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## “For the Firm Maintenance of the Dignity and Tranquility of the Imperial Family”: Law and Familial Order in the Romanov Dynasty\*

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### Abstract

This article examines the Law of Succession and the Statute on the Imperial Family, texts which were issued by Emperor Paul I on April 5, 1797, and which regulated the succession to the throne and the structure of the Romanov dynasty as a family down to the end of the empire in 1917. It also analyzes the revisions introduced in these texts by subsequent emperors, focusing particularly on the development of a requirement for equal marriage and for marrying Orthodox spouses. The article argues that changing circumstances in the dynasty—its rapid increase in numbers, its growing demands on the financial resources of the Imperial Household, its struggle to resist morganatic and interfaith marriages—forced changes to provisions in the Law and Statute, and that the Romanovs debated and reformed the structure of the Imperial Family in the context of the provisions of these laws. The article shows how these Imperial House laws served as a vitally important arena for reform and legal culture in pre-revolutionary Russia.

### Keywords

Paul I, Alexander III, Fundamental Laws of Russia, *Statute on the Imperial Family*, Succession, Romanov dynasty

The death of Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna on the night of May 23–24, 2010, garnered more media coverage in Russia than is typical for members of the Russian Imperial house. As the widow of Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich (1917–1992), the legitimist claimant to the vacant Russian throne (the first

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cousin once removed of Nicholas II), Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna was a well-known figure in the émigré Russian community, and, beginning with her first of more than thirty visits to Russia in 1991, not unknown in certain circles inside Russia, too. In the days and weeks after her death, the grand duchess was widely and sincerely praised in obituaries and in print and television news reports for her “patriotism,” for her promotion and sponsorship of charities, for her efforts at helping bring about the unification of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church (the Church Abroad and the Patriarchate), and for her staunch defense and observance of the traditions of the Romanov dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

Those same Romanov traditions, however, made Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna something of a controversial figure among monarchists, legal scholars, and some churchmen. Alongside the litany of well-deserved praise, there also appeared in some obituaries a sometimes very frank debate over the grand duchess’s status as a member of the Romanov family. The grand duchess was born a princess of the House of Bagrationi-Mukhraneli—a branch of the ancient royal house of Georgia, which had been absorbed into the Russian empire in 1801 by Emperor Paul I (1796-1801). Though the members of the Bagration dynasty never renounced their royal titles (and some even resisted Russian annexation), most settled into a prominent and privileged life as members of the highest rungs of the Russian imperial aristocracy. Only with the collapse of the Russian Empire and the independence of Georgia did members of the Bagration dynasty vigorously reassert their historic claims to the vacant Georgian throne, which had by then devolved to the Mukhrani branch of the Bagration dynasty. (The current claimant to the Georgian throne is Davit Bagrationi-Mukhraneli, the grandnephew of Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna.<sup>2</sup>)

These origins, illustrious though they may be, have raised questions for some about Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna’s membership in the Romanov family. Membership in the family was—and, for the discussion at hand, still

<sup>1</sup> A wide range of media outlets reported the death and burial of the grand duchess. See, for example, Alexander Bratersky, “Last Romanov Born In Russian Empire Dead At 95,” *The Moscow Times*, 25 May 2010; Marina Aleshina, “Stareishuiu iz Romanovykh pokhoroniat v Peterburge,” *Izvestiia*, 25 May 2010; and several reports on RIA Novosti ([www.rian.ru](http://www.rian.ru)), Vesti-Moskva ([www.vesti.ru](http://www.vesti.ru)), and NewsInfo ([www.newsinfo.ru](http://www.newsinfo.ru)). See also the webpage for the Russian Imperial House ([www.imperialhouse.ru](http://www.imperialhouse.ru)), which contains a collection detailed reports and letters of condolence in both Russian and English translation.

<sup>2</sup> See the official web page for the Royal House of Georgia at <http://www.royalhouseofgeorgia.ge/en/home.php> (last accessed 13 August 2010).

is—governed by the house laws promulgated at the turn of the nineteenth century by, ironically, Paul I, the emperor who annexed Georgia into the Russian Empire and thereby altered the status of the Bagration dynasty, as least as far as some legal scholars were concerned.<sup>3</sup> Those house laws required members of the dynasty to marry equally—in the language of the House laws, a person of “corresponding dignity”—and given the annexation of Georgia in 1801 and the subsequent absorption of its ruling house into the aristocracy, some have since deemed the marriage between Vladimir Kirillovich and Leonida Georgievna in 1948 to be morganatic and the issue of that marriage, including the current claimant to the Russian throne, Mariia Vladimirovna, to be excluded from the succession.<sup>4</sup> Press reports and broadcasts that praised the grand duchess for her outreach, selflessness, piety, and patriotism often could not refrain from also reminding readers and viewers of the controversy surrounding her marriage.

Many observers today might consign Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna’s marriage controversy to a quirky corner of present-day Russian nostalgiaism, but in point of fact it is a modern echo of a nagging and significant problem the Romanov dynasty faced at the turn of the nineteenth century and down to the end of the empire in 1917: how is the dynasty to be defined and structured? This was a question that was timely and significant particularly at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Romanov dynasty had nearly fallen extinct at the beginning of Catherine II’s reign (1762–1796). On her ascension, the dynasty consisted only of her son, the eight-year-old Paul (the future Paul I); and five distant cousins: the deposed and imprisoned Ivan VI (1740–1741) and his four siblings.<sup>5</sup> By the beginning of Paul I’s reign in 1797, the situation

<sup>3</sup> On the annexation of Georgia, see, for a start, Sean Pollock, “Empire by Invitation? Russian Empire-Building in the Caucasus in the Reign of Catherine II (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2006); and G. G. Paichadze, ed., *Georgievskii traktat. Dogovor 1783 goda o vstuplenii Vostochnoi Gruzii pod pokrovitel'stvo Rossii* (Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo “Metsniereba,” 1983).

<sup>4</sup> See Mikhail Nazarov, *Kto naslednik Rossiiskogo Prestola* (Moscow: Russkaia idea, 1998), 48–52. A scholarly study of her genealogy has clarified the family tree: Stanislav V. Dumin, “Voskhodiashchaia rodoslovnaiia vdovstvuiushchei Velikoi Kniagini Leonidy Georgievny,” *Letopis' Istoriko-rodoslovnogo obschestva v Moskve*, vyp. 1 (45) (1992): 40–44; see also idem, “Bagrationy i drugie. Predki vdovstvuiushchei Velikoi Kniagini Leonidy Georgievny,” *Rodina*, 5–6 (1993): 28–31.

