

The Autograph of Anna of Rus', Queen of France

Andrzej Poppe and Danuta Poppe

The partially preserved foundational fresco of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, painted in 1044–46, shows the family retinue of Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise facing the throne of Christ. One of Yaroslav's younger daughters, Anna, is among those depicted in this composition.

Royal daughters were usually married off in order of seniority. The year 1051 is considered the date of Anna's marriage to Henry I of France, based on the date of birth of their eldest son, Philip, in 1052.¹ In this connection it is worth mentioning Hugh Capet's unsuccessful efforts to obtain the hand of Anna, a Porphyrogenita sister of Byzantine emperors, for his son Robert, Henry's father. In 987–88 he was beaten out by Volodymyr the Great.² The Capetian ambitions to establish matrimonial ties with the Byzantine rulers were realized only by Hugh's grandson, who married the granddaughter of the ruler of Rus' and his wife, Anna Porphyrogenita.

At first Henry had no luck in finding a wife. His betrothal to the undamaged Matilda, the daughter of Emperor Conrad II, did not lead to marriage because his fiancée died. Henry married another Matilda, a niece of Emperor Henry III, but she died in 1043, a year after their wedding. A widower at the age of 36, the king had to find a new wife. Although opinions differ, the matchmaking mission he sent to Rus' can be dated as occurring in 1048 and returning in 1049. It consisted of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, including bishops Roger of Châlons and Gautier of Meaux. The retinue accompanying the bride-to-be to France bore gifts from Yaroslav the Wise—relics of St. Clement and his disciple Phoebus that had

¹ Roger Hallu uncritically amassed considerable biographical material in writing *Anne de Kiev, Reine de France* (Rome: Università cattolica ucraina, 1973), 228; R. H. Bautier put in order in his "Anne de Kiev, reine de France et la politique royale au XI^e siècle: Etude critique de la documentation," *Revue des études slaves* 57 (1985): 539–63.

² D. Poppe and A. Poppe, "Dziewosłoby o porfirigenetkę Annę," in *Cultus et Cognition: Studia z dziejów średniowiecznej kultury Aleksandrowi Gieysztorowi w 40-lecie pracy naukowej* (Warsaw: PWN, 1978), 451–68.

found their way to Kyiv from Chersonesus.³ Henry's marriage to Anna was exceptionally happy, and she bore him three sons and a daughter. The couple's good relations are indicated by the mentions of Anna in the king's documents, as well as by her active participation in France's religious life and ecclesiastical affairs, as attested in a letter from Pope Nicholas II.⁴ This happy and tranquil period in Henry's life did not last long. He died on 4 August 1060 at the age of fifty-two.

Contrary to the dynastic tradition of the Carolingians and the first Capetians, the first-born son of Henry and Anna was given a Christian name—Philip—when he was baptized. According to an early medieval legend, the apostle Philip spread the word of God among the Scythians north of the Black Sea. Those Scythians were also identified with the Rus'. It was balanced by the names given to the couple's two younger sons: Robert inherited the name of his grandfather, and Hugh, that of his great-grandfather, the founder of the Capetian dynasty.

One should accept the well-founded opinion that it was Anna who had the decisive influence on the choice of the name Philip, managing to convince Henry to diverge from dynastic tradition in this case.⁵ She was guided by Byzantine custom adopted in Rus', according to which the name of a patron saint was conferred at baptism without regard to the temporal name—in this case, that of a prince. The choice of the name of the apostle Philip was also apt because he was venerated throughout the Christian world and churches dedicated to him were built in both Constantinople and Rome.

The name of Henry and Anna's first-born son, which was at once Christian and royal, entered the repertoire of names of the Capetians and, later, other dynasties. Given the context of works about Alexander the Great, which were popular at the time, there may have been a political subtext associated with his father's name—an agenda of uniting the

³ Baudouin de Gaiffier, "Odalric de Reims, ses manuscrits et les reliques de saint Clément à Cherson," *Études de civilisation médiévale, IXe–XIIe siècles : mélanges offerts à Edmond-René Labande à l'occasion de son départ à la retraite et du XXe anniversaire du C.É.S.C.M. par ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves* (Poitiers: CESC, 1974), 315–20. Ludolf Müller is of the opinion that the accompanying retinue included Ilarion, the future metropolitan of Kyiv (1050); cf. his "Eine westliche liturgische Formel in Ilarions Lobpreis auf Vladimir," in *Die Werke des Metropoliten Ilarion*, ed. Ludolf Müller (Munich: W. Fink, 1971), 80–86.

