



## Problems with medieval Welsh local administration—the case of the *maenor* and the *maenol*

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Medieval Europe witnessed a major institutional change as societies moved from being ordered around notions of kinship to being organized around the power exercised by kings over defined territories. Territorial units of administration were part and parcel of this state-making process. Two such administrative units which have been discussed at length in a Welsh context are the *maenor* and the *maenol*, the basis for Glanville Jones' multiple estate. It is argued in this paper that these units are better understood as attempts to territorialize power in medieval Wales. The *maenor*'s emphasis on the delineation of the territorial extent of groups of people suggests that it was an immature example of this process. The *maenol*, on the other hand, was an attempt by the rulers of Gwynedd to define territorially all political space. As such, it can be described as a mature administrative unit of an early state which was based firmly on notions of territorialized power. Viewing these two units in the context of the state-making process demonstrates that they were two different institutions and not a variation on a common theme, as has been generally maintained.

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The Middle Ages in Europe was a period of momentous institutional change as societies moved from being primarily ordered around concepts of kinship to being ordered around the power and jurisdiction exercised by kings and state rulers over defined territories. This shift from a political landscape in which—to use Sahlins' phrase—territory was identified and ordered through society to one in which society was ordered through territory lies at the heart of early state formation.<sup>[1]</sup> In the process, society moved from a world which emphasized tribal organization—one in which political ordination and rights of property were mainly defined through membership of a kin group or tribe, real or assumed—to a society in which lordship over all land and over all men was increasingly assumed by state rulers. A ruler's domain of authority was increasingly defined and specified through a process of territorialization, as rights and jurisdiction were set down or emplaced within defined areas of operation. The political landscape became something abstract rather than contingent, defined by the wider needs of the state rather than by the immediate need of those who occupied it. Clearly, this would have made it a change of geographical significance.

The creation of territorial units of administration, and with them the growing territorialization of power, was part and parcel of the state-making process. We see it throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. In England, for instance, it was manifest through the creation of shires and hundreds.<sup>[2]</sup> In areas like Denmark, it was exemplified

through the creation of *syssels* and *herreds*.<sup>[3]</sup> Wales too, had its emergent system of territorial order based on administrative units like the *cantref*, commote, the *maenor/maenol* and the township.<sup>[4]</sup> We can see each of these units as the means by which early state rulers tried to control Welsh space in terms of law, obligations and fiscal levies. This article proposes to look more closely at one level of this emergent Welsh territorial order, namely, the level of the *maenor/maenol*.

The nature of the *maenor/maenol* has been a source of much debate. In particular, it has been a cornerstone of Glanville Jones' ideas concerning the multiple estate.<sup>[5]</sup> For Jones, the multiple estate was a territorial unit used by early tribal chiefs and lords from the Iron Age onwards to exploit the societies grouped around them. This paper reconsiders these ideas and, in particular, argues that the *maenor/maenol* are better examined in the context of the state-making process.

The prime source of evidence for the *maenor/maenol* are the Welsh law texts, with the North Wales texts providing information about the *maenol* and the South Wales texts describing the nature of the *maenor*.<sup>[6]</sup> According to the North Wales texts, theoretically there should be four townships in every *maenol*. However, there are hints of a greater degree of variation in the South Wales texts with the number of townships in the *maenor* depending on its topographical nature. Every lowland or bond *maenor*, it was declared, should contain seven townships, whilst every upland or free *maenor* was said to contain 13 townships.<sup>[7]</sup>

The difference of one letter between the terms *maenor* and *maenol* has traditionally been perceived as being a linguistic variation of the same basic term.<sup>[8]</sup> However, the evidence of the law texts alone seems to suggest that more basic differences may exist between the two. Firstly, there is a geographical difference. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the place-names *maenor* and *maenol* in the Welsh landscape derived from the first edition Ordnance Survey maps of Wales. It can be noted that the distribution conforms to the model presented in the Welsh law texts. The *maenol* is located in North Wales, whilst the *maenor* is a feature of the South Wales landscape. Evidence from lists of Welsh place-names supports this view.<sup>[9]</sup> One other fact which should be borne in mind from place-name evidence is that there are far more examples of *maenorau* than there are *maenolau*. Secondly, the evidence concerning the ideal number of townships in both units also suggests that they were not as similar or equivalent to each other as some have maintained. Of course, the fact that there are dissimilarities in the distribution and size of *maenorau* and *maenolau* does not necessarily mean that they were two fundamentally different units. Nonetheless, such differences are significant and should make us wary of blindly following the suggestion that the two units were one and the same. For this reason, I propose to treat the *maenor* and the *maenol* as potentially distinct institutions in the following discussion.

