The architecture of the building of the former consulate of the Russian Empire at 85 Hongjun Street, Harbin during the first half of the 20th Century

T A Smolianinova
Department of Architecture and Urbanistics, Institute of Architecture and Design, Pacific National University, 136, Tihookeanskaya St., Khabarovsk 680035, Russia
E-mail: design.total@yandex.ru

Abstract. The article is devoted to the architecture of the building of the former consular office of the Russian Empire located at 85 Hongjun Street in Harbin during the first half of the 20th century. The article provides a historical analysis, which considers the chronology of the change of functions in the selected building. The compositional and stylistic features of the object are revealed, which are presented in eclectic motifs inherent in Art Nouveau and neoclassical, characteristic of architecture of the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. The building under consideration has architectural, artistic, historical value and is a monument of the cultural and architectural heritage of Harbin.

1. Introduction
Russian-Chinese relations of the end of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century attracted more and more attention of researchers, but despite the active study of the history and architecture of the cities of the CER, many more questions remain untouched. The architecture of the foreign consulates in Harbin was practically not considered by anyone, therefore it is of interest from the point of view of the architectural features of this type of building—style, composition and space-planning solutions. The burning issue remains architecture, stylistics and placement of consular buildings in the urban planning structure of cities. The relevance of the topic is associated with the value of Russian architecture of Harbin, which appeared on the territory of China, which is an example of the Far Eastern branch of Russian architecture of the late XIX - early XX centuries [1, 2], which gained autonomous development after the collapse of the Russian Empire, presented as an example of the creation of Russian architects. Despite the fact that Harbin was built by Russian engineers and architects, the study of this topic began only in the 1990s and it became possible thanks to the funds of the Russian State Historical Archive and the State archive of Khabarovsk Region, however, the study of individual typologies of structures in particular consular buildings is of interest to researchers.

The object of the study was the building of the consulate of Harbin. The subject of the study is a stylistic and compositional analysis of the building, which housed the consular post. The aim of the study is to identify the architectural features of the consular building at 85 Hongjun St. in Harbin, the period of the first half of the twentieth century. The theoretical basis of the study was the work of Chinese and Russian scientists describing the space-planning, stylistic features of buildings, revealing their belonging to European architecture and stylistics, for example, in the book edited by Binyang Yu, Qinggo Se [3], fairly elaborate drawings of some preserved objects. Photos of the period 1980–1990,
preserved and already lost buildings that form the image of Harbin are presented in the book of the Chinese researcher Chang Huasheng [4]. The architecture of the cities of Manchuria in particular is considered in the Chinese work, which catalogs the buildings [5]. Also reviewed European and Russian-language literature, which describes the city-forming principles. Therefore, N. P. Kradin [6, 7] and S. S. Levoshko [8] were among the first in Russia who were interested in studying and analyzing the architecture of Harbin, their work examines the heritage of Russian and European architects in the cities of Manchuria, in particular in Harbin. The works of N. E. Ablova [9], M. A. Vivdych [10], T. Yu. Troitskaya [11] are devoted to the history of the construction of the CER. Also of interest are the works of N. E. Kozyrenko, Yang Hongwei, A. P. Ivanova and Yu. V. Ordynskaya [12–14]. The study was based on materials performed by the author based on field surveys and photographic fixation of objects, as well as collected periodic materials and archival funds of the Russian State Historical Archive and the State archive of Khabarovsk Region.

2. Historical information

The favorable geographical position of Harbin at the intersection of the large waterway (Sungari River) and the railways (CER) predetermined the rapid development of the city, turning it into a major administrative and commercial-industrial center, which quickly acquired not only important economic, but also political importance. Harbin became one of the largest settlements in Manchuria and subsequently its administrative center [15, 16]. Within a few years, three main districts of the city were formed: Old Harbin (quickly losing its attractiveness and becoming a distant outskirts), New Town (the administrative center where the main institutions and employees' houses were located) and Quay (trade and industrial-craft district) [17]. The functioning of the road and the rapidly growing population of the city required not only the influx of workers and employees, but also various craftsmen, artisans, traders, industrialists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, priests, the result of such needs was the emergence of consulates and diplomatic missions. At the beginning of the construction of the CER, on the proposal of the chief engineer A.I. Yugovich in three provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Fengtian - now Liaoning) along which the railway passed, diplomatic bureaus were opened to perform consular functions. Since 1907, when China officially opened the Manchurian borders for foreign trade, and at the same time agreed to establish representative bodies of foreign states, were opened the first consular posts. Therefore, Russia was one of the first to open a consulate general in Harbin on January 14, 1907. Also, the Russian consulate and vice consulate were opened in Qiqihar, Hailar, Changchun (Kuanchengtze), Shenyang (Mukden), Dalian (Dairen, Dalniy). With the growth of the Russian population on the line, the construction of new settlements, the emergence of many different kinds of institutions, industrial enterprises, trading companies, etc., the question arose of determining the order of administrative management of the exclusion zone.

