaret of Bromfield has been examined by Gwyneth Richards, it will not be discussed at any length here.<sup>145</sup> However, in terms of acting as an example of the extent to which women could and did claim action to secure their dowers, it is similar to those above. For understanding how women played key roles in the politics of their localities and in the wider gamut, it is crucial.

Margaret’s case had previously been heard in both Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s court and Edward’s, which caused political contention over the jurisdictional rights of the Welsh ruler and his English overlord.<sup>146</sup> Her actions suggest that she may have played off the men involved to better suit her needs. In fact, in the autumn or winter of 1279, Gruffudd Fychan alleged in a letter to the king that Margaret harassed him excessively (*nos fatigare ultra*), bringing actions against him in both the Welsh and English courts over lands in Edeirnion that he held from the prince of Wales, with the consent of the king.<sup>147</sup> Gruffudd feared Margaret would somehow turn the king against him and asked Edward for advice as to whom he was obliged to answer, the king of England or the prince of Wales. This event likely added fuel to an already raging fire.

Many of these cases of dower reveal a succession of lands being passed through the woman. There are also examples from Arwystli that highlight a similar practice. In a sale of land made to Strata Marcella Abbey by Gruffudd Goch (*fl.* 1207–16 × *c.* 1226) of Arwystli, the patron styles himself son of Gruffudd of Carno by his mother Lleucu (*fl.* before 1207), daughter of Cadwallon (*Gruffudd Coch*

<sup>144</sup> *Dunce le pri nostre synur le rey ke il la face dretur ...* . *AWR*, no. 528, pp. 730-1.

<sup>145</sup> See *Ibid.* 731; Richards, ‘Case of Margaret of Bromfield’.

<sup>146</sup> *AWR*, no. 416, pp. 604-5; no. 418, pp. 606-07; no. 429, pp. 620-5.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* no. 530, pp. 733-4.

*Grifini filius de Karno ex matre Levchv filia Kadwallavn*).<sup>148</sup> Gruffudd's identification as Lleucu's son is unusual. In 1206 these same lands had been granted to Strata Marcella by Cadwallon ap Hywel (*fl.* 1185–1206), who was most likely Lleucu's father.<sup>149</sup> That Gruffudd's rights to the lands are emphasised by Lleucu's lifecycle position as a daughter seems to suggest that Cadwallon had no living sons when he made the initial grant.<sup>150</sup> The use of the lifecycles of wife and mother used to describe Lleucu reinforces Gruffudd's own rights and titles to both his father's and his grandfather's lands as Lleucu was her father's remaining heir.

There are examples of claims to lands being made through the female line in some pleas that were heard in Welsh assize courts in the years 1277–1278. For instance, one Adam de Montgomery made claims against Gruffudd ap Gwenwywyn concerning the whole of the cantref of Arwystli.<sup>151</sup> Montgomery asserted this was his by right through his great-grandfather, Hywel ab Ieuf, Lleucu's grandfather. Rights to the cantref descended from Hywel to Amice, as daughter and heir. Amice subsequently passed the lands to Philip, Adam's father. Adam de Montgomery's claim was collusive and belonged to the wider context of dispute over Arwystli between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

Maredudd ab Iorwerth made similar claims against Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn for the manor of Talgarth, citing his right by descent as the great-great-grandson of Hywel ab Ieuf, through Hywel's daughter Gwenllian.<sup>152</sup> Maredudd claimed that the lands were passed from his great-grandmother, to his own mother, also named Gwenllian. In both these cases, claims through the female line were refuted as being untenable. In the case of Amice, Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn argued that the issue of two of Hywel's sons were nearer in blood than the issue of a daughter. Adam de Montgomery's lawyer argued that according to Welsh law, it was possible for a claim to lands to be made through a woman as heir, especially on account of the inactivity of the surviving male heirs. In the case of Gwenllian, Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn argued that Maredudd's case was immaterial as Gwenllian was illegitimate, whereas Hywel ab Ieuf left many legitimate sons through which Owain was making his claim.

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* no. 10, pp. 151-2.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* no. 9, pp. 150-1.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 152.

<sup>151</sup> *WAR*, pp. 127, 235, 267, 275, 280.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 129-30, 278.

## ***NORTH WALES***

Examples of lands being passed through the female line also survive for north Wales. The most prominent example is illustrated in the marriage agreement made between Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and Ranulf of Chester 22 February 1222 concerning the marriage of Helen, the daughter of Llywelyn and Joan of England, and John of Scotland, Ranulf's nephew.<sup>153</sup> The agreement clearly states that John was to receive lands in Warwickshire and Worcestershire in free marriage (*liberum maritagium*) that Llywelyn had received from King John with his marriage to Joan. Llywelyn agreed that if he was unable to warrant the manors given in free marriage to John, his daughter Helen and their heirs (*Ioh(ann)i et Helene [filie] sue et illorum heredibus*), he would give the couple a reasonable exchange or pay any arising costs relating to the settlement of any future claim disputes. More importantly, on the wedding day, John was expected to assign Helen a dower made up of 100 librates of land.<sup>154</sup> Helen and John both pledged to keep to the agreement by the hand of Reiner (1186–1224), bishop of St Asaph, which was confirmed by oath and seal by both Llywelyn and Ranulf.

The charter indicates that Joan of England, Helen's mother, was directly involved in the granting of the marriage portion for lands under her possession.<sup>155</sup> The charter conveys Llywelyn's assurances that, on the day of the wedding ceremony, John was to receive charters from both himself and Lady Joan, his wife (*domine Ioh(ann)e uxoris sue*) concerning the manors of Bidford in Warwickshire and Suckley in Worcestershire that were to be given in free marriage. As the said manors had been given by King John to Joan and Llywelyn in free marriage upon their union, it is probable that Joan had legal rights to them. Presumably the reference to Joan's issuing of her own charter can be taken to imply, at least, that she was seen as possessing rights in these lands. It is unfortunate that her charter has not survived, but this assumption is confirmed by the fact that Joan issued her own grant to her daughter and son-in-law in addition to Llywelyn's, rather than simply consenting to his charter. This only surviving marriage agreement is important as it

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<sup>153</sup> AWR, no. 252, pp. 412-13.

<sup>154</sup> *Dictus vero Ioh(ann)es dicto desponsacionis [die] assignabit dicte Helene nomine dotis centum librates terre.*

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 198, 205-08.

provides singular insight into the giving of marriage portions and dowers as integral to the creation of kinship alliances by Welsh rulers.<sup>156</sup>

In 1221 a case began between Helen and Giles of Erdington, who claimed rights to the manor of Wellington in Shropshire, which also had been given to Helen and John of Scotland in free marriage. Thomas of Erdington (d. 20 March 1218), Giles's father, was at the centre of a disagreement between Llywelyn and Hugh Mortimer regarding the Shropshire manors of Knighton and Norton, between October 1218 and November 1227.<sup>157</sup> In Helen's marriage agreement, Llywelyn specifically states that if he is unable to warrant the manor of Wellington because of Giles's claims, then he is to give them a reasonable exchange of lands in Shropshire.<sup>158</sup> In the litigation case, both parties claimed ownership based on grants previously made to them. Helen claimed Gwion ap Jonas had given her Wellington, after Henry III and his council had committed it to him.<sup>159</sup> Giles, by action of mort'd'ancestor, claimed it had been given to his father by John as early as 1212.<sup>160</sup> In 1226 the case was delayed and eventually passed on to the justices in eyre, who were expected to hear the case with or without Helen's appearance at court. The case lasted at least up to 1226 and by 1229, Giles of Erdington was in possession of the manor.

A case mentioned in the *coram regis rolls* for 5 May 1241 states that Helen's sister Gwenllian found herself in disagreement with her half-brother, Dafydd ap Llywelyn, prince of Gwynedd, for the recovery of ownership and control over the manors of Aberchwiler, Penbedw, *Estradmelened'* and *Trewowr*.<sup>161</sup> Even after her death, rightful possession these manors remained controversial with Dafydd ap Gruffudd claiming in a list of grievances sent to Archbishop Peckham (1279–1292) between 21 and 31 October 1282 against the king, that Gwenllian had held lands in Dyffryn Clwyd and Rhufoniog by letters patent. These lands passed to Dafydd upon Gwenllian's death and although this was confirmed by the king, he unjustly seized them. They eventually ended up under the control of the English king and Reginald

<sup>156</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 92-95.

<sup>157</sup> *AWR*, no. 244, pp. 402-03; no. 259, pp. 423-4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* no. 252, pp. 412-14.

<sup>159</sup> *CRR*, x, p. 280; xi, pp. 227 (no. 113), 428 (no. 2134); xii, pp. 19 (no. 113), 85-6 (no. 444), 203 (no. 1008), 445 (no. 2202).

<sup>160</sup> Cited in Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, ix, p. 43; *Rot. Chart*, p.189a.

