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Development of Museum Activities in Siberia from the 18th to 20th Centuries

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Abstract

This article intends to reconstruct the history of formation of a museum network in Siberia in the 18th to 20th centuries. The author shows the dynamics of the basic directions of activity of museums, the museum system of Siberia, its essential components, structure, function, as well as the character of interaction with the state and the society. It is verified, that these fundamental tendencies of development of the Siberian museums as a whole adequately reflected European and all-Russian social and cultural processes.

摘要

本文擬討論並建構西伯利亞博物館從十八到二十世紀間發展之歷史。作者除了呈現西伯利亞博物館發展的基本方向與動態外，也探討其體系、基本元素、結構、功能及其與國家和社會間的互動。本文論證西伯利亞博物館的基本發展趨勢，整體而言反映了歐洲及整個蘇俄社會與文化之發展歷程。

In terms of the origin of museum the history of the development of museum activity in Siberia is not an exception. In 1782, the first Siberian museum, the Irkutsk museum, was founded. Like Peter the Grate's Chamber of Curiosities in St.Petesburg, it initially collected and preserved models of sailing ships in the Okhotsk sea and Lake Baikal, scientific equipment: globes, maps, compasses, astrolabes, sun watches, natural and archeological collections, agricultural tools, old published handwritten books.

An honorable member of the Academy of Science, Erik Luksman, played an important role in the formation of both the museum and its collections. For a long time, the Irkutsk museum had been the unique one in Siberia. But already in 1823, due to fruitful scientific-research works of a number academic expeditions as well as the efforts of famous scientists P.K.Frolov and F.V.Gebler who lived in Altai, the Barnaul Mining Museum resembled the Chamber of Curiosities was founded by Peter I by its collections. The primary collection contained exotic objects or "curiouses", natural rarities, scientific devices. Ethnographic collections of peoples of North America and Siberia were of special interest, and so were the collections of models of miming machinery, the richest mineralogical and archeological collections and the library.

However, meanwhile, few provincial museums were created which did not get governmental financial support as opposed to metropolitan ones, soon lost their importance as collecting and scientific centers and practically died. In 1805, collections of the Irkutsk museum were passed on to a newly opened Irkutsk province gymnasium and were used as visual ancillary materials.

The 19th century became the most fruitful period for the establishment and development of museums in Siberia. Its principal peculiarity lies in the fact of geographical widening of museum activity. A considerable role in the formation of first museum collections was played by Imperial Russian Geographical Society (IRGS) formed in 1845, and its branches which were formed a bit later: Siberian in Irkutsk (1851), Western-Siberian in Omsk (1877), and their departments and sub departments in other Siberian cities. Foundation of subsidiaries and departments of

IRGS in regional cities was accompanied, as a rule, by creating museums. Thus, in Western-Siberian department of IRGS, there was formed the Western-Siberian Museum, Priamursk department created the Khabarovsk Museum, and Tchita department forms The Zabaikal'skiy Regional Museum. The collection of the Irkutsk Museum was passed under the authority of Siberian department of IRGS in 1854. This year is considered to be the time of the museum revival and replenishment of its collections. The formation of the museum collection was promoted by numerous scientific expeditions and individual trips of the members of Eastern-Siberian department of IRGS. At that time the Irkutsk museum collections were replenished with archeological, ethnographic, geological, botanical, zoological gatherings and a unique collection on Buddhism. By the end of the 1870s, the museum presented its collections on all-Russian and international exhibitions. It was becoming famous and authoritative. However, during fire in 1879, the Irkutsk museum lost more than 22,000 objects. There perished its famous library containing more than 10,000 books.

Nationwide assistance and support helped the museum not only restore the collection, but constructed a new building in the shortest possible time. Less than in a 4-year period, the ceremonial opening of a two-storied stone building took place on Oct.6, 1883. Prominent researches of Siberia N.M.Yadrintsev, G.N. Potanin, D.A.Klemets, V.A. Obruchev, M.N. Hangalov and N.I. Vitkovskiy passed their collection to the museum.

In the end of the 19th century, separate collections of the Barnaul Mining Museum were also used as visual aids for the students of Barnaul non-classical secindaty school. The transfer of the Barnaul Museum under the authority of Altai subdivision of IRGS appeared to be an important stimulus to the revival of the activity of the Barnaul Museum. In 1913, "by the highest assent" of Emperor Nikolai II, the building of the former chemical laboratory was passed to the museum.