<sup>5</sup> Ivan VI would be murdered in Shlüsselburg Fortress in 1762. The siblings—Catherine, Elizabeth, Peter, and Alexis—had been exiled first in Riga (in 1742), then Kholmogory (1744), and then lived out their lives, never marrying, in exile in Horsens, Denmark. On this nearly forgotten branch of the Romanovs, see M[odest Andreevich] Korf, *Braunshveigskoe semestvo* (Moscow: Prometei, 1993).

had significantly improved with the birth of nine of his ten children (and by the addition of the brides of the two eldest, Alexander and Constantine)—the largest brood of royal children born to a Romanov ruler since Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's sixteen children in the middle of the seventeenth century. In a very real sense, Paul I was the refounder of the Romanov dynasty.

Paul I's consciousness of his role as a refounder of the Romanov dynasty becomes apparent from the several edicts he issued on the day of his coronation, on Easter Sunday (5 April) 1797, including a new *Law of Succession* and a *Statute on the Imperial Family* (*Uchrezhdenie ob Imperatorskoi Familii*).<sup>6</sup> These laws established the Romanov dynasty on a new and firm footing—the first regulating the succession to the highest post in the state, the other regulating the relations between and among those with hereditary rights to that post. Richard Wortman, the leading scholar on the Romanov dynasty as a political family, describes of the promulgation of Paul's *Law* and the *Statute* as a “symbolic act”: “the Imperial Family assumed the exalted character of a monarchy that honored ‘fundamental laws’ both in family matters and matters of state.”<sup>7</sup> These laws, then, should be viewed as a set—one amplifying and enabling the other.

Much of the attention of historians of Paul I or the Romanovs has been focused on the *Law of Succession*, and for good reason. Paul I's law was undoubtedly rooted in his own troubled relationship with his mother, Catherine II, who kept him from the throne he believed should have passed to him immediately upon the death of his father, Peter III (1762).<sup>8</sup> Paul I was, in

<sup>6</sup> The *Law of Succession: Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter, *PSZ*), series 1, 24:587–89, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797). The *Statute on the Imperial Family: PSZ*, series 1, 24:525–69, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797). The other edicts issued that day established a Department of Apanages (no. 17.907), regulated the Russian orders of knighthood (no. 17.908), and forbade landowners from compelling their serfs to work on Sundays (no. 17.909). On this last edict, which was misread and misapplied after its promulgation, see Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 445; and M. V. Klochkov, *Ocherki pravitel'svennoi deiatel'nosti vremeni Pavla I* (Petrograd: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1916), 528–69.

<sup>7</sup> Wortman, “The Fundamental state Laws' of 1832 as Symbolic Act,” in F. B. Uspenskii, ed., *Miscellanea Slavica: Sbornik statei k 70-letiiu Borisa Andreevicha Uspenskogo* (Moscow: Indrik, 2008). See also idem, “The Russian Imperial Family as Symbol,” in Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel, eds., *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 60–86.

<sup>8</sup> On Paul I, see, for a start, Roderick E. McGrew, *Paul I of Russia, 1752–1801* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1992); and Hugh Ragsdale, ed., *Paul I: A Reassessment of his Life and Reign* (Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, 1979).

his mind, clearly righting a wrong by promulgating this new law on succession—making sure the injustice done to him could never be repeated. But he was also doing more than that. Paul I's law was a radical revocation of Peter I the Great's law of succession of 1722, which gave the ruler the right to choose his successor from among his relatives.<sup>9</sup> Paul I lists his "motives" (*prichiny*) for issuing the new law of succession:

That the State should never be without an Heir. That the heir should be determined by the law itself. That there should never be the least doubt as to who is to succeed. That the rights of the branches to the succession should be maintained without violation of natural right and that difficulties [*zatrudneniia*] which might occur in the passing of the succession from one branch to another should be avoided.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the situation with the succession reversed from what it had been under Peter I's law. No longer was the succession subject to the emperor's capricious will, but rather to the law itself. And since the succession could become a complex matter in a family as potentially as large as Paul I's promised to be, with his eight children in 1797, more than just a law of succession was required if "difficulties" were to be avoided. The *Statute on the Imperial Family* was, therefore, a vital accompanying document to the Pauline *Law of Succession*, aimed at establishing a familial order in the future dynasty and the "firm maintenance of the dignity and tranquility of the Imperial Family."<sup>11</sup>

This essay explores the familial order devised by Paul I in his original *Statute on the Imperial Family* as it related not only to the succession, but also to the structure of the House of Romanov as a family. It also explores revisions made to the succession and to the *Statute on the Imperial Family* by Alexander I, Alexander III, and Nicholas II, which altered the familial order within the dynasty in limited but significant ways. Of particular importance are the changes to the conditions for marriage put on Paul I's descendants and how these conditions affected membership in the dynasty and rights to the succession. These changes in marriage regulations were both a response to changing social conditions in Russian (and, more broadly, European) society, and the reason Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna's marriage became a point of some debate among historians, legal scholars, and members of the remnant Romanov family today.

<sup>9</sup> Peter I's law of succession: *PSZ*, series 1, 6:496-97, no. 3593 (5 February 1722).

<sup>10</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 6:588, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

<sup>11</sup> This phrase is taken from the addendum to the Pauline *Law of Succession* issued by Alexander I: *PSZ*, series 1, 37:129-30, no. 28.208 (20 March 1820).

### The Pauline Law of Succession and the Statute on the Imperial Family

The new *Law of Succession* of 5 April 1797 was issued in the names of both Paul I and his second wife, Mariia Fedorovna (née Sophie Dorothea Auguste Luise of Württemberg), during their coronation ceremony in Moscow's Dormition Cathedral, just after communion. "The presentation of the law at the coronation sanctified it as a holy writ," according to Wortman: it proclaimed "the beginning of a new era."<sup>12</sup> Reinforcing its sacramental nature, the text was deposited in a silver box to be held in the sanctuary of the Church—this site chosen presumably because had been and remained (even after Peter I moved the capital to St. Petersburg) the traditional location of the coronation of Russian grand princes, tsars, and emperors.<sup>13</sup> The document had actually been written on January 4, 1788, in St. Petersburg, when Paul was still the heir-apparent and while the couple were expecting the birth (in May) of their sixth child (a daughter: Catherine). The law that was promulgated in 1797 retained the earlier date of composition, appearing just below the signatures of both Paul and Mariia.<sup>14</sup>

Because both Paul I and his wife issued the law, it has been characterized as "familial agreement"—an accord between husband and wife—more than a decree by the state, and that seems to be the case.<sup>15</sup> The text contains no numbered articles, and is written more as an awkwardly organized memorandum than a formal piece of legislation. The text opens with a profession the couple's love for Russia ("Our love of the Fatherland"), then pronounces the future order of succession: "We designate as successor after My—Paul's—death, in accordance with natural law, Our eldest Son Alexander, and after Him all His male issue. In the event of the extinction of his male issue, the succession will pass to the branch of My second Son, and so on will it follow, should I have more Sons; which is to say, according to primogeniture [*pervorodstvo*]."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995 and 2000), 1:177.

