

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIBAL DIVISIONS OF WALES.

(For the materials of this chapter I have had to depend mainly upon my own studies, save that invaluable help has been derived from the notes of Mr. Egerton Phillimore in the various Cymmrodorion volumes and elsewhere.)

I. THE CANTREFS OF GWYNEDD.

IT will now be convenient to undertake a general survey of the political condition of Wales during the period 650 to 850, and this will of necessity be at the same time a topographical account of the country as it then was, since the story will not admit of being treated with reference to one central point, but must be separately told for each one of the many tribal areas into which Wales was at this time divided.

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Anglesey,¹ the Mona of primitive times and the Môn of mediæval and modern Welsh, has been throughout the historic period a political unit. It is true that it is divided into three cantrefs, but these bear upon them, in their names of Cemais, Aberffraw and Rhosyr,² the marks of their origin as areas mapped out by the government with reference to the three principal courts of the chieftains of the island. The six commotes into which the three cantrefs are subdivided wear a more ancient aspect, but even they do not appear, with the possible exception of Tindaethwy,³ to represent old tribal distinctions or anything but administrative convenience. Save for the great fen known as Malltraeth Marsh, which separates the commote of Menai from that of Malltraeth, the island has no important physical barriers; it lies low and, in marked contrast to the opposite mainland, has no mountain ranges or

¹ For the derivation of the name see chap. vi. note 99.

² The documents which record the names of the cantrefs and commotes of Wales are discussed in the note appended to this chapter.

³ See p. 41.

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high table-lands.⁴ Hence it acquired importance in very early times as the great corn-growing district of North Wales; its proud sons dubbed it "Môn, the mother of Wales," since the abundant crops it yielded were sufficient, they said, to maintain the whole of Wales for one year.⁵ In Bede's time it was known for its fertility,⁶ and the number of parish churches it contains is an incidental proof of its ability in the Middle Ages to support a large population. It thus became, as soon as the Goidelic elements in it had been thoroughly subdued to the Brythonic, the chief seat of political power in Gwynedd and the residence, in particular, of the line of kings which claimed to represent Cunedda Wledig and Maelgwn Gwynedd. Physical and political causes combined to prevent in Anglesey that division into minor chieftaincies which was so common a spectacle in other parts of Wales.

After the fall of the great Cadwallon, the house of Cunedda was represented by his son Cadwaladr, who was king among the Britons in the days of Oswy of Northumbria.⁷ None of his deeds have been recorded, yet he must have been a figure of some distinction, for the bards of later ages regarded his name as one to conjure with, and in days of national depression foretold his return, as was fabled of Arthur also, to lead the Cymry to victory.⁸ He died in the great plague of 664⁹ and

⁴ According to *App. Land Com.* 259, only 188 acres of the surface of the county lie at a higher elevation than 500 feet above sea-level.

⁵ *Gir. Camb.* vi. 127 (*Itin.* ii. 7), 177 (*Descr.* i. 6). Prydydd y Moch was familiar with the title; see *Myv. Arch.* I. 299 (211).

⁶ *H.E.* ii. 9 (frugum prouentu atque ubertate).

⁷ "Dum ipse (Osguid) regnabat, venit mortalitas hominum, Catgualart regnante apud Brittones post patrem suum, et in ea periit" (*i.e.*, Cadwaladr) (*Sax. Genealogies in Hist. Britt.* c. 64).

⁸ Cf. the lines in the "Hoianau" (*Blk. Bk.* fo. 30b; *IV. Anc. Bks.* ii. p. 26),
A phan del Kadualadir y orescin mon
dileaur Saeson o tirion prydein.

("And when Cadwaladr comes to seize Anglesey, the English will be driven from the lands of Britain.")

⁹ The plague in the reign of Oswy which, according to the *Saxon Genealogies*, carried off Cadwaladr, can hardly be any other than the famous pestilence of 664, for which *cf.* Bede, *H.E.* iii. 27. The chronicle in Harl. MS. 3859 gives the year of the king's death as 682, but it is of inferior authority to the *Sax. Gen.* Geoff. Mon. introduced another element of confusion by identifying Cadwaladr with Caedualla of Wessex and making him die, accordingly, at Rome on 20th April, 689 (*Hist. Reg.* xii. 14, where the Berne MS. reads "Cheduallam iuvenem," and 18, where "mayarum" is to be read for the "majurum" of Giles).

it is likely, notwithstanding his martial reputation, that he spent the close of his life as a monk, for the church of Eglwys Ael or Llangadwaladr in Anglesey claims him as its patron saint and founder, and churches were dedicated to him in other parts of Wales.¹⁰ The situation of Llangadwaladr, some two miles from Aberffraw, suggests that this had already become the chief dwelling-place of the family, not to speak of the fact that Cadfan's tombstone is in the same church, carrying back the connection with the district a couple of generations earlier.¹¹ Henceforth Aberffraw, a cluster of dwellings on the little lift which rises above the sand-flat at the mouth of the Ffraw, was the "principal seat" of Gwynedd,¹² and its possession was held to confer a dignity and precedence which no other title could supply.

