

# MUSEUMS

**Russo-Ottoman War 1877-1878**

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# 1. The origin, evolution and function of museum as modern cultural institution

The function of the museum is to preserve the memory about the past valuable for the identity of certain society. Presenting the identity it is a showcase of the collective memory.

In the museum object, images and texts related to certain époque or sphere are collected, stored and exhibit. Aside of the traditional museums presenting paintings, historical and archeological monuments museums of almost everything exist – museum of transport, museum of wine, museum of childhood. The common feature of all museums is that they are meant for exposure.



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*Istanbul Archaeological Museum*

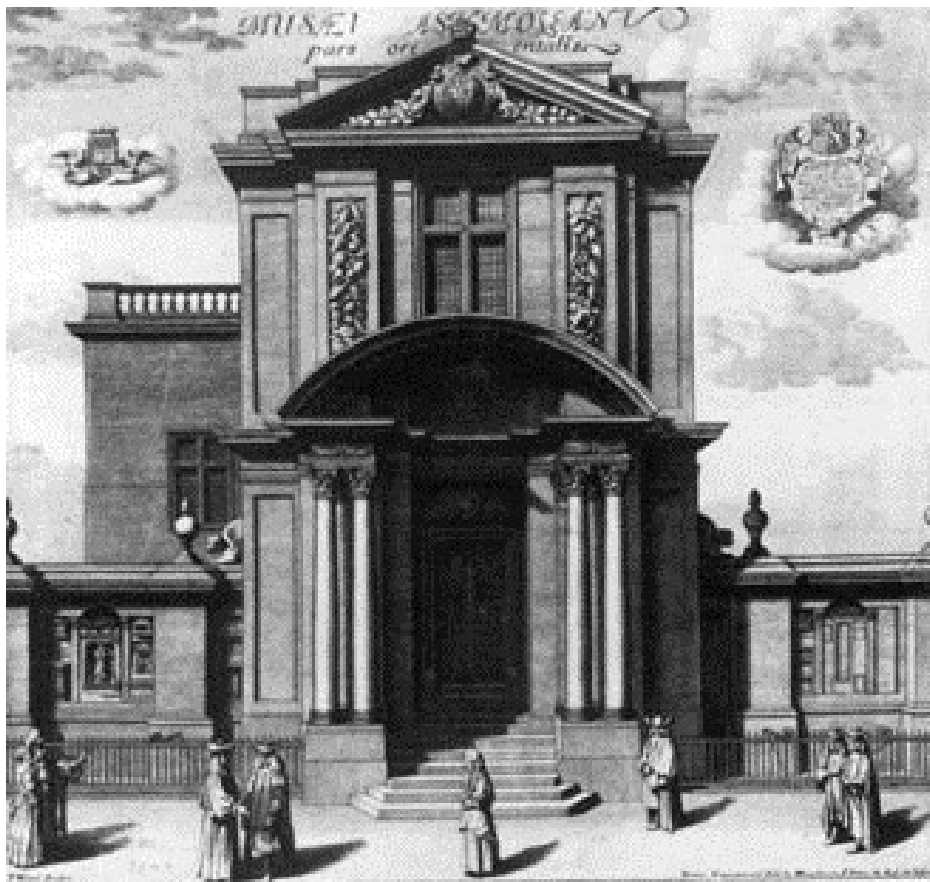
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The word "museum" comes from the Latin „museum“, which is of Greek origin „mouseion“. In Ancient Greece "mouseion" were called the temples of the muses, places of contemplation. The word was used to signify the institution founded by Ptolemy I, probably in 308 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt. After the dissolution of the Roman Empire the concept was forgotten in the course of 10 centuries (V-XIV). The term "museum" reappeared in the XV century in Florence to signify the collection of Lorenzo de Medici. In the Enlightenment the word "museum" enlarged

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its meaning and was used even for books, "Poetic museum" for instance. The book was published in 1784 and the word "museum" emphasized the wide scope of the included literary works. Up to XVII century "museum" was used to describe collections of interesting things along with "cabinet" and "camera". The Term "museum" meaning both the exposure and the buildings where things are exposed was used for the first time in England in 1682 to celebrate the relocation of the collection of Elias Ashmol in Oxford university. In different times the British museum where the collection was finally located pointed out to different aspects of the museums: "the mentioned museum or collection could be kept and sustained not only for viewing and amusement of scholars and curious people but also to be used in the sphere of education and society (1753); "for education and amusement of the viewers" (1845); "for education and rest of the people" (1850).



