

THE MAKING OF A FRONTIER SOCIETY:
NORTHEASTERN WALES BETWEEN THE NORMAN AND EDWARDIAN CONQUESTS

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ABSTRACT

In the last thirty years the field of frontier studies has shifted away from viewing frontiers as fortress lines to studying them as zones of cultural interaction. Northeastern Wales, on the periphery of English territory, exemplifies the concept of a borderland or frontier because of its geographical isolation and history as a wasteland. Some aspects of life in the region remained firmly Welsh, such as the rural agricultural and pastoral communities organized around Welsh clan groups. Religious life, however, quickly became dominated by the English church hierarchy in Canterbury. Northeastern Wales, therefore, was a place where new Anglo-Norman institutions combined with traditional rural Welsh settlement patterns and a mixed Anglo-Norman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Welsh population. The result was a zone of cultural interaction, continuity, and change.