Most consulates located their offices in existing facilities, few of them built buildings designed specifically for the needs of the consulate. This is primarily because the rapidly developing cities and stations along the railway were not ready for the opening of consular posts. The consulates chose presentable objects located in the most prestigious area of the city, mainly at the main intersections of streets, near administrative buildings, to place their offices. Architectural objects served as the basis for the formation of a composition of street facades, which are architectural dominants.

3. Features of the architecture

Due to the lack of its own premises, the consulate of the Russian Empire was temporarily located in the most prestigious area of the Nangang District (New City), in the building of the first hotel (85 Hongjun St, Harbin) [6]. Which is located at the corner of Hondjun St. (Croatian Avenue) and Yinhang St. (Bankovskaya street) emphasizing the planning axis of the avenue, completing it and moving to the station square. Opposite him were the buildings of the Dutch and Japanese consulates. Closer to the large avenue was the consulate of Great Britain and Italy. The building was built in 1904 according to the project of the architect Denisov K. Kh. (Figure 1) and occupies almost the entire quarter [18]. The building belonged to the CER and was originally designed as the first hotel; later,
during the Russian-Japanese war, it housed the Red Cross Society. In 1907, it also housed the garrison assembly and the consulate general of the Russian Empire. With the liquidation of the garrison meeting (1920), the office of the chairman of the road department was located in the building, and the former hotel premises (rooms) were reserved for apartments for office workers. For more than 10 years, the building lasted, being occupied by the office of Management, and then again became the Yamato Hotel (1935), during the Japanese occupation of Harbin, the Japanese consulate was located at the hotel. During this period, the building was rebuilt [8]. Initially, it was very solid and clean in its architecture in the style of rational Art Nouveau, both at the level of space-planning solution and decor. Now the building is used as a hotel Longmen Dasha VIP Hotel (龙门大厦贵宾楼).

The building is L-shaped in plan, the corner part is beveled at 45 °, forming the fifth facade, in which the entrance group is located. The protruding volume of the facade from the side of Hondjun St., which houses the main hall, is highlighted by five large windows one and a half floors. In the eclectic architecture of the facades, there are features of Art Nouveau and neoclassicism [6, P. 243–246, 7]. In the planning structure of the quarter, the object dominates other buildings. There is also an independent entrance, designed more for citizens than for guests. This wing housed a restaurant with a large hall and three rooms, as well as a billiard room [6, p. 242–243].

A brick-and-wood structure is used in the construction. Different-height volumes with a dynamic inlet block towering above the wings of the building create a stepped composition. The central protruding corner volume, in which the entrance block is located with a very prominent canopy covering the sidewalk, is accentuated by an attic with an oval window and flanked by flowerpots. The main entrance leads with white marble steps, penetrating the lobby to a wooden swing door. A simple and clean image is formed using a composition of window openings of various proportions. Hotel rooms stand out in pairs of grouped windows with flanked pilasters. The main hall of the hotel stands out with five large windows one and a half floors, and the shading curtain rod in the walls between the windows is supported by brackets. In the design, according to the architect’s intention, a large amount

Figure 1. The project of the Consulate General of the Russian Empire. Above: facade from Yinhang Street (Bankovskaya Street), below: facade from Hongjin Street (Croatian Avenue) (drawing Smolianinova T. A.).
of decor with an ornament in the form of vegetation inherent in the architectural style of modernity was used.

To this day, the interior decoration of the hotel recreates the atmosphere of its former luxury. The decoration of the walls of rooms upholstered in fabric with a pattern in the form of convex-concave flowers and rounded waves looks especially and man-made. The walls of the hall are decorated with marble. Finishing with rough marble without treatment looks modest and at the same time presentable. The hall has a large Dutch stove. Above her is a mirror on the wall. Mirror frames decorated with wooden sculptures. A walnut tree is used for the stairs, the handrails of which are ergonomic and elegant. The architecture of the building’s facades, now eclectic in style, contains elements of Art Nouveau and neoclassicism, which is typical for architecture of the turn of the 19th–20th centuries [6 (p. 243–246)].

The first overhaul of the palace was carried out by the CER in 1926. During the repair, marble was finished. In 1936, The Northern Manchurian Railway Administration carried out a second overhaul, after which samples of Japanese architecture were added to the building, a visor appeared in front of the door. After the reconstruction, performed by Japanese and Russian specialists, the architecture of the building acquired a light eclectic shade (sandrik windows, attic, relief pattern). Functional changes were made, such as the glazing of the open terrace, which became the dining room and the reconstruction of the entrance group with a protruding canopy. It can also be noted that the wing along Hongjin Street has become longer than it was originally. Later, in the process of reconstruction under the “Yamato-hotel,” a block was added to accommodate an additional 20 rooms. In order to preserve cultural and historical values and meet the needs of tourism in 1996, the Harbin Railway Administration carried out major repairs. Modern equipment was installed, but the decor and style remained the same, preserving the eclectic architecture of the facades characteristic of Russia, China and Japan, which generally correlates with the peculiarities of the development of architecture in China in the first half of the 20th century, which is characterized by a synthesis of various architectural schools [19, 20]. In 1997, all the interiors of the building were restored at the beginning of 1936, currently the hotel and restaurant are located in the building.