<sup>13</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 24:587, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797). See also Hughes, *The Romanovs*, 134–38; Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1:177; N. Belozerskaia, "Tsarskoe venchanie v Rossii," *Russkaia mysl'* 5 (1883): 1–48 (esp. 31); V. I. Zhmakin, "Koronatsii russkikh imperatorov i imperatrits," *Russkaia starina* 37 (1883): 499–538 (esp. 536–37); and 38 (1883): 1–36; B. Nol'de, "Zakony osnovnye v russkom prave," *Pravo*, no. 9 (1913): 524–41 (esp. 526, 532, and 541).

<sup>14</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 24:589, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

<sup>15</sup> Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1:177.

<sup>16</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 24:588, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797). See "Decree on the Succession to the All-Russian Throne," <http://www.imperialhouse.ru/eng/dynastyhistory/dinzak3/1093.html> (accessed 21 July 2010). This (and all other translations from the *PSZ*) are my own.

Thus Paul I established a clear path for the succession, following the male line of descent. He also provided for the succession in the event the male line (descended from Alexander or Constantine—or any other future sons to be born to him) should fail. Paul and Mariia specified that the succession should pass from one male line to another, by order of birth, until all males were extinct, then pass to the a female descendant who was the closest relative of the last male ruler. Succession would then proceed in her line, again by primogeniture; and if that line were eventually to fail, succession would pass again to a female descendant (or her male issue) of the most senior male of the dynasty, a principle called “substitution” (*zastuplenie*), as opposed to primogeniture. In other words, despite Paul I’s bitterness at having to wait to ascend the throne while his mother ruled, he and his wife nonetheless provided for both the passing of the succession through females and for succession by females. As the *Law of Succession* itself points out, “Here the principle should be laid down that a younger sister, even if she has sons, does not deprive an elder sister of her right [to the succession], even if the latter be unmarried, inasmuch as the latter could marry and bear children; but a younger brother succeeds before his elder sisters.”<sup>17</sup> Under Paul I’s *Law of Succession*, Russia could still be ruled by a sovereign, ruling empress. Paul never let his bitterness toward his mother get the best of him.

After laying down the posts and beams of primogeniture, Paul and Mariia then moved on to filling in the practical matters surrounding the succession: the age that members of the dynasty reach their majority, provisions for regency councils, and the first formal (though passing) statement that the emperor is the head of the Russian Orthodox Church (“*Gosudari Rossiiskie sut’ Glavoiu Tserkvi*”). The Pauline *Law of Succession* closes with a profession of the couple’s love for the state, for each other, and for their family and progeny: “We desire that this Decree should serve, in the eyes of the whole world, as the most powerful proof of Our love of the Fatherland, of the love and concord in Our marriage, and of the love for Our Children and Our Posterity.”<sup>18</sup>

If the Pauline *Law of Succession* established a path of succession based on male primogeniture, it nonetheless left many questions unresolved, and Paul I clearly knew it. The *Statute on the Imperial Family* was envisioned as an edict to accompany and enable the *Law of Succession*, and so was issued on the same day. If the *Law of Succession* was born of Paul I’s bitter frustrations with his mother and the obvious inadequacies of the Petrine law of succession of 1722,

<sup>17</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:588, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

<sup>18</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:587, 589, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

the *Statute on the Imperial Family* was born of the happy circumstances of a mother and father (Paul and Mariia) who were in the midst of producing a large and sprawling imperial dynasty. Paul I's goal in promulgating the *Statute* was to regulate the distribution of honors and wealth among his children (and the grandchildren he hoped and assumed would someday come) in order to safeguard the succession from any possible internal, familial disturbances. The *Statute* also had symbolic importance to Paul I. As Wortman suggests, the *Statute* "made the connection between the well-being of the imperial family and the well-being of the state an explicit premise of the Russian autocracy."<sup>19</sup> The *Statute* broadcast an image of tranquility and orderliness in the ruling house. The tranquility and orderliness between and among the members of his family were no doubt thought to be vital to the success of the system of succession. As Paul and Mariia put it in their *Law of Succession*: "With this Decree, We have made Our contribution to the tranquility of the State, which is based on a firm law of succession, which every right-thinking person would agree is essential."<sup>20</sup>

The *Statute on the Imperial Family* is dated 5 April 1797—the coronation date of Paul I—and so was likely not written at the same time as the *Law of Succession* (1788) but later: probably in the months between Catherine II's death and Paul I's coronation. On finally assuming the throne, Paul and Mariia very likely chose not to return to and revise their earlier "agreement" on the succession—perhaps for sentimental reasons—but nonetheless saw areas of potential trouble if not addressed in a follow-up decree. Thus it is likely that the *Statute* emerged from a review by the couple and their advisors of the contents of the 1788 text: filling in holes that neither Paul nor Mariia saw or imagined 9 years before.

Comprising 208 individually numbered articles (with dozens of numbered sub-paragraphs), the *Statute on the Imperial Family* was divided into eight sections (*otdeleniia*), each addressing topics—probably with some awareness of how these family codes were written in the West, but still rather presciently—that Paul believed would be vital for preserving the "tranquility" of the dynasty. The sections of the *Statute* pertain to the sources and types of properties and incomes for members of the Imperial Family (Section 1), the internal structure and distribution of titles within the Imperial Family (Sections 2 and 3), the system of inheritance to titles, properties, and incomes (Section 4), the

<sup>19</sup> See Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1:178.

<sup>20</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 24:589, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

distribution of awards and orders (Section 5), the establishment of a government Department of Apanages for the administration of incomes and estates of members of the Imperial Family and the procedures for its fiscal and administrative operation (Sections 6, 7, 8).<sup>21</sup> How closely the *Statute* relates to and reinforces the contents of the *Law of Succession* can be clearly seen in Sections 2, 3, and 5—which define genealogical equivalencies, titles, and awards distributed to members of the Imperial Family.

