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EDWARD I AND THE APPROPRIATION OF ARTHURIAN LEGEND

by

RACHEALLE MARIE SANFORD

2009

A Capstone Experience/Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

University Honors College at

Western Kentucky University

Approved by:

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Dr. Beth Plummer

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Dr. Maria Teresa Agozzino

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, an increasing interest in the appropriation of folklore by political leaders has led scholars to investigate potential instances where this may have occurred in the past. This work follows that tradition, examining the life and actions of King Edward I of England to determine if there are instances where he is making deliberate use of folk narrative for his own political aims. An analysis of several events discussed by past historians indicates that the king was intentionally manipulating the Arthurian legend, which was highly popular in Europe during the thirteenth century, to justify his claims to authority over both Scotland and Wales, and to potentially bolster his support among the English aristocracy.

INDEX WORDS: Arthurian legend, Britain, Edward I, England, King Arthur, appropriation, national identity

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December 2009

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this work to the various friends and family who gave me their unending love and support during the past year, encouraging me to stick with it even when I felt like giving up.

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First, I would like to give my heartfelt appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Beth Plummer, whose limitless patience and support for this project was more than I could have ever hoped to receive. Thanks are also due to my second reader, Dr. Maria Teresa Agozzino, for all the hard work she has put into this paper (and usually at the last minute too!), as well as for her ability to inspire new ideas or new approaches to old material. The time and efforts of Dr. Rick Keyser, who also agonized over drafts and helped me brainstorm ideas, is highly appreciated as well.

Furthermore, I want to thank additional contributors to my Arthurian knowledge base, including Dr. Alison Ganze, who met with me twice to toss some ideas around, and Dr. David Green, whose suggestions for some useful primary sources proved extremely helpful. The wonderful staff at Interlibrary loan is also worthy of praise, for having kept me supplied with a steady stream of books that were crucial to my paper, and on more than one occasion allowing me to keep them far longer than they intended.

Finally, thanks to Dr. Clay Motley, Audra Jennings, Amy Chester, and the Honors College as a whole for allowing me the opportunity to see how much I can accomplish and for helping me get there!

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Introduction

> "The justness of his [Arthur's] cause encouraged him, for he had a claim by rightful inheritance to the kingship of the whole island."[1]
>
> –Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain.*

> "King Augusele carried Arthur's sword,
> For the service of Scotland, which he owed to him.
> Since that time to the present the kings of Scotland
> Have all been subject to the king of Britain."[2]
>
> –Letter of Edward I to Pope Boniface VIII

The Devolution Acts for Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland were the subject of much debate both before and after they were passed by the UK Parliament in 1998. Ten years later, in the alleyways of Edinburgh, it is even possible to see graffiti chalked onto the walls in such politically charged slogans as "End English rule!" This type of activity could be viewed as indicative of the current political climate, which has led scholars to further question conceptions of nationalism and national identities in Britain, and to begin reinterpreting—perhaps even redefining—what it means to be Scottish, or Welsh, or English. If a nation, as Benedict Anderson famously suggested, is an "imagined community," then examining exactly how the peoples of the British Isles have "imagined" their relationship with each other and the rest of the world may provide insight into the nature of national identity in Britain and how it has evolved over time. The current folklore revivals associated with this search for a new understanding of national identity are also sparking inquiry, and studies

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[1] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 212.

[2] Pierre de Langtoft, *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft in French Verse, From the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I,* ed. Thomas Wright (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), 406.

concerning the political functions that folklore may have served in both the present and past could further our understanding of this issue.

The life and actions of King Edward I of England (r. 1272-1307), for example, illustrate the power that monarchs could potentially wield should they recognize the importance of folklore in the human psyche. An analysis of Edward's deliberate manipulation of the Arthurian legend for specific political purposes, which is the focus of this paper, shows that he understood it for what it was: a tradition that was not a "thing," a collection of ideas and behaviors handed down through time, but a symbolic construction that could be reinterpreted based on present needs.[3] As Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carly have noted, the vitality of the legend lies "in its ability to be transformed and to transform," and in its potential to promote the imperatives of various groups.[4] For Edward I, Arthur became a tool that he could use against the Welsh (and to a lesser extent the Scottish), who were frequently rebelling against his authority, and potentially to strengthen support for his rule among the English aristocracy.

An examination of power and politics and of the appropriation of folk narrative by various past rulers is not a new idea,[5] but the connection of such appropriation to national identity in Britain is not completely understood. Stephanie L. Barczewski has suggested that, much like folklore, national identity is constantly in a state of flux, adapting itself to the

[3] Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 385 (1984): 38.

[4] Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley, "The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend," in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 4-5.

[5] These works are excellent examples of slightly older studies concerning this topic: David Cannadine, *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Eric Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

demands of many different audiences.[6] This means that there are many manifestations of national identity and its relationship to folklore that have yet to be explored fully, and many more waiting to be discovered. Her work on the perceptions and representations of the legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood in the nineteenth century and how they relate to the development of an Anglicized "Britishness" is only one example of the various forms this type of research can take. It is also illustrative of the interest that historians have long taken in legends of Arthur.

This paper is an attempt to build upon that tradition in a way that is both insightful and helpful to those who wish to further explore the topic of folklore appropriation and its possible relationship to national identity. I recount some of the various activities of Edward I where he appears to use Arthurian legend in a political context, making no attempt to draw conclusions about the nature of national identity in thirteenth century England, but rather to demonstrate the potential of this era for re-evaluation and reinterpretation by those interested in pursuing such matters.

Edward's use of the legend against the Welsh suggests that Arthur was significant to them as a people, otherwise the English king would not have thought his actions would be effective. Arthur was, perhaps, even a representation of Welsh identity, for they had developed a body of Arthurian material long before Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien de Troyes, whose work was so popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[7] At the very least, he fulfills the characteristics of a folk hero to them. This possibility means that, along with scholars attempting to understand *British* identity and the role of folklore, those interested

[6] Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Britain: King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-7.
[7] Norris J. Lacy, *The Arthurian Handbook* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 62.

specifically in medieval *Welsh* conceptions of identity may also find this discussion of Edward I and Arthur valuable as a starting point for further research.

The first section of this paper explores the general fascination that Arthur appears to evoke among historians and his appeal to various British monarchs over time. This provides the information necessary to locate studies of Edward I and his relationship with Arthurian legend within the broader context of British history and Arthurian scholarship. From there, I assess the various ways that Edward I in particular may have manipulated Arthurian legend in a political sense: first in an obvious fashion by enacting a ceremony designed to prove Arthur's death and thus counter belief in his return, and then more subtly through his participation in chivalric culture. I do this mainly by examining the works of previous historians and determining the validity of their claims or suggestions, using information from primary documents when possible. A number of insights into Edward's behavior and possible motivations are also drawn from the fields of folklore and anthropology when applicable, adding a further dimension to this discussion that is often overlooked by traditional historians who tend to focus more on a chronological narrative of events, rather than on the literary and/or symbolic roots of such events. Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of the potential usefulness of this study to those concerned with the appropriation of folk narrative for political purposes, as well as with the shifting nature of national identity and its potential manifestations in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Understanding the past and the way that the relationship between the various peoples of the British Isles has shifted over time can help modern citizens to determine how they might "reimagine" themselves and their place in the world, and this work may contribute to that understanding.

I. The Arthurian Fascination

Voltaire is credited with saying that "history is the lie commonly agreed upon."[8] While this definition may be an oversimplification, it underlies a larger reality; what we call history is shaped by historians, and "facts" are only as true and significant as historians decree. For as long as the written record has existed—or even longer, for "history" was preserved orally for thousands of years—the "truths" that people accepted about their past were those told to them by other people—historians, who may or may not have taken creative license in their work. History may be the study of the past, but what it really reflects is what those who study it *think* about the past, and what they believe to be important enough to warrant their time and effort. E.H. Carr suggested in the 1960s, as Richard J. Evans summarizes, "there is always a subjective element in historical writing, for historians are individuals, people of their time, with views and assumptions about the world that they cannot eliminate from their writing and research."[9]

This is not to say that historians invent history in the sense that they deliberately make it up, but it has been suggested that they "find" in their sources true testimony concerning the matter in hand."[10] What historians *choose* to study, therefore, can be as

[8] "What is History?" *University of North Florida,* www.unf.edu/~clifford/craft/what.htm. (accessed December 10, 2009).
[9] Richard J. Evans, "The Two Faces of E. H. Carr," *History in Focus*, www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/WhatisHistory/evans10.html. (accessed December 10, 2009).
[10] M. T. Clanchy, "Inventing Thirteenth Century England: Stubbs, Tout, Powicke—Now What?" in *Thirteenth Century England V: Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1993,* ed. P. R. Cross et al. (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1995), 1.

revealing of their own personality and interests as what they say about their chosen topic. That historians have been creating, illuminating, and debating the nature of the legend of King Arthur for almost nine centuries since Geoffrey of Monmouth, an early historian, wrote *The History of the Kings of Britain* is a testament to their long-winded fascination with the subject. But what is it about the story of an ancient British king that has led historians to consistently turn their attention in that direction? Is it the mystery of the man himself, a real-life sixth century Arthur that inspired such a fantastic legend? Or the character of the king as he appears in literature, a fierce warrior, a chivalrous knight, changeable but immutable all at once?

Perhaps it is either of these reasons. Perhaps it is neither. The motivation of historians as a group is virtually impossible to uncover.[11] Yet, there are clues to be gained from the work of individual authors that may offer a variety of possible explanations. Often, historians themselves give clear indications of their purpose for writing in their preface or introductions. If they do not, the focus of the work itself suggests their objective.

