

Continuity and Transformation: The Idea of the Dome from Kurgan Graves to the Florentine *Tempio Israelitico*

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Abstract:

Kurgan graves and underground domes served a dual symbolic purpose, connoting the dome of heaven but also the pregnant female belly. For the Roman Pantheon, the primary interest was to echo the dome of heaven, yet the connection between the eye of heaven and the eye of the dome implied an *umbilical* tie between the two realms. Justinian's dome in Constantinople re-articulated these principles. So did Abdul Malik's Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, offering Islam's first major effort along these lines.

The domination of Jerusalem by the Dome of the Rock over the centuries led to the Temple being imagined as domed, or quasi-domed. As Rome was conceived as the New Jerusalem, the dome as a crown for the new St Peter's was further re-articulated. The implications of this would be felt in key Protestant structures like St Paul's in London, in the US Capitol Dome, and in 19th-20th-century synagogues—such as Florence's *Tempio Israelitico*—whose Jewish congregations felt themselves as spiritually complete as had been their ancestors in Jerusalem and its Temple.

Thus the symbolic intentions of the dome have continued but been transformed over the millennia.

Key Words

Roman Pantheon, *Hagia Sophia*, Dome of the Rock, St. Peter's Church, United States Capitol, Via Farini *Tempio Israelitico*, Essen Synagogue

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