The successors of Cadwaladr were men of no note, whose sway did not extend, it would seem, beyond the limits of Anglesey. The death of Rhodri Molwynog, son of Idwal, son of Cadwaladr, is recorded under the year 754,¹³ and the family then passes out of sight until in the early part of the ninth century two sons of Rhodri, Hywel and Cynan, are found battling against each other for the lordship of Môn. In 816 the death of Cynan, whose chief stronghold was in the commote of Tindaethwy, left the field clear for Hywel, who no doubt ruled over Anglesey until his death in 825. When Hywel died, the male line of Maelgwn Gwynedd was at an end and its claims were transferred to another house by Ethyllt, the daughter of his brother Cynan.¹⁴

It may be mentioned that there were other royal courts in Anglesey than that of Aberffraw. In Talybolion, Cemais¹⁵ commanded the little harbour of Porth Wygyr, widely known

¹⁰ *Welsh SS.* 299-301. In 1352 the vill of "Eglussell" was held "de sancto Cadewaladre rege" (*Rec. Carn.* 46).

¹¹ See p. 182.

¹² "Eisteddfa arbennig" is the phrase of the Dimetian Code (*LL.* i. 346).

¹³ "Rotri rex brittonum moritur" (*Harl. MS.* 3859 in *Cymr.* ix. 161). Other sources add nothing of value save Rhodri's pedigree and distinguishing epithet, the latter not yet satisfactorily explained (*Cymr.* ix. 169-70; *Bruts*, 257; *Cymr.* viii. 87).

¹⁴ The chief authority is *Harl. MS.* 3859 (chronicle and pedigrees). *Ann. Ult.* also record *s.a.* 815 (= 816) the death of "Conan mac Ruadrach rex Britonum". It has been very generally assumed that Merfyn Frych succeeded immediately on the death of Cynan Tindaethwy; on this point see chap. vii. note 145.

¹⁵ *Rec. Carn.* 63-5.

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in the Middle Ages as the northernmost point of Wales,¹⁶ while Twrcelyn had its royal manor at Penrhos Lligwy.¹⁷ Llanfaes, not far from Beaumaris (which is a creation of Edward I.), was the court of Tindaethwy¹⁸ and before Newborough commenced its career as an English-made borough, it had been, under the name of Rhosyr, the centre of the commote of Menai.¹⁹ This was in accordance with the rule that each commote should have its own "llys" or royal vill, at which the lord of the country received the renders of the men of that commote, whether freemen or serfs. In addition, there were in the island two important ecclesiastical centres, the "clas" founded by Cybi at Caer Gybi,²⁰ under the shadow of the mountain—the highest in Anglesey—known to English sailors as the Holy Head,²¹ and the similar foundation of Seiriol at Penmon, with its offshoot on the adjacent isle of Priestholm or Ynys Lannog.²² Penmon and Caergybi flank the island on its eastern and western sides respectively, and readers of Matthew Arnold will hardly need to be reminded of the tale told of the two founders, that they journeyed once a week to meet each other at the wells of Clorach, "in the bare midst of Anglesey," until the Western saint, ever facing the warm beams of the sun, became Cybi the Swarthy (Cybi Felyn), while his companion from the East, with the sunlight always falling upon his back, remained Seiriol the Fair (Seiriol Wyn).²³

Facing Anglesey, in one long serrated line, are the heights

¹⁶ *Cymr.* xi. 43. It is the "portus Yoiger" of Gir. Camb. vi. 165 (*Descr.* i. 1); for other early references see *Myv. Arch.* I. 74 (62), 194 (143), 270 (193); *Triad* i. 5 = iii. 65.

¹⁷ *Rec. Carn.* 70-2.

¹⁸ There is an interesting survey of Llanfaes, as it was in 1294, the year before that in which the building of Beaumaris was commenced, in *Trib. System*, App. pp. 3, 4.

