



## **Changing ideologies of Medieval state formation: the growing exploitation of land in Gwynedd c.1100–c.1400**

**Rhys Jones**

---

This paper focuses on one of the major ideological shifts associated with the territorialization of power experienced within Medieval European society, namely the growing exploitation of land. Using empirical evidence from the kingdom of Gwynedd in Wales, it explores the difficulties faced by Medieval societal rulers in translating their new ideologies of state rule into administrative practice. Their inability to create a consistent administrative structure to match their ideological ambitions meant that there was often a geography inherent in the territorialization of power in the Middle Ages, ranging from a close relationship between ideology and practice near the political core of the state to one of increasing discontinuity between the two near its periphery. The author suggests that the English conquest of Gwynedd in the late thirteenth century—one which was characterized by a far greater infrastructural co-ordination—led, to a large extent, to the dissolution of the spatial variations in the administrative realities of the Gwynedd state.

© 2000 Academic Press

### **Introduction**

... [A]n integral part of historical geography's false consciousness has been its focus on *landscapes* transformed by men rather than upon *man* as an agent of landscape change, upon artifacts rather than upon ideas, upon actions rather than attitudes, upon external forms rather than internal processes. Ideologies structure time and space; landscapes are reflections of ideas as much as they are products of actions. Studies in historical geography must logically therefore embrace ideologies as well as being themselves explicitly ideological.<sup>[1]</sup>

Baker's criticism of historical geography's bias towards the study of material culture and concrete landscapes, first pronounced in the early 1980s, has to some extent been heeded.<sup>[2]</sup> The sub-discipline has broadened its scope to examine themes such as the search for signification in landscape, the meaning of landscape and the ideology associated with landscape forms.<sup>[3]</sup> Students of this new approach to the study of historical geography have attempted to forge a greater understanding of both the thoughts and ideas behind actions (very often a truer indication of individuals' intentions than their actual imprint on the physical landscape) as well as individuals' perceptions of landscapes (in many ways the indicators of individuals' response to earlier actions).

Historical geographers' interest in a material, physical landscape has diminished and there has been a conscious effort to refocus on the more conceptual study of past ideology and human thought.

In this respect, the study of ideology has been the focus for much research in recent years. Nonetheless, the majority of studies in the subject area have sought to explain the historical and political geographies associated with principally two different types of ideology, namely those which are linked to various types of religion, and those that are associated with capitalism, nationalism and industrialization, or, in other words, the ideologies associated with the institutions and structures of the age of modernity.<sup>[4]</sup> Examples of the former type of study include work carried out by Nitz on planned temple towns in Southern India and Butlin's work on the reconstruction of Biblical landscapes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>[5]</sup> The latter field of study is well represented by Dodgshon's analysis of the appearance of free markets and capitalism, and Cosgrove's work on Renaissance humanists' interpretations of landscape.<sup>[6]</sup> The attention given to these subjects is, to some extent, to be expected; the former offers a stark illustration of the way in which a certain ideology (religion) can aid in the promotion and maintenance of an alternative value system and landscape, whereas the latter deals with a structure and ideology which, to a large extent, informs the ways in which the contemporary world is spatially ordered.<sup>[7]</sup>

This paper aims to contribute to an alternative field of enquiry to those studies concerned with religious-archaic and industrial-capitalist societies by examining the changes in ideology and the evaluation of space that accompanied the Medieval state-making process within Western Europe, primarily in the context of the Gwynedd state, a kingdom in north-west Wales. Although this was a relatively 'primitive' society, there was little emphasis on a given religious ideology within it, since it exhibited patterns of rule which were grounded in the absolute control of secular societal leaders. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the Medieval state-making process exemplified a fundamental—though admittedly gradual, tortuous and, significantly for geographers, spatially uneven—shift in the geography of ideology, as a political space, principally ordered into a series of kin-groups was slowly replaced by a far more impersonal political space of a territorial state.

In this respect, although the great variety of legitimate meanings of the term 'ideology' makes it extremely difficult to provide a precise definition of the term, the ideas discussed in this paper will be principally based upon Thompson's understanding of the concept.<sup>[8]</sup> He defines ideology as "the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination", and although Eagleton has outlined problems with such a definition, it is this meaning of ideology that will be used in this paper.<sup>[9]</sup> As a result of embracing such a definition of ideology, one of the main objectives of the paper will be to explore the ways in which changes in the ideologies of rule within Gwynedd in the Middle Ages served "to sustain relations of domination".

