

Armenian Church Architecture in the Town of Nakhichevan-on-Don

From Russian Neoclassicism to National Revival¹

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Abstract

This article examines the stylistic development of church architecture in the town of Nakhichevan-on-Don, founded in 1779 by Armenians resettled from the Crimea by Catherine II. The study uncovers three main trends in the work of the Armenian church architects: At first, they operated within the context of late eighteenth-/early nineteenth-century Russian Neoclassicism (Classicism in the terminology of Russian historiography). Then there was a period of conservatism in Armenian architecture in the heyday of Historicism in Russia in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Thereafter, we witness attempts to revive the national style with methods borrowed from late nineteenth-century Russian architecture. The survey demonstrates how monumental architecture was related to state policy and the poly-ethnic context of the early modern empire. Thus it contributes to a better understanding of the cultural development of national communities in Russia.

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Historical context and aims of the study

[1] The town of Nakhichevan (or Nor Nakhichevan/ Nakhidjevan,² since 1838 Nakhichevan-on-Don,³ since 1928 incorporated into the town of Rostov-on-Don and referred to as Proletarskiy district) was founded in 1779 by Armenians resettled from the Crimea by Catherine II:⁴ The Empress's decree gave the colonists the right to settle in the Lower Don region near the St. Dmitry Rostovskiy fortress. In addition to the town, the Armenians also founded five villages to the north of it.⁵

[2] Due to the historical circumstances of the Armenian people, specifically, the loss of independence, forced and voluntary resettlements, and subsequent migration to the countries of Europe and Asia, there are dozens of historical accounts of town founding by Armenians. Some foundations quickly evolved into hubs of commerce and trade, science and art; towns such as Gherla (Armenopolis, Armenierstadt), Stanislav (Stanisławów, Ivano-Frankivsk), Kameniec Podolskiy, Lvov (Lwów, Lemberg), or Grigoriopol are the examples worth mentioning in order to convey the scale and the level of Armenian integration into the culture and politics of different Eastern European states, both in the Middle Ages and in modern history. A part of the Armenian population of these towns originated in Crimea, where a large and influential Armenian colony existed for many centuries and created an impressive cultural heritage.⁶ The expansion of Armenian culture from this region can be

² Նոր Նախիջևան in Armenian. It is related to the old town Nakhidjevan in the province of Vaspurakan of the kingdom of Great Armenia. The main historical survey on the city, *Նոր-Նախիջևանը և նոր-նախիջեվանցիք* [New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians], was published by Yervand Shahaziz (Tiflis, 1903). The abridged text in Russian was published in *Записки Ростовского-на-Дону общества истории, древностей и природы* [Proceedings of the Rostov-on-Don Society of History, Antiquities and Nature] 1914. We refer to Yervand Shahaziz's text in a translation by S. S. Shahinyan (1986), see: Yervand Shahaziz, *Новый Нахичеван и новонахичеванцы* [New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians], Rostov-on-Don 1999.

³ Oganēs (Hovhannes) Khalpakhchian, *Архитектура Нахичевани-на-Дону* [The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don], Yerevan 1988, 10.

⁴ The mass resettlement of the Armenian and Greek Crimean population to the south of the Novorossiia region was organized to weaken the Crimean Khanate, a former vassal state of the Ottoman Empire that in 1774 had gained independence (and lost it in 1783 when the Crimea was joined to the Russian Empire); see Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 9-11. "Initially, in 1778, Armenians were given permission to settle near the town of Aleksandrov (today's Zaporozhie), and in the summer of 1779, in the Azov region, which was motivated by the necessity to colonize almost unpopulated steppe regions in the south of Russia conquered from the Turks, and to strengthen the economic ties with the countries in the South"; Oganēs Khalpakhchian, "Жилые дома армян на Дону" [Dwelling-Houses of the Armenians on Don], in: *Архитектурное наследство* [Architectural Heritage] 33 (1985), 122-139: 122.

⁵ See the map of the Lower Don region with the location of cities and villages in: Khalpakhchian, "Dwelling-Houses of the Armenians on Don", fig. 1.

⁶ Anatoliy Yakobson and Yuriy Tamanyan, *Армянская архитектура в Крыму* [Armenian Architecture in Crimea], Yerevan 1992, 12-19, fig. 1; Tatevik Sargsyan and Meruzhan Petrosyan, *Крым: Монастырь Сурб Хач* [Crimea: The Monastery of Surb Khach], Simferopol

illustrated by the architecture of the Armenian cathedral in Lvov (1356–1363) built on behalf of two Crimean merchants.⁷

[3] Unlike the Armenian monumental architecture built in the Crimea from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, some of which has previously been studied,⁸ we know very little about the Armenian architecture built on the peninsula in the eighteenth century, the period when a massive resettlement of Armenians to Russia took place. Looking at the contemporaneous development of Armenian architecture in the Ottoman Empire and in Safavid Iran, we observe that after the transition from the medieval period the art of the Armenian diaspora was isolated from its origins: it started to absorb the tastes and images of the people, on whose territory it was created. By the eighteenth century, the lifestyle habits in the Armenian communities in Eastern Europe and Russia had changed substantially. The integration of the Armenians into the European urban culture reached its peak, and Armenian architecture and art, and even the fashion of each community started to resemble the local versions of East European countries and Russia. Another factor transforming the essence of the Armenian national culture and bringing it closer to the dominant cultures were systems of rules and regulations with regards to architecture enforced by the receiving empires throughout their territories.

[4] The Armenian community on the Don river continued a number of its Crimean traditions. The significance of these is reflected in the villages' toponyms, or in the insertion of *khachkars* (cross stones imported from Crimea) into the walls of its new churches. Nevertheless, the architecture and the town-planning practices of the Armenian settlements on the Don river were fundamentally different from the well-known Crimean examples of the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries. At the time of the foundation of Nakhichevan, urban planning and architecture in the Russian Empire were strictly regulated, resulting in projects that followed the same

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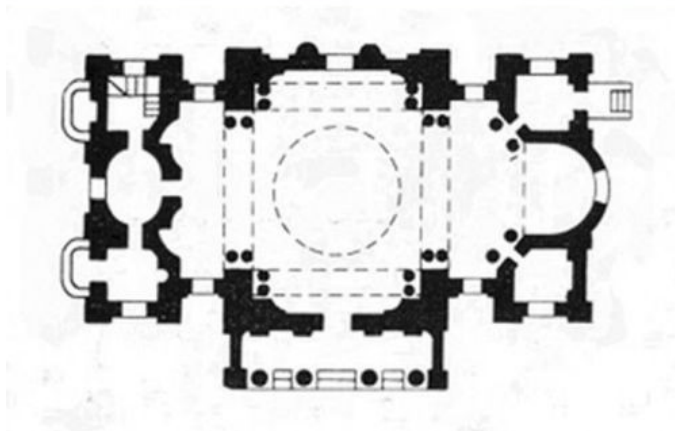
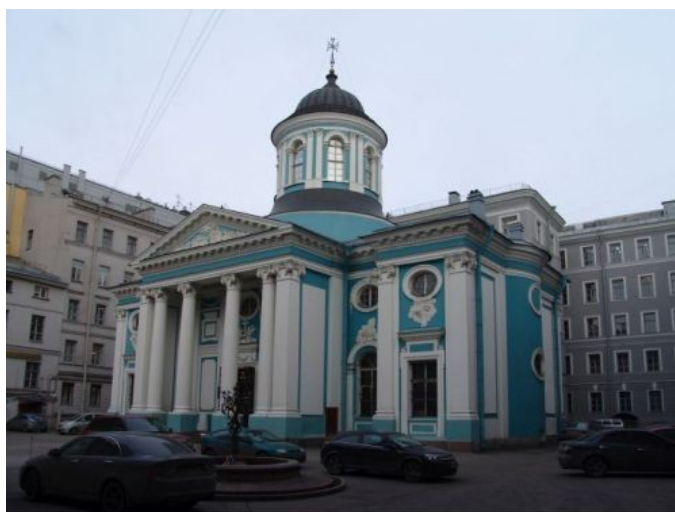
⁷ Jacek Chrzęszczewski, *Kościół Ormian Polskich. Katalog zabytków ormiańskich* [The Churches of the Polish Armenians. Catalogue of the Armenian Monuments], vol. 1, Warsaw 2001, 59. On the architecture of the Armenian cathedral in Lvov see: Joanna Wolanska, *Katedra ormiańska we Lwowie w latach 1902–1938. Przemiany architektoniczne i dekoracja wnętrza* [The Armenian Cathedral in Lvov from 1902–1938], Warsaw 2010; Armen Kazaryan, “Архитектура армянского собора во Львове. Истоки композиции и декора первоначального храма” [The Architecture of the Armenian Cathedral in Lvov. The Sources of the Plan and Decoration of the Original Building], in: *Художественная культура армянских общин на землях Речи Посполитой: Материалы Международной научной конференции, Минск, 9–11 октября 2012* [The Artistic Culture of the Armenian Communities in the Lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Materials of the International Scholarly Conference, Minsk, October 9–11, 2012], ed. Irina Skvortstova, Minsk 2013, 116–126.