<sup>161</sup> *AWR*, no. 251, p. 412; *CRR*, xvi, no. 1596.

de Gray, justice of Chester.<sup>162</sup> Such cases had politically charged undertones, with appeals being made through the English courts, rather than the Welsh, and references to a succession of English kings asserting their authority in designating landholders for lands in Wales and on the border.<sup>163</sup>

In 1278 Elizabeth Ferrers, widow of William Marshal (d. 1265) of Pembroke, and wife of Dafydd ap Gruffudd, faced a dispute concerning an exchange of dowered lands she had made with her son, and William's heir, John.<sup>164</sup> Elizabeth and Dafydd granted and quitclaimed a portion of Elizabeth's dower from her marriage to William Marshal,<sup>165</sup> namely the manor of Folesham in Norfolk to John. In exchange John granted the couple his manor of Norton in Northamptonshire, to be held for the rest of Elizabeth's life as part of her dower.<sup>166</sup> It was agreed that Folesham was to be held freely by John and his heirs and assigns and that Norton would revert back to him upon Elizabeth's death, without any interference by Dafydd, his heirs or assigns. The parties agreed that whoever possessed the manor of the greater value would compensate the other holding the lands of lesser value so that the exchange would remain equal. As clear cut as the exchange appeared to be, which was likely conducted at the king's court in Westminster,<sup>167</sup> between 1278 and 1281 Dafydd filed a complaint stating that John abnegated the terms concerning the manor of Norton, including payment of compensation for the differences in the value of Norton and Folesham.<sup>168</sup> Elizabeth and Dafydd even appealed to Robert Burnell (1275–1292), bishop of Bath and Wells, as royal chancellor for his intervention.<sup>169</sup>

Circumstances of war surely left many wives in control of the family lordships, acting as the sole representatives of their husbands and families. This has been exemplified with the case of Senana in 1241, Gerald of Wales's commentary on the princess Gwenllïan riding into battle to protect the family lands and even references to queens going on their own circuits.<sup>170</sup> The grants in which Emma of Anjou, wife of Dafydd ap Owain of Gwynedd, figures are also illustrative of this.

<sup>162</sup> AWR, no. 454, pp. 651-3; CPR 1272–81, p. 464. Also see Lloyd, 'Who was Gwenllïan de Lacy?', pp. 295-8; Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 462, n. 53.

<sup>163</sup> Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 93.

<sup>164</sup> AWR, no. 447, pp. 642-3.

<sup>165</sup> ... *dominus David et Elizabeth tenuerunt ut dotem ipsius Elizabeth per mortem predicat Will(elm)I Mareschall quondam viri sui* ....

<sup>166</sup> ... *domino David et Elizabeth ad totam vitam ipsius Elizabeth in forma sue dotis* ...

<sup>167</sup> CCR 1272-9, p. 481.

<sup>168</sup> AWR, no. 451, pp. 644-5.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. no. 448, p. 644.

<sup>170</sup> See Chapter 3, *Roles of the Welsh Queen*.

First, Emma appears in a charter, dated between August 1186 and April 1194, consenting, along with their son and heir Owain,<sup>171</sup> to her husband's grant of the lands of Stockett in Shropshire to Haughmond Abbey, to hold in perpetual right, free of all secular service due to them.<sup>172</sup> Around the same time, Emma issued her own, separate grant with the assent of her husband and son, for the whole of Stockett to be given to the monks.<sup>173</sup>

Emma affixed her own seal to this document and the witness list contains three men who appear on Dafydd's charter granting lands to Haughmond with Emma and Owain's consent.<sup>174</sup> Emma's charter has an additional seven witnesses suggesting that Emma and Dafydd's charters may have been issued at separate times, but both of which were witnessed by bishop Reiner of St Asaph.<sup>175</sup> As the wording of Emma's grant mirrors that issued by Dafydd with her consent, this perhaps highlights the importance in acquiring Emma's consent in granting lands that were connected to her marriage portion in Ellesmere.<sup>176</sup> A confirmation in which Emma gives Stockett to be held by Haughmond Abbey in perpetual right, free of all secular service due to her family, was issued by her nephew, Richard I (r. 1189– 1199) in April 1194.<sup>177</sup>

Between 1194 and 1203, she issued a grant and quitclaim, entirely in her own name, of the pannage of Stockett to Haughmond to hold freely forever, without trouble.<sup>178</sup> At the request and with consent their son and heir, Emma and Dafydd jointly granted the other lands of Crickett to the abbey, dated between April 1194 and May 1203. In this grant, Crickett is to be held by Haughmond Abbey freely forever, in a similar manner to other lands granted in alms. This gift also includes an

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<sup>171</sup> ... *me assensu Emme uxoris mee et Owini heredis mei* ... . AWR, no. 317, p. 490.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. no. 200, p. 333.

<sup>173</sup> *Sciatis me assensu David mariti mei et Owini heredis mei dedisse et concessisse Deo et ecclesie Sancti Ioh(ann)is Evangeliste de Haghmon' et canonicis Deo servientibus in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam ... totam Stocgete cum omnibus pertinentiis ... habendam et tenendam iure perpetuo de me et heredibus meis pacifice, libere et quiete pro omni seculari servitio quod ad nos pertinent.* Ibid. no. 202, p. 335.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. no. 200, p. 333.

<sup>175</sup> The witness lists to both Emma's and Dafydd's charters appear to be complete.

<sup>176</sup> AWR, no. 202, p. 335, notes.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 333. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vii, pp. 293-4.

<sup>178</sup> *Sciatis omnes tam presentes quam futuri quod ego Emma sponsa David filii Owini dedi et quietum clamavi Deo et ecclesie Sancti Ioh(ann)is Evangeliste de Haghmon et canonicis ibidem Deo servientibus ... totam pannagium de Stokeita libere et quiete, integer et plenarie habendum et inperpetuum possidendum. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod predicti canonici amodo sint inde quieti nec aliquis eos inde aliquatenus vexare presumat.* AWR, no. 203, pp. 335-6.



additional quittance of pannage for 100 pigs annually.<sup>179</sup> This additional grant to Haughmond does not have a sealing clause, which in itself is interesting given that it was likely issued during Dafydd's absence as a political prisoner in between 1197 and 1198.<sup>180</sup>

Similar to Joan's case, it is most likely that Emma's consent and joint participation in granting Stockett and Crickett to Haughmond Abbey was required. As a wife she retained some element of authoritative charge over the lands being granted, which were a part of her marriage portion of Ellesmere, granted by Henry II in May 1177.<sup>181</sup> This is confirmed by Emma's own quitclaim to the monks' rights of pannage, in essence revoking her rights to collect payments for the privilege. Her grant concludes that no one shall presume to trouble the monks regarding this account. The grant may simply be following English common law, nevertheless, it intimates the officially recognised level of her agency within the lordship and unconstrained authority.

Use of her lifecycle identifiers and titles gives further credence to this and draws attention to her authority as an individual based on her status and position.<sup>182</sup> In both charters issued by Emma, she is identified by her lifecycle positions in relation to the powerful men she was connected to. In the first consensual charter, she identifies herself, first and foremost, as Lady Emma, the sister of the king of England, and wife of the prince of North Wales (*Domina Emma soror Henrici regis, uxor David filii Owini principis Norwallie*). These lifecycle identifiers state her social position and the use of her own seal helps underscore the type of influence associated with her position at the time the charter was issued.

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<sup>179</sup> *Sciant omnes tam presentes quam futuri quod ego David filius Owini et Emma uxor mea ad petitionem et consensum Owini filii et heredis nostri dedimus et concessimus et presenti carta nostra confirmavimus Deo et ecclesie Sancti Ioh(ann)is Evangeliste de Haghmon' et canonicis ibidem Deo serventibus pro salute animarum nostrarum in liberam, puram et perpetuam elemosinam totam terram de Crickcote cum omnibus pertinentiis suis et cum omnibus libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus ... et in omnibus rebus et locis ita liberius, plenius et quietius in elemosinam data vel dari potuit. Concessimus etiam eisdem canonicis quietantiam pannagii annuatim ad centum porcos. Unde ne aliquis heredum vel successorum nostrorum prefatos canonicos super ista donatione et concessione nostra in posterum aliquatenus inquietare presumat set rata, firma et inconcussa permaneat et imperpetuum perseveret ... . AWR, no. 201, p. 334.*

<sup>180</sup> All of the above grants were confirmed by Owain around the same time. Ibid. no. 204, p. 336-7; no. 205, pp. 337-8.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 333. *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi et Ricardi Primi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1867), i, p. 162; *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. W. Stubbs, 4 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1868-71), ii, p. 134.

<sup>182</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 169, 180.

Use of the title of *domina* in the consensual charter issued by Emma, combined with lifecycle identifiers, highlight the gendered authority and position that she had in both political and personal capacities. These labels mirror those found in the consensual grant issued by Dafydd who is identified through his patronymic and his status as the prince of North Wales. Although Emma is simply referred to as his wife in this charter, and her motherhood stage is emphasised, Dafydd's title indicates the status of his marital family. This is also the case in the twelfth-century charters issued by Hywel ap Iorwerth whose use of the title *dominus de Carlyon* indicates the status of his family, who gave the consent to his grants of gifts.<sup>183</sup> Emma's additional grant to Haughmond in which she is identified solely as Dafydd's wife and which has no sealing clause may indicate one of two things. The first possibility is that it reflects her own perception regarding the loss of her status within Wales after Dafydd's imprisonment. The second possibility is that the lack of title, or even her association with the king of England, reflects the perceptions of the drafters of the documents themselves.