### Measuring Familial Order in the Dynasty

The *Statute on the Imperial Family* is principally concerned with distributing honors, titles, and income among the members of Paul's and Maria's family according to their genealogical position in the dynasty. The first article in Section 2 (Article 15 overall) declared that "as the first rule of the internal structure of the Imperial Family, we establish that all titles, pensions, and estates shall be granted to those born of the Imperial blood according to their degree of kinship with the emperor from whom they descend in the direct line, not with subsequent emperors with whom one might have a closer kinship tie."<sup>22</sup> Thus, one's place in the dynasty was determined by lineal descent alone. The *Statute* then proceeds to establish genealogical equivalencies among Paul I's current and future children and more distant (and as-yet unborn) descendants. Alexander, Paul's eldest son, is given the title Heir (*Naslednik*), as would Alexander's eldest son, eldest grandson, and so on (Alexander, it turned out, had no male issue).<sup>23</sup> Constantine, Paul's second son, would succeed to the throne only after the extinction of Alexander's male line (here, echoing the wording in the Pauline *Law of Succession*), and he, as a junior male offspring, was to be regarded as equal in genealogical status with the younger children of his elder brother, Alexander. Constantine's own sons, along with the offspring of Alexander's younger sons, constituted a third genealogical ranking in the Imperial family.<sup>24</sup> According to the provision in Section 3 of the *Statute*, the Heir and all his senior male offspring were granted the new title Tsetsarevich,

<sup>21</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:525, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797). See Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1:178-79.

<sup>22</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:527, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Section 2, Article 15.

<sup>23</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:527-28, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Section 2, Article 17.3.1-4.

<sup>24</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:527-28, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Section 2, Article 17.1-2.

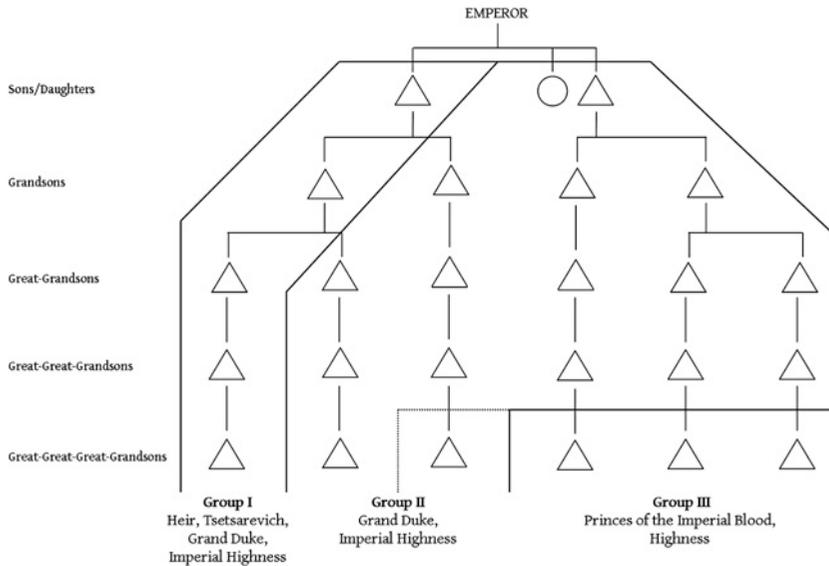


Figure 1: Titles in the Imperial House: 1797 *Statute on the Imperial Family*

and all other sons, daughters, grandsons, great-grandsons, and great-great-grandsons were granted the title grand duke (*velikii kniaz'*) and the style "His/Her Imperial Highness" (*Imperatorskoe Vysochestvo*). The descendants of great-great-grandsons were to be given the title Prince of the Imperial Blood (*kniaz' Imperatorskoi krovi*) and the style "Highness" (*Vysochestvo*).<sup>25</sup> In this way, the genealogical equivalencies bore on one's title, but not at all on one's right to the succession, which, regardless of one's place in the imperial family tree, followed a prescribed order of succession through it (see Figure 1).

These equivalencies did, however, play a role in other areas regulated by the *Statute*. The age of majority differed between the Heir and the rest of the Imperial Family. The *Law of Succession* established the age of majority for the heir at 16 "in order to limit the length of a regency," and the majority of other members of the dynasty, of either sex, at 20 years—stipulations that were repeated in the *Statute*.<sup>26</sup> (A minor member of the dynasty could reach his or

<sup>25</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:530, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Section 3, Articles 30-33. It was evidently contemplated that granddaughters and other female issue would marry and assume the titles and styles of their husbands.

<sup>26</sup> PSZ, series 1, 24:588-89, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797); PSZ, series 1, 24:529, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Section 2, Article 26.

her majority earlier, at the date of marriage, should that come before age 20.) The *Statute* also delineated the rights to the several orders of knighthood that had been created since Peter I's time. The Orders of St. Andrew the First-Called, St. Catherine (for women), St. Alexander Nevskii, and St. Anna (which was originally a Holstein order, named in honor of the patron saint of Anna Petrovna, Peter I's daughter, by her husband, Karl Friedrich, in 1735 and revived by Paul I on his coronation day), were all given to the Heir and all grand dukes on their baptism, whereas all princes of the Imperial Blood were to receive them only on reaching their majority (20 years). (Princesses of the Imperial Blood received the Order of St. Catherine at the same age). The *Statute* also spelled out the disbursement of pensions and estates according to these genealogical equivalencies: the more junior members of the dynasty receiving less, in relative terms, than their more senior kinsmen and kinswomen.<sup>27</sup>

The *Statute on the Imperial Family* literally put everyone in his or her place. By assigning titles, honors, and incomes according to genealogical proximity to the throne, Paul I both sought to support the smooth transition of power from one generation to the next outlined in the *Law of Succession*, and to remove, or so he hoped, any ambiguity about the relative status of members within the dynasty. Thus the goals of both pieces of legislation were dynastic: to secure the succession and to define membership in, and the internal structure of, the imperial house. Paul I was, then, the biological founder of the modern Romanov dynasty, but also the founder of the entire modern dynastic system Russia employed down to the end of the empire (and, for that matter, down to the present day among his remaining descendants). Paul I would come to a tragic end—Richard Wortman called Paul I “a founder, but a founder manqué”<sup>28</sup>—but his laws would remain the basic rulebook for the Imperial house, becoming integral parts of the Fundamental Laws that were compiled and issued in 1832 and of the body of Laws that formed Russia's first constitutional order in 1906.<sup>29</sup> These regulations of succession and familial order in the dynasty were therefore among modern Russia's most significant and enduring legal texts.

<sup>27</sup> *PSZ*, series 1, 24:531–38, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797): Sections 4 and 5.

<sup>28</sup> Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1:192.

<sup>29</sup> See Wortman, “The ‘Fundamental State Laws’ of 1832”; and idem, “Russian Monarchy and the Rule of Law: New Considerations of the Court Reform of 1864,” *Kritika* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 145–70; and *PSZ*, series 3, 26(pt. 1):456–61, no. 27805 (23 April 1906).

