

The Grand Princely Family Fresco in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, and the Identity of Agatha the Wife of Edward Atheling: The Search Continues

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I. Introduction

The question of the parentage of Agatha, the wife of the eleventh-century romantic figure Edward Atheling (or Edward the Exile), is not definitively settled to the satisfaction of all medieval historians and genealogical scholars.¹ A strong case for settling this question was made by Norman W. Ingham, in a long and detailed article published in the journal *Russian History*, “Has a Missing Daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi Been Found?”² As the title of his article indicated, Ingham argued for an identification of Agatha as a heretofore unidentified daughter of Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kyiv from 1016 to 1018 and again from 1019 to his death in 1054.

One of the things that Ingham took into account in developing his theory of Agatha’s

¹In a 2010 Internet article on “Agatha, Wife of Eadweard the Exile” – on *The Henry Project* website – Stewart Baldwin offers a thorough summary, and a careful analysis, of the various theories that have been set forth over the years, in scholarly articles, regarding Agatha’s origin and identity. Baldwin’s article is at sbaldw.home.mindspring.com/hproject/prov/agath000.htm

At a more popular level, two of the most trusted compendia of the medieval royal ancestries of those seventeenth-century settlers in the North American colonies who are known to have had such ancestry, do not agree in their conclusions regarding Agatha’s parentage. According to the eighth edition of *Ancestral Roots*, Agatha was “probably dau[ghter] of Iaroslav I, Grand Prince of Kiev, by his wife Irina (Ingigerd) of Sweden. This parentage for Agatha is now the most probable” (Frederick Lewis Weis et al., *Ancestral Roots of Certain American Colonists Who Came to America before 1700* [eighth edition] [Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2004], 2. The eighth edition was prepared by William R. Beall and Kaleen E. Beall). But the more recently-published *Royal Ancestry* states only that “Edward the Ætheling” was married to “Agatha, kinswoman of Henry III, Holy Roman Emperor” (Douglas Richardson, *Royal Ancestry: A Study in Colonial and Medieval Families* [six volumes] [Salt Lake City: 2013], IV:576). A less reliable compendium that is nevertheless often consulted by genealogy hobbyists, *Royalty for Commoners*, acknowledges that “The parentage of Agatha, wife of Edward ‘Atheling,’ has been under serious discussion for several decades” – although the author of this work seems not to be conversant with the most recent scholarship on this question. He claims that “the two prevailing views” are the “Hungarian” and the “German.” He supports the “German” view, according to which he describes Agatha as “Agatha von Braunschweig, res[ident] of West Friesland,” and identifies her as the daughter of “Ludolf (Ludwig) von Braunschweig, Count in the Derlingo; Margarave of West Friesland,” and his wife “Gertrude von Egisheim” (Roderick W. Stuart, *Royalty for Commoners: The Complete Known Lineage of John of Gaunt, Son of Edward III, King of England, and Queen Philippa* [fourth edition] [Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2002], 170).

²Norman W. Ingham, “Has a Missing Daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi Been Found?,” *Russian History* 25:3 (Fall 1998), 231-70. This article built on an earlier and shorter piece by Ingham, “A Slavist’s View of Agatha, Wife of Edward the Exile, as a Possible Daughter of Yaroslav the Wise,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 152 (April 1998), 217-23. That article, in turn, was inspired by, and sought to lend support to, an earlier piece by René Jetté, published in the same journal, “Is the Mystery of the Origin of Agatha, Wife of Edward the Exile, Finally Solved?” (150 [1996], 417-32).

identity, is the historical existence of a ktetor (donor or patron) fresco in the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, which was built by Yaroslav. According to its original eleventh-century appearance, this fresco was comprised of three sections or panels. The center section, in the rear of the nave and directly above the western doorway or main entrance of the cathedral, featured an image of the Lord Jesus Christ, probably enthroned. We know that such an image of Jesus was originally to be found in the middle of this center section of the fresco from “the testimonies of Rus pilgrims of the XII-XIV centuries, according to which over the Western doors of St. Sophia they saw an icon of the Saviour.”³ Also on this center section of the fresco, to the left of the image of Christ (from the viewer’s perspective), was a representation of Grand Prince Volodymyr the Great (Yaroslav’s father), and to the left of Volodymyr’s image was a representation of Yaroslav, holding in his left hand a model of the cathedral that he was presenting to Christ. The portrayals of Volodymyr and Yaroslav as here described were seen and sketched by the Dutch artist Abraham van Westervelt in 1651. To the right of the image of Christ was, in all likelihood, a representation of Grand Princess Olha (Volodymyr’s grandmother and Yaroslav’s great-grandmother), and to the right of this hypothesized image of Olha was a representation of Grand Princess Ingegerd (or Iryna), Yaroslav’s second wife. The portrayal of Ingegerd was seen and sketched by van Westervelt in 1651.

