and exchanged between the couple, as were gold crosses on chains. Thus
Ivan III may have seen this betrothal as a good start to his long-range plans
for this wedding: Elena Ivanovna was betrothed as an Orthodox Christian in
an Orthodox ceremony in an Orthodox church.

Immediately after the betrothal, the terms for the peace between Lithuania
and Muscovy were concluded and the Lithuanian delegation was on its way
back to Vilnius by early February. In March, an embassy was sent from Mos-
cow to Vilnius (they arrived in April) to formalize the treaty and discuss the
details of the marriage between Alexander and Elena Ivanovna. On both oc-
casions—in February in Moscow, and in April in Vilnius—Ivan III’s negotia-
tors requested written assurance of Alexander’s pledge back in 1494 not to
compel Elena to convert to Catholicism. The written assurance came with the
Lithuanian embassy that arrived in Moscow in November 1494, and with it
the last hurdle to the wedding was overcome.11

Whatever high hopes the betrothal may have inspired in Ivan III, the wed-
ding and marriage of Elena Ivanovna and Alexander were utter disasters.
Elena departed for her new life as Alexander’s consort on January 15, 1495,
from Dorogomilovo, a town situated on the border with the grand duchy, and
arrived in Vilnius on February 15.12 She traveled with a large entourage, in-
cluding several important boyars, scribes, and numerous other Muscovite
courtiers, plus many of their wives, and with numerous wagons carrying her
dowry and gifts for her new husband.13 A delegation from Alexander met
Elena while she was still en route, and it was apparently then that early signs
of trouble appeared. Alexander’s envoys announced to the boyars accompa-
nying Elena that the wedding would take place not in the Orthodox church in
Vilnius as had been originally agreed, but in the Roman Catholic cathedral.14

This change in venue—this violation of the original terms of the marriage
—meant that the wedding ritual could not be an Orthodox ceremony as the
Muscovites clearly expected it to be. The dowry inventory for Elena Ivanov-
na shows that Elena had set off for Lithuania not only with the personal ob-

11. The written assurance (gramota) from Alexander to Ivan III was preserved in the royal
archive and appears in subsequent inventories. See Segurt Ottovich Shmidt, ed., Opisi Tsarskogo
arkiva XVI v. i Arkhiva Posol’skogo prikaza 1614 g. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoi litera-
tury, 1960), 36 (box 183), 61 (fols. 48-48v), 65 (fols. 63v-64); V. I. Gal’tsov, ed., Opis’ archiva
Posol’skogo prikaza 1626 goda, 2 pts. (Moscow: Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie pri SM SSSR,
1977), 1: 85 (fols. 93v-94); 1: 255 (fol. 420); and Gal’tsov, ed., Opis’ archiva Posol’skogo pri-
kaza 1673 goda, 2 pts. (Moscow: Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie pri SM SSSR, 1990), 1: 150-52
(fols. 286v-90v).
12. DVR, 14: 1-15. See also Razriadnaia kniga 1475-1606 gg., gen. ed. Viktor Ivanovich
13. DVR, 14: 2; SibirIO, 35: 163-64.
14. DVR, 14: 11.