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Iago *ab* Idwal Foel

(*d. c.* 979)

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Iago *ab* Idwal Foel (*d. c.* 979), king of Gwynedd, was the son of Idwal Foel *ab* Anarawd, king of Gwynedd, who died in 942. Iago jointly ruled Gwynedd and dependent regions in north Wales from 950 until 979, when he was possibly slain. On Idwal's death the kingdom had come under the rule of the famous Hywel Dda *ap* Cadell, king of Deheubarth in south Wales, who expelled Iago and his brother Ieuaf. When Hywel Dda himself died in 949 or 950 these sons of Idwal Foel sought to reassert their claim to their father's northern kingdom, and the early 950s were characterized by a series of encounters between them and the sons of Hywel who ruled the southern kingdom. In 950 they fought at Nant Carno, in Arwystli, and according to some accounts the sons of Idwal were the victors, thus securing their hereditary position in the north. Two years later they were sufficiently strong to take the fight into Dyfed twice, and in 952 or 953 they (or according to some accounts, vikings) slew one Dyfnwal (or Dyfnwallon), a possible son of Hywel Dda. In 954 or 955 Owain *ap* Hywel and his brothers retaliated and the two groups met at Llanrwst (in the Conwy valley, Gwynedd). Iago and Ieuaf were probably the victors, slaying Edwin *ap* Hywel Dda and subsequently raiding Ceredigion.

For most of these early actions Iago and Ieuaf are simply referred to jointly as the 'sons of Idwal' and it seems that they shared political power in north Wales. Of the two there are hints that Iago was the senior or more powerful brother: thus, it was he who witnessed a charter of the English king Eadred in 955. Relations between the brothers were by no means always harmonious. In 969 Iago imprisoned Ieuaf and, according to one chronicle, had him hanged, though it is also possible that Ieuaf survived until 988. Iago may have thereby established his dominance in Gwynedd, but it appears that Hywel *ab* Ieuaf then sought to assume his father's position. Thus Iago and his nephew Hywel were among the Welsh rulers who submitted to Edgar at Chester soon after his 'coronation' at Bath in 973 and rowed the English king up and down the Dee. The dynastic rivalry continued apace. A year later, in 974, Hywel exacted revenge upon his fratricidal uncle when Iago was expelled from his kingdom (it is not specified by whom) and Hywel ruled in his place. Iago seems to have succeeded in re-establishing himself at least by the end of the decade. In 978 Hywel (with English support) raided the church at Clynnog Fawr and the Llŷn peninsula: this would seem to

be a surprising act for a north Welsh ruler unless these areas were under the rule of a rival, in this case probably Iago. In 979 Iago was taken captive by Hywel (or by vikings) and again Hywel ruled in his stead. This is the last record of Iago and he may well have died soon afterwards, perhaps at Hywel's instigation. This inference is supported by the fact that in the following year it was his son Custennin Ddu who, with the help of Godred Haraldsson (Gofraid mac Arailt), king of Man, raided the Llŷn peninsula and Anglesey, no doubt against his rival Hywel.

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