It is generally agreed that the *maenor* is the earlier linguistic form, and derives from the Welsh for stone. Lloyd's interpretation of the term was that it probably applied to the stone settlement of a chief or tribal leader.<sup>[10]</sup> In that case, the meaning of the term could well apply to the stone, or earth and stone enclosures, around early settlements.<sup>[11]</sup> This linguistic association would suggest that the original use of the term dates from a period when society was controlled by chiefs and tribal leaders. Later, its usage appears to have shifted from meaning the stone settlement of the chief to meaning the wider estate attached to that chief and his settlement. This progression in meaning would in part answer one of Wendy Davies' criticisms of Glanville Jones' handling of the idea of the multiple estate. Jones saw the multiple estate as being an institution which was instrumental to the ordering of society from the Iron Age down to the fourteenth century. He cites examples that range from Meddyfnych in Carmarthenshire

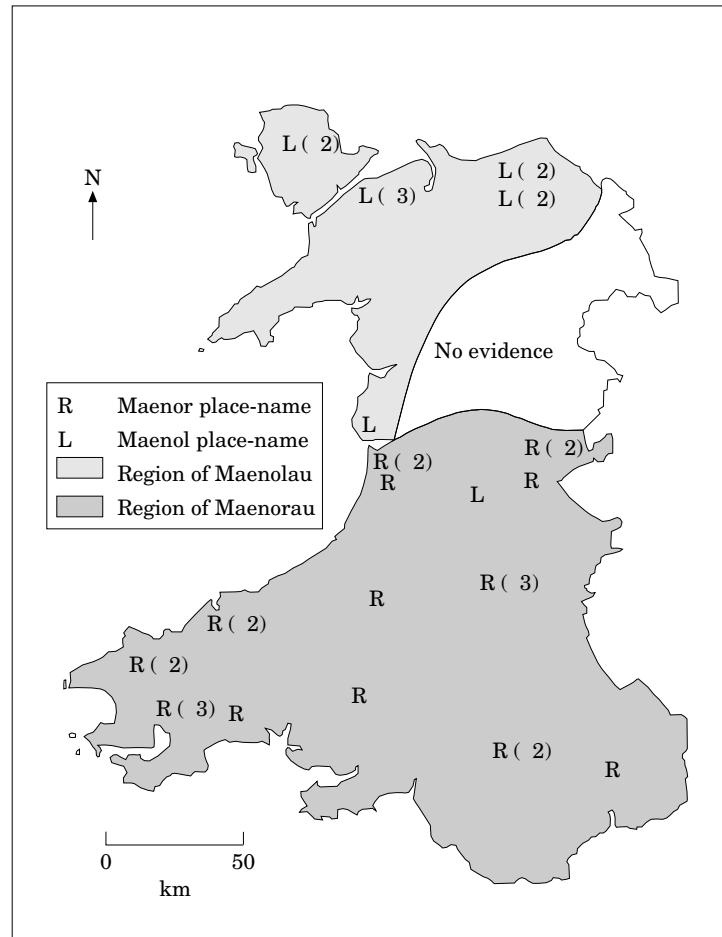


Figure 1. Place-names containing the elements “maenor” and “maenol”. Source: First edition Ordnance Survey Maps.

in the ninth century to Aberffraw on Anglesey in the fourteenth century.<sup>[12]</sup> In contrast, Davies does not believe that such institutional inertia would have been possible in an age of far-reaching political, climatic, demographic and agricultural change.<sup>[13]</sup> If we accept Lloyd’s interpretation of the original meaning of *maenor*, then one change in the use of the term which can be hypothesized is the one outlined above, where the early usage of *maenor*, meaning the stone settlement, broadened to embrace the estate that was associated with that settlement. This change possibly reflects an early attempt by local rulers, be they chiefs, tribal leaders or early kings, to define precisely the area of land which formed the basis of their territorial power. The term *maenor* gradually changed from signifying the ruler’s power as it was symbolized by his settlement or fort to signifying his power as it was symbolized by the territory over which he now exercised authority or jurisdiction. In this regard, the change in meaning of the term *maenor* is similar to the way in which Anglo-Saxon estates took on the name of the *tun* settlement contained within them.<sup>[14]</sup>

Jones cites the manuscript *Chad 6*, which dates from approximately the ninth century, as evidence for the nature of this early *maenor* or multiple estate.<sup>[15]</sup> Unfortunately, on closer inspection, this source demonstrates that only tentative evidence, if any, can be

gleaned from it concerning the nature of the early *maenor*. The source relates to the donation of a *maenor*, Maenor Meddyfnych, to the Church of St Teilo and concentrates on the extent of land which was donated. It provides no real or tangible evidence concerning the internal structure or nature of the early *maenor*, other than the fact that the early *maenor* was a tract of land with definite boundaries.

