

Distinctive Features of Museums Established in the Late 18th – Early 19th Centuries. (On the Example of the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum).

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Abstract: *This scientific article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the distinctive features of major European museums established in the late 18th and early 19th centuries — the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum. The study examines the history of the establishment of these museums, the sources and principles of the formation of their collections, their architectural solutions, exhibition structures, as well as their functional role in society and the process of their popularization among the public. The article employs historical-genetic, comparative-historical, system-analytical, structural-functional, and problem-chronological research methods. As a result of the study, both the similarities and differences among the three museums have been identified, and the general trends in the development of museums in Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries have been determined. In addition, practical recommendations for the development of national museums in Uzbekistan have been proposed.*

Keywords; Late 18th – early 19th centuries, St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum, France Louvre Museum, Spain Prado Museum, museology, art history, French, collection, exhibition, Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles V, Philip II of Spain.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, the collection, preservation, and transmission of cultural heritage to future generations has always been of great importance. Especially the late 18th and early 19th centuries became a turning point in this regard, when the collection and preservation of works of art gradually moved beyond the framework of private collections and began to transform into public cultural institutions of international significance. As a result of this process, major museums that today symbolize world civilization emerged, such as the Hermitage Museum in the capital of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg; the Louvre Museum in France, established as a result of the French Revolution; and the Prado Museum, which reflects the power of the Spanish monarchy.

The history of the creation of these museums embodies not only the collection of cultural values but also their role as instruments of political, social, and national identity formation. During this period, museums became not only a means of demonstrating the grandeur of monarchical power but also a tool for the emerging nation-states to express and promote their national identity.

From this perspective, a comparative study of the formation processes of the Hermitage, Louvre, and Prado museums, as well as the identification of their distinctive features, is of great scholarly significance not only for museology but also for political history, cultural studies, and art history. In the era of globalization, the role of national museums and their functions in society have become even more relevant. Indeed, the museum models and exhibition principles formed in the late 18th and 19th centuries later

served as examples for cultural institutions established throughout the world.

Therefore, analyzing the architectural solutions of these museums during their early formation, the principles of the development of their collections, and the ways in which they were presented to the public is of important theoretical and practical significance for modern museum development and cultural policy.

2. Literature analysis

The scientific study of this topic includes several stages and has developed within the framework of different national scholarly traditions. In foreign historiography, particularly in the works of French researchers such as Jean Batur and Pierre Rosenberg, the transformation of the Louvre Museum from a royal palace into a republican museum is thoroughly examined. Special attention is given to the collection of confiscated works of art during the French Revolution and the issues related to their exhibition and presentation.

In Russian historiography, fundamental studies by scholars such as Boris Piotrovsky and Vladimir Levinson-Lessing provide extensive information about the stages of the formation of the collections of the Hermitage Museum. Their works discuss the enrichment of the museum's collections and the development of its scholarly activity from the reign of Catherine II until the end of the nineteenth century [1].

In Spanish historiography, the formation of the Prado Museum occupies a special place. In particular, studies by authors such as Francisco Calvo Serraller and Javier Portús analyze in depth the nationalization of the Spanish royal collections, the establishment of the Prado as an independent

museum, and its role in shaping Spanish national identity. In Anglo-American historiography, the works of scholars such as Andrew McClellan and Christopher Gould are devoted to the comparative analysis of European museums. These studies highlight the contribution of the Louvre and other major museums to the development of modern museology [2]. Among Uzbek historians and art historians, certain works by authors such as Shavkat Pidayev and Akmal Hakimov mention the experience of world museums within a broader cultural context. However, special studies devoted specifically to the comparative analysis of these three major museums and the clarification of their distinctive characteristics remain limited. In particular, although interest in this topic has been increasing in connection with the development of museology in the post-Soviet space and independent Uzbekistan, scholarly works that comparatively analyze the formation period of world-renowned museums such as the Hermitage, Louvre, and Prado remain relatively scarce.

3. Methodology

Through this method, the processes of the emergence of the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum were studied within the dynamics of their historical development. This approach made it possible to identify the initial conditions of the establishment of each museum, the stages through which they transformed from private collections into public museums, and the factors that influenced this process. In particular, the formation of the Hermitage collection beginning from the reign of Catherine II, the transformation of the Louvre into the “Central Museum of Arts” during the French Revolution, and the transformation of the Spanish royal collection into the Prado Museum were analyzed from a genetic perspective.

Comparative-historical analysis was used as one of the main methods of the research. This method made it possible to determine the similarities and differences among the three museums, as well as to identify the general trends and national characteristics in their development. The comparative analysis was carried out according to the following parameters: historical conditions and political factors behind the establishment of the museums; principles and sources of the formation of museum collections; architectural solutions of museum buildings and the structure of their exhibitions; the functional role of museums in society and the process of their popularization.

Museums were studied as complex and multifaceted cultural institutions based on a systemic approach. This method allowed each museum to be analyzed as an integral system consisting of interconnected elements (collection, building, exhibition, scientific activity, and public relations). In addition, the interaction of museums with the external environment—society, state policy, and economic factors—

was also examined within the framework of the systemic approach.

4. Results

The research on the distinctive features, formation processes, architectural solutions, and the composition of the collections of the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum—established in the late 18th and early 19th centuries—has produced several important scientific results. According to the findings of the study, the establishment of all three museums was closely connected with the complex socio-political processes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and each emerged within its own specific historical context.

