



MAŠREQ AL-ADKĀR

MAŠREQ AL-ADKĀR (the Dawning-Place of the Remembrance [of God]), a *Bahai* term having three meanings. The first meaning is a gathering which is held, ideally at dawn, to say prayers and recite from scripture; the second meaning is a building to be constructed in every community in which this dawn gathering takes place; and the third meaning is a complex of edifices centered around the prayer building but including other auxiliary social and humanitarian institutions as well. In English usage, “House of Worship” and “Temple” are frequently used for the second meaning.

1. *Concept.* In the *Ketāb-e Aqdas*, Bahā’-Allāh (1817-92) gave general instructions that Mašreq al-Adkār should be built “throughout the lands” (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, v. 31, p. 27; trans., p. 29). He stated that any building in which people gather to worship is a Mašreq al-Adkār (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, v. 115, p. 110; trans., p. 61). Establishing such buildings in Iran, however, was fraught with peril in view of the ongoing persecutions of the Bahai community. Writing in June 1883, Bahā’-Allāh counsels that establishing of such a building should be done with great prudence (*hekmat*), and, in one of his undated writings, he indicates that he has not permitted this in Tehran, Shiraz, and Yazd, but approved it in Khorasan (Bahā’-Allāh, 1964-77, VI, pp. 75-76; VII, pp. 275-76; ELMA, vol. VII, pp. 238-40; Māzandarāni, *Amr va Kalq*, IV, pp. 147-48).

At a later date, when conditions for the Bahais of Iran had improved a little, ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ (1844-1921) encouraged the Bahais to establish a Mašreq al-Adkār in every locality, whether a hamlet where only two Bahais lived, or a big city with a Bahai community. Furthermore, if persecutions made it



necessary, it could even be located underground. This instruction appears to have meant that the Bahais should have at least established places for dawn prayers, if necessary in the home or cellar of one of them, but if possible they should have had a special building for the purpose. ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ gave much importance to this matter and stated that it had a great effect, created unity, and revitalized the community (‘Abd-al-Bahā’, *Montakabāt*, I, pp. 92-93; trans. pp. 95-96; Māzandarāni, *Amr va Kalq*, IV, p. 151). This instruction seems to have gone out in about 1900, and we find “the Hands of the Cause” (*Ayādi-e Amr Allāh*) and other Bahai traveling teachers (*moballeḡs*) quoting this instruction and encouraging Bahai communities to establish such buildings from about that time onwards; it is stated that the first such building was established by the efforts of Moḡammad-Taḡi Ebn Abhar (1854-1919, see [EBN ABHAR, MOḡAMMAD-TAḡI](#)) in Qom in May 1901 (Soleymāni, IV, pp. 542-43; see also *Idem*, IV, p. 6; Anonymous, *Tāriḡ-e Sangsar*, p. 22). Thus, during ‘Abd-al-Bahā’s leadership, many Bahai communities in Iran, Central Asia, India, Burma, and North America designated ordinary houses or specially-built halls in their localities as Mašreq al-Aḡkār, many of which were donated by wealthy local Bahais. Sometimes, as in the cities of Qom and Kermānšāh, these were houses that had already been considered holy: in the two mentioned cases, the remains of the [Bāb](#) (1819-50) had rested there for a time during their journey to ‘Akkā (Soleymāni, IV, pp. 542-43; Fayzi, pp. 302-5).

Almost simultaneously, however, ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ was developing plans for buildings with particular features that would be specifically erected to function as Mašreq al-Aḡkār. The creation of the first of such buildings started in Ashgabat (Rus. Ashkhabat, Pers. ‘Ešqābād) in Turkmenistan in 1902. Later, in a general letter to the Bahais of the East dated July 1925, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957) directed that the buildings used as Bahai meeting-places and administrative headquarters, which had up to then been called Mašreq al-Aḡkār, should now be designated *Ḥaḡirat al-Qods*, which is usually translated as “the sacred fold” and often referred to in English simply as “Bahai center” (Shoghi Efendi, 1973, pp. 247-48). From this time onwards, Mašreq al-Aḡkār was to refer exclusively to the buildings specifically erected with particular features and used only for worship, of which only two existed at that time, one in Ashgabat and another unfinished one in Wilmette, Illinois in U.S.A.