⁸ For example: Oganēs Khalpakhchian, “Строительные традиции крымских армян” [Constructive Traditions of the Crimean Armenians], in: *Архитектурное наследство* [Architectural Heritage] 43 (1999), 6–16; Oganēs Khalpakhchian, “Культовые постройки крымских армян” [Church Constructions of the Crimean Armenians], in: *Архитектурное наследство* [Architectural Heritage] 39 (1992), 32–45; Anatoliy Yakobson and Yuliy Tamanyan, *Armenian Architecture in Crimea*, Yerevan 1992.

set of instructions and corresponded to the then fashionable Baroque, and, from the 1770s onwards, neoclassical style: Catherine the Great and the court nobility related Russian culture with the ancient classical art. Armenians succumbed to this fashion both in order to conform to the imperial instructions and to appear 'progressive' and 'forward-looking'.

[5] In order to understand how the neoclassical Armenian town on Don took form, it is important to consider not only the city master plan and the top-down administration of the building projects (i. e. their regulation by the various offices of the Russian Empire), but also the internal development of the new Armenian community. It had moved from a settlement located on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire to a newly developed province of Europeanizing Russia. These changing socio-cultural conditions brought about a deep transformation of the Armenian community's mindset. A new worldview was forming, attuned to the architectural space that surrounded the Armenian society. The newcomers began to knit tight connections with other Armenian communities that were integrated into the economic and cultural life of the Russian metropolises of Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The neoclassical appearance of Saint Catherine's Armenian Church on the Nevskiy Prospekt in Saint Petersburg (architect Georg Friedrich Veldten, 1770–1772), commissioned by Ivan Lazarev (Fig. 1), and a number of other similar examples could become models for new Armenian churches in other Russian cities.⁹

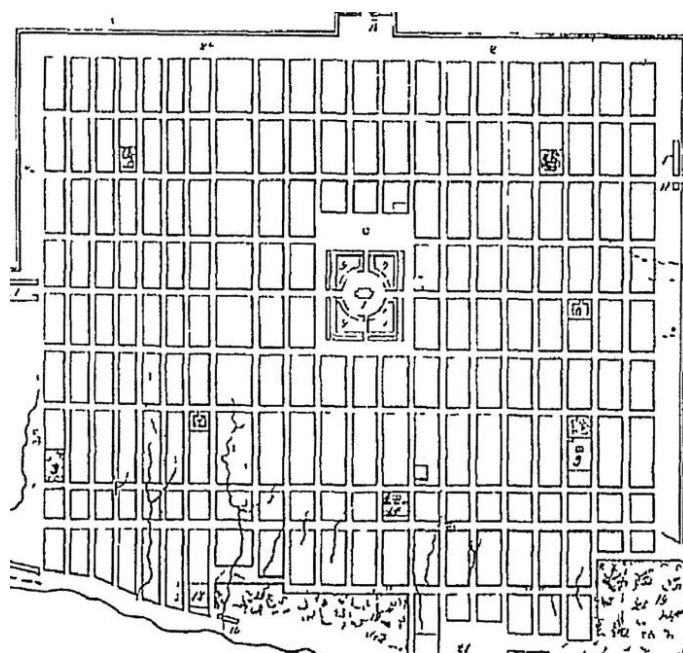
⁹ Oganēs Khalpakhchian, “Архитектурные памятники армянских колоний Москвы и Петербурга” [Architectural Monuments of the Armenian Colonies in Moscow and Petersburg], in: *Архитектурное наследство* [Architectural Heritage] 37 (1990), 249-272.



1 Saint Catherine's Armenian Church, Saint Petersburg, 1770-1772, architect: Georg Friedrich Veldten: a) view from the South-East (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2008); b) ground plan (reprod. from: Khalpakhchian, "Архитектурные памятники армянских колоний Москвы и Петербурга" [Architectural Monuments of the Armenian Colonies of Moscow and Petersburg], 266)

[6] This is the historical context in which the construction of Nakhichevan commenced. According to the late eighteenth-century urban planning regulations of Imperial Russia, it was required for cities to have a master plan. Thus, a general plan of the town of Nakhichevan was created almost simultaneously with its foundation.¹⁰ As the master plan was drawn in the period when neoclassical ideas prevailed in Russian urban planning, it reflected the most important one of them: a systematic approach to town-planning, with regular building blocks and an accentuation of central squares (Fig. 2).

¹⁰ The exact date of its creation and the author are unknown, the plan itself survived only in a copy discovered by Oganés Khalpakhchian in the Russian State Military Historical Archive, ф. ВУА, 22214; see Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 15.



2 Master plan of the city of Nakhichevan, 1811 (reprod. from: Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Книга чертежей и рисунков [Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire. The Book of Drawings and Paintings], Saint Petersburg 1859, 105)

The structure of the town was essentially a grid of streets intersecting at straight angles with a central square located at the intersection of the main streets. In the center of the square, there was a cathedral dedicated to St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavorich), which became the dominant architectural structure of Sobornaya Street (Fig. 3).



3 The main square of Nakhichevan-on-Don with the monument to Catherine II and St. Gregory's Cathedral/ Surb Grigor Lusavorich (reprod. from: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 38)

The town districts were distinguished by parish churches that were distributed almost symmetrically within this coordinate system.¹¹

¹¹ According to Khalpakhchian, the Nakhichevan parishes were each formed by the people that originally settled together in the different towns of the Crimea, and the names of the

[7] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the citizens of Nakhichevan had built six parish churches, one church with a cemetery, and a monastery complex outside the northern border of the town. Churches were also built in the five Armenian villages to the north of the town. The total number of churches varied in the different master plan drawings. The largest number found so far is in the first master plan conventionally dated to 1781: The initial idea was to build seven parish churches in the town, and land lots were immediately allocated to them. However, when the construction of the first six churches was completed, it became evident that they were sufficient for the number of people residing in Nakhichevan in the early nineteenth century, so the construction of the seventh church, to be dedicated to John the Baptist (Surb Karapet), was postponed. Later on, the citizens abandoned the idea of building the seventh parish church, and the land lot reserved for it was converted into a garden.¹²

[8] Nevertheless, a seventh church was built and dedicated to John the Baptist, and that in the late nineteenth century, at the cemetery. Its architecture reflected the changes in construction regulations in Russia and can be considered the first attempt to revive the national Armenian style not only in the town of Nakhichevan, but in all Eastern Europe.

[9] This instance as well as the character of the ecclesiastical architecture built during the first hundred years of the largest Armenian town of the Russian Empire are poorly and dispersedly described in academic literature. The only study that contains a description and an analysis of urban and rural churches of the Don Armenians was carried out by Oganēs Khalpakhchian. His article and a chapter of a monograph based on it laid the foundations for research on this topic,¹³ while new material findings and recent theoretical considerations on the Surb Karapet church provided prospects for its further development.¹⁴

[10] This paper aims to uncover the stylistic characteristics and creative methods of the architects who built the churches in Nakhichevan during the two main construction periods, 1) from the foundation of the town in 1779 to the middle of the nineteenth century, and 2) from the second half of the nineteenth century to

churches were borrowed from cult buildings in Crimea. For example, St. Gregory the Illuminator cathedral united the emigrants from Theodosia, see: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 82.

¹² Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 48.

¹³ Oganēs Khalpakhchian, “Культовые сооружения новонахичеванских армян” [Cult Buildings of Nakhichevan’s Armenians], in: *Архитектурное наследство* [Architectural Heritage] 33 (1985), 107-121; Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*.

¹⁴ Armen Kazaryan, “Альбом обмеров Д.И. Гримма и проект церкви Сурб Карапет в Нахичевани-на-Дону” [Album of the Measurements by D. I. Grimm, and the Project of the Church of Surb Karapet in Nakhichevan-on-Don], in: *Архитектурное наследство, памяти О.Х. Халпахчьяна* [Architectural Heritage, to the Memory of O. Kh. Khalpakhchian], ed. Armen Kazaryan, Moscow 2009, 165-190; Armen Kazaryan, “Церковь Сурб Карапет в Нор-Нахичеване: В поисках национального стиля” [The Church of Surb Karapet at Nor-Nakhichevan: Searching for a National Style], in: *Архитектура, строительство* [Architecture, Construction] 39-40 (Yerevan 2009), n. 5-6, 60-66.

the early twentieth century. So far, there has been no comparative analysis of the architecture of these periods that would take into account the simultaneous development of Neoclassicism (Classicism in the terminology of the Russian tradition) in the first period, and of Historicisms and the search for a national style in the latter. Such investigation, however, might provide valuable insight into the cultural development of the presumably largest Armenian community in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Nakhichevan church architecture in the era of Neoclassicism

[11] The construction of churches started immediately after the Crimean Armenians began to settle the territory. The first master plan (1781) indicates that two churches were under construction: Nikolskaya and Voznesenskaya. According to the sources, they were built from 1781 to 1783.¹⁵ In these years, also the first stone of the cathedral dedicated to St. Gregory the Illuminator was laid.

[12] Originally, these churches were built from wood. We do not know their appearance, because starting from 1783, newly-constructed stone churches came to replace the wooden ones.¹⁶ The new churches, founded in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, belonged to Neoclassicism, the style that flourished during Catherine II's rule. One of the churches, Surb Astvatsatsin (Holy Virgin) remained wooden for quite a long time, and was replaced by a stone church in 1819. It is worthy of note that its belfry (1856) was constructed in continuation of the Neoclassical style.