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*The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology is a museum of the University of Oxford. Founded in 1683, it is one of the oldest public museums in the world.*

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*The Muse Clio (1689).*  
*By Pierre Mignard*

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With the rise and successful completion of the nationalistic movements in the Central and West Europe by the end of 19th century the role of the museums increased. This is the time when national museums opened in most of the national countries. Step by step museums turned into a powerful tool for constructing and consolidating the national identities because of the potential to visualize the story of the nation, its origin, myths and symbols by the exposure of objects arranged on chronological or systematic way.

Pierre Nora speaks about the "era of remembrances" – classical boom of national remembrance. This model of remembrance suppose one superior power (State, Nation, Republic) reaffirming itself by inventing and organizing different commemorations. The classical model suppose one homogenous history- epic, heroic, clearly outlined – and the commemoration event is considered as concentrated expression of the national history. The commemoration in the classical model most often is initiated by the elite and radiate from top to down according to

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the scale of national- patriotic values. Museum in this case appear as active participant in the "commemoration craftsmanship" – subjected to the logic of the national narrative.

Museum is both place of memory and media of memory. It is an institution visualizing the changes in the modern historical consciousness and their reflection on the cultural practices of collecting, preserving, exhibiting and reproduction of social knowledge and cultural meaning. The term "museumfication" mean overproduction of heritage, past and history by their objectification in samples loaded with symbolic values.

Museum is a specific media exhibiting memory produced by social practices. Museum visualize the three aspects of memory places – material, symbolic, functional- relying on the objectification of its exhibits producing a symbolic space where the public ritual of museum visit is realized.

Today when the world is moved by the globalization museums are used to attract tourists. Museums search ways to inscribe themselves into the "society of spectacle" in order to compete successfully with the other industries of culture, amusement and free time. The cultural values which are searched, preserved, exhibit and interpreted by the museums have to be commercialized. The social mission of the contemporary museum balances between the poles of memory and amusement.

## 2. Panorama

The panorama images represent a model for organizing of visual experience in the époque before the invention of mass visual arts. They are cross-points between art, amusement and political propaganda. The term "panorama" was used for the first time by Robert Barker in 1792 to describe his large scale painting "A view from Edinburgh". The panorama of Barker was situated in a cylindrical hall which was also called panorama. The painting technic combined with special illumination provoked a new experience - the spectators observed the painting from a special platform situated in the center of the round hall.

With the development of the panorama genre the space between the painting and the place of the observation was filled up with objects (original or made of wood, gypsum and other materials, weapon, constructions, models. The purpose was to create an illusion of real situation.

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*Frederick Birnie,  
Aquatint after  
Robert Barker's  
Panorama of  
London, 1792*

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During the course of the 19th century most often topics of the paintings were landscapes, Bible scenes, famous battles especially during the Napoleon wars when panoramas represented scenes from the battles of the Emperor (the panorama of the battle of Waterloo in 1816). In 1810, for instance, Napoleon visited the panorama rotunda in Paris. Leaving the exhibition he recommended 8 panoramas to be made to represent the most important victorious battles.

New direction of the panorama art was initiated by the French artist Charles Langlois by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His presentations of the battles in Borodino (1812), Sevastopol (1855), Solferino (1868) and others turned the battle panorama into a popular genre and part of the mass culture.

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century marked the boom of the panorama art in France, Germany, USA and Russia.

