The Architecture of Banking Institutions in Changchun City (first third of the 20th century)

D S Tceluiko\textsuperscript{1,a} and M E Bazilevich\textsuperscript{1,b}

\textsuperscript{1}Department of Architecture and Urbanistics, Institute of Architecture and Design, Pacific National University, 136, Tihookeanskaya St., Khabarovsk, 680035, Russia

E-mail: \textsuperscript{a}dima123117@gmail.com, \textsuperscript{b}mikhailbazilevich@gmail.com

Abstract. The article is devoted to banking institutions in Changchun City, China. The author considers the history of the first banks, their background and consequences. Three main groups of banks are considered in the article: 1. State banks: Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces, Jilin Yongheng Official Bank, Bank of Communications; 2. Private banks: Gongcheng; 3. Foreign banks: Russo-Chinese Bank, Yokohama Bank, Bank of Korea and Changchun Industrial Bank. All these buildings have the most striking architecture among the other bank buildings, which were much more numerous. The first banks appeared in Changchun City towards the end of the Qing dynasty, they gave an opportunity to develop other industries and became a significant stage in the formation of the city, as well as in the history of architecture. As a result of the study, two main financial centers of the city, which were active in different periods, were identified.

1. Introduction
The city of Changchun, the administrative center of Jilin Province (Chinese simplified, Pinyin: Jilin), received a powerful impetus for development with the beginning of the construction of the CER (Chinese east railway). However, after 1905, southern Manchuria, including Changchun City, was seized by Japan. Though even after this, the active use of the transport highway allowed maintaining the pace of economic growth. Banking became one of the leading industries in this period \cite{1}.

Around 1910, due to the development of the Changchun Commercial Port and the Shanghai Railway, a large number of financial corporations, that opened their branches in Changchun City, were attracted. Among them: Jilin Bank, Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces, Bank of Communications, Yifa Bank, Yitong Bank, Gongcheng Bank, Frontier Bank, Colonial Bank, Russo-Chinese Bank, Yokohama Bank etc. Also, with the development of the banking industry, money houses, silver smelters, jewellery shops, currency exchange and street monetary exchange were actively opening. All banks can be divided into three large groups: state, private and foreign banks. Some banks changed buildings over time, opening in already-existing buildings or building new ones \cite{2, 3}.

2. State banks
Banks that actively cooperated with the government, received subsidies, or were completely under the control of the government belong to this category.
2.1. Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces
It was founded in 1905 and closed in 1932, later becoming a part of Manchuria Bank. Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces not only monopolised the financial industry in the northeast, but also controlled many industrial and commercial enterprises in the three Eastern provinces: Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and Jilin [4].

The building of the Changchun branch of Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces was built in 1907. Originally it housed the Japanese Yokohama Bank. The building was located on San Dao street at the Western gate of Changchun. After 1922, the Bank of the Three Eastern provinces was located here (fig. 1).

It was a two-storey reinforced concrete building in the neoclassical style. On its facade, which was facing North Street, there was a portal group due to the offset of the architectural volume. Two ionic columns and a pediment also highlight this element and make it the key one in the overall composition. The lobby of the Bank was well lit due to the large number of windows in the portal group. The semicircular window above the main entrance is especially noteworthy, as it is standing out from the rest of the rectangular shapes and strict lines of the building. There are pilasters at the corner of the bank and in the center of the side facades, which have a composite continuation on the roof, passing into a balustrade. The window frame is made of concrete and differs on the first and second floors of the building. The roofing of the building was flat and used as an observation platform. Due to its location on a hill and one-storey surrounding buildings, the top of the building opened a panoramic view not only of Changchun, but also the surrounding rivers and fields [5].

In 1945, the Manchurian government transferred this building to the private bank Yifa. Various city services were located here afterwards, and at the end of the 20th century the building was demolished [6].

Figure 1. Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces.

Figure 2. Jilin Bank.