In the last several decades the scholarship on King Arthur—both as a literary figure, folk hero, and as a man—has virtually exploded. From 1978-1998 alone more than 10,000 books, articles, and dissertations on Arthurian subjects have been listed in the recent volumes of the *Arthurian Bibliography*,[12] and a veritable flood of new developments and contributions to the field continues. Scholars have striven to unravel the mysterious origins of a historical Arthur, show how the story has embodied certain ideals and values, examine how the

[11] As Corrine Lathrop Gilb suggests, "too little is known in empirical terms about those who profess history, how they function, and what influences condition their views." *Toward Holistic History: The Odyssey of an Interdisciplinary Historian* (California: Atherton Press, 2005), 17.
[12] Norris J. Lacy, ed., *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 1.

literature has been treated by writers in different countries, look at how the legend has influenced art, or more recently, film, and a myriad of other topics.

Scholars have also been concerned with discussions of national identity in Britain for a similar time frame, particularly historians, for whom the question is of more practical importance, according to Krishan Kumar. When writing British history, "to what extent is one dealing with a unitary story?" Kumar asks, and to what extent with separate histories, the histories of "four nations"?[13] It is a good question, for the identity of "Britain" has come to be so associated with the identity of "England" over time that it can be difficult to separate them, and this puts the other "British" countries of Wales, Scotland, and (now) Northern Ireland at a disadvantage in such discussions. This is particularly obvious when one realizes that some historians, such as P. J. Marshall, discuss British identity as revolving around its Empire for a long period of time[14]—an empire that, for centuries, included the countries of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, but that was ruled by an English king. The process of devolution in the last half a century has defied this notion of British identity, however, and led to the need for a new understanding of "Britishness" in the present, as well as a desire to explore its potential manifestations in the past.

One trend that has emerged in force in recent years that has helped foster the growth of new research on national identity is a multidisciplinary approach to history. Because our perceptions of ourselves and others are so dependent upon our cultural beliefs and values, as well as our folklore, an examination of topics such as the appropriation of Arthurian legend by English kings can benefit significantly from a cross-disciplinary approach that looks not

[13] Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.
[14] P. J. Marshall, *The Oxford History of the English Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

just at a chronological series of events, but at the possible symbolism or veiled meaning that they project.

As the disciplines of folklore and anthropology have come into their own in the last few centuries, academics have also realized that the so-called "Arthurian Legend" is well-worth study as narrative—not just as a historical possibility or a literary cycle. According to Maria Teresa Agozzino, legends are a type of folk narrative that "continue and evolve from a historical kernel, such as a historical character," and have a tendency to adapt and modernize.[15] They often retain their core while taking on the values, ideals, and practices of the culture they are part of. As a result, historians have begun to recognize the deeper impact of the story of King Arthur on British history.

Though the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed a veritable explosion of Arthurian enthusiasm among Europe's nobility,[16]it is in the British Isles that the legend appears to have held the most power, and thus received the most use. Historians have been able to document connections between Arthur and the English monarchs beginning as far back as the twelfth century. In *On the Instruction of a Prince,* for instance, written c. 1223, Gerald of Wales records the "discovery" of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury after King Henry II (r. 1154-1189) "disclosed to the monks some evidence from his own books of where the body was to be found."[17] Though Robert W. Ackerman has suggested in his review of *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology* by Leslie Alcock that the "discovery" of the tomb was likely orchestrated by the monks in order to make the abbey a popular shrine for pilgrims

[15] Maria Teresa Agozzino, review of *Concepts of Arthur* by Thomas Green, *Folklore* 120 (2009): 332-334.
[16] Derek Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 48-51.
[17] Gerald of Wales, "The Discovery of the Tomb of King Arthur from *On the Instruction of a Prince,*" *Medieval Sourcebook,* http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1223gerald-arthurtomb.html.

Gerald's own account seems to suggest that it was instigated by the King.[18] This was possibly to bolster the ecclesiastical and dynastic claims of his house, as W. A. Nitze postulates,[19] suggesting that already the English recognized that in Arthur, finally, was a story and a king worthy of the title "the Matter of Britain" that they could potentially take advantage of.[20]

While scholars are now aware that Arthur was more 'historicized' than historical, there is no evidence to suggest that his existence was ever in question by medieval peoples. As E. M. R. Ditmas suggests, "Geoffrey of Monmouth's creation of the figure of a great king had such compelling force that for centuries his Arthur was accepted, by all but a few skeptics [sic], as an authentic person."[21] Even historians such as William of Malmesbury, who thought Geoffrey added too many fables to his account, never questioned Arthur's existence, describing him as "one who is clearly worthy to be told about in truthful histories."[22] This meant that instead of questioning Arthur's validity, monarchs were able to focus on the variety of ways his work could be used for their own purposes.

Some scholars, such as Michael Faletra, have suggested that this was actually what Geoffrey of Monmouth intended when he wrote his *Historia.* Though in his preface the medieval writer states only that he wished to "set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus,

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[18] Robert W. Ackerman, review of *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology* by Leslie Alcock, *Speculum* 50 (1975), 712.

[19] W. A. Nitze, "The Exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury," *Speculum* 9 (1934), 355.

[20] The "Matter of Britain" was a title derived in response to the so-called "Matter of France," which revolved around the exploits of Charlemagne and, to a lesser extent, his nephew Roland, and the "Matter of Rome," which encompassed Alexander the Great and The Battle of the Seven against Thebes. Valerie Wayne, *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2.

[21] E. M. R. Ditmas, "The Cult of Arthurian Relics," *Folklore* 75 (1964), 19.

[22] William of Malmesbury, *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi Gesta Regum Anglorum, atque Historia Novella*, ed. Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy (London: Samuel Bentley, 1840), 14; E. M. R. Ditmas also suggests that Arthur's existence was taken as fact: "Geoffrey of Monmouth's creation of the figure of a great king had such compelling force that for centuries his Arthur was accepted, by all but a few skeptics [sic], as an authentic person." E. M. R. Ditmas, "The Cult of Arthurian Relics," *Folklore* 75 (1964), 19.

the first King of the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo," his dedication of the work to Robert, Earl of Gloucester makes it obvious that Geoffrey was also concerned with politics, and may have written to impress his patron. Geoffrey writes during a period of great instability, Faletra reveals, when Norman expansion into Wales was beginning to lose ground, and this leads him to narrate "the past of the isle of Britain in a way that ultimately legitimates Norman sovereignty." Despite Geoffrey's mixed Celtic-Norman heritage and the fact that his work glorifies the heroes of the ancient Bretons, Faletra views Geoffrey's main purpose as political rather than historical, and understands his true purpose as granting support to the Normans "in their tenure of an imperium over all of Britain" by giving them a precedent for their domination and ambitions.[23] Such analyses show that historians have been attributing political significance to Arthur from the very beginning of his "historicization." The concern with interpreting his political allegiance could also be indicative of an interest in British national identity as it existed in Geoffrey's time, and how it may have shifted after his work as Arthur's popularity climbed and he was transformed into a universal symbol of chivalry.

The warm reception of the legend among the nobility assured that references to it would be readily recognized and understood, at least among the upper classes, and this is part of what has made this particular folk narrative so useful to the British monarchy. The Arthurian writings of authors such as Chrétien de Troyes in the late twelfth century and the subsequent Vulgate Cycle pushed Arthur's popularity to new heights on both the continent and in England, providing the monarchy, in the words of N. J. Higham, with "a source of political precedent and propaganda to be reformulated for present purposes of political status

[23] Michael A. Faletra, "Narrating the Matter of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Norman Colonization of Wales, *Chaucer Review* 35 (2000): 60-85.

and aggrandizement."[24] This would not have been possible, however, if a monarch's subjects—or his enemies—had not been familiar with the character and plot of Arthurian lore, which the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the romance writers assured. The international awareness of the elevated status granted to Arthur by Geoffrey of Monmouth (from warrior to king) allowed the British kings the opportunity to place their royal "ancestor" on the level of Charlemagne, the Christian Frankish Emperor of great renown, and increase their prestige among the other European monarchs.[25] The conception of genealogy and land as an important marker of kinship, and thus of identity—which more fully developed in the Middle Ages—was also particularly important in making such claims, and several kings including Edward IV and Henry VII had their ancestry deliberately traced back to their Welsh roots.[26] Henry VII, in particular, was able to make use of his Tudor ancestry and was promoted in Wales as "the Son of Prophecy," the claimant to the "crown of Britain."[27]

Even the name "Arthur" could have a political undercurrent when given to a child of the royal family. According to Constance Bouchard, aristocratic children from the eleventh century on were frequently named after relatives, family being a key aspect of

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[24] N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 230.
[25] Anne Berthelot, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 38.
[26] For a discussion on "self-conscious elaborations of family history," including that of the Beauchamp family, whose supposed lineage is recorded in the well-known ancestral romance *Guy of Warwick see* Philip Morgan, "Making the English Gentry," in *Thirteenth Century England V,* 23*;* Also, for information on the importance of family in medieval conceptions of identity see Constance Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave, and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 67; Higham, 234; Christopher Snyder, *The World of King Arthur* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 133.
[27] Gerald Morgan, "Welsh Arthurian Literature" in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship,* ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 79. Francine Roche also discusses Henry VII, stating that it was believed he fulfilled the Welsh prophecy that "British blood would one day reclaim the throne." See Francine Roche,"The Battle of the Books: An Attack on Nationalism," *Medieval Forum* 6 (2007). http://www.sfsu.edu/~medieval/Volume6/roche.html.

medieval identity: "glorious ancestors were a key attribute of glorious aristocrats."[28] Thus, naming one's child "Arthur" could easily be construed as a way for the English royalty to play upon the prestige of their supposed ancestor. It is telling that, according to royal genealogies, at least seven royal children were given the name Arthur from the twelfth century to the present. These include: Arthur of Brittany, nephew of Richard I and John; Arthur Plantagenet, illegitimate son of Edward VI; Arthur Tudor, son of Henry VII; Arthur, Duke of Rothway, son of James V; Arthur of Rothway, grandson of James V; Arthur, Duke of Connaught, son of Victoria; and Arthur of Connaught, grand-son of Victoria.

