

Louis xiv and absolutism principles

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The palace of Versailles is considered to be one of the greatest expressions of European Absolutism. Louis XIV, also known as the “ Sun King,” reigned for 72 years; he is credited for building this monumental palace. Starting in 1661, he transformed a small, quaint hunting lodge into a glittering palace. He drained swamps, built over a village and completely changed the landscape to build one of the most renowned palaces in the world.

Thesis

Louis XIV’s palace of Versailles is a physical and cultural manifestation of the principles of absolutism. Louis XIV’s palace embodied the essence of absolutism through its Classicist symbols of power, its sheer size and luxuriousness and through the housing of the nobles on palace grounds.

Reason #1:

Louis XIV’s palace of Versailles is the epitome of the principles of absolutism. As an Absolutist King, Louis XIV was profoundly influenced by Classicism. The influence of Classicism can be seen throughout the palace. These various references to Classicism were meant to reinforce Louis XIV’s rule as a strong and centralized authority figure.

Reason #2:

When Louis XIV moved his court and government to Versailles, he gained more control of the government and the nobility. By keeping potential threats near him, he rendered them powerless.

Reason #3:

The palace of Versailles’ sheer size and splendour exhibited Louis XIV’s supreme wealth and boasted his power as an absolute monarch. The size

and grandeur of the palace sent a message to the people of France and to other leaders that he had complete authority and that no one should dare defy him.

Reason #1:

As an Absolutist King, Louis XIV was greatly impacted by Classicism. There were various references to Classicism throughout the palace, these references were meant to cement Louis XIV's rule as a strong and centralized figure of authority.

The exterior of the palace is considered to have a classical design with Roman columns.

The Main Gateway- when people passed through it, they had to pass under a replica of Louis XIV's crown. This served as a constant reminder of his power to all who entered and left Versailles.

Louis XIV had a Classicist inspired statue of himself created with the following inscription:

“ World come and see what I see,

And what the Sun admires,

Rome in one palace, in Paris an Empire,

And all the Caesars in one King”

This engraving on a statue shows Louis XIV belief that he is as strong as Roman Emperors. He also refers to himself as the “ Sun,” which is an allusion to the Greek Sun God Apollo.

The Latona Fountain- The fountain tells the story of Apollo’s mother. This is another indication of Classicism which is what Absolutism was influenced by.

His silver throne was 8 feet high; this reinforced the notion that the King was larger than life.

Hercules Drawing Room- The room was specifically built to house a Venetian painting. Hercules, who was a Roman demigod, was known for his strength and for “ making the world safe for mankind.”

Since Versailles was an embodiment of Louis’ rule, having a room named after Hercules shows that Louis believed he himself can stand in comparison to Hercules.

The Mars Room- The room was originally used to house the guards. Mars was the Roman God of war. Having a room named after Mars depicts Louis XIV’s ability to go to war and emerge triumphant

Louis XIV also had a very large bronze statue of himself on horseback. He believed that the King and the state were one; this statue all with other art was created to embody that.

The Hall of Mirrors- The hall became a symbolic focus of the palace. The walls of the hall housed busts of Roman Emperors. This furthered reinforced Louis XIV’s connection to Classicism.

Reason #2:

When Louis XIV decided to make the palace the new centre for the royal court, he moved his court and the nobles to Versailles. By doing so, he was able to keep an eye out on all nobles and thus preventing them from revolting and maintaining his power.

Louis XIV required that nobles of certain standings to spend time at Versailles.

This prevented the nobles from developing their own provincial power at the cost of his power.

He prevented them from stopping his efforts to centralize the French government and retain absolute authority.

There were parts of the palace that were specifically made for housing nobles.

All the power of France was centered at Versailles; there were government offices there, the palace acted as the homes of thousands of courtiers.

To attract the Louis XIV's attention, the nobles visited the royal residence regularly and observed the rigid rules of conduct the King set out.

In return for their constant availability, the nobles were rewarded with royal pensions, living quarters in the palace of Versailles and regular invitations to festivities and ceremonies.

Louis XIV was able to draw the nobles favour and keep an eye at them all at once.

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By holding the nobles at a greater importance than previous Kings had, Louis XIV gave them a sense of service.

This sense of service was useful to the kingdom and contributed to control over the nobility, thereby strengthening Louis XIV's absolute authority.

Reason #3:

The palace of Versailles' size and finery exhibited Louis XIV's supreme wealth and boasted his power as an absolute monarch. The palace itself sent a message to the people of France and to other leaders that Louis XIV was in full control.

The Park of Versailles has over 2037 acres with over 232 acres of gardens.

The palace grounds include over 12 miles of roads, 50 fountains, 67 staircases, 200 000 trees, 6000 paintings, 2100 sculptures, and 6000 pieces of furniture.

The palace had a total of 700 rooms.

The palace employed nearly 600 people, while housing thousands of courtiers and friends of Louis XIV.

The Battle Gallery- The gallery was 120 metres long. It was dedicated to the difference battles fought by the French.

These larger than life features of the palace emphasized Louis XIV's power and intimidated any visitors.

The Peace Room- It was built to depict France as the arbitrator of peace.

The Queen had her own staircase. She even had a whole room in which nobles waited to meet with her.

The Royal Chapel- A number of religious ceremonies took place at the chapel. The King and Queen sat at the very top of the chapel. This indicated that they (especially the King) were closer to God making them more important than the rest of the people.

Conclusion

The palace of Versailles is considered to be one of the greatest expressions of European Absolutism. Louis XIV's palace underwent a transformation from being a small hunting lodge to an extravagant palace the likes of which had never been seen before. The Palace embodied the essence of absolutism through its Classicist symbols of power, its size and luxuriousness and through the housing of the nobles on palace grounds. The palace of Versailles will forever remain an expression of the principles of the Absolutism that dominated the 17th century.

CHY4U0- The West and the World

“ How is Louis XIV's palace of Versailles a physical and cultural manifestation of the principles of absolutism?”

As an Absolute monarch, Louis XIV was significantly influenced by Classicism. There were various references to Classicism throughout the palace of Versailles. These prevalent references were meant to bolster Louis XIV's rule as a strong and centralized leader. The exterior façade of the palace is considered to be inspired by Classicism. The palace includes beautifully crafted Corinthian columns complete with elaborate capitals

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decorated with acanthus leaves. The Main Gateway that led to the palace had a replica of Louis XIV's crown. The crown served as a constant reminder of his power and presence to all those who entered Versailles. There are also a number of rooms such as the Apollo Room, which compared his powers to that of the Greek and Roman Gods. Louis XIV also had a number of statues of himself in the palace and around palace grounds. These statues along with other forms of artwork were created to embody the Absolutist belief that the King and the state were one. The influence of Classicism can be seen throughout the Palace of Versailles; this emphasizes the belief that the palace is a manifestation of Absolutism.