# Research and Analysis of Modern Consulate Complexes -- Taking Yantai Hill in Fuzhou City as an Example

Tao Zheng *

School of Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, Fuzhou, 350002, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 31520221154196@stu.xmu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** Since the First Opium War, foreign forces have flooded into China, building a great variety of public buildings across China, and importing Western culture. As one of the representatives of the recent Western culture, the consulate building plays an important role in history. As the political, economic, and cultural center of Fujian Province, Fujian was introduced to many Western cultures as one of the five port cities after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing. Foreigners set up all kinds of buildings and municipal facilities here, such as consulate buildings, customs, foreign firms, churches, hospitals, workshops, clubs, etc. Western architectural techniques and forms have collided and fused with the traditional architectural culture of Fuzhou, together constituting a diverse modern architectural history of Fuzhou. Taking the modern consulate building complex in Yantai Mountain of Fuzhou City as an example, through field research and literature arrangement and induction, we analyze the buildings of modern consulates, understand the historical evolution of consulate buildings in Fuzhou, the architectural form and the existing situation, excavate their characteristics and summarize them, to provide basic information for the study of modern architectural history in Fuzhou. The article concluded that the Western consulate architecture is characterized by the central axis symmetry, the characteristics of each country are obvious, while retaining part of the local characteristics, to achieve the fusion of Chinese and foreign.

**Keywords:** Modern; consulate; Yantai Hill.

## 1. Introduction

Yantai Hill is located on Mount Meiwu top in the south of Fuzhou Nantai Island. Nantai Island belongs to the present-day Cangshan District of Fuzhou. During the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty, a salt merchant built a salt warehouse at the northern foot of Tianning Mountain in Fuzhou, which was called Salt Cangqian, and Tianning Mountain was renamed Cangqian Mountain, or Cangshan for short [1]. After the First Opium War, China was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanking with Britain, and Fuzhou was opened as one of the five ports of commerce. After that, Yantai Hill became the consular district of Fuzhou and the commercial port district of Cangshan. At the same time, the British Governor of Hong Kong sent Li Taikuo to be the consul of Fuzhou [2], and to prevent the British from entering the city and the influence of Western culture on the society of Fuzhou, the Qing government decided to arrange it in the Nantai Yum Chau residential area outside of the city and chose Yantai Hill as the consular district and the commercial port area [3].

Due to the strong intervention of Western culture and politics, Yantai Hill became the most important internationalized center of political, economic, and cultural activities in modern Fuzhou. The collision and fusion of Chinese and Western cultures in the Yantai Mountains greatly impacted modern Fuzhou's commerce, religion, education, medical care, lifestyle, and architectural development [4].

On October 1, 2013, Fuzhou officially implemented the "Regulations for the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities in Fuzhou", in which Article 9 mentions the protection of Fuzhou's Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, including the Yantai Mountain Historical and Cultural Neighborhood. On October 18 of the same year, Fuzhou Urban and Rural Planning Bureau issued the Protection Plan for Yantai Mountain Historical and Cultural Landscape Area, Park Road Historical Building Complex, and Mafang Street Historical Building Complex, and on November 15 of the same year, it started the relocation work. This shows that the preservation of historic buildings is the responsibility of all [5].

With the help of the literature and historical books, this paper makes a macro understanding of the development history of consulate buildings in Fuzhou from a historical point of view, clarifies the development history of foreign consulates in Fuzhou, and sorts out the development time and current distribution of consulate buildings in Fuzhou. Through data review and on-site research, focuses on three existing consulates: The American Consulate, the French Consulate, and the Dutch Consulate. The aim is to summarize the characteristics and values of modern consulate buildings in Fuzhou through the analysis and comparison of the modern consulate buildings in Fuzhou.

