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Istanbul Armenian Churches And Their Architectural Formations

ABSTRACT

The fact that Istanbul has served as the capital of four different empires in its history has enabled the city to gain an important position politically and militarily. While the city was under different administrations, it became a political, commercial, military, social and economic central location. Various religious and ethnic groups contributed to making the city a center. This situation also revealed the identity structure of the city. Armenians, who have a decisive place in the cultural and social life of Istanbul, have shown variable population movements. Armenians are referred to as "Krikor" or "Gregorian" with the nickname "Enlightener" (Lusavoriç) within the framework of ethnic and religious identity. For Christian Armenians, Krikor the Illuminator has an important place in their history. Armenians, who accepted Christianity through the Surp Krikor Illuminator in 301 AD, are known as the first state to accept Christianity. The Armenian Church is called Apostolic because it is accepted that the church was founded through the apostles. Within the scope of the study, the plan type, architectural features, materials used and decoration programs of the Armenian churches identified within the borders of Istanbul were examined and the existence of these structures was tried to be documented.

Keywords: Amenian Church, Architecture Formation, Historical Church, Istanbul

1. INTRODUCTION

The Armenian Community continues to live as a closed community by establishing various communities in different districts of Istanbul until today. The formation of the first Armenian community in Istanbul dates back to the beginning of the fourth century. Istanbul has been a center of attraction from those years until today for the Armenian communities, known as Millet-i Sadıka, who lived together and became friends with the Turkish-Muslim community for centuries, and they gathered around their own churches in different districts of Istanbul.

The Ottoman Empire's organized management of the communities under its sovereignty on the basis of religion or sect, based on Islamic Law, was called the "nation system". Armenians, who were accepted as a community and considered as "dhimmis" within the scope of state organization according to Islamic law, were accepted as a "nation" in the Ottoman Empire based on religious discrimination. This system has played a significant role in the development of the urban texture and the formation of architectural characteristics. In the Ottoman cities, where the neighborhoods where Muslim and non-Muslim communities lived were observed to be separated from each other, there were social restrictions for non-Muslims and the construction of new churches was prohibited, except for existing churches and other places of worship where they could perform their religious rituals. Within the framework of these prohibitions, although the construction of new churches is not allowed, within the framework of the repair of existing churches, although the construction of new churches is not allowed, the repair of existing churches is allowed, but special care has been taken not to make changes with new additions.

2. CHURCHES, ISTANBUL ARMENIAN CHURCHES AND THEIR CONFORMATIONS

Derived from the Greek word "ekklesia", which means "meeting" or "gathering", the word church was used to describe democratic public meetings in the early times, but later it was used for all kinds of meetings. In the early periods of Christianity, it meant "God's meeting" and "those gathered around Jesus Christ". In this process, it also gained the meaning of believing community or community. The word church began to be used in the sense of building, dating back to the fifth century. Until this century, the main function of basilicas was to host courts or meetings. It is thought that the Christian basilica was modeled on these civil forum basilicas. Although round, polygonal, three-leaf clover and cruciform building types were also used in early church architecture, the basilica form was the most widely used (Reis, 2012, p. 24).

When looking at Armenian churches, the characteristic similarities that are common to Armenian church architecture and can be seen at first glance are that the ceilings have a multi-piece appearance in order to cover the vaults and domes that cover the symmetrical plan scheme in the interior, as well as the fact that they are made of finely cut tuff in the form of tiles used on the interior and exterior walls. In the early period, many architectural experiments were carried out simultaneously and innovations took place. For this reason, it is not possible to trace the historical development of Armenian structures on a completely linear line (Mert, 2020, sy.49). In principle, Armenian churches were taken as examples from Byzantine churches and buildings were built in accordance with Byzantine church plan schemes and types. The plan types used are categorized according to the number of naves, the covering system used and the carrier system. Accordingly, church plans can be listed as basilical planned churches, centrally planned churches, domed basilical planned churches, cross planned churches, free cross planned churches, closed Greek cross planned churches, ciborium planned churches, clover planned churches, and vestibule planned churches (Hazır, 2022, p. 11).

In churches, the basilical plan type is positioned with one short side facing east, and it is a rectangular plan that is oriented in depth. There is an apse on the short side facing east. In buildings arranged in three or five naves with rows of columns, the central nave is wider than the side naves and its upper cover is higher. The narthex, where the entrance is located, is usually located in the West (Karabey, 2001, p.5).

