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THE MOSKVA-PHOBIA OF ANNA KOLTOVSKAIA¹

Anna Koltovskaia, briefly Ivan IV's fourth wife in 1572, was sent off to spend her remaining fifty-four years in a convent. She retained her title and state support, as did other discarded royal women, but unlike her counterparts she grasped opportunities to remove herself more and more from contact with court life and devoted her last decades to fulfilling her vow to rebuild the Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent.

Keywords: Anna Koltovskaia, Ivan IV, Mikhail Romanov, Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent, Pokrovskii convent, Goritskii Resurrection convent, Ustiuzhna

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Anna Alekseevna Koltovskaia (1550s?–1626), Ivan IV's fourth wife, remains an elusive figure. Her name appears infrequently in surviving Muscovite sources. We know nothing about her early life, little more about her selection as a royal bride, her marriage, or why the tsar decided after a few months that her probably unexpressed wish to enter a convent had been granted. The experience was unlikely to have left her with fond memories of Moscow or the court, and this seems to be reflected in her grasping opportunities to distance herself further and further from the capital. In later life she came into her own as the remarkably successful patron of the Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent. She rebuilt her community after it was destroyed during the Time of Troubles, in the process carving out for herself a life very different from that of other royal women dispatched into religious life.

Anna was the daughter of a Kolomna provincial cavalryman who died in the 1550s fighting the Crimean Tatars. She perhaps came to the court's attention as a runner-up in the bride-show which preceded Ivan's marriage to Marfa Sobakina on 28 October 1571. Marfa died on 13 November, and by spring the tsar requested ecclesiastical permission for an uncanonical fourth marriage. His marriage to Anna took place sometime before May 31, and on June 1 the couple left for Novgorod.²

Anna apparently had been raised in the provinces, had no relatives at court or in the capital, and no one to help her navigate her new role. Suddenly she was married to a complex autocrat twice her age, surrounded by a court that included Ivan's sons, more distant relatives, kin of her predecessors Marfa Sobakina and Mariia Temriukovna, her own brother, uncle, and cousins, and royal favorites including the Godunovs and B. Ia. Bel'skii, Maliuta Skuratov's nephew. The marriage evidently was rocky from the beginning. Anna apparently had no idea of what was expected of a tsaritsa. In contrast to her predecessors, she is not recorded as having given any gifts or donations to the churches and monasteries they visited, while the tsar made generous donations in memory of his first three wives. She was not included when Ivan visited the Iur'ev Monastery and was allowed to pray in St. Sophia's only at night. Ivan departed for the

2 L. E. MOROZOVA, *Zhenshchiny i vlast' v Moskovskom tsarstve XV-nachala XVII v.* (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt; fond "Mir," 2018), 284–86; RUSSELL MARTIN, *A Bride for the Tsar: Bride-Shows and Marriage Politics in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 139–40. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501756658> No wedding description has survived.

capital on August 15, after learning about the Muscovite victory over the Tatars at Molodi, leaving Anna to follow. That fall the marriage was over.³

Anna became the nun Dar'ia, but surviving sources give no reason for the divorce or information about her tonsure. Some historians have concluded that she took her vows at the small northern Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent,⁴ but more probably Dar'ia followed earlier royal discards to the Pokrov Convent in Suzdal'. The testament of the Pokrov nun Aleksandra, widow of Vasilii Petrovich Iakovl' (Iakovlev), dated September-October 11, 1574, possibly attests to her presence. Aleksandra bequeathed a silver reliquary cross to "the tsaritsa," unnamed, and a silver reliquary panagia to "the appanage princess."⁵ If the bequests were to sisters at the convent, Dar'ia is the most likely "tsaritsa" candidate. The alternative possibility, tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich's first wife Evdokiia Saburova, may not have arrived in Suzdal' until 1575.⁶ Dar'ia's successor Anna Vasil'chikova married Ivan in 1574/75, probably in January 1575, and was sent to Pokrov sometime before her death in 1577.⁷ The "appanage princess" was probably Vladimir Staritskii's first wife.⁸ In any case, Dar'ia was in Suzdal' in 1584 when Ivan IV died, living in a religious community that was closely tied to the court.

