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The Pound and The Hammer: An Analysis of the Effects of Finance on Edward I's Conquest of Wales and Scotland

Mackenzie Mohr

The idea of medieval conquest and war is one that has been immensely popular in modern media, especially over the past century. Whether in movies, novels, or television shows, this topic has been romanticized and adapted to a degree that often makes it difficult to remember the reality of the events and cultures upon which these adaptations are based. Additionally, in viewing the plethora of fantasy and medievalist media, it is important to remember that war and conquest were very real parts of medieval life. These wars and their consequences defined several aspects of modern society; in fact, today's geopolitical situation can arguably be seen as a culmination of these conflicts and wars, with today's borders and nation states defined by the results of a long history of violence and battle. This reality is most evident in the case of Europe, where centuries of war shaped a political landscape that is still very relevant to any discourse of modern politics. For example, the modern concept of the United Kingdom is by no means a recent invention, as entwined in its foundation are the results of centuries of medieval conflict and conquest, for it was the wars of multiple English kings that helped shape the political borders and ties still present today. Debatably, among the most significant contributions to the unification of the United Kingdom are King Edward I's wars of conquest, namely those for the principality of Wales and the kingdom of Scotland.

While these nations had been entangled for centuries prior to these wars, it was Edward I who bound them together under a single political overlordship. In fact, Edward would be the last king to rule over the entire British mainland, creating a unified landscape that lasted nearly three hundred years and served in part as the foundation of the modern United Kingdom (King and Etty 28). Edward I was famed for his great military success as well as his advancements in English law and politics, both of which can be seen in his endeavours in Wales and Scotland. Although Edward was successful in bringing Scotland and Wales under his rule, the circumstances surrounding the submission of the two nations were quite different. In his Welsh conquest—ended formally in 1284 with the Statute of Wales at Rhuddlan—Edward fully annexed and incorporated Wales into his kingdom by means of successful military conquest ("Statute of Wales" 422). However, his con-

quest of Scotland, which followed a series of conflicts eventually settled in 1305, was neither successful nor complete (King and Etty 28). Scotland was incorporated under Edward's leadership through a political surrender by the Scots, rather than by means of a decisive defeat; for this reason, the Scots were able to retain control of their land under an English administration.

The subject of why Edward was successful in conquering Wales but not Scotland has been much debated and discussed among scholars. Overall, however, the two are difficult to compare because the circumstances of Edward's kingdom had shifted drastically between the two conflicts, which occurred years apart. The financial situation of England was in a far worse state at the time of the Scottish conquest than it had been with Wales, due to years of warring and expensive castle building; additionally, the financial states of Wales and Scotland were very different, to the advantage of the Scots. Related to the resources available to each of the involved parties, the differences in the administrative structure and capability between Wales and Scotland were significant, with England facing a far more solidly developed administration in Scotland. Finally, and also related to the Crown's economic state, the military situation that Edward faced in each of his conquests was completely changed: the English troops were well supplied and reinforced in Wales, but in Scotland they faced difficulties with food supply and financing. These circumstances rendered the English unable to capture a solid foothold in Scotland before the supply difficulties of winter drove them back. All of these factors are intrinsically linked to crucial role that finances played in medieval warfare. Ultimately, it was the change in England's economic security at the time of each conquest, especially when met with Wales' lack of centralization in contrast to Scotland's well-established administration, that was the driving factor in the outcome of Edward's conquests.

One of the most essential resources to winning wars is money, and the conquests of Edward I were a testament to that fact, as the kingdom's financial situation played a critical role in his wars against Wales and Scotland and was crucial in determining the outcome of both. Money and resources affect the number of soldiers that can be employed, the duration of their employment, and their effectiveness in combat. Because of these factors, Edward's financial situation came into play in both conquests and demonstrated how drastically the circumstances of the kingdom had changed in the years between his wars in Wales and Scotland. In his conflict with Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the Prince of Wales, Edward's strong financial position—especially compared to that of Wales—was key to his overall victory, while his ability to create an effective supply line and replenish his troops

with Welshmen during his actual campaign was key in his military success. In contrast, Edward's efforts to crush a nationwide rebellion in his conflict with the Scots was a situation where Edward repeatedly faced financial crises due to years of war and extensive castle-building programs. This lack of financial resources thus hindered Edward's military strength and success in Scotland.

