



Annunciation with Acatistus in border scenes. Main icon, beginning of 17th century.

CHRONICLE

1484. The foundation of a new stone three-domed cathedral is laid by order of the Grand Prince Ivan III.

1484–1489. Pskov architects erect a cathedral on the place of the Annunciation church built in 14th century that had fallen into ruin and had been demolished. A system of parvises links the cathedral to the palace. The Court of Treasury is built.

1489. Metropolitan Gerontius consecrates the cathedral in the honour of the Annunciation Day of the Blessed Virgin.

1508. The Grand Prince Vasilii III orders to paint the cathedral with frescoes and make rich icon settings.

1547. A fire destroys all the interior of the cathedral. Paintings and icons are later restored.

1562–1564. The cathedral is significantly rebuilt by order of Ivan IV the Terrible. The southern side-chapel is renovated. Four one-domed chapels and two blind domes are added, transforming the cathedral into a nine-domed one. Domes and the roof are covered by gilded copper.

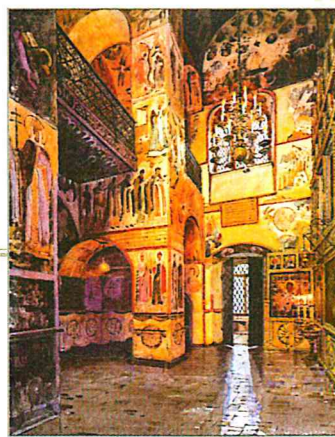
1697. A work is carried out to recreate old-style murals.

1895. The new iconostasis structure is installed.

1918. The liturgies cease in the cathedral.

1960s. The cathedral is transformed into a museum.

1993. A first liturgy is held since 1918.



The interior of the cathedral isn't vast. Four columns divide it into three naves. Eastern columns are flanked by the iconostasis. The balcony, supported by massive vaults, is in the western part.

Ivan III Vasilievich
Grand Prince of Moscow (1462–1505), he was successful in uniting the Russian princedoms into one state under the power of Moscow. He started full-scale construction in the Moscow Kremlin.

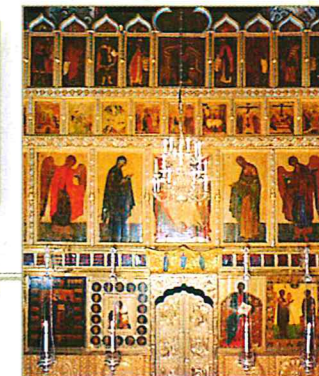


ANNUNCIATION CATHEDRAL OF THE MOSCOW KREMLIN

PRIVATE CHURCH OF RUSSIAN GRAND PRINCES AND TSARS DESTINED FOR DOMESTIC AND FAMILIAL CEREMONIES.

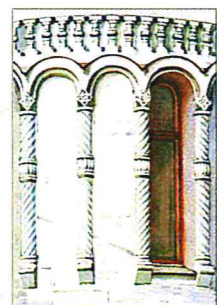


Ivan IV Vasilievich the Terrible
First Tsar of All Russias (since 1547), he conducted reforms aimed at centralization and military strengthening of the state. He continued building and decorating the Moscow Kremlin cathedrals.



The multi-tier iconostasis of the cathedral is one of the oldest surviving in Russia. It includes almost a hundred icons situated in six rows. Icons of the Festival and of the Deesis tier were painted in the end of 14th–beginning of 15th century, supposedly with the participation of Theophanes the Greek and Andrei Rublev. The Festival tier represents the events described in the Gospels. The Prophets tier and the Patriarchs tier were painted after the fire of 1547. In the centre of the iconostasis there are gilded silver royal doors with the images of the Annunciation and of four evangelists. Second to the right from the royal doors is the main icon **Annunciation with Acatistus in border scenes** (beginning of 17th century). A peculiarity of the Veneration tier is a special place destined for an icon of the saint patron of the ruling Tsar. After the death of the monarch it was transported to the Archangel Cathedral and a new one was painted for the new tsar. Icons of 14th–17th centuries are inserted into a gilded brass frame with enamel and mica, made at the factory that belonged to the Moscow merchant Andrei Postnikov.