With regard to the building and design of the Mašreq al-Aḡkār, Bahā’-Allāh states: “Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being” (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, v. 31, p. 27; trans. p. 29). Writing in 1955 to the German Bahais, Shoghi



Effendi considered that the Mašreq al-Adkār should not be built in an ultra-modern style, but rather be “graceful in outline,” with a “delicate architectural beauty” (Shoghi Effendi, 1982, I, pp. 245-46). ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ in the instructions he had given to Ostād ‘Ali-Akbar Bannā Yazdi (1845-1903), the architect of the first Mašreq al-Adkār, had stated that the design should be based on nine lots of nine: nine doors, nine paths, nine gardens, nine pools, nine sides, nine columns (*‘omud*), nine piers (*rokn*), nine ambulatories (*ḡolāmgardeš*), and nine loggias (*ravvāq*; ELMA, vol. 52, p. 490). The number nine is emphasized because it is the numeric value of the word *Bahā’* according to *abjad* notation, and thus a holy number in the Bahai faith. The requirement for a generally circular shape, with nine sides, nine gardens, and nine paths has been maintained as an essential feature for the designs of all subsequent Mašreq al-Adkārs (Shoghi Effendi, 1982, I, p. 232). They should be adorned “with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies” (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, v. 31, p. 27; tr. p. 29) and should have no pulpit; those who recite the scripture should sit on a chair raised on a platform (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, v. 154, p. 146; tr. p. 75). Although not stated to be essential requirements, all Mašreq al-Adkārs built thus far have a dome and, since they are essentially places for communal prayer, they necessarily have a central prayer hall, where the seats face towards the shrine of Bahā’-Allāh, the direction of prayer for the Bahais. Some Mašreq al-Adkārs have certain local architectural features or symbols incorporated into their design. It has also become the custom to place small items associated with the Bāb and Bahā’-Allāh in the foundations of each building.

‘Abd-al-Bahā’ states that “Although to outward seeming the Mashriqu’l- Adhkār is a material structure, yet it hath a spiritual effect. It forgeth bonds of unity from heart to heart; it is a collective center for men’s souls” (*Montakabāt* p. 93, trans. *Selections*, p. 95). However, this in turn is a symbol, for “the real Collective Centers are the Manifestations of God [the founders of the world religions], of Whom the church or temple is a symbol and expression” (‘Abd-al-Bahā’, 1982, p. 163). ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ calls the Mašreq al-Adkār a “paradise” (Idem, 1982, p. 71), and the gardens and pools of water around each Mašreq al-Adkār can be considered symbols of this (Badiee, pp. 43-51).

‘Abd-al-Bahā’ states that, at least in the case of Ashgabat, the Mašreq al-Adkār should be administered by the Bahai assembly under whose jurisdiction it falls. There may be more than one Mašreq al-Adkār in any one town, and a Mašreq al-Adkār can be transferred to another location with the permission of



the Universal House of Justice (Māzandarāni, *Amr va Kalq*, IV, p. 374, 375; Ešrāq-Kāvāri, *Ganjineh*, p. 234). Shoghi Effendi states that the Mašreq al-AḌkār building should be “solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God” (Shoghi Effendi, 1968, p. 184) and should be open to all people of whatever religion. The reading of the scriptures of other religions is permitted in it, but no rituals or ceremonies of other religions should be allowed, nor any new ones developed. There should be no addresses or lectures, and all forms of rigidity and uniformity in the services conducted there should be avoided. Special meetings, such as memorial services for Bahais or non-Bahais, can be held (Shoghi Effendi, 1968, pp. 184-85; Idem, 1982, pp. 606-10).