There are 48 Armenian churches open to worship belonging to the Armenian community in Istanbul. 34 of them belong to the Gregorian community, 12 to the Catholic community and 3 to the Protestant community. Armenian churches in Istanbul developed differently from Anatolian churches. The majority of Armenian churches in Anatolia have a cruciform or central plan. Drum and pointed cones were used on the upper covers. Istanbul Armenian Churches show some architectural differences according to their denominations. With a few exceptions, all Armenian Gregorian churches were built in the T plan type with a single nave and a basilica main space. The upper cover is a barrel roof over a vault. The use of a full dome is only seen in Kuzguncuk Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Church (Batar, 2007, p.17).

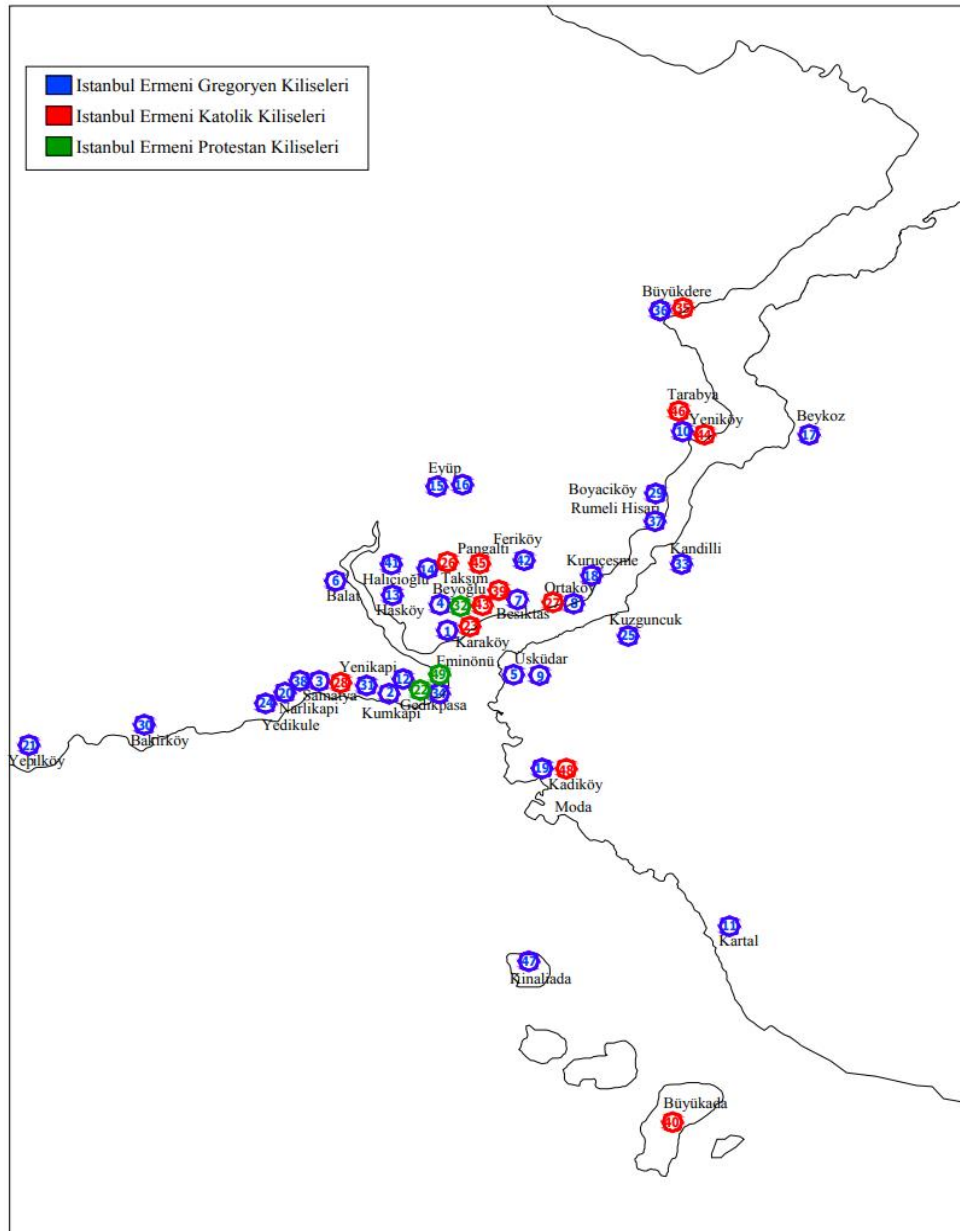


Figure 1. Distribution of Armenian Churches in Istanbul according to denominations (Batar, 2007, p.30)