The naming of Henry II's grandchild, Arthur of Brittany, and Henry VII's son, Arthur Tudor, may have been particularly significant. In the twelfth century, the belief that Arthur would one day return was widespread, possibly originating in a ninth century Welsh poem, the "Stanzas of the Graves."[29] Arthur of Brittany, therefore could possibly have been intended to represent the "second coming of Arthur." At least one early twentieth century scholar has speculated that this belief is what led to Arthur of Brittany's death at the hands of his uncle, John I, who feared the legendary power associated with his name—a rumor that persists among some folklorists to this day.[30] Similarly, Nicola Royan has asserted that by calling his first son Arthur, Henry VIII intended to evoke the memory of the "Once and Future King" and suggest "a magnificent future for his dynasty and its realm."[31]

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[28] Constance Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave, and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 67.

[29] This poem is found in *The Black Book of Carmarthen* and is variously translated as "the world's wonder a grave for Arthur" or "a mystery to the world, the grave of Arthur." http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/ctexts/bbc19.html

[30] Snyder, 129.

[31] Nicola Royan, "'Na Les Vailyeant Than Ony Uthir Princis of Britane': Representations of Arthur in Scotland 1480-1540," *Scottish Studies Review* 3 (2002): 9.

The concept of the Round Table of Arthur and his knights, originally created in 1155 by Robert Wace in his English translation of Geoffrey's *Historia*, also interested a number of British monarchs. According to Wace's poem, the Round Table was a physical representation of the equality among Arthur's knights:

> Arthur fashioned the Round Table
> Of which many tales are told
> There sit his knights,
> Each one equal to the next:
> They sit equally at the Table
> And are equally served.
> None of them can boast
> That he sits ahead of the next.
> None has a favored position,
> And none is excluded.[32]

This appears to directly contrast with the usual medieval system of hierarchy, where those of higher rank or favor sit closest to the king, creating a constant jockeying among nobles for the highest position. The equality represented by the Round Table would have eliminated this conflict and encouraged more cooperation between knights. While it is impossible to tell if the equalizing power of the Round Table was what was of interest to various kings, Norris J. Lacy has suggested that it is likely that they at least viewed the table as a symbol of chivalric distinction, devotion, and accomplishment.

This may explain why monarchs are continually attracted to this aspect of the legend. Edward I or II, for example, is thought to have actually constructed a Round Table, a great oak structure of about 18 feet in diameter which still hangs in the Great Hall at Winchester—radio carbon dates tentatively estimate that it was originally constructed between 1250 and

[32] Robert Wace, *Le Roman de Brut,* ed. I Arnold. 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1938-40), lines 9751-60, quoted in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Arthurian Handbook* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 62.

1350.[33] According to Richard Barber, there is also archaeological evidence (in the form of trenches filled with the specific type of stone records indicate was purchased for this occasion) to suggest that Edward III attempted to build a great "House of the Round Table," a circular construction that was 200 feet in diameter and would seat the 300 knights of Edward's proposed Order of the Round Table.[34] Later, Henry VIII also played on the Arthurian associations of the Table, commissioning its painting possibly around 1516 with Tudor colors and an Arthur in Henry's image.[35] Pamela Tudor-Craig and Charles T. Wood have pointed out that this was done before the visit of the Emperor Charles V, possibly to remind him "that he was the guest of a monarch who mattered."[36] This demonstrates that the Round Table may have also had a political function for English monarchs, rather than being purely symbolic.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a number of kings also hosted or participated in the feasts and tournaments known as "Round Tables," so called because of the way many of them imitated the celebrations held by Arthur and his knights in popular romances.[37] Juliet Vale and Richard Barber, for example, have discussed Edward III's participation in such events, and Barber has even suggested that the Winchester round table may have been used as a theatrical prop.[38] According to Nicola Royan, James IV and Henry VIII were active in

[33] Martin Biddle, *King Arthur's Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2000), 148.
[34] Richard Barber, "Edward III's Round Table," *History Today* 57, no. 8 (2007), 12-18.
[35] Biddle, 148, 289; Snyder, 133.
[36] Charles T. Wood, review of *King Arthur's Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation* by Martin Biddle, *Speculum* 78 (2003), 838-839.
[37] Barber, 12-18.
[38] Juliet Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry:Chivalric Society and its Context 1270-1350* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1982), 92; Barber, 12-18.

these entertainments as well, play-acting as a knight or son of Arthur and as the king himself, respectively.[39]

The royal fascination with Arthur was also evident through their patronage of Arthurian literature, or at least their warm reception of it. Spencer's *Fairy Queen*, for example, which was written for Queen Elizabeth, embraces Arthurian themes, and Alan MacColl has suggested that this was also true of the court poetry of James VI and I.[40] Furthermore, MacColl suggests that Prince Edward, the son of Edward I, was familiar enough with Arthurian literature that he took a vow straight out of the *Conte Del Graal* of Chrétien de Troyes when he swore that "he would not sleep two nights in the same place until his father's vow had been accomplished."[41]

Other associations between British monarchs and Arthurian legend could be summarized, but the connections between Edward I and Arthur are particularly intriguing and deserve closer examination. Edward's appropriation of the Arthurian legend is often seen as political propaganda, but certain scholars, namely Roger Sherman Loomis, have also represented him as an "Arthurian enthusiast" on a more personal level. Mostly, such representations revolve around analyses of his ownership of Arthurian romances, the feasts and tournaments that he attended, and, to some degree, his prowess in warfare. Edward's own understanding of these events and his possible motivations are questionable, but a detailed examination of a number of these ideas and their validity may increase our understanding of Arthur's place in the lives and beliefs of medieval peoples, as well as Edward I's role in establishing or rejecting those beliefs. In essence, having located Edward I

[39] Royan, 9.
[40] Alan MacColl, "King Arthur and the Making of an English Britain," *History Today* 49 (1999), 12.
[41] MacColl, 11.

and his use of the Arthurian legend within the larger historical context, an in-depth analysis of select occasions during his rule may open doors for future studies in national identity.

II. Imperial Ambitions

From their vantage point centuries into the future, it is relatively simple for historians to look back at some of the actions of Edward I and see parallels with Arthur and the Arthurian legend that may or may not have been recognized at the time. The similarities between the two kings imperial ambitions, for example, are obvious based on what Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us about Arthur as a conqueror and what is known about Edward's expansion into Wales and Scotland. What this section explores is whether these similarities had any real affect on Edward's actions, on the way he perceived himself and his relationship with the rest of the British Isles—are historians right to suggest that Edward I used his knowledge of Arthurian legend to reinforce his authority as a ruler and to legitimize his imperial ambitions?

There are particular sources from the reign of Edward I that seem to indicate that that king was familiar with the story of Arthur and that he understood its significance enough to at least attempt to manipulate it for his own purposes, including the account of Adam of Domerham, who according to Juliet Vale records the opening of Arthur's tomb by Edward I.[42] Where possible I have explored such evidence, but unfortunately, the availability of such sources, especially outside of their original Latin text, is limited, and a more thorough examination of original sources is not always possible. Thus, while these types of references are interesting and undoubtedly useful for interpreting the events of the thirteenth century, they are also relatively rare, and it is the lack of primary sources in general that makes the role of Arthur in Edward I's personal and political life so difficult to study—and so tempting to contemplate.

[42] Vale, 17; Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), 334.

Part of this problem results from the simple fact that not everything in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was written down, and much of what was written has been lost. Prior to the invention of the printing press, manuscripts had to be written and copied by hand, a process described as an "act of endurance," by M.T. Clanchy.[43] Though by the reign of Edward I the demand for written documents was growing quickly, most of these materials were of a kind that would be of little use in determining the motivations of a king. Such documents as surveys and rentals, legal records, cartularies, and registers were frequently written in the thirteenth century but the information they record is too economically focused to provide much material that could help historians to understand the role that legend may have played in the lives of English monarchs. A record of Edward I's landholdings, for example, could show that he had territory in Wales and Scotland, but it would not discuss *why* Edward wanted to own lands in Wales and Scotland. Learned and literary works, by contrast, are more detailed and may have proven more useful, but existed in the form of manuscripts and were few in number and less likely to survive to modern times.[44] Also, as Antonia Gransden has pointed out, when these works *are* available to modern scholars they can often only be found in antiquated editions, which does not allow researchers to take advantage of the latest developments in their field.[45]

Another potential problem with studying the connections between Arthur and Edward I relates to the subjectivity of historians themselves. It is possible that when scholars search for evidence linking the historical and the pseudo-historical kings, they are "reading in"—projecting their own worldview and understanding onto the consciousness of past peoples.

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[43] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* 90.
[44] Ibid, 82.
[45] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 500-c.1307* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), xi.