In the joint charter granting the lands of Crickett and Emma's quitclaim concerning the pannage of Stockett, titles are not used. Emma is simply referred to as Dafydd's wife. Dafydd, himself, is referred to as David son of Owain. This contrast has been noted by Huw Pryce who suggests that the lack of title implies these charters were likely issued after Dafydd lost Gwynedd to his nephew, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in 1194, when his power and influence were relegated to his English castles and lands.<sup>184</sup> It has also been suggested that these two charters may have been issued during Dafydd's imprisonment by Llywelyn in 1197–1198, which may have been the only reason why Emma produced a quitclaim in her own name.<sup>185</sup> These may, indeed, have been issued during Dafydd's captivity, but his presence or absence within the lordship most likely did not enhance or impede Emma's ability or freedom to issue these specific gifts in her own right, especially as the lands were a part of her dowry of Ellesmere. Successive charters like these, issued jointly, with consent and independently by women underscore the additional means available to a ruling lordship when a family acted as a collective pool of patrons. This helped to

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<sup>183</sup> See above, p. 264

<sup>184</sup> *AWR*, no. 201, p. 334, notes.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* no. 203, p. 336, notes.

ensure their hegemony through acts of patronage, especially during times of political instability.

Around August 1241, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd quitclaimed his rights to Maelienydd and Gwerthyrnion to Ralph Mortimer, his wife Gwladus Ddu and their heirs (*Rad(ulf)o de Mortuo Mari et Gladuse uxori sue et heredibus eorum*).<sup>186</sup> Llywelyn, Gwladus's nephew, promised that Gwladus and Ralph would be able to hold the quitclaimed lands without difficulty, that he would defend them in their rights to seisin and provide them with aid and council against all men.<sup>187</sup> Although this grant is similar to half a dozen quitclaims that Mortimer received concerning rights to Gwerthyrnion,<sup>188</sup> it is important to consider why Gwladus may have been an equal beneficiary. It may have been that grants made by kin relations jointly to a couple, as well as those given jointly by couples, were sometimes made in anticipation of widowhood or women taking the helm of the lordship in the absence of their husbands and grown sons. Perhaps quitclaims to and by couples were a means of avoidance of having to issue re-grants stating family ownership over certain lands. They were also as a means of ensuring a married woman's entitlement to such rights associated with property management if her husband died.

In a letter sent to Henry III between October 1249 and 2 July 1250 brothers Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd refer to the unwillingness of Henry's justice to restore their lands and rights as laid out in a peace agreement made with the king in August 1241.<sup>189</sup> They claim that the king's justice was frivolous and would do nothing unless the lands in question pertained to the dower of their mother Senana, which she had had in possession for a long time.<sup>190</sup> On 11 July 1252, Senana witnessed a binding agreement made in the presence of her youngest son, Dafydd, lord of Cymydmaen (*David filio Griffini domino de Kemedmaen*), between the abbot and convent of Enlli (Bardsey) and the secular canons Aberdaron and the men of the *abadaeth* (landed endowment of the church).<sup>191</sup> This agreement

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. no. 317, p. 490.

<sup>187</sup> *Ego vero Leulinus tactis sacrosanctis iuravi quod ego et heredes mei dictos Rad(ulf)um et Gladusam et heredes eorum in seisinam dictarum terrarum pro posse nostro manutenebimus et quod erimus eis auxiliantes et consulentes in omnibus agendis eorum contra omnes homines.*

<sup>188</sup> This may relate to a truce made between him and the dynasty of Maelienydd.

<sup>189</sup> See Chapter 4, *Senana ferch Caradog*.

<sup>190</sup> *Frivole contra nos excipiebat, dicens quod nichil faceret, nisi Maredudd filius Ricardi de Leyn haberet quasdam terras [qu]as mater nostra habuerat pro dote longo tempore.* AWR, no. 315, pp. 487-8.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. no. 440, pp. 635-8.

documents a dispute settlement and the procedures of arbitration under native rule in the thirteenth century and is one of a very small number to survive.<sup>192</sup> The dispute concerns the land rights and other dues in the commote of Cymydmaen claimed by the convent of Enlli and is of particular interest to this research as it tells of the annual procurations (dues) from the *abadaeth* that Dafydd, as the lord of Cymydmean had rights to.<sup>193</sup> That Senana appears first on the witness list is significant. Her status is defined by her title *domina* and her identifying lifecycle as widow (*domina S. quondam uxore domini Griffini*) perhaps reveals the type of power associated with a woman in widowhood. There is perhaps more than meets the eye, however, as Senana is recognised as the former wife of lord Gruffudd, rather than as an actual widow (*relicta /vidua*). This is perhaps indicative of her accepted status as head of the family lordship (which she assumed during her husband's prolonged captivity) and why she was witness to an agreement that her youngest son presided over.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, the prospect that Senana may have controlled the area in question as a portion of dower should not be overlooked. This may also signify why she acts as first witness, possibly having quitclaimed rights to Dafydd at some earlier stage.

## **WARRANTIES**

The above illustrations provide strong evidence that even though the Welsh laws disallowed female inheritance and landownership, endowing married women with economic agency in the form of lands and management responsibilities was a well established practice amongst the elite. Warranties in Welsh charters provide further clue to women's involvement in land administration. There are nine charters issued amongst the *acta* of Welsh rulers that warrant against both men and women.<sup>195</sup> For Deheubarth, between 1280 and 25 March 1282 Cynan ap Maredudd ab Owain (d. 1328) granted all lands, gifts, legacies, sales, pastures and liberties to Strata Florida Abbey that had been granted by his predecessor the Lord Rhys. His grant concludes

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<sup>192</sup> It is an example of a Welsh church (Aberdaron) as a native institution, similar to those described in the lawbooks. *AWR*, p. 637; Pryce, *Native Law*, pp. 186-7.

<sup>193</sup> *AWR*, pp. 637-8.

<sup>194</sup> *Brenhinedd y Saesson* and the *Brutiau* indicate that Llŷn was held by Gruffudd previous to 1238. *BS*, pp. 230-3; *BT, Pen20*, p. 196; *BT, Pen20Tr*, p. 104; *BT, RBH*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>195</sup> There are 30 that warrant against all men. Some comparisons of warranties against all women and men can be found from lordships in south Wales under foreign rule. See NLW, Picton Castle, 21 and 70.

with a warrant against all men and women (*etiam contra omnes homines et feminas warrantizare*).<sup>196</sup> In the thirteenth century, Gruffudd ap Maredudd ab Owain (d. 1319) made an exchange of lands with Rhys Fychan ap Rhys ap Maelgwn (d. 1302) on 2 May 1283. This particular grant actually begins with a warranty against all men and women of the whole of Cantref Penweddig to be possessed freely and without harassment or dispute, from him and his heirs, forever.<sup>197</sup> Between 25 October 1230 and February 1241 Morgan Gam, with the consent of his wife Matilda ‘and other friends’ granted to Margam Abbey gifts made to it by Gilbert de Clare (c. 1180–1230), earl of Gloucester. The gifts pertained to the fee of Newcastle, portions of which had been granted to the monks by Morgan’s father, Morgan ap Caradog (d. c. 1208) and the earl.<sup>198</sup> This particular charter is interesting because it warrants lands against all men and women, especially the Welsh.<sup>199</sup>

Comparatively, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys issued four consecutive grants with the same warranty clause as that found in Gruffudd ap Maredudd ab Owain’s exchange of lands with Rhys Fychan.<sup>200</sup> Between 9 June 1232 × c.1245, Gruffudd’s mother, Margaret Corbet, consented to her son’s quitclaim that transferred annual payments of 6s. by the men of Longstone for lands in Newland to Lilleshall Abbey.<sup>201</sup> This charter is warranted against all men and women.<sup>202</sup> The lands in question were part of Gruffudd’s manor of Ashford in Derbyshire, over which Margaret retained some control as a portion of her dower.<sup>203</sup> Gruffudd refers

<sup>196</sup> AWR, no. 82, pp. 216-22.

<sup>197</sup> *Noveritis nos pro nobis et heredibus nostris dedisse et concessisse et contra omnes homines et feminas warrantizasse Reso Iuniori filio Resy filii Maelgun totam terram de Cantref Penweddig in terminis et finibus suis ...* . Ibid. no. 78, pp. 213-14.

<sup>198</sup> *Ego consilio et consensu Matildis uxoris mee et aliorum amicorum meorum ...* . AWR, no. 180, p. 308. Kinship groups founded on blood-relationships underscored European feudalism, which is manifest in the characteristic use of the term ‘friends’ to describe such connections in medieval France (*amis*) and German (*Freunde*), for example. The ubiquitous utilization of such terminology implies that in feudal society the only real friendships or connections were those joined by blood. Only on rare occasions was the expression ‘friends by blood’ (*amis charnels*) employed. Although, as Marc Bloch points out, ‘The tie of kinship was one of the essential elements of feudal society; its relative weakness explains why there was feudalism at all’, it is important to recognise that feudalism and customs associated with vassalage, the fief and the manor were unknown to regions like Wales, for example, ‘in which powerful agnatic groups survived’. M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, (trans.) L.A. Manyon (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1962), pp. 123-4, 138, 142.

<sup>199</sup> *Et ego et heredes mei omnes dictas terras dictis monachis warrantizabimus contra omnes homines et feminas et maxime contra omnes Walenses.* AWR, no. 180, p. 308.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. nos. 582-5, pp. 775-80.