2.2. Jilin bank
Jilin Bank was established in 1898 as a counterbalance to the Russian-Chinese Bank, which is actively developing in Manchuria.

The architecture of Jilin Bank is one of the most unusual, compared to other banks of Changchun of the era under review (fig. 2). The two-storey reinforced concrete building, despite its simple form in plan, had a very unusual facade solution. The central element of the composition was a portal group, the top of which was the pediment. Two vertical elements symmetrically located from the entrance support the overall structure. The space between them is resolved with the help of wide ledgements and small pilasters, which define a mesh structure, highlighting the key element. Visually, this section of the building resembles an attempt to depict the traditional elements of Chinese wooden structures in concrete, while maintaining one facade level without using offsets. Each of the facade blocks is topped with arched cornices, and the corner parts of the building with a balustrade. The use of window openings only on the first floor of the front facade is also an unusual feature of the building [7, 8].
In March 1932, the puppet government created the Bank of Manchuria, which is located in the building under review. In 1934, it was demolished, due to the functional and technical discrepancy with the bank buildings. Later a new building of the Central Bank of Manchukuo was built in its place [9].

2.3. Bank of communications
Bank of Communications was founded in 1908. It was one of the four largest banks in China, at the time of its foundation, and one of the first banks issuing banknotes. The Changchun branch was opened in December 1909.

It is a one-storey building in the art Nouveau style (fig. 3). Being rectangular in plan, it has a projecting portal group, which is supported by a pediment that extends its upper section above the roof level. The front door is highlighted by two columns of the Ionic order, along with decorated canopy. The reinforced concrete building has pilasters located between window openings on all facades. The windows are quite high and decorated with concrete architraves. Window openings are compositionally supported by decorative compositions located above the windows, separated by an architectural ledgement. Despite the general European style of the building, the tiled roof is made in the traditional Chinese style, the edges of the ridges have an upward slope [10].

In June 1919, Bank of Communication ceased operations. On March 20th, 1935 work was resumed in the former building.

3. Private banks
Most of the Chinese financial institutions of this type in this period were just emerging and located in constructions that did not have any architectural refinements, or alternatively they quickly closed and the buildings were subsequently taken down.

3.1. Gongcheng bank
The company was founded in 1889. In 1917 Gongcheng bank opened a branch on South Street. The main activities were deposits, loans and stock trading [11].

Unlike state-run enterprises, the building of the private bank looked much more modest (fig. 4). It was manifested in the materials, in the shape of the construction as well as in the decor of the two-storey building. The entrance group is highlighted by a volume sunk into the building, which contains four columns of the Tuscan order. The basement part of the building is tiled and separated by a ledgement from the main part. Decorative elements are not present. The building was demolished in the second half of the XX century.

4. Foreign banks
Due to the unique history of the territory under review, various foreign banks saw potential in the development of Manchurian cities and opened branches there.
4.1. Russo-Chinese Bank
An Office in Changchun City opened in 1900. In November 1906, a new building was built (now it is the northeast corner of the Minkang intersection on Sisandao Street) (fig. 5). The house was designed by Russian engineer Nikolay Mistov in a traditional Russian architectural style. The main construction materials for the two-storey building with a basement were brick and wood. At the corners of the main facade there are two towers about 5 meters high, covered with metal tiles. Flagpoles are installed at the top of the roofing. These two elements, with an unusual shape of the roof, add the rectangular building with a large amount of decor an originality not only in the context of Changchun architecture, but also among the buildings of the Russo-Chinese Bank [12, 13].

After the October Revolution in 1917 the headquarters and 85 branches were nationalised by the Soviet regime. Against this background, the branch in Changchun City was closed in 1919. The city library was located there soon afterwards. In the time of Manchuria, the building housed Manchurian Legal State Institute. After 1949, the building was occupied by the Public Security Bureau and the Light Industry Bureau. In 1981, a children's theatre was located in the house, and in 1985 the building was demolished [13].