⁴ Frédéric Sæhnée, *Catalogue des actes d'Henri Ier, roi de France (1031–1060)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1907), nos. 120, 123; papal letter written by Peter Damiani (October 1059), *Patrologia Latina* 144: 447B–448C.

⁵ See Jean Dunbabin, "What's in a Name? Philip, King of France," *Speculum* 68, no. 4 (1993): 949–67.

French lands under one scepter on the model of King Philip, who laid the foundations of his successor's power by uniting the Greek lands under Macedonian supremacy.

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Anna was a young and attractive widow “en âge d’avoir et de donner de l’amour,” as a mid-seventeenth-century French historian described her.⁶ This is evidenced by an affair she had with Raoul de Péronne, the count of Crépy. In order to be able to marry his beloved, the count accused his wife, Eléonore, of adultery and then staged Anna’s abduction and married her, making her his countess. A scandal broke out, and the abandoned wife complained to the papal curia. The ecclesiastical investigation spared Anna herself. After all, having allowed herself to be abducted, she saw to the ratification of the new liaison with a church ceremony, an uncommon event among the aristocracy of those times; only in the late eleventh century did it begin to prefer ecclesiastical marriage.⁷

Of the documents drafted with Anna’s participation during her regency on behalf of the underage dauphin Philip, the royal deed of 1063 for the Abbey of St. Crépy le Grand has attracted particular attention because it alone bears the Cyrillic signature, undoubtedly in Anna’s hand, АНАРЪИНА or АНАРЪИНА. It appears beneath three crosses, two of which are larger—one inscribed by Baudouin of Flanders, acting as regent, and the other with the monogram of the young king a smaller one made by the queen. In all other documents Anna’s signature is limited to her handwritten cross with the scribal annotation “subscriptum Annae reginae.”⁸

This document is remarkable in another respect: it does not mention Anna in the text itself. That is no accident, given the notoriety of the scandal at the time. When the document was being drafted in the royal chancery, it was decided to conceal Anna’s role in it, most likely under the pretext that the wife of the Count of Crépy was no longer the dowager queen. On the other hand, in the presence of the underage king, who had a strong emotional attachment to his mother, one did not dare object to her signing with a cross. But Anna had no intention of yielding her

⁶ François Mezeray, *Histoire de France*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1643), quoted in Hallu, *Anne de Kiev*, 101–102, 181–82.

⁷ Korbinian Ritzer, *Formen, Riten und religiöses Brauchtum der Eheschliessung in den christlichen Kirchen des ersten Jahrtausends*, 2d ed. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981), 52–57; Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre: Le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris: Hachette, 1981), 40–82, 95–116.

⁸ *Recueil des actes de Philippe Ier de France, 1059–1108*, ed. M. Prou (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1908), 47–49 (no. 16); Hallu, *Anne de Kiev*, 169–97.

prerogatives, and, as shown by the document of 1065, she continued to be regarded as queen and guardian of her underaged son.⁹ She must have noted the omission of her person in the deed and immediately reacted to that show of disrespect by emphasizing her presence and her right to be there, emphatically and unequivocally. Having marked her cross in the presence of the doubtlessly startled witnesses, with the same pen she almost carved her Cyrillic signature, АНАРЪИНА, into the parchment.

The reconstruction of events proposed here has greater support in the sources than the rather naive supposition that Anna wanted to show off and boast of her literacy, which in turn was supposed to evince the vanity of the crowned lady from Rus'. Anna was not only literate in her native tongue: having spent some fourteen or fifteen years in France and taken part in issuing royal privileges to monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions, she had also mastered Latin, which is evident from her immediate grasp of the content of the document drawn up in that language. The proud Rus'ian lady, a granddaughter of Volodymyr the Great and Anna Porphyrogenita and a sister-in-law of Princess Gertrude-Elizabeth of Kyiv (who was a great-granddaughter of Otto II), acted as befitted a true queen. It is one of history's abundant paradoxes that a signature with a tinge of scandal, given the circumstances attending it, served after many centuries as proof of age-old friendship and rapprochement between two European nations. At the dawn of the twentieth century the document of 1063 with Anna's Cyrillic signature helped establish a tradition on which the *Entente cordiale* between Russia and France was based. A facsimile was presented to Tsar Nicholas II during his visit to Paris in 1896.

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Anna's signature has evoked particular interest among linguists, both Romanic and Slavic. At least twenty articles have been published on this subject¹⁰ and many apt and helpful observations have been made, but the very reading of the signature must raise reservations. The crucial factor here is the phonetic reading in the word "РЪИНА" or "РЪИНА" of the jer that appears after the letter "P," inasmuch as it determines the sound of this utterance.