Perhaps sensing a change of attitude in Moscow, Dar'ia petitioned tsar Fedor to allow her to move to the Goritskii Resurrection convent in Beloozero. Fedor ordered transport for her,⁹ and a royal charter dated 16 May 1586 granted the village Nikol'skoe to Tsaritsa Dar'ia, Abbess Dar'ia, and the sisters.¹⁰ Her grant was part of a pattern. Royal women consigned to religious life retained not only their titles but a claim on state support. In 1587 Fedor conferred the village Berezhki in Suzdal' province upon the

3 MOROZOVA, *Zhenshchiny*, 288–290.

4 See MARTIN, *A Bride*, 141; IAKOV I. BEREDNIKOV, "Kratkoe izvestie o Tikhvinskom Vvedenskom monastyre," *Syn Otechestva*, no. 16 (1832): 77–78. Berednikov does not discuss Dar'ia's vows, but notes her arrival at Tikhvin only between 1598 and 1604.

5 *Akty Pokrovskogo Suzdal'skogo devich'ego monastyria XVI–nachala XVII veka* [hereafter APSDM], ed. A. V. ANTONOV, A. V. MASHTAFAROV (Moscow: Fond Sviaz' Epokh, 2019), 97, no. 75.

6 According to Martin, most assume Saburova was repudiated in 1575; others conclude 1572; MARTIN, *A Bride*, 136–37.

7 See MARTIN, *A Bride*, 146, 151–52.

8 Tonsured c. 1555, died at Pokrov c. 1597; E. I. KATASONOVA, "Chetyre pokrova kontsa XVI v. iz masterskoi Suzdal'skogo Pokrovskogo monastyria," *Ubrus. Tserkovnoe shit'e: istoriia i sovremennost'*, no. 17–18 (June, December 2012): 35–37.

9 APSDM, 152, no. 129.

10 *Akty istoricheskie* [hereafter AI], 5 vols. (St. Petersburg: v tip. II otd-niia sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii, 1841–1842), I: 411–14, no. 217.

Pokrov nun Aleksandra, the first wife of Tsarevich Ivan.¹¹ When Mariia Vladimirovna, daughter of Vladimir Staritskii, widow of “King” Magnus of Livonia, was lured back to Muscovy, she was made the nun Marfa, sent to the Podsosenskii Bogoroditskii convent near the Trinity-Sergius monastery in 1588, and granted the Suzdal’ village Lezhnevo.¹²

Dar’ia moved again early in the Time of Troubles (Smuta), putting even more distance between herself and the court. The Goritskii convent chronicle briefly notes a number of royal women who were transferred in and out about the turn of the century: Ivan Ivanovich’s widows Aleksandra and Praskov’ia, Ivan IV’s last wife Mariia Nagaia, Marfa Nikitichna Cherkasskaia with her nephew, the future tsar Mikhail Romanov, and possibly Mikhail’s mother, the nun Marfa.¹³ Goritsy’s location on the Sheksna brought heavy river traffic and also travellers going to and from the huge Kirillo-Belozerskii monastery, which was closely tied to the capital. Dar’ia petitioned Boris Godunov for permission to move to the Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent, vowing to rebuild the community, which was short of provisions and staff after the three-year famine of 1601-03 and had lost its former votchina holdings to the neighboring Uspenskii monastery. Godunov gave permission and in a grant of 22 July 1604 restored the convent’s lands.¹⁴ Two of Dar’ia’s nieces, Princesses Leonida and Aleksandra, daughters of Grigorii Gagarin, came to join her in the convent.¹⁵ The tsaritsa apparently went to Moscow in 1607,¹⁶ probably seeking assistance in dealing with the consequences of the Smuta. On 16 February 1608 tsar Vasilii Shuiskii reconfirmed the grant previously issued by Fedor and Boris Godunov.¹⁷

The Swedish occupation of Novgorod in 1611 brought war closer, and in June 1613 Tikhvin was occupied. On 14 September the convent burned down.

11 APSDM, 178–79, no. 160, and 193–94, no. 179.

12 V. V. ZVERINSKII, *Material dlia istoriko-topograficheskogo issledovaniia o pravoslavnykh monastyriakh v Rossiiskoi imperii 3* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. Bezobrazova i Komp, 1897), 198, no. 2182; Iu. D. RYKOV, “Potomki kniazia Vladimira Andreevicha Staritskogo i sud’ba ego docheri Marii (v inochestve—Marfy), korolevy Livonskoi,” *Rossiiskaia genealogiia* 8 (2020): 29–30.

13 See “Letopis’ Goritskogo monastyria,” in Kirillov: *Istoriko-literaturnyi al’manakh 1* (Vologda: “Rus’,” 1994) (<https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/kir/ill/ov1/17.htm>, accessed 21 August 2021).

14 *AI* 2, no. 49.

15 MOROZOVA, *Zhenshchiny*, 291. Leonida died 7 May 1675; her will is in the archives of the Russian State Library: Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka. OR F. 178. 1 k. 10996 ed. 9.