There are 12 Armenian Catholic Churches in Istanbul that have survived to the present day. These churches: Galata Surp Pırgıç Church, Taksim Surp Hovhan Vosgeperan Church, Ortaköy Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Church, Samatya Anarad Hıçutyun Church, Büyükdere Surp Boğos Church, Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun Church, Büyükada Surp Asdvadzadzin Church, Beyoğlu Surp Asdvadzadzin Church, Yeniköy Surp Hovhannes Mıgırđıç Church, Pangaltı Anarad Hıçutyun Church, Tarabya Surp Andon Church, Kadıköy Surp Levon Church. All of these churches, except the Kadıköy Surp Levon Church, which dates back to 1905, were built in the 19th century (Kepiç, 2020, p.10).

3. DIVISIONS OF THE CHURCH

While Greek and Roman court buildings were used for Christian worship, some additions were made resulting from Christian worship methods. In line with local factors and needs, there are architectural differences between the spatial layout of a church built in Europe and a church built in Mesopotamia. The spatial program of churches can be read as the arrangement of furnishings used in communion, the organization of the community and priests in the church, and the interpretation of the church's epigraphic programs (Halifeoğlu, 2016, p.30).

Churches are not just physically perceived spaces. Its interior appearance distinguishes it from other meeting places and centers of collective life. The separation and order of the parts inside are inspired by the thoughts of the religious group and respond to the worship needs of the people. In this way, the church imposes an attitude on the group members and introduces a set of images into their memories through

prayers and rituals. With the decor, clothes, and images of saints in the church, group members visualize holy beings and heaven in their minds. When these images disappear, group members' beliefs are erased from their minds. For this reason, those who wanted to destroy a belief in ancient times destroyed temples and shrines. However, when a new place of worship is built, the situation is reversed. For example, when a new church is built, the religious group feels that it has grown and become stronger (Bozkurt, 2022, p. 4).

At the entrance of the main space, the closed section between the courtyard and the naos is called "the narthex". It has been suggested that the narthex is the section where those who are not full members of the Christian community wait during the thanksgiving service. Based on early Byzantine sources, it is known that the gallery floor above the side naves was the section reserved for women. The gallery floor can also be found above the narthex. The stairs reaching this floor are located in the narthex or naos (Barutçu, 2012, p.12).

The narthex is the closed space that provides access to the worship area of the church. This term has been used since the 6th century. Since people who have not been baptized, people who have not accepted Christianity but are interested in it, and Christians who have committed sins are prohibited from entering the main worship area, they are allowed to watch the services from the narthex (Açıkgoz, 2023, p. 25).

Based on early Byzantine sources, it is known that the gallery floor above the side naves was the section reserved for women. The gallery floor can also be found above the narthex. The stairs reaching this floor are located in the narthex or naos (Ahunbay, 1997, p.1013).

Naos, derived from the Greek word "naein" meaning shelter, is the sacred section in Greek temples where cult objects and statues of gods are located. It refers to the main place of worship in churches. Naos is synonymous with cella. It is located between the pronaos and the opisthodom. Ceremonies such as baptism, weddings and funerals are held in this part of the church (Özcan, 2022, p.44)

As a feature of ancient eastern churches, pastophorions are spaces located on the eastern wing of the naos, the main space of the church, next to the apse, reserved for the storage of liturgical items and the protection of sacred objects. In the history of Byzantine art, these spaces are called prothesis at the north end and diakonikon at the south end (Halifeoğlu, 2016, p. 31).

Bema, the sacred section in front of the apse in Early Christian and Byzantine Churches, where the clergy are located and the public cannot enter, represents the sky and contains sacred items (Doğan, 2002, p. 336). The niches in the bema are places where various icons and sacred materials used for liturgical purposes are placed. The altar in front of the apse contains the Eucharistia, which describes the flesh of Jesus turning into bread and his blood into wine, and it is believed that this was performed on the altar (Karaca, 2008, p.599). The choir hall is located in the front part of the bema. In this section, hymns are recited while standing.

