The architecture of banking institutions in Changchun city (1932-1945)

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the architecture of banks in Changchun from 1932 to 1945 (Manchou). At this time, Japan had a great influence on this territory, which invariably influenced the new bank buildings. Four buildings were built: Manchuria Daxing Bank and Manchurian Industrial Bank, Yitong bank and two buildings of Central Bank of Manchou. The article describes each of these objects. The study describes the design solution, functional blocks, outdoor materials, interior, as well as the history of the building and companies located inside. Many of the banks that existed earlier were disbanded, and as a result, their buildings were used for other purposes and subsequently lost their value, which generally made Changchun less diverse from an architectural point of view, if we only consider financial institutions. Typology of a banking institution has clearly developed, with a large hall, spaces for employees and customers, as well as a developed storage system.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the XX century, due to population growth and the development of agriculture, as well as the established transport network, Changchun gradually became a large city where merchants gather and distribute goods. After the Russian-Japanese War in 1905, Japan has gradually started to develop their businesses in Changchun. The first Japanese institution was Yokohama Bank. At the same time, the official banks of the Qing government and private banks open their branches in the city. In March 1932, the Manchurian state was created, which made Changchun the capital. Using the law "Rectifying the financial structure and order of banks", the state took control of all financial transactions over Manchuria. As a result, only Japanese banks were preserved. The remaining Chinese and foreign organizations were liquidated or reformed. As a result of these actions, four new buildings were built in the city from 1932 to 1945 [1].

2. Manchuria Daxing Bank and Manchurian Industrial Bank

Construction began in June 1935 and was completed in October 1936. At that time, two financial organizations were located in the building at once. On the left, relative to the main entrance, is Manchuria Daxing Co., Ltd. and the Manchurian Industrial Bank, to the right of the main entrance [2].

This building is a reinforced concrete structure with a single-level basement and four floors above the ground. Its shape, with two bends at 45 degrees, is typical of Japanese architecture of that time. The building is symmetrical, in the center are the main element - the entrance group. There are seven vertical square columns, and at the top of the building is a square tower. The corners of the main and side facades are rounded. As for the exterior design, the first floor is covered with marble tiles, and the
second floor above is covered with brown matte tiles. They are separated by a massive architectural belt that runs throughout the building. The bank was designed and controlled by Yingzhou Class of the
4. Central Bank of Manchou, and was constructed by the Gaogang Group (figure 1).

Manchuria Daxing Bank and Manchuria Industrial Bank are the products of "Rectifying the financial structure and order of banks" after the establishment of Manchuria [3, 4].

After the surrender of Japan, the bank housed administrative services and government departments. In 1988, two floors were added over the original building, the roof tower disappeared, but the overall style of the facade was preserved. After that, the difference in the color of the finishing material between the historical part and the new floors was clearly visible, but later the whole building was finished with new tiles (figure 2).

Figure 1. Manchuria Daxing Bank, 1942
Figure 2. Manchuria Daxing Bank, 2019.

3. Yitong bank

The bank was founded in 1919. During the work, the organization changed buildings several times, as well as its internal structure. According to documents, the founders of Yitong Bank are businessman Sun Sushan and chairman of the Changchun Chamber of Commerce Shi Huanting. Their business includes deposits and loans, currency exchange, accounts, discounting accounts, securities trading and foreign exchange transactions [5].

The building was completed in 1933 and has three floors above the ground. The reinforced concrete building has an unusual shape, because it was built in the conditions of an existing building. The building has two detailed facades that enter public streets. The upper floor is separated from the lower part by a large architectural belt, which has many decorative elements. The corner of the building is recessed inside the facade, as well as the entrance group on the central part of the building. They have four ionic columns with flutes. Unlike the rest of the building, which is made of square panels, the entrance group has a smooth concrete texture (figure 3).

Figure 3. Yitong bank.
In 1934, after the Manchou proclaimed the Banking Law, Yitong Bank was forced to merge with Yifa Bank. In July 1947, Yitong Bank resumed its independent activities. April 12, 1948, he was forced to suspend work. After 1945, the building was used for various purposes, including as a private house. The building has survived to the present day, but has a completely different function, unlike the original [6].

4. Central Bank of Manchou (1932-1938)
There was a central bank of Manchou state. It was created on June 15, 1932 through the merger of the official bank account of the former three provinces, Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces, Jilin Yongheng Bank, Official Bank of Heilongjiang and the Border Bank. The building under study was originally a temporary building for the Central Bank of Manchuria [7].

There is two floors rectangular building, with a basement. The facade is quite simple, it has a small amount of decor. The main element is the indented plane of the wall, in which the windows of both floors, the main entrance and 10 columns of the Doric order are located. The columns have flutes, but they do not have a base. Above the columns is an entablature that surrounds the entire building. Triglyphs are located just above the columns. The whole facade is decorated with decorative tiles. After the building ceased to be a bank, the windows were covered with tiles, and decorative patterns appeared in the central part in the window openings (figure 4).