Jones attempts to make good this lack of evidence in *Chad 6* by using the information found in *Chad 3* and *Chad 4*, manuscripts relating to the gift of a township to the Church of St Teilo.<sup>[16]</sup> However, there is no reason for supposing that the way in which early townships were administered was in any way related to the way in which early *maenorau* were administered. Neither are there any grounds for supposing that all townships in South Wales were administered as part of *maenorau*. The early Middle Ages was not an age of uniform administration by any means, in Wales nor anywhere else in Europe. Different customs could exist cheek by jowl, and often did so, in a society which was parochial in the extreme. The great variety of names of institutions which are mentioned in the *Book of Llandâv* is a testimony to the way in which institutional and administrative practices could vary over short distances. In this respect, it is worth noting that only two per cent of the grants in the *Book of Llandâv* contain any references to *maenorau*.<sup>[17]</sup> One needs to be cautious, therefore, in using the evidence found in *Chad 3* and *Chad 4* to bolster the lack of evidence concerning the early *maenor* in *Chad 6*. Evidence for *maenorau* can only be considered contextually.

It is probable that the *maenor* represented early medieval rulers' first attempts to territorialize their power. This, however, was an institutionally immature landscape. Political units were fragmented and were still partly ordered through the controlling of social groups. In effect, it is possible to theorize that the *maenor* represented the territorialization of people and not the territorialization of political space as such. It was probably an institutional half-way house as rulers began to define territorially the spatial extent of the settled and occupied land associated with their rule. Land beyond the inhabited areas would not have been similarly defined. These peripheral lands would have been perceived as being wilderness or waste. It is for this reason that we cannot consider the *maenor* to be a true unit of an early state. Although it represented the first steps towards the territorialization of power, its dependence on the spatial extent of social groups and occupied land for its definition implies that it was still firmly based on tribal notions of social and spatial organization.

The natural question to ask is why should the *maenor* only appear in some areas of South Wales. It is difficult to give a definite answer when sources of evidence are as thin on the ground as they are in Wales for the early Middle Ages. However, a possible explanation is the low population levels in Wales in this period. Recurrent plagues between the fifth and seventh centuries would have diminished the size of the Welsh population.<sup>[18]</sup> Since the *maenor* was an unit which emphasized the close occupation of land, it would be highly unlikely to find *maenorau* in areas which were only lightly settled or uninhabited. It is more likely that only the best agricultural land, the settled landscape, would have been divided into *maenorau* or other administrative units, leaving the moorland and woodland relatively free from either settlement or administrative subdivisions. Consequently, it is likely that substantial areas of Wales at this time would have existed outside the immediate control of tribal leaders. This again implies that we cannot consider the *maenor* to be a mature institution of the early state since it was not part of an administratively homogenous landscape. Large consolidated territories, subdivided into administrative units, were not yet a feature of the Welsh political landscape.

*Maenorau* were probably centred on areas of settled or occupied land, whilst the

lands in between existed within the looser control of that individual. In this case, the *maenor* introduced notions of state rule into early Wales insofar as a ruler's jurisdiction was confined to the definite boundaries of the *maenor*, but it was not part of an introduction of an early state *per se* into Welsh society. It allowed rulers to control small territories, but the fact that this notion of rule was centred on the territorialization of people and not on the territorialization of all political space meant that it cannot be considered as a state institution.

Large consolidated kingdoms, of the type which can be described as 'early states', begin to appear in Wales from approximately the ninth century onwards.<sup>[19]</sup> After that date larger institutions, such as the *cantref* and commote, gained importance as the main instruments of government. These administrative units were used to subdivide large territories in a relatively uniform way, as opposed to the piecemeal subdivision of landscape which occurred with the *maenor*. It is probable, therefore, that the *maenor* experienced its heyday in the period before the appearance of these large units of more systematic administration.

Given this chronology, Jones' attempt to reconcile the *maenor*, which was an institution of the early Middle Ages, with the commote and *cantref*, administrative units which start to appear in the Welsh landscape from approximately the ninth and tenth centuries onwards, must be questioned.<sup>[20]</sup> The South Wales law texts offer no plan of the relationship between the *maenor* and the *cantref* or commote. Such an omission might appear surprising, especially when contrasted with the systematic administrative structure outlined in the North Wales law texts. However, it is only surprising if we believe that there was a formal relationship between the *maenor* and the *cantref* or commote. If the *maenor* and the *cantref*/commote belong to two different periods in the administrative history of Wales, then there seems no real reason for accepting that there ever was a formal or fixed relationship between them.

