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POINTED DOME ARCHITECTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA: EVOLUTION, DEFINITIONS OF MORPHOLOGY, AND TYPOLOGIES

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This study aims at offering a closer view of pointed domes as the most significant and important cultural features of Eastern domes in the Middle East and Central Asia. In contrast to previous general historical studies, this study addresses the better comprehension of a formal architectural language of the pointed domes including their morphologies and typologies based on epistemological premise of pointed domes' structuralism. It starts with defining the proper terminology of the pointed dome type, then, by analytic consideration of selected examples, the study proposes their origin, evolution, formal morphological constitutions, geometrical designs, and finally definitions of three typologies and subtypes of the pointed domes based on their shells' compositions and geometrical profiles, from the twelfth through sixteenth centuries. Despite varieties of forms and configurations of Islamic domes, the research puts forward some recurring features and shared characteristics that are incorporated into a specific style, that is pointed domes. Furthermore, this study on the significance of pointed domes brings to light undiscovered facts about the essences of traditional dome constructions in the Middle East and Central Asia which may be employed in providing historical documentation for any conservation interventions.

KEY WORDS: dome typologies, dome morphology, pointed domes, Middle East, Central Asia

1. INTRODUCTION

Pointed domes, whether erected on single domical buildings or involved in huge complexes, are considered as greatly significant and important items of Islamic architecture which were widely utilized for both architectural and symbolical purposes. This type of Eastern masonry domes appears on the majority of monuments in Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. They are well known due to their graceful designs, proportion of constitutions, various typologies, and specific configurations. Despite the existence of several historical considerations, studies regarding their formal architectural language such as morphological compositions, typological organizations, and geometrical characteristics are insufficient and the dispersed documents suffer from the lack of profound architectural analysis as to the clarification of exact composition and configuration hierarchies of such domes.

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