<sup>201</sup> *Ego Griffin filius Wennunwen consensu et assensu domine Margarete matris mee ... habendam et tenendam in perpetuum libere et quiete de me et de heredibus meis sine omni servicio, consuetudine et exactione seculari ad me vel ad heredes meos pertinente.* Ibid. no. 582, pp. 775-6.

<sup>202</sup> ... *et extra contra omnes homines et feminas warrantizabimus ...* .

<sup>203</sup> AWR, p. 776; CR, 1231–4, p. 70.

to his mother as Lady Margaret (*domine Margarete matris mee*), thus reiterating both her status and position within the lordship, as well as the associated roles of her widowhood. The two remaining examples are from Gwynedd where Llywelyn ap Gruffudd issued two grants to Basingwerk Abbey (8 April 1247) and Beddgelert Priory (11 March 1269) respectively.<sup>204</sup> It is difficult to know if the inclusion of women in warranty clauses was a scribal preference or a specific requirement of the grantor. Nonetheless, warrants made against all men and women, though few in number, provide another good illustration in which women were active in property dealings. They indicate that some women had better claims to titles and properties in question. The fact that the warranties survive at all tells us that women were involved in estate management and as land owners or they would not be warranted against in the first place.<sup>205</sup>

## **ANALYSIS**

The partition of family lands in any guise changed the face of a lordship. These changes often affected the nature of a locality, which had the potential to change political dimensions. Marriage portions or dowries illustrate this, as do gifts of dowers made to wives by their husbands. Such endowments can be seen as extensions of lordship control and the exercise of family power over any set of given lands.<sup>206</sup> Illustrations of dowers given to women living in Wales before the Edwardian conquest and cases of dower litigation found in chancery records reveal that, in spite of the laws, there was a (written) practice in which women were given control over portions of family lordships; gifts of which provided some with avenues to exercise economic, legal and even political forms of agency within their localities.

It can be seen that the granting of dowers and (presumed) marriage portions was hardly a nominal business transaction. Like elsewhere it was a form of gift that was controlled and created under defined conditions.<sup>207</sup> At its heart, the granting of dowers, and any other forms of family lands to women, was largely a family affair. The dower especially ‘was as much subject to mistake, anger, dislike and affection

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<sup>204</sup> *AWR*, no. 321, pp. 492-4; no. 367, pp. 545-6.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. warranty clauses found in the Powysian charters concerning Margaret Corbet and Emma Audley. *Ibid.* no. 516, p. 720; no. 582, pp. 775-6.

<sup>206</sup> On the Welsh border it has been revealed that military considerations may have contributed to the types and size of lands given to women in dower. Cavell, ‘Aristocratic Widows’, p. 62.

<sup>207</sup> Loengard, “‘Of the Gift of her Husband’”, p. 217.

as any other intra-family arrangement'.<sup>208</sup> As such, it could not be claimed as an abstract right, nor was it a guaranteed absolute once granted as it was a provision that heirs could choose to ignore.<sup>209</sup> Evidence of this is in the cases of women who found themselves defending their dowers. In fact, the examples found for Wales in which women were directly involved in dower litigation point to the concerns of women pertaining to not only their legal rights to lands, but to the political security of their localities and lands directly under their control.

Medieval women appearing in court as plaintiffs in cases pertaining to dowered lands was hardly an uncommon phenomenon. Sue Sheridan Walker's study on dower litigation cases in the plea rolls of the English royal court between 1272 and 1350 suggests that the large number of cases indicate two main things. First, that it was practice that required women to be personally active and competent in their pursuit of such avenues. And second, that the widow's role as the plaintiff was frequent in a culture dominated by law and rights associated with real property. Medieval widows, especially, were provided recourse in the courts when denied their dower rights. Evidence from records of the royal court contends that in terms of dower litigation, widows were required to act as plaintiffs, with or without the use of legal advisors; this includes women who had new husbands who were united in the demand for dower.<sup>210</sup>

More often than not, dower disputes were intrafamilial, with many adult children, stepchildren, guardians of heirs or other relatives regularly refuting a woman's access to lands she had been endowed with.<sup>211</sup> The intrafamilial involvement in charters or deeds concerning land rights is also marked in the many European-wide examples in which the consent of relatives closely associated with the vendor or donor is provided. When property disputes escalated, in many cases the family as a whole unit claimed to have suffered damage.<sup>212</sup> It was the power of the family as a unit, rather than the individual, that provided the backbone of support and help during times of crisis.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 231.

<sup>209</sup> Jenkins, 'Property Interests', p. 85; Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 58.

<sup>210</sup> Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', pp. 81-3.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>212</sup> In the words of Marc Bloch, 'In medieval society [with the exception of England] there was scarcely an institution more universal than this right of redemption enjoyed by relatives (*retrait lignager*)'. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 135.

In late medieval Italy, for example, evidence shows that women in the northern regions were supported by their own families and the courts when claiming land rights, especially when fighting against their husbands' chosen heirs. Like in England, the courts often favoured women's claims. Further, Italian women had the support in forcing heirs to pay or assign lands or dwellings over to them in place of their dowers and were allowed to transfer their rights to a third party that would act as a more powerful deterrent. More interestingly, wives had the right to take their husbands to court as a means of legally securing their rights.<sup>214</sup> It has been shown that familial bonds and kinship groups amongst the nobility and urban patriciate in late medieval Italy were a powerful political and communal force.<sup>215</sup> Yet, as in the case of dower disputes, the woman's marital family, or her husband's heirs, could also be the main threat, forcing her to seek adequate protection from others by the way of creating binding ties.<sup>216</sup> Welsh cases heard in the English royal courts also illustrate a number of these points.

The recorded cases of endowments made to women cited above provide an indication as to the types of land distribution practices that were acceptable in native Wales during the Age of Princes. These illustrations show that in spite of the legal limitations concerning female inheritance, the ambiguity of the Welsh dowry or *argyfrau* and the sheer silence in the laws concerning dower, there were native families who deemed it important to keep records of land provisions made to their female family members. This is especially pertinent considering the endowments made to Welsh wives by their Welsh husbands, such as Elen wife of Maredudd ab Owain ap Gruffudd, Angharad wife of Maelgwn Fychan ap Maelgwn, Senana wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, and Angharad wife of Owain ap Maredudd. These grants possibly illustrate how land assignments to women may have been associated with gender expectations within the family milieu and the socio-political necessities for making provisions to women.

Evidence indicates that dower litigation was, in reality, 'women's business' and one that often awarded both power and status to those women who grasped the

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<sup>214</sup> C.E. Meek, 'Women, Dowries and the Family in Late Medieval Italian Cities', in C.E. Meek and M.K. Simms (eds), *The Fragility of her Sex? Medieval Irish Women in their European Context* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 142-4.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 136-52.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, p. 142.



legalities concerning land ownership and property control.<sup>217</sup> It was important for them to have knowledge of the actual property arrangements. Any charters associated with them, the history of the estates in question, including any previous suits, as well as the details of their own marriages. This knowledge was key to success in their rebuttals, with or without legal advice.<sup>218</sup> Such factors make it clear that female plaintiffs suing for dower were not simply defined by their widowhood, but also profited from the socioeconomic status that the label of doweress and powers associated with it provided.<sup>219</sup>

In the early Middle Ages, groups of individual women who acted in a legal capacity to secure their assets demonstrate that some women had powers over property and expectations that they would be able to maintain possession of them.<sup>220</sup> The above examples of dower disputes corroborate that this was still the case as late as the end of the thirteenth century. Further, they confirm that, in spite of the laws, women in Welsh society clearly were not excluded from being heavily involved in and attending legal proceedings concerning their inheritances and producing charters as evidence of their landed rights. Many of the cases discussed involved women of English origin. This may be why so many examples from the English courts survive and it is important to remain cautious about how far this may skew the picture in context to Wales. Yet, with the example of Margaret of Bromfield, it is clear that women also made appearances in the Welsh courts.<sup>221</sup> Although married women had no more than a life interest in their properties, which in terms of alienation effectively limited their ownership, they could and did have power over their land endowments and portions of the family lordship. More importantly, these litigation cases show the socio-economic and, crucially, the socio-political importance of a wife being able to administer a lordship in her husband's absence as a means of securing assets and family holdings. This is established by the very existence of the

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<sup>217</sup> The sheer number of cases also intimate that dower was a force of interest for women and that widowed plaintiffs relied on the 'collective wisdom' drawn from other examples of relicts suing for dower to enhance their own arguments and ensure their economic survival. Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 82.

<sup>218</sup> In fact, many defendants demanded that widows suing for dower hand over charters and other pertinent muniments in return for offering to grant dower. As such, it was most likely a prudent move for dower claimants to consult a lawyer, although neither laws nor customs required that a woman have a male representative in the royal court. *Ibid.* 85, 97, 99.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* 84.

<sup>220</sup> Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 149.

<sup>221</sup> A discussion of the differentiation in the use of the English courts and Welsh courts for dower litigation is beyond the reach of this project.

dower in the first place. Importantly, the examples of dower provision reveal how successive generations of women received grants of land from the men in their families. This can be seen in the case of Margaret Corbet to Hawise Lestrage. More significantly, perhaps, is the example of Owain ap Maredudd's grant to his wife Angharad the commote of Anhuniog in dower. His own mother Elen de Vall, was granted the commote of Gwynionydd by her husband, Maredudd ab Owain. Further, Angharad's own grandmothers were Juliana de Lacy on the paternal side and Angharad, daughter of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth on her mother's side, both of whom held lands in their husbands' territories.