There follows a brief discussion of the main ideological changes that were part and parcel of the process of the territorialization of power in Medieval Europe. I will then focus explicitly on one of these changes, namely the growing exploitation of land associated with the Medieval state-making process. Drawing on empirical evidence from Gwynedd in the period between *c.* 1100 and *c.* 1400 I will argue that there was often a distinct discontinuity between the ideologies promoted by societal leaders during the period and the actual methods by which they governed their land and people. Significantly for historical geographers, I will suggest that there is a geography to this adherence—or lack of it—to the new ideology of the state.

### Changing ideologies of control

The Middle Ages in Europe were a period of considerable institutional change as societies moved from being mainly organized around concepts of kinship to being primarily ordered around the territorially-defined domains of power and jurisdiction of kings and state rulers. This state-making process meant that society was now mainly ordered through reference to a particular territory, rather than being constituted with regard to the geographical extent of groups of people.<sup>[10]</sup> In effect, conceptions of political space gradually became more abstract in nature, defined by the wider needs of the state rather than by the immediate need of those who occupied it. Obviously, this institutional shift would have involved a major change in the structure of society, from one which emphasized the important role of ties of kinship between a leader and his or her people to one which increasingly promoted the notion of a ruler ordering his or her people through the absolute control of space and territory. This paper will examine some of the changes in ideology which accompanied the Medieval state-making process and their uneven geographical consequences.<sup>[11]</sup>

Political space in the former societal organization of kin-groups did not have any meaning unless it was socially constructed and thus land which existed outside or beyond the spatial extent of the kin-group was perceived as wilderness. In an early Medieval context, the land which had any sort of immediate political meaning for the majority of the population was the small pockets of agricultural land. These were the centres of population, the lands occupied by kin-groups, the farmed and civilized landscape. As both Pounds and Ball and Eric Jones have maintained in a wider European context, these agricultural heart-lands were “population islands in a sea of forest and heath”.<sup>[12]</sup> An understanding of this notion can help us to appreciate the conceptual change associated with the territorialization of power. Ideally, under a state system, the whole of Medieval political space was apportioned to particular societal leaders as they claimed territorial jurisdiction over *all* land.<sup>[13]</sup> Indeed, theoretically this new territorially-ordered space did not necessarily bear any relation to social space. In effect, it was a politically-constructed notion of space in which contrived territorial boundaries were far more important than the human occupation of land.

Specifically, I would like to suggest that there were theoretically three distinct changes in ideologies of governance and rule that were inherent in the territorialization of power, namely the change from an ideology of exchange to an ideology of production; the change to an ideology of exploitation, and the change from a society which emphasized small-scale political or legitimizing ideologies to one which stressed the importance of far more extensive and large-scale political ideologies (see Figure 1).

In the first place, Medieval rulers often sought to alter conceptions of political and economic space from one based on notions of exchange to one centred around an ideal of production. Under a pre-state, socially-constituted mode of societal organization the leaders of kin-groups did not claim any personal control over land or territory as such.<sup>[14]</sup> As a consequence, individuals within this society did not hold land of the king, but rather inherited it by being a member of the kin-group. These two facts suggest that there was little direct relationship between the authority of the leaders of kin-groups and the possession of land in pre-state societies. Consequently, their bases of political and economic power were founded on the control of the exchange of goods and services within society. An understanding of this concept can help us to appreciate the fundamental change which occurred when mature state institutions were adopted as a means of governing Medieval European society. Kings started to assert that all land within their kingdom was theirs. For instance, in Wales we see assertions similar to the following in the native legal texts:

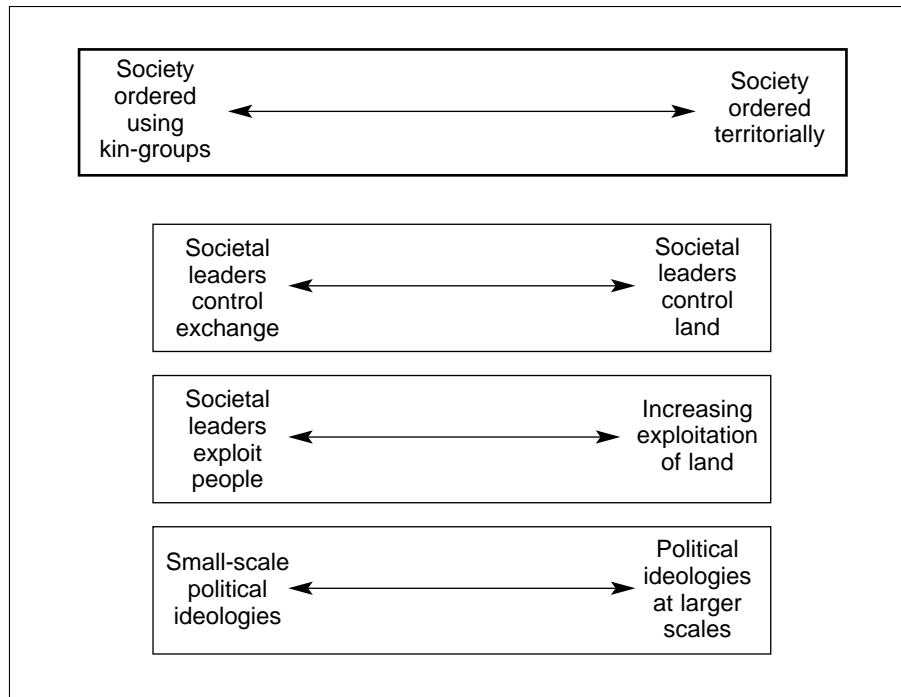


Figure 1. A model of the changes in ideology associated with the state-making process.

*Ny dyly untyr bot yn dyurenhy* (No land should be without a king).<sup>[15]</sup> We must understand that a similar proclamation could not have been made under the previous societal organization, one which was dominated by kin-groups, a time in which societal leaders did not have any direct control over land. Theoretically speaking, it was only with the territorialization of power that societal leaders began to promote the notion that they were individuals whose wealth and status was based upon their control of land.

In the second place, as a result of the state-making process, ideologies were promoted which sought to increase the exploitation of land. This does not mean that no exploitation of the land occurred under the societal organization which preceded the state, one which was organized into a series of kin-groups. It patently did so. However, ruling classes in a kin mode of societal organization would have been exploiting the social groups under their control rather than directly exploiting the land.<sup>[16]</sup> The formation of state institutions, which emphasized the control of territory and space, meant that the ruling classes now sought to increase the efficiency by which their territory and land were exploited. It can be postulated that there was a shift in the way in which societal leaders perceived land as it moved from being a resource which supported a population so that they in turn could support their kin-leaders, to being something which acted as a direct resource base for state rulers. To use Dodghson's words, land and "space became something interposed between king and vassal, between lord and peasant".<sup>[17]</sup>

In the third place, the adoption of state institutions within Medieval society enabled kings and princes in the Middle Ages to govern political units of increasing size. An almost inevitable consequence of this was the promotion of group ideologies at ever-increasing geographical scales. In other words, the increasing scale of governance, along with the need to ensure that such political units were socially and culturally constituted,

meant, on the whole, that ideologies of group identity were promoted at ever-larger spatial scales throughout the Medieval period.<sup>[18]</sup> In Wales, for instance, we find evidence for regional senses of identity in the number of foundation legends of kingdoms—tales concerning the origins of kingdoms which acted as a focus for group senses of identity—which came into being during the ninth and tenth centuries. A famous example of these myths is the foundation legend of the Gwynedd kingdom.<sup>[19]</sup> Following this, there is evidence for a perception of, and a sense of attachment to, an even larger territory—a common proto-Welsh polity—in the thirteenth century. Both Richter and Davies have demonstrated that Welsh leaders at this time were increasingly promoting the notion that there existed one community of Welsh people or *ethnie*, united by myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, a series of cultural markers and a sense of attachment to a particular territory.<sup>[20]</sup>

These, then, were some of the main ideologies that were being promoted by societal leaders within the new institutional context of the Medieval state.<sup>[21]</sup> We need to appreciate, however, that these three changes in ideology—associated with, and crucial to, the territorialization of power—were far more substantial in theory than they were in practice, especially during the early Middle Ages. The state-making process experienced in Medieval Europe was, to a large extent, tentative and sometimes discontinuous in nature. A fundamental aspect of the incomplete nature of the territorialization of power in Medieval Europe was the degree to which age-old, pre-state institutions were still of significant importance to its internal organization. In Gwynedd—the main source of empirical evidence in this paper, for instance—much of local administration in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was based on the territorial units of the *cantref*, the commote and the township.<sup>[22]</sup> Such units, which acted as the territorial focus for the collection of renders and dues and the maintenance of law and order, were plainly institutions which were designed to serve the needs of the state. However, in spite of the fact that these units demonstrated a desire on the part of the rulers of Gwynedd to order their kingdom into distinct domains of territorial jurisdiction, a closer examination of Medieval surveys and extents reveals that kinship units, such as the *gwely* and the *gafael*, still had an important role to play in local administration. For instance, a proportion of the rents in the commote of Rhos Uwch Dulas in north Wales was paid by the kinship group of Edryd ap Marchudd in 1334.<sup>[23]</sup> The coexistence of state administrative units and kinship groups in Gwynedd in the Middle Ages would seem to suggest that although the Medieval rulers of Gwynedd sought to revolutionize their methods of governance and rule—in other words, to promote a new territorial ideology of rule—their plans were, to some extent, constrained by both their lack of resources and infrastructural co-ordination, or in other words, their ability to affect the lives of their citizens in a routine manner.<sup>[24]</sup> As such, the simple theoretical progression from an ideology that promoted the primacy of a social conception of political space to one that emphasized the existence of the territorially-defined space of an early state is somewhat distorted when viewed in the context of practical methods of governance.