At the entrance to the building, the visitor enters a high and spacious hall with columns on which the roof rests. In the centre of the hall is a large chandelier made of metal. In addition to the basic set of engineering measures at that time, the building was heat-resistant and shockproof. The building has an air conditioning and air heating system with 36 air installations [8].

Figure 4. Central Bank of Manchou, 1935.  
Figure 5. Central Bank of Manchou, 2019.

Speaking about the official bank Jilin Yongheng Bank, in addition to its financial business, the scope of its non-financial business is also quite extensive. According to the principle of “affiliation of branches to manage various manufacturing enterprises that are really profitable,” they took an active part in the work of power plants, grain processing and other agricultural and industrial sectors [9].

Subsequently, a premeditated company and a bath center were located here. Currently, the original building, together with the attached elements, is the Outlet shopping center (figure 5).

5. Central Bank of Manchou (1938-present)
The construction of the new bank building began on April 22, 1934, and it was completed on August 6, 1938. To create it, it took about 5,000 tons of steel and the money spent on construction significantly exceeded the original estimate. The steel frame building has 4 floors above ground and 2 floors below ground [10].

The head office of the Central Bank of Manchou is located on People's Square in Changchun. The plot covers an area of 30,000 square meters and a built-up area of 26,835 square meters. Designed by
Hershey Design Institute in Nishimura, Japan, constructed by the Dalin Group. This is a classicist building with a Doric colonnade. This is the longest and most expensive construction project in Changchun at that time [7].

In its style, the new bank building has much in common with its predecessor. The main element is a protruding volume with ten Doric columns, and an entablature with a triglyph and other elements of a Doric order located above them, which can be found on the last building. Between the third, the fourth floors have a small architectural belt, it is on a level with the upper line of the entablature. Exterior facades finished with various facade slabs (figure 6).

Figure 6. Central Bank of Manchou

At the entrance, the visitor got into the main hall, from where he could get into various zones of the bank (figure 7). Since this building was the main bank of Manchuria at that time, it had extremely high reliability requirements. After the building was completed, it was called the strongest building in Asia. According to calculations, it could withstand aerial bombardment and artillery attacks. The most technologically important parts of the entire bank were the doors of various vaults and warehouses. All the gates in the bank vaults were made in the United States of America and delivered to Dalian by sea, and then by land to Changchun (figure 8). The main storage door has a length of 4 meters, a width of 2 meters and a thickness of 1.5 meters, its weight is 25 tons. Due to its impregnability, a many people kept in banks, in addition to money, jewelry, gold, diamonds and valuables.

The western part of this building was built in 1983 by the People's Bank of Jilin Province, a branch of Changchun Insurance Company in Chaoyang and the commercial department of the Jilin Agricultural Bank in the style of the initial project. The building is currently under the protection of cultural relics in Jilin Province [11].

Figure 7. Main hall.  Figure 8. Bank vault gate.
Today, this 70-year-old building is still a bank. It became not only a unique building in Changchun, but also one of the witnesses of the Japanese presence in China. Today it is called the Changchun branch of the People's Bank of China [12].

6. Conclusion

As a result of Japanese influence, the financial system of the new state was formed in Changchun from 1932 to 1945. Many of the banks that existed earlier were disbanded, and as a result, their buildings were used for other purposes and subsequently lost their value, which generally made Changchun less diverse from an architectural point of view, if we only consider financial institutions.

With the help of the Bank law, Manchuguo also planned to control other industries. After several years of existence of the “Central Bank of Manchuria”, it became the main instrument of public finance management. Industrial Bank worked with industrial organizations. Daxing has become a daily funding channel for civilians. Zhengjin Bank has become a professional currency bank.

In the period under review, four buildings were built, three of them have an order system, the building of Manchuria Daxing bank and Manchurian Industrial Bank is noticeably different both in style, material and color. Yitong bank, as well as two buildings of the Central Bank of Manchuria have similar features. Especially evident continuity between the two buildings of the Central Bank, in the use of the Doric order, ten columns and triglyphs on the entablature, which makes the two basic elements of the building is almost identical.

Comparing these four buildings with buildings of the early twentieth century, we can say that new structural solutions appeared in the form of a steel frame, stopped using wood as a material for the main structures, and buildings become higher. In general, buildings have become more reliable structurally and have a concise architectural image. Technical equipment has changed, complete ventilation, air conditioning and heating systems have appeared. So, we can say that a typology of a banking institution has clearly developed, with a large hall, spaces for employees and customers, as well as a developed storage system.

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