## 2. Background

Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian Province, is located on the eastern coast of Fujian Province, in the estuarine basin of the lower reaches of The Min River, with a longitude of 118.08-120.31 degrees east and a latitude of 25.15-26.39 degrees north, with a mild climate, evergreen seasons, and fertile soil. Its northwest negative mountains, southeast of the sea, and Taiwan across the sea, winding coastline of 1,137.77 kilometers, accounting for one-third of the province, with Mawei Port, Luoyuan Bay, and other natural harbors. Fuzhou area includes the urban area and eight counties and cities under its jurisdiction: the urban area is divided into five districts, namely Gulou, Taijiang, Cangshan, Mawei, and Jinan, and the eight counties and cities under its jurisdiction are Fuqing, Changle, Minhou, Minqing, Yongtai, Lianjiang, Luoyuan, and Pingtan.

Fuzhou city is located in the center of Fuzhou Plain and belongs to the silt, impact plains, the province's largest river Minjiang River flows through Fuzhou and is divided into north and south tributaries by the island of Nantai, the northern tributary Minjiang River (Bailongjiang River) through the city, the south bank of the Cangshan District, the north bank of the Taijiang District across the river, the north side of the Taijiang District, the northern part of the Gulou District, northeastern Jin'an District, and the Mawei District independently of the city in the southeast of the fifteen kilometers. Inside Fuzhou city, Pingshan, Wushan, and Yushan mountains stand on top of each other, with Wuta and White Pagoda facing each other, and outside the city, Gushan, Qishan, Wuhushan and Lianhua Mountains surround the city, forming a unique "three mountains, two pagodas and a river", and beautiful scenery of "the city is in the middle of the mountains, and the mountains are inside the city". Due to the midpoint of the coastline in the province, along the Minjiang River westward, can enter the hinterland accounting for 63.8% of the province's land area, superior geographic conditions make Fuzhou since ancient times become an important distribution center of commodities in the province and the port city of the sea trade [5].

In the late Qing Dynasty, as a major town of China's feudal economy, Fuzhou had the Governor's Office of Fujian and Zhejiang and the General's Office in Fuzhou. After the Opium War, Fuzhou was opened as one of the five ports of commerce, the city layout has undergone significant changes, the city scale is expanding, and the city, Nantai, and Cangshan are linked together, completing the process of separating the "city" from the "city" since the Song Dynasty, and forming a "cluster" urban layout structure [6]. As the Qing government was extremely reluctant to open ports in Fuzhou, the Western culture and politics had an impact on the society of Fuzhou [7], and Yantai Hill with its special geographic location and natural conditions was chosen as the consulate area and commercial port area, which was gradually occupied by foreign capitals.

## 3. Overview of Modern Consulates in Fuzhou

Starting from 1845, when the British established the first consulate in Cangshan, a total of 17 countries, including Britain, the United States, France, Russia, Japan, Holland, Portugal, Spain, etc., set up a total of 15 consulates in Cangshan, Fuzhou, until the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression led to the evacuation of consulates of various countries and the buildings of these consulates were gradually changed to other uses [6].

Most of the consulates maintained their architectural style, mostly two or three-story Western-style buildings.The consulate buildings are distributed along Aiguo Road - Lequn Road - Park Road. The specific distribution is shown in figure 1. This route is adjacent to the Min Customs, St.John's Church, and Lequn Building, which is strategically located, convenient for transportation, and easy to monitor the activities between Cangshan and downtown Fuzhou City, and the line of sight can also reach as far as the Min River at the Customs Cheng. Guanjing Road is an extension of the connection between downtown Fuzhou and Cangshan and connects Lequn Road and Customs Cheng. The centers of political and economic dual control were located on Lequn Road and Guancheng, which were closely connected and had convenient land and water transportation. The consulate complex was accommodated by Lequn Road, the center of political control, and at the same time, this area could easily descend the hill through Guanjing Road, which made the consulate more closely connected with the urban area of Fuzhou can be seen in figure 2. This shows that the foreigners were very attentive to the location of the building [8].