As Clanchy has suggested, this can actually lead them to "invent" history—not in the sense that they deliberately make it up, but that they shape it to fit their own ideas by only focusing on specific evidence.[46] The nature of historical writing, formulating an argument and then supporting it, makes this problem difficult to overcome, so it is important to recognize its existence when considering the work of other scholars and to distinguish fact based on primary materials from the speculation that represents a scholar's *interpretation* of events. This last point is especially vital when analyzing Edward I's use of Arthurian legend and attempting to understand if he was making a deliberate political connection or simply following standard precedent for a thirteenth century king.

The actions of Edward I are interesting to historians because as a king of England he is responsible for shaping a good portion of British medieval history. The rulers of a country are the individuals at the top of a political hierarchy, and thus they have the distinct advantage of having their opinions heard and their orders carried out. While the daily lives of countless ordinary citizens remain cloaked in mystery, those of kings and princes are more well known, and documents concerning them are more readily available, leading many historians like to focus their studies around political leaders and events. Combine this approach with a newly developing interest in the role of folklore in influencing nationalism and shaping national identity, and it is not hard to see why there have been a number of works discussing the appropriation of the Arthurian legend by Edward I from a political standpoint.

In many ways, Edward's use of the legend, if deliberate, could indicate that nationalism is a much older development than many modern scholars believe. Some seek to

[46] Clanchy, "Inventing Thirteenth Century England," 1.

place its origins in the last several centuries, but nationalists and perennialists have argued that the nation has existed for much longer, though it may have changed and manifested itself in different ways at different times. [47] Adrian Hastings, in particular, has suggested that while he believes the central development of the English nation-state did not occur until the sixteenth-century, it actually began after the Saxon invasions, growing during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[48] Furthermore, if the task of nationalism is defined as rediscovering and appropriating the past in order to build on it[49], and state-building nationalism involves incorporating culturally distinctive territories into a single state, then it is easy to see why historians could find Edward's Arthurian connections fascinating in a political sense—an extensive study of this topic could potentially allow one a new argument for the earlier development of English nationalism.[50]

In general, however, most historians have preferred so far to examine Edward I's use of Arthurian legend in light of his imperial ambitions towards Wales and Scotland. They do not discuss the obvious connection between the two kings' territorial conquests, assuming a certain amount of prior knowledge on the part of their audience, and instead move right into their accounts of specific occasions or events that suggest Edward I was acutely aware of the political power of Arthur. In hindsight, however, a brief consideration of the character of Arthur as Edward I would have known him actually enhances our understanding of *why*

[47] Anthony D. Smith. "Gastronomy or geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations," *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1 (1994): 18-19; Leah Greenfield, "Nationalism in Western and Eastern Europe Compared," in *Can Europe Work? Germany and the Reconstruction of Postcommunist Societies*, eds. Stephen E. Hanson and Willfried Spohn. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1995.
[48] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2-5.
[49] Smith, 18-19.
[50] Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000), 15-17.

Edward may have been motivated to manipulate the legend to his own political advantage and why he might have thought it would be effective.

By the thirteenth century, Edward I would actually have had two versions of Arthur with which he would have been familiar. On one hand there was the Arthur of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the chroniclers, and on the other, the Arthur of the romance tradition. In the first tradition, the Galfridian Arthur was a warrior-king, a trait shared with the earlier representations of Arthur from Welsh legend and the *Historia Brittonum*. Arthur is shown to be the *dux bellorum*, "leader in battles," and his skill as a warrior is demonstrated by the number of enemies he has slain.[51] In his account of Arthur's victory over the Saxons, as well as his conquest of Scotland, Ireland, and other parts of Europe, Geoffrey describes his skill as such that "every man whom he struck…he killed at a single blow," and asserts that "he did not slacken his onslaught until he had dispatched four hundred and seventy men with his sword."[52] Later chroniclers, including Wace and Layamon, continue to portray Arthur in this light, assuring that military prowess is a defining feature of the "historical" Arthur they present.

The Arthur of the romance tradition, by contrast, is a much less central figure, participating in feasts and hosting tournaments, but mainly serving as a plot device to send other young knights, such as Lancelot or Gawain, on their quests. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, for instance, Arthur's court is the setting in which the story begins, and his love of pageantry and feasting is emphasized: "On Ascension Day, King Arthur held court with all

[51] Higham, 151.
[52] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of* Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 217.

the splendor he loved, being so wealthy a king."[53] Though the poem goes on to mention that when Queen Guinevere was taken from the court "the king, of course, was the first to mount,"[54] his role in her rescue is relatively small—by line 300 the poem has come to revolve around Lancelot, and a focus on Arthur's military skill is abandoned in favor of his knights'. This shift in attention from Arthur to his men continues throughout the Vulgate Cycle and other romance works, effectively distinguishing the romance tradition from that of the chronicles, even if, as Thomas Green asserts, both portray Arthur as "imperial and utterly dominant."

Because of his own territorial ambitions, however, the Galfridian account of Arthur as a warrior king, a mighty emperor who gained prestige through war and whose first conquests after defeating the Saxons were Scotland and Ireland may have had more resonance with Edward. Even before he became king, Edward was involved with attempts to complete the subjugation of Wales to English control, and the last years of his reign were spent attempting to exercise the same authority over Scotland. As N. J. Higham writes, Geoffrey's Arthur was "a highly desirable role model for any insular king with extensive ambitions to overlordship in Britain and territory in France," and Edward clearly liked the idea of himself as a ruler of "Britain," rather than of England. In his Parliamentary records, he assured that explicit reference was made to the homage paid to him by the King of Scotland: the entry for 1278, for example, reads "Alexander King of Scots appears before him in his presence chamber and proffers him homage in the Parliament at Westminster, Michaelmas," and this fact is further emphasized in other entries where various individuals are mentioned specifically as

[53] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart,* trans. Burton Raffel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 2.
[54] Ibid, 9.

witnesses to this occasion.[55] In his new, improved version of Arthur's character, therefore, Geoffrey provided Edward with a very powerful and convincing precedent for his territorial aims that would have been widely understood.

The work of Pierre de Langtoft provides evidence that at least some of Edward's contemporaries recognized the possibilities that such a precedent presented and even encouraged it. In his French verse chronicle, which covers "the earliest period to the death of Edward I," Langtoft pays particular attention to the relationship between Edward and Scotland, discussing events with clear anti-Scottish sentiment, such as the Great Cause, when Edward held Scotland "in ward" until he "promoted" John Baliol as king.[56] Earlier in the work, Langtoft also gives a history of King Arthur where the subject of Scotland is of concern as well, writing that Arthur "wished to be lord over the Scots and Picts"[57] and reinforcing the idea that Arthur provided Edward with a precedent for control of Scotland. As N. J. Higham remarks, Langtoft was essentially adapting "the Galfridian version of Arthur to accord with Edward's attempts to impose his authority over the Scots."[58]

The French poem *Le Rossignos,* as noted by Roger Sherman Loomis and Juliet Vale, is another example that suggests Edward's contemporaries recognized and understood the similarities between Edward I and Arthur. [59] Written by John of Howden, a clerk in the household of Eleanor of Castile, this poem compares Christ with earthly heroes, culminating with the person of Edward I, whose crusading exploits follow entries of Alexander and

[55] Francis Palgrave, ed., *The Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons Together With the Records and Muniments, Relating to the Suit and Service Due and Performed to the King's High Court of Parliament and the Councils of the Realm ; or Affording Evidence of Attendance Given at Parliaments and Councils,* ed. (2 vols., London: Great Britain Record Commission, 1827-34), 2:578, 801.
[56] Pierre de Langtoft, *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft in French Verse, From the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I,* ed. Thomas Wright (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), 193, 221.
[57] Langtoft, 155.
[58] Higham, 233.
[59] Roger Sherman Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," *Speculum* 28 (1953), 126; Vale, 20-21.

Arthur. It is therefore, Vale argues, a testament to the idea that "Edward welcomed the opportunity to juxtapose the deeds of his ancestors with those of famous heroes and also to associate his own name with theirs."

With these clear indications that Edward's contemporaries were comparing him to Arthur, the theory that Edward I himself may have purposefully used the Arthurian legend to justify his political actions becomes much more viable. If his contemporaries could make the connection between Edward's and Arthur's imperial ambitions, it seems likely that Edward I did so as well. An examination of the specific examples given by historians to support this point, however, is necessary before confirming or rejecting its validity. Though numerous arguments have been made, for the purposes of this paper only the most common will be evaluated, as these are the ones that appear to be most influential in shaping historians' perceptions of Edward's rule.

In general, there are two main instances where it appears that Edward I was knowingly and deliberately making reference to Arthur to justify his authority over Wales and Scotland. Chronologically, the first of these took place in 1278, when Edward and his wife Eleanor traveled to Glastonbury to preside over the opening and re-interment of the remains of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere. This burial had supposedly been discovered in the twelfth century by the monks at Glastonbury, as recorded by the account of the medieval writer, Gerald of Wales:

> The memory of the famous Arthur, king of the Britons, is not to be suppressed… . However, Arthur's body, which the fables allege was like a fantastic thing at the end, and as it were moved by the spirit to far away places, and not subject to death, in our own days was discovered at Glastonbury between two stone pyramids erected in the holy cemetery, hidden deep in the ground by a hollow oak and marked with wonderful signs and marvels, and it was moved into the church with honor and committed properly to a marble tomb. Whence a leaden cross with a stone

> underneath, not above as it usually is in our day, but rather lower nailed on the side, (which I have seen, and in fact I have traced these sculpted letters - not projecting and protruding, but carved into the stone) contains the words: "Here lies buried the famous King Arthur with Guinevere, his second wife, in the isle of Avalon."[60]

Unfortunately, the inscribed cross to which Gerald refers disappeared long before archaeologists would have been around to date it, and it is now impossible to verify the truth of this "discovery." In recent years, scholars have often speculated that the whole episode was actually engineered by Henry II, who had hoped that the grave would allow him to counter Welsh resistance to his authority, which was significantly believed to have been encouraged based on a belief in Arthur's return.[61] Henry died before the excavation of the abbey could be completed, but it appears that a hundred years later Edward I found himself in a similar situation, and decided to continue in Henry's footsteps.