Bahā’-Allāh urges the recital and the melodious chanting of scripture in the Mašreq al-AḌkār, especially by children and especially at dawn (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, vv. 115-16, 150, pp. 110-11, 143-44; tr., pp. 61, 74). With regard to saying prayers at dawn, he states that this could be done anytime from dawn until two hours after sunrise (*Ketāb-e Aqdas*, p. 47; tr., p. 111). In writing to the prominent Iranian musician and Bahai, Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh Farāhāni (ca. 1843-1918, see ‘ABDALLĀH, MIRZĀ), ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ encourages music in the Mašreq al-AḌkār (Māzandarāni, *Amr va Kalq*, III, p. 364, tr. *Compilation of Compilations*, II, p. 76). Shoghi Effendi has stated that there should be no musical instruments used, only a capella singing by live singers (not recorded). The words sung should be from the Bahai or other scriptures (Shoghi Effendi, 1982, pp. 607-8).

One important point with regard to the financing of the Mašreq al-AḌkār is that both ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ and Shoghi Effendi deliberately made these into international projects for the global Bahai community, in this way drawing together the Bahai world and creating bonds of unity (‘Abd-al-Bahā’, *Makātib*, I, pp. 460-63, III, pp. 131, 173-74; Shoghi Effendi, 1973, p. 110; Idem, 1968, p. 94). Thus, for example, ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ told the Iranian Bahais of the sacrifice of an English lady who, having nothing to give, cut her long hair and put that forward to be sold and the proceeds given to the Temple Fund (‘Abd-al-Bahā’, *Montakabāt*, I, pp. 95-97; tr., pp. 98-99; Idem, *Makātib*, III, p. 292). To the Western Bahais ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ told the story of the Iranian widow, whose only source of income was the socks she knitted, and who would use the proceeds of one sock for her family’s needs while those of the other would go to the Mašreq al-AḌkār (*Star of the West* 11, 1920, pp. 209-10). Contributions for the Wilmette Mašreq al-AḌkār came from Bahais in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and even from

Mauritius (*Star of the West* 1/328, April 1910, pp. 15-16; *Star of the West* 1/4, 17 May 1910, pp. 14-15; *Star of the West* 4/8, 1 August 1913, p. 133). As with all Bahai funds which relate solely to Bahai purposes, contributions from non-Bahais are not accepted (Shoghi Effendi, 1968, pp. 181-82).

2. *Auxiliary Institutions.* Shoghi Effendi stressed that worship, no matter how exalted and fervent, was not the sole, or even the essential, role of the Mašreq al-Adkār in the Bahai community. This worship had to be linked to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific services that would benefit humanity (Shoghi Effendi, 1968, pp. 185-86). Thus, the Mašreq al-Adkār was not a place of worship only. ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ states that around it should be situated such facilities as a hospital and medical center, a dispensary, a traveler’s hostel, a school for orphans and the poor, a home for the disabled and incapacitated, and a university (‘Abd-al-Bahā’, I, p. 97; tr., p. 100; Māzandarāni, *Amr va Kalq*, IV, p. 151; *Star of the West* 6/17, 19 January 1916, p. 136). Furthermore, it is a principle that these facilities and the Mašreq al-Adkār itself should be open to people of all faiths and not restricted to Bahais (*Star of the West* 21/1, 1930, p. 20). Also in the vicinity of the Mašreq al-Adkār are to be situated a meeting-hall for general Bahai purposes and the offices of the Bahai administration (*ḥazīrat al-qods*). Shoghi Effendi states that these social and administrative activities can, however, only reach their full potential if the individuals engaged in them interact with the spirit of worship engendered in the Mašreq al-Adkār. Only then can the Mašreq al-Adkār become what Shoghi Effendi calls “one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahā’u’llāh” and provide “the essentials of Bahā’ī worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world” (Shoghi Efendi, 1968, pp. 184-86). None of the Mašreq al-Adkār have these auxiliary institutions at the time of writing this study (2010).

3. *Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.* Ashgabat (Rus. Ashkhabad, Pers. ‘Ešqābād) is a city which was built by the Russians to become the capital of their newly-conquered province of Transcaspia. Bahais were present in the city almost from its foundation. Land was purchased by some Bahais in about 1882 when the city was first established, and the first Bahai settlers arrived in 1884. The Bahai population grew rapidly, from approximately 1,000 people in 1902 to about 5,000 in 1918.