Because of different reasons most of the first panoramas were destroyed, some of them were restored (using old photos and preserved fragments). Such are the cases with the Russian panoramas in Borodino and Sevastopol, "Crucifixion" in Switzerland, "The entrance of Emperor Konstantin in Roma" in Germany etc.

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*Paul Rhilippoteaux painting the Gettysburg Ciclorama circa 1883. From the archives of Gettysburg National Military Park*

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Historical panoramas because of their stunning visual effect are used as efficient ideological tool comparable to the effects of the propaganda movies. They are used for the so called “patriotic upbringing” of the young generations. The propaganda potential of panorama was used in the totalitarian states during the second half of the 20th century. Panorama were built in USSR, North Korea, China, Poland, Hungary, Iraq, and Bulgaria.

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*Panorama "The Epopee of Plevna 1877"*

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### 3. The Russian Monuments in Bulgaria Devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878



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*Šipka Monument, Bulgaria*

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In theoretical memory studies, monument is considered as both collective creation of identity and affirmation of interpretation of history by consensus between the state and its citizens. Each monument is socially and politically motivated and objectifies social constellations. It is a social symbol uniting a group or a nation making a collective memory visible and objective. Once created monuments immediately shape public space and projects long term consequences. The lack of monuments in a certain period of

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history speaks about identity crises and a related disintegration of the state or about a lack of tradition in objectifying the cultural memory of the nation.



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*Grave Monument - Bulgaria*

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At the beginning the Bulgarian memory was not a state initiative [...] There were two groups who used to fill up the memory emptiness in their own way. On one side the Russian army and the provisional Russian government as representatives of a foreign power and on the other side the collective patterns of history interpretation of the Bulgarian participants in the war and their veteran associations. Both impacted the beginning of the memory culture in Bulgaria.

The first Russian monuments in Bulgaria devoted to the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War were raised in the first years after the San Stefano peace treaty and during the temporary Russian government on the initiative of the headquarters of the Russian army on the Balkans. On 11 August 1878 General Èduard Ivanovič Totleben, commander in chief of the army, made an official suggestion to the Em-peror of Russia Aleksandr II. By the letter № 121 from 21 August 1878 Dmitrij Ale-kseevič Miljutin, the secretary of state

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for war, informed General Totleben that Aleksandr II had approved the demand. As a result the raising of two types of monuments started. Monuments on the graves of fallen officers and soldiers belonged to the first group. Sources for their construction were to be gathered basically by donations of the part of the officers still alive and soldiers from the same military units. The military units' paymasters added financial contributions to the collected donations. The engineers of the regiment had to supervise the raising of the monuments. A small part of the monuments was financed by relatives and friends of the fallen warriors.



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*The Monument of Yulia Vrevskaya, Biyala, Bulgaria*

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The second group concerned monuments on the places of the major battles. "A decision was taken that such monuments were to be built in Svištov, Nikopol, Kalitinovo, Loveč, Pleven, Čerkovna, Mečka, Arabakonak, Šipka, Plovdiv and Dobrich. Sources for their raising were provided by the Emperor himself." The suggestion included eleven memorials. In 1884 on the request of the Military-History-Commission to the headquarters of the Russian army a register of the raised monuments was edited. The document provides valuable information about the Russian gravestone-monuments erected until 1884. The sums spent are also mentioned.

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### *The Church Monument Šipka - Bulgaria*

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What does the data of the document speak about? 264 officers and 12,501 soldiers were killed in the battles. 200 officers and 10,695 soldiers died of their wounds and epidemics. For them monuments were raised – 159 to officers and 248 to soldiers, in total 407, of which 38 were common graves. The total costs of the monuments amount to 111,879 rubles. Having in mind the number of the monuments and their value, which in average is 275 rubles per monument, it is obvious that these monuments were of the first type, mostly gravestones replacing the wooden crosses raised on the graves during the war. These earliest monuments were “of one type designed by the architect Vokar. Some were imported from Russia; others were produced on the spot.” The tradition of raising such gravestones can be traced back to the beginning of the 19th century. Military regulations were elaborated to define the type of the monuments, the ways of their financing and the rules for their liturgical commemoration. The second group of the early Russian monuments built in Bulgaria was of monumental type. “[...] formed in common West-European type with an obelisk, they were made of granite, marble, limestone (the Russian monument in Sofia, the Doctor’s monument in Sofia, the monument of Aleksandr II on Šipka and in the outskirts of Pleven etc.).”

