

= Onion dome =

An onion dome (Russian : луковичная глава ; compare Russian : лук , " onion ") is a dome whose shape resembles an onion . Such domes are often larger in diameter than the drum upon which they sit , and their height usually exceeds their width . These bulbous structures taper smoothly to a point .

It is the predominant form for church domes in Russia (mostly on Russian Orthodox churches) and in Bavaria , Germany (German : Zwiebelturm (literally " onion tower ") , plural : Zwiebeltürme , mostly on Catholic churches) , but can also be found regularly across Austria , northeastern Italy , Eastern Europe , Mughal India , the Middle East and Central Asia .

Other types of Eastern Orthodox cupolas include helmet domes (for example , those of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod and of the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir) , Ukrainian pear domes (Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev) , and Baroque bud domes (St. Andrew 's Church in Kiev) .

= = History = =

Art historians disagree on when and why onion domes became a typical feature of Russian architecture . Byzantine churches and architecture of Kievan Rus were characterized by broader , flatter domes without a special framework erected above the drum . In contrast to this ancient form , each drum of a Russian church is surmounted by a special structure of metal or timber , which is lined with sheet iron or tiles .

By the end of the nineteenth century , most Russian churches from before the Petrine period had bulbous domes . The largest onion domes were erected in the seventeenth century in the area around Yaroslavl , incidentally famous for its large onions . Quite a few had more complicated bud @-@ shaped domes , whose form derived from Baroque models of the late seventeenth century . Pear @-@ shaped domes are usually associated with Ukrainian Baroque , while cone @-@ shaped domes are typical for Orthodox churches of Transcaucasia .

= = Traditional view = =

Russian icons painted before the Mongol invasion of Rus do not feature churches with onion domes . Two highly venerated pre @-@ Mongol churches that have been rebuilt ? the Assumption Cathedral and the Cathedral of St. Demetrius in Vladimir ? display golden helmet @-@ like domes below newer onion cupolas .

It has been posited that onion domes first appeared during the reign of Ivan the Terrible . The domes of Saint Basil 's Cathedral have not been altered since the reign of Ivan 's son Fyodor I , indicating the presence of onion domes in the sixteenth @-@ century Russia .

Some scholars postulate that onion domes were borrowed by Russians from Muslim countries - probably from the Khanate of Kazan , whose conquest Ivan the Terrible commemorated by erecting St. Basil 's Cathedral . Eight of the nine domes featured on St. Basil 's Cathedral represent each attack on Kazan . The ninth dome was constructed 36 years after the siege of Kazan as a tomb for Basil . The ornate finishes of these domes are bright in color and bold in shape as they 're adorned with pyramids and stripes , and many other patterns seen on other cathedrals than Basil 's . Some believe that onion domes first appeared in Russian wooden architecture above tent @-@ like churches . According to this theory , onion domes were strictly utilitarian , as they prevented snow from piling on the roof .

Based on the notion that onion domes did not exist in Russia before the mid @-@ sixteenth century , restoration work on churches built before the seventeenth century have routinely involved replacement of onion domes with " more authentic " helmet @-@ shaped domes . One example of such restoration is the Dormition Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin .

= = Modern view = =

In 1946 , the historian Boris Rybakov , while analysing miniatures of ancient Russian chronicles , pointed out that most of them , from the thirteenth century onward , display churches with onion domes rather than helmet domes . Nikolay Voronin , the foremost authority on pre @-@ Mongol Russian architecture , seconded his opinion that onion domes existed in Russia as early as the thirteenth century , although they presumably could not be widespread . These findings demonstrated that Russian onion domes could not be imported from the Orient , where onion domes did not replace spherical domes until the fifteenth century .

Sergey Zagraevsky , a modern art historian , surveyed hundreds of Russian icons and miniatures , from the eleventh century onward . He concluded that most icons painted after the Mongol invasion of Rus display only onion domes . First onion domes displayed on some pictures of twelfth century (two miniatures from Dobrylov Evangelie) . He found only one icon from the late fifteenth century displaying a dome resembling the helmet instead of an onion . His findings led him to dismiss fragments of helmet domes discovered by restorators beneath modern onion domes as post @-@ Petrine stylisations intended to reproduce the familiar forms of Byzantine cupolas . Zagraevsky also indicated that the oldest depictions of the two Vladimir cathedrals represent them as having onion domes , prior to their replacement by classicizing helmet domes. hi explains the ubiquitous appearance of onion domes in the late thirteenth century by the general emphasis on verticality characteristic of Russian architecture from the late twelfth to early fifteenth centuries . At that period , porches , pilasters , vaults and drums were arranged to create a vertical thrust , to make the church seem taller than it was . It seems logical that elongated , or onion , domes were part of the same proto @-@ Gothic trend aimed at achieving pyramidal , vertical emphasis .

= = Symbolism = =

Prior to the eighteenth century , the Russian Orthodox Church did not assign any particular symbolism to the exterior shape of a church . Nevertheless , onion domes are popularly believed to symbolise burning candles . In 1917 , noted religious philosopher Prince Yevgeny Trubetskoy argued that the onion shape of Russian church domes may not be explained rationally . According to Trubetskoy , drums crowned by tapering domes were deliberately scored to resemble candles , thus manifesting a certain aesthetic and religious attitude . Another explanation has it that the onion dome was originally regarded as a form reminiscent of the edicula (cubiculum) in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem .

Onion domes often appear in groups of three , representing the Holy Trinity , or five , representing Jesus Christ and the Four Evangelists . Domes standing alone represent Jesus . Vasily Tatischev , the first to record such interpretation , disapproved of it emphatically . He believed that the five @-@ domed design of churches was propagated by Patriarch Nikon , who liked to compare the central and highest dome with himself and four lateral domes with four other patriarchs of the Orthodox world . There is no other evidence that Nikon ever held such a view .

The domes are often brightly painted : their colors may informally symbolise different aspects of religion . Green , blue , and gold domes are sometimes held to represent the Holy Trinity , the Holy Spirit , and Jesus , respectively . Black ball @-@ shaped domes were once popular in the snowy north of Russia .

= = Internationally = =

The onion dome is not only found in Russian architecture : it was also used extensively in Mughal architecture , which later went on to influence Indo @-@ Gothic architecture . Outside India , it is also used in Iran and other places in the Middle East and Central Asia . At the end of 19th century , the Dutch built Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Aceh , Indonesia , which incorporated onion shaped dome . The shape of the dome has been used in numerous mosques in Indonesia since then .

Baroque domes in the shape of an onion (or other vegetables or flower @-@ buds) were common in the Holy Roman Empire as well . The first one was built in 1576 by the architect John Holl (1512

@-@ 1594) on the church of the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Maria Stern in Augsburg . Usually made of copper sheet , onion domes appear on Catholic churches all over southern Germany , Czech lands , Austria and Sardinia and Northeast Italy . Onion domes were also a favourite of 20th @-@ century Austrian architectural designer Friedensreich Hundertwasser .

The World 's Only Corn Palace , a tourist attraction and basketball arena in Mitchell , South Dakota , also features onion domes on the roof of the structure .