To the left of this center section of the fresco, on the south wall of the cathedral, was another section, on which four figures were portrayed, representing four of Yaroslav and Ingegerd’s children. To the right of the center section, on the north wall, was a third section of the fresco, also portraying four figures, representing four additional children of Yaroslav. These left and right sections of the ktetor fresco, with the eight figures that they together pictured, were likewise seen and sketched by van Westervelt, according to the way they appeared in 1651.⁴

The center section of the ktetor fresco no longer exists, except for a small trace of the image of Yaroslav.⁵ The left section does exist today, and is a popular attraction for visitors to the cathedral. According to its current appearance, this left section seems to portray – and by its twentieth-century restorers was intended to portray – four daughters of Yaroslav.⁶ Speaking of this left section of the Saint Sophia Cathedral ktetor fresco, Ingham said that the images of “four of the daughters are relatively well preserved.”⁷ He considered this artistic portrayal ostensibly of four daughters of Grand Prince Yaroslav to be significant for his theory that Agatha was one of those daughters, since from medieval documentary sources the identity of only three daughters of Yaroslav are known. This would mean, then, that according to the fresco, Yaroslav had an

³Andriy M. Domanovsky, “St. Sophia of Kyiv Cathedral’s Millennium in Contemporary Ukrainian Historiography (A Critical Survey),” *Newsletter of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University*, No. 1138 (2014), 9 (published in English); online at dspace.univer.kharkov.ua/bitstream/123456789/10308/2/domanovsky.pdf

⁴See illustrations 1 and 2 at the conclusion of this essay.

⁵See the photograph in Sergei A. Vysotsky, *Secular Frescos of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1989), 74 (published in Russian).

⁶See illustration 5 at the conclusion of this essay.

⁷Ingham, “Has a Missing Daughter of Yaroslav Mudryi Been Found?,” 213.

additional unaccounted-for daughter. Ingham then argued, on the basis of various strands of circumstantial and indirect evidence, that Agatha was in fact that previously unaccounted-for daughter.

Other knowledgeable researchers concurred in Ingham's conclusion. One of them was Igor Sklar, who summarized the evidence for this identification by noting – with respect to the purported four daughters of Yaroslav pictured on the surviving left section of the fresco – that

Russian chronicles do not mention any of them. Foreign sources, however, permit us to identify them with: 1) Anastasia the Queen of Hungary; 2) Anna the Queen of France; 3) Elisaveta the Queen of Norway. What happened with the fourth daughter has long been a puzzle. Several years ago it was proposed that Agatha, the wife of Edward the Exile, was this “lost princess.” Many chroniclers point out that Agatha was a Hungarian Queen's sister, and the only Hungarian Queen available is Anastasia Yaroslavna. The marriage [of Agatha and Edward] took place ca. 1043 in Kiev, where Edward was an exile.⁸ Anastasia married Andrew of Hungary under similar circumstances several years before that. It is remarkable that all the daughters of Yaroslav had Greek names. Agatha was the name of the aunt of Yaroslav's Byzantine stepmother; [Yaroslav's grandson] Vladimir Monomakh also had a daughter named Agatha. Edward and Agatha's children had either traditional English (Edgar) or Swedish (Christina, Margaret) names. The Russian princess's mother was indeed a Swede. And to crown it all, one of the English chroniclers says that Edward's wife was a noblewoman from Rus. The only conflicting piece of evidence is the chronicler's phrase that Edward's wife was a relative of Emperor Heinrich. This could be a misunderstanding of later chroniclers; but we should keep in mind that at the time when the chronicler wrote this, the wife of Emperor Heinrich IV [Eupraxia of Kiev] was indeed a granddaughter of Yaroslav and so a niece of the “lost princess.”⁹