The apse is the generally semicircular section located at the eastern end of the building. It has been considered sacred since early Christian times. The gallery is located on the narthex or on carriers to the west of the naos. In old churches, the gallery section was used as women's quarters. The gallery is the section where part of the choir is located today. The stairs leading to the gallery are located in the naos or narthex. The baptistery is the cell located to the left of the main room in Armenian churches. This is the section where babies are baptized. In the niche on the western wall, usually made of marble, babies are blessed with holy oil and take the step into Christianity (Batar, 2007, p.17).

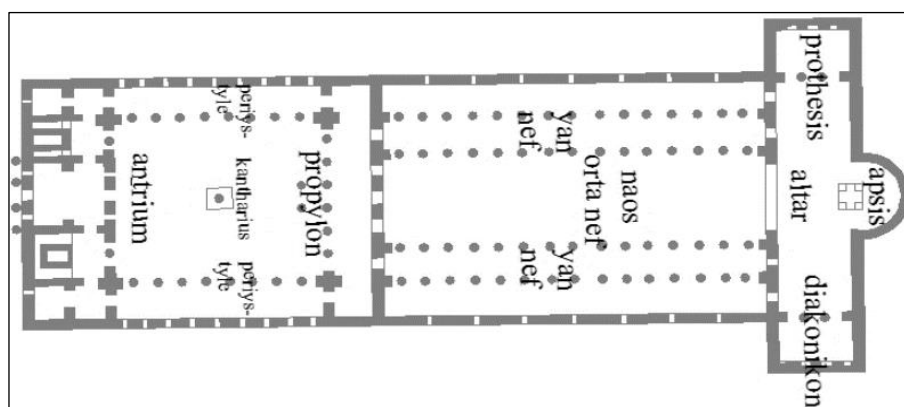


Figure 2. Basilica Plan (Halifeoğlu, 2016, p.32)

4. GENERAL FEATURES AND CLASSIFICATION OF ISTANBUL ARMENIAN CHURCHES

The plan formation of Catholic churches and Protestant churches is similar to Gregorian churches. They have a rectangular plan and, except for some examples, a single nave. The Gothic style draws attention to the façade layout. Especially in Protestant churches, bell towers rising towards the sky and pointed lines are indicators of the Gothic style. Catholic churches are built more simply and are covered with steep gable roofs. Armenian churches in Istanbul continue their lives as building complexes that serve the community with additional buildings around them. School buildings, association buildings or halls built for post-service ceremonies adjacent to churches meet the needs of the community and keep the Armenian people together (Batar, 2007, p. 17).

Istanbul Armenian Gregorian Churches Gregorian Armenians have been living in Istanbul since the 15th century. For this reason, there are Armenian Gregorian Churches in almost all of the old residential areas of the city. Armenian Gregorian Churches open for worship in Istanbul are listed chronologically according to their last construction date as follows;

Table 1. Chronological order of Istanbul Armenian Gregorian Churches according to their last construction date (Özcan, 2022, p. 48).