We can consider the relevance of the early *maenor*, or lack of it, in the later administrative geography of South Wales by comparing the spatial extent of Maenor Meddyfnych, as described in *Chad 6* (and as mapped by Jones), with the extent of the Maenor Meddyfnych of the fourteenth century. The spatial extent of Maenor Meddyfnych in the later Middle Ages has been depicted by Rees in his map of the geography of South Wales in the fourteenth century.<sup>[21]</sup> Both versions of the *maenor* have been combined in Figure 2. It becomes evident immediately that there is a significant discrepancy between the two *maenora*. It can also be noted that the *maenor* of the early Middle Ages does not fit neatly with the commotal boundary, as does the later one. While it is possible to argue that it would be natural for administrative boundaries to shift over time, the fact that the boundary of the earlier *maenor* bears little relation to the commotal boundary surely indicates that the boundary of the earlier *maenor* was of little importance in the later Middle Ages. If the earlier *maenor* and the commote bore any administrative relationship to each other, their boundaries would have surely coincided. This in itself suggests that the earlier *maenor* had little significance in the later Middle Ages. Once again, this suggests that there is very little insight to be gained in attempting to relate the *maenor*, whose significance as an institution was confined to the early Middle Ages, with commotes and *cantrefi*, which became important only after *c.* 1000.

The main reason that Jones has tried to incorporate the *maenor* of South Wales, with its seven or 13 townships, into a theoretical administrative structure of *cantrefi*, commotes and *maenora* lies in the fact that such a theoretical structure exists in the law texts of North Wales. It also derives from his unwillingness to differentiate between the *maenor* and the *maenol*.<sup>[22]</sup> Indeed, the fact that the *maenol* has been theoretically

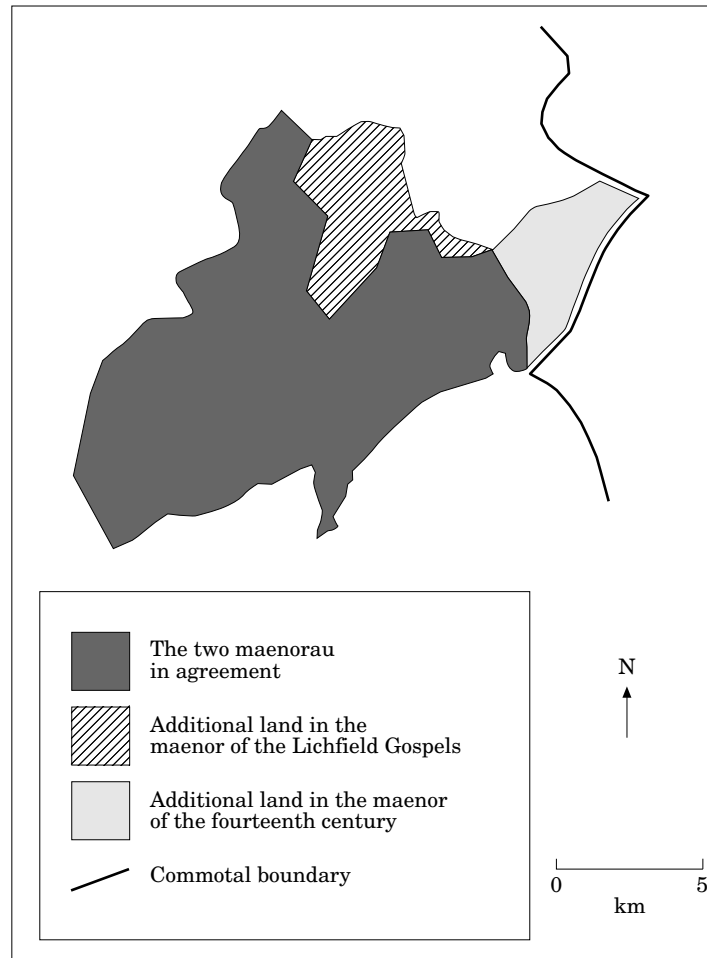


Figure 2. The relationship between the Maenor Meddyfnych of the Lichfield Gospels and the Maenor Meddyfnych of the fourteenth century.

grafted onto an administrative structure which emphasized the territorialized control of society implies that there may have been an overhaul of an earlier unit, possibly the *maenor*.

This is the view shared by some Welsh historians who have stressed that the *maenol* was a failed attempt to re-invigorate the earlier *maenor* by the rulers of Gwynedd.<sup>[23]</sup> As such, the appearance of the *maenol* in the administrative hierarchy of Gwynedd represents the introduction of an extra layer of state institutions in this particular region of Wales. The main purpose for introducing this extra layer of course was so that the rulers of Gwynedd could exploit their territory more efficiently. The ruler who was most likely to have carried out this reorganization was Owain Gwynedd, the ruler of Gwynedd in the twelfth century. It was he, also, who may have created a consistent landscape of defined townships in Gwynedd for the first time.<sup>[24]</sup> That this was a failed attempt to reorganize older institutions is shown by the fact that it was the township which acted as the unit for collecting rents and dues in the extents and surveys carried out in North Wales in the Middle Ages, and not the *maenol*, as is proposed by the law