16 The text of her *podorozhnaia* (explanation) is in the Russian State Archives; RGADA. F 141, Op. 1, 1606, No. 1, L. 10.

17 *AI* 1, no. 217.

Dar'ia and the sisters had to flee to forest dug-outs. Russian troops liberated Tikhvin quickly, but the convent was gone.¹⁸ Fortunately for Dar'ia and her community, the new tsar, Mikhail Romanov, and especially his mother, the nun Marfa Ivanovna, were well disposed toward them. Marfa herself knew such conditions first-hand, having been forcibly tonsured in Godunov's reign and exiled north of Lake Onega.¹⁹ The tsar may have been generous because of his mother's experiences; Marfa may have found it useful to support childless relatives of the previous dynasty who were not a threat; and Dar'ia, as Isolde Thyrêt pointed out, "carefully manipulated her prestige as tsaritsa to further the fortunes" of her convent.²⁰ Over the next decade the Romanovs' campaign to "claim their heritage" as alleged descendants of the old dynasty gave added reason to provide for "their grandfather's" widow.

Dar'ia and the sisters were transferred to the neighboring small northern mining town Ustiuzhna-Zhelezopol'skaia, which had supported several royal widows: the wife of Ivan IV's brother Iurii, the last wife of Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan IV's last wife (Mariia Nagaia).²¹ Dar'ia's predecessors had enjoyed the income but lived in Moscow convents; Dar'ia, in contrast, intended to build a refuge for her community in Ustiuzhna.²² The tsar directed local officials to arrange accommodations for the Tsaritsa and her people,²³ and awarded her the village Nikiforovskoe for her lifetime, but she was not to bequeath it to relatives or donate it to the convent for memorial prayers.²⁴ At the end of 1614 she wrote to boyar B. M. Saltykov, the tsar's cousin, complaining that local authorities had not allocated the space she needed for cells, housing for her servitors, and outbuildings for household needs.²⁵ She called on him again in 1615 to intercede with the

18 *Novgorodskiiia letopisi: tak nazvannia Novgorodskaia vtoraiia i Novgorodskaia tret'ia lietopisi*, ed. A. F. ВУЧКОВ (St. Petersburg: Izd. Arkheograficheskoi kommissii, 1879), 2: 363–73, 432–33.

19 *AI* 3, no. 41.

20 ISOLDE THYRÊT, "The Royal Women of Ivan IV's Family and the Meaning of Forced Tonsure," in *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*, ed. ANNE WALTHALL (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008), 163–64. <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520254435.003.0008>

21 MOROZOVA, *Zhenshchiny*, 291–92.

22 *Dukhovnye i dogovornye gramoty velikikh i udelnykh kniaziei XIV-SVI vv.* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1950), 443, no. 104, p. 443.

23 *Ukaznye gramoty gorodovym voevodam i prikaznym liudiam 1613-1626 gg.* [hereafter UGGV], ed. I. V. PUGACH (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Krug", 2012), 13, no. 26.

24 *AI* 3, no. 41.

25 IA. I. BEREDNIKOV, "Pis'ma 4-i supругi Ivana Vasil'evicha Groznogo boiarinu Saltikovu," *Syn Otechestva* 32 (1829): 333–46.

tsar and his mother for help in overcoming the foot-dragging of Ustiuzhna officials.²⁶

In addition to lodgings, the tsar granted Dar'ia additional support. A memo of 29 December 1613 ordered local officials in Ustiuzhna to give her a monetary payment of 30 rubles and to purchase her annual supplies: 5 *grivenki*²⁷ of pepper, 10 *puds*²⁸ of spring honey, 16 long sturgeons, 2 barrels of pike, a cask of German herring, 2 *puds* of caviar in woven wood containers, 13 *cheti* of cracked wheat, 6 *cheti* of fine rye flour, 40 *cheti* of ordinary rye flour, 3 *cheti* of buckwheat groats, 3 *cheti* of oatmeal, a *chetvert'* of red winter wheat, 3 *cheti* of hemp seeds, 3 *cheti* of peas, 4 *cheti* of gluten-free oat flour, 10 *cheti* of oat flour, 10 *cheti* of barley malt, and 5 *cheti* of rye malt.²⁹ The list of provisions is comparable to Ivan IV's grant of everyday supplies for the nuns who accompanied Evfrosin'ia Staritskaia to Goritsy after her tonsure; but Dar'ia did not receive the luxury foods, spices, and wines that Ivan had specified for celebrations of church holiday feasts at Goritsy.³⁰ On 23 July 1614 the Ustiuzhna officials were ordered to send to Moscow records of their income and expenditures, tavern and customs revenues, and a record of revenues, expenses, and arrears from 1613/14. They were reminded that they were responsible for paying for firearms manufactured in Ustiuzhna, the tsaritsa's household, and salaries for the *strel'tsy*.³¹ In April 1615 the tsar again wrote to Ustiuzhna, noting that Dar'ia, the widow of "our grandfather of blessed memory" (a reference to the Romanovs' alleged relationship to Ivan IV, serving to build legitimacy through fictive direct descent from the old dynasty), had petitioned him regarding non-payment of her annual grant for 1614/15.³² He wrote yet again on 18 August, after another petition from Dar'ia about non-payment. On 1 January 1616 Mikhail once more ordered his local officials to take care of the tsaritsa. Dar'ia had petitioned that despite his two previous decrees she had still not received her allotment for 1614/15. They were to give it to her in full for the current year, 1615/16, and report to Moscow when the

