On the Analysis of Modern Financial Architecture Techniques in Hankou: Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank (Banque De L’indo Chine)

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Abstract: The Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank (Banque De L’indo Chine) is a building with unique style in the modern financial architectures in Hankou, which shows many architectural techniques in history. This paper summarizes these architectural techniques and explores their cultural connotation and artistic value, through the detailed analysis of the bank.

Keywords: Hankou; Modern; Financial architecture; Techniques

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Some foreign banks set up branches in Hankou after the opening-up of Hankou in the modern times, which had a great impact on the financial market in China. Based on this, official financial institutions and national financial institutions began to emerge in modern China. The scale and cost of these financial architectures were the best in the urban construction at that time, with unique architectural style which carried the special brand of the times as well as the history and culture. Now they play an important role in the Wuhan’s urban style.

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The Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is one of the existing outstanding modern financial architectures in Hankou, which are more than 20. It is located at 171 Yanjiang Avenue in Hankou today, where many modern financial architectures are standing on the Yanjiang Avenue. Most of their styles are classical revival style, with three-stage facade composition and gray white stone appearance, as well as the grand and solemn temperament. While the Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is particularly different. As an eclectic building, the outer wall of it is mainly made of red bricks with many historical techniques, which is very romantic.

This paper mainly analyzes the architectural techniques of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank. First of all, the differences between style and technique should be clarified. Architectural style is the overall understanding of architectural vision and design elements. Besides, the core and overall effect shall be considered in the induction. The styles of modern financial architectures in Hankou are generally divided into classical revival, eclecticism and modernism. While, the design technique is to analyze the parts and details of the architectures, comparing them with the specific forms in the architectural history to find the correlation and similarity. It is an effective way to deeply explore the cultural connotation and artistic value of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank by carefully studying its architectural techniques and thinking about its solutions in dealing with architectural problems, which is a more detailed exploration of architecture.

1. Introduction of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank

The Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank was jointly established by several major French banks in 1875 and the headquartered was in Paris. It started the business about the French colony in Asia, and then became a part of Crédit Agricole. Now it is an asset management company in Europe. In 1902, The Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank established a branch in Hankou to support the import and export business of French foreign banks in Hankou and engage in the business of mortgaging Hankou land, and this two-story brick-wood structure building was built. In 1949, Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank withdrew from Chinese mainland, and returned in 1982, setting up branches in Shenzhen, Shanghai and Guangzhou. The old Hankou Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is now the Wuhan cultural market management center.
The appearance of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is a brick building mainly in red, with a small amount of grey bricks, which is rectangular in shape. It has a gentle sloping roof surrounded by railing parapets. Some people think it belongs to Rococo style, which I think is inappropriate. In terms of construction time and era background, it has pasted 100 years since the popularity of Rococo. While, the architectural styles in modern China are mainly classical revival, eclecticism, romanticism and modernism. Moreover, the Rococo style is against the architectural motif, which will not widely use the classical architectural techniques such as arches and columns. There are many elements of different architectural historical periods and styles in the architecture of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, including classicism, Baroque and Byzantine, which is the main reason why it is classified as eclecticism. Its rich architectural details are unique in the modern architectures of Hankou.

2. Diversity and Complexity of Architectural Techniques

There are specific techniques in Renaissance, classicism, Baroque and other historical styles reflected in the architecture of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, which is complicated with integration and creativity. To sum up, it mainly focuses on the architectural techniques such as column style, arch column style, pediment and so on.
(1) Column Style and its Changes

Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome formed five major column styles of Western Architecture: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan and Composite. The image and rules of column style are fully restored and improved in the Renaissance, applied to the organization and modeling of architectures to deal with the space and appearance of architecture, so as to deeply affect the history of Western architecture. Such a series of column styles are widely used in modern financial architectures in Hankou.

There are two types of pilasters adopted by the bank. The facade of the first floor of the building is a variant of Doric column, while the facade of the second floor is a variant of the Corinthian column. The reason why it is called a variation is that it does not simply refer to the classical column form. The ratio of Doric scape and chapiter on the first floor of the building became slender. In order to adapt to the height of the facade on the first floor of the building, a smaller Doric chapiter is superimposed on the chapiter. In addition, the large and small column capitals have been changed. The capital stone at the top of the column has changed from square to round, and the level of fillets under the column capital has become more. The fillets of the large column have also added a layer of toothed fillets, and the column necking has also become longer. The Corinthian column on the facade of the second floor of the building has little change, but the proportion is larger on the column capital and chassis, at the same time, changing the ratio of Acanthus and small Volute on the column capital makes the Acanthus shorter and the small Volute higher, which makes the proportional relationship of the column capital more like a...
Composite.

(2) Arch Column Style and its Changes

Arch is the most important form of ancient Roman architecture, which has the credit of arch everywhere from structural system to spatial form and then to facade. The arch column style is created by the Ancient Roman architecture, which is combined column and arch, applied to the treatment of architectural space and facade. The arch column style was widely used and innovated in the Renaissance, and the classic arch column composition was also created, like the famous “Palladian motive”, which became a popular architectural form in later generations.

The treatment of the building facade of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank uses the arch column composition for reference. First of all, the facade of the building is divided into seven bays by pilasters, the back facade is divided into 8 bays and the side facade is divided into 5 bays, then the inverted arches are made in each bay, which are semicircular. This technique is similar to that of the Renaissance, except that each bay here is not exactly the same. The bay in the center of the facade is larger than that on both sides, and the arch is also larger. The number of pilasters separating the bay is also different. There are two round pilasters on both sides of the central bay of the facade, and a quarter round pilaster and thin square pilaster are at both ends of the building facade. In addition, there are also some special features that there is an enlarged capstone in the center of the top of each semicircular arch. Horizontal fillets and toothed fillets are made at each arch foot, just like the treatment of column capital and necking. Visually, it seems that the arch foot falls on two small square thin-walled columns.