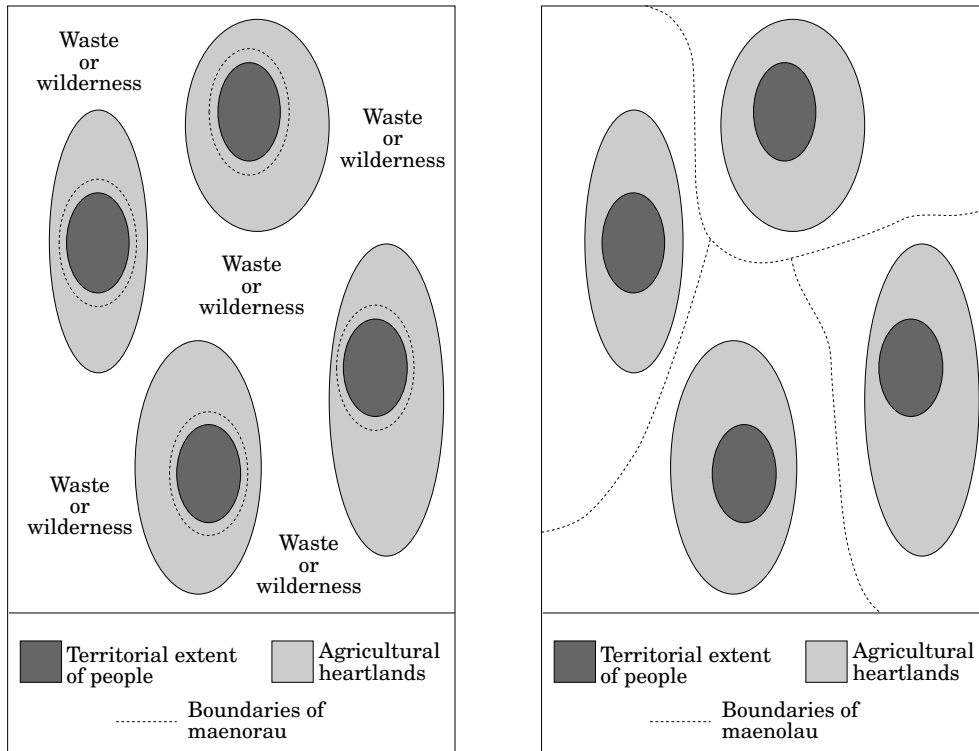


Figure 3. A model of the different social and territorial contexts of the *maenol* and the *maenol*.

texts of North Wales.<sup>[25]</sup> This supposition is strengthened by the lack of place-name evidence of the term *maenol* in the North Wales landscape.

The fact that the *maenol* is part of a definite administrative structure in North Wales, as opposed to the more ambiguous nature of the *maenor*, demonstrates once again that the two units are different to each other. Herein lies the main difference between the *maenol* and the *maenor*. The *maenol* of the Gwynedd law texts was part of a process whereby all political space was subdivided into a systematized and homogenous administrative landscape. It was not a unit which was dependent in any way upon the distribution of people. As Figure 3 demonstrates, it was a unit which was defined using purely territorial criteria as opposed to the social criteria employed in defining the earlier *maenor*.

Consequently, no areas of land were left outside this framework of *maenolau*. All land—wilderness or waste—belonged to the lord or prince, and could be subdivided in any way that that individual saw fit. As such, the *maenol* of the law texts represents a far more politically and institutionally mature administrative unit than the earlier *maenor*. It was a planned and systematized territorial administrative unit of an early state.

If the *maenol* was a failed attempt by the rulers of Gwynedd, and most probably Owain Gwynedd, to reorganize and re-invigorate an older institution, the obvious question is what was this older institution? The natural candidate would be the *maenor*. The only problem with this interpretation is that there is no evidence in the North Wales landscape for this place-name. The lack of evidence is critical in this respect. The most likely explanation is that there were a variety of institutions of this magnitude

present in North Wales in the early Middle Ages. This hypothesis would fit in with the institutionally varied landscape portrayed in the *Book of Llandâv*. This variety would be due to the small-scale nature of kingship at this time. This would have meant that varying practices could have developed, even within small regions.<sup>[26]</sup>

The main reason why this attempt to introduce an homogenous landscape of *maenolau* was only carried out in Gwynedd, and not in any other region of Wales, is because Gwynedd represented the most politically centralized and stable early state within Wales in the Middle Ages. Indeed there are some grounds for suspecting that this so-called peripheral early state was one of the most institutionally mature societies in Europe in the thirteenth century.<sup>[27]</sup> This would have encouraged rulers of Gwynedd to believe that they could introduce an extra layer of administration to exploit their lands more efficiently. Their lack of success shows that this was, to a large extent, a false hope.