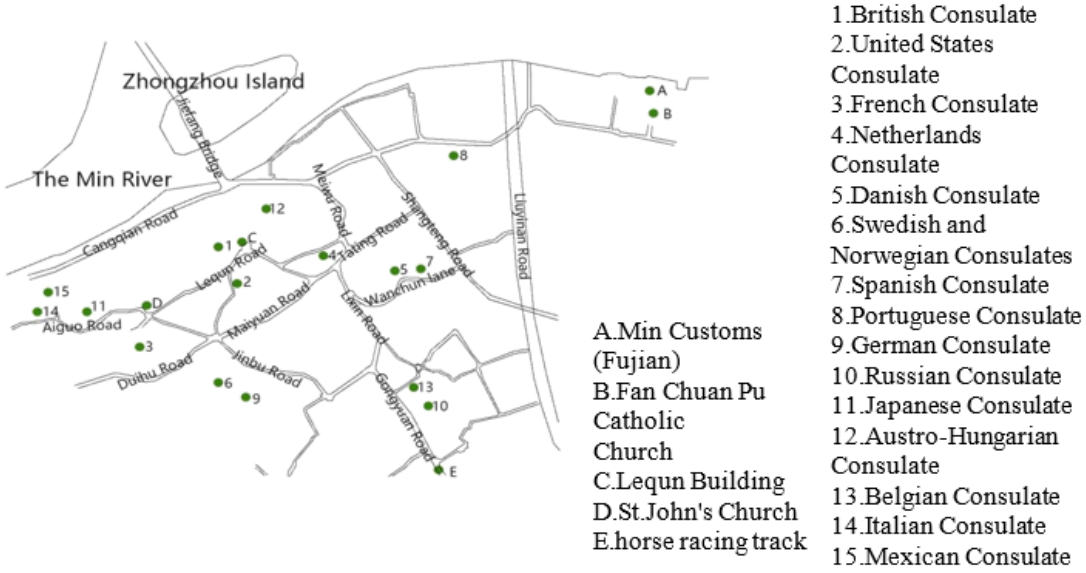



**Fig. 1** Distribution of Modern Consulates in Fuzhou.



**Fig. 2** Late 19th-century panoramic view of Cangshan Mountain [5].

According to all kinds of literature and on-site research, the existing situation of modern consulates in Fuzhou is drawn and organized in the following table. As can be seen from Table 1, only the American Consulate, the French Consulate, and the Dutch Consulate are left in Fuzhou, so the following section will introduce these three consulate buildings.

**Table 1.** Existing Condition of Modern Consulate in Cangshan, Fuzhou

| Numble | Name | Adress | Age of Construction | Status quo |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | British Consulate | No.10, Lequn Road, present day | 1855 | Originally built three groups of buildings, all destroyed, the old site is now built for the provincial and district cadres recuperation center |
| 2 | United States Consulate | No.84, Maiyuan Road, No.2 Aiguo Road, present day | 1854 | No.2 Aiguo Road was renovated and opened; No.84 Maiyuan Road is now owned by Fujian Provincial Health Supervision of Family Planning |
| 3 | French Consulate | No.2, Duihu Road, No.23 Lequn Road, present day | 1861 | No.2 Duihu Road was originally built as a three-storey Gothic brick building, which is now destroyed; No.23 Lequn Road still exists |
| 4 | Netherlands Consulate | No.2, Meiwu Road, present day | 1863 | Two buildings were originally built, one was destroyed by fire, one was demolished, and the old site is now built as the Kurama Cinema Theater. |
| 5 | Danish Consulate | No.21, Wanchun Lane, present day | 1863 | Destroyed |
| 6 | Swedish and Norwegian Consulates | Cangqian Mountain | 1863 | Destroyed |
| 7 | Spanish Consulate | No.21, Wanchun Lane, present day | 1863 | Destroyed |
| 8 | Portuguese Consulate | No.12, Guanjing Road, present day | 1863 | Originally built as a two-story brick building, destroyed |
| 9 | German Consulate | No.16, Jinbu Road, present day | 1864 | Originally built as a building, only part of the foundation remains |
| 10 | Russian Consulate | No.39, Gongyuan Road, present day | 1866 | Originally built in two buildings, only one remains, now used by Fuzhou Foreign Language School Alumni Association |
| 11 | Japanese Consulate | No.14, Aiguo Road, present day | 1872 | Destroyed by fire at the beginning of the war against Japan |
| 12 | Austro-Hungarian Consulate | Cangqian Mountain | 1880 | Destroyed |
| 13 | Belgian Consulate | No.36, Gongyuan Road, present day | 1900 | Destroyed |
| 14 | Italian Consulate | Present-day Patriotic Road, Tingxiashan | 1902 | Destroyed |
| 15 | Mexican Consulate | Present-day Patriotic Road, Tingxiashan | 1903 | Destroyed |