There were two wars involved in the conquest of Wales: a brief campaign in 1277 after tensions against Llywelyn came to a head, beginning with his refusal to pay homage to Edward; and a far more serious and expensive war beginning in 1282, in which Edward sought to completely subjugate the Welsh principality (Prestwich, Edward I 182). The first conflict was resolved fairly easily by the English through combat and was concluded by a peace treaty, through which Llywelyn formally recognized Edward's authority and severe indemnities were levied on the Welsh (Prestwich, Edward I 181). The second—and more significant—of the conflicts began in 1282, when the Welsh prince Dafydd, Llywelyn's brother, who supported Edward in his first attack, revolted after Edward did not supply adequate rewards for his service (Prestwich, Three Edwards 14). Llywelyn and a number of other Welsh lords then rose to support Dafydd against Edward (Prestwich, Three Edwards 14). The English quickly responded and saw much progress early in the campaign, but faced numerous defeats in the south of Wales and a serious loss at Anglesey (Prestwich, Edward I 188–192). However, the English rallied, receiving vital reinforcements from Gascony in November of 1282, and Llywelyn was killed while attempting to move out of Snowdonia, leading to disaster for the Welsh (Prestwich, Edward I 191–194). The resistance then quickly deteriorated, and after Edward took Dolwyddelan Castle and secured Snowdonia, Dafydd was soon captured and peace was made (Prestwich, Edward I 195–196).

While the English did achieve many important military victories in this war, it was Edward's vast resources that enabled him to defeat the Welsh—that, and also his ability to replenish and supply his troops. Edward's England was one that, compared to Wales, was highly populated and rather wealthy. Edward's first financial advantage was his ability to receive income from many sources. For example, in November 1282, summons were issued for county representatives to appear at assemblies to grant a taxation to fund the war; in Northampton such a tax was granted, thus providing Edward with significantly more funds going into the conflict (Prestwich, Edward I 197). Additionally, Edward was able to muster large numbers of paid soldiers—and even more who were unpaid, serving their feudal duty—indicating the substantial wealth of resources at his disposal (Prestwich, Edward I 196–197). The incomes of commerce, farming, and trade also supplied

Edward's coffers significantly. Analyzed comparatively, Edward's resources were far more substantial than those of Wales. Being far more sparsely populated and situated largely on rough, infertile lands, Wales had far fewer opportunities for generating income. For example, records show that Llywelyn earned a mere £17 annually from customs revenue, compared to Edward's £10,000 in the same period (Morris 136). To compound this difference, the Welsh faced extreme indemnities from the Treaty of Montgomery that established Llywelyn as Prince of Wales (Morris 136–137). While this financial situation put England at an extreme advantage over Wales in Edward's conquest, his ability to supply his troops proved to be critical in the finances of the war.

Similarly, the enemy that Edward faced in Wales was one that was significantly less politically developed than those in either England or Scotland, which would have serious effects on Edward's success in Wales. As R.R. Davies points out, "Llywelyn's principality was never more than a loose federation kept together by fear, success, and the force of his personality," and thus under pressure of the English, divisions soon became apparent (323). These divisions can be seen clearly in the first Welsh war, where Llywelyn's own brother Dafydd turned to Edward's cause. This benefited Edward greatly and would in the second war see Wales ultimately conquered. The division in the Welsh principality enabled Edward to maintain important Welsh allies, such as Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys. This too benefited Edward by enabling him to replenish his troops with Welshmen, notably while stationed at Rhuddlan (Prestwich, Edward I 186–190). While Edward took advantage of the tensions of the Welsh lords, the overall primitivity of the Welsh nation also improved Edward's efforts. Wales was very sparsely populated and still relied on self-sufficiency rather than on a market economy; furthermore, the use of money was still relatively uncommon, complicating Llywelyn's efforts to pose a nationwide resistance (Prestwich, Edward I 171). Similarly, as Michael Prestwich points out, "there was not the tradition of taxation which existed in England" (Edward I 173). This lack of taxation system would also cripple Llywelyn, providing much less income to fund his resistance. This situation that so benefited Edward in Wales would be completely different from that of Scotland, the latter being a well-established kingdom with more developed resources. This will be later demonstrated in the analysis of Edward's efforts in Scotland.