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Konstantin Jireček, who crossed the Šipka Pass in 1880, has left a description of the atmosphere of that time. In his book "The Kingdom of Bulgaria" he wrote:

Next to the old Šipka road a work on several big marble monuments was going on [...] The place resemble a graveyard: here a big marble pyramid is raised similar to the one in Sofia and many other monuments of different regiments or persons around simple graves with wooden crosses.

Until the 25th anniversary of the war in 1902, most of the Russian monuments were already built. On the occasion of the celebration de-voted to the anniversary the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand I presented the Russian Emperor Nikolaj II with an album of the Russian monuments in Bulgaria. We were interested in the published "List of the Russian monuments in Bulgaria, elaborated in 1898 on the occasion of the competi-tion for their artistic representation." In the document the monuments are grouped into ten regions; their total number is 305 in-cluding six Romanian monuments and five house-museums. Probably the list missed some of the monuments since the artists were allowed to paint other monuments as well. For 14 years out of 400 docu-mented gravestone-monuments only 305 were mentioned as artistic accomplish-ments, including the monumental ones and the house-museums. Probably some of the graves in the smaller settlements were removed to common grave-memorials and are therefore not men-tioned in the list.

The biggest and the first Russian church-monument built in that period was the one in the town of Jambol-Bakadžika, on the initiative of the 35-year old Gen-eral-Lieutenant Skobelev. This is the first church in Bulgaria named after the Rus-sian Saint and Protector of the regiment which liberated Sofia "St. Aleksandr Nev-skij". The building of the church started on the date of Emperor Aleksandr II's sav-ing, who survived a terroristic act which influenced the choice of the name of his protector for the church. Building church-monuments is in accordance with a medi-eval Russian tradition – churches as the most important monuments to military victory.

The problem of the lack of Bulgarian monumental memory about the war was dis-cussed by a Bulgarian journalist in the eve of the opening of the Monument of Free-dom on Šipka in 1934.

The history of the Bulgarian people is marked by a row of graves without crosses [...] 50 years after the war neither personal nor an official initiative was born to place a pile of stones on the place where the Bulgarian spirit reached the limit of its aspira-tion for new life. We had to wait for the volunteers' own initiative, the initiative of the Šipka eagles, the first monument of our liberation to be raised not on the place where they wrote the most impressive pages of our histo-ry by their blood but on the place where history inscribed their modest names in golden letters [...] On the initiative of the Volunteers' Society representatives of almost all cultural institutions, societies and organi-zations, 15 years ago a committee for raising a Bulgarian

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monument on Šipka was formed. For around 15 years the committee did not collect money but rather begged Bulgarian people for donations to raise a sign of gratitude on Šipka.

The history of the first Russian monuments devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War re-veals the lack of any Bulgarian tradition of memorial culture in the first decades after the War. The initial memorial places were imported from outside, from the victorious Russian Empire, and were marked by the tradition of the Russian religious memory culture. Depending on the Bulgarian-Russian and later on the Bulgarian-Soviet relations the monuments changed their meaning and function; their status was reinterpreted in accordance to the political situation. In spite of the drastic political changes in Bulgaria, the monuments of the last Russo-Ottoman War were not destroyed as it happened in the Soviet Union but rather different aspects of historical memory were emphasized and celebrated in the cultural memory, while some aspects of memory were doomed to silence and new aspects were invented.



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*The Church Monument Alexander Nevsky - Bulgaria*

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