II. History and Law

BLEGYWRDY AND THE WELSH LAWS

Since the publication in 1909 by the Rev. A. W. Wade-Evans of his Welsh Medieval Law, it has become the practice among students of Welsh law to denote one group of law-books by the appellation 'Llyfr Blegywyd' ('The Book of Blegywyd'). This appellation replaced the designation 'Dimetian Code' which had been introduced by Aneurin Owen over half a century earlier in his Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales (1841); the change of name was made on the grounds that the manuscripts of this family of texts themselves named 'Blegnyd' (in the Latin texts 'Blaugori-dus'), firstly in their prologues and secondly in a verse colophon appended to the texts, as a jurist and clericus doctissimus who played a prominent and influential role in the legal achievement traditionally associated with the reign of Hywel Dda. It has been maintained further that confirmation of this claim is to be found in a document recorded in the Liber Landavensis.1

This document, which is dated in the year 955, recounts an incident involving a certain 'Bleducuir filius Enniaus', who might therefore have been a contemporary of Hywel Dda, and who is described therein as fannoisisimus ille cirs. In spite of certain difficulties with details, e.g. the description of him in the law-texts as a clericus, the identification of the Blegywyd of the law-texts with the Blegywyd ab Einion of the Liber Landavensis document has, on the whole, been accepted as correct and as confirmation of the statements of the law-texts.

It is now becoming apparent, however, that the authenticity of the Blegywyd tradition is questionable.2 Several indications brought to light by further critical study of the law-texts have combined to produce this change of climate:

1. The name of Blegywyd and the claim associated with him only appears in one family or group of the Welsh law manuscripts. No mention is made of him, for instance, in the Gwynedd family of texts. Due allowance should perhaps be made in this context for the effects of regional sympathies and interests, but his non-appearance in the so-called 'Venedocian' and 'Gwentian' versions must be considered significant.

2. Within the 'Dimetian' family of texts Blegywyd puts in only a very belated appearance. The two earliest redactions of this group are represented by the Latin texts respectively of N.L.W., Peniarth 28 (Lat. A, of the late twelfth century) and B.M. Cotton. Vespasian E XI (Lat. B, of the mid-

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1 J. G. Evans (ed.), The Book of Llau Ddau, pp. 218-21. The identification of the two 'Blegywyds' was first proposed by Sir J. R. Lloyd in History of Wales, i. 341.

2 Sir Goronwy Edwards has made a contribution of great significance on this subject in Welsh History Review (Special Welsh Laws Number, 1963), pp. 11-16.
Landavensis (see below) is consistent with his description as a famosissimus vir. However that may be, there appears to be no explicit justification for assuming that the superlative adjective refers to legal activities on the part of Blegwyryd ab Einion. Indeed, Sir Goronwy Edwards has proposed a plausible, yet totally different, interpretation of the circumstances giving rise to it (the adjective in any case is essentially part of the twelfth-century dress of the episode and must, therefore, be subject to the strictures affecting the document as a whole).

In the present state of studies in the Welsh laws it is considerably easier to make out a case for demolishing the 'historical' identification of Blegwyryd than to propose a constructive line of argument to take its place. However, in an effort to clarify the position and to throw some light on the associations linked with the name 'Blegwyryd', I propose to list below all the examples of that name known to me in sources up to the late thirteenth century.

The Book of Chad
The name Bleduciurit occurs in the bottom margin of page 223. It is not associated with any charter. The only indications of date are the script, which is inconclusive in this case, and the probability that it was written before the removal of the manuscript to Lichfield. The period of this example is the second half of the ninth century or the first half of the tenth. Modern scholarship tends to connect the Book of Chad with Llandello rather than with Llandaff.

Annales Cambriae
(ea. 1018).3 'Aidan filius Bluguirit cum illud suis occisis est a Grifino filio Lewelin regis Britonum.' He again was a historical personage. He was a native of Deheubarth in the second half of the tenth century, a local prince, or at least the father of a local prince, whose family came into conflict with the prince of Gwynedd. Brut y Tywylogion,4 as would be expected, has a similar record which tallies very closely with that of the Annales.