(3) Pediment Style and Top Treatment

The large bay in the center of the facade of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, the double columns on both sides and the enlarged capstone all emphasize the central axis of the building facade, and there is a pediment at the top of this axis. The pediment, also known as the gable, was originally the triangular wall at the top of the facade of the ancient Greek temple, which shown in the Renaissance, classicism, Baroque and other times later. It often appears in the center of the top of the building facade, the top of doors and windows, niches and so on, and the outline of the triangle will also change, such as arc, bow, scroll and so on.

The pediment on the top of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is a variant of scroll and abstract palmette based on the outline of triangular gable. Outline and vortex are drawn with gray mortar on the red triangular brick wall, and simplified palmette is decorated on the top corner of the pediment. The height and width of the pediment are not large, emphasizing the central bay and the central axis of the facade. The relief effect of grey curve, scroll and palmette of pediment is not very prominent, which expresses a soft and concise effect in the relatively
complex and diverse facade, so as to not only highlight itself, but also balance the whole.

The roof of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is a very flat four-slope roof. On each facade of the building, the eaves above each column continue to extend upward, just like the base part of the column. Each base is connected by a treasure vase shaped railing, forming a railing parapet surrounded by four sides, which almost blocks the sloping roof. Parapet is a popular technique in Baroque architecture. Four columns extend upward to the top of the parapet, forming four small towers on both sides of the central bay of the facade. Meanwhile, a small tower is also molded at the top of each corner of the building, which are as like as pagoda. It has the form of finial in Baroque architecture and the form of onion domes in Byzantine architecture. From the location of the tower, it is also similar to Islamic architecture.

(4) Architectural Color, Material and Other Details
Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is a building mainly made of red brick, which is Dutch style. It means that in the same level, stretchers and headers are laid alternately. The architrave above the arch is made of grey bricks in each bay of the facade, except for red bricks, besides, the wall at the foot of the arch is also made of grey bricks, which are all Dutch. On the facade of the building, all the capitals and capstones, most of the moldings and fillets, and the base of the building are all white. The vase-shaped finial and a few moldings are gray, and all balusters are painted aquamarine.
There are a few reliefs on the facade. The architrave on the large arch in the central bay of the facade is decorated with white reliefs, and the pattern is a combination of scroll and curling grass pattern. On the first floor of the facade, there are three white rose reliefs at the necking under each small column capital (two at both ends of the facade).

Under the pediment on the facade of the building, a white rectangular plaque with the name of the building in black is outlined on the wall of the eaves.

To sum up, the whole building is mainly red, supplemented by grayish white, and dotted with aquamarine, which is brave to be used in Hankou modern financial architecture to form a delicate and lively appearance as well as a friendly and pleasant atmosphere. This kind of gentle color matching does have the shadow of Rococo technique, but there is still different between them. The lightness and purity of the building colors used in Rococo will be higher, while the saturation of the red used in Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is very high.

3. Architectural Techniques to Achieve Overall Harmony

Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank uses a variety of architectural techniques, spanning different times and styles, which can be said to be quite mixed. There are so many methods applied to a building, which is inevitable to be a sense of chaos, but why is the overall appearance of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank so harmonious?

As a matter of fact, there are several techniques that command the overall situation in all the architectural techniques of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, which are the regular plane, emphasis of center and facade three-stage composition. The architectural space of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank is very simple, with the whole rectangular plane, surrounded by an arch column corridor, and there is a symmetrically arranged rectangle room inside, with a large rectangular space in the center as the core of the plane. The four building facades are all symmetrical, with the steps at the entrance on the main facade and the large bay defined by the double columns, as well as arches and pediment, emphasizing the central axis of the building together. At the same time, the facade of the whole building follows the three-stage composition relationship from the vertical view.

The three-stage style is a building facade treatment method developed based on the principle of classical column style. The bottom of the column style is the base, the middle section is the column (including column base, column scape and column capital), and the top is the eaves. Later, both Renaissance and classical architecture developed this three-stage composition technique in the vertical treatment of facade, especially in classicism and later classical revival style, the three-stage composition
was the most important architectural technique, which treated the building facade from bottom to top as: closed and compact base, lightweight columns or colonnades (arcade, arch column corridor, etc.), and eaves as a bundle. On the whole Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank, there is a circle of grayish white base at the bottom, and the parapet at the top ends as the terminal, in the middle, there is a transparent and exquisite arch column corridor. Subdivided into each floor, the arch column corridor itself is also divided into three sections, which are base, column (arch) and eaves according to the relationship of column composition.

The organization of the plane and facade of the whole building is rational, regular, symmetrical and central. Regardless of the internal space or facade appearance, the organization of the building has a strong logic, and the three-stage method is used in both large-scale and small-scale. Therefore, no matter how many different architectural techniques are used partially, there is always a rational framework to standardize the whole building, keeping it organized and ensuring the harmony of the whole building.

4. Conclusion

The architectural design of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank includes architectural techniques in different periods and styles such as Renaissance, Baroque, classicism, Rococo and Byzantine, which changes the historical techniques rather than completely copy them, so as to present the architecture as a particularly lively and exquisite image. However, it does not follow the reins, but implies an order that commands the overall situation within this image, which is the harmonious and wonderful charm of Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank's architecture, rational and perceptual.

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