## 4. Features of the Modern Consulate of Fuzhou

Fuzhou modern consulate mostly belongs to the Colonial Veranda Style, this kind of building is very simple whether it is the plane or façade, the plane is mostly the rule of the square, and the structure is generally two to the floor of the brick and wood structure. Commonly, there are four sides of the corridor and a single side of the corridor with two kinds [6]. This form of architecture is called the Veranda Building. Veranda originated in Beniapukur, India, where it was first built by British

colonizers. It was first built by the British colonizers in Beniapukur, India, and was widely used in southern China as the colonizers wanted to cope with the hot weather in the south [9]. The style of the consulates in Yantai Hill is obvious while absorbing the local practices and architectural features of Fuzhou. The three existing consulates of the United States, France, and the Netherlands are described and analyzed below.

### 4.1. United States Consulate

#### 4.1.1. History of the Former U.S. Consulate

The existing U.S. Consulate is located in Cangshan District, Fuzhou City, No. 2 Aiguo Road and Maiyuan Road 84. No. 2 Aiguo Road is the first consulate of the United States in Fuzhou, located on the west side of Yantai Hill, built in 1863, the earliest for the J. Forster Company, tea business after several changes of ownership belonged to the Jardine Matheson Company. The Jardine Matheson Company leased the building to the U.S. Consulate directly after it was purchased, but did not use it, and the lease lasted roughly from 1891 to 1928[5].

No. 2 Aiguo Road is a typical 19th-century colonial coupon corridor style building, brick and wood structure, with three floors (including a basement) owned by Fuzhou Post and Telecommunication Bureau, which used it as a dormitory for its employees, and the exterior corridor was added and converted into a room after laying a wall, and the balcony on the second floor was demolished due to leakage of water, which led to a serious damage of the exterior of the building at No. 2 Aiguo Road, although the interior of the building's fireplaces, wood floors, and wood staircases are preserved intact. In 2016, the Yantai Hill Historic District restoration project was launched, and No. 2 Aiguo Road was restored by Vanke, and then reopened for tourists to visit, as shown in figure 3.

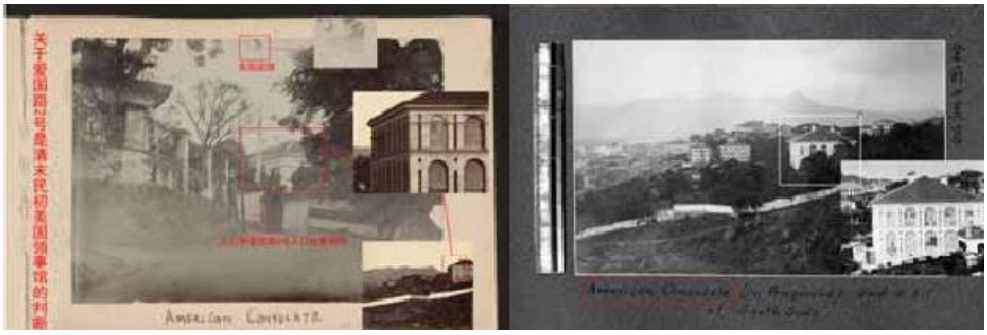


**Fig. 3** Comparison of 2 Aiguo Road with old photographs of the U.S. Consulate [5].

According to an 1868 historical map in the Library of Congress, the building at 84 Maiyuan Road in Cangshan District was the residence of Dr. J.A. Stewart, a physician and the first missionary sent to China by the Anglican Mission, and the U.S. Consulate was moved to 84 Maiyuan Road between 1928 and 1937, and it has been using the premises at 84 Maiyuan Road ever since.