⁹ *Recueil des actes de Philippe Ier*, 51–53 (no. 18); Hallu, *Anne de Kiev*, 188. On 26 January 1065 Anna accompanied her son to Orléans, and two years later, in 1067, to Melun. This time the chancery did not fail to note on both occasions "*subscriptum Annae reginae*."

¹⁰ Danuta Poppe and Andrzej Poppe, "Anna regina Francorum: Przyczynek paleograficzny," *Studia i Materiały z Historii Kultury Materialnej* (Warsaw) 71 (2006): 246.

The Cyrillic alphabet has two special letters called jers (ѣ, ѓ), designated as reduced vowels. At the dawn of old Slavic literature, they represented sounds similar but not identical to the vowels *o* and *e*. The importance of the written jer—and there is general agreement on this point—lies in its representation of the eleventh-century Rus' vernacular.¹¹ Hence it is critical to determine whether the jer in Anna's signature is the back or the front jer.

Anna's signature (see the accompanying reproduction of the document and the detail showing her signature) has often been redrawn, not very accurately for the most part. Paleographic observations are rare and usually superficial and verging on the dilettantish, for instance, when it was claimed on the basis of the letters *N* and *H* that this is a hybrid of Latin and Cyrillic letters, when in fact what we have here is the purest *ustav* based on uncial Greek letters. There was no admission of the possibility that the jer in Anna's signature could be a front jer, even though paleographic analysis of the writing system of those times gives every possible proof of this.

In terms of the shape of the letters, Anna's signature is close to the script of the Ostromir Gospel of 1056–57, but the shape of the front jer is characterized by a longer horizontal stroke (serif) that resembles the shape of that letter in some eleventh- and twelfth-century graffiti on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod and in much more numerous local birch-bark inscriptions dating from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.¹² One may therefore conclude that the front jer with an elongated horizontal serif appears more frequently in inscriptions by individuals, which may also be determined by the choice of writing material and implement: it was difficult to produce uniform letters when scoring with a burin on hard material. By contrast, the script of professional scribes, who wrote mainly on parchment with a pen dipped in ink, was characteristically regular. Anna wrote her signature with a pen. The line thickness of the letter *б* allows us to deduce that she wrote with an even

¹¹ Aleksei Shakhmatov, *Ocherki drevneishego perioda istorii russkago yazyka* (Petrograd: Otdelenie russkago yazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1915), 203; Kristoffer Nyrop, *Grammaire historique de la langue française*, 4th ed. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1939), § 253 (1st ed., 1904, p. 178); among more recent studies is an article by George Y. Shevelov, "On the So-called Signature of Queen Ann of France (1063)," in his *In and around Kiev* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), 44–51. The state of knowledge at the turn of the twentieth century about Anna's autograph is discussed in Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus', c. 950–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108.

¹² V. L. Yanin and A. A. Zalizniak, *Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste (iz raskopok 1990–1996 gg.)* (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 2000), 208, plate 34.

stroke without raising the pen. Beginning on the left of the horizontal serif, she could have elongated it unduly in a fit of irritation.

It should also be noted that Anna's signature, following Greek and Cyrillic writing practice, ties the words together. This is yet another proof that Anna was fluent in reading and writing Cyrillic. Suggestions that her level of fluency was limited to rendering the Old French "*reine*" or transcribing the Latin "*regina*" (with omission of the elided *g*) by means of a few Cyrillic letters cannot be taken seriously.

Paleography shows that the jer in Anna's signature can be the front jer, dispels the doubts raised in the literature on this question, and opens up new vistas for linguistic research.¹³

The mystery of Anna's unique Cyrillic signature on the parchment of a royal document is thus readily explained. Meeting with the Regency Council, the queen mother, having familiarized herself with the contents of the document, noted the absence of the formula "*subscriptum Annae reginae*" where she was to make the sign of the cross according to chancery practice. She reacted spontaneously. Having crossed out her monogram (the smaller cross on the photograph), she amplified it with the bold flourish of her signature. Differing strikingly in size (72 mm in length) from the minuscule Latin text, it made a substantial point: this was Anna's emotional response to the attempt to eliminate her from the Regency Council and an assertion of her status of *consors regni*, acquired during the lifetime of her royal husband. In light of this, this seemingly curious signature emerges as an important primary source.

Translated by Andrij Hornjatkevych

¹³ For details, see Poppe and Poppe, "Anna regina Francorum," 239–46. We are indebted to Boris A. Uspensky for pointing out that in the oldest South Slavic manuscripts the shape of the two jers, ѣ and ѣ, is not always differentiated. Worth noting in this regard is the fundamental importance of paleography—an auxiliary discipline so often neglected in university curricula—for philologists and historians.