The exterior of the cathedral combines features of the early Muscovite and Pskovian architectures. Pskovian art of building shows itself in **small niches** and **ornamental bands** made of bricks. The walls are decorated with the blind arcade frieze. High up on the apses there is a **band of balusters**. The facades of the cathedral are divided into three parts by lesenes and end with ogee-shaped **gables** characteristic of the early Muscovite architecture. The walls of the four chapels carry square decorative brickworks and end with **kokoshniks** (corbel arches) that harmonize with the gables.

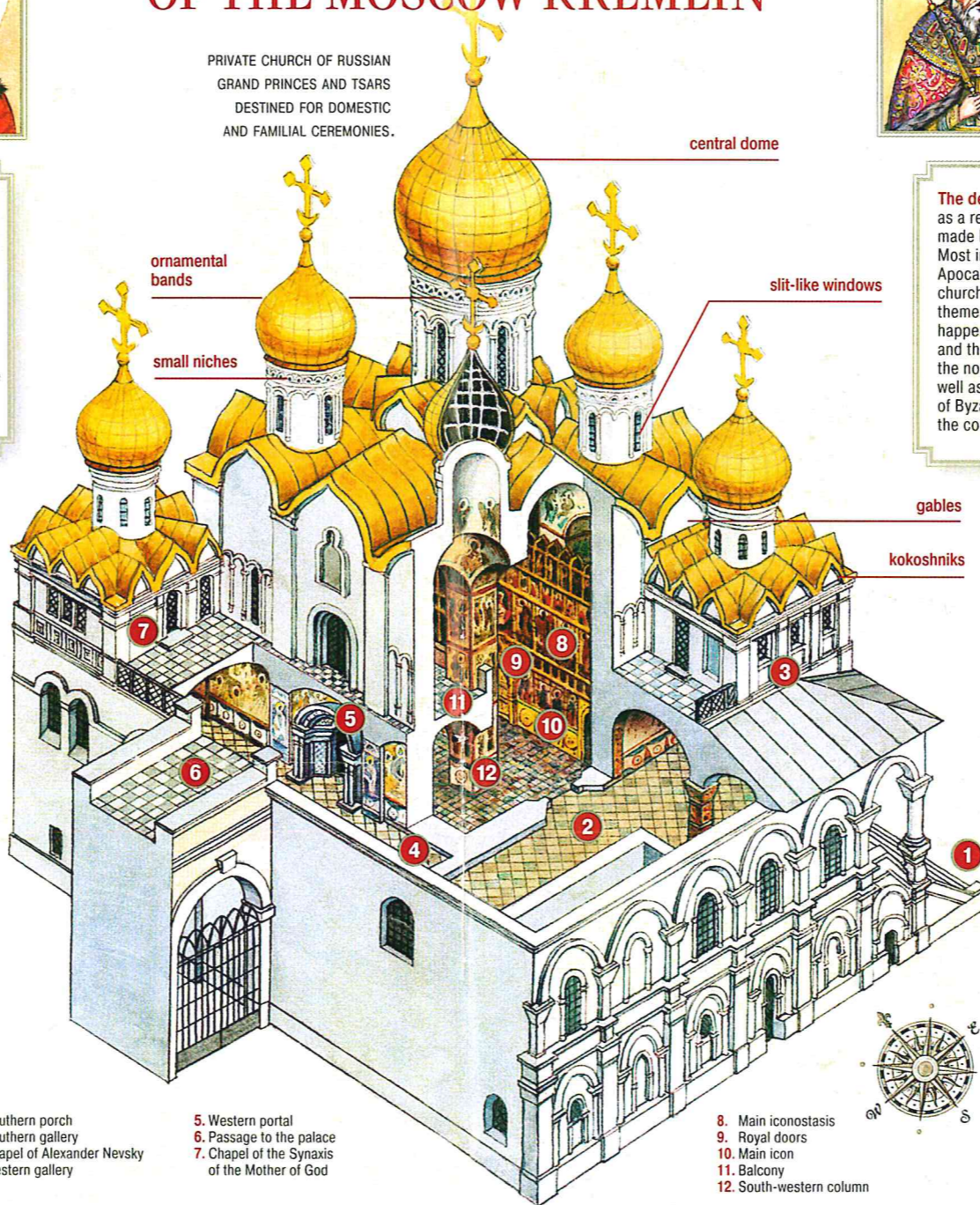


Band of balusters



Southern porch

Side-Chapels – four small one-domed chapels, built in the 1560s on the arches of the galleries. To strengthen the walls, apertures of the arches were partly walled in, with images of ancient philosophers painted on top. Four chapels were dedicated to St. Michael (reconsecrated in 17th century in honour of St. Gabriel), to the Entry in Jerusalem, to the Synaxis of Holy Virgin and to Saint George. The chapel of St. George was rebuilt and reconsecrated in 1822 in honour of St. Alexander Nevsky, the saint patron of the Emperor Alexander I. The iconostases of all the chapels date from 15th–19th centuries. Best preserved are now exposed in the southern gallery.



- 1. Southern porch
- 2. Southern gallery
- 3. Chapel of Alexander Nevsky
- 4. Western gallery
- 5. Western portal
- 6. Passage to the palace
- 7. Chapel of the Synaxis of the Mother of God
- 8. Main iconostasis
- 9. Royal doors
- 10. Main icon
- 11. Balcony
- 12. South-western column

The decoration of the cathedral took present shape as a result of many centuries. Present frescoes were made by Russian painters after the fire of 1547. Most interesting are the scenes from the Apocalypse, very rare for the Russian 16th century churches. The images are dedicated to three main themes: events occurring in the sky; calamities happening to the earth; fight between the good and the evil. Multi-figure compositions occupy the northern, the southern and the western wall as well as the vaults under the balcony. The images of Byzantine Emperors and Russian Princes illustrate the continuity of power.



Western gallery