Cangshan District, Maiyuan Road, No. 84, the consulate has a consulate office building and a staff dormitory building with two buildings as premises, staff dormitory building has now been dismantled. The old site is located in the north of the base of the Fujian Provincial Health and Family Planning Supervision Bureau, the original consulate gate opens to the direction of Lequn Road, out of management needs, long-term locked, can be seen from the intersection of Lequn Road and locusts and the old site of the U.S. Consulate of the United States consulate of more than three floors [5].

#### 4.1.2. Architectural Features

The U.S. Consulate at 84 Maiyuan Road is analyzed as a specific building. Built in 1854, 84 Maiyuan Road is a building with rounded corbels, arched frieze, and relief ornamentation [10]. As shown in figure 4. The office building is the main building of the U.S. Consulate, which sits in the west and faces east, is a three-story brick and wood structure building, covering an area of 432.6 square meters, with a total floor area of 985 square meters, the building plan is shown in figure 5. Due to the relationship of buildings along the mountain, the west half of the first floor is a basement,

which is used as a storage room. The east side is a corridor with 4 openings in front of the corridor, a hallway in the middle, 3 rooms side by side in the back, and an inner corridor in the middle of the north side connecting the rooms to the indoor staircase, which can lead to the attic. The arrangement of the second and third floors is in the form of an inner corridor, with 3 openings and a hall in the center, the rooms are always open to the door, with windows in the second direction, double windows and doors, arched lintels, painted wood floors and wood wainscoting, and medium stucco on the interior walls. The east side of the second floor has an equal-height outdoor terrace, and the south side of the second floor is connected by an equal-height access terrace with the main door of the building, an outdoor staircase connecting it with the first floor, and a fireplace in the front room. The north side of the building also has an outdoor staircase leading to the second floor of the building.

The consulate staff quarters are located on the southeast side of the office building, is a three-story brick and wood structure building, that covers an area of 400 square meters, a construction area of 1009 square meters, clear water red brick wall, stone le foot, tile roof four inverted water. The ground floor outside corridor has six brick joint arches, indoor three rooms, in the hall, before and after the two sides of a room. The second and third floors have six brick joint-arched corridors, Tuscan pilasters, arches, and coupons with red bricks superimposed on the line of feet, balustrades with brick grille decoration, and exquisite workmanship [7]. The brick balustrades of these exterior corridors, Gershon, leave a distinct regional imprint.



**Fig. 4** Exterior of the U.S. Consulate Staff Quarters Building [7].

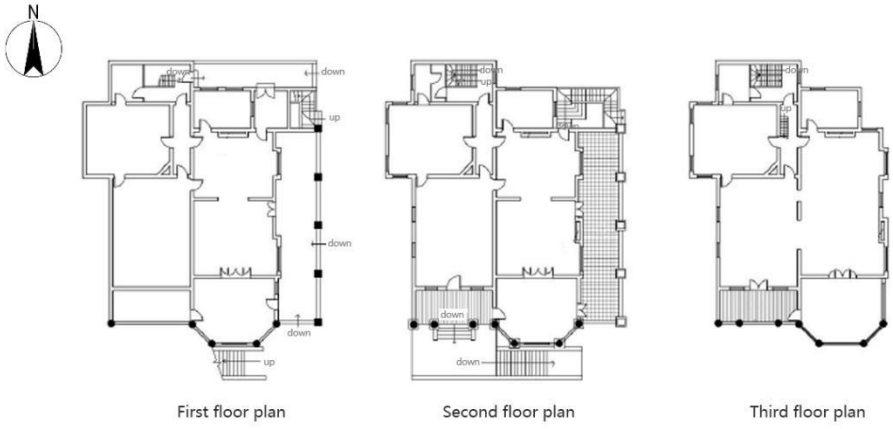



**Fig. 5** Floor Plan of the U.S. Consulate [7].

Because of the undulating hills on which it depends, each elevation of the main building is not regular, and the design techniques and forms embodied in the building are also different. The east, south, and north elevations are the main exposed elevations, with the south elevation being the most delicate, as shown in figure 6 and figure 7.