The dowered rights of many of these women were clearly secured. It was stipulated that revenues were not to be taken from Margaret Corbet's dower by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Those of Juliana de Lacy were protected by the Crown when she was in her second marriage. Elen de Vall's dower was ratified by Henry III, whilst in Anhuniog, Angharad's dowered rights were safeguarded with promises that if she was deprived of any portion of it by any future grants, she would be reimbursed with lands of equal value. Further, her gift of dower stipulates that all lands granted to her would remain hers alone even upon separation of her husband under certain conditions.

Although some of the lands remain unspecified in the above examples, such as Juliana de Lacy's in contrast to the later Anhuniog grant made to Angharad, it is remarkable that a number of these women were granted control over generous proportions of their husband's lordship lands, not least Welsh territorial units that had their own courts and administrative centres. This is especially noteworthy concerning areas that were under considerable pressure in regards to territorial disputes, such as Anhuniog, Gwynionydd and Maelor Saesneg. Hawise Lestrage's, Emma Audley's and Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd's grants are particularly instructive as to the nature of terms that some women were expected to adhere to regarding patrimonial lands under their possession and lands as important as commotes. All three women were to possess their dowers in free possession for the whole of their lives. While Hawise was exempt from amongst other things paying tributes and tallages, as well as performing other forms of hospitality while her husband was on circuit, Emma was not allowed to sell, pledge or alienate her dowered lands. Upon the deaths of both women, the lands were to revert back to their either their husbands or their heirs. These stipulations help inform the political

and economic factors behind the maintenance of native dynastic lordships and how women's roles fit within them.

J. B. Smith has discussed at length the provisions of dower made by Owain ap Maredudd to his wife Angharad, and that Gruffudd ap Madog made to Emma Audley. He says that Owain's grant of dower to Angharad 'belongs to those brief years when princes and magnates began to establish the procedures by which they might secure that reconciliation of interest which was essential to the well-being of a political community ...'.<sup>222</sup> Enfeoffments of land in dower made to women in Wales — which mirror some practices associated with English common law, perhaps reflecting a natural cultural influence through the design of intermarriages between Welsh and Marcher families — highlight both the territorial interests of the native princely dynasties themselves and the wider interests of the princes of Wales. This is verified for example in the confirmation of the grant of dower of Anhuniog made by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. This was unlikely to be a unique circumstance as Gruffudd ap Madog's dower provision to Emma Audley refers to the power of Llywelyn as confirming all grants.<sup>223</sup> These documents reflect the relationship between the prince of Wales and his vassals and how the devolution of a dynastic estate as a whole was the concern on a local and 'national' level.<sup>224</sup> That the land rights bestowed upon women were at the centre of these concerns is significant. In theory, they were entrusted with powers to the benefit of the stability of both the localities associated with familial lordships and those on the wider Welsh political front.

The making of gifts to individuals, families and religious institutions by the heads of lordships and their heirs intensified alliances and reinforced familial control over widespread territories. Upon closer scrutiny, some women were at the heart of the transactions of Welsh rulers, recorded as performing roles associated with lordship administration, such as granting lands as co-lords, as individuals and giving consent to the division of family lands.<sup>225</sup> With few exceptions, most of the extant grants and confirmations concerning women in the *acta* of the Welsh rulers were made to religious houses. The connection between a lordship and a religious

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<sup>222</sup> Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', p. 354.

<sup>223</sup> *AWR*, no. 526, pp. 727-8.

<sup>224</sup> Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', pp. 351-2.

<sup>225</sup> e.g. *AWR*, no. 35, pp. 180-83; no. 150, pp. 283-4; no. 201, p. 334; no. 460, p. 659; no. 474, pp. 673-4; no. 526, pp. 727-8.

institution ensured that family lands, and thus family power, could be securely sustained by certifying that the lands were controlled by the greater power of the church, but often under direction and stipulations laid out by the families themselves. For ecclesiastical institutions, such connections ensured military security and promises of prosperity.

Religious patronage provided women with opportunities to display authority and wealth. This has been found to be the case from Anglo-Saxon England to early modern France where patronage was, traditionally, an informal and acceptable means for women to access power.<sup>226</sup> It has been shown that the enduring belief that women suffered from an institutional powerlessness has tended to obscure the very power they gained as patrons of religious institutions and as active patrons of culture.<sup>227</sup> Through patronage, women were able to influence the course of relationships and because patronage often influenced politics, it was an essential feature in the progression of the female career.<sup>228</sup> It has been shown that roles of noblewomen on the Welsh March were central to the creation and perpetuation of ties between lordships and religious houses; their positions within a lordship and their familial and affinitive connections were key to the making of grants to monasteries in the twelfth century.<sup>229</sup> This, too, is evident in the charters of the Welsh rulers and their wives. Records of practice suggest that through acts of familial patronage noblewomen in Wales had opportunities to exert power and wealth in a wider public sphere sanctioned by the Church by combining the practicality of their roles with the influences culturally and socially associated with their gender and class.<sup>230</sup>

Examples such as Gwenllian's, Lord Rhys's wife, strongly suggest that the marital relationship provided a significant degree of autonomy for women who were central figures in family matters. This has been revealed also to be the case for noblewomen in England in the later Middle Ages who retained a prominent place in a society in which social status and power for both sexes was determined by land

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<sup>226</sup> S. Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *The Historical Journal*, 32/4 (1989), p. 841.

<sup>227</sup> Kettering, 'Patronage Power', p. 841.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* 838.

<sup>229</sup> Cavell, *Noblewomen in Shropshire*, p. 111.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p. 74. On the patronage of families to Cistercian houses in Wales see H. Pryce, 'Patrons and Patronage among the Cistercians in Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 154 (2007 for 2005), 81-95.

holdings.<sup>231</sup> In many guises, as wives, heiresses and widows, women participated in the transmission of land and were able to demonstrate their capabilities in attracting and retaining relationships important to the success of a lordship through their exercise of patronage. Their contributions helped to complement the work and goals of their husbands and families.<sup>232</sup>

Generally, in order to prevent the gifts or donations from being challenged by family members, many lords secured the consent of their immediate relatives, usually those who had some form of claim over the property specified. This has been seen demonstrated in cases where heirs consented to and confirmed dower grants made to their mothers by their fathers. The acts of religious patronage indicate that the women named in the documents exercised some agency. They helped establish and maintain religious houses, granting lands and running the family estate, even if it was through administering public consent based on the wishes of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers. It should be considered that family members may have simply consented to grants made by the head of the lordship because there was an expectation amongst the noble classes that immediate family members fulfil the responsibilities assigned to their lifecycle positions. However, it has been argued that since wives especially were consulted in the alienation of lordship lands, their documented consent to family donations strongly suggests they had claims to family property, which ‘provides further evidence of their participation in feudal concerns’.<sup>233</sup> The securing of female consent, largely as wives, but also as mothers and daughters, substantiated the legitimacy of women’s claims to the patrimony.<sup>234</sup>

In early medieval Wales, though evidence regarding marital practice is largely absent, there are charters that offer information in terms of both husbands and wives taking part in land transactions. These examples suggest that there may have been not only a common interest in securing family fortunes, but a shared control over marital property.<sup>235</sup> Though difficult to confirm, there may have been a continuity in practice from the pre-Norman period to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a shared control over marital property is not only intimated in the above

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<sup>231</sup> Cf. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*.

<sup>232</sup> Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. ix.

<sup>233</sup> Livingstone, ‘Noblewomen’s Control of Property’, p. 68.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* 58.

<sup>235</sup> Davies, ‘Celtic Women’, pp. 154-5.

examples, but is also suggested in quitclaims made jointly to families found in the *acta*.<sup>236</sup>

David Herlihy has highlighted the correspondence between the periods of early medieval history that were ‘marked by extensive mobilization of the population, vigorous military and geographic expansion’ and periods of female activity when women appear as owners and managers of lands. Monastic records from continental Europe emphasise the connection between military mobilization and an extension of Church lands with women’s increased social prominence as owners and managers of property.<sup>237</sup> It is important to ask if the extended absences of husbands and male heads of households enhanced the status of women and their economic positions as administrators. Circumstances often dictated that wives and husbands create successful partnerships so that during times of war and long absences, women could take their husbands’ place in managing estates.<sup>238</sup> These expectations allowed many women to forge important roles for themselves within national and local politics.

This is especially pertinent when, as has been shown in England, as widows or *femmes soles*, women often found themselves administering lordships and providing for their children.<sup>239</sup> The uncertainties of medieval society and the very real threats of untimely (male) deaths often meant that in practice, women inherited lands or were expected to effectively manage family estates, even in even in areas like Lombardy ‘where prevalent custom was unfavourable to them’.<sup>240</sup> English charters in which women appear as benefactors and beneficiaries suggest a high degree of confidence and trust imparted on wives and mothers and a belief in their competency to effectively manage the lordship.<sup>241</sup> Applying such generalisations based on Welsh evidence, however, has its limitations. There is simply not enough information from other native sources to suggest one way or the other. However, even though there is no precise evidence that this was the case in Wales, it is

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<sup>236</sup> Cf. *AWR*, no. 150, pp. 281-2; nos 200-02, pp. 333-6; no. 474, pp.673-4.