At present, the opening of the Russian diplomatic mission in China, in particular in Harbin, is designed to protect the interests of Russian business entities. According to the decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 107-r dated March 30, 2019 in the spring of this year, the Consulate General of Russia reopens in Harbin [21]. In this connection, to date, the Russian side is engaged in Harbin in the restoration of five historical buildings of the Consulate General of Tsarist Russia. In one of them, as expected, the new Russian diplomatic mission will be located [22].

4. Conclusion

The building under consideration combines architectural forms and volumes of various styles, represented mainly by elements of modern and neoclassicism. The composition is based on the use of a combination of window openings of various proportions, accented mainly by balconies and a developed entrance group. The mesh of the division of the facades is emphasized by vertical division. The building was not chosen by chance; it occupies a favourable location in the city structure near the railway station. The architecture of the buildings is expressive and presentable, reflects the characteristic features of European eclectic architecture. The building has become the hallmark of the city, it is included in the register of protected objects, their condition is monitored and the building is being reconstructed.

References

[1] Bazilevich M E and Kim A A 2018 Moscow architectural school in the Far East (the second half of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century) IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng. 463 022032. DOI:10.1088/1757-899X/463/2/022032

[2] Bazilevich M E 2018 Influence of professional activity of the graduates of Saint Petersburg architectural and engineering higher schools on the development of the architecture in the
Far East in the pre-revolutionary period *Bulletin of Civil Engineers* 68 5–14. DOI:10.23968/1999-5571-2018-15-3-5-14

[3] Harbin Urban Planning Bureau 2005 *The Condensed Music. Overview of Protected Constructions in Harbin* ed. B. Yu et al (Beijing: China Construction Press)

[4] Chang H 1990 *Harbin Architecture* (Harbin: Heilongjiang Science and Technology Press)

[5] Watanabe P 1921 *Manchuria and Siberia commemorative photo posts* (S.l.: Guoguang Publicity Society)

[6] Kradin N P 2001 *Harbin—Russian Atlantis* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskaya kraevaya tipografiya)

[7] Kradin N P 2010 *Harbin—Russian Atlantis* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskaya kraevaya tipografiya)

[8] Levoshko S S 2003 *Russian Architecture in Manchuria. End of 19th–First Half of the 20th Century* ed N P Kradin (Khabarovsk: Chastnaya kolleksiya)

[9] Abalova N E 2005 *CER and Russian Emigration in China: International and Political Aspects of History: The First Half of the 20th Century* (Moscow: The Russian Academy of Sciences. Institute of the Far East)

[10] Vivdych M A 2011 *Railway Construction in the Far East in the late 19th–Early 20th Century* (Blagoveshchensk: Blagoveshchensk State Pedagogical University)

[11] Troitskaia T I 1996 *Features of the Architecture of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Late 19th–First Third of 20th Centuries)* (Novosibirsk: Siberian State Academy of Communications)

[12] Kozyrenko N E, Yang H and Ivanova A P 2015 *Urban Heritage of Harbin* (Khabarovsk: Pacific National Univ. Publ.)

[13] Kozyrenko N E, Yang H and Ivanova A P 2015 *Architectural Heritage of Harbin* (Khabarovsk: Pacific National Univ. Publ.)

[14] Kozyrenko N E and Ordynskaia I V 2016 *Divided city* (Khabarovsk: Pacific National Univ. Publ.)

[15] Zatsepine V 2013 Russia, railways, and urban development in Manchuria, 1896–1930 *Harbin to Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940* eds V Zatsepine and L Victoir (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press) pp 17–36

[16] Miasnikov V S 2014 Russian-Chinese relations *The History of China from Ancient Times to the Beginning of the 21st Century* vol 6 ed S L Tikhvinskii et al (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura) pp. 550–71.

[17] Nilus E K 1923 *Historical overview of China Eastern Railway 1896–1923* vol 1 (Kharbin: Tipografii Kitayskoy Vostochnoy zheleznoy dorogi i Tovarishchestva “Ozo”)

[18] RGIA fund 323 inventory 11 affairs 16 p 146

[19] Kim A A and Tceluiko D S 2018 The border of cultures as a zone of formation of eclectic architecture *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* 463 022093. DOI:10.1088/1757-899X/463/2/022093

[20] Kim A A, Luchkova V I 2018 Assimilation of traditional architecture influenced by the imported styles *ITU J Faculty Arch* 15 pp. 71–80. DOI:10.5505/itujfa.2018.32032

[21] The Russian Government 2019 Order No. 107-p of 30 January 2019

[22] RIA Novosti 2019 Consulate General of Russia to open in Harbin. https://ria.ru/20190201/1550230593.html