This discussion has highlighted some of the main changes in the ideology of rule which accompanied the Medieval state-making process. The above statements suggest, however, that the main difficulties faced by the rulers of Medieval European states lay in translating their new ideologies of governance and rule into political and administrative practice. Their lack of infrastructural power—in other words, their lack of bureaucrats, administrators, collectors of renders and dues, and officers who enforced law and order in a systematic fashion—meant that there often existed a tension between Medieval rulers' visions of their ideal method of governance, as encapsulated, for instance, in their legal texts or in their political treatises, and the reality of the administrative and jurisdictional system they could feasibly support. It is these tensions which will be explored in the following section

with sole respect—due to reasons of space—to the Medieval state of Gwynedd's attempts to increase its exploitation of land. Furthermore, I will argue that these tensions may have had a spatial manifestation, ranging from a close interrelationship between the territorial ideology and administrative reality at the core of the Gwynedd state to an increasingly pronounced discrepancy between the two at its periphery.

### Efforts to promote an ideology of exploitation: the Welsh and the English

Located in north-west Wales, safe within the mountain fortress of Snowdonia, Gwynedd, by the eleventh or twelfth centuries, occupied the most powerful position in the political geography of Wales. Indeed, such was its prowess from this period onwards that its rulers—individuals such as Gruffudd ap Cynan, Owain Gwynedd, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd—regularly succeeded in extending the orbit of their political and military power to encompass other territories in mid and even South Wales.<sup>[25]</sup> Significantly in the context of this paper, such military and political success had two implications in terms of the administrative geography of Gwynedd and specifically the way in which its rulers were able to exploit the inhabitants of the kingdom. Gwynedd's pole position within the hierarchy of Welsh kingdoms—as well as its ability to maintain its independence *vis-à-vis* the intrusive English state—would have enabled it to maintain its political and economic integrity for far longer than any other Welsh regional kingdom, thus enabling the rulers of Gwynedd to develop more efficient ways of exploiting their subjects in a relatively stable political climate. In addition, Gwynedd's central role in Medieval Welsh political geography was dependent to a large degree on a successful and efficient exploitation of its economic resources. As such, Gwynedd's military and political prominence from the early twelfth to the late thirteenth centuries would also have acted as a catalyst to impel its rulers to promote increasingly exploitative methods of governance.

In this respect, there is evidence to support the notion that the land and people of Gwynedd were being increasingly exploited during this period. At a theoretical level, the sub-division of territorial administrative units is an example of the way in which the ruling class was now attempting to exploit land in a more efficient way. The commote—part of the administrative hierarchy in Gwynedd—can be perceived as being part of an attempt to better exploit land.<sup>[26]</sup> The close relationship between the *cantref* and the commote in Gwynedd, as well as the fact that the commote was a later development than the *cantref*, possibly suggests that the commote was planned here as a sub-division of the *cantref*.<sup>[27]</sup> As such, it is likely that it represented an attempt by the rulers of Gwynedd to exploit their land in a more efficient way. Sub-dividing units within the administrative hierarchy meant that every sub-division of the state would have been assessed specifically in terms of the amount of renders which they could produce. Theoretically, we can suggest that smaller and smaller communities were being told their exact fiscal and judicial duties, and it is probable that this increased definition would have also led to an increased exploitation of the land.

We have more concrete evidence for the increased exploitation of land in Gwynedd in the changing institutional basis for the collection of *gwestfa* dues. It is specified in the north Wales law texts that the commuted *gwestfa* render of one pound should be paid by every *maenol*—an administrative unit containing four townships—within the kingdom of Gwynedd.<sup>[28]</sup> However, by the fourteenth century, there are some indications that the *twnc* pound, which was the successor of the earlier *gwestfa* payment, was paid by a significant proportion of individual townships within Gwynedd.<sup>[29]</sup> In other words,

a render which had previously been paid by the inhabitants of a *maenol* was now in some cases discharged by the inhabitants of an individual township, a change which represents a four-fold increase in financial burden. Viewed in this context, the subdivision of administrative units was obviously an attempt to improve the efficiency of the exploitation of the land and people of Gwynedd. Attempts were also made by the rulers of the Gwynedd state to increase their exploitation of their resources by reducing the importance of kin-groups in the state structure. Dafydd ap Gruffudd, for instance, ruler of Gwynedd for a short period in the 1240s, sought to reduce the jurisdictional role played by kin-groups: a proportion of the compensation for murder, which had traditionally been paid to the victim's relatives, was now paid into the coffers of the state.<sup>[30]</sup>

