

Novel 21.

Concerning the Armenians and that they too shall be governed by Roman laws.
(De Armeniis, ut ipsi quoque per omnia Romanorum leges sequantur.)

Justinian to Acacius, magnificent Proconsul of Armenia.

Preface. Since we want the Armenians to have good laws, and do not want that country to be different from the remainder of our republic, we have given them Roman magistrates, discarded the former designation of them (in that country), have accustomed them to Roman forms, and do not want them to have laws other than those cherished by the Romans. And we have thought it necessary to expressly correct a matter in which they have conducted themselves badly, so that it shall no longer be true, as is the custom of barbarians, that men only can inherit the property of their parents, brothers and sisters and other relatives, but women also shall be able to do so; nor shall the latter be married without dowry (documents), nor bought by their husbands, as is still the uncivilized custom among them. Nor only have they such ferocious sentiment, but other nations, too, have contempt for nature, and a low regard for women, as if the latter were not made by God, and had no part in the procreation of children, but were creatures to be despised and not worthy of any honor.

c. 1. We accordingly ordain by this imperial law that the rule as to succession by women, in force among us, shall also be in force among the Armenians, and no difference shall be made between male and female. But the order specified in our laws, in which parties inherit from parents, that is to say, from father and mother, from grandfather and grandmother and remoter ascendants, and from their descendants, that is sons and daughters, and the order in which they themselves are succeeded, shall be in force among the Armenians, and the Armenian laws shall not be any different from that of the Romans. For as they belong to our empire and owe obedience to us, and along with other nations enjoy all that we have, women shall not be deprived by them of the equality which they enjoy among us, but our laws

shall apply equally to all, including the ancient laws, which we collected and put into our Institutions and Digests, as well as the imperial legislation enacted by our predecessors and by us.

c. 2. These provisions, therefore, shall be in force for all time, commencing with the beginning of this fourteenth indiction in which we enact this law. For to anxiously search the past and return to previous times, creates confusion and is not required of legislation. But from this fourteenth indiction, as has been stated, and in all subsequent times, the right to succession shall be equal, and everything in any manner relating thereto shall apply equally to females as well as to males. All matters of the past shall remain undisturbed, both as to patrimonial estates and as to other property; so that women shall have no share in patrimonial lands already divided, or in successions falling to heirs previous to the (end of) the thirteenth indiction, but from and after the time aforesaid; that is to say, from the fourteenth indiction, the provisions made by us shall be in force.

Epilogue. Your Magnificence, and your successors in office, must, for all time, be zealous to enforce this our will, declared by this imperial law.

Given at Constantinople.