The reforms of the 1860s couldn't but influenced the development of museum activity in Siberia. Though following halfway policy, the reforms resulted in obvious democratization of all social processes. Creation of a number of large

museums in Moscow and St. Petersburg stimulated the analogous process in the province. Siberia, as a place for political exile, possessed considerable intellectual potential which expressed itself in researches of local history and their popularization. Intelligent people not of noble birth united within the allowed Geographical Society, and they contributed considerably to the creation of local museums. During post-reform period, the following museums were formed: Tobol'sk (1870), Minusinsk (1877), Eniseisk (1883), Krasnoyarsk (1889), Yakutsk (1891), Barnaul (1902), Vladivostok (1892), Tumen (1892), Khabarovsk (1902), Kjakhta (1902).

Impetuous industrial development in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries promoted development of education and enlightenment that substantially changed social status of museums. They were becoming not only depository of rarities, but working in close contacts with scientific societies; they turned into centers of science, culture, education, studying and popularization of local history knowledge. By 1917 there functioned about 20 museums in Siberia.

In the period of Soviet Power, museums were under the supervision of provinces' departments of public education and became public. Museum funds and expositions were replenished with materials telling about working people's fight for the power of Soviets in Siberia, about fighters and leaders of revolutionary movement. Authentic documents, presented in museum expositions, reflected achievements of Soviet people during the pre-war five-year plans, showed the success of industrialization, collectivization and elimination of illiteracy.

Great Patriotic War caused considerable damage to the material and technical basis and staffs of Siberian museums. In connection with coercive transference of the museum buildings to evacuated institutions their expositions were disassembled. Thus, expositions halls of the Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum of Local Lore homed "Glavsevmorput"². A military hospital was quartered in the building of the Tumen regional Museum of Local Lore. The Omsk, Achinsk, Khakass (Abakan), Altai regional museums of Local Lore also lost a sizeable part of their expositional

² SARF. F.10010. On.4. Д.231. Л.1-20.

grounds. In the beginning of the war, funds and expositions of the Novosibirsk Regional Museum of Local Lore were moved to Novosibirsk House of Science and were kept in the room of the children's technical station.

In the war period, the museums of Irkutsk region were represented by the only regional museum of local lore, and its exposition included just sections of nature and socialist construction devoted to the expositions about the war³. Only two out of six museums of Tumen region were functioning.

The majority of professional staff joined the army during the war. It resulted in reducing expositional, scientific-research and fund collecting activities. Thus, the Biysk and the Kamensk museums did not have qualified members at all. A 86-year-old retired person worked as a manager, a guard and a guide simultaneously in the Yalutorovskiy museum "In the memory of Decembrists"⁴.

By the end of the war, there were 47 museums in Siberia, but only 20 museums of local lore and 8 memorial museums were able to open their expositions. After the war, restoration of the museum buildings which had been passed to the evacuated industrial enterprises, hospitals, military headquarters, educational establishments and other organizations went very slowly. Up till the middle of the 1960s, the number of Siberian museums underwent the process of reduction. Mostly Stalin memorial houses and the houses of his comrades were eliminated; on the one hand it could be explained by the process of blame of personality cult, and on the other hand – by the absence of authentic objects in museum collections.

Broadening and strengthening of museum net in Siberia began in the 1960s. And if it was reduced from 47 to 40 for the first 20 post-war years, then it increased up to 60 during the next twenty years. Appearance of new museums in Siberia was seriously stimulated by various numerous revolutionary jubilees being widely celebrated in the 1970s. Together with opening new museums the old famous ones which were the pride of museum fund, went under the reconstruction.

³ SARF. F. A-534. On.1.Д. 250. Л.3-7.

⁴ Calculated by: SARF. F.10010. On.4. Д.231. Л.1-20.

An important stage in Siberian museums' activity is connected with the Committee on the affairs of cultural and educational institutions which was formed in 1949 under the Council of Ministers of RSFSR. The Committee passed "Basic regulations of making expositions in provincial, regional, republican and district museums of local lore". This document had a great impact on changing expository, educational and propagandistic activity and paid more attention to social destination of museums.