Land for the Mašreq al-Adkār in Ashgabat was purchased in the central part of the town by Mirzā Moḥammad-‘Ali Afnān in 1304/1886-7, and Bahā’-Allāh approved the proposal to build a House of Worship there. On a visit to ‘Akkā



in 1311/1893-4, Ostād ‘Ali-Akbar Bannā Yazdi, who had been appointed by Bahā’-Allāh the designer of the project, drew up its design under the instructions of ‘Abd-al-Bahā’. The latter also wrote to Mirzā Moḥammad-‘Ali Afnān urging that the project be started. The death of Mirzā Moḥammad-‘Ali Afnān in 1896, however, brought the project to a halt, although some of the auxiliary institutions such as schools were built on the site, and some further plots of land were bought, thus making the site an entire city block. In September 1902, Mirzā Moḥammad-Taḳī Afnān Wakil-al-Dawla (d. 1911) arrived in Ashgabat from Yazd, having been asked by ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ to complete the construction of the building. He was an affluent merchant and expended much of this wealth on this project. Works began on 31 October 1902, and the foundation stone was laid on 11 December 1902 by General D. I. Subbotich (1852-1920), the military governor of the province. ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ gave great importance to this project being the very first Mašreq al-AḌkār, and he encouraged contributions to it in many of the letters he wrote (Yazdi, pp. 353-55; Ešrāq-Kāvāri, *Qāmus*, pp. 301-4; Māzandarāni, *Zohur al-Ḥaqq*, VIII/2, pp. 995-98; M. Momen, 1991, pp. 284-85). In late 1902, ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ wrote to Ostād ‘Ali-Akbar Bannā Yazdi asking him to send the plans for the building to Ebn Abhar in Tehran, so that it could serve as a guide for those places in Iran that were planning to build such edifices (Soleymāni, III, pp. 582-83).

Ostād ‘Ali-Akbar Bannā Yazdi supervised the first six months of the construction before he was killed on a visit to Yazd during the anti-Bahai pogrom of 1903. After that, the project was headed by two Russian engineers: by Akenov for the first two years and then by Volkov (d. 1338/1919-20). By November 1907, the dome and the external structure were complete, and Wakil-al-Dawla departed for ‘Akkā leaving his son Ḥājji Mirzā Maḥmud to complete the project. Due to the disruption from World War I and financial problems caused by the collapse of the Russian economy and currency, it was not until 1917 that the extensive external and internal decorative work was complete, and, since the internal metal supports ordered for the minarets went missing in the war conditions, it was not until 1919 that the entrance portico and its two minarets were built and the gardens and surrounding walls and gates were finished (FIGURE 1; Ešrāq-Kāvāri, 1973, I, pp. 580-84; Māzandarāni, *Tāriḳ-e Zohur-ol-Ḥaqq*, VIII/2, pp. 998-1003; M. Momen, 1991, pp. 285-86; ELMA, vol. 52, pp. 489-90; Dreyfus).

Following the Bolshevik victory in the region in 1920, the Bahais were



relatively free for a few years, but in 1928 the anti-religious drive of Stalin began in earnest. The Mašreq al-Adkār was expropriated, although it was rented back to the Bahais. Some families left Ashgabat to return to Iran. Then in February 1938, as a result of Stalin's purge of the "kulaks" (well-to-do peasants and farmers), the Soviet authorities suddenly arrested almost all of the male members of the Bahai community and held them for a year. Later, some were sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment, some were exiled to Siberia, and the rest were expelled to Iran. The women and children were forcibly put across the border into Iran. The Mašreq al-Adkār was taken over and eventually made into an art gallery. It survived a major earthquake in 1948 when most of the city was flattened, but its poor maintenance, which allowed rains to weaken the structure, meant that eventually there was no alternative but to demolish it, which was done in 1963 (Māzandarāni, *Tāriḳ-e Zohur-al-Ḥaqq*, VIII/2, pp. 1037-43; M. Momen, 1991, pp. 284-86; *Bahā'ī World* 14, pp. 479-80).