Galleries-parvises originally surrounded the cathedral from every side. The main north-western gallery was often used in various ceremonies. Its arches carry a unique **Tree of Jesse** – the biblical genealogy of Jesus. The fresco has multiple figures including ancient thinkers such as Virgil, Homer and Plutarch. Southern gallery where the sacristy was situated linked the cathedral with the Grand Prince's palace and was used for the carrying-out of the most respected relics. The high southern porch decorated with carvings is used to access the gallery. The eastern gallery didn't survive. It was demolished together with the Treasury Chamber in 19th century. Above the entrance to the northern gallery one can see a fresco of **The Saviour Not Made by Hands**. Among the compositions of the western gallery there is the **Trinity**.



Annunciation, beginning of 15th century



Crucifixion, beginning of 15th century



Six-ray pendant

In the vaulted basement under the central part of the cathedral, there is an exposition "Archeology of the Moscow Kremlin", representing the most precious findings in the Kremlin during 19th–20th centuries.



Copper gate – a rare technique was used for decorating them. Door leaves are covered with copper plates decorated with golden images of the Annunciation, of prophets and of philosophers.



The décor of the southern gallery and porch can still be seen in the window frame and the column of the middle of 15th century. The trunk and the capital of the column are decorated with big flat leaves of acanthus.



On the walls of the central drum the patriarchs are depicted.



Candelabrum, middle of 18th century



The western portal, of white stone with two Corinthian columns, is adorned with a carved ornament. A high lamp with fire – a symbol of eternity – is supported by sphinxes.

EXPOSITION OF ICONS

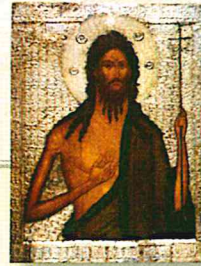
During centuries, icons, church plate and liturgical objects were created especially for the Annunciation Cathedral. An exposition of icons and sacred objects presents exhibits relating to the Tsars's private church.



Shrine for reliquaries, 1894. Reliquaries of 16th–17th centuries are the sacred depositories for the pieces of relics. Princes of Muscovy and Tsars of Russia gathered a priceless collection of relics.