Processes of democratization of the society and relaxation of censorship, characteristic of the second half of the 1950s, entailed the reinforcement of publishing activity of Siberian museums. Many of them restore to life or create anew their regional publications: "Local History Transactions", "Annuals", "Works". So, in 1956, after a 27-year interruption, the Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore renewed publication of its "Works", the Altai Regional Museum of Local Lore published the first issue of "Local History Transactions". In 1958 the Irkutsk museum published its "Transactions". Then appear publications of Tumen, Krasnoyarsk and Omsk regional museums, and the museums of Buryat ASSR.

In the end of the 1950s Siberian museums start creating ethnographic exhibitions and exposition halls. Museums paid their attention to ethnographic subject area due to the republican conference of museum workers held in 1958 in Leningrad and Siberian interregional meeting held in 1959 in Khabarovsk, where special attention was attracted to the use of ethnographic material in expositions.

There appeared new forms of work with visitors: "Day of Kholhoz member" in the Novosibirsk Regional museum, "Day of Front-line Soldier" in the Kemerovo regional museum, meeting of three generations – participants of World War II, service personnel and conscript. For the first time museums used possibilities of television.

Museums develop their connections with schools. Students and teachers are becoming active participants of hiking tours, expeditions, scientific conferences. Museums form various circles on different directions in history and local history: "Young student of local history", "Corner of nature", "Circle of young naturalists",

“Friends of Museum”. There are created museums in schools.

Museum activity underwent considerable changes in the 1960s. Propagandistic and educational activity was recognized privileged. Not only workers of specially created departments of cultural and educational activity were involved in this work, but all scientific staff of museums without exception. Quantitative indices of museum work had also grown high, its methods and forms became more diverse.

The 1960s-1970s became a new stage in the development of expositional activity of Siberian museums. However, the next attempt to accelerate socio-economic development on the basis of scientific-technical progress, which was undertaken under the guidance of M.Gorbachev in the 1980s, didn't bring positive results. Political reforms were inevitable, and they began with “glasnost” – direct and open public social problems discussion in mass media.

Accomplishment of democratic freedoms, unprecedented for our country, resulted in awakening of social consciousness, forming of basics for civil society, and finally, to elimination of totalitarian regime, establishment of new political system and state structure.

As far as all changes in the country were of systemic character they couldn't but influence museums' vital functions. Major attempts of museum transformation were connected with improvement of management by means of “further intensification of museum net centralization” and museum integration. A distinctive feature of the reforms held in the period of perestroika (reconstruction) was in the absence of pressure on museums on the side of Ministries and regional departments of culture. New style of management, dictated by staggering positioning of bureaucracy, made it possible to sometimes keep off insufficiently grounded reforms. So, the centralization of museum, which started in the country, didn't lead to total unification of them on a major part of Siberian regions. Siberian museums managed to avoid the unification of museum properties which was characteristic of the initial stage of centralization; major efforts were aimed at providing weaker museums with methodical help and coordinating their expositional and collecting

activity.

By the middle of the 1980s Siberian museum housed rich natural and historic-cultural collections containing a lot of unique exhibits. Museum fund of Siberia numbered about 1,7 million units of issue which was one eighth of all-Russian local history fund. Another important change in the activity of museums of local lore is connected with “reconstruction of economic methods” which directly followed the instructions “Principal terms of new economic mechanism in the branches of not-production-related sphere” enacted by USSR Council of Ministers in 1988. In accordance with basic items of this document Ministry of Culture of RSFSR elaborated “Principal terms of transference of cultural and educational institutions to new economic conditions”.

According to these documents there considerably broadened independence of the museum staff, strengthened legislative basis for solving issues dealing with provision of paid services to visitors and payment to museum workers: museums could settle the problems with different methods of economy in their activity including renting, cooperative or individual activity and introducing a flexible conditions for work. The system of federal financing of museum had also undergone serious transformation.

However, Siberian museums did not hurry to introduce new forms of economy. Having no specialized education and experience of functioning in new economic conditions museum administrations could make irremediable mistakes which would have resulted in losing financial support or premises.

Not immediately did Siberian museums were captured by “glasnost”.

Expositional and exhibition activity of museums was successfully supplemented with diverse mass arrangements: Christmas matinees, pancake week celebrations; in these performances there were used authentic folk costumes as well as cultural traditions, rites and best samples of folklore were revived.