[13] Today none of the churches built in Nakhichevan in the late eighteenth century is preserved. The parish churches were completely destroyed in the 1930s and 1940s, and the cathedral in the 1960s. The character of the destructions was haphazard, though legitimized by the official doctrine of the Soviet state that aimed at wiping out the religious heritage and images. The implementation of this ideological position started in the Soviet Union before World War II and was revived in the time of Khrushchev.¹⁷ As a result, the urban landscape of Nakhichevan lost its architectural and semantic dominants, because the remaining cemetery church and nearby Surb Khach monastery never played a significant role in the formation of the town. Thus, studying the six late eighteenth-century churches is extremely difficult. The few written accounts of the building histories of the Nakhichevan churches offer but a cursory mention. We know little about the people who financed the construction of the churches. Likewise, we know almost nothing about the architects and the builders. The only surviving technical drawing is the drawing of the most

¹⁵ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 55, 63.

¹⁶ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 49, 54.

¹⁷ Khalpakhchian, who was aware of it and had previously studied the architecture of the town, was quite cautious in his statements. Mentioning the "disassembling" of churches, he writes that "the bricks were used to build schools, multi-storied residential blocks and the club of the cultural center of the "Krasniy Aksay" factory in place of the churches or close to them"; see: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 82. On the same issue, but without mentioning the secondary use of the bricks for the construction of secular buildings, see: Khalpakhchian, "Cult Buildings", 107.

recent parish church, Surb Astvatsatsin. There are also rare photographs, which were taken before the demolitions in the Soviet period. For these reasons it is difficult to reconstruct the exterior and, especially, the interior of the churches.

[14] The fact that the churches were present on the master plan demonstrates that their construction was required not only by the citizens, but also the state officials, and was most likely discussed with the elders of the Armenian community. The Archbishop of the Armenians in the Russian Empire, Joseph Argutinskiy (Hovsep Argutyan, 1743–1801)¹⁸ played an important part in the foundation of these and other eighteenth-century Armenian churches. Most of the information on the construction of the churches in Nakhichevan derives from his manuscript entitled *Davtar* (diary). Lengthy descriptions from this source are cited in Yervand Shahaziz’s study on the history of Nakhichevan and its citizens.¹⁹ The German-Russian scholar and academician Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811), who visited the town in 1793, stated that there were three churches as well as a monastery with a church.²⁰ General Ilia A. Bezborodko wrote in 1812: “There are several stone churches, they are quite huge.”²¹

[15] Both, the cathedral of Gregory the Illuminator (Grigor Lusavorich) and either four or all five stone parish churches were founded in 1781 or 1783. Their construction was completed by 1787, except for the cathedral that was consecrated only in 1807. Following the construction of the parish churches, in 1786–1792 the stone church of Surb Khach monastery was built. The table below shows the chronology and the building history details of the churches in Nakhichevan:

¹⁸ Argutyan-Yerkaynabazuk, Arm. Հովսեփ Բ Արղւութսի Երկայնաբազուկ, the Catholicos of all Armenians from 1800 until his death in 1801.

¹⁹ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 48-73.

²⁰ “Заметки академика Палласа о Ростове-на-Дону и его окрестностях” [Notes by Academician Pallas on Rostov-on-Don and its Vicinities], in: *Записки Ростовского-на-Дону Общества истории, древностей и природы* [Proceedings of the Rostov-on-Don Society of History, Antiquities and Nature] 2 (1914), 203-207: 204; Antranik Malkhasyan, *Страницы истории анийских крымских и донских армян* [Pages of the History of the Crimean and Don Armenians Originating from Ani], Rostov-on-Don 2010, 31.

²¹ S. Svatikov, “Ростов на Дону и Приазовский край в описаниях путешественников XVIII века и первой половины XIX века” [Rostov-on-Don and the Azov Region in the Descriptions of Travellers of the 18th Century and the First Half of the 19th Century], in: *Записки Ростовского-на-Дону общества истории, древностей и природы* [Proceedings of the Rostov-on-Don Society of History, Antiquities and Nature] 1 (1912), 82-94.

DEDICATION OF THE CHURCHES	CONSTRUCTION	DEMOLITION
Dormition of the Holy Virgin or Surb Astvatsatsin (The Holy Virgin)	First construction in 1780, in wood. According to "Davtar": The new church was founded in 1781 and completed before 1787. It is unknown, whether it was built of stone. 18 May 1819: authorization to build the new Dormition church in 1 st Uspenskaya St. In 1856, an annex with a bell chamber designed by Muratov was added.	Demolished in the 1930s
St. Nikolaos the Wonderworker or Surb Nikoghos	1781–1783, in wood. Soon after in stone. The shape of the domes was altered in the late nineteenth century.	Since 1935–1937 in ruins. After World War II, a residential building was constructed in its place.
Saint Martyr Theodore	1783–1786	The remains were blown up in 1941 to build barricades. The land lot is currently occupied by garages and waste containers.
St. George or Surb Gevorg	1783–1787 under the patronage of Archbishop J. Argutinskiy.	Demolished shortly before World War II
Church of the Ascension or Surb Hambartsum	1781–1783 Church services were held until 1936.	In 1936, the roof was destroyed in a storm. After that, the church was closed for reconstruction and eventually demolished.
Cathedral of Gregory the Illuminator or Surb Grigor Lusavorich	The first cathedral was built from wood. The stone cathedral was founded in 1783 on the axis of Sobornaya, now Sovetskaya St., and consecrated in 1807. Traditionally, its design is attributed to Ivan Starov, the author of the townplan.	Closed in the early 1930s. The bell chamber was taken apart, and the building was turned into a space for a technical hobby group. In 1942, during the Nazi occupation, religious services in the cathedral resumed and continued up to the late 1950s. In 1970, Krasniy Aksay factory, a new cultural center, was built on the very spot.
Church of the Holy Cross or Surb Khach Monastery (A part of Nakhichevan since 1883).	1783, in wood. 1786–1792, rebuilt in stone; architect Ivan Starov. Belfry constructed in 1862. Renovation in 1868. Renovation in 1972.	During the 1972 renovation, the bishop's house and the belfry were demolished and 13 khachkars from Crimea got lost.

[16] All these buildings were designed in the tradition of Neoclassicism. Oganés Khalpakhchian associates this fact with a prohibition of Armenian architecture. In support of his view, he adduces a document found in the USSR Central State Historical Archive, in which the General Department of Projects and Accounts refuses to adopt the design of the Nakhichevan Armenian church proposed by Catholicos Nerses V (1842–1857) in 1846: It was found "unsatisfactory because of the unattractiveness of the façade".²² The scholar concludes that, in this context, it was only natural that the Armenian religious buildings were designed by Russian

²² Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, footnote 119 with reference to archival documents.

architects or, sometimes, Armenian architects, who had been trained in the capital of the Russian Empire.²³

[17] Did this decision reflect the attitude of the Russian authorities towards the Armenian style and the Armenian architectural traditions, or was the design proposed by Catholicos Nerses actually bad? – Probably, the Armenian architecture in Crimea was not at its prime in the eighteenth century, and the people from the peninsula, who founded Nakhichevan, were unlikely to propose innovative architectural solutions.²⁴ The drawing proposed by the Armenian Catholicos was carried out by an architect named Muratov from the town of Taganrog.²⁵ This architectural project represents a standard church design as applied for the Armenian villages in the Don region, and the proposed structure is devoid of any outstanding characteristics. Not only does it lack the typical features of traditional Armenian architecture, but it also explicitly references medieval Russian architecture. It may therefore be concluded that the rejection of this design does not imply a general prohibition of traditional Armenian architecture in the Empire.

[18] It appears logical that in the first stage of church building in Nakhichevan designs by Russian architects would be used. – Armenian architects, who were educated in Russia, are known to have participated in the construction of churches in the town and nearby villages only starting from the mid-nineteenth century. – Although no names of late eighteenth-century architects can be found in the existing literature, it is believed that the Nakhichevan cathedral and monastery church were designed by a famous neoclassical architect, Ivan Yegorovich Starov (1744–1808), the presumed author of the town layout.²⁶ This well-known architect of the age of Catherine the Great was in fact active in Novorossiia between 1783 and 1790 and is considered to have defined with his projects the character of urban planning in the region, creating not only town master plans, but also palace complexes and cult buildings.²⁷ Victor G. Voronov attributes the authorship of Surb

²³ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 83.

²⁴ Significant examples of Armenian architecture in Crimea in the 18th century are unknown. The level of development of the Crimean Armenian architecture in the early 19th century can be established by looking at the example of the ‘new’ Mother of God church in Bakhchysarai, built between 1811 and the 1820s, see: Nikolay Dneprovsky, “К вопросу о количестве армянских религиозных центров в Бахчисарае и их локализации” [Towards a Quantification of the Armenian Religious Centers at Bakhchysarai, and in Regard of Their Locations], in: *Исследования по арменистике в Украине* [Armenian Studies in Ukraine] 2 (Simferopol 2010), 17-19, photo 13.

²⁵ This drawing has previously been discussed by Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 86, fig. 4.

²⁶ Authoritative scholar Khalpakhchian shared the authorship attribution to architect Starov, see: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 86, fig. 64. Following the publication of his book, many scholars called Starov the author of the plans of some churches and of the general plan of the city. However, documentary evidence does not exist.

²⁷ Viktor G. Voronov, *Иван Старов – главный архитектор эпохи Екатерины Великой* [Ivan Starov – Chief Architect of the Epoch of Catherine the Great], Saint Petersburg 2008, 259-290.

Khach monastery to Starov based on its similarity to other churches constructed by the architect at that time.²⁸ However, this hypothesis has not yet been tested by means of a comparative analysis of the two above-mentioned churches with Starov's known constructions.

