DOCTRINE AND DESIGN: TWO ISLAMIC CENTRES IN BURNABY, CANADA

A Photo Essay

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ISLAMIC PRAYER CENTRES are increasingly part of the contemporary religious architectural landscape of North America. Although they have become more architecturally ambitious, surprisingly little scholarly attention has been paid to them, and what has been written about them focuses primarily on the genre of the mosque. Particularly unexamined are the roles that different Islamic religious doctrines play in architectural design and details.[1] Recent work in the field of Islamic art and architectural history has attended to different Muslim groups, such as the Sunni, the Shi'i and their many variants, as well as Sufi orders and to the ways they architecturally differentiate themselves in the premodern world.[2] This is less true, however, for the study of contemporary North American works.[3] The diversity in beliefs among Muslim communities and their architectural expressions often goes unnoticed, illegible to people outside those communities.

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1 Omar Khalidi, "Approaches to Mosque Design in North America," in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, 317-34 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Omar Khalidi, "Mosques in the United States and Canada" (Berlin: US Embassy Germany, 2006); Vincent F. Biondo, "The Architecture of Mosques in the US and Britain," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 26, 3 (2006): 399-420. doi.org/10.1080/13602000601141414; Akel Ismail Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

2 For recent considerations of the role of doctrine in material culture with an emphasis on Shi'ism, see: Fahmida Suleman, ed., *People of the Prophet's House: Artistic and Ritual Expressions of Shi'i Islam* (London: Azimuth Editions, 2015); Pedram Khosronejad, *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); and James W. Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and the Indian Sub-continent* (London: Azimuth Editions, 2011).

3 For a recent examination of the Middle Eastern confluence of state and religious authority expressed in transnational mosque design and patronage, including the differing doctrinal agendas of Saudi and Iranian governments, see: Kishwar Rizvi, *Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

For the Islamic centres of contemporary Greater Vancouver, it is unclear whether a local Muslim community's allegiance to a particular Sunni, Shi'i, Sufi, or other doctrinal perspective translates into distinctive architectural decisions.[4] Are variant notions of Islam manifest in visual and spatial terms? As with all of Greater Vancouver's religious communities, religious discourse is embodied not only in verbal or conceptual terms but also in ritual practice and material culture. The material manifestations of faith communities are significant sites for the articulation of a community's defining principles, which are directed simultaneously towards its own members and the broader society of which they are a part.

In this article I examine how distinct Islamic doctrines are encoded in the designs of two prominent Islamic centres in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada: the Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana (compl. 1985) and the Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre (compl. 2008) (Figures 1 and 2). I analyze and compare their designs alongside narratives written by their respective communities. The different approaches to embodying specific Islamic doctrines – namely, Shia Nizari Ismailism[5] and a moderate Sunni tradition influenced by Saudi Wahhabism and South Asian Deobandism[6] adapted to the Canadian context – may be discerned. It is through choices made regarding (1) ornamental calligraphic texts, (2) minaret and *qibla* wall design, and (3) gender segregation design that the doctrines of the respective communities are signalled and materialized. By better understanding the subtle role doctrine plays in Islamic centre architecture, a more informed appreciation of the differences and commonalities among Burnaby's Muslim communities may be gained. This, in turn, will expand the discourse on Pacific Northwest religious architectural history at a time when considerable illiteracy, fear, and misunderstanding relating to Muslims is flourishing in North America. But to understand the subtleties of contemporary Islamic centre architecture in Burnaby, it is necessary to first delve into the complexities of Islam's early evolution.

Islam originated in the Arabian peninsula in the early seventh century, when, according to Muslim belief, the prophet Muhammad became a messenger (not a focus of worship) who received revelations from God

[4] In Derryl MacLean, "Religion, Ethnicity, and the Double Diaspora of Asian Muslims," in *Asian Religions in British Columbia*, ed. Larry DeVries, Don Baker, and Dan Overmyer, 64-84 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), an overview of key BC Muslim communities is given but differences in architectural genres or specificities are not delved into.

[5] Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[6] Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization* (New York: Brookings Institution Press, 2007) 36, 94-96.