4.2. Yokohama bank
The bank has been operating in Changchun City since 1907, but in 1922 it was moved to a new building on Victory Street. The office building was designed by famous Japanese architects Nakamura and Ziping and built by the Shimizu Group (fig. 6). The two-storey reinforced concrete building also has an underground floor. Externally the building is made in the style of classicism. The rectangular building has four ionic columns on the front facade, which makes it stand out from the surrounding buildings. The outer wall has rounded corners, the facades are tiled with ceramic tiles, and the other decorative facade elements are made of concrete [14].

In 1994, the building was included in the cultural heritage list of Changchun City. Currently, the building houses an acrobatic palace.

4.3. Bank of Korea
The Changchun branch of Bank of Korea was built in 1920 and was located on South Square. Despite the name, this bank is Japanese. When its first office was opened in Korea, it was called Tokyo bank [15].

The building is made in the so-called "Tatsuno style", which was popular in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century (fig. 7). The architects Nakamura and Ziping, who also designed the Yokohama bank, were inspired by the work of Kingo Tatsuno, who created his own style based on a free combination of classic “European” architectural styles. The author’s most striking feature was the use of red brick on the walls in combination with horizontal stripes of white granite.

The two-storey building has a complex shape (trapezoidal) due to its location. The front facade faces the South Square, the side facades are adjacent at an obtuse angle and overlook the driveways. A small entrance space made of white marble stands out against the background of red brick. The absence of horizontal stripes on the central part of the facade, between the first and second floors, also
emphasises the portal group and the overall symmetry of the composition. The corner parts of the building come forward in relation to the line of the facade, which together with the pilasters sets the rhythm of the final image. The central and corner parts of the building also have different upper volumes in shape and decor.

In 1932 and 1937 the bank changed its name. Then in April 1951 the People’s Bank of China was located there. In 1987, another floor was added to the building, and in 2000 the historic building was demolished.

Figure 7. Bank of Korea.  Figure 8. Changchun Industrial Bank.

4.4. Changchun Industrial Bank
The company was founded in 1918 in the Republic of China, despite the name, the organisation has Japanese origin [16]. When it comes to the creation of the facade, techniques that can often be found in the design of European Renaissance cathedrals were used (fig. 8). The three-stage composition of the architectural volume, with two protruding elements, both in relation to the facade line in plan and in height, is made of brick and concrete. The footing of the building is made of concrete and decorative tiles imitating natural stone. The main part of the building is brick with decorative inserts and ledges that do not protrude beyond the wall. The upper part of the building is made of concrete. Pilasters located at the corners of the building reach the upper part of the facade and end with two arch roofs, including both small decorative elements and large ornaments. The inscription "Changchun Industrial Bank" in English and Chinese is still preserved above the front entrance.

During the times of the Manchu state, the building housed Binjiang Industrial Bank. In 1943, Bank of Beijing. For the past few years, a pharmacy has been located in the former bank building.

5. Conclusion
Over a short period of time reviewed in the article, the architecture of Changchun City changed greatly, as did the city itself. The study identified two periods of development of banking institutions. The first one is the period of the development of the old city along Sisandao Street, where mainly Chinese banks and several foreign banks were located. The first companies of the Celestial Empire actively borrowed “Western” architectural styles, while disproportionalising, changing or adding elements of various architectural movements, combining them with traditional Chinese architecture, as well as building with the help of Eastern technologies and local materials, which ultimately created an eclectic architecture. The building of Russian-Chinese Bank stands out against such a background. It was designed and built competently and in a different architectural style.

The second period is inextricably linked with the development of the railway and the development of a new part of the city. A new financial center has emerged, connecting the railway station forecourt and the South Square. This territory was mainly occupied by Japanese banks, for the construction of which they began to bring in architects and constructors from Japan. They brought new architectural solutions, which made it possible to create architectural monuments that exist today.
The development of the architecture of bank buildings in Changchun City reflects not only the stylistic and constructive trends of that time, but also the vector of development of the city. The change in the financial center is the result of major global processes, and the architecture reflects them.

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