Sanctuary cross from the altar of the Dormition cathedral, c. 1570. Its bone plates show scenes of festivities, crucifixion and saints.



John the Baptist (left)
Entry in Jerusalem (right)

Icons painted in the 1560s come from the Veneration tier of the iconostasis of the chapel of the Entry in Jerusalem. John the Baptist had the same name with Ivan the Terrible. The second icon shows everything that four Gospels say about the entry of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.



Synaxis of Holy Virgin, 16th century. Holy Virgin is on the throne with the Infant in her lap. The Magi and the Shepherds adore her.



Nativity of Christ, 15th century. The main composition including the swaddled Infant, Holy Virgin and Joseph is completed by numerous details.



Sanctuary cross from the altar of the Annunciation Cathedral, 16th century. The cross is decorated with silver relief images and precious stones.



Holy Virgin Eleusa, end of 14th century



Holy Virgin Hodegetria, 14th century



Holy Virgin Eleusa of Vladimir, end of 14th – beginning of 15th century



Sts. Forty Martyrs at Sebaste, 16th century. Three-tier icon gives the details of the legend about the defenders of the Christianity.



Exposition of icons

- Show-case 1.** Proofing of the Apostle Thomas
- Show-case 2.** Holy Virgin Eleusa, Holy Virgin Hodegetria, Holy Virgin Eleusa of Vladimir; Sts. Forty Martyrs at Sebaste
- Show-case 3.** Synaxis of Holy Virgin, Nativity of Christ
- Show-case 4.** Sanctuary cross from the altar of the Dormition Cathedral
- Show-case 5.** Sanctuary cross from the altar of the Annunciation Cathedral
- Show-case 6.** Holy Virgin of Pimen, Holy Virgin Hodegetria of Smolensk, Holy Virgin the Milk-giver

- Show-case 7.** John the Baptist, Entry in Jerusalem
- Show-case 8.** Shrine for reliquaries
- Show-case 9.** Iconostasis of the chapel of Archangel Gabriel
- Show-case 10.** Crucifixion with Thiefs, with the Passion in border scenes
- Show-case 11.** Great Martyr Demetrius, Great Martyr George, St. Simeon Stylites, St. Daniel Stylites



Proofing of the Apostle Thomas, 16th century. The icon is based on the St. John's Gospel. In the foreground, St. Thomas touches Christ's wounds and is convinced that He is truly resurrected.