¹⁹ *Rec. Carn.* 83-5.

²⁰ See pp. 130, 218.

²¹ The fourteenth-century English romance of "Gawain and the Green Knight" brings Gawain past "alle the iles of Anglesay" and "the Holy Hede" (vv. 698-700, ed. Morris).

²² See p. 216. That Penmon was a monastic church of the ancient type is made certain by the grant in 1237 to the prior and canons of Ynys Lannog of "totam abbadaeth (i.e., abbacy) de Penmon" (*Mon. Angl.* iv. 582).

²³ The story first appears in the notes to Richard Lloyd's *Beaumaris Bay* (1800), p. 2, though it was known to Lewis Morris (*Celt. Remains*, p. 351). It should be explained that in his well-known sonnet ("East and West") Matthew Arnold misses the precise point of the two epithets and so tells the legend not quite convincingly.

of the "stronghold of Gwynedd,"²⁴ the region known to the Welsh as Eryri, "the haunt of the eagles,"²⁵ and to the English by the no less romantic name of Snowdon, "the hill of snows."²⁶ This was the mountainous rampart which, stretching from the mouth of the Conway to the Rivals, at all times protected Anglesey and the intervening district of Arfon from serious attack on the landward side, and few sights are more impressive than the distant prospect of this mountain wall, rising in peak after peak along the horizon, as it may be seen from Aberffraw and many another point of vantage in Southern Anglesey. Nor was Eryri merely a barrier of crag and moorland, a rocky, marshy wilderness. Hidden within its folds were mountain glens, such as Nant Peris in Arfon and Nant Ffrancon in Arllechwedd, where the herbage was of the finest and the woods sheltered deer and nurtured swine. Just as it was reckoned that Anglesey could feed with corn the entire population of Wales, so it was held that the pastures of Eryri could furnish grazing for all the sheep and cattle in the country.²⁷ It was not only a citadel, but a citadel which, in the summer season, at any rate, could not easily be starved into submission.

The region which lay opposite to Anglesey, from the summit of the Rivals to the river Cegin between Bangor and Llandegai, was appropriately known as Ar-fon, *i.e.*, the land over against Môn.²⁸ The cantref thus named extended not only between the limits just specified, but also far into the heart of Eryri; the vale of Nantlle and the pass of Llanberis

²⁴ "Kedernit gwyned" (*Mab.* 62, 63). Cf. *Bruts*, 292: "mudaw hyt ymnyded eryri. Kanys kadarnaf lle adiogelaf y gael amdifffyn yndaw rac y llu oed hwnnw".

²⁵ The *Hist. Britt.* (c. 40) contains a reference to "montibus Hereri" (according to some MSS. "Heriri"), where was situated the "arx" of Ambrosius, *i.e.*, Dinas Emrys, near Beddgelert. It is not so long since eagles ceased to haunt these mountains—see Williams, *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802), pp. 2, 3.

²⁶ An early instance of the use of the name is to be found in *A.S. Chr. s.a.* 1095, MS. E. (Snawdune). It is properly the equivalent of Eryri (Gir. Camb. vi. 135 (*Itin.* ii. 9)) or Snowdonia, and was not used in the Middle Ages, as now, to denote merely the summit. The Welsh name of this, known to every Welshman to-day as "Y Wyddfa," was anciently "Y Wyddfa Fawr," or the Great Burial-place, since the bones of Rhita the Giant were supposed to be entombed in the cairn which crowned it (*Celt. Folklore*, pp. 474-9).

²⁷ Gir. Camb. vi. 135 (*Itin.* ii. 9), 170 (*Descr.* i. 5).

²⁸ Gir. Camb. vi. 124 (*Itin.* ii. 6).