A major concern in any extended military venture is that of supplying troops in enemy territory. Due to his vast finances and resources, Edward was able to import a significant amount of provisions from England and Ireland. He was able to collect 1500 quarters of wheat and 2000 quarters of oats from each of

the English counties and even larger amounts of wheat and animals for food from Ireland and Gascony, providing a large store of provisions and supplies for his troops in the upcoming war (Prestwich, Edward I 198–199). Additionally, Edward was able to maintain steady supply lines as he progressed through Wales, a crucial variable in his victory. His allies along the Marches and the castles that he captured along the coast of Wales, such as Cardigan and Carmarthen, enabled Edward to stockpile supplies to feed his troops (Rowlands 43), which in turn enabled him to wage a longer campaign, even through the winter. Lacking this ability in the instance of Scotland would prove just as critical in his failure.

The financial state of the English Crown going into the Scottish conquest—as well as the situation in Scotland as a whole—was a stark contrast to that of the expedition into Wales. After King Alexander III of Scotland died, along with his only heir, Margaret, the Scots went to Edward to commit judgment upon which claimant had the greatest right: that of John Balliol or of Robert Bruce (King and Etty 16–19). Edward called representatives of the Scots to England, where he too would pass judgment and, in the end, Balliol was chosen and installed in 1292 (King and Etty 16–19). However, when growing tensions between the Scots and Edward came to a head, war broke out and Edward quickly moved through Scotland, where the resistance soon fell, following which Balliol submitted and was taken captive (King and Etty 20–22). Edward then established an English administration, which the Scots largely opposed (King and Etty 23–24). This lack of support became a public rebellion that was led by William Wallace and Andrew Murray, who were joined by a number of Scottish nobles, and earned substantial victory against the English puppet government at Stirling (King and Etty 23–24). In the summer of 1298, Edward quickly mustered a large expeditionary force and led it into Scotland, defeating Wallace at Falkirk. The conflict became a war of attrition and soon Edward faced financial difficulties, forcing him on a number of occasions to agree to truces with gains until 1302 (King and Etty 24–26). After this, Edward was able to muster enough forces to launch an expedition into Scotland, sustained even in winter. Then, in 1304, the Scots surrendered, although Edward had not by any means conquered the country (King and Etty 27). This lack of military success is significant and its difference from the Welsh campaign had much to do with the ultimate shift in Edward's financial situation

The Edward who invaded Scotland was very different Edward from the Edward who invaded Wales. This was a man who was economically strained, as is evident in the results of this war. Following his successful campaign in Wales, Edward famously engaged in an expansive castle-building program that yielded

some of the most beautiful castles in history. These castles, with a scale and grandeur that had never before been seen in England and Wales, were enormously expensive and their construction drained the Crown's finances significantly. So extreme were these expenses, that many of the castles, most notably Beaumaris, were left incomplete (Rowlands 52). Nonetheless, by 1301, well into the struggle with Scotland, the expenses of these castles and of the King's works in Wales reached some £80,000 (Rowlands 52). This financial situation was exacerbated by the expenses overall in his Welsh wars, including payment for soldiers, supplies, and loans taken by the Crown; the total of Edward's expenses in Wales, including the castles and his campaigns, reached £120,000 (Prestwich, Edward I 200). This debt considerably limited his ability to wage war in Scotland, hindering his capacity of employing and, far more importantly, feeding and sustaining armies.

Edward's financial difficulties and their disastrous effects on his attempt to subdue Scotland were well known to him. The chronicle of Peter Langtoft, recognized for its authority on the reign of Edward I, includes a response by Edward to his earls and barons in 1300 regarding the financial situation: "On another side, I say to you, I am without money, / Of which I must have aid of my land, / If I am to recommence the war of Scotland" (Langtoft 249). From this statement it is clear that Edward realized the necessity of funds to the continued campaign in Scotland and was in dire need of replenishment. This situation would affect Edward most in his attempt to sustain the conflict in the winter, where a lack of money—and therefore a lack of supplies and of food—would force Edward to contend with desertion and make numerous retreats, thereby ceding any gains, driving his costs even higher, and pushing military victory further away.