Despite these efforts to increase the way in which the land and people of Gwynedd were exploited under native rule, there is tentative evidence that there existed a geographical unevenness in the adoption of more mature territorial institutions. For instance, efforts were made by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Gwynedd in the mid to late thirteenth century, to reduce the degree of variation in the administrative geography of his kingdom. The changes in the nature of the payment of *porthiant* dues—or, in other words, a community's obligation to quarter the prince's household for a fixed period every year—is instructive in this respect. Whereas Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Dafydd his son, princes of Gwynedd in the first half of the thirteenth century, were billeted in the commote Penllyn only in those years when they hunted there, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd claimed his right to such a render every year, with the putative being commuted to a money payment in the event of his inability to visit Penllyn.<sup>[31]</sup> Such a change demonstrates clearly the efforts being made to exploit the land in a more efficient and systematic manner. There is, of course, a crucial geographical significance in this instance of the expansion and intensification of state power, in that the commote of Penllyn—only incorporated into Gwynedd in 1202—was located in a relatively peripheral position in the larger kingdom.<sup>[32]</sup> In all probability, Penllyn's peripheral location had meant that its people and land had not been exploited to the same degree as those commotes nearer the core of the kingdom of Gwynedd (on Anglesey and the opposite mainland), especially in the first half of the thirteenth century. The political and military—and consequently financial—pressure faced by the kingdom of Gwynedd in the late thirteenth century meant that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was forced to devise new, more efficient, ways of exploiting his land, even in the distant parts of his realm. It is unlikely, in this respect, that such administrative and economic changes would have gone uncontested. Indeed, our source of evidence for the changes in the nature of the payment of *porthiant* dues suggests that the inhabitants of Penllyn were in the process of disputing the additional financial burden which had been placed on their shoulders by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

Further evidence of the spatial variation in the relationship between territorial ideologies and administrative realities appears in the context of the commutation of traditional renders, paid in kind, into cash rents. Efforts were made on the part of some of the rulers of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century to exploit their land and people in a more efficient manner in the context of redefining the nature of the payment of renders and dues. We can suggest that there arose a situation in which rents paid in kind were increasingly perceived as being the poor relation of money rents. For instance, siege engines, war horses and the like were much more easily constructed or bought with money than they were with food rents.<sup>[33]</sup> Pierce's study of the commutation of rents in Gwynedd demonstrates that commutation was well underway in the region in the thirteenth century, primarily under the auspices of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.<sup>[34]</sup>

Crucially, however—and echoing earlier statements made in the context of the *porthiant* render—there were spatial variations in the degree of commutation, ranging from a high degree of commutation in the commotes located near the political core of Gwynedd to a far smaller degree in the more remote areas of the kingdom. Such patterns demonstrate that although there was a desire to commute rents in Gwynedd in the thirteenth century—in other words, to exploit land in a more efficient way—it was tempered by a lack of efficient administration and money economy in the more remote regions of Gwynedd. It meant, in many ways, that there was a distinct geography to the adoption of mature state institutions within the Gwynedd state.

In this context, it may be possible to draw a distinction between the ability of the English and the native rulers to exploit the people and land of Gwynedd. This variation between the institutional practices of native rulers and the English conquerors, newly-arrived, would have been based on the latter's ability to further emphasize the sanctity of territorial ideologies and on their increased ability to promote the administrative realities associated with those ideologies. We may firstly address the issue of the increased emphasis on territorial ideologies that were evident under English rule. It is likely that it would have been easier for the English conqueror to exploit the population of Gwynedd in a ruthless and wholly efficient manner than it would have been for the princes of Gwynedd, who would have been the kin relations of a large proportion of their subjects. The Gwynedd princes' close ties of kin with many of their subjects would have made it easier for the latter to emphasize the sanctity of tradition and custom, and to moderate any radical plans on the part of the princes to exploit the land. It is likely that circumstances changed when Gwynedd land came under English control. They, the conquerors, would have come into a new land and viewed it mainly in economic terms, perceiving it as a land which could sustain so many knights, so many castles and so many boroughs. It is highly likely that the English would have viewed the land as a resource base for their political ambitions and nothing else. Moreover, the English would not have been as easily constrained by the protestations of Gwynedd individuals concerning the sanctity of traditions and customs as had their Welsh counterparts. Indeed, there are many instances which demonstrate this fundamental change in ideology. For example, Roger Lestrangle petitioned Edward I for land in 1283 asking whether he could “obtain for him Penllyn and Edeyrnyon, or one of them; or he would prefer Maillor Saesnek: he would hope very much to come to Maillor Saysnek”.<sup>[35]</sup>