Two questions remain to be answered. The first is when did the original unit of the *maenor* appear? Jones, although referring to it in the form of the multiple estate, has hypothesized that the *maenor* was a unit which was formed in a period when the Celts ruled the whole of Britain. His main source of evidence for this argument is the fact that similar rents and obligations appear attached to multiple estates in many parts of Britain. For instance, occupants of local units as far apart as Northumbria, Sussex, Kent and Wales were all expected to entertain the lord and his retinue as well as to maintain his court.<sup>[28]</sup> The main problem with such an hypothesis, though, is the fact that the basic expectations due from a bondman or freeman would not have varied very much anywhere in Western Europe. Every lord would ultimately want to be fed and housed by his subjects. It is not surprising, therefore, that common elements are found in the rents and obligations due from bondmen and freemen from Kent to Anglesey.

Another weakness in Jones' argument is the assumption that because one is dealing with similar rents and obligations in two regions one must be dealing with similar territorial institutions. However, lords or rulers within Western Europe who wanted to be housed and fed could ensure that those rents were paid and those obligations met in a variety of ways.<sup>[29]</sup> The upshot of this discussion is that there are no real grounds for supposing that the *maenor* derived from a period when the Celts ruled the whole of Britain on the basis of there being similar rents and obligations throughout the whole of early medieval Britain. All that can be said concerning the appearance of the original unit of the *maenor* is that it was fully operational by the ninth century, as is indicated by the evidence for Maenor Meddyfnych discussed earlier.

Another problem lies at the other end of the time spectrum and relates to the influence of the Normans on Welsh institutions and Welsh institutional thinking.<sup>[30]</sup> A number of commotes in South Wales were subdivided into four *maenorau* each in the later Middle Ages. These were the commotes of Mabelfyw, Mabudrud, Perfedd, Iscennen, Carnwyllion and Cydweli (Figure 4). At first glance, the existence of *maenorau* in these commotes could mean that these units had been formally incorporated as state institutions in some parts of South Wales. The traditional explanation for this was the one given by William Rees, that these commotes were inhabited by freemen only.<sup>[31]</sup> A commote inhabited only by freemen would have obviated the need for both a reeve settlement and a township of wasteland. Consequently, all the land within the commote could be subdivided between the freemen. This in turn allowed the naming of local institutions as *maenorau* and not townships. There are weaknesses with this argument. Firstly, there is evidence that there was a reeve township in the commote of Iscennen in the Middle Ages, which also implies that this commote also contained bondmen.<sup>[32]</sup> Secondly, there is evidence that a rent, *dofraeth*, traditionally associated with bondmen,



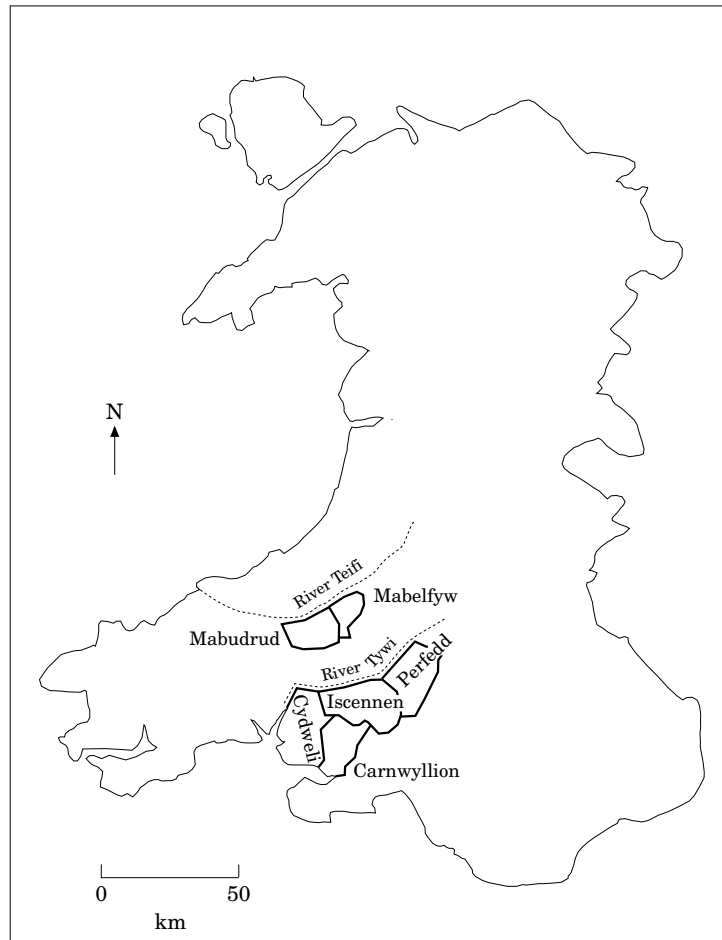


Figure 4. The location of commotes subdivided into *maenoraui* in the fourteenth century.