<sup>237</sup> Herlihy, ‘Land, Family, and Women’, p. 33.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* 33; Ward, *Women in England*, p. 102.

<sup>239</sup> Ward, *Women in England*, p. 102.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Herlihy, ‘Land, Family, and Women’, p. 33. For an assessment of the legal and financial positions of widows in north Wales in the early modern period see Swett, ‘Widowhood, Custom and Property’, pp. 189-227.

<sup>241</sup> R.E. Archer, “‘How Ladies ... Who Live on their Manors Ought to Manage their Households and Estates’”: Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages’, in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Women in Medieval English Society, c. 1200–1500* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 150, 152.

reasonable to presuppose that women had an integral part to play in the daily administration of the family lordship whilst their husbands were absent.

In the absence of their lords, women acted as witnesses to grants made by their offspring. This is found in the example of Senana as first witness to her son's charter. Female witnessing is an important discussion because the presence of names indicates the individuals who acted as key players — politically, socially, economically and even legally. Historians have viewed witnessing and charter evidence in varied perspectives that range from lists being evidence and products of political influences to lists used as further expressions of power and authority based on the individuals and the importance of their presence at the ceremony.<sup>242</sup> The lists of names could also simply represent the beneficiaries' views of individuals important enough to be recorded to assess the validity and security of the transaction; an individual's perceived importance surely implies that those named had 'real' power.<sup>243</sup> For example, in the late twelfth century, Tangwystl, the wife of Gruffudd son of *Keneithur* not only witnessed a bequest of lands made by *Ketherech*, son of John Du, to Margam Abbey but also swore on holy relics,<sup>244</sup> likely indicating social status. Most significantly, it has been argued that power was founded in the exercise of office, which had the capacity to degender or regender individuals and facilitate female participation in events.<sup>245</sup> Appearance as witnesses indicated their status and the social recognition of their roles and the offices within the institution of their lordships.

There are four charters in the *acta* in which women appear as witnesses. The roles that rank and gender played in influencing female identities and determining where women appear list in witness lists are frequently highlighted.<sup>246</sup> High ranking women often appear at the heads of lists as wives or widows, accentuating the importance of those specific lifecycles within specific contexts.<sup>247</sup> Adeliza de Clare (*fl.* 1136 × 1161), wife of Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd (d. 1172), appears as a witness to

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<sup>242</sup> *English Episcopal Acta, V, York, 1070–1154*, ed. J.E. Burton (Oxford, 1988), p. xxxiii; M. Chibnall, 'The Charters of the Empress Matilda', in G.S. Garnett and J.G.H. Hudson (eds), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 291-3; D.A. Postles, 'Choosing a Witness in Twelfth-Century England', *Irish Jurist*, 23 (1988), pp. 330-46; T. Webber, 'The Scribes and the Handwriting of the Original Charters', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 71 (1991), p. 139.

<sup>243</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p. 84.

<sup>244</sup> NLW, Penrice and Margam, Ch. 17; *Cartae et munimenta*, ii, no. 185. cf. Chapter 4, p. 221.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.* 85.

<sup>246</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p. 92.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.* 93-4.

her husband's grant of the church of Nefyn on the Llŷn peninsula and surrounding lands to Haughmond Abbey, dated 1140 × 1152 or 1157 × -12 August 1161.<sup>248</sup> The canons were to possess the gift in perpetual peace, free of all injury and evil custom.<sup>249</sup> In this particular grant, Adeliza appears last on the truncated witness list and is identified as Cadwaladr's wife (*Aliz de Clara uxore mea*). It is likely that Adeliza was the widow of Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare, lord of Ceredigion (d. 1136) and that Cadwaladr's claims to rule Ceredigion were reinforced by their marriage.<sup>250</sup> That Adeliza appears as a witness may indicate her rights to the lands being donated, perhaps by dower granted to her by her first husband. Thus, it may be especially significant that she is the only lay person listed, the other four witnesses being clergymen, including Meurig the bishop of Bangor (d. 12 August 1161).

Fundamentally, witness lists provide an insight into the perceived, or relative powers associated with individuals and any offices they may have held; powers that are socially defined and recognised.<sup>251</sup> However, out of the four charters discussed, two have truncated witness lists,<sup>252</sup> which is important to note. Truncated witness lists are problematical in assessing how and why women may have made an appearance. Women may have been omitted during truncation by later copyists, like in cartularies. Though, the tendency to keep the first few names does at least suggest something of the perceived importance of women as witnesses. Their appearances underscore basic levels of female authority and influence. The naming of female witnesses suggests their direct participation in and agreements to the creation of specific contracts and arrangements affecting the shape of their localities and the administration of the family lordship.

As Wendy Davies pointed out for the eleventh century, consensual acts and those of jointure may have been representative of the fact that each partner had contributed to a common marriage stock and maintained control of ownership over their individual portions. As a result, no decisions about the conveyancing of property were likely made without spousal consultation. This probably often led to acts of spousal jointure, which is in contrast to the Welsh laws that limit women's property rights to largely moveable goods rather than land. It shows that the legal

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<sup>248</sup> AWR, no. 197, p. 329.

<sup>249</sup> *Quare volo et precipio firmiter quantius predicti canonici hanc meam donationem libere et quiete et absque ullo gravamine et mala consuetudine teneant et inperpetuum in pace possideant.*

<sup>250</sup> AWR, p. 330.

<sup>251</sup> Stafford, 'Powers of the Queen', p. 14.

<sup>252</sup> AWR, no. 195, pp. 325-7; no. 440, pp. 634-8.



norms do not give an accurate account of practice,<sup>253</sup> which may have held true throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In the Welsh March, the prominence of wives as co-donors and consenters hints at an assumed social and, perhaps, political expectation that women were to associate themselves with gifts of land if the lands in question derived from the lordship. This association could have been in the most nominal sense, simply as a means of providing security for the donation. Additional documentation concerning religious patronage in Wales suggests that some family lands were held by women who had a say in the disposal of the patrimony. This idea is further expressed in the examples that illustrate successive generations of Welsh lordships endowing women with lands. This suggests that the larger administrative duties lay at the feet of both wives and husbands.

Charters offer ways of interpreting the dynamics of gendered power and women's power specifically in terms of lordship. Many types of roles for and activities of women are defined in grants of dower. The most prominent example is the 1273 dower made to Angharad, wife of Owain ap Maredudd of Powys, which was given in free marriage. This grant gives her the privilege to act as a patron of parish churches as part of the right associated with the appurtenances and liberties of Anhuniog and inherent in the lordship of the commote. More importantly, Angharad and her heirs by Owain are given the special powers of appointing and dismissing bailiffs and all other officials within the commote without the permission of anyone.<sup>254</sup> Extents, such as those produced for Anglesey and Merionedd do not openly tell us anything about women, but the surveys of commotes do provide a means of measuring the relative wealth and types of estate management that women, like Angharad, enjoyed. They shed light on agricultural renders, services, puture, due

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<sup>253</sup> Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 153.

<sup>254</sup> *Sciunt presentes et futuri has litteras visuri vel audituri quod ego Owen(us) filius Maredudd filii Oweni dedi et concessi . . . totum comotum Annvnuauc integrum cum omnibus suis pertinentiis et libertatibus, tam in iure patronatus ecclesiarum quam in aliis, in terra et in mari ac aliis liberis consuetudinibus Agarad filie Oweni uxori mee in liberum maritagium in omnibus terminis predicti comoti . . . sibi et heredibus suis de me procreandis libere et quiete, pacifice et sine ulla contradictione tenendum et habendum et etiam possidendum, scilicet memoratum comotum Annvnuauc in Kardigant a dicta Agarad et suis heredibus de me et heredibus meis in eadem libertate in qua antea tenui comotum sepe dictum, dans eidem Agarad et heredibus suis de me et concedens specialem potestatem ponendi et deponendi ballivos et omnes alios ministros in illo comoto sine consilio et licentia alicuius. AWR, no. 71, p. 205.*

and amercements, exclusive rights and privileges and court revenues,<sup>255</sup> thus shedding light on the interworkings of a specific locality and associated manorial power.

The example of Angharad denotes a mergence of gender roles within her familial lordship as Angharad was to take on public and very political responsibilities within a commote, by nominating commotall offices, that worked on balance with those of her husband and male heirs. Although there is no evidence that Angharad exercised these rights, the particulars are explicit in defining her individual administrative duties and highlight the influence and power she was given over the locality under her care. On a very literal level, contracting women to hold lands as ‘freely and fully’ (*libere et quiete*) as their husbands intimates that the duties, responsibilities and assumed roles to be undertaken were to be the same as those carried out by their husbands.<sup>256</sup> This was often done under the same terms in which they were to exercise their powers and authority as widows.