We can almost hear the avarice and greed in his plea. In this carve-up of the land, the land of north Wales was seen as a means of increasing the resource bases of English lords, and nothing else. Indeed, the English were not averse to inventing new services and renders, so that they could increase the degree of exploitation of their new territories. For instance, the men of Brycheiniog—a region admittedly well outside Gwynedd, but one which experienced a process of colonization similar to it—attempted to emphasize the importance of age-old traditions at the turn of the fourteenth century and complained that “bailiffs of the Earl of Hereford at Brecon distrain . . . the men of his lord grievously, because they do not come to carry his timber to the castle of Brecon, a thing which neither they nor their ancestors have ever done”.<sup>[36]</sup>

This was not an isolated complaint against the new English lords. It is a common theme which occurs in the petitions and letters sent to the English Crown in this period and demonstrates clearly the ways in which the inhabitants of Gwynedd, and indeed the whole of Wales, were contesting the unsympathetic introduction of exploitative new institutions to their country.

The second factor relates to the increased infrastructural power of the English, which



would have enabled them to turn territorial ideologies into an administrative reality in a consistent manner. In this respect, although Llywelyn ap Gruffudd sponsored many far-reaching administrative changes in his governance of Gwynedd in the late thirteenth century, it is unlikely that he would have possessed the same administrative or military wherewithal as the conquerors, backed by the powerful and institutionally-advanced English state. In much the same way as the Edwardian castles came to dominate the skyline of Gwynedd, I would suggest that English administrative practices would have come to dominate its inhabitants in a jurisdictional and economic context. However, as well as promoting new ideologies of state rule within Gwynedd, I would argue that the other crucial contribution of the English conquest lay in their ability to translate the territorial ideologies conceived by them, and by the native rulers, into an administrative reality. Perhaps the clearest example of such a change in the practical side of state governance came in the context of the increased commutation of renders and dues into money rents. We have already seen how the rates of commutation in Gwynedd under the leadership of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd varied from the political core to the periphery. The English changed all this, as even freemen in the most remote parts of Gwynedd now had to pay money rents to their new English lords.<sup>[37]</sup> Indeed, Given has argued that the English were extremely successful in their efforts to exploit the land of Gwynedd as they managed to increase economic exploitation by a rate of 300 per cent in the relatively short period between 1284 and 1306.<sup>[38]</sup> Evidently, it was the English conquerors' increased infrastructural co-ordination that enabled them to proceed with an exploitation of land and people which was far more consistent than that sponsored by their Welsh counterparts.

### Discussion and conclusions

In this paper, I have sought to discuss some of the new territorial ideologies associated with the Medieval state and have specifically focused on the practical problems that Medieval rulers faced as they attempted to turn the new territorial ideologies that they promoted into administrative practice. In this respect, the sources of evidence of the Medieval state-making process to a large extent contradict each other: whilst many of the sources of evidence for the period, items such as law texts, biographies and political treatises, emphasize the existence of a wholly territorial conception of political space—one in which a king governed all land within the kingdom, in which the land and inhabitants of the state were exploited efficiently and one in which ideologies of rule were being promoted at ever-increasing geographical scales—other sources reveal an administrative and organizational reality which was far from consistently territorial in nature. Furthermore, I have sought to demonstrate that there may have been a distinct geography to this discontinuity between state ideology and administrative practice: the evidence from Gwynedd suggests, for instance, that there existed a marked difference between the core and periphery of the kingdom, especially under native leadership. In spite of their attempts to promote a conception of political space that was purely territorial in nature, Welsh leaders, mainly through their lack of resources and infrastructural power,<sup>[39]</sup> were often unable to promote their putative state-making process to the furthest reaches of their realm. The situation changed with the English conquest of Wales. As a result of their greater fund of resources, their increased political clout and their more developed military power, the English were able to promote a more systematized territorialization of power in the physical landscape. Whereas the Welsh lords and princes of the thirteenth century succeeded in instigating a major shift

in the ideologies of governance and rule, along with a partial territorialization of power in the lands that they controlled, the English essayed to complete the process of institutional change by patronizing a further territorialization of power in the physical landscape so that it actually mirrored the ideals of state rule that were being promoted by them.<sup>[40]</sup> As such, although efforts to territorialize political space within Gwynedd began from a period as early as the late tenth century, the evidence in this paper suggests that the thirteenth century should be viewed as the crucial period in the increased exploitation of land within the Gwynedd state.<sup>[41]</sup>