[19] St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, situated in the town's central square and, according to J. Argutinskiy's *Davtar* manuscript, under construction for 24 years, from 1783 to 1807,²⁹ is known only from photographs and scarce information in written accounts. It was the dominating architectural structure of the town both because of its location in the master plan and because of its large dome and high belfry towering above the low-rise housing and smaller parish churches. Based on the photographs, the cathedral seems constructed on a rectangular base slightly stretched along the East-West axis. The positioning of the dome suggests that it rested on four free-standing pillars. Yervand Shahaziz (1856–1951) described the form of these pillars in the late nineteenth century in his account of the cathedral. As he puts it, these "fat columns" were decorated to imitate multi-colored marble.³⁰ On both sides of the low-rise altar, there were sacristies, that the citizens of Nakhichevan called "matur" (chapels) (Fig. 4).



4 Nakhichevan-on-Don, St. Gregory's Cathedral or Surb Grigor, 1783–1807, architect unknown. View from the North-West (reprod. from: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-Don*, 85; see also <https://pastvu.com/p/613637>, accessed 1 April 2019)

²⁸ Voronov, *Ivan Starov*, 122.

²⁹ The previous small wooden church was situated in the corner of the land lot. Later, after the consecration of the stone cathedral, a bell tower with a cross and a portrait of St. Illuminator were erected on the foundation of the wooden church.

³⁰ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 56.

The historian also says that the floors were covered with parquetry, and the walls were colored with oil paint and decorated with paintings in gilded and silver frames. An authentic national character was conveyed by *khachkars* that had been brought from the Crimea and built into the walls. From the outside, the walls were whitewashed and also decorated with icons and *khachkars*.³¹

[20] According to Khalpakhchyan, at the eastern side, there was a jutting apse. Across the width of the transversal arms, which also had entrances into the cathedral, there were protruding four-column porticos with triangle pediments. The western cross-arm was connected with a three-tier bell-tower, which was probably constructed in parallel with the cathedral. On its western side, there was the main entrance to the cathedral, marked by four columns supporting an architrave with a pediment. The order of the columns was either Roman-Doric or Tuscan, while the plain frieze was a Tuscan, not a Doric one as suggested in earlier analyses.³² A broad cornice with an intricate profile and large modillions unified the bell tower and the main structure of the church. The Tuscan order could also be seen on the big drum of the dome, the tall lantern crowning it, and, possibly, the two higher tiers and the lantern of the bell tower. The unification of the colonnades of six different heights with a common order added elegance and cohesiveness to the building.³³

[21] The most striking part of the cathedral is the drum, where the wide belt of entablature contrasts with the cubic base. In the intercolumniation, high and wide arched windows alternate with flat, graphically emphasized niches of the same shape. They resonate with the high arched niches on the corner zones of the cathedral; there were two rows of windows inside that niches: rectangular ones in the lower register, and round ones in the upper.

[22] The bell tower was higher than the dome of the church, in accordance with the Russian architectural tradition.³⁴ The first tier of the bell tower was square in plan, with a portico serving as the Western entrance to the cathedral, while the second and third tiers had a round base. The second tier was high and had multiple openings. The last tier was plain and had a clock. On top of the bell tower, there was a lantern with a cross. The artistic unity of the cathedral and the bell tower was maintained not only by similar columns, but also by matching half-circular archways and windows.

[23] The parish churches were smaller and more austere in their design. The church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin or Surb Astvatsatsin was the most revered one by the citizens. It was the town's first wooden church, constructed by archbishop Joseph between Nikolskaya and Uspenskaya streets and 23rd and 25th lanes. It is on this same spot that the cornerstones of the town and other Nakhichevan churches

³¹ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevians*, 56-57.

³² Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 84.

³³ The interior of the drum also seems to have been decorated with columns or pilasters; see: Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevians*, 56-57.

³⁴ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 84; Khalpakhchian, "Cult Buildings", 109.

were consecrated.³⁵ The cemetery in the backyard of the church became a burial place for prominent Nakhichevan citizens.

[24] The construction of the stone church started in 1781, i.e. two years before the foundation of the cathedral. Unfortunately, the dates when the building was finished and Surb Astvatsatsin was consecrated have not yet been established. In the 1930s, the church was demolished. Today, we know of two visual documents of it: It has been captured in a technical drawing by architect Muratov in the above-mentioned 1856 design proposal regarding the addition of a bell tower;³⁶ and there is a photograph probably taken between 1880 and the end of the century (Fig. 5).



5 Nakhichevan-on-Don, church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin or Surb Astvatsatsin (Holy Virgin), photograph, ca. 1880–1900 (reprod. from: E. I. Malakhovskii, *Храмы и культовые сооружения Ростова-на-Дону, утраченные и существующие* [Churches and Religious Buildings of Rostov-on-Don, Lost and Preserved], Rostov-on-Don 2012, 137; see also <https://pastvu.com/p/269353>, accessed April 1, 2019)

[25] Unlike the cathedral, the Astvatsatsin church was cross-shaped in plan with stretched longitudinal arms and twice as short transversal arms. At the far end of the eastern arm there was the altar zone complemented with a protruding semi-circular apse.³⁷ The diameter of the dome rising above the omphalos was smaller

³⁵ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 66.

³⁶ Muratov's proposal followed the destruction of the old bell tower in 1850, that probably had been erected simultaneously with the church. This is stated by Khalpakhchian with a reference to the USSR Central State Military and History Archive, f. 218, op. 4, 28-VII-1856; Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 88; Khalpakhchian, "Cult Buildings", 110.

³⁷ Shahaziz writes that the style and the interior of St. Asvatsatsin are similar to those of other churches. The only difference is that, apart from the main altar, it has two smaller

than the width of the arms because of the massive pylons integrated into the inner corners of the cross-shaped composition. The transversal arms, as well as the western one, contained exits. In Muratov's drawing, the transversal arm displays a significantly protruding four-column portico. It can be argued that this was a part of the architect's unrealized proposal for the reconstruction of the church, because the photograph of the church (Fig. 5) depicts the four columns literally leaning on the sidewall of the arm, or even projecting out from the wall by three-fourths of their volume. It seems likely that, just like it was in the cathedral's case, in the Astvatsatsin church these elements echoed the decoration of the first tier of the original bell tower.

[26] The equal width of all four arms suggests to compare the building to the cross-shaped churches of Armenia.³⁸ However, the pylons, the openings, the presence of protruding porticos with columns and the overall style of the building inscribe it within the paradigm of neoclassical architecture. The porticos are constructed in accordance with the conventions of the Tuscan order, with elegant proportions and details. Much like it was the case in the cathedral, the wide entablature goes around the entire perimeter of the building, including the apse. In the intercolumniation and the lateral parts of the longitudinal arms, there are two rows of openings: these are austere rectangular and square windows of the same width as the ones above them. Above the entrances, however, they are replaced with arched windows. The circular dome with a statuesque lantern crowns the tall drum. The latter has a plain cylindrical form with four large Venetian windows in the cardinal directions and arched niches with sculptures in between.

[27] At the same time, in 1781, the stone church of St. Nicholas was founded in the northwestern part of the town.³⁹ To honor the consecration of the church, which took place three years later, a commemorative plaque was installed, with the following inscription:

*This church of God was erected in the name of patriarch St. Nikoghayos, with the utmost spiritual assistance of and consecration by the high envoy of the first-throned Holy Etchmiadzin and the leader of all of the Armenians of the Russian state and the founder of the new town – archbishop Joseph Argutyan, the Sanahinean, under the rule of the Empress of all Rus – the great Catherine the Second, and under the patriarchate of the Catholicos of all of the Armenians – Ghukas of the Holy Etchmiadzin monastery in the year 1232 of the Armenian chronology (1783).*⁴⁰

[28] St. Nicholas church was built in the same style as the cathedral of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, as has previously been pointed out by Shahaziz.⁴¹ The

altars that are built not to the sides of the main one, as it usually is, but in front of low parvises dedicated to St. Harutyun and to Hovakim and Anna; Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan*, 63.

³⁸ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 88.

³⁹ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 59.

⁴⁰ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 55, 59-60.

description of the church that follows is based on the one and only surviving photograph of the building that researchers currently dispose of (Fig. 6).⁴²



6 Nakhichevan-on-Don, St. Nikolaos the Wonderworker or Surb Nikoghos, photograph, ca. 1900 (reprod. from: Malakhovski, *Храмы и культовые сооружения Ростова-на-Дону* [Churches and Religious Buildings of Rostov-on-Don, 146; see also <https://pastvu.com/p/427645>, accessed April 1, 2019)

This image illustrates the church as it looked in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The main body of the church, in neoclassical style, supports two upper structures that have been added later and constructed in a different style: the dome and the bell tower. The church is rectangular in plan, with a protruding apse in the eastern part. The main entrance in the west and the two lateral entrances situated in the axis of the dome were decorated with columned porticos. Between the western portico and the main body, right below the bell tower, there was an anteroom. The main body is quite narrow and stretched longitudinally. It allows us to assume that the pylons were adjacent to the longitudinal walls. That is why St. Nicholas church cannot be considered a smaller version of the cathedral; it was another architectural type, which possibly came closer to the traditional Armenian domed hall.⁴³ Stylistically, the church differs both from the Illuminator cathedral and the Astvatsatsin church. Its main distinctive features are stumpy

⁴¹ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 60.