| Church Name | Construction Date | District |
|--|-------------------|---------------|
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1824 | Ortaköy |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1828 | Kumkapı |
| Surp Haç Church | 1830 | Üsküdar |
| Surp Stepanos Church | 1831 | Halıcıoğlu |
| Surp Yegya Church | 1832 | Eyüp |
| Surp Nigogayos Armenian Church | 1832 | Topkapı |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1834 | Yeniköy |
| Surp Nigoğayos Church | 1834 | Beykoz |
| Surp Haç Church | 1834 | Kuruçeşme |
| Surp Pirgiç Church | 1834 | Yedikule |
| Surp Hreşdagabet Armenian Church | 1835 | Balat |
| Surp Yerrortutyun Church | 1838 | Beyoğlu |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church | 1838 | Beşiktaş |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1844 | Bakırköy |
| Surp Steponos Armenian Church | 1845 | Yeşilköy |
| Surp Tateos Portoğomeos Armenian Church | 1846 | Yenikapı |
| Surp Yergodasan Arakelots Armenian Church | 1846 | Kandilli |
| Surp Harutyun Armenian Church | 1855 | Kumkapı |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church | 1855 | Eyüp |
| Surp Santuth Armenian Church | 1856 | Rumeli Hisarı |
| Surp Niğan Armenian Church | 1857 | Kartal |
| Surp Takavor Armenian Church | 1858 | Kadıköy |
| Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Armenian Church | 1861 | Kuzguncuk |
| Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Armenian Church | 1885 | Kınalıada |
| Surp Yerits Mangants Armenian Church | 1885 | Boyacıköy |
| Surp Hripsimiyants Erm Armenian Church | 1886 | Büyükdere |
| Surp Kevork (Sulu Monastery) Armenian Church | 1887 | Samatya |
| Surp Garabed Armenian Church | 1888 | Üsküdar |
| Surp Hağop Armenian Church | 1892 | Samatya |
| Surp Harutyun Armenian Church | 1895 | Taksim |
| Surp Hovhannes Avedaraniç Armenian Church | 1904 | Gedikpaşa |
| Surp Vartanants Armenian Church | 1951 | Feriköy |
| Surp Hovhannes Avedaraniç Armenian Church | 1964 | Narlıkapı |
| Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Armenian Church | 1965 | Galata |

Armenian Catholic Churches in Istanbul Based on Byzantine and Ottoman sources, it has been determined that fifty churches survived, apart from the monasteries, during the conquest of Istanbul, and that there were nearly a hundred Armenian and Greek churches in total in the city. After the conquest, some of the intact churches were converted into mosques, and mosques, lodges and palaces were built in place of the dilapidated ones. Most of the churches built after the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul in 1461 fell into disrepair, changed identity and were destroyed as the Armenian community migrated to other places. Catholic Armenians officially gained the right to build their own churches with the decree of Mahmud II on January 6, 1830. With the decree of Mahmud II on 7 October 1831, the foundations of the first Armenian Catholic Church, Surp Hisus Pirgiç Church, were laid in Galata by Archbishop Andon Nuriciyan and Minister Agopos Çukuryan on 12 May 1832, and the church was opened for worship on 13 January 1834. The spiritual center of the community in Istanbul is Sakızağa Surp Asdvadzadzin Church (Barutçu, 2012, p.13). Armenian Catholic Churches open for worship in Istanbul are listed chronologically according to their last construction date as follows;

Table 2. Chronological order of Istanbul Armenian Catholic Churches according to their last construction date (Özcan, 2022, p. 49).

| Church Name | Construction Date | District |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Surp Pirgiç Armenian Church | 1834 | Galata |
| Surp Hovhan Vosgeperan Church | 1837 | Taksim |
| Surp Gregory the Illuminator Church | 1839 | Ortaköy |
| Anarat Hıgutiun Church | 1857 | Samatya |
| Surp Yerrortutyun Church | 1857 | Beyoğlu |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1858 | Büyükdere |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1865 | Beyoğlu |
| Surp Hovhannes Mıgırdiç Church | 1866 | Yeşilköy |
| Surp Andon Church | 1871 | Tarabya |
| Surp Boğos Church | 1885 | Büyükdere |
| Surp Levon Church | 1905 | Kadıköy |
| Anarad Hıgutyun Church | 1971 | pangaltı |

Realizing the importance of protecting religion in terms of politics, England requested the opening of a Protestant Church in Jerusalem in 1840, but the Ottoman Empire rejected this request, stating that there was no Protestant community in the country and that changing sects was prohibited. Despite this, with the decree issued by England on September 10, 1845, the Sublime Porte Protestant community was allowed to build a church of their own in Jerusalem. The Protestant Community was officially established and recognized on 15 November 1850. Protestants were the last recognized community in the Ottoman Empire. The regulations of the Protestant community were prepared and came into force on March 12, 1878, when the Constitutional Monarchy administration came into force. It is seen that at the end of the 19th century, 15% of Armenians in the Ottoman lands chose Protestantism. Today, Turkish Armenian Protestants are affiliated with the Middle East Armenian Protestant Churches Union in Lebanon. Armenian Protestant Churches open for worship in Istanbul are listed chronologically according to their last construction date as follows;

Table 3. Chronological order of Istanbul Armenian Protestant Churches according to their last construction date (Özcan, 2022, p. 50).

| Church Name | Construction Date | District |
|--|-------------------|-----------|
| Avedaranagan Amenasurp Yerrortutyun Church | 1861 | Beyoğlu |
| Gedikpaşa Protestant Church | 1911 | Gedikpaşa |

While the Armenian population increased in some districts of Istanbul over time, the population rate decreased in some districts, and as a result, the abandoned buildings were ruined and destroyed over time due to neglect, fires and demolitions. The chronological order of churches and chapels that do not exist today and are located in districts with a dense Armenian population, according to their construction date, is given in table one.