⁸Christian Raffensperger, in *Ties of Kinship: Genealogy and Dynastic Marriage in Kyivan Rus'* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), writes that Agatha and Edward were married “ca. 1028” (202 [table 3]). But a marriage year of 1028 for Agatha and Edward is too early, in view of the fact that their son Edgar was said (by Orderic Vitalis) to be the same age as Robert of Normandy, who was born around 1050 or 1051 (Baldwin); and in view of the fact that their daughter Margaret married King Malcolm III Canmore of Scotland in 1068 or 1069 (Richardson, IV:576), which would put Margaret's likely year of birth somewhere between 1047 and 1053. It is also generally accepted that Edward Atheling was born in 1016 or 1017 (Ingham, “Has a Missing Daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi Been Found?,” 234), so that he would have been only 11 or 12 years old in 1028. A better approximation for the time of Agatha and Edward's wedding would be “in the mid-1040s” (Ingham, “Has a Missing Daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi Been Found?,” 264). (In personal correspondence Raffensperger has accepted the soundness of this criticism.)

⁹Igor Sklar's post “Regarding Edward Atheling's Father-in-Law,” which I have edited slightly for style, was published in the online Google forum [soc.genealogy.medieval at groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/soc.genealogy.medieval/F3XNeGKAdeU](https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/soc.genealogy.medieval/F3XNeGKAdeU)

Raffensperger, who also agrees with Ingham's identification, slightly overstates his point – with respect to one of the bases for that identification – when he writes that “Agafija's heritage is recorded in the *Leges Edwarde Confessoris*, which states that she was the daughter of the Russian king Yaroslav”; and when he characterizes this record as a “plain statement of Agatha's origin” (37-38). Raffensperger's cited source for this claim is Ingham's article “Has a Missing Daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi Been Found?” (252-54), but what Ingham actually reported (253) is that the *Leges Edwarde Confessoris* states that Agatha was a daughter of a Russian king named “Malesclodus.” Ingham did indeed argue that this is a garbled reference to Yaroslav, but he admitted that what the

But is it true that Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise had four daughters? Does the current appearance of the surviving left section of the ktetor fresco accurately reproduce its original appearance? Is there actually a “lost princess” from this family who might have been Agatha the wife of Edward Atheling?

II. Was Agatha One of the Figures on the Left Section of the Fresco?

With the vicissitudes of Kyivan history after the time of Yaroslav the Wise and his immediate successors, and especially after the Mongol depredations of the thirteenth century, Saint Sophia Cathedral fell into a state of neglect and disrepair. Much of the artwork within its walls – including the Grand Princely family fresco – was also damaged. Later, and in stages, the cathedral was rebuilt (where necessary), restored, and expanded. And in a manner of speaking, what remained of the left or south section of the fresco was likewise “restored.” Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that what remained of the left or south section of the fresco was eventually modified and repurposed.

Russian scholar Yuri A. Pelevin’s recounting of how the surviving left section of the fresco came to have the appearance that it now has, is very informative. In an article on “The Family of Yaroslav the Wise: The Ktetor Fresco of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev,” Pelevin writes that

Today this well-known fresco [purportedly] represents the daughters of Yaroslav the Wise, yet originally the prince’s sons were portrayed here. This metamorphosis, which may seem strange at first sight, occurred as a result of multiple poor-quality repaintings and restorations. The fact that originally a group-portrait of the princes had been in this place was proved by Sergei Vysotsky as a result of years of thorough research and restoration work. His finding was based on studies of the fresco’s remnants; and on a drawing by Abraham van Westervelt, from the year 1651, which is preserved in an eighteenth-century copy. When this Dutch artist made his drawing in Saint Sophia, the figures in the center and Christ on the throne had already been lost; and the icon painters of Petro Mohyla, the Metropolitan of Kyiv from 1596 to 1647, had corrected the figures that survived. Yet it is clearly seen in Westervelt’s drawing that the fresco depicts men in princely garments. A second drawing of the fresco on the southern wall was made only in 1843, by Fedor Solntsev.¹⁰ One can see traces of men’s fur-trimmed conical hats in his watercolors, and some other details that match the 1651 drawing.