Historians such as Marc Morris are careful to remind their audience that in the years following Geoffrey's *Historia*, most people took the existence of King Arthur as fact: For them, Morris argue, he was as real a historical figure as William the Conqueror or Edward the Confessor, and should there be any doubt among some, the discovery of the tomb in 1184 was offered as undeniable proof of his reality. This "proof" served Edward I well, for just as Henry had dealt with Welsh resistance to his attempts to impose his authority, the previous year had seen Edward I busy putting down the rebellion of the Welsh Prince Llywelyn-ap-Gruffyd. According to Morris, peace had been made in November of 1277 and Llywelyn reduced to obedience, but Edward remained highly active in Welsh affairs for some time.[62]

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[60] Gerald of Wales.
[61] Snyder, 128-29; MacColl, 9.
[62] Morris, 159.

This is the context, therefore, of Edward's visit to Glastonbury, and indeed, the events occurring around Easter of 1278 seem much more significant in this light. Though the English might have believed Arthur was dead and buried after the discovery of the tomb, the Welsh may have been tempted to hold to the prophetic belief that Arthur would return. After all, even Geoffrey of Monmouth did not discuss Arthur's death, saying only that "Arthur himself, our renowned king, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to."[63] Later, T. H. White would popularize the notion with the concept of Arthur as "the once and future king," but in Edward's time Arthur's return was already expected, and indeed hoped for by the Welsh. Thus, Morris asserts, Edward came to Glastonbury "not to praise Arthur, but to bury him. Again."[64]

The main primary source recording this event appears to be the chronicle of Adam of Domerham, written around 1291. Referenced directly by both Juliet Vale and Geoffrey Ashe, Adam's account is translated from the original Latin in Ashe's *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*:

> The lord Edward…with his consort, the lady Eleanor, came to Glastonbury to celebrate Easter…the following Tuesday…at dusk…the lord king had the tomb of the famous king Arthur opened. Wherein in two caskets painted with their pictures and arms, were found separately the bones of the said king, and those of Queen Guinevere, which were of marvelous beauty…on the following day…the lord king replaced the bones of the king and the queen those of the queen, each in their own casket, having wrapped them in costly silks. When they had been sealed they ordered the tomb to be placed forthwith in front of the high altar, after the removal of the skulls for the veneration of the people.[65]

If this account is an accurate description of events, it is immediately apparent from a folkloristic and anthropological perspective that this was a significant occasion. The timing

[63] Monmouth, 261.
[64] Morris, 165.
[65] Geoffrey Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain* (London: Paladin, 1972), 99.

of the ceremony itself, dusk, is symbolic, representing the liminal period between day and night, light and dark, when many rituals and ceremonies are believed to possess more power. The choice of the Easter holiday may also have been significant, as holidays are also believed by folklorists to be a time of change or reversal of the normal order or existence. The wrapping of the bones in silk, or any type of cloth, was likely a common practice when interring the body of medieval royals—after his death, the corpse of Edward III was also wrapped in cerecloth[66]—, but Edward and his wife's participation in this activity gives the ceremony enacted at Glastonbury additional significance.

As Emile Durkheim suggested and Jennifer Woodward reiterates, taking part in a ritual involves the conferment of status and identity.[67] By handling the bones of the legendary king personally, Edward I may have been emphasizing his authority and status as king, thinking it appropriate that only the king and queen be allowed to touch the remains of their royal predecessor. Interestingly, in her study of Renaissance England Woodward has noted that direct participation in funeral rites also played a crucial role in smoothing the transfer of power from the defunct monarch to his heir.[68] It is possible that Edward I and his fourteenth-century contemporaries may have understood the ceremony to serve a similar purpose—if Edward hoped to emphasize Arthur's death and his authority, it would make sense to enact a ritual that represented the end of a reign and the succession of a new monarch to the throne. The display of the skulls, supposedly for the "veneration of the people," was likely also intended to provide tangible proof of Arthur's death. Thus, the

[66] Chris Given-Wilson, "The Exequies of Edward III and the Royal Funeral Ceremony in Late Medieval England," *English Historical Review* 124(2009): 257-282.
[67] Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: the Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 13.
[68] Ibid, 2.

Easter ceremony and Arthur's reburial may have functioned as a manifestation of Edward I's political power in a deeper, more subtle context than was previously understood.

Aside from Vale and Ashe, Loomis and Caroline Shenton also give brief accounts of the tombs opening, but after Adam himself Marc Morris provides the most interesting and detailed description:

> Every effort was taken to ensure that the event was momentous and memorable. The disinterment of the bodies, we are told, took place at twilight, no doubt deliberately to heighten its dramatic effect. The following morning, the court was treated to an equally arresting spectacle when Edward personally wrapped Arthur's bones in silk, while Eleanor of Castile similarly prepared the remains of Guinevere for reburial. There may even have been, in addition to these macabre solemnities, some kind of celebratory jamboree. Immediately prior to its arrival at Glastonbury, the court had gone out of its way to stop at Eleanor's manor of Queen Camel, which stands close by the giant Iron Age hill-fort at South Cadbury. Since Cadbury had already been identified by this date as Camelot…it seems likely that the two visits were connected, and that there might have been a chivalric prelude to the exhumation. Such efforts, coming as they did…at a time when the king was engaged in a general drive to redefine the relationship between England and Wales, can hardly be interpreted as anything other than an exercise in propaganda directed squarely at the Welsh…. Edward and Eleanor affixed their seals, so as to certify that the contents were indeed authentic. More telling still is the intention to ensure that the evidence was left on permanent display: the skulls of "Arthur" and "Guinevere " were not re-interred, but placed outside the tomb, 'on account of popular devotion.' Edward, it would seem, was determined to prove to his turbulent neighbors, once and for all, that Arthur would not be coming back to save them.[69]

Morris's account as related here is significant for several reasons. First, it closely mirrors that of Adam of Domerham, though Morris cites only secondary materials as the source for this account. This leads one to wonder if each of his sources relied on Adam's original account, and if so, why did Morris not reference it and provide his own analysis, which may have made this section more effective?

[69] Morris, 165-66.

Second, his conclusion appears to encompass the idea expressed by each historian mentioned above that the opening of the tomb was political propaganda. Vale comments that Edward "was clearly not inclined to discourage the cults associated with Glastonbury … nor was he reluctant to associate himself with the figure of Arthur, whilst clearly refuting the legendary survival of the British king."[70] Loomis and Shenton reach similar conclusions. Given the timing and political situation, which has been discussed previously, these observations seem reasonable, and the logic of their argument cannot readily be disputed—if, in fact, this is how events unfolded that day in Glastonbury. Yet, Morris and other historians have so far overlooked the additional symbolism and possible function of the reburial ceremony that was discussed earlier, and thus have missed the full extent of both Edward I's awareness and understanding of how power is acquired.

The third reason Morris's account is significant, is that this section is illustrative of the way that historians may attempt to connect the dots in a way that allows them to see what they would like to see. Though writing a biography of Edward I, Morris is clearly fascinated by the idea that folklore can shape history. In his book, he provides no less than eleven references to Arthur, each time linking his name with Edward's to suggest that that the ancient British king played a significant role in Edward's life. His concluding paragraph even goes so far as to remind his audience "of the power of myth to shape men's minds and motives, and thus to alter the fate of nations."[71] When he discusses the stop that Edward I made at Queen Camel was likely the result of the location's proximity to Cadbury, which in turn was associated with Camelot, it is clear Morris has drifted into the realm of speculation. Shenton also makes this association, arguing that Edward's detour to that area was unusual,

[70] Vale, 17.
[71] Morris, 378.

and since no better reason has been suggested for why this might occur, it likely has something to do with the King's interest in Arthur. This may be reasonable speculation, perhaps, but it also indicates the desire of modern historians, and humanity in general, to attempt to explain events in a manner that suits them. The entire passage, therefore, while verified to a degree by Adam's account, may be one instance where, as Jeremy Goldsmith has suggested, Morris fits the evidence into a "sensationalist analysis."[72]

Despite Morris' somewhat questionable account of events, the episode above illustrates that there truly are instances when Edward I is using the legend to negotiate political power. As Abner Cohen discusses, the term "power" refers to relations of domination and subordination, which are "objectified, developed, maintained, expressed, or camouflaged by means of symbolic forms and patterns of symbolic action."[73] By opening the tomb and conducting an elaborate ceremony with the bones of Arthur, Edward is attempting to project his power, his dominant status, over Arthur and thus over the Welsh people. Such manipulation as a dominant political symbol is successful, Cohen suggests, because death, and the idea of life after death, is a deep-rooted and powerful human issue that resonates with everyone. Though the Welsh wars began again soon after Edward's display at Glastonbury, calling into question the effectiveness of his tactics by making it impossible to assume that the Welsh actually received the message—or that it in any way altered their belief in Arthur's return or deflated their desire for independence from English rule—Edward's intentions are clear.