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were within its borders. It is aptly described by the author of *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig* as a land of which the seaboard ran side by side with the champaign, the woodlands with the mountain.²⁹ The cantref was conceived as divided into four strips or belts, the maritime, the agricultural, the forest and the highland belt, rising in terrace fashion above each other until the central mass of Snowdonia was reached. It was a rich and diversified country and nourished a race of great independence of spirit. The men of Arfon claimed it as their right to lead the van in the hostings of Gwynedd and therewith demanded many other privileges, such as the liberty to fish in the three chief rivers of the district (probably the Saint, the Gwyrfaï and the Llyfni), the right to declare, against their neighbours of other cantrefs, the boundaries of Arfon, and the privilege of sleeping, when they visited the king's court, in the "neuadd" or common hall with the royal heir and the squires of the court.³⁰ Arfon was a true tribal district, in which tribal consciousness was keen and alert. At some period or other in its history, the ancient cantref was, like many another, divided into two commotes. The river Gwyrfaï, flowing from Llyn Cawellyn under the foot of Snowdon to the western end of the Menai Straits, furnished the dividing line, and from that day to this has separated the commote or hundred of Uch Gwyrfaï (Above Gwyrfaï) from that of Is Gwyrfaï (Below Gwyrfaï). The cantref contained several notable civil and ecclesiastical sites. Oldest of all was Carnarvon,³¹ the Segontium of the Romans, known to the Welsh as Caer Saint yn Arfon and often more briefly as "Y Gaer yn Arfon," which is the source of the modern name. Legend had much to say of the past glories of this place. It was the burial-place of Constantine the Great and the home of Elen of the Hosts, the British wife of the Emperor Maximus. Here Brân the Blessed was found by the bird which brought under its wing the tale of the woes endured by his sister Branwen in Ireland, and here Beuno the saint up-

²⁹ "Gwlat a oed kyhyt y maestir ae mor. kyhyt y mynyd ae choet" (*Mab.* 83).

³⁰ "Breiniau Arfon" (The Privileges of Arfon), a tract found in two MSS. of the Ven. Code (*LL.* i. 104-6).

³¹ For references to Carnarvon see *Hist. Britt.* c. 25; *Mab.* 34, 88; *Cambro-Br.* SS. 18. A charter in favour of Penmon priory was issued by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth at "Kaerinarvon" on 15th October, 1221 (*Mon. Angl.* iv. 582).

braided King Cadwallon for offering to him land which had been unlawfully wrested from its infant proprietor. The fort on the hill of Llanbeblig—for it was the building of the Edwardian castle which drew Carnarvon down to the margin of the strait—was clearly the ancient centre of the cantref, the original home of its chieftains, though in later times it was eclipsed in importance by Dolbadarn.³² The two chief sanctuaries of Arfon were Bangor and Clynnog. Of the former, Bangor Fawr yn Arfon, the seat of the bishops of Gwynedd, some account has already been given; ³³ it is enough to say here that the whole of the north-eastern corner of the cantref, from the Cegin to the modern village of Portdinorwic, formed part of the possessions of the see, and that a solid barrier of Church land thus intervened between the men of Arfon and those of Arllechwedd.³⁴ The “clas” of Celynnog Fawr was little inferior in importance to that of Bangor; it had lands in Lleyn and Anglesey as well as in the neighbourhood of the church, and St. Beuno, its founder and protector, was reckoned among the mightiest of saints. Not many years have elapsed since the whole countryside brought their children to Beuno’s Well to be healed of their ailments, and paid an annual tribute to Beuno’s Chest (Cyff Beuno) to ensure the prosperity of their flocks and their herds.³⁵

To the east of Arfon lay Arllechwedd, for the most part a rugged, stony region, a land of declivities, as its name implies, and hence playing no important part in the early history of Wales. Its two strips of fertile, low-lying territory, the one bordering on the sea and the other on the river Conway, which was the eastern limit of the cantref, were known re-

³² *Rec. Carn.* (17-22) shows the tenants of Is Gwyrfaï as joining in the maintenance of the manor of Dolbadarn.

³³ See note appended to chap. vi.

³⁴ *Rec. Carn.* 93-5, 231.

³⁵ The “clas” of “Beuno,” with that of Bangor, was to protect the special rights of the men of Arfon (*LL.* i. 106). Clynnog is Celynnog, the hamlet of holly trees; see *B. Saes. s.a.* 977 and 1151 (*B.T.* is wrong in both passages); *Llyfr yr Ancr*, 124; *Buch. Gr. ap C.*, 36. Clynnog Fechan was close to Llangeinwen, Anglesey, and belonged to Clynnog Fawr (*Arch. Camb.* I. i. (1846), 310-11; *Rec. Carn.* 257). There is a list of the possessions of the house in *Rec. Carn.* 257 (*cf. Arch. Camb.* I. iii. (1848), 253-5). For the antiquities and traditions of the place see B. Willis, *Bangor*, pp. 299-305; Penn. ii. 396-400; *Arch. Camb.* I. iii. (1848), 247-57; “Cyff Beuno,” a Welsh account of the parish by Eben Fardd, schoolmaster and poet (Tremadoc, 1863).