On the west side of the south elevation of this building is the Tuscan Order, which has a three-part transitional treatment from bottom to top, transitioning from the solid and powerful base at the bottom

to the light colonnade in the middle, and then to the roof gable at the top, which is adorned with multiple lineal feet. Half of a hexagonal corner tower protrudes from the east side of the U.S. Consulate, and the protruding corner tower has a window in the center of the second story and windows on all three sides of the third story. In addition to this, the consulate building has Tuscan pilasters in the center of the east side, square pilasters at each end, curved beams at the top of the pilasters, and further up there are brick-decorated cornices and Western-style pediments, all curved. The east elevation with four stone masonry arches on the ground floor has a more flexible and free form, with a diamond-shaped balustrade on the second-story outdoor terrace. The east elevation features windows and doors with internal functional openings, coupon windows and doors on the inside of the stone masonry arches on the ground floor, rectangular windows and doors on the second and third floors, and arched lintels adorning the upper portions of the third-floor windows and doors. The other two elevations are more hidden, so they are treated more simply [3].




**Fig. 6** Exterior of the U.S. Consulate Staff Quarters Building [7].



**Fig. 7** U.S. Consulate South Facade, Window Lintels and Handrails [5].

The topography of the base of the old U.S. Consulate site gradually rises from south to north, and the old U.S. Consulate took advantage of the topography to design the building into a spatial layout of falling floors from west to east. The first floor of the building is designed with a partial basement, and when viewed from the west, the building has only two floors, and when viewed from the east,

the building has three floors. The first and second floors of the building can directly walk to the outdoor ground, so that the building east-west is used with good lighting, lighting surface of the weaker layer of the north-south direction, the arrangement of outdoor staircases, enriching the building façade. Make full use of the contour of the mountain and keep the original topography and geomorphology [5].

Due to the influence of the terrain, and converted from residential buildings, the Fuzhou U.S. Consulate site of the former plan layout form is very free, and other Western-style buildings are different from the symmetrical plan layout. The consulate does not have a central axis of symmetry, the plane outline is not a regular rectangle, not in the center of the north-south corridor will be divided into two rows of rooms east and west of the building plane, the interior walls are not symmetrical, even the number of rooms are different. On the west and north sides of the building are protruding functional space staircase is also by the topography of the necessary arrangement, and is not placed in the center of the building. The free plan of the old American Consulate is a rare example.

### 4.2. French Consulate

#### 4.2.1. History of the French Consulate

The former site of the French Consulate is located at 23 Lequn Road, Cangshan District, on the south side of Lequn Road near the top of Cangqian Hill, diagonally across from the Methodist Church Headquarters and the St.John's Church. In 1881, the French Consul Cte. De Pourtalè- Gorgier commissioned Bishop Li Hongzhi of the Dominican Order to lease land in Tiananpu, and construction began the following year. The building was used as the office building of the French Consulate in Fuzhou no later than the 17th year of the Guangxu reign (1891). The famous French poet, playwright, and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868-1955) lived and worked here from 1898 to 1905. His collection of prose poems, recognizing the East, was based on his personal experiences in Fuzhou. In his diary, he repeatedly referred to this old house as his "home". Around 1912, because the French Consulate in Fuzhou on Tsushu Road was under construction, the Consulate temporarily rented the Bishop's Office as a transitional office. Since then, the building gradually lost its function as a consulate and became the property of the Dominican Order. In 2014, Fuzhou City issued the Protection Plan for the Yantai Hill Historical and Cultural Landscape Area, Park Road Historical Architectural Complex, and Mafang Street Historical Architectural Complex to renovate and upgrade the Yantai Hill Historical Landscape Area. The building was listed as a preserved building, which was repaired and revitalized for use.