26 BEREDNIKOV, "Pis'ma," 334–37, 341 n. 1; THYRËT, "Royal Women," 164–65.

27 A *grivenka* equals one Troy pound, approximately 0.82 aivoirdupois pound and 0.373 kilogram.

28 A *pud* was 36 pounds, a *chet/chetvert'* six *puds*, 216 pounds.

29 *Ukaznye gramoty*, 28, No. 60.

30 On the Goritsy provisions see ANN KLEIMOLA, "The Road to Beloozero: Ivan IV's Reconciliation with the 'Devil in a Skirt,'" *Russian History* 42, no. 1 (2015): 64–81. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763316-04201007>

31 *UGGV*, 23, no. 48.

32 *UGGV*, 26, no. 56.

delivery was complete.³³ Dar'ia had to petition again in 1620; in response Tsar Mikhail on 12 February 1620 ordered the Ustiuzhna officials to give the tsaritsa her monetary grant and provisions for 1619/20 and in accord with her request to provide transport and an escort to take her to her Tikhvin convent.³⁴ After she returned to Tikhvin, the Ustiuzhna authorities were to give her an additional 167 rubles, 14 altyns and 4 den'gi³⁵ instead of buying her provisions for her. On 10 January 1624 the tsar yet again had to remind the Ustiuzhna authorities to pay the tsaritsa's subsidy.³⁶ Dar'ia thus encountered recurring difficulties in obtaining the promised support.

Delays in payment and the tsar's repeated efforts to press local officials were undoubtedly connected with the problems besetting gun production in Ustiuzhna. During the Smuta the local metallurgical industry had fallen on hard times as smiths dispersed, materials became expensive and scarce, and guns cost more to make than the government was willing to pay. Moscow fell back on force. In 1615 the voevoda was threatened with being held personally responsible. He petitioned, citing rising costs and only three working smiths in town; the others were in jail, on *pravezh*, being flogged with rods for refusing to work.³⁷ Similar orders and threats continued in 1616 and 1617. The price rose from 20 altyns per gun to 30.³⁸ The authorities were undoubtedly hard pressed to cover these costs along with salaries, payments to the strel'tsy, and other obligations in addition to Dar'ia's grant.

Despite all obstacles Dar'ia proved herself a competent administrator and Tikhvin recovered. Beginning about 1617, or perhaps earlier, Dar'ia had a running dispute with local elected officials in the Ustiuzhna urban settlement (*posad*) over residents the officials claimed were tax-payers and Dar'ia said were peasants registered on her land.³⁹ The dispute reflects the problems arising from depopulation during the Smuta and efforts on both sides to retain dues-paying workers. After numerous petitions

33 UGGV, 29–30, no. 64.

34 UGGV, no. 152, pp. 67–68.

35 The ruble, *altyn* and *den'ga* were monetary counting units. A ruble equalled 100 Novgorodian or 200 Moscow *den'gi*, while an *altyn* equalled six *den'gi*.

36 UGGV, 114, no. 244.

37 UGGV, 24–26, nos. 52–55, 57; see also I. V. PUGACH, "Ustiuzhna Zhelezopol'skaia v XVI–XVII vekakh," in *Ustiuzhna: Kraevedcheskii al'manakh* 5 (Vologda: "Legiia," 2002), before note 181, and 6 (Vologda: "Legiia," 2002), before note 20 [www.booksite.ru Accessed 17 February 2021].