In describing the analyses and scholarly studies of the surviving left panel of the fresco, and of

Leges Edwarde Confessoris says may represent a confusion with another Slavic name: “*Malesclodus* might recall [the] Pol[ish] *Mieszko* or [the] E[ast] Sl[avic] *Mstislav* (the name of Iaroslav’s brother)” (255, note 60). One researcher, John P. Ravilious, does in fact argue that Agatha was the daughter of Duke Mieszko II of Poland, in part on the basis of the “*Malesclodus*” reference (“The Ancestry of Agatha, Mother of St. Margaret of Scotland,” *The Scottish Genealogist* 55 [2009], 70-84).

¹⁰Fedor Solntsev’s watercolor painting of this section of the fresco appears in Vysotsky, 67. See also illustration 3 at the conclusion of this essay.

the four figures portrayed thereon, that have been undertaken in more modern times, Pelevin informs us that

The leftmost figure is best preserved. When illuminated from a side angle, it faintly revealed a conical hat. Indeed, X-ray emissiography revealed the original headwear: a man's hat with a high crown, and trimmed with fur.¹¹ When the frescoes were painted over with oil paints in the period between 1843 and 1853, the composition was turned into the "martyrs" Faith, Hope, Love, and their "mother" Sophia [Wisdom]. These respective names were written adjacent to the images. ... The garments remained the same, but their heads were now circled with halos and covered with kerchiefs. This is how Kievan princes were turned into women.¹²

Restoration work in the first half of the twentieth century involved the removal of this nineteenth-century overlay of oil paint, so that

In 1934, as the cathedral was being restored, the fresco was rediscovered, and, at Pavel Yukin's suggestion, was redefined as a representation of Yaroslav the Wise's daughters. Ever since then, this erroneous attribution has found its way into multiple research monographs and a vast popular literature.¹³

But Yukin's suggestion was indeed in error. Those four uncovered figures were not originally meant to portray daughters of the Grand Prince. They were meant to portray four of his sons. The female-style kerchiefs that currently appear on the heads of these personages should therefore not be there, if these images (in their "restored" condition) are supposed to look as much as possible like they originally looked. And that is because the heads of these figures – these *male* figures – were originally covered with male-style conical hats. Agatha, as a possible daughter of Yaroslav, was definitely not one of the persons originally pictured on this section of the fresco, or pictured there today, because *none* of Yaroslav's daughters were originally pictured on this section of the fresco!

III. Was Agatha One of the Figures on the Right Section of the Fresco?

The drawing of the family fresco that was made by Abraham van Westervelt in 1651, and the additional drawings of the cathedral and of other vistas in Kyiv that van Westervelt also made at this time, are believed to have been destroyed during the Russo-French War of 1812. But an

¹¹See the comparative parallel images of the head of this leftmost figure – one a normal photograph, and the other an x-ray photograph – in Vysotsky, 87.

¹²See Powstenko, plate 153; and the photograph in Vysotsky, 71. See also illustration 4 at the conclusion of this essay.

¹³Yuri A. Pelevin, "The Family of Yaroslav the Wise: The Ktetor Fresco of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev," online in the Russian Educational Portal website (in Russian), at artclassic.edu.ru/catalog.asp?ob_no=15173 I am grateful to Oleh O. Yukhymenko for his initial English translation of the Pelevin article.

eighteenth-century copy of this collection of drawings survives.¹⁴ The extent to which the eighteenth-century copy of the drawing of the family fresco correctly reproduces that fresco's original eleventh-century appearance, depends on four factors: 1) the accuracy of the eighteenth-century copy, with respect to what van Westervelt's now-lost 1651 drawing actually looked like; 2) the accuracy of van Westervelt's artistic rendition of what was on the cathedral walls in 1651; 3) the extent to which the fresco (in some recognizable form) had survived to the time of Metropolitan Petro Mohyla, in the first half of the seventeenth century; and 4) the degree to which the "touching up" of the fresco, by icon painters working under Mohyla's direction, had preserved (or restored) the original appearance of the fresco.