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[72] Jeremy Goldsmith review of *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* , Marc Morris (review no. 718) URL: http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/goldsmithj.html (Date accessed: Thursday, 14-Jan-2010 01:13:21 GMT).

[73] Abner Cohen, "Political Symbolism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 8 (1979), 88-89, 93.

Another example that historians have often given as evidence of Edward's political use of the legend once again involves symbolism. According to Alan MacColl, when Edward I attached the Principality of Wales to the English throne in 1283, he made the Welsh "surrender certain particularly precious relics as tokens of submission, including a piece of the true cross and the legendary crown of Arthur."[74] Vale also records this event, stating that after their defeat, the Welsh "handed over, with other jewels…the crown of Arthur, whose symbolic value seems to have had considerable impact upon contemporary opinion." Just as the bones of Arthur's body represented his physical death and thus emphasized the idea that he would not be returning to his people, the mysterious "crown of Arthur" could also be viewed as a symbolic representation of Welsh sovereignty.

This is because, as anthropologists have long suggested, both names and objects can have special significance for people. "Names classify objects and events and convey meanings and distinctions," Kathy Charmaz asserts, "We attach value to some names, and dismiss others."[75] The naming of Arthur's crown therefore conveys the value the Welsh placed on their ancient folk hero. We can take this symbolism one step further. "All objects can be given meaning," as Ian Hodder has suggested, and cultural objects (as Arthur's crown could be considered) have three potential types of meaning that are associated with them: historical and structural, or symbolic meaning.[76] That the Welsh saw fit to name the crown after a legendary figure from their history suggests that they had already assigned the crown a "historical" meaning, and it is very likely that the associations of the crown's name also came to be associated with the object itself, giving it its "symbolic" meaning. This becomes

[74] MacColl, 10.
[75] Kathy Charmaz, "The Power of Names," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35 (2006): 396.
[76] Ian Hodder, "The Contextual Analysis of Symbolic Meanings," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections,* ed. Susan M. Pearce (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

vitally important when one considers Edward's determination to claim the crown for himself. Though Gerald Morgan has argued that Arthur is a "British" concept, the earliest literary representations of him are Welsh.[77] As Maria Teresa Agozzino points out, there are ten references to Arthur in Welsh poetry alone, and eight of those predate Geoffrey of Monmouth.[78] They are the people to whom the story originally belonged, and only during the twelfth century did the story appropriated by the Anglo-Normans. That is why belief in Arthur's return appears to have been so strong among them, and that is also why Edward's possession of the crown of Arthur could be construed as another attempt to show his authority over them. By taking the crown, Edward became part of the development of its meaning, which Susan M. Pearce describes as "an interactive process between thing and viewer."[79] Edward I knew of the existence and the name of the crown, he understood the legendary associations of its name, and thus he viewed it as having symbolic power over a conquered people. His confiscation of the Stone of Scone, or the Stone of Destiny, from Scotland is likely to have had a similar significance.

Once again, however, that such an event ever took place, that Edward I did, in fact, seize the crown of Arthur from the Welsh, must be verified before the arguments above can hold any sway. As with the events at the tomb, Edward's actions in this case also appear to have been recorded in contemporary sources—after a little digging. MacColl, for instance, does not give an actual bibliography for his work, instead providing a list of works "for further reading." This makes his source for his information concerning Edward I and the

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[77] Gerald Morgan, "Welsh Arthurian Literature," in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship,* ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 77.

[78] Maria Teresa Agozzino, "Divining King Arthur: The Calendric Significance of Twelfth Century Cathedral Depictions in Italy," (PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006), 161.

[79] Susan M. Pearce, "Objects as Meaning; or Narrating the Past," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections,* ed. Susan M. Pearce (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

crown extremely hard to locate, and automatically has the astute reader questioning its validity. Based on the wording, it seems likely that MacColl did not get this information from a primary source, but possibly from the work of Roger Sherman Loomis, who wrote in 1953 that "he [Edward] received as tokens of submission certain relics treasured by the Welsh, among them the crown of Arthur."[80] If one goes further, however, and attempts to track down Loomis's source for this information, one eventually finds support for the actual occurrence of such an event.

Loomis references *The Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II,* edited by William Stubbs in 1882, and Morris, for his part, also cites Stubbs. In particular, their information appears to be taken from the "Annales Londoniensis," which Stubbs includes in his work, or possibly from the "Flores historiarum," which Morris also cites.[81] Vale gives a similar source, the *Annales Monastici*, published in 1869. Both of these sources are part of the Rolls Series, and are thus primary sources from the reign of Edward I, which lends credence to the validity of "Arthur's crown." Both are also in Latin, however, and thus any further analysis of these texts to confirm the existence of the crown is outside the realm of this paper. As Helen Cam points out, however, it would be wise to use caution when perusing Stubbs' chronicle material, for many of the records which can now be found at the Public record office were not available to him, and he was "only checked by such records as had been printed when he wrote."[82] However, Cam adds, he did have access to the Parliamentary rolls printed during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and these he fully

[80] Loomis, 117.
[81] Loomis, 117; Morris, 401.
[82] Helen Cam, "Stubbs Seventy Years After," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 9, no. 2 (1948), 131.

exploited.[83] Thus, despite Stubbs' limitations, his reputation as a historian is such that he can probably be counted on to have accurately recorded the materials he did consult, making a plausible case for the existence of Arthur's crown and Edward's role in its acquisition.

Overall, these two examples succeed in showing that, to the best knowledge of scholars past and present, there does appear to be evidence that Edward I was using the Arthurian legend for political purposes. Both examples appear to be supported by primary sources, and their potential significance verified by anthropological theory. If the events at the tomb or the existence of the crown of Arthur were invented, then it is likely that they were the work of the medieval writers who recorded them, rather than more recent scholars.

It is also worth noting that there is at least one further substantial piece of evidence for this theory: a letter written by Edward I to Pope Boniface VIII to historically justify his position in Scotland, which is included in the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland* and preserved in the Public Record Office and the British Library. Thomas Wright has included a rendering of it by an unknown contemporary who based his verse of the Chronicle of Matthew of Westminster in his translation of Pierre de Langtoft's French verse Chronicle. This letter, written in response to a papal bull stating that the Scottish king did not owe him service nor money for the land of Scotland, demonstrates once again Edward's belief in himself as the king of Britain based partly on Arthurian precedent:

> And king Arthur, a prince of nown,
> Destroyed Albany [Scotland] for their rebellion,
> Afterwards he gave Scotland to sir Augusele,
> And who performed the services to king Arthur.
> At Caerleon, subsequently, Arthur held his feast,
> Where all his kings had yielded their services;
> King Augusele carried Arthur's sword,

[83] Cam, 131.

> For the service of Scotland, which he owed to him.
> Since that time to the present the kings of Scotland
> Have all been subject to the king of Britain.[84]

III. The Politics of Chivalry

If there is evidence to support the theory that Edward I was manipulating Arthurian legend for political purposes to negotiate his relationship with Wales and Scotland, then is the claim that Edward I was a personal enthusiast of Arthur, held by scholars such as Roger Sherman Loomis supportable as well? Or is it possible that what could be labeled the more social or personal manifestations of Edward's interest in Arthurian legend actually have a political function? This section addresses this question, recounting the specific evidence that historians have cited, briefly examining their sources, and placing Edward's actions within the larger context of his time. The Middle Ages, and the thirteenth century in particular, was an era of chivalry, when Arthurian romances and ideals flourished throughout Europe, and

[84] Langtoft, 405-406.

while Edward I may have been well aware of the potential power of Arthurian stories, the idea that he may also have used the legend's emphasis on chivalry in a political fashion is worthy of further analysis.

An early historian to suggest that Edward's use of the legend may have involved "sentiment" rather than just being dictated by political considerations, is Roger Sherman Loomis. In 1953 he published an article entitled "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," apparently in response to Sir Maurice Powicke's *King Henry III and the Lord Edward.* This latter work, spanning two volumes, has much to say on the relation of Edward I to the Arthurian legend, and approaches the topic mostly as it relates to Edward's politics. "He [Edward] knew how to appeal to history," Powicke suggests, "He tried to comprehend in his own rule the traditions of his land."[85] Powicke then goes on to recount the opening of Arthur's tomb by Edward and Eleanor, and Edward's possession of the "traditional crown of Arthur," both of which were discussed in detail in the previous section.

In doing so, Powicke appears to be yet another historian who believes that Edward's regard for the legend was political, rather than personal, in nature. In his opening paragraph, Loomis seems eager to dispute this theory, suggesting that though Powicke's *King Henry III and the Lord Edward* was a "fine study," he believed that "sentiment too was involved, and that in his cult of Arthur, Edward was influenced by a vogue not exclusively English but shared by most of the aristocracies of Christendom in his day. Surely," he adds, "political calculations had little if anything to do with this extraordinary addiction to matters Arthurian in lands remote from Britain, and part of Edward I's interest in these same matters cannot be

[85] Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 724.

connected with his Welsh wars, but may be attributed simply to the fact that he was a man of his time."[86]

Loomis certainly makes a good argument. Arthurian stories, particularly romances, were widely popular throughout the western portion of the continent. Geoffrey's *Historia* was translated into French as early as 1155 in Wace's *Roman de Brut*[87], and a separate group of French writers, most notably Chrétien de Troyes, took up the legend sometime between 1170 and 1190.[88] The Vulgate Cycle was composed soon after, between about 1215 and 1225[89], and along with the Chrétien romances rapidly spread to the rest of Europe as they were translated in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, and even Norway and Iceland.[90] As Loomis points out, it does appear highly unlikely that peoples from each of these countries would have had a political use for the legend, leading to the conclusion that something else must have been happening. For some reason, the aristocracy throughout Europe was taking a personal interest in these narratives.