Taken together, the evidence discussed in this paper would seem to indicate a fundamental change in ideology in Medieval Wales, as the land and people of Gwynedd came to be viewed as something that could be legitimately exploited. An acceptance of the definition of ideology as being a “way in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” would suggest that such a change did not occur due to processes of chance, but was rather promoted by the ruling classes within Welsh and English society as a means for them to legitimize their efforts to exploit their people and land more efficiently. What the evidence from Gwynedd suggests is that a change in ideology was not, on its own, sufficient to create the circumstances under which Medieval societal leaders could make the most of their economic resources, particularly at the margins of the territories that they governed.<sup>[42]</sup> In order for that to happen, they also needed a higher degree of infrastructural co-ordination so that they could bring every individual, farm and township within their actual, as well as their theoretical, territorial reach.

*Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences*  
*University of Wales*  
*Aberystwyth*  
*Ceredigion SY233DB*  
*UK*

## Notes

- [1] A.R.H. Baker, On ideology and historical geography, in A.R.H. Baker and M. Billinge (Eds), *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography* (Cambridge 1982) 235.
- [2] For instance, landscape and identity has been described as a burgeoning subject area within historical geography. See D.A. McQuillan, New classics and diverse clusters in historical geography, *Progress in Human Geography* **19** (1995) 273–84.
- [3] D. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscapes* (London 1984); idem, Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* **10** (1985) 45–62; D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (Eds), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge 1988); D. Atkinson and D. Cosgrove, Urban rhetoric and embodied identities: city, nation, and empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome, 1870–1945, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **88** (1998) 28–49; S. Daniels, Iconography in historical geography, *Area* **16** (1984) 289–90.
- [4] For instance, see the subjects discussed in A.R.H. Baker and G. Biger (Eds), *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meaning of Some Places in the Past* (Cambridge 1992). A more eclectic mix of subjects can be seen in Cosgrove and Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape*.
- [5] H. Nitz, Planned temple towns and Brahmin villages as spatial expressions of the ritual politics of Medieval kingdoms in South India, in Baker and Biger, *op. cit.*, 107–24; R.A. Butlin, Ideological contexts and the reconstruction of Biblical landscapes in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: Dr Edward Wells and the historical geography of the Holy Land, in Baker and Biger, *op. cit.*, 31–62.

