

Characteristics of Nakhichevan-on-Don Residential Architecture of the Second Half of the 19th Century*

Olga Bayeva

Scientific Research Institute of the Theory and History of Architecture and Urban Planning
Branch of the Central Scientific-Research and Project Institute of the Construction Ministry of Russia
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: olabaeva@mail.ru

Abstract—The town of Nakhichevan-on-Don was the center of a colony established by the Crimean Armenians in 1779. Between 18th and 19th centuries, their dwellings still showed the architectural traditions of the peninsula. However, Russian laws and the architectural practice that developed under these laws resulted in construction by existing models and in accordance with predominant styles. In the second half of the 19th to early 20th centuries, the architectural image of Nakhichevan resembled any other Russian provincial town built by a general layout. At the same time, some specific characteristics that defined the peculiarity of residential architecture and the uniqueness of the cultural heritage of the town remained. The article describes the characteristics of volumetric and spatial solutions and stylistic preferences of the dwellers. Studying of archival materials and field studies allowed the author to trace the transformation of the interior design of a Nakhichevan dwelling and to reveal sustainable architectural forms that existed in residential construction up to the early 20th century.

Keywords—Nakhichevan-on-Don; residential architecture; Don Armenians

I. INTRODUCTION

Nakhichevan (Nakhichevan-on-Don since 1838, in 1928 became a part of the neighboring city of Rostov-on-Don) - the urban center of the Armenian colony in the Lower Don region, was founded in 1779. The Armenians who left Crimea settled here, and, in the late 18th to early 19th centuries, their houses were strongly influenced by the building traditions that existed on the peninsula. However, Russian laws and the architectural practice that developed under these laws resulted in quick transition to construction by existing models and in accordance with predominant styles. Religious buildings were the first to be design in the style of classicism; administrative and residential buildings followed. By the middle of the 19th century, the architectural image of Nakhichevan-on-Don resembled new provincial Russian towns built by a general layout. At the same time,

*This paper was funded by the Science and Technology Development State Program of the Russian Federation for years 2013-2020, Program of Fundamental Research of State Academies of Science for years 2013 – 2020, within Program of Fundamental Researches of Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation and Russian Academy of Architecture and Construction Sciences, the Research Project 1.2.16.

some specific features remained here, which determined the peculiarity of the architecture and determined the originality of the cultural heritage of the town. This specificity emerged from layers of different cultures: the imposition of the Crimean tradition adopted by the Armenians while living on the peninsula for several centuries on the foundations of Russian architecture, which, at that time, developed in line with European trends [1].

Some researchers have already touched upon the history of Nakhichevan-on-Don architecture [2], [3], but in most works it was viewed in the context of the history of architecture of southern Russian towns [4], [5] and not as an object of a special study. There are publications dedicated to the architecture of religious buildings [6], [7]. O. H. Halpahchyan was the one who paid a significant attention to the history of Nakhichevan Armenians' houses in his monograph. Having analyzed the most important residential buildings of the Don Armenians, the author came to the conclusion that they “definitely show features of the national architectural school” [8]. It is difficult to agree with this statement. Although some features of space-planning decisions preserved here, the exterior of residential buildings was determined by existing models or were designed in the spirit of the styles and trends that dominated in Russian architecture at that time. In this regard, in our opinion, it is possible to speak of some sustainable forms of private life of Nakhichevan citizens and their slowly changing ideas of living space organization.

This article aims at identifying the specifics of Nakhichevan-on-Don residential architecture, which still existed in the building practice second half of the 19th century. To achieve this goal, it seems necessary to analyze the interior layouts of houses, their relationship with the space of the courtyard and the street, and to characterize the stylistic preferences of the citizens.

II. PLANNING ORGANIZATION OF NAKHICHEVAN-ON-DON RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

According to the general layout developed right after Nakhichevan was founded, the territory of the town was divided into square-shaped blocks with streets crossing at right angle. The 19th century's copies of the general layout indicate that the blocks consisted of two rows of land lots. In

each row, there were ten households and less, their number depended on the size of a particular block and the land lots in it. Rectangular land lots were stretched deep into the block their narrow side facing the street. As a rule, the owners built their structures along the perimeter. The house was on the frontage line, usually in the corner of the land lot. Behind it, deeper in the courtyard, were subsidiary structures, such as summer kitchens, barns, outhouses, etc.

One, or one-and-a-half-storied brick or wooden houses on a stone foundation were typical of mid and late 19th century urban residential architecture. These houses were square or rectangular in plan with a compact layout: the rooms were grouped around the hallway or adjoined to a small front room, the entrance hall, which was used to enter the house. Layouts of this type could usually be found in five-wall or six-wall houses, where the entire interior space was divided into two or four equal parts, respectively, with possible subsequent division by partitions into several adjacent rooms.

Sometimes the entrance hall was under the one roof with the main volume of the house, but more often wooden entrance hall or veranda were attached to the side facade, and later would usually make a brick cladding for them. Under the influence of model designs, the entrance, which previously faced the courtyard, was now moved to the street facade. In rectangular houses with three to five windows on the front facade, the location of the entrance was lateral, which was determined by the interior layout described above. Although in the second half of the 19th century, buildings with a central entrance group began to appear in the town, this approach was rarely used; as a rule, in the mansions of wealthy citizens.