### Revisions to the Statute on the Family

Though significant and enduring, they did not, however, remain unchanged. Developments in the Imperial family itself prompted revisions to the two edicts. These alterations to these laws concerned both the distribution of honors and titles, but also the rules on marriage, which, as we will see below, would become a vital criterion for membership in the Imperial house for purposes of succession rights. Throughout all these changes, however, the original goal established by Paul I for these two texts remained unchanged: securing the peaceful transference of power from one emperor to the next (a goal only partially met, as it turns out), and the establishment and maintenance of the internal structure among Romanov kinsmen and kinswomen (a goal met with somewhat more success).

The most important change to the *Statute on the Imperial Family* occurred on July 2, 1886, when Emperor Alexander III published a new and significant revision of it.<sup>30</sup> The new *Statute* included many of the same principles and even some of the same language as the original issued by Paul I in 1797, but the structure of the text was significantly altered. Instead of 208 articles in 8 Sections, the new *Statute* had only 98 articles arranged under five unnumbered headings: “On Degrees of Kinship in the Imperial House”; “On the Births and Deaths of Members of the Imperial House and the Genealogical Book”; “On titles, Coats of Arms, and Other Visible Symbols of Rank”; “On the Income of Members of the Imperial House”; and “On the Legal Rights (*O grazhdanskikh pravakh*) of Members of the Imperial House”—a large section that includes separate subheadings on marriage; marriage contracts and dowries; divorce; the age of majority; property; inheritance; legal procedures involving property; and the duties of members of the Imperial house to the emperor.

The need for a new *Statute* arose out of changes in the Romanov dynasty itself. The problem was, in part, the growth in size of the Romanov dynasty. Paul I had 10 legitimate children, all but one surviving to marriageable age and having issue. Paul’s third son, Nicholas I, had 8 legitimate children who reach marriageable age, and Alexander II also had 8. By the 1880s, the Romanovs were a sprawling family of more than three dozen grandchildren of Paul I, all of whom, according to the *Statute on the Imperial Family*, were entitled to the ranks, style, and incomes of a grand duke or grand duchess. According to the diary of A. A. Polovtsov, a prominent advisor to Alexander

<sup>30</sup> PSZ, series 3, 6:381–91, no. 3851 (2 July 1886).

III, informal but increasingly urgent discussions about the need to review and revise the *Statute* were already underway in 1884. Polovtsov writes, “I reminded [the emperor] once again about the necessity to reexamine the laws on the Imperial Family. I insisted that this is necessary to do precisely now, while there are still no great-grandsons of an emperor who can benefit from the rights afforded them by the statute, but this situation could change any day after the marriage of the son of Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich.” Alexander III is reported to have replied: “To leave things as they are means to ruin utterly my own family. I know that all this will lead to trouble, but I have so many troubles right now that one more won’t count for much, and I do not intend to leave only troubles for my son.”<sup>31</sup>

In a memorandum he wrote for Alexander III, Polovtsov explains the urgency of the situation:

*The Statute on the Imperial Family*, issued on 5 April 1797, on the day of the coronation of the Emperor Paul I, was established at a time when not only a permanent law of succession to the throne did not exist, but when the family of the emperor included only two childless sons, and one infant son. Recognizing the danger of the uncertainty of so important a matter as the succession to the rights of the supreme power in the state, Emperor Paul did not limit himself to issuing a law of succession, but broadly defined the circle of persons who would always constitute the Imperial Family, in order that, should there not be immediate successors, there should never be a shortage of heirs to the throne....

After almost an entire century since the promulgation of the statute, conditions have substantively changed. By the Will of Divine Providence, the Imperial Family has grown in number, and in spite of the fact that the descendants who issue in the direct line from each of the ruling emperors has reached only two generations, the overall membership in the Imperial Family, which finds its origins in His Majesty Nicholas Pavlovich, has reached 37 persons, all bearing the title Imperial highness....

In such a situation, there naturally arises a question: is it really necessary to extend to the as-yet unborn generations of great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons of ruling emperors the same rights as those enjoyed by the emperors’ closest relatives?<sup>32</sup>

Polovtsov then answers his own question:

It is impossible not to believe that the government’s intent [in 1797], which was guided by the legislation granting to great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons of emperors identical titles and rights as their closest descendants, now has lost all meaning.

<sup>31</sup> A. A. Polovtsov, *Dnevnik gosudarstvennogo sekretaria A. A. Polovtsov*, ed. P. A. Zaionchkovskii, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 1:252-53 (27 October 1884).

<sup>32</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 1:263-65 (11 December 1884).

Polovtsov then proposes the formation of a special commission to examine and revise the *Statute*; and, as agenda items for that commission, he recommends the commission explore limiting the titles of grand duke and grand duchess and style “imperial highness” (and the economic benefits attached to these honors) only to sons, daughters, and grandsons (in the male line) of the emperor.<sup>33</sup>

Alexander III adopted Polovtsov’s recommendations. He appointed his younger brother, Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich, to chair the commission, which included Polovtsov and several others. The work by the review commission came to include far more than just a review of the range of titles and pensions given to members of the dynasty. It took Paul I’s original text and substantially edited it: rearranging and, in many instances, rewording many of its provisions, and drawing not only on Paul I’s original text, but also on other imperial edicts issued in the years between 1797 and 1886.<sup>34</sup> The commission’s work, then, was as much an editorial and textual project as it was a practical-minded re-envisioning of the honorific and economic status of the members of the dynasty. This commission’s work—though narrow in scope and focused only on the Imperial Family—should nonetheless be considered one of the major legal accomplishments of the Imperial Russian government during the last decades of the empire: evidence of the competency of some of the legal minds at Alexander III’s court, and of the considerable (and often neglected) importance of the Imperial family in shaping and driving what Wortman has called “legal consciousness.”<sup>35</sup>

The new *Statute on the Imperial Family* altered the genealogical equivalencies defined in Paul I’s original decree. Whereas Paul I’s *Statute* envisioned three genealogical groupings (the Heir, the grand dukes, and the princes of the Imperial blood) liberally extending the highest title and honors to Paul I’s great-great-grandsons, Alexander III’s *Statute* envisioned four groupings, with the titles of grand duke and grand duchess and Imperial Highness limited only to sons, daughters, and grandsons (see Figure 2). The titles prince and princess and the style Highness were given to great-grandsons and senior great-great-grandsons, and the new style Serene Highness was given to junior

<sup>33</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 1:265 (11 December 1884).

<sup>34</sup> See Articles 6, 18, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 38, 41, 58, 59, 63, 69, 72, and 88 in *PSZ*, series 3, 6:381-91, no. 3851 (2 July 1886).