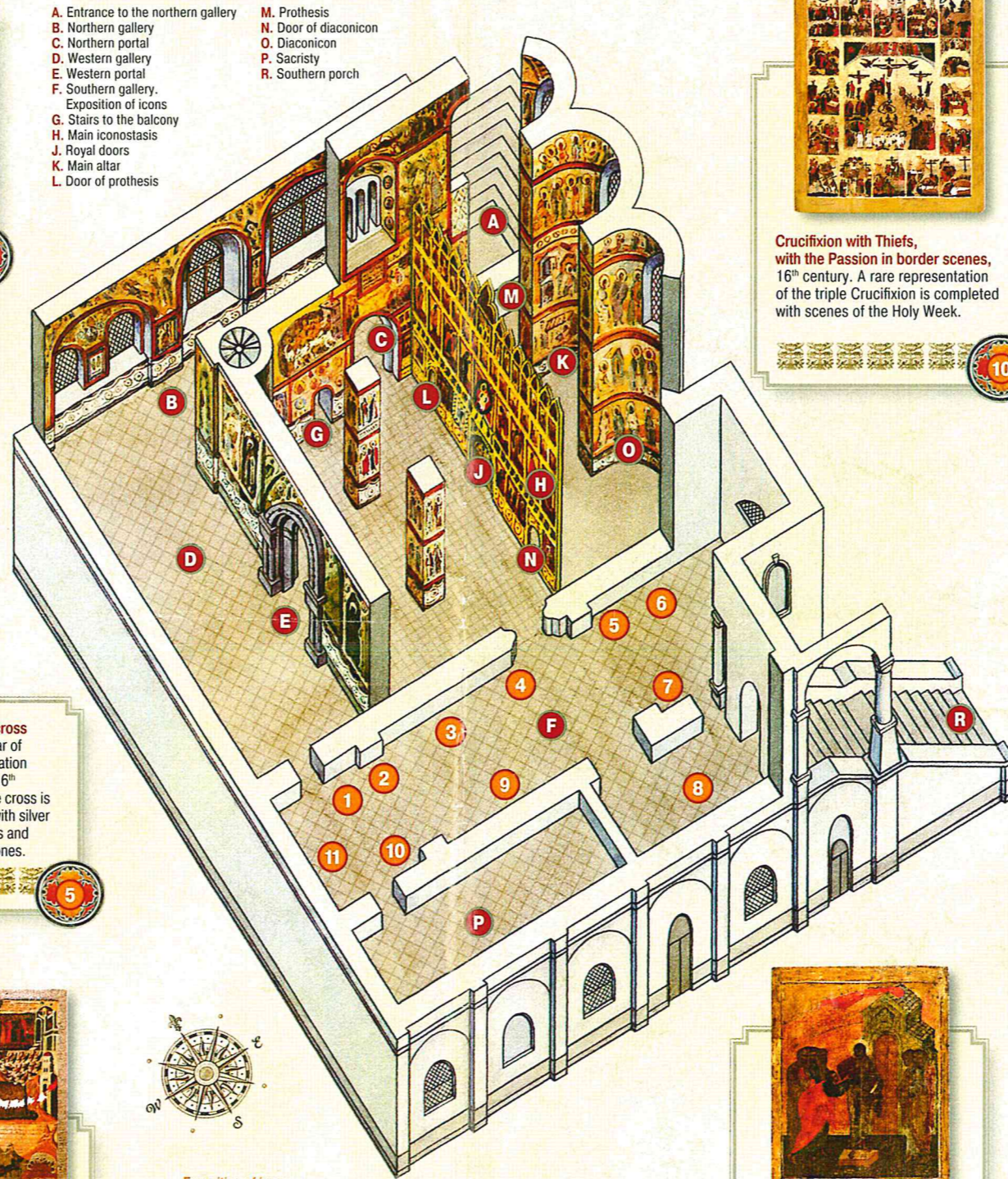
Holy Virgin of Pimen, 16th century. The icon was copied from a well-known Byzantine icon Holy Virgin Hodegetria brought by the Metropolitan Pimen from Constantinople.



Holy Virgin Hodegetria of Smolensk, 16th century. The images of the Virgin, small in size, repeating the image of the God's Mother of "Blessed Womb" is very rare in Russia before the 17th century.



Holy Virgin the Milk-Giver, end of 16th – beginning of 17th century. The icon, repeating the image of the God's Mother of "Blessed Womb" is very rare in Russia before the 17th century.



- A.** Entrance to the northern gallery
- B.** Northern gallery
- C.** Northern portal
- D.** Western gallery
- E.** Western portal
- F.** Southern gallery
- G.** Exposition of icons
- H.** Stairs to the balcony
- I.** Main iconostasis
- J.** Royal doors
- K.** Main altar
- L.** Door of prothesis
- M.** Prothesis
- N.** Door of diaconicon
- O.** Diaconicon
- P.** Sacristy
- R.** Southern porch



Crucifixion with Thiefs, with the Passion in border scenes, 16th century. A rare representation of the triple Crucifixion is completed with scenes of the Holy Week.



Great Martyr George



Great Martyr Demetrius

Icons from the Deesis tier of the main iconostasis. Images of the Martyrs were painted in the beginning of 15th century in the Moscow school style influenced by Andrei Rublev. Icons of the Stylites were painted in 16th century. The hermits lived fasting and praying on the pillars of stones.

St. Simeon Stylites

St. Daniel Stylites



Iconostasis of the chapel of Archangel Gabriel, 1560s. The most complete and the less damaged iconostasis, it includes the Deesis tier, the Festival tier, the Prophets tier and the Veneration tier. The images of the Deesis and Festival tiers are painted on the same board. In the centre of the Veneration tier are the royal doors with canopy and small columns.