To understand how the financial difficulties of Edward's England in his campaign against Scotland were exacerbated, it is important to consider the nature of his military approach, which differed significantly from that of his conquest in Wales. While Edward was quickly feeling the economic stress on his campaign due to his previous expenses, he faced a much more formidable task in feeding his men because of the increased size of his force. In Wales, Edward rarely had more than a few thousand men in a single army, with the total of his infantry reaching a height of 15,000 men when it swelled at Rhuddlan, and, considering the aforementioned accessibility of supplies, the English did not have any severe difficulties feeding troops (Morris 155). In Scotland, however, the English mustered much larger forces on many occasions. For example, in response to the Scottish victory at Stirling, where the English puppet administration suffered disastrously, Edward mustered an enormous force of some 28,000 men in the summer of 1298 (King

and Etty 25). Amassing the resources necessary to supply and maintain this force was extremely difficult, especially on a regime already facing financial stress. While this muster did prove successful at the crucial victory at Falkirk, its funding and supply issue grew quickly out of hand and Edward was forced to cease his expedition until the following winter (King and Etty 25). The Scots recaptured much of what the English had gained, and, when Edward was once again able to raise a fighting force in preparation for the upcoming winter campaign, his muster resulted in a pitiful number of troops, made worse by numerous desertions (King and Etty 25).

This problem of low recruitment and desertion would become a dangerous precedent that was repeated multiple times in Edward's attempt at conquest, occurring almost annually until 1303 (King and Etty 26). After a significant royal campaign in 1300 when Caerlaverock castle was captured and the Scots were defeated, the English army soon deserted and a truce was made (King and Etty 26). Similarly, in 1301, when Edward initiated an attack that captured Bothwell castle with his son, the future Edward II, he again faced widespread desertion after suffering more financial difficulties, resulting in yet another truce (King and Etty 25–26). Andy King and Claire Etty's analysis of the situation perhaps summarizes it best: "Essentially, whenever Edward invaded, the Scots could afford simply to wait until he was forced to go away again" (King and Etty 26). As a result of these repeated desertions, retreats, and re-musterings, Edward's finances were stretched to dangerous extremes, especially considering the enormous expenses necessary to feed, in short order, three large expeditions.

In addition to the financial burdens of upkeep and supply, Edward faced a serious challenge regarding the exhaustion of his soldiers and his people. Wales was only the beginning of Edward's military career as reigning king; by the time the conquest of Scotland came about, the soldiers of England had faced decades of regular warfare. A decade after his conquest of Wales in 1284, Edward went to war with King Philip IV of France over Gascony in 1294, suppressed a significant revolt in Wales in the same year, and began war with the Scots soon after (Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 26). The toll on the soldiers would have been significant, not merely in terms of the deaths and the need to replace casualties, but also of physical exhaustion. This fairly short period of time was choked with several major conflicts, creating an environment of high stress. In similar situations where a people have been subjected to the stress of extended periods of war, substantial detrimental effects can be seen not only in the soldiers but also in the general population, where public emotion is strained and tensions run high. It is difficult to

imagine that this situation would be any different in the thirteenth century; in fact, the reality that Edward was able to maintain public morale and the degree of support that he did amid such levels of conflict and expenditure is testament in itself to the aptitude of Edward as war-maker and lawgiver.

Adding to the issue of exhausted troops was the continuance of the war over Gascony. Edward was leading a campaign in Flanders against the French when the Scottish rebellion defeated the English puppet administration at Stirling Bridge in September of 1297 (Morris 307). Pressure on Edward in light of the defeat in Scotland would have been significant. In Flanders, he was facing infighting among his men, defeat and desertion on the part of his allies against the French, as well as the threat of rebellion among locals in Flanders (Morris 307). He remained in Flanders to defend Gascony, even after a two-month truce was issued with France, while the earls and barons of England prepared to lead an attack against the Scots (Morris 308–309). In this, Edward's forces were stretched even thinner until a truce of two years over Gascony was issued in early 1298, upon which Edward returned to England and prepared to lead the attack on the Scots (Morris 309). With his forces now consolidated and able to focus solely on the affairs of Scotland, Edward was prepared to assert his rule over the Scots, even given the extent of his financial and logistical difficulties.

Throughout all of the issues Edward faced in Scotland—from a drained treasury to repeated desertion and retreat, alongside complications in feeding and supplying massive forces—it is not difficult to see the difference with regards to his conquest of Wales. However, beyond the vast significance of these events was one final aspect that caused Edward more difficulty in conquering Scotland than Wales: the Scots' level of administrative development. As discussed earlier, Wales was a relatively underdeveloped nation, which greatly hindered Llywelyn's ability to defend himself. Scotland's circumstances were the opposite. Scotland was a well-established and, for the most part, unified kingdom (Morris 242-243). In Wales, many areas that were not exposed to English influence were only just beginning to develop towns (Prestwich, Edward I 171), while Scotland was founding towns and burghs and already modelling itself after the English system (Morris 242–243). Culturally, Scotland's kings and nobles shared much of England's chivalric society (King and Etty 14). By the time of Edward's conquest, Scotland was well recognized by England itself as a civilized nation (Morris 243). Scotland had a well-established idea of law and custom, as can be seen by their language in the Treaty of Birgham with England in the late thirteenth century. This treaty, written in relation to Edward's proposal to marry Margaret, the child heir of King