The fresco as van Westervelt observed it certainly did not look exactly as it had looked when it was originally created, 600 years earlier. For example, modern restoration work has made it clear that the original angle of the heads and faces of the leftmost and second-from-the-left figures on the left section of the fresco, and of the rightmost and second-from-the-right figures on the right section of the fresco, was not the same as the angle of the heads and faces of those four figures in the van Westervelt drawing. In Fedor Solntsev's 1843 watercolor of the four figures on the left section, the same alterations in angle that are seen in van Westervelt's rendition – with respect to those two leftward figures – are also evident. This indicates that van Westervelt's drawing of these figures, in the way that he drew them, was an accurate representation of how those figures actually appeared on the wall of the cathedral at that time in history (and of how they still appeared in 1843). Mohyla's artists, it would seem, had changed the appearance of those heads and faces. We can therefore understand why Andriy M. Domanovsky would say – with respect to the van Westervelt drawing – that "Researchers are critical of this source, since it is unlikely that this 1651 sketch reflects the real state of the frescoes in the ancient Rus times, especially since the fresco on it is depicted after a partial destruction and renovation of the seventeenth century."¹⁵

The copy of van Westervelt's sketch to which we have access today, portrays four Grand Princely sons from the left section of the fresco, wearing male-style conical hats; and four Grand Princely daughters from the right section of the fresco, wearing female-style slightly-rounded hats.¹⁶ Is it possible that one of those daughters – from the right section – was Agatha the wife of Edward Atheling? In considering this question we must remember that van Westervelt's drawing was made six centuries after the original fresco was produced. And in the intervening time, damage and decay, followed by attempted restorations, had clearly resulted in some changes in the appearance of the fresco. The artists in the time of Mohyla who touched up or even repainted the images in the fresco, may have had a difficult time discerning what the original appearance of the various images had been, or they may have taken a few liberties in their seventeenth-century interpretations of the figures.

¹⁴Olexa Powstenko, *The Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev* (a special triple issue of *The Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.*, III:4; IV:1-2 [Summer-Fall 1954]), 56.

¹⁵Domanovsky, 7-8.

¹⁶Powstenko, 138-39.

Pelevin refers to the important research of Sergei A. Vysotsky, as published in his book on *Secular Frescos of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev*. Pelevin's article is largely dependent on this book. Vysotsky sets forth a factually-based and well-reasoned proposal of who was originally portrayed in the fresco, and where. Vysotsky certainly does take into account the eighteenth-century copy of the 1651 van Westervelt drawing, together with the 1843 Solntsev watercolor of the left section of the fresco. But even more so, he bases his conclusions on his own examinations of the remnants of the original images – as uncovered during restoration efforts in the twentieth century – and on the careful scientific studies of those remnants that were undertaken during his lifetime. And Vysotsky concludes that the left (southern) and right (northern) sections of the fresco, taken together, probably did not originally portray four sons and four daughters of the Grand Prince, but instead probably portrayed five sons and three daughters. He writes that

the original look of Saint Sophia's tetra composition, based on the described aggregate of materials, should be reconstructed in the following way: In the center on the western wall, Christ; on His right, Volodymyr Svyatoslavych and Yaroslav the Wise, with the model of the cathedral; on the southern wall, four sons (with each of the two main heirs holding a candle); on Christ's left, Princess Olga and Yaroslav's wife Iryna; and continuing on the northern wall, four [daughters] or three daughters (Yelizaveta, Anna, Anastasia) and one of the younger sons. ... The princes on the southern side are depicted strictly by their seniority, since that is what their rights to the Kievan throne depended on. Therefore, in view of their chronological dates of birth, one can assume, with a high level of certainty, that the fresco depicts by height, from right to left, the following people: Volodymyr Yaroslavych, prince of Novgorod; Izyaslav Yaroslavych, claimant to the Kievan throne; Svyatoslav Yaroslavych; and Vsevolod Yaroslavych; and on the northern wall, due to a lack of space on the southern wall, Ihor Yaroslavych.¹⁷

Two of the figures originally portrayed on the right or north section of the fresco – the rightmost figure, and the figure to the left of the rightmost figure – were uncovered in the twentieth century by the “peeling back” of several layers of more recent artwork that had been applied over that section of the fresco at various times through the centuries.¹⁸ With respect to the rightmost figure, Vysotsky is not *completely* sure that, in its original and now-restored appearance, it is a boy and not a girl, and he holds open the possibility that it might be a girl. He notes that “the issue, whether it is a son or a daughter may be clarified in the future by restorers.”¹⁹ But all points being considered, he judges it to be more likely that this image portrays a younger fifth son of Yaroslav, and not a fourth daughter. Vysotsky has studied the Grand Princely family fresco in Saint Sophia Cathedral more intensely than anyone else in recent history. His judgment in such a matter should and does carry much weight. And the “boyish” features on the face of this image certainly seem to be the features of a fifth son, and not of a

¹⁷Vysotsky, 206. I am grateful to Oleh O. Yukhymenko for his English translations of the quotations from Vysotsky that appear in this essay.