<sup>35</sup> Wortman, “Russian Monarchy and the Rule of Law,” 147.

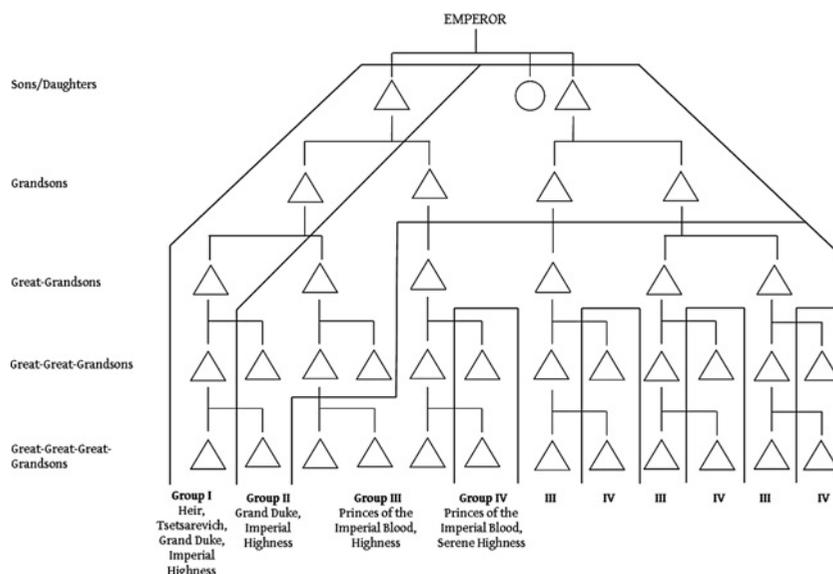


Figure 2: Titles in the Imperial House: 1886 *Statute on the Imperial Family*

great-great-grandsons. Pensions, estates, coats of arms, and other privileges were distributed through the dynasty by these new groupings. As is easy to imagine, these were not wholly popular reforms among some of the emperor's relatives, especially those about to marry and have children who would be deprived now of titles and income on account of this new *Statute*. But the reason for adopting this change was fairly clear and obvious at the time: the expanding dynasty posed a fiscal threat to the budget of the Imperial Household. And with the succession now secured by the rapid (and perhaps unexpected) proliferation of the dynasty in the nineteenth century, there truly was, as Polovtsov wrote, "sufficient certainty of an unbroken succession to the throne."<sup>36</sup> With so many grand dukes already running around, there was no need to fret over the succession. Little did Polovtsov, or anyone else, know how quickly the prolific dynasty would be nearly eradicated by the revolution.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 1:263–64 (11 December 1884).

<sup>37</sup> In the year following the February/March abdication of Nicholas II, 18 members of the Imperial Family were executed, including 9 of the 17 grand dukes alive at the time.

### Marriage and Membership

If the revolution took its toll on the dynasty, so too did morganatic marriages. Morganatic marriages were known in the Romanov dynasty since Constantine Pavlovich, Paul I's second son, married his second wife, Joanna Grudzińska, in May 1820. There would be others. Alexander II would marry secondly to Princess Catherine Mikhailovna Dolgorukova in 1880, and Nicholas II's brother, Mikhail Aleksandrovich, would marry Natal'ia Sergeevna Sheremetevskaia (her third marriage) in 1912. After the abdication of Nicholas II, the floodgates were opened. Of the 30 marriages (and remarriages) of members of the Romanov dynasty since 1917, 26 were morganatic, reducing today the once robust dynasty to only Grand Duchess Mariia Vladimirovna and her son, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich.<sup>38</sup>

Paul I, Alexander I, Alexander III, and Nicholas II seem to have known the dangers that unequal marriages posed to the succession. Even in Paul I's and Mariia's original *Law of Succession*, the marriage of members of the dynasty was a regulated matter. The royal couple asserted their rights, as head of the Imperial Family, to control whom their children married: "Marriages will not be regarded as lawful if they have been contracted without the permission of the Sovereign."<sup>39</sup> The same requirement is also found in Article 25 of Paul I's original *Statute on the Imperial Family*, which declares that "all marriages contracted without the permission of the sovereign emperor may not be recognized as legitimate."<sup>40</sup> Neither text specifies any restrictions on the choice of spouse, but the *Law of Succession's* description of how the succession passes through the male and female branches of the dynasty appears to assume that these marriages would be with other royal and imperial houses, requiring that "[w]hen the succession reaches a female branch which is already reigning on another throne, it is left to the person who succeeds to make a choice of faith and throne and, together with that person's heir, to renounce the other faith and throne, if such a throne is tied with a religious denomination..."<sup>41</sup> Paul and Mariia may simply have been incapable of imagining a time when one of their descendants would not marry royalty.

<sup>38</sup>) Brien Horan, the American attorney for the Russian Imperial House and an authority on the Pauline *Law of Succession*, has calculated and described the morganatic marriages and the implications for the succession. See Brien Horan, "The Russian Imperial Succession," <http://www.chivalricorders.org/royalty/gotha/russuclw.htm> (accessed August 13, 2010).

<sup>39</sup>) *PSZ*, series 1, 24:588, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

<sup>40</sup>) *PSZ*, series 1, 24:529, no. 17.906 (5 April 1797).

<sup>41</sup>) *PSZ*, series 1, 24:588, no. 17.910 (5 April 1797).

But it was Paul I's and Maria's son Constantine who did just that. A week before he remarried Joanna Grudzińska, his brother, Emperor Alexander I, issued a formal annulment of Constantine's first marriage (to Anna Fedorovna, née Juliane Henriette Ulrike of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld), along with a new codicil to the *Statute on the Imperial Family*. It reads, in part:

We consider it good for the firm maintenance of the dignity and tranquility of the Imperial Family and of the Empire itself, to add to the existing laws concerning the Imperial Family the following additional provision: if any person of the Imperial Family enters into a marriage with a person of a status unequal to his, that is, not belonging to any Royal or Ruling House, in such a case the person of the Imperial Family cannot pass on to the other person the rights which belong to Members of the Imperial Family, and the children issuing from such a marriage have no right of succession to the Throne. Expressing this Our Will to all present and future Members of Our Imperial Family and to all Our faithful subjects, in accordance with the exact right established in article 23 of the *Statute on the Imperial Family*, We, standing before the King of Kings, make it incumbent upon one and all whom it may concern solemnly and inviolably to maintain for all time this Our supplemental enactment.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, Alexander I both permitted unequal marriages among his Romanov relatives and spelled out the consequences of them. Provided the emperor had given his permission, members of the dynasty could contract unequal marriages, and doing so did not deprive one of his or her membership in the dynasty and rights to the succession (unless they renounced them, as Constantine did). Unequal marriages did, however, deprive any children issuing from them of rights to the succession. Constantine was therefore free to remarry the Polish noblewoman, which is what he immediately did.