The traditionally accepted parameters of women’s property management are based on the theory that women supervised the ‘inner economy’ (*Innenwirtschaft*), whilst the men assumed the public functions, or control of the ‘outer economy’ (*Aussenwirtschaft*).<sup>257</sup> Women’s roles in the ‘inner economy’ were flexible and were often reactions to circumstance.<sup>258</sup> Consequently, there were multifarious responsibilities taken on by married women who needed to fulfil the commitments of administration. By the later Middle Ages in England, many women commonly functioned as landholders and administrators. Their rights to exercise economic agency developed through a steady adaptation of structures and roles that were essential in sustaining property management.<sup>259</sup> Realistically, the ownership and management of lands spread far and wide, ensured there was a common family interest in which the roles of both sexes complemented one another. Specific circumstances often dictated particular roles and expectations of female administrative responsibilities ‘wherever and whenever the need arose’.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> R. Smith, ‘The 1284 Extent of Anglesey Revisited: Some Facts and Figures’, *Studia Celtica*, XLV (2001), p. 84; *Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll*, pp. lxxx-lxxiv, xci.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Hawise Lestrangle and Margaret Corbet.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> Archer, ‘Women as Landholders’, p. 149.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* 150.

Records of evidence for native Wales show forms of female agency that were related to land holdings and the economic interests of the family. ‘Documents of practice’ concerning land conveyances in which women appear illuminate some of the expected roles and duties accorded to noble women in marriage;<sup>261</sup> how women wielded specific power and authority throughout their uxorial lifecycles. Women clearly acted as patrons to religious houses, exchanged, sold and bought lands. Some warranted their grants, were given powers to elect public officials and jointly rewarded loyal subjects for their services. Others acted as witnesses to business transactions and participated in the creation of agreements between lords and vassals. In all of these ways, women helped to exert influence over their localities and subjects.<sup>262</sup> Theirs were roles steeped in traditional gender expectations mixed with pragmatism.

As has been shown after the conquest of England in 1066, the rules relating to female succession and control over family lands were not ‘hard and fast’ and historians are in danger of trying to fit the pieces of what was perceived as custom into the puzzle of actual practice.<sup>263</sup> In his study on the domination and conquest of Wales, Ireland and Scotland, R. R. Davies states that the very nature of lordship in the Middle Ages meant that exclusivity was not an option; ‘it assumed that others participated in the exercise’.<sup>264</sup> Although Davies refers to the prominence of England’s overlordship over these kingdoms, on a much more grass-roots level, it is a statement that strikes at the heart of familial lordship, which relied on the participation of many family members to ensure success. Effective lordship, and effective domination, was only attainable through a sustained and massive investment on the part of the lord.<sup>265</sup> This investment often necessitated that entire generations of family members partake in the management of affairs, often through powers of persuasion usually associated with marital agreements and grants of land.<sup>266</sup>

The preceding analysis has shown no clear variation in practice in different Welsh territories in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as far as women’s involvement in the production of charters is readily apparent. Neither does there

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<sup>261</sup> Cavell, ‘Noblewomen in Shropshire’, p. 275.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Ward, *Women in England*, pp.108, 110-11.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

<sup>264</sup> Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 93.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.* 97-8.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 99.

seem to have been a regional difference in the relationship between the practice of endowing women with lands and a strict adherence to the native Welsh laws of women. It is hard to establish whether the practice of involving women in land management and politics intensified as threats of invasion and conquest increased because of the limited material that has survived. Dower was likely a practice adapted from England and the March, as examples of pre-1282 influences can be seen. Evidence highlighted in this research shows that though in Welsh law the wife was a ‘non person’, in practice her involvement in maintaining the economic and even political stability of the family lordship was one that a number of Welsh dynasts deemed necessary. Further, examples of uxorial claims to land rights that reference the ‘customs of Wales’ and ‘the *patria*’ indicate that many aspects of female land-based economy and agency were native in origin. Gruffudd ap Cynan’s wife, Angharad, was given a dower. Further, Gruffudd also assigned each of his daughters and sons ‘shares so that they might live more comfortably after his death’.<sup>267</sup>

That research undertaken for charter evidence between 1282 and 1300 unearthed very little material concerning aristocratic married women is not a marker for the decline in uxorial landownership. What is crucial is that pre-conquest evidence shows that women were intimately involved in lordship administration and were land owners. In this light, it seems likely that the probable impact of the implementation of the Statute of Wales in 1284 on married women’s land based agency was not as exceptional as has been assumed. As far back as the mid-twelfth century noble women such as Angharad, wife of Gruffudd ap Cynan were issued with dowers by native rulers. Furthermore, references in records of English administration referring to women’s rights to land as was the ‘custom of Wales’ strongly advocates that elements of land endowment to women was a native practice itself.

It is crucial to think about how accurate it is to make widespread generalisations about the status and position of women in Welsh society when comparing the above examples with existing studies of female agency and landed power examined for different medieval times and places. Although Wales certainly experienced an acculturation of more pervasive European values and practices

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<sup>267</sup> *Vita Griffini*, pp. 88-9; *HGK*, p. 32.

during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it still retained many of its own traditions and customs. It is significant to note that some of these native customs, as recorded, recount the property rights of women as is expressed in some forms of the laws — like those of the *gwraig briod*, the female lord, the Welsh queen and *prid* transactions discussed — and in charter evidence ranging from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries.<sup>268</sup> Thus, as Llinos Beverely Smith has appropriately warned, it is important not to attribute Welsh women's 'emancipation ... from the tenurial shackles' of outmoded conservatism regarding land inheritance 'entirely to the liberating forces of English land law'.<sup>269</sup> Some of these practices were already in place. Charter evidence analysed reveals that in terms of women's participation within the family lordship, Wales was not on the periphery to the rest of Europe; it did not deny them access to land based agency, nor were their activities involving estate management unusual or extraordinary. The recorded practice of alienating land to women in whatever forms and the acceptance of their roles within the lordship was comparable to similarly run yet vastly different areas of medieval Europe.

There remains a difficult task in attempting to assess any particular adherence to the more pervasive strict legal codes and how this affected women. It is likely that, in practice, women were, in many ways, legally denied access to lands and their positions traditionally deemed secondary to that of their husbands. Yet, the unknown level of daily female influence may have been substantial. The practical needs of sustainability of a lordship likely overrode any consistent practice of holding fast to legal doctrine or theoretical implications concerning the management and alienation of lands. 'Documents of practice' help provide a means to an end in ascertaining elements of control that they had over their family lands and localities and the roles they undertook during their married lives.

Nevertheless, just as enlightening as these few charters are as to women's property dealings and the employment of female agency, they remain difficult to interpret on many different levels. There are decisive complications in analysing the

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<sup>268</sup> Wives and daughters were endowed with landed property and, similar to evidence found for Celtic regions, including Wales, in the very early Middle Ages, women made bequests of lands they held in perpetuity. They also purchased and alienated lands under their direct control and consented to many decisive transactions that effected the sustainability of the family lordship. Evidence of women's property rights in Wales after the Edwardian conquest further highlights the importance of familial relationships. See Davies, 'Celtic Women', p. 151; Smith, 'Towards a History of Women'.

<sup>269</sup> Smith, 'Towards a History of Women', p. 23.

meanings behind the endowments of land made to women and by women. Each charter needs to be contextualised in order to gain a clearer idea of specific situations and circumstances. Never mind the problems associated with assessing female agency in practice or even taking into consideration the different types of marriages codified in the native laws and rights and status a woman as a *gwraig briod*. Or even the extent to which the laws are relevant in any case.

In spite of these issues, however, the evidence gathered thus far endorses the idea that in terms of maintaining operational control over the wider lordship, the family as a unit, as well as individual family members played a large part in preserving the power, status and prestige of a dynasty. In terms of the wife's contributions and influence, it should certainly be considered that the nature of her position within the family meant that her activities within the greater lordship and associated localities had added value. Her own personal associations and the practicalities of maintaining control over vast areas of land ensured that the woman as wife, at least in some instances, was able to exercise her own forms of agency competently.

## *CONCLUSION*

The objective of this research has been to help ‘lift the thick veil’ hanging over the history of women in Wales in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Until now, a synthesis of gender ideals and constructs found in Welsh sources associated with the Age of Princes had not been carried out. This project has maximized the source base by analysing the diverse range of available source material to permit a more nuanced study of gendered norms and perceptions. By focusing on evidence of uxorial agency it has focused on how married women figure in the master narratives of Welsh history *c.* 1100-1282. Concentrating on gender helps redress a balance in the ways historical narratives are understood by revealing the moral framework under which women and men were judged. The approach taken in this thesis differs from the traditional trajectory of medieval Welsh scholarship that concentrates on the era under investigation from an implicitly masculine viewpoint. As a result, this thesis is important to the development of the discipline of Welsh history as it presents a different perspective by looking at the relationship between the norms and perceptions of gender in native Welsh society as expressed in the written word and how gendered expectations affected women’s access to agency in records of practice.

The status and position of a woman in native society was defined by two things: one, her lifecycle stage and two, her relationship with men. This is the impression given in the ways married women in particular are represented and identified in the sources ranging from prose, poetry, hagiography and the laws, to the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan, the works of Gerald of Wales, chronicles and records of practice. In the main, these sources suggest that women acted as figures of Welsh masculine power, defined by attitudes and perceptions of gender in which the valued traits and roles for wives were complementary to those of their husbands.