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spectively as Arllechwedd Uchaf (Upper) and Arllechwedd Isaf (Lower) and with these two commotes was associated that of Nant Conwy,³⁶ which lay west of the Conway from Dolgarrog to its source. The royal court of Arllechwedd was at Aber of the White Shells (Gwyn Gregin),³⁷ a favourite residence of the later rulers of Gwynedd; Trefriw, perched on the hillside just above the highest reach of the tidal portion of the Conway, was the manor of Nant Conwy when the district came into the hands of the English, but Dolwyddelan must have been at one time the chief stronghold of the lord of the commote. The Church had no great foothold in Arllechwedd until the foundation of the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy in 1186; there was no important "clas" within its bounds, and probably none of its churches stood higher in popular repute than that of St. Tudclud at Pennant Machno (now condensed into Penmachno),³⁸ which is shown by its ancient Christian tombstones to be a foundation of the fifth or sixth century.³⁹

The great tongue of land thrown out by Eryri to the west has long been known by the name of Lleyn, which is said to signify the land of spearmen.⁴⁰ It is a remote, sea-locked region, lying off the track of the main currents of Welsh life, but its green straths and swelling knolls, only here and there broken into by mountain masses, are fertile and luxuriant, and the district has always maintained a considerable population. Three commotes went to make up the cantref of Lleyn. Dinllaen, so called from the "dinas" or cliff castle on the little peninsula of Porthdinlleyn, was the northernmost, stretching from the Rivals to Carn Fadryn; its royal manor was at Nevin.⁴¹ From Carn Fadryn to Aberdaron a second com-

³⁶ So Pen. MS. 163 (Evans, *Rep.* i. p. 952), which is right on this point against the other old lists. The five churches of the commote are assigned to the deanery of Arllechwedd in the Norwich Taxation (*Arch. Camb.* V. xi. (1894), 30) and the silence of the Statute of Rhuddlan as to Nant Conwy is only to be explained by the assumption that it was included in "candreda de Arthlegaph".

³⁷ The full name is given in Pen. MS. 147 (Evans, *Rep.* i. p. 913) and *Myv. Arch.* II. 30 (419).

³⁸ Penanmagnò in *Rec. Carn.* 9, Pennam'achno in the Norwich Taxation (*Arch. Camb.* V. xi. (1894), 30). Llyfr John Brooke (Evans, *Rep.* i. p. 913) and B. Willis, *Bangor*, p. 274, give the name of the saint correctly; in Ecton's *The-saurus* (third edition, p. 495) it is printed as Tyddud, which misled Rees (*Welsh SS.* 332).

³⁹ *Inscr. Chr.* Nos. 135-7; *Lap. W.* 175-7.

⁴⁰ *Celt. Folklore*, i. p. 226.

⁴¹ *Rec. Carn.* 35.

mote extended, which apparently took its name of "Cymydmaen" from a famous "Maen Melyn" or "Yellow Rock" forming part of the promontory which faces Bardsey.⁴² The court of this commote was at Neigwl.⁴³ The third commote, which skirted the shores of Cardigan Bay from St. Tudwal's Isles to the river Erch, originally bore the name of Cunedda's son Afloeg, but Afloegion was in time corrupted into Gaflogion and Cafflogion.⁴⁴ Pwllheli was the ancient centre of this commote.⁴⁵ The church lands of Lleyn were extensive, for, in addition to the numerous villis which were the property of the see of Bangor and those which belonged to Clynnog Fawr, the cantref itself contained the important "clas" of Aberdaron, whose abbot was lord of a very considerable part of Cymydmaen.⁴⁶ Pilgrims were constantly passing through to Bardsey, and the necessary provision for them helped to give the church a special title to the wide domains which it held in the peninsula.

There is scarcely anything to show who ruled in Arfon, Lleyn and Arllechwedd in the eighth century. But the mention in Harl. MS. 3859 of a King Caradog of Gwynedd who was slain by the English in 798⁴⁷ leads one to surmise that the pedigree of Hywel ap Caradog to be found in the same authority⁴⁸ is that of the royal line of his district. It goes back to Cynlas (no doubt the Cuneglasus of Gildas), cousin of Maelgwn Gwynedd and great-grandson of Cunedda.⁴⁹ As it is not carried beyond Hywel, who belonged to the early part of the ninth century, it may be conjectured that the three cantrefs were,

⁴² "Maen Melyn Lleyn" is close to Braich y Pwll. It was famous in the fourteenth century; see Dafydd Nanmor's reference in his "cywydd" to the golden hair of Llio of Gogerddan—

Mae'r un lliw a'r maen yn Llŷn.

