

0. THE FIRST TSAR - Story Preface

1. BEGGAR IN THE PALACE

2. THE FIRST TSAR

3. THE GOOD REIGN

4. DEATH BY POISON

5. ARCHITECTS BLINDED

6. ART AT THE TIME OF IVAN IV

7. THE BAD REIGN

8. LEGACY and MURDER

9. OLD BEFORE HIS TIME

10. I'M SORRY



Official functions for the Tsars took place inside the Kremlin Cathedral. Ivan IV ("Ivan the Terrible") had a special wooden throne which he used during his visits. This view depicts the coronation of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (daughter of Peter the Great). Illustration by G.A. Kachalov, based on a drawing by I.E. Grimmell. From the Empress' coronation album maintained by the Heritage Museum. PD

Everyone bowed to Ivan Vasilyevich, the royal child who played inside the Kremlin. (The linked layout, from the 17th century, provides a sense of how the 16th century Kremlin would have appeared from the inside.) The lad was, after all, the named ruler of Muscovy.

Because he was just a boy, however, people disrespected him. The prince himself had other views:

I am god on earth.

During Ivan's youth, a powerful boyar family (the Shuiskys) captured Fyodor Mishurin (one of Ivan's confidants). Perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate their own power, or to denigrate that of the Grand Prince, the Shuiskys skinned Mishurin alive, leaving his remains for public viewing in a Moscow square.

By the time he was thirteen, the young ruler relied on himself, not just his regents, to make crucial decisions. Fed up with the Shuisky family, he had Prince Andrei Shuisky arrested. For his punishment, the boyar was thrown into an enclosure with ravenous hunting dogs. It is doubtful there was much left for public viewing.

Because the boyars were actually in charge of the country, as regents for the young ruler, they could decide when Ivan would officially take the throne. They made him crown prince at age seventeen.

Ivan, however, resented the nobles. Not content to be a crown prince, or even the Grand Prince (as his father and rulers before him were called), the teenager decided he would be a Russian Caesar.

He took the title "Tsar," which is the Russian word for Caesar. He was officially the first to be so called in his country.

Russian rulers were crowned inside the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin (Uspensky Sobor), a Kremlin church. (That state church, historically used for all official ceremonies, is more familiarly known as Cathedral of the Assumption. Its Monomakh throne was used by Ivan IV when he attended church services.)

In 1547, a busy year for Ivan, the newly crowned seventeen-year-old also decided to marry. Instead of looking outside the country for a bride who could provide Russia with political connections, however, Ivan wanted a Russian wife.

He found Anastasia Romanovna, daughter of a minor, untitled boyar family. (The descendants of that family - the Romanov dynasty - would one day rule the Russian Empire. In fact, the last Tsar of Russia - Nicholas II - was a Romanov.)

Ivan selected Anastasia from a gathering of potential brides (perhaps akin to this 1884 painting by Ilya Repin - Choosing a Bride for a Grand Duke). One could reasonably expect that such a marriage would not be happy. Ivan and Anastasia, however, were devoted to each other.

By most accounts, theirs was a relatively happy (albeit short-lived) marriage.

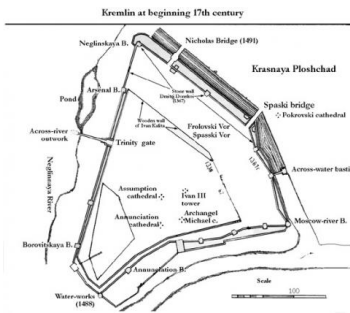
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Media Stream

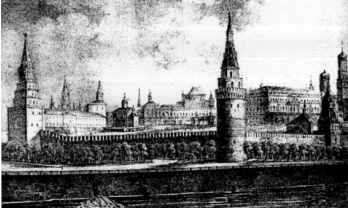


Home of the Tsar: The Kremlin, 17th century

Image online courtesy the xenophon-mil.org website.

View this asset at:

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Pen and Ink Drawing of the Kremlin

Image online courtesy, xenophon-mil.org website.

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Tsar Coronation at the Cathedral of the Dormition

Image of painting by Zichy Mihaly, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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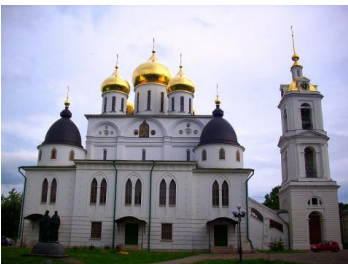


Frescoes within the Kremlin Church

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Uspensky Sobor: Church inside the Kremlin Walls

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Exterior of the Kremlin Church

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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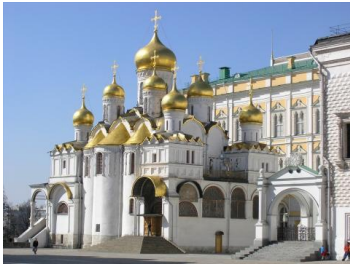


Cathedral of the Assumption - Awesome Interior

Image from the coronation album of Empress Elizabeth. Online, courtesy Hermitage Museum.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Cathedral-of-the-Assumption-Awesome-Interior>



Cathedral of the Assumption

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Kremlin's Cathedral of the Assumption - Interior Wall

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Cathedral of Assumption - Oculus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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"Choosing a Bride for the Grand Duke" - Ilya Repin

Public Domain

"Choosing a Bride for the Grand Duke"

1884 - Oil on canvas

The Perm Picture Gallery, Perm, Russia

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Throne of Monomakh: Seat for a Tsar

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Nicholas II: The Last Romanov

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Portrait of Ilya Repin

Image online courtesy, Wikimedia Commons.

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