The Mašreq al-Adkār was situated in the center of Ashgabat on a large plot of land. Nine pathways led away from each of the doors of the building into gardens containing nine ponds. In the four corners of this plot were other buildings: to the east was a large hall for meetings; to the northwest were the offices of the *maḥfel-e ruḥāni* (local spiritual assembly), a reading-room, and a room for holding small meetings for enquirers; to the southwest was the girls' school (completed in 1907); and to the southeast was the boys' school (completed in 1897). The building was a nine-sided polygon with nine doors. The main door, facing towards 'Akkā, was surmounted by a high arched portico and two minarets on either side, 44 meters high. The height of the structure was 56 meters, and the diameter of the dome was 19 meters. The total cost of construction was estimated in 1928 to have been \$220,000 (Māzandarāni, *Tāriḳ-e Zohur-al-Ḥaqq*, VIII/2, pp. 999-1000, 1002-3; M. Momen, 1991, p. 286).

4. *Wilmette, near Chicago, United States of America.* Chicago had the first and the largest Bahai community in the West, and when news of the start of the construction of the Ashgabat Mašreq al-Adkār reached North America, the Bahais of Chicago successfully petitioned 'Abd-al-Bahā' in March 1903 for permission to build a Mašreq al-Adkār there also. The Chicago Bahai Assembly at first favored a site on the southern side of Chicago, but Corinne True (1861-1961), who was the leading figure in the Women's Assembly and was to play a major role in the whole story of the American Mašreq al-Adkār,



pressed for a site on the northern side of Chicago. In November 1907, she organized in her home a meeting of Bahais, including some from other cities, which appears to have recommended a site in Evanston to the north of Chicago. Moreover, at about this time, ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ began to discourage other communities in North America from starting similar projects, so that financial resources could be concentrated on one project only. Then in March 1908, Corinne True found a site in Wilmette overlooking the lake. Although no site had yet been selected, two plots were purchased at the Wilmette site on 9 April 1908 as an investment (Whitmore, pp. 7-44; Armstrong-Ingram, *Music*, pp. 121-54; McDaniel, pp. 3-12).

During the Nowruz celebrations (20-23 March) in 1909 and simultaneously with the burial of the remains of the Bāb on Mount Carmel, 39 delegates from the Bahai communities of North America elected the Bahai Temple Unity as the coordinating body to carry forward the task of building the Mašreq al-Adkār (this body eventually evolved into the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States). The convention also confirmed the Wilmette site as the place for building the temple. ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ laid the cornerstone of this Mašreq al-Adkār on 1 May 1912 during his journey to North America, and over the next few years the main target of the project was to raise funds (Whitmore, pp. 49-75; Armstrong-Ingram, pp. 159-74; McDaniel, pp. 15-17).

In April 1920, a design by the French-Canadian architect Louis Bourgeois (d. 1930) was chosen at a convention of the Bahai Temple Unity. Writing of his design, Bourgeois stated: “Into this new design ... is woven, in symbolic form, the great Bahā’ī teaching of unity—the unity of all religions and of all mankind. There are combinations of mathematical lines, symbolizing those of the universe, and in their intricate merging of circle into circle, and circle within circle, we visualize the merging of all the religions into one. ... As the essence of the pure original teachings of the historic religions was the same, ... in the Bahā’ī Temple is used a composite architecture, expressing the essence in the line of each of the great architectural styles, harmonizing them into one whole” (quoted in Shoghi Effendi, 1995, pp. 351-52). One of its most notable features was the use of a lace-like pattern in the dome, enabling the light both to enter the building during the day and to emanate from it at night. In fact, however, much of Bourgeois’ design was impractical and had to be amended as the building proceeded (Whitmore, pp. 76-100; Armstrong-Ingram, pp. 175-215; McDaniel, pp. 21-34).