¹⁸See Powstenko, plate 155; and the photograph in Vysotsky, 75. See also illustration 6 at the conclusion of this essay.

¹⁹Vysotsky, 106 [note 119].

fourth daughter.²⁰ What the twentieth-century restoration process appears to have revealed on the remnants of the right section of the fresco, is an image of an eleventh-century princess, and – with respect to the rightmost figure – an image of an eleventh-century prince. The rightmost figure is probably not a girl, as is indicated in the van Westervelt drawing.

The “touching up” of this rightmost image by the artists who had worked on it in the years before van Westervelt’s 1651 sketch seem to have given that figure an (inauthentic) female appearance, even as the angle of the head and face in that image were altered by those artists. They may have assumed that the symmetry of the fresco would require four daughters to be pictured on the right side, to balance off the four sons who were pictured on the left side, so that in their attempts at restoration, they accordingly would have made the fifth son look like a fourth daughter. And so, while the van Westervelt drawing of this modified version of the right section of the fresco, in itself, might lend support to the theory that Yaroslav had four daughters, the modern restoration of the image of the rightmost of those “daughters” strongly suggests that this “daughter” was actually another son, standing behind his three older sisters, who in turn were standing behind their mother Ingegerd.

It has been observed that, in the eighteenth-century copy of the van Westervelt drawing, “The eldest daughter wears a shawl under her princely hat, which means that she is a married woman.”²¹ If we assume that the presence of this shawl, which was visible on this figure in 1651, represented an accurate preservation – up to that point in time – of this figure’s original appearance; and if we take into account the known or estimated dates of marriage for the three daughters of Yaroslav, then we can conclude that this eldest shawled daughter would have been Anastasia, who married Andrew, Prince of Hungary (later King Andrew I), around 1039.²² This approximate date of marriage is significant, in view of Domanovsky’s conclusion that “Historiographical analysis and the critical consideration of the sources of the existing theories about the dating of the cathedral allows us to suppose that the construction of the Sophia of Kyiv took place in the second half or the end of the 1020s and the beginning or first half of the 1030s.”²³ So, Anastasia would have gotten married right around the time when the interior of the new cathedral was being ornamented with its frescoes and mosaics. And she would also still have

²⁰See illustration 7 at the conclusion of this essay. At first glance there appears to be a faint remnant of male-style conical headgear on this rightmost figure, but Vysotsky informs us that “The image of the hat on the figure’s head is not original and represents remnants of oil painting” (106 [note 119]). Of course, beneath the later oil paint overlay, there may very well have been a portrayal of male-style headgear also in the original eleventh-century fresco.

²¹Nadia M. Nikitenko; quoted in Serhii Bratishko, “Unknown portrait of Volodymyr the Great,” *The Day* (3 March 2009); online at day.kyiv.ua/en/article/culture/unknown-portrait-volodymyr-great While I appreciate Nikitenko’s observation regarding the shawl, I disagree with her theory that the fresco in Saint Sophia Cathedral originally portrayed Grand Prince Volodymyr the Great and his family, rather than Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise and his family; and with her corresponding theory that the cathedral was built during the reign of Volodymyr (or mostly during his reign), rather than during the reign of Yaroslav. For a refutation of these theories see Domanovsky, 6-26, especially 7-9.

²²Stuart, 121.

²³Domanovsky, 6.

been living in Kyiv, since her husband did not return to Hungary to claim his throne until 1046. Yaroslav's daughter Elizabeth was married in 1042 to Harald Siggurdsson (later King Harald III Hardrada of Norway).²⁴ And Yaroslav's daughter Anna was married in 1051 to King Henry I of France.²⁵

These are the three daughters who were originally portrayed on the right section of the fresco, probably in this order, from tallest to shortest. And the most probable art-historical conclusion is that there were only three. The portraits of the older two daughters are now gone from the wall of the cathedral, but the uncovered and restored portrait of the youngest of the three daughters (Anna) is visible in the cathedral today. Also visible, next to the image of Anna, is the uncovered and restored portrait of what is most likely a younger brother of these three sisters, identified by Vysotsky as Prince Ihor.