was being paid in the commote of Perfedd.<sup>[33]</sup> This again suggests that there is no reason for supposing that these particular commotes were subdivided into *maenoraui* because of the preponderance of freemen in them. One may suspect the hand of the Normans in creating this administrative anomaly. For one thing, there is a striking consistency to the number of *maenoraui* in each commote, a feature which is conspicuous by its absence in native administrative structures. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, there is evidence that the local administrative units in these commotes at the end of the thirteenth century were *gwestfâu*, the unit which corresponds to the township in much of South Wales.<sup>[34]</sup> This suggests that a terminological and perhaps institutional change happened under the auspices of the Normans sometime at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Such reasoning suggests that the *maenor* in these commotes in South Wales was not a legacy of the *maenor* which had existed in some parts of Wales in the early Middle Ages. Rather was it the adaptation of a term which had some administrative import in early medieval Wales and that most Norman of local institutions, the manor.<sup>[35]</sup> Thus, the *maenor* in these commotes in South Wales was more a testimony to Norman ideals concerning the consistency of rule in a territorial state than an indication of the early Welsh *maenor* surviving as a native state institution.

Two main conclusions arise from this paper. Firstly, that no more attempts should

be made to incorporate the *maenor* as an integral part of the commote and *cantref*. The last two institutions belonged to a different period in the institutional history of Wales, a period of state formation and institutional change within the country. We also need to appreciate how the *maenor* and *maenol* differed. The former reflected rulers' first efforts to expand their power by controlling territory, and thereby controlling people. This was not a state institution because it was based on territorializing people rather than political space. Consequently, it did not form an homogenous or systematized administrative landscape. This would in any case have been highly improbable in an age of institutional immaturity. The latter on the other hand was a failed attempt to introduce a purely administrative unit *de novo* into twelfth- and thirteenth-century Gwynedd. It is the *maenol* which reflects the growing influence of state institutions in early Welsh society as political leaders in Gwynedd attempted to subdivide all political space into territorial administrative units with little or no regard for the distribution of people. Its failure to make a durable impact as an administrative unit is surely an indication of the relative institutional immaturity of early states within Wales, even at a late stage in the Middle Ages.

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## Notes

- [1] M. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs 1968) 5; R. A. Dodgshon, *The European Past: Social Evolution and Spatial Order* (Basingstoke 1987) especially chapter 5. General theories concerning state formation can be found in H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, The early state: theories and hypotheses, in idem (Eds), *The Early State* (The Hague 1978) 3–29; J. Gledhill, Introduction: the comparative analysis of social and political transitions, in J. Gledhill et al (Eds), *State and Society: the Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralisation* (London 1988) 1–29.
- [2] H. R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087* (London 1984) 133–140.
- [3] J.K. Sørensen, Toponymic evidence for administrative divisions in Denmark in the Viking Age, in T. Andersson and K. I. Sandred (Eds), *The Vikings: Proceedings of the Symposium of the Faculty of Arts of Uppsala University, June 6–9th, 1977* (Uppsala 1978) 133–141.
- [4] A. Owen (Ed.), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales* vol.1 (London 1841) 186. This administrative hierarchy was most relevant to North Wales, see G.R.J. Jones, The models for organization in *Llyfr Iorwerth* and *Llyfr Cyfnerth*, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 39 (1992) 95–118.
- [5] G. R. J. Jones, Multiple estate and early settlement, in P. H. Sawyer (Ed.), *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (London 1976) 15–40; idem, The multiple estate as a model framework for tracing early stages in the evolution of rural settlement, in F. Dussart (Ed.), *L'habitat et les paysages ruraux d'Europe* (Liège 1971) 251–267.
- [6] It is difficult to provide a precise date for the codification of the Welsh law texts. Nonetheless, it is usually assumed that they were codified under the auspices of Hywel Dda in the mid-tenth century. For a discussion of the validity of this theory, see the introduction to H. D. Emanuel (Ed), *The Latin Texts of the Welsh laws* (Cardiff 1967).
- [7] Owen, *Ancient Laws* vol. 1, 186, 538, 768, 770.
- [8] Jones, Multiple estates and early settlement, 18; W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester 1982) 43–46; J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales* vol.1 (London 1911) 32–34, 57–58.
- [9] M. Richards, *Welsh Territorial and Administrative Units: Medieval and Modern* (Cardiff 1969) 159–161.
- [10] Lloyd, *A History of Wales* vol. 1, 313 n. 140.