In April 1921, works began on sinking nine caissons which were to act as

foundations for the building. In April 1922, the Bahai Temple Unity became the National Spiritual Assembly, and, in this year, the foundation hall was finished, although it was not until 1928 that it became usable. There was a hiatus in the building work due to lack of funds, but by August 1930 a sufficient amount had been raised to sign a contract for the superstructure which was completed in May 1931. Between June 1932 and January 1943, a series of contracts were signed for the external ornamentation which was made of finely decorated panels cast from a mixture of crushed quartz, sand, and concrete in a technique that was developed for the structure by John Earley (d. 1945), thus allowing this part of Bourgeois's plans to become reality. This external decoration includes symbols of various religions, such as a cross and a crescent moon. During 1942, the eighteen circular steps surrounding the building were cast. Thus, the external work on the building was complete in time for the celebration of the centenary of the declaration of the Bāb in May 1944. Completion of internal structural work and decoration was a goal of the Second Seven Year Plan of North American Bahais, which began in 1946. The work began in 1948 and was completed in April 1951, but Shoghi Effendi delayed the opening ceremony until 1953, the centenary of the start of Bahā' Allāh's mission. He sent his wife Ruhyyih Rabbani (Ruḥiya Rabbāni, 1910-2000) to represent him at the dedication of the building on 2 May 1953. The height of the building is 58.2 meters, and the outside diameter of the dome is 27.4 meters; it can seat 1,200 people and occupies a site of 2.71 hectares (FIGURE 2). The total cost of construction was \$2,600,000 (Whitmore, pp. 101-236; Armstrong-Ingram, pp. 175-215; *Bahā'ī World* 5, pp. 293-313; McDaniel, pp. 37-89).

'Abd-al-Bahā' gave great importance to this House of Worship, and, because he stated that it would give birth to a thousand other Mašreq al-AḌkār (Ešrāq-Ḳāvāri, 1973, I, p. 584) it was called "the Mother Temple of the West" by Shoghi Effendi (1971, pp. 9, 11, 17, etc.). Shoghi Effendi also referred to it as "the Holiest House of Worship in the Bahā'ī world" (Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 100). In 1978, the building was listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places (*Bahā'ī World* 17, pp. 375).

5. *Kampala, Uganda.* Shoghi Effendi had intended that the third Mašreq al-AḌkār of the Bahais would be built in Tehran, and this was announced as one of the goals of the Ten Year Global Plan (1953-63). However, the persecutions of Bahais that erupted in Iran in 1955 made it impossible to proceed with this plan. Shoghi Effendi responded to this by determining the erection of two



Mašreq al-Adkār in Kampala and Sydney (*Messages to the Antipodes*, p. 396), and the announcement about the Kampala Temple was made on 23 August 1955 (Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 90). Purchase of land for this had been a goal of the Ten Year Global Plan, and the successful accomplishment of this had only just been announced in April 1955 (Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 81). This site proved unsuitable, however, and another site on Kikaya Hill to the north of the city, which had previously been purchased as an endowment, was expanded and chosen for the building in August 1956. Additional land around it was obtained, resulting in a site with the total surface of 8.7 hectares. The importance of Kampala for Shoghi Effendi was that, apart from being at “the heart of the African continent” (Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 81), it was one of the earliest places to which Bahais had moved in the Two Year African Campaign (1951-53) and the first place in Africa where large-scale enrollment of people into the Bahai faith was occurring.

After one design had been rejected, the American Bahai architect Charles Mason Remey (1874-1974) prepared a new design in Haifa under Shoghi Effendi’s direction. This was completed and approved in August 1956. Flaring eaves create a porch around the building, giving the whole complex the shape of an African hut. The design originally featured no walls on the main floor of the building to allow for a maximum circulation of air, but as the project progressed it became evident that a wall and doors would be needed in view of the driving rain on the hill. Mr. Freeman (of the architectural firm Cobb, Powell and Freeman) was appointed the resident architect, and the first contract, for the foundations, was signed in October 1957. The foundation stone was laid at a ceremony on 26 January 1957 by Ruhyyih Rabbani, representing Shoghi Effendi, and by the Hand of the Cause resident in Kampala, Musa Banani (1886-1971). There were several setbacks in the course of construction; not least of which was the bankruptcy of the only engineering company in that part of Africa, which could make the pre-stressed steel dome that was part of the design. It was eventually decided to make the dome of steel-reinforced concrete. The building, with a height of 38 meters and some 500 square meters of floor space, was completed in May 1960 (FIGURE 3). It can seat 800 people, and the total cost of construction was about \$120,000. A dedication ceremony, at which Ruḥiya Rabbāni represented the Bahai World Center, was held on 14 January 1961 (*Bahār World* 13, pp. 705-19).