It is clear that the key assumptions and themes found in these sources stress the importance of married women, not as individuals, but as they are related to men. This is observable in the omnipresent descriptions of the uxorial lifecycle used to identify them.<sup>1</sup> It is important to recognise that the categorization of women as

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the contextualisation of the use of female lifecycles, generally, in all the different genres discussed offers a glimpse into the social expectations and status associated with the different stages of a woman’s life.

wives provides an insight to the perceived attitudes regarding their positions and status within their kin and social groups. It also helps expose some of the idealistic expectations of female-male, wife-husband relationships. The underlining tones of the sources that focus on genealogy and the familial connections of women through marriage (and motherhood) are emblematic of an older, more widespread tradition that associated an important link between women and land, i.e. the transference of power.<sup>2</sup> Overall, in written form, the wife is generally represented as the personification of her husband's power — as a symbol thereof, or as a prize to be won or a pawn to be played.<sup>3</sup>

It has been important to assess the agendas of the sources and their credibility in terms of authorship and authenticity in their accounts. Medieval writers used all types of literary genres as vehicles for educating audiences about their own social and gender norms.<sup>4</sup> That these sources were in all likelihood written by a learned class of men means that, in many ways, their views and opinions concerning women's place in society are the ones expressed. Yet, gender constructs are socially created and influence the way both sexes are perceived. It is most likely that a contemporary female audience would have understood, accepted and even contributed to the circulation of the ideals that communicated cultural expectations of social behaviour.

The research for this thesis has primarily focused on key questions related to the status of married women, yet the approach taken would be possible in a work devoted to an analysis of the normative depictions of women in general. A focus for future research could be to analyse how individual genres and individual texts depict women and gender in order to achieve a more nuanced view based on the circumstances surrounding the composition of the texts themselves. This angle would allow for a better degree of understanding of the particular perspectives of the different sources that have been considered here and could even possibly allow for a greater appreciation of the impact that the written conveyance of social and moral codes had on a wider and perhaps more female focused audience.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Leyser, *Social History*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> The lifecycle of the daughter as portrayed in the 'chronicles' is similar in many respects to that of the wife. cf. Aronstein, 'Culture and Society', pp. 552-4.

<sup>4</sup> Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jones, 'Prose Romances', pp. 141-2.



However bewildering the conflicting images of wives are, they instil an appreciation that although seemingly on the margins, their roles and positions are not insignificant. Examples of agency and even gendered expectations are noteworthy, even if they act as complements to men's gendered roles, duties and assumed traits. Evidence of this is found in the assessment of Welsh queenship where in literary sources 'maximum' status of the Welsh queen is envisaged. In many ways, ideals of queenship centred on expectations specifically associated with that of the queen's position as the 'king's wife'. This is particularly prevalent in the Laws of the Court where it appears that the queen's distinguished status is simply as a means of further elevating that of the king. Nevertheless, evidence also points towards an established impression of Welsh queenship, one in which the queen-consort played a very visible and active role in her social circle. As a valued member of the royal household, she exercised agency in official and unofficial capacities, such as going on circuit and through public acts of hospitality. The individual personas and circumstances of historical women in these positions likely helped to create both the positive and negative courtly and customary ideals regarding the office and expectations of queenship reflected in sources.

The assessment of the role of the Welsh 'queen' in the thirteenth century shows how the 'office' developed into a more modified form that was in some ways institutionalised and in many ways highly personalised. The domestic and public realms of authority and political management of the court of Gwynedd, in particular, melded together in a very intimate way, demonstrating that women were active agents as members of their kin and social groups. Family feelings and bonds of kinship amongst royalty were powerful forces in local and communal politics<sup>6</sup> and the examples of Joan of England, Senana and Eleanor de Montfort show that some wives of the Venedotian rulers were able to utilise power within the family structure and extend beyond the familial boundaries into the realm of politics. Their activities and influences helped shape the face of Welsh 'kingship' in Gwynedd and helped facilitate its survival over the course of the thirteenth century.

Property ownership in medieval Wales may have been dominated by men, but women were not entirely excluded from such forms of economic agency as has been seen by the types of land endowments women received over the course of the

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<sup>6</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p. 59.

twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Charter evidence shows that in terms of maintaining control over the lordship, the practicality of women's contributions and activities played a part in preserving the power of a lordship. The ever-present need to create and sustain alliances through marriage and practice effective estate administration made it a necessity for women to be able to move beyond legally defined and culturally assumed gender boundaries. The collective roles of the family and the individual roles of family members within a lordship warranted women's participation in local, regional and international dealings. The practice of land apportionment to women and the roles associated with estate management calls into question prevailing assumptions about female subjugation founded in Welsh legal doctrine. The numerous examples of dower and dower litigation discussed negate the traditional assumption that the woman in Welsh society was a 'non-person'.<sup>7</sup>

In this light, it is important to think about the uxorial lifecycle label used to identify women in Welsh sources because it is not a value free term. Like all labels, it is used as a means of defining social construction.<sup>8</sup> It tells much about power structures and relationships defined by gender. In all the sources consulted, the overall evidence suggests that the categorization of women through their lifecycle stages was an important tradition. The employment of female lifecycle labels in general was clearly significant to a society in which genealogical connections played a vital role in establishing power and status. As concerns the women themselves, it illustrates a familiarity with perceived attitudes vis-à-vis their social status and positions within their kin groups.

Moreover, the labelling of women as 'wives' was a practice related to socially acceptable and recognised forms of female agency and status. The variety of influences that were attached to each female cycle span (namely those of daughter, wife, mother and widow) provided women with different forms of power, respect and honour at different times in their lives. This is, for example, evidenced in the ways that royal women are identified in sources by the utilization of titles and other designations to denote status and relative forms of agency. Categorising women by their lifecycles in the face of individual events and personalities, real or

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<sup>7</sup> Davies, 'Status of Women', p. 101.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R.R. Davies, 'The Identity of "Wales" in the Thirteenth Century', in R.R. Davies and G.H. Jenkins (eds), *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 50, 62.

fictive, serves to draw attention to the changes in authority as it relates to political and social alliances usually created through marriage. Thus, this thesis has shown that by using gender as a subject of historical research, source material that has been generally created and studied from a masculine perspective can be reconsidered to provide a more balanced investigation into the past. Future research focusing on the thematic strands of conquest, co-existence and change should include the experiences of women in context with their relationships to men.

Placing emphasis on women and gender has implications for an understanding of other key themes in medieval (Welsh) history. In terms of the theme of 'conquest', further consideration should be given to the influx of wider European gender constructs and the influences of acculturation. A more focused examination on lifecycles used to identify both women and men may serve to highlight whether or not gender as it is portrayed in the sources is down to genre or reveals more about native attitudes. Thinking about the theme of 'co-existence', more focus on the position and status of women in marriage based on their nationalities may, to an extent, reveal how this affected the overall employment of female agency. This is especially pertinent within the context of the intermarital alliances that were fashioned as a means of quelling conflicts and reorganising power relationships between native kingdoms, Marcher lordships and the English Crown. As has been shown, the importance of the co-existing relationship between wives and husbands was clearly beneficial and often necessary in sustaining native rule. Within this framework, the study of 'queenship', or simply even female political power in medieval Wales demands further consideration than has been previously studied or even established here. Further research needs to be undertaken on the gendered notion of sovereignty of medieval Wales in order to establish a clearer distinction between 'public' and 'private' power and whether these are related to the 'official' and 'unofficial' power outlets for women.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the theme of 'change' should include consideration of the major historical turning points in Welsh history and how these affected the overall status and position of women in native society. A diachronic assessment of ideals and values, norms and perceptions, and evidence of practice before and just after the great transition of the Edwardian conquest seems to demonstrate that there was a long-term continuity concerning the condition of

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<sup>9</sup> Fradenburg, 'Rethinking Queenship', p. 9.

women — that their positions and roles within their families may have changed whilst their overall status in native Welsh society remained the same.

It is important to try to reconstruct as critically as possible the environments that provided individuals with possibilities and choices in order to understand how the ambiguous set of expectations forced individuals to make choices and act in the ways they did.<sup>10</sup> Amorphous as they may be, theories and images of marriage and wifehood enable this reconstruction, to some degree, especially as the expected behaviour of wives is often understood in many of the illustrations. A gendered reading of the material set within the context of patriarchal institutions and doctrine has highlighted how ideological social constructs concerning gender played a seminal role in shaping not just literature, but society and culture as a whole.<sup>11</sup> The kinship system in Wales, in its variety of forms, reveals a complex social organisation where one's status and position benefitted from political alliances that were founded on cognatic kinship alliances.<sup>12</sup> Women were not exempt from profiting from such a set up and a combination of factors helped some to become important figures within the wider kinship network and within their own localities.<sup>13</sup> A family's status and political exploitation of landed wealth, its socio-political and personal relationships, combined with a woman's personal ability to adapt to specific circumstances, provided many in various lifecycle stages opportunities to be key players in events.

Evidence offered here makes it clear that gender expectations in native society were fluid. Married women had opportunities to engage, often successfully, in activities loosely based on the roles publicly sanctioned for the female lifecycle of wife and her position within her family. Their places within the narratives of Welsh history should, indeed, be more carefully considered in the political, social and cultural discourses of future scholarship because their contributions affected the outcomes of some of the greatest challenges their husbands' faced during their careers and that Wales faced during the Age of Princes.

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<sup>10</sup> Stafford, 'Writing the Biography', p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Damico and Olsen, *Women in Old English Literature*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 469.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Cavell, 'Noblewomen in Shropshire', p. 322.

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