- [6] R.A. Dodgshon, The changing evaluation of space 1500–1914, in R.A. Dodgshon and R.A. Butlin (Eds), *op. cit.*, 255–78; Cosgrove, Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea. See also D. Gregory, ‘A new and differing face in many places’: three geographies of industrialisation, in Dodgshon and Butlin, *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, 351–77.
- [7] See for instance Tilly’s claim that “we bear the nineteenth century like an incubus” in our spatial arrangements and in our modes of social thought; C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York 1984) 1.
- [8] T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London 1991) 1.
- [9] J.B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge 1984) 4; *ibid.*, 6–7. Alternative definitions include those suggested by M. Seliger, *Ideology and Politics* (London 1976) 11; R. Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge 1981) chapter 1; Baker, On ideology and historical geography, 233. See also N.J. Thrift, On the determination of action in space and time, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1983) 23–57.
- [10] M. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs 1968) 5; R.A. Dodgshon, *The European Past: Social Evolution and Spatial Order* (Basingstoke 1987) especially chapter 5; M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge 1988) chapters 1 and 2.
- [11] For reviews of the different theories of state formation see R. Cohen, Introduction, in R. Cohen and E.R. Service (Eds), *Origins of the State: the Anthropology of Social Evolution* (Philadelphia 1978) 1–20; H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik, The early state: theories and hypotheses, in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik (Eds), *The Early State* (The Hague 1978) 3–29; J. Gledhill, Introduction: the comparative analysis of social and political transitions, in J. Gledhill, B. Bender and M.T. Larsen (Eds), *State and Society: the Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralization* (London 1988) 1–29.
- [12] N.J.G. Pounds and S.S. Ball, Core areas and the development of the European states system, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 54 (1964) 24–40; quotation from E.L. Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (Cambridge 1981) 105.
- [13] See R. Jones, Problems with Medieval Welsh local administration: the case of the *maenor* and the *maenol*, *Journal of Historical Geography* 24 (1998) 141 for a representation of the changing nature of political space in Wales during the Middle Ages.
- [14] Dodgshon, *The European Past*, 91–3.
- [15] A. Owen (Ed.), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, Vol. 1 (London 1841) 170.
- [16] Dodgshon, *The European Past*, 93.
- [17] *Ibid.* 134.
- [18] R. Jones, Foundation legends, *origines gentium* and senses of ethnic identity: legitimising ideologies in Medieval Celtic Britain, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, forthcoming.
- [19] A.W. Wade-Evans (Ed.), *Nennius’s ‘History of the Britons’* (Cardiff 1938) Chapter 6; *idem* (Ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff 1944) 149; E. Phillimore (Ed.), The “*Annales Cambriae*” and the Old-Welsh genealogies from Harleian MS.3859, *Y Cymmrodor* 9 (1888) 182–3; N.K. Chadwick, Early culture and learning in north Wales, in N.K. Chadwick (Ed.), *Studies in the Early British Church* (London 1958) 16.
- [20] M. Richter, The political and institutional background to national consciousness in Medieval Wales, in T.W. Moody (Ed.), *Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence* (Belfast 1978) 37–55; R.R. Davies, Law and national identity in thirteenth-century Wales, in R.R. Davies, R.A. Griffiths, I.G. Jones and K.O. Morgan (Eds), *Welsh Society and Nationhood: Essays to Glamor Williams* (Cardiff 1984) 51–69. For a discussion of *ethnie*, see A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford 1986); *idem*, *National Identity* (London 1991) 21.
- [21] In the same context see J. Painter, *Politics, Geography and ‘Political Geography’: A Critical Perspective* (London 1995) 27–57 for a discussion of the way in which the process of state formation is constituted discursively.
- [22] Owen, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, 186; see for instance H. Ellis (Ed.), *The Record of Caernarvon* (London 1838).
- [23] T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford 1993) 234; the use of commotes (and other native administrative units) in Wales in the period following the Norman conquest of course demonstrates the institutional continuity between the period of Welsh and Norman rule.
- [24] M. Mann, The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results, *European Journal of Sociology* 25 (1984) 185–213.

- [25] W. Rees, *An Historical Atlas of Wales from Early to Modern Times* (Cardiff 1951) Plate 23.
- [26] R. Jones, The formation of the *cantref* and the commote in Medieval Gwynedd, *Studia Celtica with the Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* **32** 169–77.
- [27] R. Jones, *Daearyddiaeth wleidyddol, weinyddol a sefydliadol Cymru yn yr oesau canol* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberystwyth 1996) chapter 4.
- [28] Owen, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, Vol. 1, 188.
- [29] P. Vinogradoff and F. Morgan (Eds), *Survey of the Honour of Denbigh 1334* (Oxford 1914) lx.
- [30] R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1093–1415* (Oxford 1992) 127.
- [31] Public Record Office (hereafter P.R.O.) *Calender of Inquisitions Miscellaneous 1216–1377*, Vol. 1 (London 1916–37) no. 1357; D. Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff 1984) 67.
- [32] *Ibid.* xviii.
- [33] See H. Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton 1994) 61–3 for a more general discussion of the reasons for the economic renaissance that occurred in the later Middle Ages.
- [34] T.J. Pierce, The growth of commutation in Gwynedd in the thirteenth century, in J.B. Smith (Ed.), *Medieval Welsh Society: Selected Essays* (Cardiff 1972) 103–26.
- [35] J.G. Edwards (Ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales* (Cardiff 1935) 124.
- [36] *Ibid.* 103.
- [37] Pierce, The growth of commutation in Gwynedd in the thirteenth century.
- [38] J. Given, The economic consequences of the English conquest of Gwynedd, *Speculum* **64** (1989) 29–31; idem, Autonomy, integration and marginalization in the construction of Medieval states: a comparison of Gwynedd and Languedoc under outside rule, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* **31** (1990) 303.
- [39] Mann, The autonomous power of the state.
- [40] Similar statements have been made in the context of the Norman conquest of England in 1066. Here the Normans based their methods of governance on a pre-existing Anglo-Saxon framework but succeeded in invigorating it, H.R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England, 500–1087* (London 1984). The fact that kinship groups, however, still had a role to play in the institutional geography of Wales well into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may be seen as evidence for the limited maturity of territorial institutions, even during this late period.
- [41] R. Jones, Early state formation in native Medieval Wales, *Political Geography* **17** (1998) 667–82.
- [42] See A. Giddens, *The Nation-state and Violence* (Cambridge 1985) 59–61.