Activization of Siberian museums’ expositional activity in the second half of the 1980s - beginning of the 1990s may be explained by socio-economic transformations in the period of “perestroika” which put culture in the conditions of survival.

Museums' yearning to improve their financial situation at the expense of attracting more visitors made the staff organize more exhibitions as the most effective means which didn't require serious financial expenditures. Creative search of major Siberian museums got international acknowledgement. Expositions of Siberian museums' collections were successfully exhibited in the USA, France, Italy, South Korea, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland and other countries.

Siberian museums' staff championed new forms of cultural and educational work such as folklore festivals, thematic slide-shows, theatrical excursions and museum festivals, different shows, evenings of Russian love songs, fall and New Year masked balls.

Museum net of Siberia underwent serious changes in the last decade of the 20th century. By 1995 the number of museums had increased at 66,5% in comparison with 1990. However, such considerable growth is not to be explained only by ideological ideas or special governmental programs on culture financing. The interest to history has undoubtedly grown, but there were not any target programs on financial support to museums. This growth happened due to many factors.

First of all, it is connected with the transfer of public museums into the status of state museums. This is also creation of new museums connected with industrial mastering of regions, construction of the largest territorial-industrial complexes and enterprises.

Structural changes in the net of Siberian museums are marked with the tendency to the deepening of specialization. Up till the middle of the 1960s the region had only memorial museums and museums of local lore, and in the second half of the 1980s there appeared ethnographic, historic, natural science, archeological and reserve museums. Museums reveal the tendency to increasing interest to ethnic peculiarities of culture and traditions of people inhabiting Siberia and preserving their national self-identity. It was in that time (1986) that the first national eco-museum appeared in Siberia in the village of Var'egan, Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous District. Since 1990 there begins the implementation of the project dealing with creation of national eco-museums in Pritomje. Museums of Irkutsk,

Tumen and Krasnoyarsk regions devote their expositions to ethnic problems.

Typological line of ethnographic museums is also renewed. There are created architectural-ethnographic, historic-ethnographic museums and culture preserves. The museums are varied by museum complexes including memorials of tangible and intangible heritage, open-air museums and unique architectural-artistic buildings.

Broadening of Siberian museum net in recent decades of the 20th century didn't boil down to the increase in the number of museums. Forms and methods of work with visitors have considerably changed as well. This resulted in forming a new conception, the so called "integrated museum", the essence of which was to develop educational function of museums and to broaden the forms of work with visitors and attract their attention not only to history but to modern problems as well. Practical implementation of this conception lied in developing connections with schools, opening access to the museum funds, attracting teachers to exhibition planning and use of modern mass media in acquaintance with collections.

One of the most effective forms of work of integrated museums was its participation in the revival of ancient handicrafts. Handicraft works were created in museums where old technologies were studied anew, and with the help of them masters created museum objects.

The conception of integrated museums was most evidently embodied in the activity of eco-museums. Innovative forms of work were mostly active used in open-air museums and museums-culture preserves. Situated in picturesque location and possessing rich ethnographic collections the open-air museums are the most natural scenery for staging folk holidays where visitors appear in the centre of the event and where they perceive national culture in its natural expression.

Development of professional cooperation within the framework of international association "Open Museum" was a remarkable event in museum life of Siberian in the second half of the 1990s. The initiator of this public organization was the Krasnoyarsk museum center (former subsidiary of the Central Museum of V.I. Lenin). "Krasnoyarsk museum biennales" – contests of museum expositions held once in two years - became the uniting moment of the association.

One of the prospective innovation directions in museum activity reflecting global processes of informatization is the creation of virtual exhibitions. Penetration of computer technologies into museums began abroad in the beginning of the 1970s, when within the framework of American Museum Association the first computer net was formed. Because of the shortage of necessary technical means timid attempts to digitalize museums began only twenty years later. The tendency to growth of a number of museums in Siberia which use nontraditional methods of work in their activity, tells about selfless devotion of Siberian intelligentsia and creative work of museum staff.

Thus, in the period of the 18th-20th centuries the museum system of Siberia and its basic components, structure, functions and character of interaction with the state and society underwent serious changes. These major tendencies of Siberian museum development quite adequately reflected all-Russian social and cultural processes.