

A Summer Union In Portugal

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In the Northern Hemisphere at least, it's summer time - a season which heralds the arrival of numerous society weddings. While the May union of Peter Phillips and Autumn Kelly received exhaustive coverage thanks to the controversial decision of the bride and groom to sell their story to Hello! magazine, over in Portugal the June wedding of a less high-profile royal couple followed more traditional lines, as Dr. Janice Seto examines....

One wag on a royal forum quipped, 'Another

Charles and Diana' in response to the happy news of the engagement at the historical royal Chateau d'Eu of 34-year old French Prince Charles-Philippe

d'Orleans and the 29-year-old Portuguese duchess, Diane Álvares Pereira de Melo.

The

first royal wedding in Portugal since Dom Duarte's about a dozen years ago was always destined to be a real gathering of continental royals, and one which saw the appearance of a wedding gown from Carolina Herrera. Stylish and comme il faut.

In choosing suitable partners, it seems this new generation of French royals have learnt from the matrimonial turmoil of the previous generation.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}In so many ways, the newlyweds are well-matched. And not in the William-Kate Middleton and Harry-Chelsy Davy way of, shall we say, 'partying and puking'.

Rather than sharing a lifestyle of the fast-spending, self-immolating House of Wales sets, Charles-Philippe and Diane make public appearances supporting charities and other worthy causes.

Both have French mothers, were brought up on the Iberian peninsula, and have spent enough time together in Portugal to make a considered decision. They speak each other's languages. (Has Kate started learning Welsh yet? Then again, has William?!).

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}They make a photogenic couple - and more significantly a couple who appear very happy together.

Compared to the young royals across the pond, they remind us this is how grown-up royals behave. Perhaps mature behaviour portends well for their future.

Plus, both hold titles that others dispute. And since neither of these titles come from countries with extant monarchies, the

need for a resolution is faint. Call yourselves what you will, it depends on who recognizes it.

Charles-Philippe is the eldest son of Prince Michel of France and his aristocratic wife, Beatrice de Pasquier de Franclieu but he was not born a prince.

Michel's choice of life partner in 1968 had infuriated his father, Henri, the late Comte de Paris, who wanted his eleven children to contract dynastic marriages. For him, the daughter of a French baronial family was not quite right. And so Michel lost his place in the succession.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]} Later, the Comte granted Michel and his wife the titles of Comte d'Evreux. Following French noble practice, the two daughters, Clothilde and Adelaide, were then known as Mesdemoiselles d'Evreux.

And so it was that Charles-Philippe and his younger brother, Francois, and two older sisters were largely raised in Spain - some would say his parents were exiled from France.

Representing the House of Dior in Madrid is mother Beatrice, often seen in the fashion press. However, Charles-Philippe retained very close ties with his French side via his indomitable paternal grandmother, the late Comtesse of Paris - Princess Isabelle d'Orleans-Braganza, granddaughter of the last Princess Regent of Brazil, and her husband, French Prince Gaston d'Orleans, Comte d'Eu.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]} Known simply as Madame, Isabelle took seriously her role of matriarch and the importance she played in the survival of the Orleans family.

For the first quarter of the 20th century, the French Orleans family had been in danger of becoming extinct in the male line, almost like Japan's imperial family today. Indeed, Isabelle's husband had only three sisters.

After her spectacular marriage to her second cousin in Palermo at the family's Orleans palace in 1931 at the age of barely 20, Isabelle - the lady who was dubbed by the King of Bulgaria the "most beautiful princess in Europe" - later gave Henri a total of five sons - his heir and namesake Henri, Francois, twins Michel and Jacques, and Thibault.

Madame had indeed saved the Orleans.

At the time of the late Comte de Paris's passing in 1997, however, the male line of succession was limited to his heir Henri (and his three sons) and son Jacques Duc d'Orleans (and his two sons). Prince Francois had died a bachelor soldier in the Algerian war of independence, while Michel and the late Thibault and their sons had been excluded because of unequal marriages.

This situation changed when the new Henri took charge.

Calling himself Comte de Paris Duc de France, the new head of the Orleans line recognized the marriages of Michel and Thibault and then raised their children to the titles of 'H.R.H'.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}In a gesture to Jacques, these new princes were placed after the family of the Duc d'Orleans in the line of succession.

Of all the Orleans grandsons, Charles-Philippe is the one who works best to his uncle, the new head of the family, on preserving the dynastic heritage of the Orleans.

Comte Henri's own sons remain uneasy with him, after the divorce of their parents, and are not usually found at the Orleans events he hosts. On the other hand, business consultant Charles-Philippe tends to be there for his uncle.

In gratitude for his support, the Comte gave Charles-Philippe a hereditary title of his own, that of Duc d'Anjou, during a formal ceremony which took place in September 2004.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}The event served another purpose – to end the détente with the supporters of the Legitimiste heirs, headed by their own Duc d'Anjou, the Spanish Prince Luis Alfonso. (He was deliciously photographed in polo-playing style for the special royal issue of Vanity Fair magazine in 2003).

It was an audacious move to grant a title that had always been outside the purvue of the Orleans. It is

almost as if the Queen had bestowed upon Viscount Linley the title of Prince of Prussia. (That would certainly raise the ire of young HI & RH Prince Georg, the head of the family!).