⁴² Georgiy Bagdykov, “Печальная судьба храма Святого Николая” [The Sad Fate of Saint Nicholas Church], in: Georgiy Bagdykov, *Армянская община Ростова-на-Дону* [The Armenian Community of Nakhichevan-on-Don], URL: <http://nnao.ru/2013/11/22/> (accessed 4 June 2019).

⁴³ On the so-called domed hall type see Josef Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa: Ergebnisse einer vom Kunsthistorischen Institute der Universität Wien 1913 durchgeführten Forschungsreise*, 2 vols., Vienna 1918, vol. 1, 190-208; Armen Kazarian (Gazarian), “La ‘Sala con cúpula’ de la iglesia Armenia de Arutch (s. VII) y sus fuentes en la tradición arquitectónica de Constantinopla”, in: *Erytheia. Revista de estudios bizantinos y neogriegos* 22 (2001), 65-95; Armen Kazaryan, “The Architecture of Hořomos Monastery”, in: *Hořomos Monastery: Art and History*, ed. Edda Vardanyan, Paris 2015, 55-206: 78-96, 126.

proportions, massive columns of the porticos, decorative garlands, and a simplified framing of the windows.

[29] The drum of St. Nicholas church is octagonal, with big arched windows in each of its facets. The four-sided bell tower is of a larger height, and it is pierced with arch-shaped apertures and decorated with slats and small pediments. These features, the drum and the bell tower, as well as the peaked pyramidal tops result from a major reconstruction of the church in the late nineteenth century, which has also been mentioned by Shahaziz: “Just recently, during Sargis Khrjian’s ktetorship, the church has been completely renovated, and the shape of its dome became Armenian.”⁴⁴

[30] Thus, the earliest stage of Nakhichevan church architecture was represented by a wide range of cross-in-square plans: with four separate pillars (the cathedral), cross-shaped buildings (Surb Astvatsatsin), and, most probably, “domed halls” (Surb Nikoghayos).

[31] Other parish churches, Surb T’eodoros (or Fyodorovskaya) and Surb Gevorg (or Georgiyevskaya), can be described by reference to Shahaziz’s accounts and by drawings by Evgeniy Malakhovskiy based on two photographs of the buildings.⁴⁵ It would be hard to classify these domed churches into one construction type of any kind. However, it is possible to claim that stylistically they belong to the same group as the three churches described above.

[32] Finally, the monastery of the Holy Cross (Surb Khach) situated seven kilometers to the north of the town (in its original borders), on the road leading to the Armenian villages, also deserves some attention, because its stone church was founded in 1783 and built from 1786 to 1792.⁴⁶ This is the only church belonging to Nakhichevan’s first generation of cult buildings that has survived to this day (Fig.

⁴⁴ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 60. Khalpakhchian only acknowledges the substitution of the helm-shaped domes with the pyramidal ones; Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 85. However, the drum and the top tier of the bell tower stylistically differ from the main volume. This could indicate that more substantial changes have been made to the structure of the domes than the replacement of the roofing.

⁴⁵ Evgeniy Malakhovskiy, *Храмы и культовые сооружения Ростова-на-Дону, утраченные и существующие* [The Churches and Cult Constructions of Rostov-on-Don, Lost and Preserved], Rostov-on-Don 2012, 148-149.

⁴⁶ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 69; Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 96. Initially, the monastery was a part of the Armenian village Bol’shie Saly; in 1883 it became incorporated into the town (ibid., 95). Khalpakhchian believed the name to be connected with the Surb Khach Monastery in Crimea (Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 95). According to another version that does not contradict the first one, the monastery was named after a holy *khachkar* that has been placed in the column of the main choir gallery. The story of the *khachkar*’s origin was forgotten already in the nineteenth century, but it was assumed that the stone was brought from Armenia to Crimea, and then to the Don region; see: Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 71.

7).⁴⁷ However, in 1862, it was extensively rebuilt and expanded. Having again fallen into a state of disrepair during the first decades of the Soviet rule, the church was restored in 1968–1972 under the guidance of a well-known architect of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, Mark V. Grigoryan.⁴⁸

[33] According to Shahaziz, the appearance of the building prior to 1862, when it was radically rebuilt, is not known to scholars.⁴⁹ However, Khalpakhchian described the intervention of that period as renovation works and not as a reconstruction.⁵⁰ In the historical documents, the 1862 intervention was presented as a capital renovation, during which alterations were made “in the entablature along the entire perimeter of the building and especially in the pediments. These alterations affected Starov’s initial design in terms of style.”⁵¹ Other alterations included the addition of non-neoclassical capitals to the portico columns and of the quatrefoil molding above the windows of the drum. It seems that the restorers working on the church in 1862 were unfamiliar with its original appearance and decided to add architectural details that were typical of their own age (Fig. 7).⁵²

⁴⁷ The architectural complex included a bishop’s house. The southern part of the territory was occupied by fruit and vegetable gardens. Within the borders of the complex, there were tombs of well-known public figures such as the first rector of the Lazarevskiy Institute of Eastern Languages, A. Alamdaryan, of the poet, thinker and revolutionary M. Nalbandyan, and of the poet and educator [?] Raphael Patkanyan.

⁴⁸ *Проект реставрации объекта бывшей церкви монастыря «Сурб-Хач» – памятник архитектуры XVIII века.* [Restoration Project of the Former Church of the Monastery Surb Khach – a Monument of 18th-Century Architecture], Rosrestavrtsiya (Russian Institute for Restoration) and the North-Caucasian branch of Spetsproektrestavrtsiya (Institute for the Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments), Rostov-on-Don 1988, vol. II, book I, 7.

⁴⁹ Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 69.

⁵⁰ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 96.

⁵¹ During the restoration, the appearance of the church was distorted, because the authors intended to “eliminate the violation of Starov’s architectural canons”, and the bell tower was never restored as it was considered as “an unnecessary annex to the church”, see: *Restoration Project of the Former Church of the Monastery Surb Khach*, vol. II, book 1, appendix, note.

⁵² Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 97.



7 Nakhichevan-on-Don, Surb Khach Monastery, 1786–1792, architect unknown. General view from the South-East (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2008)

[34] With its whitened brick walls over a stone foundation, the Surb Khach church has all the qualities ascribed to churches of the Neoclassical era. The exterior view bespeaks the cross shape of its plan: the northern and southern arms are accentuated by four-column porticos, while its nave culminates in a semi-circular apse. A series of big arched windows in the main body of the church is placed in line with the three entrances. The wide central crossing is covered by an unusually high dome, resting on a relatively squatty main volume. Inside, the protruding pylons supporting the dome remind us of the Armenian domed halls, which have previously been evoked by Khalpakhchian.⁵³ Eight pairs of windows alternating with eight pilasters decorate the cylindrical drum. The almost hemispherical dome culminates in an elegant lantern.

[35] It is unclear whether the two-tier bell tower with a four-faceted tent-shaped roof was added to the western façade in the very beginning or in 1862. It was destroyed by a lightning stroke in 1932, but is documented by some photographs. Traditionally, it is considered to be the only bell tower in Nakhichevan-on-Don constructed according to the conventions of Armenian religious architecture.⁵⁴ However, being lower than the church would have been considered to be wrong according to the seventeenth-century standards embodied in the Etchmiadzin cathedral, the spiritual and administrative center of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and in the high bell towers of the monasteries in the Vaspurakan province of historic Armenia. In other words, the relations between the heights of a bell tower and the main body of a church cannot be considered to be an indicator of one or another architectural tradition.

⁵³ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 98.

[36] In the analysis of the early church architecture in Nakhichevan, it is equally important to evaluate the buildings in the context of the history of Russian Neoclassicism. The accounts, or, to be exact, the assumptions about the authorship of the town layout, of the cathedral and of the Surb Khach church belonging to architect Ivan Yegorovich Starov, one of the most prominent architects of Russian Neoclassicism, are not substantiated by any specific evidence. Their credibility rests on the Novorossiyan architect's professional reputation. Nevertheless, written descriptions and some historical photographs of the Nakhichevan churches allow us to compare them to the buildings actually realized by Starov or to the architect's technical drawings.

[37] Starov's signature principles of composition were formulated during the creation of the Holy Trinity cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevskiy monastery in Saint Petersburg, the capital. The project for the cathedral was approved in 1776, and the foundations were laid in 1778.⁵⁵ The Holy Trinity cathedral cannot be compared to the Nakhichevan one, neither regarding the complexity of its composition, nor the size of the structure. Nevertheless, some comparable forms and construction principles can be observed on the façades.

[38] Although other researchers attribute the authorship of the Nakhichevan cathedral to Starov, it was not possible to find any documentary evidence of this. To our opinion, the Nor-Nakhichevan achievements in the areas of urban planning and architecture are rather local reflections of the achievements of Starov. Following Dmitri O. Shvidkovskiy, we conclude that this version of Neoclassicism with a local flair endorsed the importance of the original model, "the establishment of which was believed to be the privilege of the state".⁵⁶ Shvidkovskiy continues: "Royal residences, especially outside of the cities, where there were more opportunities to erect new buildings, turned into a kind of 'laboratories', where new models were created to form the official architectural tastes."⁵⁷ Given that the town of Nor-Nakhichevan was built as a whole by the Empress's order and its churches fulfilled a representational function, it is tempting to compare it to Sophia, an ideal neoclassical town founded in 1780 by Catherine II and planned by the court architect Charles Cameron around the architectural ensembles of Tsarskoye Selo and Pavlovsk.⁵⁸ Having existed for just 26 years and then disassembled, this town is "now almost forgotten".⁵⁹

[39] The radial structure of the main streets of Sophia was quite unique, and could not have been taken as a literal model for the development of other settlements. However, images of the town could be used as an idealized reference for urban

⁵⁵ Voronov, *Ivan Starov*, 185.