Table 4. Armenian Churches in Istanbul that have not survived to the present day

| Church Name | Construction Date | District |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| Surp Nişan Church | 1776 | Alemdağ |
| Surp Hagop Church | 1810 | Kasımpaşa |
| Surp Hovhan Vosgeperan Church | 1829 | Karagümrük |
| Surp İsteyanos Church | 1829-1831 | Hasköy |
| Surp Hagop Church | 1832 | Zeytinburnu |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1837 | Bakırköy |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin (Meryemana) Armenian-Assyrian Church | 1848 | Beyoğlu |
| Surp Gregory the Illuminator Church | 1865 | Pangaltı |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin (Meryemana) Kalfayan Chapel | 1889 | Halıcıoğlu |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | 1898 | Okmeydanı |
| Surp Hovhannes Garabed Church | Unknown | İstinye |
| Surp Haç Church | Unknown | Bakırköy |
| Surp Asdvadzadzin Church | Unknown | Edirnekapı |
| Surp Hagop Church | Unknown | Sarıyer |
| Surp Hagop Kilisesi | Unknown | Üsküdar |
| Surp Harutyun Church | Unknown | Tersane |
| Surp Nigoğayos (Santa Nicola) Church | Unknown | Edirnekapı |
| Surp Nigoğayos Church | Unknown | Yenikapı |
| Surp Sarkis Church | Unknown | Galata |
| Surp Sarkis Church | Unknown | Yenikapı |
| Surp Sarkis Church | Unknown | Topkapı |

5. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Istanbul is a metropolitan city that has hosted different societies and cultures for centuries and has a rich cultural heritage. The way of life of various societies and the construction that came with them have been effective in the formation of urban identity. Religious temples and churches have great importance in shaping the cultural heritage of Istanbul. Istanbul has been a center of attraction for Armenian communities since those years and they have gathered around their churches in different districts of Istanbul. 12 of the Armenian Catholic churches built in areas where Armenian Catholics live densely are open for worship today. Armenians, who constitute a very small community compared to the ever-increasing population of Istanbul, continue their understanding of worship in their churches today.

The plan types of Armenian churches in Istanbul are generally in the form of single or three-naved basilicas. Some buildings also emulate the transept plan. Most of it was built of masonry. The entrance doors of churches are always located in a courtyard. The entrances of the churches extending in the east-west direction are located in the west direction. Narthex, naos, bema (choir section), apse, baptistery and Muganniler dressing room sections are repeated in all churches. In addition to these, priests' dressing rooms, treasury rooms and chapel areas were also created in some churches. The areas above the narthex used as choir halls or women's galleries have been used in almost all churches. The northern amira of the apse section was used as the baptistery and the southern amira was used as the room of the mugannis. In churches with priests' dressing rooms and treasury rooms, these rooms are located behind the apse. Its upper covering is a barrel roof over a vault. Its facades generally have a simple layout. They have similar structures with their gable roofs and rectangular windows. Most of the masonry facades were plastered in later periods. Bell towers were sometimes built adjacent to the structure, sometimes on top of it, and sometimes separately. Catholic Armenian churches have a common plan feature. Single-nave basilica, three-nave basilica and domed basilica plans were implemented. The location of the gallery floors, which is seen in most of the churches, is on the narthex instead of the side naves as was usual in Byzantine church architecture. Examples of these churches are Büyükada Surp Asdvadzadzin church and Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun church. There is a corridor behind the apse in the Surp Krikor Lusavoriç church and the Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun church. In Samatya Anarad Hıçutyun church, Beyoğlu Surp Asdvadzadzin church, Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun and Taksim Surp Hovhan Vosgeperan church, there are admiral rooms above the baptistery room and muganni dressing rooms in the apse section. These admiral rooms overlook the apse with a window.

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