('Tis of the same hue as the stone in Lleyn.)

⁴³ *Rec. Carn.* 38. A farm near Llandegwning still bears the name of Maerdref.

⁴⁴ See p. 117. ⁴⁵ Under the name of Porthely (*Rec. Carn.* 25, 29, 31, 32).

⁴⁶ There are early references to the church and clergy of Aberdaron in *Buch. Gr. ap C.* (1116; *Myv. Arch.* II. 596 (729)) and *B.T.* p. 122 (*Bruts*, 295; *B. Saes. s.a.* 1112 (= 1115)). For the "abadaeth" as a territorial area see *Rec. Carn.* 252 (composition of the year 1252 between the abbot of Bardsey and the secular canons of Aberdaron), and *cf.* the "abadaeth" of Penmon (*Mon. Angl.* iv. 582).

⁴⁷ "Caratauc rex guenedote apud saxones iugulatur" (*Cymr.* ix. 163).

⁴⁸ *Cymr.* ix. 172.

⁴⁹ See p. 133.

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The rugged heights which surround the north-eastern corner of Cardigan Bay were, according to tradition, the portion of Cunedda's son Dunod (Donatus), and here, therefore, was the cantref of Dunoding.⁵⁰ It was, says the primitive narrator of the story of King Math, the best of all cantrefes for a young man to rule over,⁵¹ which may be taken to mean that as a rough and craggy region, it tried and disciplined the powers of the budding chieftain, not suffering him to fall into ignoble sloth and self-indulgence. It was cut in twain by the broad tidal estuary known as "Y Traeth Mawr" (The Great Sands), which was previous to its reclamation from the sea in 1811 a most formidable barrier, and it thus fell at an early date into the commotes of Eifionydd and Ardudwy, names which soon eclipsed and drove out of current use the ancient one of Dunoding. Eifionydd, named after Dunod's son, Eifion,⁵² was the northern commote; it lay between the Erch and the Traeth, and, in historical times, the home of its lords was on the rock now crowned by the ruins of Criccieth Castle, though there is reason to think that the mound at Dolbenmaen marks the site of an earlier royal residence.⁵³ Ardudwy was a large but thinly populated area; from the Festiniog valley in the north to the Mawddach estuary in the south it was chiefly moor and mountain, but a fertile strip along the coast was known as Dyffryn Ardudwy (The Plain of Ardudwy). Among the famous sites within it were Harlech, where Brân from the height of the Castle rock watched the coming of the ships which brought the king of Ireland and his train to beg the hand of his sister Branwen,⁵⁴ and Mur y Castell, where Llew held his court amid

⁵⁰ For the name see, in addition to the ordinary lists, Jesus Coll. MS. 20 (*Cymr.* viii. 85), *Iolo MSS.* 122, *Mab.* 73. On the analogy of Glywysing and Dogfeiling, the ending should be -ing and not -ig. Pfynton Dunawd, near Eisteddfa in Eifionydd, probably commemorates a saint and not the son of Cunedda (Y Gestiana, gan Alltud Eifion : Tremadoc, 1892, p. 9).

⁵¹ *Mab.* 73.

⁵² "Ebiau(n) map Dunaut map Cunedda" (*Cymr.* ix. 178). For the form cf. Meirionydd, Elenydd and Maelienydd.

⁵³ *Bye-Gones*, viii. (1903-4), p. 180.

⁵⁴ *Mab.* 26 (hardlech yn arduwly ynllys idaw).

the broken walls of the dismantled Roman encampment.⁵⁵ It was a land which bred hardy wielders of the lance,⁵⁶ a nurturer of warriors rather than of churchmen, for neither here nor in Eifonydd were there in early times any churches of the first rank and the ancient church holdings were not considerable. The local dynasty, tracing its origin to Dunod ap Cunedda, appears to have held its own until well on in the tenth century.⁵⁷