⁵⁶ Dmitry Shvidkovski, *Чарльз Камерон и архитектура императорских резиденций* [Charles Cameron and the Architecture of Imperial Residences], Moscow 2008, 124. On the special character of Neoclassicism in Russia see: *ibid.*, 122-127 and *passim*.

⁵⁷ Shvidkovski, *Charles Cameron*, 125.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-245.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

planning and the design of main representational buildings that dominate the cityscape in the age of Neoclassicism. Probably, the most important one of such models was the cathedral of Sophia (1782–1788), which was built by Cameron with the participation of Starov.⁶⁰ Its symmetrical, centralized main body with a large central dome, four-column porticos and flat arched niches on the lateral walls was depicted in a drawing by Giacomo Quarenghi.⁶¹ This drawing, that still exists today, reveals significant similarities between the Sophia cathedral and the Nor-Nakhichevan cathedral. We do not know any other late eighteenth-century structures that would come closer to it. If we eliminate such typical Byzantine-Russian features as the five domes and the multitude of arched windows on the drum that are visible in the image of Cameron’s church, and replace them with a neoclassical dome supported by a drum with regularly alternating pillars and windows, the resulting building would come very close to the volumetric composition of the Surb Lusavorich cathedral. According to Andrey Chekmaryev, Cameron’s cathedral has made a contribution to the Russian provincial architecture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: It has played a significant and to this day understudied role as a model in the creation of large churches commissioned by members of the nobility, including the immediate circle of the empress.⁶² Unlike this key example and its several interpretations mentioned by the author, the cathedral of Gregory the Illuminator did not have five domes. The proportions of its body, though, come close to the Sophia cathedral.

[40] Among the details of these two buildings, one can notice the common character of the entablature encircling the building and the Tuscan order portico columns also featured in the more stern version of the Sophia cathedral. The porticos of both cathedrals also recall the more sophisticated realization of the Apollo Colonnade in Saint Petersburg by Charles Cameron (1782), with a Ionic echinus and a rim on the base of the cap.⁶³ However, variants of these motifs that are quite similar can also be found in other known neoclassical buildings. Among them are N. P. Sheremetev’s house for the poor in Moscow (arch. E. S. Nazarov,

⁶⁰ Dmitry Shvidkovsky, *The Empress and the Architect. British Architecture and Gardens at the Court of Catherine the Great*, London and New Haven 1996, 143.

⁶¹ Reproduced in: Shvidkovski, *Charles Cameron*, p. 239. See the portico of the Sophia cathedral in a 1920s photograph as well as other contemporary photographs in: *ibid.*, 242, fig. LIII.

⁶² Andrey Chekmarev, “Влияние царскосельской Софии на архитектуру усадебных церквей” [The Influence of Sophia of Tsarskoye Selo on the Architecture of Manor Churches], in: *МАРХИ. Наука, образование и экспериментальное проектирование. Тезисы докладов международной конференции [...], 8-12 апреля 2013 г.* [MARKHI. Science, Education and Experimental Designing. Abstracts of the International Conference [...], 8-12 April 2013], Moscow 2013, 133-135. This abstract has been republished with the addition of visual material of several churches of the epoch: Andrey Chekmarev, “Эхо «греческого проекта» Екатерины II. Часть I” [The Echo of the ‘Greek Project’ of Catherine the Great], in: URL: <http://arch-heritage.livejournal.com/1540839.html> (accessed 4 June 2019). The Nakhichevan cathedral is not mentioned in this overview, maybe because of its single-dome plan.

⁶³ Shvidkovski, *Charles Cameron*, figs. LXII-LXIII.

1796; porticos by arch. D. Quarenghi, 1801) and the church of St. John the Baptist in Yaropolets (1751–1755; the decoration of the porticos and the apse date from the reconstruction in 1808). The latter building, just like the Nakhichevan one, has round windows above the high rectangular ones. However, this feature is common to many estate churches, including the two by Starov (in Nokol'skoe-Gagarino estate and Bobrinski estate).⁶⁴ It is also present in its rudimentary form not only in St. Sophia cathedral in Tsarskoye Selo, but also in the earlier Armenian St. Catherine church in Saint Petersburg (arch. M. Yu. Felten, 1771–1780), where they are smaller in size and have an oval shape in accordance with the previous Baroque style. The latter one could serve as an iconographic model for the Armenian churches in Russia; if not for its overall composition, then for its distinctive traits.

[41] The dome of the Armenian cathedral in Nakhichevan with an alternation of high arched windows and pairs of columns slightly reminds the dome of the Pashkov House in Moscow (arch. V. I. Bazhenov, 1784–1786), the one at Arkhangel'skoye estate near Moscow (1780–1810s) and the one of the already mentioned Armenian church in the capital designed by Felten. However, the drum of the Nakhichevan cathedral is less high, and the pairs of columns are not so close to each other. This more even distribution of the columns with, apparently, Tuscan order capitals along the perimeter of the drum, and the wide entablature make this architectural form more universal and the main volume of the church more harmoniously looking.

Armenian church architecture of Nakhichevan in the era of Russian Historicism

[42] In the region of Nakhichevan-on-Don, the development of religious architecture in the paradigm of Neoclassicism continued over the next half-century. The persistence of the neoclassical principles is embodied by three big churches in the vicinity of the town, in the Armenian villages of Chaltyr, Nesvitay, and Bolshie Saly. Also the subtle changes introduced to the Surb Khach church in 1862 and Muratov's reconstruction of the Astvatsatsin church have to be mentioned in this context. In Russian architecture, however, beginning in the 1830s, the Russian-Byzantine style became the main trend. The Don Armenians, though, had only one period of interest in this new architectural style: precisely, when a church and a bell tower were built in the Sultan Saly village (Fig. 8).⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Voronov, *Ivan Starov*, 150, 156.

⁶⁵ Khalpakhchian, "Cult Buildings", 118.



8 Village of Sultan Saly, church of Surb Gevorg, mid-19th century, architect unknown. General view from the North-East (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2017)

Khalpakhchian believes that this monument was designed by architect Muratov and dates it to the mid-nineteenth century,⁶⁶ possibly because a fairly similar design study of a church building for Nakhichevan and the nearby villages was sketched by the same architect in 1846.⁶⁷

[43] As already said, the church in Sultan Saly remained the only “Russian-style” building in the region, with the subsequent churches constructed in the above-mentioned villages characterized by a neoclassical style. The Bolshiye Saly church dates back to 1860–1867; the two others, in Chaltyr (Fig. 9, 10) and Nesvitay, according to Khalpakhchian, were built at the same time.

⁶⁶ Khalpakhchian, “Cult Buildings”, 117-118, fig. 12. Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 99, fig. 77.

⁶⁷ Khalpakhchian, “Cult Buildings”, 110, fig. 3. Also, in 1844, architect Afanasiy Farafontyev (1799–1856) designed a church for the Kuban Armenians (the Armenians settling in the Krasnodar krai, or region, of Russia) in a style uniting the features of Classicism with the forms of medieval Russian architecture; see: Oganés Khalpakhchian, “Застройка Армавира XIX в.” [Redevelopment of Armavir in the 19th Century], in: *Проблемы истории архитектуры народов СССР. Сборник научных трудов* [Problems of the History of Architecture of the Peoples of the USSR. Collection of Scholarly Works], vol. 3, ed. O. Kh. Khalpakhchian, Moscow 1976, 10-13, fig. 3.



9 Chaltyr, church of Surb Hambartsum, 1860–1867, architect unknown. General view from the North (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2017)



10 Chaltyr, church of Surb Hambartsum, 1860–1867, architect unknown. Interior (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2017)

Such a persisting influence of the preceding widespread European style is partially explained by the delayed coming of Neoclassicism to the remote regions. However, the episodic introduction of the Neo-Russian style in the church in Sultan Saly speaks in favour of a 'return' of Neoclassicism that was determined by the specifics of Armenian culture in the Don region and a particular demand from the clients. In the first place, they turned to neoclassical designs because the earlier churches in Nakhichevan, notably the cathedral, were created in the period, when Neoclassicism flourished in Russia and was the dominant architectural style for decades. In other words, we can suggest that the creative method of taking a revered model as a reference was still active in the Nakhichevan community. Then the character of Russian art and culture during Nicholas I's rule (r. 1825–1855) should also be taken

into account. “Despite the formation of the eclectic trend in the 1830s–1850s, the neoclassical traditions continued to develop in Russian architecture, changing with the demands of time”, writes M. V. Nashchokina,⁶⁸ also pointing out an interesting feature of this period: “When the ideas of nationality and populism were crystallizing in architectural theory during the rule of Nicholas I, a new interpretation of architectural styles based on the antique heritage also appeared – classical antiquity started to be perceived as a source for national and popular ideas.”⁶⁹ If so, would it be possible to assume that the Nakhichevan population aspired to tie their own tradition down to antique themes and forms? This is certainly an important question to ask, yet it does not lie within the scope of our article.

The church of Surb Karapet and the beginnings of national revival in Armenian architecture

[44] From the historical perspective, the above-mentioned ‘backwardness’ of the stylistic development of church architecture in Nakhichevan should be considered as a short-term tendency, possibly necessary for the evaluation of the opportunities to create an own national style, deliberately searching for unique features in an attempt to recreate and interpret images of medieval Armenian architecture. The search for such a style within the framework of Historicisms was undertaken by the Armenian church architects starting from the 1870s. At that time, several parish churches underwent considerable renovation or reconstruction, and one new church was built at the cemetery, Surb Karapet (church of Saint John the Baptist).