- [11] This could bear some relation to the term “caer”, the term which Kenneth Jackson postulated as being place-name evidence for the existence of a fortified settlement in northern England, K. Jackson, *Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria*, in K. Jackson (Ed.), *Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures* (Cardiff 1963) 80.
- [12] G. R. J. Jones, Post-Roman Wales, in H. P. R. Finberg (Ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales I/ii* (Cambridge 1972) 308–311; idem, Multiple estates and early settlement, 21–24.
- [13] W. Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales: O'Donnell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford 1983* (Oxford 1990) 82, n. 4.
- [14] D. M. Hadley, Multiple estates and the origins of the manorial structure of the northern Danelaw, *Journal of Historical Geography* 22 (1) (1996) 5.
- [15] J. G. Evans (Ed.), *The Text of the Book of Llandâv Reproduced from the Gwysaney Manuscript* (Oxford 1893) xlvii; D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, The Welsh marginalia of the Lichfield Gospels part 1, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (1983) 37–66; idem, The Welsh marginalia of the Lichfield Gospels part 2: the ‘Surexit’ memorandum, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 7 (1984) 91–120.
- [16] *ibid.* xlv.
- [17] W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (London 1978) 37–42.
- [18] Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, 31, 41.
- [19] Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales*, 33; idem, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, 101. Although Davies notes that some kingdoms in Wales have had a very long existence, the evidence for their consistent appearance in the sources is scant before the eighth or ninth centuries.
- [20] There is one reference to a *cantref* in South Wales in the sixth century. See Edwards, *The Book of Llandâv* 124. This reference is dubious. It is unlikely that such an administrative unit would have existed in Wales at that time, a period when the small size of units of kingship would not have justified such a large administrative unit. The first dependable evidence of the existence of a *cantref* comes in the ninth century, but this is limited to one region of Gwynedd only. See I. Williams (Ed), *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Cardiff 1953). 16. Consistent references to *cantrefi* only appear in the tenth and eleventh centuries, e.g., see D. and Rh. Ifans (Eds), *Y Mabinogion* (Llandysul 1980) 1, 16, 25, 60.
- [21] Jones, Post-Roman Wales, 308; W. Rees, *South Wales and the Border in the Fourteenth Century* (Ordnance Survey 1932) South-west sheet. See also I. Williams, Meddyfnych, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 7 (1933–1935) 369–370; J. Fisher, Meddyfnych, Llandeibŷ, *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society* 20 (1926–1927) 14–15.
- [22] For his attempts arithmetically to incorporate the *maenor* and the commote, see Jones, Multiple estates and early settlement, 18.
- [23] T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford 1993) 249, n. 63.
- [24] C. A. Gresham, Medieval parish and township boundaries in Gwynedd, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 34 (1987) 137–149.
- [25] For instance, see H. Ellis (Ed.), *The Record of Caernarvon* (London 1838) 1; P. Vinogradoff and F. Morgan (Eds), *The Survey of the Honour of Denbigh 1334* (London 1914). For the alleged economic functions of the *maenol* in North Wales see Owen, *Ancient Laws* vol.1, 186.
- [26] T. M. Charles-Edwards, Early medieval kingships in the British Isles, in S. Bassett (Ed.), *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester 1989) 28–33.
- [27] R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford 1991) 252–264.
- [28] Jones, Multiple estates and early settlement, 21–40.
- [29] A similar argument in an Anglo-Saxon context can be found in Hadley, Multiple estates and the origins of the manorial structure of the northern Danelaw, 8–11.
- [30] For a general introduction to the Normans’ influence on Welsh institutions, see Davies, *The Age of Conquest*.
- [31] W. Rees, *South Wales and the March 1284–1415: A Social and Agrarian Study* (Oxford 1924) 203–204; idem (Ed.), Ministers’ accounts (General Series), Bundle 1158 No.3 (PRO), *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 10 (1939–1941) 80–81.
- [32] W. Rees (Ed.), *Survey of the Duchy of Lancaster Lordships in Wales 1609–1613* (Cardiff 1953) xvi.
- [33] Public Record Office, *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* vol.6, (London 1904–) 41. For an explanation of *dofraeth*, see Owen, *Ancient Laws* vol.1, 188, 190.

- [34] F. Seebohm (Ed.), *The Tribal System in Wales, Being Part of an Inquiry into the Structure and Methods of Tribal Society* (London 1904) 116 (Appendices numbered separately). For information concerning the *gwestfa* unit, see T. J. Pierce, *Medieval Cardiganshire: a study in social origins*, in J. B. Smith (Ed.), *Medieval Welsh Society: Selected Essays of T. Jones Pierce* (Cardiff 1972) 309–328.
- [35] The one exception to this argument might be the commotes of Mabelfyw and Mabudrud. These commotes were separate from the other commotes which were subdivided into *maenorau* and there is conclusive evidence that they were solely inhabited by freemen. It is possible that Rees' hypothesis is relevant to the administrative history of these commotes, and that the Normans had little influence on the choice of administrative units within them. For evidence that these commotes were solely inhabited by freemen see M. Rhys (Ed.), *Ministers' Accounts for West Wales 1277–1306* (London 1936) 197–198.