The districts so far dealt with belonged to the ancient Gwynedd, sometimes called by way of distinction Gwynedd above Conway.⁵⁸ East of the river Conway came Gwynedd below Conway, which does not seem to have been entitled to the name originally, for the natural explanation of the name "Y Berfeddwlad" (The Middle Country) which it also bore is that it was the land which lay between Gwynedd and Powys.⁵⁹ The four cantrefs of the Middle Country were Rhos, Rhufoniog, Dyffryn Clwyd and Tegeingl,⁶⁰ belonging for the most part to the great upland plateau of eastern North Wales, but cleft by the rich expanse of the Vale of Clwyd, a fertile, corn-growing tract of which each cantref had its share. Rhos was bounded by the Clwyd, the Elwy, the Conway and the sea; along the east bank of the Conway it sent a long arm southwards as far as Capel Garmon. The Llandudno peninsula was included in it and formed the commote of Creuddyn, which is now in a different county from the main body of the cantref, but was anciently reckoned one of its members. One may, indeed, surmise from the name Eglwys Rhos that this was the original Rhos from which the cantref took its title and that the derivation is to be sought in the Goidelic word for "promontory" rather than in the Brythonic for "moor".⁶¹ The two other

⁵⁵ *Mab.* 74 (lys idaw yn y lle a elwir mur y castell). The fort is described on p. 68.

⁵⁶ "Sunt . . . his in partibus lanceae longissimae" (*Gir. Camb.* vi. 123 (*Itin.* ii. 5)).

⁵⁷ None of the persons named in the Dunoding pedigree in *Cymr.* ix. 177-8, appear elsewhere, so that dating is difficult, but the usual method of calculation (three generations to a century) will bring Cuhelyn, with whom the pedigree ends, to about 930.

⁵⁸ "Gwyned ewch Conwy" (*B. Saes. s.a.* 1175).

⁵⁹ *Cymr.* xi. 174.

⁶⁰ In a document in Rymer (4), i. 267, dated 30th April, 1247, the four "cantredos" of "Pernechelad" are given as "Ros, Rowennok, Defrencluc et Angfeld".

⁶¹ Both are derived from the same Celtic original (*Urk. Spr.* 312).

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commotes were Uwch Dulas and Is Dulas, to the west and east respectively of the little river Dulas. Of the sites of the cantref, none ranked higher than Degannwy, the royal manor of Creuddyn, associated by tradition with the glories of the rule of Maelgwn,⁶² known to have been a stronghold in the ninth century,⁶³ and only eclipsed as the principal fortress of the district when Edward I. built Conway on the opposite side of the river. Possession of the rock of Degannwy, which, like that pictured in "The Bard,"

Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,

was hotly contested in the long border strife between Welsh and English, and its vicissitudes furnish no bad index of the alternate rise and fall of the fortunes of the men of Gwynedd. The cantref also contained some important churches, such as Abergele, once the mother church of a wide district, but afterwards reduced to a state of dependence upon St. Asaph,⁶⁴ and Llandrillo or Dineirth, a church of similar standing.⁶⁵

Rhufoniog was an inland cantref; the broad moorlands of Hiraethog were for the most part within its limits, which to the north and east were defined by the Elwy, the Clwyd and the Clywedog. The river Aled furnished the dividing line of the two commotes of Uwch Aled and Is Aled; there was a third commote, called Ystrad or Cymeirch, which lay between the Lliwen and the Clywedog. Rhufoniog plays no important part in the early history of Wales; though there must have been a fortress on the limestone rock of Denbigh, the Welsh Dinbych, long before the time of Edward I., it is only then that the place enters into the light of history, and no list has been preserved of the princes of this region or of the neighbouring cantref of Rhos during the period which preceded the absorption of the district in the realm of Gwynedd.⁶⁶ Much of it, in fact, was in episcopal hands; the bishop of Bangor had Llanrhaeadr,⁶⁷ and

⁶² P. 129.

⁶³ P. 202.

⁶⁴ Thomas, *St. Asaph*, pp. 350-1. For the "princeps opergelei" who was head of the "clas" in 856 see *Cymr.* xi. 165.

⁶⁵ Thomas, *St. Asaph*, p. 548. It was an important church in 1137 (*Buch. Gr. ap C.* 128 (734)).

⁶⁶ *Ann. C. MS. B. s.a.* 816 mentions a "regnum Roweynauc" in a notice clearly derived from an ancient source.