IV. Conclusion

Vysotsky's research is an indispensable guide for anyone who wants to have an accurate understanding of the history of the ktetor fresco in Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. Ingham and many others, apparently unfamiliar with his work, believed that the four figures from the left section of the fresco – which now have the appearance of being female – are evidence that Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise had four daughters. But Vysotsky demonstrates conclusively that these figures cannot be utilized as evidence for such a conclusion, since they originally portrayed four sons of the Grand Prince, and not four daughters. And while it is true that the van Westervelt drawing ostensibly shows four sons of Yaroslav and Grand Princess Iryna from the south or left section, and four daughters of Yaroslav and Grand Princess Ingegerd from the north or right section, Vysotsky's studies – and what we can see with our own eyes! – lead us to conclude that the fresco's original eleventh-century appearance probably portrayed the rightmost figure, on the right section, as a young Kyivan prince, and not as a Kyivan princess.

Vysotsky's important work has been noticed, and is appreciated, also by other scholars. After describing earlier and now-discredited theories regarding the identities of the personages currently portrayed on the southern wall of Saint Sophia Cathedral, the Swedish archeologist and historian Rune Edberg writes that

A new interpretation, based on X-ray photographs, was proposed in 1989 by Soviet scholar S. A. Vysotsky. He surmised that the now well nigh invisible figures on the north wall represented Yaroslav's and Ingegerd's [three] daughters and a young son, while those preserved on the south wall originally showed four of their sons. Westerveldt's 17th century drawings also include the frescoes which were to be found on a later demolished west wall between the two surviving paintings. This wall contained the central section of the scene where Yaroslav symbolically offers to Christ a model of the new Cathedral. ... This central section, with portraits of Yaroslav and Ingegerd, was presumably lost when

²⁴Raffensperger, 203 (table 3).

²⁵Raffensperger, 203 (table 3); Richardson, III:18.

the wall was torn down at the end of the 17th century.²⁶

When I began doing the research for this article – with the use of materials published in English, Ukrainian, and Russian – it was from the starting-point of having been persuaded by Ingham’s conclusion, on the basis of traditional genealogical and historical sources and methods, that Agatha, the wife of Edward Atheling, was probably a daughter of Yaroslav the Wise. I expected my foray into the field of art history – dealing specifically with the Grand Princely family fresco in Kyiv – to confirm Ingham’s theory. I have been to Saint Sophia Cathedral personally, several times, and have myself gazed upon the famous fresco (according to its current appearance) that we have been discussing. I wanted to think that I had been gazing upon an image of Agatha, and upon images of her three sisters. But the actual result of my research has been a change in my thinking about Agatha’s identity. I no longer accept Ingham’s conclusion. I now believe that, according to the best evidence we have, the family fresco originally showed Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise to have had only three daughters. And we already know who all of them were. In spite of the current feminine appearance of all four of the Grand Princely children on the left section of the fresco, and in spite of the 1651 feminine appearance of all four of the Grand Princely children on the right section of the fresco (as sketched by van Westervelt), the evidentiary data presented by Pelevin and Vysotsky has led me to the conclusion that in the *original* form of the fresco, there was most likely no unidentified fourth daughter who could have been Agatha. Agatha is not the missing daughter of Yaroslav, because Yaroslav has no missing daughter. Agatha’s actual identity, therefore, remains a mystery.

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²⁶Rune Edberg, *Viking Princess, Christian Saint: Ingegerd, a Woman in the 11th Century* (translated by Theodosia Tompkinson) (Sigtuna, Sweden: Sigtuna Museum, 2005), 33, 36.



1. Copy of the drawing of the family fresco made by Abraham van Westervelt in 1651: left (south) side



2. Copy of the drawing of the family fresco made by Abraham van Westervelt in 1651: right (north) side



3. Watercolor of the left (south) section of the family fresco painted by Fedor Solntsev in 1843



4. Photograph (taken before the modern restoration) of the left (south) section of the family fresco, showing the nineteenth-century overlay of oil paint (partially obscured by a chandelier)



5. Contemporary photograph of the left (south) section of the family fresco



6. Contemporary photograph of the right (north) section of the family fresco, showing also the remnants of some of the artwork that covered the original eleventh-century images in later centuries



7. Magnification of what has been uncovered of the right (north) section of the original family fresco