6. *Sydney, Australia.* Sydney was the first place in Australia where a Bahai community was established in 1920. Purchase of land for a Mašreq al-Adkār

was one of the goals of the Ten Year Global Plan, and, after an initial purchase that proved unsuitable, seven acres of land on a hill overlooking the ocean at Ingleside north of Sydney were purchased in November 1955. Shoghi Effendi had already imparted to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand in October 1955 that he wanted to proceed with the erection of a Mašreq al-AḌkār in Sydney as a response to the persecutions of Bahais in Iran. Although some local studies were invited, eventually the design for the building was drawn up by Charles Mason Remey in Haifa under the supervision of Shoghi Effendi. The plan to build a Mašreq al-AḌkār and its design were announced to the Australian Bahais at their national convention in April 1957. Construction works commenced in December 1957 under the supervision of the Sydney architect, John Broga, and a foundation ceremony took place on 22 March 1958 with Mason Remey and Clare Hyde Dunn (1869-1960), who together with her husband had been the first Australian Bahais, present. The building was dedicated by Ruḥiya Rabbāni, representing the Bahai World Center, on 16 September 1961. It is 39.6 meters high and seats 600 people (FIGURE 4; *Bahā'ī World* 13, pp. 721-32).

7. *Frankfurt, Germany.* Although the building of a Mašreq al-AḌkār in Frankfurt was announced in 1953 as part of the Ten Year Global Plan, the purchase of land and the obtaining of the various necessary permits were vigorously opposed by both the Protestant and Catholic churches in the area. From 1953 onwards, several sites were chosen but then blocked by local authorities or the courts, until eventually an approval was obtained on 18 December 1959 for a site purchased on 29 October 1957 in the village of Langenhain. On 22 July 1956, the design of the Frankfurt architect Teuto Rocholl was chosen, with the approval of Shoghi Effendi. A contract for the first stage of building was signed in October 1960, and the cornerstone was laid by the Hand of the Cause Amelia Collins (1873 – 1962) on 20 November 1960. The superstructure was completed on 16 November 1962, and the service of dedication was held on 4 July 1964 with Ruḥiya Rabbāni representing the Universal House of Justice. The building is 28.3 meters high and situated on 2.9 hectares of land. It seats up to 600 people (FIGURE 5; *Bahā'ī World* 13, pp. 733-41; 14, pp. 483-84).

8. *Panama City, Panama.* Acquiring land for a Mašreq al-AḌkār in Panama was a goal of the Ten Year Global Plan, and this was achieved in 1954. The erection of this building was made a part of the Nine Year Plan (1964-1973). In 1965, an invitation was extended to architects to submit plans for the building



and the design chosen was that of the British architect Peter Tillotson, which incorporated on the supporting walls some elements of the patterns of the indigenous peoples. He was also engaged in supervising the project. The land already purchased was exchanged for some more suitable land, and the foundation stone was laid by Ruḥiya Rabbāni, representing the Universal House of Justice, on 8 October 1967. An access road had to be built, and its construction started in December 1969; the dedication took place on 29 April 1972. The building sits on 11.22 hectares of land, its height is 28 meters, and it can seat 550 people (FIGURE 6; *Bahā'ī World* 14, pp. 493-94; 15, pp. 643-49; 16, pp. 633-40).

9. *Apia, Samoa.* In 1968, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II (1913-2007) was the first head of state to become a Bahai. Although a site for the Mašreq al-AḌkār had been acquired in 1966, in November 1975 it was used as a part payment for another site at Tiapapata overlooking Apia. In April 1978, the Iranian Bahai architect Ḥosayn Amānat (b. 1942) was appointed the architect for the project. His design, which was approved in September 1978, reflects the traditional indigenous huts, called fales, and incorporates an innovative design of nine separate shells united at the apex but with no ties in between, allowing a large expanse of glazing between the ribs and thus making the interior look unified with the sky. The foundation stone was laid by His Highness the Malietoa in the presence of Ruḥiya Rabbāni, representing the Universal House of Justice, on 27 January 1979. Construction works began in September 1980, with all of the concrete being poured on site. The building was dedicated in September 1984 by Ruḥiya Rabbāni. It is located on 6.88 hectares of land; its height is 30 meters, and it seats up to 1,200 people (FIGURE 7; *Bahā'ī World* 16, p. 489; 17, pp. 371-73; 18, pp. 585-86; 19, pp. 548-57).