⁶⁷ *Rec. Carn.* 112.

no small proportion of the revenues of the bishop of St. Asaph was drawn from the manors of the see in Henllan, Llansannan, Llanefydd and Llangerniew.⁶⁸

Dyffryn Clwyd was a much richer cantref, though it did not cover the whole of the famous vale, but only the southern portion, from Bodffari to Derwen. The most important of the three commotes into which it was divided bore the name of Dogfeiling⁶⁹ and it is a reasonable assumption that this was once the designation of the whole cantref, marking it out as the realm of Dogfael, son of Cunedda Wledig.⁷⁰ Like Rhufoniog, it has no recorded early history, though there is in this cantref as in the other a site pretty clearly indicated by its name and its natural advantages as that of an early stronghold. Ruthin, which is by interpretation Rhudd-ddin, the red fort, occupying a ridge of red sandstone in the centre of the Vale, was the centre of the commote of Dogfeiling and became the seat of the lord's castle when at the end of the thirteenth century Dyffryn Clwyd was transformed into a marcher lordship. Ecclesiastically, the cantref, with the adjacent commote of Cymeirch, was associated with Gwynedd above Conway, for, when evidence is forthcoming as to the boundaries of the Welsh dioceses, it is found to be part of the diocese of Bangor, though surrounded by that of St. Asaph.⁷¹ The fact has also to be noted—and here may lie the explanation of the anomaly—that the bishop of Bangor was a principal owner of land in the cantref, being lord of almost the whole of the commote of Llannerch, which consisted of the modern parishes of Llanfair and Llanelidan.⁷²

The fourth cantref included in the Middle Country was known to the Welsh as Tegeingl.⁷³ Under the later princes of Gwynedd, Tegeingl was a region which took in the whole of our Flintshire as far south as Connah's Quay and Cilcen, and

⁶⁸ Thomas, *St. Asaph*, p. 180.

⁶⁹ Evans (*Rep.* i. p. 914, footnote 9) gives, from Cardiff MS. 14, the constituent parishes of the three commotes of Dyffryn Clwyd.

⁷⁰ *Descr. Pemb.* 201 (note by E. P.).

⁷¹ This was the case at the time of the Norwich Taxation of 1254 (*Arch. Camb.* V. xi. (1894), 31). In 1859 Bangor gave up the deanery of Dyffryn Clwyd in exchange for that of Cyfeiliog.

⁷² *Rec. Carn.* 113-5.

⁷³ The accent falls on the first syllable. For the suggested derivation from the tribal name "Deceangli," see *Celt. Br.* (2), pp. 81, 290; *Arch. Camb.* V. ix. (1892), 165; *W. People*, p. 94.

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was divided into the three commotes of Rhuddlan, Coleshill and Prestatyn. But it has already been shown that this district was seized by the English of Mercia not later than the end of the eighth century,⁷⁴ and all the evidence goes to show that the bulk of it remained in English hands until it was reconquered by Owain Gwynedd in the twelfth. Even the names of the commotes show how late was the organisation of this country as a Welsh cantref, for they bear the names of the castles built by the Normans to secure their hold upon the district. At the period which is now under consideration, Tegeingl was a part of Mercia, save perhaps the portion around Llanelwy or St. Asaph, where the bishops of this quarter of Wales maintained a precarious and uneasy footing on the storm-swept frontier between the two races. It is true that nothing is known with any certainty of the history of the see before the twelfth century, but the place was then regarded as a bishop's seat of old standing and some ancient title no doubt underlay the extensive claims of the successors of St. Kentigern to territorial lordship in the northern part of the Vale of Clwyd.

II. THE CANTREFS OF POWYS.

Central Wales may be regarded as a broad table-land, through which rivers great and small furrow their way in winding courses to the sea, but which has few clearly marked mountain ranges or stretches of fertile plain. The ancient kingdom of Powys⁷⁵ took in most of this region, extending in its widest limits from the neighbourhood of Mold to the river Wye, near Glasbury and Hay.⁷⁶ It included some productive districts, such as the lower valley of the Dee and the well-watered meadows of the upper Severn, so that its children were not altogether without warrant in hailing it as "Powys, the Eden of Wales".⁷⁷ But most of it

⁷⁴ Pp. 201-2.

⁷⁵ The view of Zeuss (*Gr. Celt.* (2), pp. 1053-4), that the name is to be connected with the "poues = quies" of the Oxford glosses and to be interpreted as meaning "settlement," still holds the field (*Celt. Br.* (2), p. 218).

⁷⁶ In the "Dream of Rhonabwy" (*Mab.* 144) the limits of Powys are given as "oporford (*i.e.*, Pulford, near Chester) hyt yg gwauan yg gwarthaf arwystli" (some point near Llangurig in South Montgomeryshire). But this was in the twelfth century, after the separation from the province of "Rhwng Gwy a Hafren".

⁷⁷ "Powys paradwys Cymry" (*Myv. Arch.* I. 114 (92); *IV. Anc. Bks.* ii. p. 259).