The loophole on unequal marriages, opened by Alexander I, was firmly closed on March 23, 1889, when Alexander III issued a blanket prohibition against unequal marriages in the dynasty. He was perplexed and harassed by members of his family contemplating and threatening to contract morganatic matches and he wanted to put a stop to it. His new edict read: "Henceforth, no member of the Imperial House may enter a marriage with a person of unequal status, that is, not belonging to a royal or ruling house."<sup>43</sup> This strict rule would be softened in 1911 by Nicholas II, who limited his father's prohibitions only to the grand dukes and grand duchesses: "Henceforth, no grand duke or grand duchess may enter into a marriage with a person of unequal

<sup>42</sup> PSZ, series 1, 37:529, no. 28.208 (20 March 1820).

<sup>43</sup> PSZ, series 3, 9:113, no. 5868 (23 March 1889).

status, that is, not belonging to a royal or ruling house.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, the genealogical equivalencies in the *Statute on the Imperial Family*, which were used to assign titles, pensions, and other honors to members of the dynasty, came now to have additional implications for marriage and membership in the dynasty. In other words, Nicholas II was relaxing the restriction on unequal marriage for those in the more distant genealogical groupings (those with the style “Highness” and “Serene Highness”—the princes), but retaining them for his closest kin (those with the style “Imperial Highness”—the grand dukes).

Integral to the question of marriage and membership in the dynasty was the problem of interfaith matches with the heterodox. Paul I’s *Law of Succession* and *Statute on the Imperial Family* assumed that the monarch would be Orthodox, and mentions religion only in the context of the succession devolving through the female line to someone who might belong to another dynasty and another faith, as we have seen. Marriage to the heterodox became an explicit element in legal documentation regulating the Imperial House only in 1832, with the promulgation of the Fundamental Laws by Nicholas I. That first element was contained in Article 142 (Article 185 in the 1906 code):

The marriage of a male of the Imperial House who may have the right of succeeding to the Throne with a person of another faith may take place only after her conversion to the Orthodox Confession.<sup>45</sup>

This language was altered by Alexander III in the 1886 revision to the *Statute on the Imperial Family*, with the vague phrase “who may have the right of succeeding to the Throne” removed and greater specificity inserted about who it was that was prohibited from marrying the heterodox:

The marriage of the Heir to the Throne and of his senior male issue with a person of another faith may take place only after her conversion to the Orthodox Confession.<sup>46</sup>

In this formulation of the text, male members of the dynasty in the first genealogical grouping (that is, the Tsetsarevich and Heir, and his eldest son, his senior grandson, and so on) were not permitted to marry anyone who had not first converted to Orthodoxy. Thus, as with unequal marriages, the restriction

<sup>44</sup> PSZ, series 3, 31:884–85, no. 35731 (11 August 1911).

<sup>45</sup> See Mikhail Zvyzkin, *Tsarskaia vlast'* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Novaia zhizn', 1924), 150–54.

<sup>46</sup> PSZ, series 3, 6:387, no. 3851 (2 July 1886).

on interfaith marriages was linked to and defined by the genealogical groupings built into the dynasty for other purposes (the distribution of titles, styles, coats of arms, incomes, and so on). The 1886 commission had looked at the original language of this article (the 1832 Digest version) and had seen a problem: a poorly worded and vague regulation (who, after all is meant by the phrase “who may have the right of succeeding to the Throne?”), which they felt needed fixing. Their solution (to limit the prohibition to the Heir and his senior male issue) was clear and sensible.

Alexander III, by contrast, may have appreciated the textual improvements, but he probably saw the new text as a diminution of his authority to control the marriages of his Romanov relatives. In 1889, the emperor restored the old wording (the 1832 Digest version) and reclaimed his power over his family’s nuptial lives:

Having deemed it good to reestablish Article 142 of the Digest of Fundamental Laws [*Svod osnovnykh gosudarstvennykh zakonov*] published in 1857, we decree: in accordance with the original wording [*nachertanie*] of the fundamental requirements for marriage of Members of Our August House, to have Article 60 of the *Statute on the Imperial Family* (Digest of Laws, volume 1, part 1, section 2, 1886 edition) read as follows: “The marriage of a male of the Imperial House who may have the right of succeeding to the Throne with a person of another faith may take place only after her conversion to the Orthodox Confession (Art. 40 of the Fundamental Laws).”

What prompted this change? Evidence from Polovtsov’s diary suggests that the Borki train accident on October 17, 1888, when Alexander III and his entire immediate family were all nearly killed, brought the question of marriages with the heterodox to a head. In January 1889, just three months after the Borki accident and just six months before the promulgation of the new edict on intermarriage, Polovtsov records several conversations he had with Alexander III and other members of the Romanov family about intermarriage. According to Polovtsov, the question was: what “would have happened in the case of a different outcome to the Borki catastrophe,” that is, “if they all had been killed.”<sup>47</sup> The hypothetical question spawned a debate among Alexander III and his relatives and advisors, including Polovtsov. Alexander III was originally of the view that, if he and his entire family had perished in the train derailment, the succession would have passed not to his brother, Vladimir (who had chaired the 1886 commission and who, according to the system of

<sup>47</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 2:150–51 (23 January 1889).

primogeniture elaborated in the *Law of Succession*, stood next in line to the throne after Alexander III and his sons), but to Vladimir's son, Kirill. The emperor evidently believed that Vladimir's marriage to a Lutheran disqualified him from the succession. Others strenuously disagreed.<sup>48</sup> Vladimir himself protested that he had not signed any renunciation of his succession rights when he married his non-Orthodox wife, though he (rightly) understood that, quoting Polovtsov again, an empress of Russia "cannot be a person who is not Orthodox and that, consequently, if this unhappy event [the death of Alexander III and his family] should present itself, then of course the grand duchess [Vladimir's wife] would immediately accept Orthodoxy for reasons of state."<sup>49</sup>

Polovtsov echoed that view. Marriage to a non-Orthodox was not to be treated like marriage to a commoner: while both required the sanction of the emperor, unequal marriages deprived children of the union of all succession rights, whereas nowhere does the *Law* or *Statute* say the same of marriage to the heterodox. Just the opposite, in fact. The *Law* and *Statute* make provisions for how persons in other dynasties (descended in the female line from the Romanovs) who were in line for the throne should "chose their faith and throne" once the succession had devolved to them. That Alexander III's thinking on the matter was not entirely systematic is demonstrated by his claim that the succession should, in the case of his and his family's death, fall to Kirill—the offspring of a religiously mixed marriage. Alexander evidently changed his mind about the position of his younger brother, but it must be admitted that the Article on marriage to the non-Orthodox remains perhaps the most ambiguous piece of the *Statute on the Imperial Family*. Alexander III should have left well enough alone.