The only surviving great-grandson of both the late Alfonso XIII and his Battenberg queen, Victoria Eugenia, and dictator El Caudillo, Francisco Franco, Luis Alfonso has largely led his own life, now father of a baby girl with his duchess, the Venezuelan heiress Maria-Margarita Vargas and working in Latin America with his wealthy father-in-law.

It is a tribute to Isabelle Countess of Paris that action man Charles-Philippe - nine years in the French military, reality show contestant, and international development consultant - announced his September engagement at her childhood home in Normandy, the Chateau d'Eu.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Now mostly occupied by the municipal government, I believe that the family has the use of the lovely pavilion.

It remains to be seen if his former flame, the sister of Crown Princess Mathilde of the Belgians, will attend. He was at Comtesse Elisabeth d'Ucqoz D'urdem's wedding to the Marquis Pallavacini.

Being civilized folk, she will certainly receive an invitation.

No question that the Portuguese claimant will attend. Madame's nephew, Dom Duarte Duke de Braganza and his much younger duchess, aristocrat Isabel de Heredia, and their three young children will make the short drive down to the wedding ceremony from their home in Portugal to the palace of the Dukes of Cadaval in a UNESCO monument, the historic town of Evora.

The Cadavals had gone into a form of voluntary exile with the Portuguese royals.

Enter the blonde fiancée, 29 year old Diane Álvares Pereira de Melo, who studied at the American University of Paris and had done a stint at Christie's.

Born in Lausanne when her father was in his sixties, Portugal-based Diane is the elder daughter from his second marriage in 1965 to the former Claudine Tritz.

It was Duchess Claudine who persuaded her husband to relocate their family permanently to Portugal after years in fashion, during which time they opened Lanvin, Valentino and Armani boutiques in world cities such as New York and Paris.

Though

Diane is known as the successor to her father, as Duchess of Cadaval, it is a disputed claim.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Her father, Dom Jaime Álvares Pereira de Melo, 10th Duke of Cadaval, bore no sons and he wanted young Diane to inherit the title. Unfortunately, Dom Jaime also had two older daughters, by his first marriage in 1935 at age 23 to Antoinette Louise Schweisguth, a woman 14 years his senior.

The Duke of Cadaval's first marriage, which ended in divorce, took place only in a civil ceremony in London. The rationale was that the offspring of the first marriage had a lesser claim due to the civil ceremony.

The second time around however was a Catholic ceremony in 1965 to 21-year-old Claudine Tritz. Unlike Charles and Camilla, who received a religious blessing at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, for Henri comte de Paris and his second wife, Micaela, the lack of a religious ceremony was an important distinction. (On the other hand, the fact she had only married civilly gave Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano enough wiggle room to wed Prince Felipe. In the eyes of the church, she had not previously been married).

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Her father named Diane his heir, in the process controversially disinheriting his adult two daughters from his first marriage.

Diane's elder half-sister, Paris-based Rosalinda Guerrand-Hermès, who married into the Hermes family (yes, those handbags), has not yet relinquished her claim to the duchy. People invariably took sides and the conservatives supported Diane.

Dom Duarte as the defacto head of the Portuguese royal family, was the one who resolved the problem of who inherited the dukedom of Cadaval when Dom Jaime died in 2001.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}At a family meeting he respected the wishes of the late Duke by awarding Diane the peerage of Duchess of Cadaval for life. He bestowed upon Rosalinda the hereditary titles of 13th Marquess of Ferreira and 23rd Countess of Tentúgal, plus the courtesy title of Duchess of Cadaval-Guerrand-Hermès.

Apparently, according to the Duke of Braganza, the dukedon of Cadaval is not of automatic succession and the title-holder has to be confirmed by the royal house.

It is the same in Spain, where the heir has to apply to the council of nobles to secure the title.

Therefore, when Diane dies, the head of the Portuguese house of Braganza will then decide who will be the 12th duke or duchess of Cadaval. The choices come from Diane's offspring, or the families of her sister Alexandra or her half-sisters.

But it is clear which duchess of Cadaval is in charge of the family seat in beautiful Evora.

Since possession is nine-tenths of the law, it was widow Duchess Claudine who hosted the spectacular pre-wedding ball and the wedding banquet at the Ducal palace. Her daughter's wedding on June 21 cements her branch's claim.

The bride was beautiful in her Cadaval tiara and gown, and the guests rose to the occasion.

Diana wore the most stunning Oscar de la Renta gown, standing beside the other belle of the ball, Camilla, the new Duchess of Castro (a title bestowed upon the death of her father-in-law).

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Her in-laws, who are the next generation of Napoleons, cheered on the newlyweds while the groom's parents put on a show of unity as their younger son escorted Alexandra de Cadaval to her seat. Meanwhile, the Comte de

Paris and his sons looked equally relaxed as they posed for photos.

Honeymooning in secret, the couple will be known as Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess d'Anjou and de Cadaval as they carry out their royal and humanitarian work whilst juggling the management of the Cadaval enterprises from their home base in Estoril.

That's how it's done. A jolly good show, Your Royal Highnesses!