In the studied period, the number of habitable rooms in the house increases and their layout becomes more complex. In the buildings that were built earlier, the owners seek to increase living space and attach additional rooms. Due to the increasing density of buildings, houses now often have a complex asymmetrical configuration, which affects the layout of the main volume rooms and lateral annexes protruding into the courtyard. Along with the compact layout of small houses, the enfilade and corridor arrangement of rooms is becoming more and more common. Up to the end of the 19th century, popular are circular layouts, formed by the arrangement of enfilade rooms in two rows without a corridor. The corridor is initially either not used at all, or plays a secondary role, not being an independent element of planning. It is often put in only one part of the house and connects the non-isolated rooms on either side of it. By the end of the century, wealthy citizens' houses get a more orderly design and a regular structure; most of them are designed as corridor-type buildings, with an increasing number of isolated rooms.

Tenement buildings, becoming more important in the urban environment, used to have mixed functions. Their first floors could be occupied by shops or offices. The most common type of tenement houses combined residential, warehouse and commercial functions. Buildings of this type had a similar layout, typical for these buildings: apartments

were grouped around staircases, corridors or galleries, which ensured the isolation of living cells. Tenement houses consisted of a varying number of apartments intended for rental, unequal in size and the degree of comfort.

III. ARCHITECTURE OF NAKHICHEVAN-ON-DON RESIDENTIAL BUILDING FACADES

In the second half of the 19th century, a completed architectural image forms in Nakhchivan-on-Don. During this period, housing becomes more compact, multi-storied apartment buildings with shops, various public and administrative buildings, boulevards and parks appear on central streets.

In 1858 the mandatory use of plans and facades approved by the Emperor was abolished, however, these designs were still in use, which was justified in a situation of increasing scale of construction and the lack of architects in provincial towns. Many one or two-storied brick or wooden houses on a stone foundation were built according to designs based on the previous period models. Before the position of chief architect appeared in Nakhichevan in the second half of the 19th century, designs were made in the Taganrog Construction Committee; therefore, some facades of buildings in these towns are similar.

From mid-19th century, a transition from classicism to eclecticism started in provincial architecture, which was seen, first of all, in the use of order elements as a decor, which role gradually gained importance in the formation of facade plastics. The most popular in Nakhichevan were interfloor cornices, window linings of various configurations, but above all triangular and arched shapes and their variations, rustication, panels, pilasters and semi-columns, keystones and attics on the roof.

Turning to the architectural elements of academic styles in the era of eclecticism defined the uniformity of the architectural objects on the central streets. D.P. Shulga noted that the eclectic architecture has pronounced regional differences determined by the peculiarities of the local architecture of previous periods, and focuses on the local architectural environment [9]. Nakhichevan, which, in fact, was being built up throughout the 19th century, did not have many cultural layers. Its image was determined by religious and administrative buildings constructed in the era of classicism with recognizable features of the order architecture. Perhaps this is why the eclecticism, which was close to classicism here, did not violate the artistic integrity of the architectural environment.

Art Nouveau, which came to the architecture of the city in early 20th century, did not violate this uniformity as well. Firstly, this style was popular for a rather short period of time, and secondly, even the mansions that adopted the spatial organization of Art Nouveau were still decorated in the style of eclecticism with the use of classicist elements [10] or already drifted towards neoclassicism. Citizens liked domes of various configurations, and there was quite a large number of eclectic of Art Nouveau buildings with corners decorated with domes.

Consolidation of housing and moving buildings to the frontage line led to construction of houses with a single front facade. In most cases, the plastics of these facades were formed, according to the classicist tradition, by three, five or seven windows. The entrance, initially leading to the courtyard, was more often moved to the front facade, and the houses had a front entrance hub, which served as decoration, and another one in the courtyard providing communication between residential buildings and outbuildings. Nakhichevan residents paid considerable attention to the design of the doors of the front entrance group. Carved wooden canvases were designed in the same style as the facade of the house. Common were paneled doors, sometimes with an inclusion of a glass transom. Above them, there were light metalwork canopies.

From mid-19th century, Nakhichevan sees the emergence of houses with a rounded or cut off corner facing the intersection of streets. This corner could have a window or doorway, and if the building was two-storied, it usually had a balcony there.

Open verandas, galleries and balconies, quite common in southern cities, were particularly important in Nakhichevan. Verandas were attached to the courtyard or side facade of the house. They served as entrance to the building. Sometimes they resembled galleries, although individual houses with galleries in their pure form were never popular in the city. Starting from mid-19th century, verandas started to be remodeled into interior rooms, usually by building brick walls around them and making a small antechamber to enter the house. Nakhichevan residents' for summer premises was reflected even in large mansions built by a special design. For example, in the Aladzhalovs' house, the main volume of the building was supplemented by a separate block of summer premises included into the facade composition. The building is decorated with a terrace with wrought cast iron railing.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the second half of the 19th century, many features that had appeared here earlier remain in Nakhichevan-on-Don residential architecture. These include locating houses along the frontage line of the street, focus on model designs, and popularity of compact layouts with entrance through a side corridor (the entrance hall). Open spaces, traditional for Armenians, remain very popular, providing communication between the house and the courtyard or street space. However, the increased needs of citizens and the desire to increase living space made some of the homeowners to remodel verandas into additional rooms or kitchens. However, in newly built houses, verandas and terraces remain an important element of architecture.

At the same time, new trends appeared, some of which were a result of a more compact development of housing and change in stylistic preferences. Houses with a cut or rounded corner, asymmetrical buildings with annexes extended to the depth of the courtyard became more widespread. New planning solutions changed the interior and exterior architectural image of residential buildings. Houses with an

entrance made in the center of the front facade, or even with several entrance groups, began to appear.

From the middle of the 19th century, eclecticism started to replace classicism in Nakhichevan, but it reflected the classicist tastes of the citizens and was characterized by increased attention to decorative elements. Romantic tendencies, characteristic of the Russian architecture of this period, can be seen here only in the few mansions built in the Art Nouveau style.

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