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Andrey A. Yefimov

St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

Construction of the Grand Ducal Residences: The Role of August Persons in Preparation and Realization of Ceremonies under Nicholas I and Alexander II

Abstract

The article considers one of the aspects of interaction of the august personages with the employees of the Ministry of the Imperial Court during the construction of grand ducal residences. Although there are numerous architects' biographies, publications on the history of palaces construction, ceremonies in the Russian Empire, Imperial court of the Russian Empire as a phenomenon, many issues are lacking in the historiography. The author examines the role of the Romanov family members in preparation and realization of ceremonies, such as laying of

the foundation stones and consecration of palaces, considering these events as a symbolic start and finish of the construction. Reasons behind the chronological framework of the article, which is limited to the epochs of Nicholas I and Alexander II, are specifically stipulated. The author argues that under Nicholas I, when the residences for the Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna were being constructed (they proved to be the only ones finished in this period), it was the Emperor who set the date of the ceremonies, while all organizational activities were carried out by the Construction Commission under the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty. However, the future owner, when participating in the celebrations, symbolically gifted construction workers on her behalf in addition to the official awards and payments distributed by the employees of the Court Department. The article states that under the next sovereign, Alexander II, the future owners of the residences, the grand dukes, were promoted to the first roles. They made decisions both on the date and time of the ceremonies and on organizational issues, passing their orders to the employees of the Construction Bureau of the Ministry of the Imperial Court. The author notes that with acquisition of their functions of organizers, the august customers also gained financial responsibility that manifested in payment to ceremonies participants and distribution of symbolic gifts.

Keywords

Historical sources, Ministry of the Imperial Court, Emperor Nicholas I, Emperor Alexander II, Grand Duke, ceremony, palace, construction of the august residences.

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About the authors

Yefimov Andrey Aleksandrovich, PhD in History, St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, researcher, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, +7-911-971-59-49, aaefimov5@gmail.com

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