10. *New Delhi, India.* During the 1970s, India became the country with the largest Bahai community in the world. Land for the Mašreq al-AḌkār was purchased in 1953 at the site of an ancient village named Bahapur to the south of New Delhi. Building the Mašreq al-AḌkār became a goal of the Five Year Plan (1974-79). Iranian Bahai Fariborz Šaḥbā (b. 1948) was appointed the architect of the project, and, after traveling around India, he became convinced that the symbol that best connected all the religions of India and at the same time formed a bridge to the Bahai faith was the lotus flower. His design of 27 free standing marble clad “petals,” arranged in clusters of three to form nine sides, and 36 internal unopened “petals” forming the inner dome has resulted in a building which resonates with most Indians who see it.



Ponds of water surrounding the building increase the idea of it being a lotus plant floating on water. This design was accepted in August 1977, and on 17 October 1977 the foundation stone was laid by Ruḥiya Rabbāni, representing the Universal House of Justice. After the completion of excavation works for the foundations, construction began in July 1980. The “petals” were created by filling a frame of wood with concrete in one continuous operation, thus avoiding any joints. They were then faced with marble slabs mined in Greece and worked in Italy. The building was dedicated on 24 December 1986 by Ruḥiya Rabbāni. Since that time the structure has won numerous architectural awards and is now one of the most visited buildings in the world, attracting some 2.5 million people per year. The building is located on a site of 10.7 hectares; it is 43 meters high and can seat up to 2,500 people (FIGURE 8; *Bahā’ī World* 17, pp. 368-69; 18, pp. 571-84; 19, pp. 558-68; 20, pp. 731-53).

11. *Santiago, Chile.* In a message to the South American Bahai convention in 1953, Shoghi Effendi had mentioned Chile as the site for the first Bahai Temple in South America. In 2001, the Universal House of Justice called for the construction of the “Mother Temple for South America” in Santiago, Chile. The National Spiritual Assembly of Chile issued a call in September 2001 for designs to be submitted. A shortlist was created, and eventually the design of the Iranian architect Siāmak Ḥariri, which is based on nine gracefully torqued wings made of translucent alabaster, was selected. The building will be 30 meters high and will seat up to 600 people (FIGURE 9; *Bahā’ī World News Service*).

12. *Future Developments.* In 1932, land for a Mašreq al-Adkār was purchased at Ḥadiqa, northeast of Tehran, and a design for this building by Mason Remey was approved by Shoghi Effendi. It has proved to be impossible to proceed with this, however. Plans drawn up by Mason Remey for a Mašreq al-Adkār on the promontory of Mount Carmel in Haifa were approved in 1952, but its construction is not presently planned. An obelisk marks the site (Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 26; *Bahā’ī World* 12, pp. 388-89, 547-50; 14, p. 495; 15, pp. 177-78; Giachery, pp. 170-74).

The Universal House of Justice announced in 2001 that when the Mašreq al-Adkār in Santiago is built, this will complete the set of continental “Mother temples,” and after that national Mašreq al-Adkār will be erected (*Turning Point*, 1997-2007, pp. 160-61). Over 120 national Bahai communities have purchased land for building a Mašreq al-Adkār (*Bahā’ī World* 19, p. 144). In its more recent plans for the development of the Bahai community, the Universal



House of Justice has instituted devotional meetings as one of the “core activities” of all Bahai communities, has encouraged “projects of humanitarian service,” and has linked both of these with the development of the institution of the Mašreq al-Adkār (quoted in W. Momen, 2003, pp. 15, 59, see also pp. 9-14).

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Abbreviations: ELMA = Entesārāt-e Lajna-ye Melli-e Maḥfaẓa-ye Ātār wa Āršiv-e Amr, photocopied collection of the manuscripts from the National Bahai Archives of Iran, in private collection.

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