[45] During the reconstruction works, stylistic changes were introduced only to Surb Nikoghos: the drum and vault of the dome, and the bell tower were carried out in the “Armenian style”. Perhaps these elements, now lost, were created even before Surb Karapet, because they contained details that harked back to the Russian style: namely the exotic shapes of the window archivolt (Fig. 6).

[46] Today, Surb Karapet is the only surviving church in town (Fig. 11). It is also the only church, whose history of construction is known in details. According to the inscription on the (lost) gravestone of the “noble lady Akuline Poghosovna Aladjalova, née Khatranyan”, who passed away in 1871, the construction of the church was carried out according to her will by her nephew Ioann Khatranyan in 1875–1881.⁷⁰ K. A. Porkshian claims, without reference to any primary document, that the architect of the church was Bagdasar Gazymbekov, and that he was awarded a silver medal and a trip abroad for this work.⁷¹ Khalpakhchian agrees with

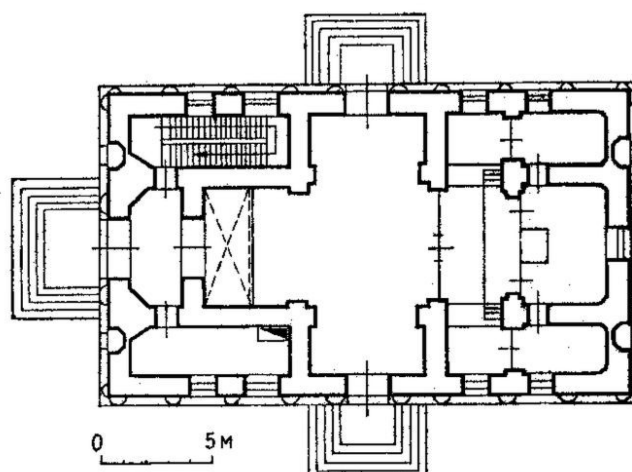
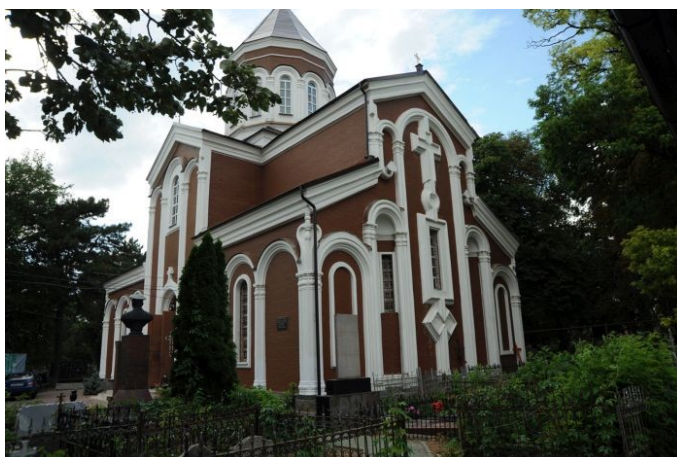
⁶⁸ Maria Nashchokina, *Античное наследие в русской архитектуре николаевского времени: Его изучение и творческая интерпретация* [Classical Antique Heritage in Russian Architecture in the Time of Nicholas I], Moscow 2011, 608.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 610-611.

⁷⁰ The inscription is recorded in: Shahaziz, *New Nakhichevan and New-Nakhichevanians*, 67.

⁷¹ Christophor Porksheian, *Армянские древности и исторические памятники в Ростове-на-Дону* [Armenian Antiquities and Historical Monuments at Rostov-on-Don], unpublished and undated manuscript, in: Ростовский областной музей краеведения [Regional Museum of Local Lore], without shelf mark, p. 3. Khalpakhchian refers to a similar idea that

this opinion, and adds: "Taking into account the 1875 exchange of letters on the inspection of the ground for the construction of the Karapet church undertaken by provincial architect Brodnitskiy,⁷² we can assume that its construction, realized under the supervision of V. Sazonov, started eight years after the design had been created."⁷³ Hence Khalpakhchian concludes that the year when the design for the project was created, was 1867.⁷⁴



11 Nakhichevan-on-Don, Surb Karapet church, 1870s, architect: Bagdasar Gazyrbekov. A) general view from the South-East (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2017); b) ground plan (reprod. from: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 89)

[47] If this information is accurate, then the project was commissioned by Aladjalova, whose aristocratic descent explains why she had called for an architect

Porksheian (1886-1970) expressed in his other manuscript in the same archive (Christophor Porksheian, *О Нахичевани-на-Дону (К 180-летию основания города)* [On Nakhichevan-on-Don (on the Occasion of the 180th Anniversary of the City)], see: Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 90.

⁷² State Archive of Rostov Oblast, F. 91, OP. 1, D. 124.

⁷³ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 90.

⁷⁴ Khalpakhchian, *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*, 90.

from the metropolitan Academy of Arts. It is interesting that the architect was an Armenian. Probably, the client wished the church to have a national character. The composition is based on a type of church that was wide-spread in Armenia in the Middle Ages: a rectangular perimeter into which a cross is inscribed, with a dome above the crossing. The simple rectangular layout of the church, the niches in the main façade, the blind arcades, as well as the high, polygonal drum, also decorated with blind arcades and crowned by a conic vault, are all elements of Armenian architecture.

[48] An earlier study of the church of Surb Karapet⁷⁵ yielded that other than the Armenian prototype, the exterior of this church recalls at least two specific medieval churches: the cathedral in Ani (last quarter of the tenth century), and a large eleventh-century Georgian church, the cathedral of Samtavisi.⁷⁶ It has been demonstrated that architect Gazymbekov used survey drawings of these medieval churches and then combined them⁷⁷ – a method widely applied in Russia by the architects of the age of Historicisms. The template were the tables of the *Monuments d'architecture byzantine en Géorgie et en Arménie*, published by Prof. David Ivanovich Grimm (1823–1898), a member of the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg, in 1846 and 1866.⁷⁸ Possibly Gazymbekov even had the original drawings at his disposal, if we consider that Gazymbekov was employed at the Academy. The fact, that the generalizations and errors present in the drawings are also present in the Surb Karapet church, indicates that Gazymbekov was inspired by the drawings respectively prints, and not by the monuments themselves.⁷⁹

[49] The interior of the Surb Karapet church adopted the general appearance of nineteenth-century churches built in a more or less neoclassical style. However, it also displays some ornaments, and all of them were taken from the drawings of Ani cathedral in the above-mentioned album⁸⁰ and in a way differ from the authentic ornamentation of this famous church in the medieval Armenian capital (Fig. 12).

⁷⁵ Kazaryan, “Album of the Measurements by D. I. Grimm”, 165-191.

⁷⁶ The best study of the cathedral of Samtavisi is: Nikolay Severov, “К вопросу о реконструкции барабана Самтависского храма” [Towards the Reconstruction of the Tholobate of Samtavisi Church], in: *Ars Georgica. Разыскания Института истории грузинского искусства* [Research of the Institute of the History of Georgian Art], series A – Old Art, issue 6, Tbilisi 1963, 197-206.

⁷⁷ Kazaryan, “Album of the Measurements by D. I. Grimm”, 179-187.

⁷⁸ David I. Grimm, *Monuments d'architecture byzantine en Géorgie et en Arménie*, Saint Petersburg 1864; David I. Grimm, *Памятники христианской архитектуры в Грузии и Армении* [Monuments of Christian Architecture in Georgia and Armenia], Saint Petersburg 1866.

⁷⁹ Kazaryan, “Album of the Measurements by D. I. Grimm”, 179.

⁸⁰ Grimm, *Памятники христианской архитектуры в Грузии и Армении* [Monuments of Christian Architecture in Georgia and Armenia], pl. IV.



12 Nakhichevan-on-Don, Surb Karapet church, 1870s, architect: Bagdasar Gazyrbekov, interior (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2016)

[50] The exterior view of the dome over a high arcaded tholobate recalls the dome of another church in Ani, the thirteenth-century church of Surb Grigor (or church of Tigran Honents), and again, in those differing forms that were represented by Grimm (Fig. 13).⁸¹



13 Nakhichevan-on-Don, Surb Karapet church, 1870s, architect: Bagdasar Gazyrbekov, dome (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2017)

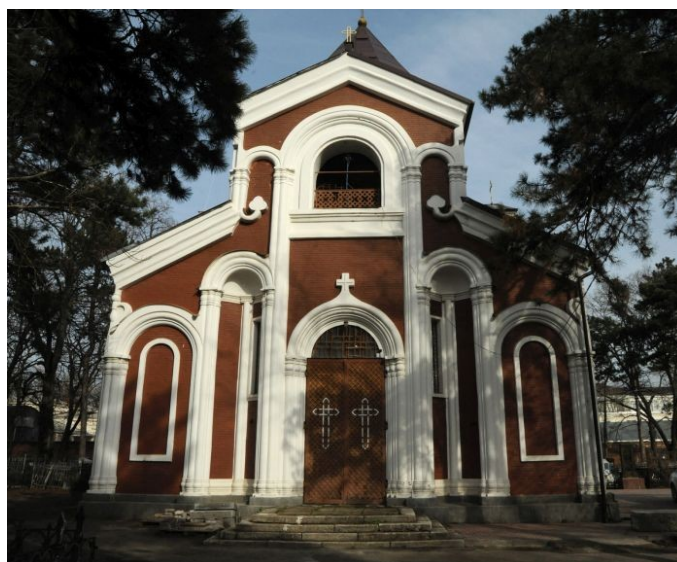
On the other hand, the blind arcade and the whole decoration of the façades of Gazyrbekov's church recalled the drawings of the cathedral of Samtavisi (Fig. 14, 15).⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid., pl. VII.