Barbara N. Sargent-Baur has suggested that in the twelfth century, "the character of Arthur underwent a profound change."[91] Thanks to the creative license taken by the French romancers, he was no longer the leading actor, but rather a supporting character, taking on the position of a patriarch and rarely participating in the action. This allows other characters such as Erec and Perceval to step to the forefront—characters that appear to exemplify the ideals and codes of conduct that is often referred to as "chivalry." According to Norris J.

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[86] Loomis, 114.
[87] Lacy, *The Arthurian Handbook,* 61
[88] Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Lancelot-Grail Reader* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), vii.
[89] Ibid., viii.
[90] Pearsall, 49.
[91] Barbara N Sargent-Baur,. "Dux Bellorum/Rex Militum/Roi Fainéant," in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 28.

Lacy, these characters "are expected to serve God, King, justice and morality, their ladies, and the cause of all who are in need. They are expected to develop their military skills, perfect their moral state, and exhibit appropriate behavior."[92] They are, in essence, expected to behave in exactly the same way that real knights were expected to behave in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

This point can best be made by an examination of the lives of two of the most well-known knights of the period, William Marshal and Geoffroi de Charny. The life of William Marshal, who lived from about 1147 to 1219, was recorded in a French poem known as the *History of William Marshal,* probably sometime around 1224.[93] According to David Crouch, who has studied this work extensively, Marshal would have been familiar with an ideal of masculine conduct he calls *preudomme*, which appears to have a similar definition to the type of "chivalry" referred to above, involving characteristics such as strength, wisdom, loyalty, and honor.[94]

Charny, who lived about a century later (1306-1356), is usually perceived as following a similar ideal. Richard W. Kaeuper has described him as the "chivalric embodiment of his age," and discusses the fact that his work (*A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry)*, while intended to instruct, managed to keep closer than other works to actual, historical knighthood.[95] Just as for Marshal, loyalty is an important aspect of Charny's chivalry, but "prowess," or strength and skill in combat, is given as the essential chivalric

[92] Lacy, *The Arthurian Handbook,* 69.
[93] David Crouch, *William Marshal: Knighthood, War, and Chivalry, 1147-1219* (London and New York: Longman, 2002), 186, 190.
[94] Ibid., 190.
[95] Richard W. Kaeuper, "Introduction," in *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry* by Geoffroi de Charny (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 1, 18.

trait. Those who are worthy of praise, Charny writes, are those "who are physically strong and skillful (agile), and who conduct themselves properly and pleasantly."[96]

Thus, from these two accounts it is possible to see that the ideals Arthurian knights were expected to uphold in the romances were essentially those of a real knight. This ability to merge with reality, Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carly have suggested, "to be transformed and to transform," is a major part of the vitality of the legend itself.[97] Outside of England, the invention of the romance tradition gave authors a chance to reshape the Arthurian legend to better fit current ideals and fashions. In essence, they made it interesting to their contemporary audience on a more personal level. With chivalric culture existing very similarly in both France and England, Loomis made a good point when he suggested that Edward was not simply politically motivated, but was "influenced by a vogue not exclusively English."[98]

Whether Edward I was *more* personally invested in the legend than other English nobles of his time, however, is up for debate. Wisely, some historians have taken the approach of attempting to prove that Edward I was exposed to or owned Arthurian literature before they suggest the various ways he might have made personal use of this knowledge. Morris is especially successful in this respect, suggesting that Edward I would have gained at least partial knowledge of Arthur through his mother, whom he calls an avid reader of French romances, judging by her book purchases. "If Eleanor had a personal hand in the development of her son's historical awareness," Morris writes, "it may have been to teach

[96] Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 47.
[97] Shichtman, 4.
[98] Loomis, 114.

him about the more distant, legendary past of the country she had come to regard as home."[99] Additionally, based on a citation from the French romance *La Meliadus* that attributes a portion of the work to a book left in Italy by Edward I, Loomis and Vale both argue that the English king owned at least one Arthurian romance himself, either a *Prose Tristan* or a *Palaméde.*[100] These arguments are convincing in themselves, but are additionally supported by records of the court and household of Eleanor of Castile, which prove that Edward's wife also purchased the romances of her day.[101] Even more tellingly, according to J.D. Bruce, Girard of Amiens dedicated his Arthurian romance, *Escanor*, to the queen.

After establishing Edward's familiarity with the legend (or alternatively, taking it for granted on the basis of the popularity of Arthurian literature depending on who is writing), historians have presented a number of examples illustrating a more social aspect in Edward's use of the legend, though they usually do not classify them as such. On the whole, these mostly involve his attendance at various Arthurian-based tournaments and feasts, as well as his status as a skilled warrior as understood by his contemporaries. Few, if any, official sources exist that provide direct evidence of Edward's combat skills, so these outside accounts compensate somewhat for this lack.

As discussed in the previous section, Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthur was a warrior-king, a man of "outstanding courage" and skill who could defeat more than 400 men in battle by himself.[102] Though the romances altered the focus of the narratives, forcing Arthur into the background, he still retained his reputation as a great leader, and his knights assumed

[99] Morris, 9.
[100] Loomis, 115; Vale, 20.
[101] John Carmi Parsons, *The Court and Household of Eleanor of Castile in 1290: An Edition of British Library, Additional Manuscript 35294 with Introduction and Notes* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1977), 13.
[102] Monmouth, 212, 217.

similar skills in battle. Thus, the idea that knights should show "prowess" in battle remained. As Charny reveals, "deeds of arms" in war were considered the most honorable, but praise and esteem is also given to those who participate in tournaments, "for they require a great deal of wealth…physical hardship, crushing and wounding, and sometimes danger of death."[103] Historians therefore note that Edward I's participation in such events helped secure his reputation as a skilled combatant and in a sense validated his worth as king. Vale, for instance, refers to accounts of Matthew of Paris and a Dunstable annalist, which mention Edward's "bloody debut" at Blyth and some of his excursions abroad and are almost the only information we have concerning the historical details of Edward's tournament career.[104] The details of most of the occasions which shaped Edward's reputation in Europe, Vale laments, have been lost to us.[105]

Participation in tournaments alone, even if successful, does not automatically warrant linking Edward's name to that of the legendary king, however, and most historians realize that further evidence is needed to support a link between Arthur's military prowess and Edward's. For Morris, this evidence comes in part from the poem of Peter de Langtoft, which was written in celebration of Edward's victory over Scotland at Dunbar in 1296 and is recounted here at length:

> Ah God! How often Merlin said the truth
> In his prophecies, if you read them!
> Now are the two waters united in one
> Which have been separated by great mountains;
> And one realm made of two different kingdoms
> Which used to be governed by two kings.
> Now are the islanders all joined together
> And Albany (Scotland) reunited to the regalities

[103] Charny, 48-49.
[104] Vale, 16.
[105] Vale, 16.

Of which king Edward is proclaimed lord.
Cornwall and Wales are in his power
And Ireland the great at his will.
There is neither king nor prince of all the countries
Except king Edward, who has thus united them
Arthur never held the fiefs so fully.[106]

Clearly, Edward's contemporaries were, as Morris suggests, comparing Edward's success in war and conquest with that of Arthur and in this instance, Edward was even coming out ahead. A similar comparison occurs in a lament after Edward's death, written by a local author. In this text, Morris tells us, the writer presented Edward I as "entirely without equal, outshining not only Arthur and Alexander but also Brutus, Solomon and Richard the Lionheart," and he quoted him as saying 'We should perceive him to surpass all the kings of the earth who came before him.'"[107] While such a claim might seem extraordinary, it is necessary to remember that men such as these were likely sponsored by royal patronage, though the details of their lives remain unknown. Thus, while Edward I may not have officially compared himself to Arthur on the basis of his "prowess" in warfare, it is very clear that some of his contemporaries did. If Langtoft was writing for royal patronage, then it is possible that accounts such as these provided Edward I with yet another political use for the Arthurian legend—they allowed his own name to be held up beside the ancient British king and, in some instances such as in Langtoft's poem, to overshadow it. This seems to fit with Agozzino's perception that, in the twelfth century, Arthur's more peripheral role in the romances is a reflection of a deeper metaphor: "Arthur cannot win in the present (twelfth century) because he did not win in the past. Arthur, and the Britons that he personifies, failed

[106] Langtoft, 265-66.
[107] Morris, 364.

to retain the sovereignty of Britain."[108] This failure would have been something Edward I could emphasize and use to underline the idea that he was in power now, much as he did at the opening of Arthur's tomb. The praise of Edward's contemporaries, whether given at his behest or not, could be construed as one more method for Edward I to display his dominance over the British Isles.