Liber Landavensis
(1) 'Anno DCCCLV, indictione XIII.... Tunc affuit famosissimus ille vir Bleduciurit [or Bledeciurit] filius Enniaun qui proximio eos ne ecclesiam frangerent.... [The deed was, however, perpetrated].... His mals peractis, nuntiatum est episcopo qui tunc morabatur apud Huel, Britannicum regem, in regione Brachani.'5
(2) 'De laici vero... Bledeciurit et Riderch filii Enniaun,6 [the last of the lay witnesses].
(3) 'De clericis testes sunt... Bledeciurit7 [the last one].
The first two entries are associated with the tenth-century Bishop Pater and

The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth
'Cui Blegbicred [i.e. Bledegbred]. He omnes cantores quasi retro etas habuerat et in modulis et in omnibus musicis instrumentis [exceperat], ita ut deus loculatorum diceretur.'8 The corresponding paragraph in the variant version edited by Joseph Hamner is practically identical with the above, and also quotes the form Bliathnerit in a note. The Welsh translations of Geoffrey's Historia repeat more briefly or at full length the statements of the Latin. Brut Dingestow and the Red Book of Hergest, using the forms Blugywyrt and Blegwyryd respectively, content themselves with briefer notices. But the Cotton. Cleopatra MS. version describes him thus: '.... y doeth Blegwyrt ym vrenhin. Ac ny bu eeroed kantor kystal ac ef o geludwyd music, na chwarcyd kystal ac ef o huddaw. Ac am hynny y gelwyd ef duw y gwarae.'9 The editor translates: '.... Blegbicred became king, and there never was a singer as good as he in the art of music, nor a player as good as he in enchantment. And for this reason he was called the god of drama.' In the Myrurgian Archeology text of Brut Tysilio10 the tradition is related in full.11 All the Welsh translations use the form Blegwyryd.12 Similar traditions were perpetuated in the Old French Brut of Wace, who used the forms Blegchreb and Bleggabreit,13 and in the Middle English Brut of Layamon, where the forms Blugbicred and Blaiygabarat appear.14

The Hendregadredd Manuscript
This manuscript contains an elegy to a Blegwyryd. The poem seems to be an elegy to an optimus or ucchefor, who had spent his life near Strata Florida and was probably buried in the churchyard. It contains the usual conventional elements praising his liberality and his bravery in war. This Blegwyryd was not a churchman but a local nobleman, upon whose death the bard — Y Prydydd Bychan — was commissioned to write an elegy. He was thus perhaps slightly older than the bard, and can probably be assigned to the first half of the thirteenth century.15

The Welsh Laws
Bodl. Rawlinson C 821 uses the form Blugorigus both in its preface and the verse-coloephon. The Welsh manuscripts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries use the forms Vledgywyrt, Vlegwyrt16 and Blegwyrt.17

Not one of the personages who figure in the extracts quoted has an evident link with the sphere of law. The remarks which follow centre

2 Note that the same adjective, also in the superlative degree, is applied in the second sentence of the document to the episcopal see of Llandaff.
3 From MS. B, which is of the thirteenth century.
5 Ibid., p. 219.
6 Ibid., p. 222. 7 Ibid., p. 230.
9 In n. 242 on p. 556.
10 For the composition of the name see Y Cymroddor, x. 219, n. 1, and xliii. 279-81; also Renee Cefnence, xviii. 295-7.
11 L. 369; ed. Arnold, i. 198.
12 Ed. Madden, i. 298.
14 J. D. Williams and J. E. Powell (eds.), Llyfr Blegwyryd, p. 133.
15 A. W. Wade- Evans, Welsh Medieval Law, i. 17.
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Abstract of a paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Western Historical Association, 2 Oct, 1974, at the Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

The paper deals with the history of the Western Historical Association and its impact on the study of western history. It discusses the organization's role in promoting research and scholarship in the field of western history, as well as its contributions to the development of the discipline.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the future prospects for the Western Historical Association and the challenges it faces in continuing to serve the needs of its members and the broader academic community.