Alexander III, to his own son, Edward II, set what the Scottish saw as guarantees against the subversion of their independence to England, ensuring that "the kingdom of Scotland shall remain separate and divided from the kingdom of England" ("Treaty of Birgham" 467). Through this language, it is demonstrated that Scotland's idea of itself, as well as its laws and customs, was well established as separate and independent from England. That Scotland was far more developed than Wales as a society is made clear by these examples.

The effects of this social, political, and cultural development are significant in Edward's attempt to conquer the kingdom of Scotland. The well-established towns and, crucially, the relative unity as a nation under a recognized crown would greatly facilitate the coordination of Scottish lords. Even when without a sitting king—following Balliol's capture, a regency of guardians led the kingdom in his name—the networks of communication and transportation would already have been established and used to the benefit of the Scots' resistance, thus enabling the Scots to more effectively defend and mobilize against Edward (King and Etty 24–25).

Scotland also had a much stronger economy than that of Wales. As previously mentioned, much of Wales still relied on self-sufficiency rather than on a market economy and its currency had limited use. This was not the case in Scotland. The presence of a market economy and a more widespread use of hard currency greatly benefited the Scottish war effort and posed to Edward a much greater challenge of conquest (King and Etty 24–27). As has been demonstrated, the financial and political situation of Scotland was far more highly developed than that of Wales, which made a significant difference in the fortunes of Edward's conquest, and the presence of a unified Scotland rendered it much more difficult to capture than Wales.

In conclusion, the circumstances surrounding Edward I's attempted conquest of Scotland were completely different from those of his success in Wales years earlier. The state of the English Crown had changed dramatically between the two ventures, and this shift was responsible for the difference in outcomes between Wales and Scotland. Knitted inseparably to Edward's success in Wales and military failure in Scotland were the financial states of the three nations. Edward faced Wales with a seemingly infinite wealth of resources that allowed him to conquer the nation outright, but, in Scotland, years of war and castle construction had drained the English Crown's treasury and Edward lacked the resources to sustain a military conquest. Similarly, in Wales, Edward faced an opponent who was far less economically threatening than the one he faced in Scotland. Edward also had

the challenge of supplying and feeding his armies in Scotland, where he could not maintain the system of supply lines he made use of in Wales.

Additionally, in Scotland, Edward fought with much larger expeditionary forces, often more than doubling the size of his forces in Wales, which posed a far more serious issue in supplying victuals. The cost of upkeep on these larger forces placed further strain on Edward's finances and caused, on multiple occasions, widespread desertion in the ranks. Come winter, Edward was forced to cede most of his meagre gains in Scotland because of desertion. The English also faced the issue of exhaustion among the troops caused by decades of intense warfare, to a much greater extent than did the Scots.

Finally, the change in circumstances surrounding Edward's conquests was dictated by the type of enemy he fought. In Wales, he found a largely underdeveloped and divided enemy; in Scotland, he encountered the opposite: a united kingdom, well established socially, financially, and culturally. These differences in circumstances surrounding each of his conquests made all of the difference to Edward and had major effects on the wars' outcomes. It was because of this large shift in Edward's financial situation, coupled with the difference in the nations he fought, that he was successful in his conquest of Wales but failed in his attempt to conquer Scotland.

Despite the disparity of Edward's outcomes, it is important to remember that, in the end, he was successful in asserting his rule over both Wales and Scotland, albeit under different circumstances. Edward was and is rightfully famed for his military success and his advancement of English law and politics. For him, war was a necessity, a means to protect what he saw as rightfully his and to expand his power over others. War was not a method of escapist entertainment but a very real and very important part of life. Too often modern society is swept up in its fascination of romanticized medieval war, forgetting that the reality of war was brutal, ugly, and expensive. It was an endeavour that often involved the significant financial commitment of the wealth of an entire kingdom. The real war was regularly fought in the ledger book, making ends meet to fund the mere possibility of changing dominion, borders, and history. In the idealized modern popular culture, the inspiring and heroic scores all too often drown out the reality: the sound of a penny, a pound, or a dollar dictating the course and outcome of warfare.

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