⁸² Ibid., pl. II.



14 Drawings of Samtavisi cathedral (Georgia), 1030. Eastern and southern façades (reprod. from: Grimm, *Памятники христианской архитектуры в Грузии и Армении* [Monuments of Christian Architecture in Georgia and Armenia], pl. II)



15 Nakhichevan-on-Don, Surb Karapet church, 1870s, architect: Bagdasar Gazymbekov (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2016)

[51] David I. Grimm's book was the first one that included drawings of the Georgian and the Armenian churches. Samtavisi is the most interesting monument in this small catalogue. Gazymbekov, the Russian-Armenian architect commissioned to design the Armenian church of Surb Karapet in Nakhichevan, used the drawings of the Georgian church as a reference, and that should not come as a surprise, because at the time, there was not yet an understanding of the differences between the two leading schools of architecture of the South Caucasus, and the Armenian and the Georgian styles were not seen as different from the Byzantine one – the

study of Eastern Christian architecture had just begun.⁸³ Thus, there were no obstacles to borrowing ideas and forms.

[52] The middle and the second half of the nineteenth century were a time of search for the origins of Russian art, and first of all, its Byzantine origins. It is noteworthy that the construction of new buildings “based on Byzantine models was associated with D. I. Grimm’s work”, as E. I. Kirichenko puts it. Grimm’s research for his surveys of Byzantine monuments certainly influenced his design in a purely Byzantine style of the huge and prominent St. Vladimir cathedral in Chersonesus (1859–1879).⁸⁴ The 1860s–70s, then, saw a shift in preferences from the Byzantine to the Russian style, which used late medieval palaces and churches as a model, particularly, the seventeenth-century ones.⁸⁵

[53] Taking into account the context of the development of architectural styles in the second half of the nineteenth century, the construction of Surb Karapet can be considered as an adequate, natural and artistically quite successful response of a Russian-Armenian architect to the builders of Russian churches in the Byzantine and “Russian” styles. It was the first attempt to build a church in the “Armenian” or “Oriental” style in the Russian Empire outside the Caucasus region.

[54] The importance of this relatively small Nakhichevan church in the development of Russian and Eastern European architecture in the late nineteenth as well as early twentieth century has not been fully discovered yet. Only once it served as a model for the decoration of a façade – for a church in the village of Krym, the details of which have been executed in the spirit of Art Nouveau. It should be acknowledged, however, that Gazyrbekov’s project was possibly the first attempt to revive the forms of medieval Caucasian architecture in modern times. This revival was genealogically connected with the ideas and design principles applied in the creation of the Neo-Byzantine style, which, among other architects, was introduced to Russia by D. I. Grimm. Later, this “Caucasian” style, with a random mix of details from Armenian and Georgian architecture and an active use of the above-mentioned album by Grimm, developed in two, possibly interconnected, directions: 1) the architecture of Armenian churches in Moscow, Lvov (Fig. 16),⁸⁶ Baku and Yalta; 2)

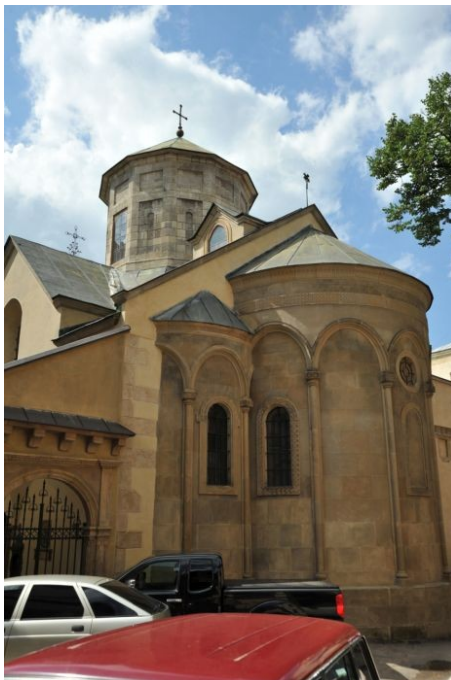
⁸³ As late as in the early 20th century, scholars began to distinguish an independent Armenian style, in which they also included medieval Georgian building; see: Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*; Charles Diehl, *Manuel d’art byzantin*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Paris 1925, 335 [first edition Paris 1910].

⁸⁴ Evgenia Kirichenko, *Русский стиль* [Russian Style], Moscow 1997, 141.

⁸⁵ Kirichenko, *Russian Style*, 183–199.

⁸⁶ In her study of Lvov cathedral, Joanna Wolanska compared the new blind arcades of the apses (1902) to the shapes of the decorative motifs of the cathedral of Ani, which could have been known to Lvov’s architect thanks to the measurements of Toros Toramanian in Ani (Wolanska, *Katedra ormiańska we Lwowie*, 45–48). Nevertheless, Toramanian started his work in Ani only in 1903; thus only the album by Grimm can be considered as a source for the reconstruction of the Lvov apses; see: Kazaryan, “The Architecture of the Armenian Cathedral in Lvov”, 122.

the architecture of Orthodox churches in Russia.⁸⁷ To date, this idea is a generalization based on a number of local studies. More specific conclusions and a better understanding of the role of the Surb Karapet church in this process require further research.



16 Lvov, Armenian cathedral, 1356–1363. The triple apse was redecorated in 1902 following a design by Prof. Jan Bołoz-Antoniewicz (photograph: A. Kazaryan, 2012)

[55] Considering the desire of the patron of the Surb Karapet church and its architect to achieve a national “Armenian” appearance, it cannot be ignored that the interior of the church was different in terms of style. Along with the oriental ornamental motifs, it features compositional elements characteristic of the Russian neoclassical tradition. For instance, above the pendentives there is a broad plain frieze, probably designated to be painted; also the coloristic treatment of the façades, based on the contrast between the blind arcades in white stone and the red brick walls, is typical of historicist architecture in Russia, from 'Gothic' to 'Russian' re-creations.⁸⁸ Such features organically inscribe Surb Karapet into the context of other monumental buildings of Nor-Nakhichevan, Rostov-on-Don and the nearby towns and villages. But this aspect of the design only supplemented the main idea of a national-style church.

⁸⁷ Elements of Armenian architecture documented in Grimm’s album influenced even church architecture in the Russian and the Byzantine styles, see: Evgenia Kirichenko, *Архитектор Василий Косяков* [Architect Vasilii Kosiakov], Moscow 2016, 65-70.

⁸⁸ See the colour photograph taken before the last two repaintings of the façades, in: Georgiy Esaulov and Valentina Chernitsyna, *Архитектурная летопись Ростова-на-Дону* [Architectural Chronicle of Rostov-on-Don], Rostov-on-Don 1999, fig. 190.

Conclusion and perspectives for future research

[56] This article tried to highlight the development of church architecture during three distinct periods in the history of the Armenian settlements in the Don region. The first one is related to the dramatic changes in lifestyle that the Armenian community experienced upon its relocation to the Don region. Clearly, the monumental architecture of that period was related to imperial policies in a poly-ethnic empire: The entire architecture of the new city of Nakhichevan, from its master plan to the churches as well as to public and dwelling structures was influenced by the neoclassical style, which in turn had a very distinct character in the Russian Empire. The architecture of the cathedral and of almost all parish churches compared to the best examples of church architecture in the Russian capital, including the Armenian churches. During the second period, when Historicism flourished in Russian architecture, the builders of the Armenian churches in Nakhichevan experimented with a new Russian style, but remained committed to neoclassical forms. Only from the 1870s onwards, Armenian church architecture joined the mainstream Russian architecture, but without literally reproducing its forms. At that moment, Armenian architects also made the first attempts to revive their own national style, and the first structure to embody these pursuits was the church of Surb Karapet in Nakhichevan.

[57] The community of Nakhichevan-on-Don was one of the most important and most progressive ones in the widespread Armenian diaspora, and it seems that its achievements influenced other ethnic groups, especially in the Crimea region, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. This of course, needs to be addressed in a separate study.

[58] It seems notable that some of the key figures of the new national art and architecture in Armenia itself in the 1920 and 1930s were originally from Nakhichevan-on-Don and other South Russian towns, and received education and pushed fortune in Moscow and Saint Petersburg: among them were an architect, Alexander Tamanian (1878–1936), an artist, Martiros Sarian (1880–1972), and a politician, Alexander Miasnikian (1886–1925). Tamanian, who played a very important part in the creation of a new style in architecture, was one of the most well-known representatives of the neoclassical school before the collapse of the Russian Empire. Like Gazyrbekov half a century before in Nakhichevan, he started the search for a national style in Yerevan based on classical principles, but having huge work experience, applying another methodology and working in the epoch of Art Deco. These two instances of efforts to create a national style, the first in Nakhichevan and the other in Yerevan, were different in nature and character. Yet we may regard them as the stages of the beginning of a “neo-Armenian style” and its rise during the Soviet period.

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