

in each town and village, and emphasize that its doors be open to all regardless of religion, race, color, nationality, sex, or other distinction; that only the holy scriptures, of Bahai or other religions, be read or chanted therein, in any language; that no musical instruments be played although readings and prayers set to music may be sung by choirs; that no pictures, statues, or images be displayed within the temple walls; that no sermons be delivered and no ritualistic ceremonies practiced; and that no pulpits or altars be erected as an incorporated architectural feature, although readers may stand behind a simple, portable lectern. There being no clergy in the Bahai faith, readers are selected from the community, none serving as a permanent reader. The architect of a Bahai temple could be a Bahai or not, and the submission of designs by the public is permissible. The spirit of the Bahai laws emphasizes that a Bahai temple is a gathering place where the followers of all faiths may worship God without the imposition of denominational practices or restrictions. Since the act of worship is deemed to be purely individual in character, rigidity and uniformity are avoided in Bahai temples.

As stipulated by 'Abd-al-Baha', the essential architectural character of the temple requires a nine-sided, circular shape. Although a dome has so far been a feature of all Bahai temples, it is not regarded as an essential part of their structure. It has been advanced that the number nine, as the largest single digit representing comprehensiveness and unity, stands as the numerical value of the Arabic word "Baha'," from which the words Baha'-Allah and Bahai have been derived. Existing Bahai temples, surrounded by gardens and often referred to as "silent teachers," have played an important role in familiarizing the public with Bahai history and teachings, and because of their unique designs reflecting the indigenous cultural, social, and environmental elements of their locations, they continue to attract large numbers of the public.

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The Bahai temple, as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Baha'-Allah, is surrounded by a complex of humanitarian, educational, and charitable institutions such as a hospital, an orphanage, a school, a university, a hostel, etc. It belongs to the international Bahai community which is governed by the Universal House of Justice. The cost of constructing temples has been met by voluntary contributions made by Bahais throughout the world, they being explicitly forbidden to accept donations for the advancement of the faith from non-Bahais, a stricture rigorously upheld. Houses of Worship are maintained and administered by the national Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the country in which they are located.

The structural design of the first Bahai temple in Ashkhabad was prepared by Ostad 'Ali-Akbar Banna' and work, which was started in 1902 and supervised by Haji Mirza Mohammad-Taqi, the Wakil-al-Dawla, was completed in 1919. The temple, which served the community for two decades was expropriated by the government and converted into an art gallery in 1938. Ten years later,

violent earthquakes seriously damaged the building and the heavy rains of the following years weakened the structure to the point that the Soviet authorities decided to demolish the remaining edifice and convert the site into a public park.

The temple in Wilmette, near Chicago, on Lake Michigan was designed by Louis J. Bourgeois in 1919, while the corner-stone had already been laid on 1 May 1912 by 'Abd-al-Baha'. Dedicated in 1953, it is the most ornate Bahai temple in the world and can seat 1,191 people. It is 191 feet from the lowest level to the pinnacle of the dome ribs, and the diameter of the exterior of the dome is 90 feet.

The construction of the temple near Kampala, Uganda, designed by Charles Mason Remey, started in May, 1957 and the temple was opened to the public on 15 January 1961. The height of the building is 124 feet, and the diameter of its dome is 44 feet. It has seating capacity of 800.

The fourth Bahai temple, with a seating capacity of 600, also designed by Remey, was officially dedicated on 16 September 1961 at Ingleside, near Sydney, Australia. It is located on a seven-acre property and the height from its basement floor to the top of the spire is 130 feet.

The fifth Bahai temple was constructed at Langenhain, in the Taunus Hills near Frankfurt-am-Main, West Germany. Designed and built by Teuto Rocholl, a non-Bahai architect, the temple seats about 500 persons, measures 158 feet in diameter at its base, and 92 feet in height from base to the top of the dome. Twenty-seven pillars support the dome in the interior. The central rotunda is brightened by the reflection of the sun on 570 glass panels. The temple was dedicated on 4 July 1964.

The corner-stone of the sixth Bahai temple was laid atop Cerro Sonsonate, seven miles north of Panama City, Panama, on 8 October 1967. It was designed by the English architect, Peter Tillotson. Construction started on 1 December 1969 and the temple was dedicated on 29 April 1972. Its seating capacity is 550; its diameter at base is 200 feet, and its overall height is 92 feet.

The seventh temple, which was designed by Hossein Amanat (Hosayn Amanat), was built in Western Samoa, in the Pacific Ocean. An area of approximately 17 acres surrounds it, and it can seat 700. The construction of the temple was commenced in 1979 and it was dedicated on 1 September 1984. The building is 102 feet high and is located at Tiapapata, in the hills behind Apia.

The eighth Bahai temple, near Nehru Place, at Bahapur, in New Delhi, India, and known as the Lotus Temple because of its shape, was dedicated on 24 December 1986. Designed by Fariburz Sahba (Fariborz Sahba), the temple stands in an area of 26.7 acres and has an overall height of 40.8 meters and is 70 meters in diameter. The temple contains 1,200 fixed seats, expandable to 2,500.

The Bahais of Iran acquired an area of 3,580,000 square meters on the slopes of Mount Alborz, named Hadiqa, in northeastern Tehran, for the eventual construction of the first temple in that land. Although the design was prepared

and preliminary studies were undertaken, hostile circumstances prevented its construction. A complex of buildings, however, was erected on the site in the 1960s and dedicated to educational and administrative activities.

Of a total of 148 national Bahai communities around the world, 84 have acquired sites for the future construction of temples; the remainder are in the process of securing them. In many cases the lands acquired have, in the meantime, been put to agricultural uses, or buildings devoted to the education of children, etc., have been erected on them.

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