In the case of the Hermitage, the formation of the museum began under the conditions of an absolute monarchy as a private collection of the imperial court. The research shows that the establishment of the Hermitage in 1764 was linked to the policy of Catherine II aimed at strengthening the prestige of the Russian Empire in Europe and creating the image of an “enlightened monarch.” The initial collection of 225 paintings was presented by the Berlin merchant Johann Ernst Gotzkowsky. In subsequent years, Catherine II significantly enriched the museum’s holdings by purchasing major European art collections, including those of Pierre Crozat, Robert Walpole, and Heinrich von Brühl. By the early 19th century, the Hermitage had become one of the largest museums in Europe, containing more than 3,000 works of art [3].

The establishment of the Louvre in 1793 occurred under completely different political circumstances—during the French Revolution. According to the results of the research, the opening of the Louvre as the “Central Museum of Arts” (Muséum Central des Arts) was a direct result of the revolutionary government’s policy of transforming art into the property of the people. Between 1789 and 1793, thousands of works of art confiscated from the royal collection, aristocrats, and the church were declared national property, and the Louvre was chosen as the place to preserve and display them. This process became one of the earliest examples of the democratic foundation of a museum and later stimulated the popularization of museums throughout Europe [5].

The formation of the Prado Museum, in turn, took place on the basis of the Spanish royal collection, but under complex historical conditions—during the Peninsular War and the struggle for Spanish independence. The research shows that although the official opening of the Prado in 1819 was carried out by Ferdinand VII of Spain, the establishment of the museum was closely related to the processes of national identity formation within Spanish society. The Spanish royal collection included works by great artists such as Titian, Peter Paul Rubens, Francisco Goya, and Diego Velázquez, and this collection played an important role in the formation of the Spanish national school of art [6]. As models of museums formed in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Hermitage,

Louvre, and Prado later served as examples for cultural institutions established throughout the world. Their principles of collection formation, exhibition structures, and experience in working with the public have had a significant influence on the development of modern museology.

5. Discussion

According to the research, the principles and sources of the formation of the collections of the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum differed significantly, which also influenced their subsequent development. The Hermitage collection was mainly formed through the complete purchase of large private collections. In this regard, the obtained results confirm the information presented in the studies of Vladimir Levinson-Lessing (2018) and Mikhail Dobrokonsky (2011). However, our research shows that the encyclopedic character of the Hermitage collection—its broad representation of all schools of Western European art—was connected with the policy of the Russian Empire aimed at integrating into the European cultural space. In this respect, the Hermitage example represents an important source for studying the role of cultural collections in interstate relations. The formation of the Louvre collection from three main sources—the royal collection, confiscated property, and military trophies—has also been noted in the studies of Pierre Rosenberg (2007) and Geneviève Bresc-Bautier (2018). While confirming these findings, our research also analyzes how the return of works of art brought during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte after 1815 influenced the further formation of the Louvre collection. This process is of particular importance from the perspective of international relations and cultural heritage issues [9]. The fact that the Prado collection was mainly formed on the basis of the Spanish royal collection and includes the greatest works of the Spanish school of art has also been noted in the studies of Javier Portús (2012) and Jonathan Brown (2015). Our research shows that the wide representation of the Flemish and Italian art schools in the Prado collection is related to the international relations and political alliances of Spanish monarchs, particularly Charles V and Philip II of Spain. In this respect, the Prado example serves as an important source for studying the influence of political alliances and dynastic relations on the formation of cultural collections.

According to the results of the research, the functional role of these three museums in society and the level of their popularization also differed. In this regard, the obtained results confirm the theories of Carol Duncan (2015) and Peter Vergo (2016) concerning the social functions of museums.

6. Conclusions

The practical significance of the research lies in the possibility of using its results in activities aimed at developing national museums in Uzbekistan, organizing new exhibitions, and increasing the role of museums in society. In particular, recommendations have been developed regarding the use of international experience in organizing museum exhibitions, strengthening the educational function of museums, ensuring

their accessibility and popularity, harmonizing national traditions with modernity in museum architecture, introducing a scientific approach to enriching museum collections, developing cooperation with foreign museums, and studying advanced practices in museum pedagogy and marketing.

To develop national museums in Uzbekistan, the following recommendations are proposed: Improving exhibition structures – When organizing exhibitions in Uzbek museums, it is advisable to apply the experience of the Hermitage Museum, Louvre Museum, and Prado Museum by introducing a systematic approach based on chronology and national art schools.

Strengthening the educational function – Museums in Uzbekistan should serve not only as repositories of artworks but also as centers of public education and enlightenment.

Ensuring public accessibility – It is necessary to ensure the broad accessibility of museums and create conditions for representatives of all social groups to freely visit them.

Improving architectural solutions – The architectural design of museum buildings should harmoniously combine national traditions with modern architectural trends.

Enriching collections – A systematic scientific approach should be introduced in expanding museum collections, focusing on gathering the best examples of both national and world art.

International cooperation – It is important to strengthen cooperation with foreign museums, including organizing exhibition exchanges and implementing joint scientific projects with institutions such as the Hermitage, Louvre, and Prado.

Training specialists – Advanced international experience in museum pedagogy and museum marketing should be studied and implemented in practice, while improving the system of training qualified museum professionals.

Digitalization – Museum collections should be digitized, electronic catalogs should be created, and virtual museums should be developed to ensure broader public access to museum resources.

7. References

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