Who, then, did Alexander III have in mind with the phrase "those who may succeed to the throne" in Article 185 (and Article 142 in the 1832 Digest)? This phrase has been the source of considerable debate among legal scholars even before the revolution, and has been enormously significant to

<sup>48</sup> In 1911, when Tat'iana Konstantinovna, the daughter of Grand Duke Konstantine Konstantinovich and his Lutheran wife, Elizaveta Mavrikiievna (née Elisabeth of Saxe-Altenburg), married Prince Konstantine Aleksandrovich of Bagration-Mukhanskii, she renounced her rights to the succession "which belongs to her as a member of the Imperial House of Russia," in a decree published by the Imperial Senate on 24 August 1911. She obviously had rights to renounce. The groom was an agnatic kinsman of Grand Duke Leonida Georgievna, and, according to Tat'iana's father's published diary, Nicholas II did not regard the marriage asmorganatic.

<sup>49</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 2:149 (19 January 1889).

the surviving members of the dynasty after it. It is hard not to agree with the view that the phrase does “not refer to all male members of the Imperial House, but to a narrower circle of persons.”<sup>50</sup> Who constitutes that circle may have been the prerogative of the emperor himself to decide, in his capacity as head of the dynasty. But the previous version of this law suggests a more precise identity: “the Heir to the Throne” and “his senior male issue.” This wording matches perfectly the formulation (and even the phrasing) describing the first and most senior genealogical grouping in both the 1797 and 1886 *Statute on the Imperial Family*: the Heir, Tsetsarevich, Grand Duke, and the first-born male in each generation issuing from him. That conclusion—that the “narrower circle of persons” was the senior line of descent only—is indirectly supported by Polovtsov’s diary, which describes the 1889 revision on intermarriage a “new decree concerning marriages of grand dukes with persons of other faiths.”<sup>51</sup> Polovtsov, who was in a position to know, clearly did not believe the prohibition extended to the entire male population of the dynasty.

The structure and membership of the Romanov dynasty, then, was a matter debated and revised on the pages of legal decrees, edicts, and law codes. The Pauline *Law of Succession* and *Statute on the Imperial Family* established the dynasty as a legal institution in Russia, bound by and to the law. These statutes were, in a word, *integral* to the legality of the entire monarchical system in Russia. But it did more than that, of course: it projected an image—contrived, surely, but useful for the regime—of legitimacy, of loving domesticity in the imperial palace, and of a filial bond uniting the dynasty and the whole of Russia. The *Law* and *Statute*—as much as any coronation, royal wedding, or other rituals performed publically by the Imperial family—helped to create and project a specific vision of the Russian monarchical system. More than a dusty pile of papers pulled out only on rare occasions, these dynastic laws governed the Imperial House in a real way; and even if they on occasion could be brazenly ignored (and at times, they were), all members of the family seemed to understand that their status in the dynasty and in society overall was determined by, and debated always with reference to, these laws.

Membership in the dynasty was largely determined by a close regulation of marriage. The *Law of Succession* and the original and revised versions of the *Statute on the Imperial Family* established three criteria for legal marriage in the

<sup>50</sup> Archbishop Antonii of Los Angeles, *Nasledovanie Rossiiskogo Imperatorskogo Prestola*, with an introduction by Kirill Tumanov (Bridgeport, Conn.: Order of the Imperial Union of Russia, 1985), 27.

<sup>51</sup> Polovtsov, *Dnevnik*, 2:211 (19 June 1889).

dynasty: the permission of the emperor (the oldest and firmest requirement, dating back to 1797), equal marriage (which dates to 1820, and was revised in 1889 and 1911), and conversion for the wives of heirs (which dates to 1832, and which was revised in 1886 and 1889). Aside from a proven descent from Paul I, the other requirement for succession to the Russian throne was having the right marriage.

Thus, this study reveals that the fixation on the marriages of Romanov dynasts in the nineteenth century, and the more recent controversy around the marriage of Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna and Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich, are nothing new. Dynastic marriage has been a political minefield in Russian history going back to the turn of the sixteenth century, if not well before that.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, this study settles the doubts about Leonida's suitability as a Romanov consort as far as Paul's *Law* and *Statute* are concerned. Did Leonida and Vladimir marry with the emperor's (or the head of the dynasty's) permission? At the time of the marriage, Vladimir was the nearly universally recognized heir to the throne and head of the dynasty. Therefore, he was, in true monarchical fashion, in a position to give himself permission to marry.<sup>53</sup> Was his marriage equal? Honest people can disagree about the status of the Bagration dynasty during the nineteenth century, but by the time of the marriage (in 1948), the existence of an independent Georgia (before 1801 and 1918–1921—and later, since 1991) more than satisfies that requirement. The fact that Vladimir Kirillovich had himself issued a declaration affirming the royal status of the House of Bagration (in December 1946—two years before he met and married a Bagration himself), only confirms the conclusion.<sup>54</sup> And, finally, no one disputes that Leonida Georgievna was Orthodox.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Russell Martin, "The Petrine Divide and the Periodization of Early Modern Russian History," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 410–25.

<sup>53</sup> See the pledges of loyalty and recognition as head of the Imperial House offered by exiled members of the Romanov dynasty to Vladimir Kirillovich in Archbishop Antonii, *Nasledovanie*, 69–74.

<sup>54</sup> For the declaration, see Archbishop Antonii, *Nasledovanie*, 74–75. The declaration was issued in response to a request from King Juan Carlos I of Spain that Vladimir Kirillovich offer his opinion, as head of the Russian Imperial House, as to whether a proposed marriage between Infanta Doña María de las Mercedes Raimunda, the king's relative, and Prince Irakly Bagrationi-Mukhraneli, would be deemed equal. The grand duke consulted with historians and relatives and determined that the 1801 Russian violation of the Treaty of Georgievsk of 1783 (between Russia and Kartli-Kakheti, or Georgia) ought not deprive the ruling house of Georgia of its rightful royal status for purposes of inter-dynastic marriage.

To be sure, other questions have been raised: about Vladimir Kirillovich's father's (Kirill Vladimirovich's) role in the revolution, or, as we have seen, about his grandfather's (Vladimir Aleksandrovich's) marriage to a Lutheran. But it appears clear from a detailed reading of the House laws that on the night of May 23–24, 2010, a Romanov grand duchess passed away.