38 UGGV, 45, no. 101; 36, no. 79; 39, no. 86; 40, no. 88.

39 UGGV, 40–41, no. 89.

and counter-petitions the matter was finally resolved in 1623 and Dar'ia's peasants were returned.⁴⁰

The tsaritsa went to court on behalf of her peasants as well. In 1617 she petitioned Moscow on behalf of her people who were accused of stealing livestock and horses.⁴¹ In 1618 Dar'ia's gentry servitor (*syn boiarskii*) Never Zabelin brought suit against a group of town residents, claiming that in 1616/17 they had borrowed 76 rubles for trading activities from his lady's peasants, a short-term loan without a promissory note. The debt had not been repaid, and Zabelin requested that the borrowers be put on bond and sent to Moscow for trial.⁴² Dar'ia herself was solidly entrenched in the "interlocking webs of credit and debt" characteristic of Early Modern communities. In these societies "balanced precariously on a fragile web of credit," people took their debt obligations seriously, listing the money they owed in their wills.⁴³ Muscovite testators likewise gave the matter considerable attention, listing both what they owed ("give to") and what others owed them ("take from").⁴⁴ In her 1626 testament Dar'ia listed loans made "to my peasants because of their poverty" and to others, 120 rubles to 13 people, to be collected by her executors for the Vvedenskii convent treasury.⁴⁵

In her last years the Romanovs treated her as an honored member of the family. In May 1623 she received a gift of a gilded silver bowl with a goblet, ten *arshiny* (1=28 inches) of velvet and patterned silk, forty sables and 100 rubles.⁴⁶ The court dispatched her relatives to bring her gifts in celebration of royal weddings. At the end of September 1624 D. Koltovskii brought her gifts from Mikhail's marriage to Mariia Vladimirovna Dolgorukaia and in February 1626 Prince D. Gagarin brought presents from the tsar's second marriage to Evdokiia Luk'ianovna Streshneva.⁴⁷

40 UGGV, 106–07, no. 231.

41 BEREDNIKOV, "Pis'ma," 338–41; THYRËT, "Royal Women," 164–65.

42 UGGV, 45–46, no. 103.

43 See EMILY KADENS, "Pre-Modern Credit Networks and the Limits of Reputation," *Iowa Law Review* 100, no. 6 (2015): 2429–55.

44 See DANIEL KAISER, "Forgive us our Debts: Debts and Debtors in Early Modern Russia," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 50 (1995): 155–83.

45 IA. A. BEREDNIKOV, "Dukhovnoe zaveshchanie chetvertoi suprugii tsaria Ioanna Vasil'e- vicha," *Syn Otechestva*, no. 5 (1829): 266.

46 A. V. MASHTAFAROV, "Dariia," in *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* 14 (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyi tsentr "Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia, 2006): 199–201, citing RGADA. F. 396. Oruzheinaia palata. P. 2. No. 208-A. L. 394ob–396.

47 MASHTAFAROV, "Dariia," 199–201; *Dvortsovye razriady*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: v tip. II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1850–1851), 1: 774;

It is likely that Tsar Mikhail's mother offered Dar'ia a place in one of the Moscow convents, as she had for others,⁴⁸ but the tsaritsa remained at Tikhvin and successfully rebuilt her community, providing cells for the sisters and restoring the granary, mill, stable and cowshed, along with residences for priests and servants.

In her March 1626 testament, Dar'ia designated donations to 19 monasteries and churches (all in the North: Solovki, Beloozero, Novgorod, and the Tikhvin area) for memorial prayers, setting aside 30 rubles for her burial service, commemoration, and alms to the poor. She bequeathed the land and fisheries granted her by the tsar to the convent, despite the prohibition in the charters, and on June 29, shortly after her death in May, Tsar Mikhail and his father Patriarch Filaret approved the property transfer "for the sake of her soul."⁴⁹ Dar'ia called the Tikhvin Vvedenskii convent her *obeshchanie*, the community she had vowed to protect, and she kept her promise. It was a project to which she devoted years of her life. At the same time, it gave her life a purpose and enabled her to make use of her talents and abilities. Hers was a life well lived, and she did it her way.

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THYRËT, "Royal Women," 165–66. Dar'ia's run-ins with Ustiuzhna residents perhaps are behind the difficulties, leading to robbery and beatings, that Dmitrii Koltovskii suffered when trying to arrange transport back to Moscow after visiting Tikhvin; see UGGV, 136, no. 285, and 138, no. 290.

48 MOROZOVA, *Zhenshchiny*, 292–93.

49 BEREDNIKOV, "Dukhovnoe zaveshchanie"; *AI* 3, no. 142; THYRËT, "Royal Women," 166–67.

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