There is another line of evidence that historians point to in order to suggest a more personal relation of Edward I and the Arthurian legend that may also have a distinct political component: his hosting of Arthurian-style feasts and tournaments. Most famous among these is the "Round Table" tournament held in 1284 at Nefyn (alternatively, *Nevin* or *Nevyn*), an area which Powicke describes as "the farthest limits of Snowdonia by the sea," and which Vale, rather more helpfully, locates "on the coast not far from Caernarvon."[109] The occasion appears to have had two purposes: historians have noted that it was a celebration of Edward's conquest over Wales,[110] which was completed the previous year, and possibly also of Prince Edward's birth earlier that summer as a new prince for the people of Wales.[111]

Thus, while the appeal of jousting, singing, and dancing may have heightened the event's appeal, this occasion may also be construed as more of a political demonstration than social in nature. The celebration of the conquest of Wales is obviously political, but the naming of Edward's son as "Prince of Wales" is even more significant. It sent a clear message to the Welsh: their old political system was gone, and there would be no more Welsh princes. Just as Edward symbolically enforced his authority over Wales by reburying Arthur and taking "his crown," the titling of his son represented a similar assertion.

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[108] Agozzino, "Divining King Arthur," 161.
[109] Powicke, 724; Vale, 19.
[110] Powicke, 724; Loomis, 117; MacColl, 10; Morris, 192.
[111] Vale, 19.

The tournament could be read to have political significance in another light. Vale suggests that the king hoped the event would help "the reconciliation of the Welsh to his rule," as well as provide an opportunity to reward his own men.[112] The latter argument is particularly interesting, as according to Michael Prestwick the medieval chronicler Pierre Langtoft has noted that many men were unwilling to serve Edward I because, unlike King Arthur, he lacked "the important chivalric virtue of *largesce*, generosity" and was reluctant to reward them.[113] "In ancient histories," Langtoft writes, "we find written…how [Arthur] shared largely of his gain. There was not a king under him who contradicted him, Earl, duke, or baron, who ever failed him…The king sir Edward has given too little."[114]

This observation is significant given that anthropologists have noted that in medieval times, power was symbolically based on the ability to give freely, whether it be land or a type of service, and status correlated with how much one was able to give. The Arthur of legend "observed the normal custom of giving gifts freely to everyone,"[115] but because of his financial hardships Edward I may have struggled to fulfill his expected role. The recent incursions into Wales had cost somewhere around £120,000, for instance, an enormous sum that required heavy taxation, and Parliamentary records indicate that Edward was already borrowing money from Italian merchants and trading companies, as well as from various citizens and burgesses.[116] Thus, Edward may have considered the elaborate celebration at Nefyn a satisfactory replacement for the more traditional gifts which he could not afford to dole out to individual knights. In this sense, it is possible that the event served multiple

[112] Vale, 19.
[113] Michael Prestwick, "The Art of Kingship: Edward I, 1272-1307," *History Today* 35, no. 5 (1985), 38.
[114] Langtoft, 297.
[115] Geoffrey of Monmouth, 211.
[116] Morris, 188; Palgrave, *The Parliamentary Writs* 2:578.

political purposes, rather than simply manifesting as a result of Edward's personal interest in Arthurian legend.

Though the event is described as a "Round Table" by every historian who mentions the celebration at Nefyn, it remains unclear whether it actually even had an underlying Arthurian structure. This, in turn, casts doubt on the idea that it represented a great personal interest in the legend on the part of Edward I, and the idea that its function was more political is reinforced. Though Morris locates Nefyn as the town where the prophecies of Merlin were said to have been discovered and suggests that it was conducted in the same "Arthurian vein" as his building of Caernarfon and possession of Arthur's crown[117], the actual "Arthurianess" of the event is questionable. Citations for this information are not provided by any of the authors to suggest that the assumption of an Arthurian theme has its origins in primary source material, and Vale's wording is such that it is clear this idea is more speculation than historical fact: "It seems particularly unlikely in this context," Vale writes, referring to the celebration, "that Edward would have refrained from grasping such an opportunity to link himself with Arthur and it is not unreasonable to suggest that this occasion might have been given a specifically Arthurian structure."[118] The emphasis being, of course, on the "not unreasonable."

If the idea that the "Round Table" held by Edward I in 1284 lacked an Arthurian theme offers little support for the theory that he possessed an unusually personal interest in the British king, then Vale's argument for an Arthurian structure at Nefyn does even less. Her suggestion that an Arthurian theme may have existed at the celebration appears to come from a belief that this was a trend in tournaments at the time. In a preceding section, Vale

[117] Morris, 192.
[118] Vale, 19.

discusses the chivalric themes and practices present in tourneys at Chauvency and Le Hem, which seem to parallel the behaviors of knightly heroes of romance,[119] and Edward's friend Roger Mortimer also held a "Round Table" in 1279 that was once thought to be "the first of its kind."[120] Thus, the hosting of such events was not limited to Edward I and his interest in them was not out of proportion with the times.

Ruth Cline has also pointed out quite convincingly that while "Round Tables" themselves were believed to have Arthurian origins, they did not always have Arthurian themes.[121] The only characteristics of a "Round Table" that necessarily differentiated it from a tournament, Cline argues, was that jousts took place on a circular field and that blunted weapons were used. It does not absolutely follow, therefore, that a "Round Table" would have a deliberate Arthurian structure, and though this argument does not rule out the possibility that Edward I's celebration *was* Arthurian, it warns against making this assumption prematurely.

If, as these arguments suggest, Edward's interest in tournaments and "Round Tables" were more political than personal, then his participation in such activities and his hosting of these events was one more way that he could play upon the fame of Arthur to draw men to him and enhance his own prestige. In a way, this was guaranteed by such events at this time in general: if a "Round Table" had an Arthurian theme, then it would be popular because of the associations with Arthurian romance that have already been discussed; if it did not have

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[119] Ibid, 5. Though Vale is careful to assert that it is "impossible to say whether literature first reflected contemporary practice or influenced it," one should also note that the two tournaments mentioned above were described in verse tournament narratives from the late thirteenth century and it was not without precedent for writers to "borrow" scenes from popular romances and include them in their accounts. For an example of this, see David Crouch's *William Marshal: Knighthood, War, and Chivalry, 1147-1219.*

[120] Ruth Huff Cline, "The Influences of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 20 (1945): 204-211.

[121] Ibid.

an Arthurian theme, men would attend anyway because tournaments were the order of the day—training for warfare though such activities was a major focus of the medieval knight, as Charny pointed out, and were encouraged in the chivalric romances of the times anyway.

Samuel Kinser has suggested that festivities such as these are places where "beliefs are exhibited, extended and reinforced," and in the case of Edward I, this is certainly true. His tournament and Nefyn was both an exhibition of his skill in war, coming as it did right after the defeat of Wales, and it was also a reinforcement of his claim to authority by celebrating the naming of his son as "Prince of Wales." The references to his personal prowess and lordship over Britain as made by his contemporaries are also likely to have been politically motivated, illustrating that aside from his obvious use of symbolism concerning Arthur's tomb and Arthur's crown, Edward I was not adverse to using Arthurian legend in other, more subtle ways.

Conclusion

An analysis of various events throughout Edward's reign that have been described by past historians has shown that Edward I was, in fact, using the Arthurian legend for political purposes, and suggests that he may have been doing this in ways not fully considered by previous writers. Each of the examples discussed in the two chapters above, but particularly those from Chapter 1, which are more fully substantiated, can provide interesting insight into the psyche of the medieval king. Edward I, as Michael Prestwicke has suggested, was greatly concerned with preserving his rights as king, even taking off his crown at his coronation and swearing that he would not wear it again until he had recovered the lands and rights granted

away by his father.[122] This attitude may explain, at least in part, the strength of his desire to complete the conquest of Wales and lay claim to Scotland. In order to do so, Edward I was not unwilling to utilize whatever methods were available to him to enhance his potential for success, including justifying his actions through the historical precedent of King Arthur and confirming his authority through a symbolic demonstrations of his sovereignty over the Welsh peoples and their dead king.

The effectiveness of these acts on Welsh morale and belief is unclear, but their significance is unmistakable. In Edward I we have evidence of a medieval king who was not only capable of manipulating the folklore of his people, but who understood the intrinsic power that such an act could have. Centuries before William Bascom would articulate the functions of folklore within a culture, Edward I was already aware of its potential to validate a particular view point[123] (though he would likely not have understood it as such), and was using this awareness in a decisive, calculated manner.

His actions may be particularly interesting for those concerned with national identity, since Edward seems to be playing on the values and beliefs of Welsh culture when he performs his ceremony at the tomb of Arthur and takes possession of Arthur's crown. It could be suggested that the English king, at least, feels that a large part of Welsh identity is wrapped up in the legend of Arthur, despite the fact that Geoffrey had historicized him for the Normans, by that point. Something of English identity, too, is suggested in Edward's imperial attitude, his determination to gain authority over both Wales and Scotland, and thus of Britain as a whole, through whatever means he can. One important area of study for future

[122] Prestwicke, 35.

[123] In this sense, the term "validation" refers to the use of folklore to justify or support a particular point of view or practice of an individual or group. The other functions are: 1) compensation, 2) education, and 3) integration/social control.

research would therefore be a more intensive study of national identity during this crucial time in Wales and England, and how Edward I's actions, as seen here, may have contributed to or reflected this identity.

As this paper has illustrated, Edward I's actions during his reign were significant in numerous ways, allowing him to shape politics, and thus English history, in the direction of his choosing. That he chose the Arthurian legend as his instrument of choice in many cases and wielded it with such deliberate intention and clear recognition of its symbolic power should not only serve as a warning "of the power of myth to shape men's minds and motives, and thus to alter the fate of nations,"[124] as Morris suggests, but should also be a reminder of the ability of peoples of the past to exceed present expectations.

[124] Morris, 378.

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