#### 4.2.2. Architectural Features

The building is a brick and wood-framed colonial coupon-court style building with three floors including a basement. As shown in figure.8.The north and south sides have doorways with a width of seven rooms and a depth of six rooms. A small portion of the exterior corridor is made of flat beams, while most of it is made of arches. The plan of the building is a typical colonial plan, with four exterior corridors and English fireplaces in all the major rooms (the chimneys protruding from the roof have been destroyed); the central room is a hall, and there are porches on the ground floor in both the north and south directions, with brick columns, flat roofs, and terraces on the upper floors, and the steps are made into eights, and the porches have been destroyed, while the steps have been preserved intact. The building is made of brick, the surface has been covered by mortar, the texture of the façade cannot be examined, and the basement is made of stone. The total area of the building is about 437.86 square meters, and the total building area is 1758.35 square meters.

The building materials of the French Consulate in Fuzhou Smoky Mountains are mainly brick, wood and stone. The most important material of the building is brick, which is used for walls, floors, stairs, and other parts of the building to increase the stability and durability of the building. Wood is the auxiliary material of the building, which is used for the roof, railings, windows, doors, and other parts. Stone is used as the decorative material of the building, used for fountains, flower beds, sculptures, and other parts.



**Fig. 8** Current Appearance of the French Consulate.

### 4.3. Netherlands Consulate

#### 4.3.1. History of the Netherlands Consulate

The former site of the Dutch Consulate is located at No.2 Meiwu Road, the original site for the Taixing Foreign Bank, built in 1880. The main body of the neoclassical coupon corridor style two-story brick structure, has an area of 1569.3 square meters. 1889-1930 was set up as the Dutch Consulate in Fuzhou after the fire destroyed about three-quarters of the consulate. 1995, the consulate on the west side of the original site of the open space by the Soviet neoclassical style of the newly built Cangshan Cinema, and the north side of the site partially transformed into a ticket room and other ancillary facilities.

#### 4.3.2. Architectural Features

The overall building of the Dutch Consulate has three floors, it has a masonry exterior with a pale yellow painted surface, complemented by a wooden interior. The four tall solid columns in front of the building's entrance are the distinctive features of the building. As can be seen in figure 9, the Dutch Consulate is symmetrically distributed in plan, with hard lines, presenting the solemn and dignified character of the consulate building.

The restoration project of the Studio Theatre adheres to the concept of respecting history, repairing the old as the old, and revitalizing the use of the old. In 2019, the remains of the old building of the Consulate and the theater completed restoration.



**Fig. 9** Appearance of the Cangshan theater/Netherlands Consulate.

## 5. Conclusion

The consulate building complex in Yantai Hill of Fuzhou City is taken as an example to analyze the characteristics of modern consulate buildings. This study finds that the consulate buildings in Yantai Hill, Cangshan District, and Fuzhou City are concentrated in the area of Cangqian, generally covering a large area, surrounded by office buildings, mansions, etc. into courtyards, surrounded by beautifully decorated courtyard walls or railings, with a beautiful environment, tightly guarded, and generally using the exterior corridor style of architecture. In addition to the U.S. Consulate, the monolithic building seeks symmetry of the central axis, presenting the solemnity of the consulate building, in terms of decoration, form, etc., retaining the architectural form of each country while incorporating local elements, so that the details show the phenomenon of the fusion of East and West.

Due to historical reasons, many of the buildings have been destroyed and documentation is scarce, the article research still has some limitations. Most of the buildings are not open due to control or protection needs, and only their appearance was visible during the field research. Future research on this topic can be improved by going through more historical data, visiting the field, and comparing it with the modern consulates in other cities.

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