Figure 1. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Courtyard with view to entrance. Photograph by Mohib Ebrahim, 2014, essentialismaili.com. Copyright: Mohib Ebrahim (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Figure 2. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Exterior. Photograph by Dale Simonson, 2009, www.flickr.com. Copyright: Dale Simonson (CC BY-SA 2.0).

mediated through the angel Jibril (Gabriel).[7] He struggled to share these revelations with his contemporaries and eventually came to be venerated as the model Muslim, God's favoured Messenger and even a potential intercessor with the Divine. The revelations came to be compiled as the Quran (Recitation), which enjoined Muslims to remember a singular God through daily prayer ideally performed as a congregation while facing the direction (i.e., *qibla*) of a place called the Far Mosque, which was interpreted to be the Kaaba in Mecca. Any place in which one bowed in prayer was declared a *masjid*, or mosque, and few additional specific requirements were given. Muhammad's house in Medina, known only through verbal description, evolved into the first congregational mosque, thus establishing an influential prototype.[8] Following Muhammad's death, a crisis of succession ensued. Dozens of diverse Islamic doctrines emerged and competed with one another, setting in motion perpetual countervailing processes of pluralization and homogenization that endure today.

A key early movement consisted of those who supported the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali. They were called the party of Ali, the Shia, and their members were called the Shi'i.[9] In subsequent centuries, the Shi'i articulated a distinctive doctrine in which Muhammad was said to have endorsed a line of hereditarily appointed male leaders known as *Imams*, who were vested with the authority and special knowledge to interpret the Quran's inner meanings (*tawil*) and the faith.[10] For the Shi'i, Ali and his descendants deserved special reverence and came to be seen as infallible (*isma*).[11]

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[7] For an introduction to Islamic history, see: Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002) and Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2005). For a classic examination of the earliest sources on Muhammad, see Michael Cook, *Muhammad*, reprint ed. (New York: Oxford Paperbacks, 1983).

[8] Doğan Kuban, *The Mosque and Its Early Development* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 12; Alexander Knysh, *Islam in Historical Perspective* (New York; London: Routledge, 2015), 328; Francis E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany (N.Y.): SUNY Press, 1994), 194-96.

[9] For in-depth scholarly treatments of the Shi'i, see: Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Patricia Crone, "The First Civil War and Sect Formation," in *God's Rule (Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 17-32; and Andrew J. Newman, *Twelver Shiism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[10] I. Poonawala, "Ta'wīl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., vol. 10, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[11] Madelung, W., and E. Tyan, "'Iṣma," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., vol. 4. eds. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 182-183.

However, the majority of Muslims understand Islam's history differently. For them, Muhammad's companion and father-in-law Abu Bakr was his rightful successor. He assumed the leadership role of *khalifa*, or vice-regent, which was initially similar to the Shi'i notion of *Imam* but with the difference that succession was first determined consensually by male elites then dynastically. Arguably, the office evolved along more secular and imperial lines, and religious authority was decentralized to bodies of religious scholars and officials.[12] Religious authority came to rest less with the *khalifa* and more with the companions and religious scholars who transmitted the Prophet's example (*sunna*) as well as with scholarly readings of the Quran. This approach would characterize the tradition of Sunni Islam. Yet Sunni history claims Ali as the fourth *khalifa*, a reminder of how deeply interwoven the two traditions are.

According to the Quran, Islam was an extension of earlier revelations to humanity, particularly those of the Abrahamic traditions of Christianity and Judaism. Early Islam was diverse, filled with intermingling and contesting views and mystical trans-doctrinal Sufi brotherhoods.[13] However, with the rise of ruler-sponsored and institutionalized religious scholarship after the eighth century, doctrinal consolidations took place.[14] During this process, competing and contradictory accounts of the Prophet (*hadith*) were sorted through; approaches to Quran interpretation (*tafsir*) systematized, legalized (*usul al-fiqh*, *fiqh*), and canonized; and clearer distinctions around previously intertwined Sunni and Shia doctrines and ritual practices were established. Yet Islam's spread always entailed, and arguably thrived upon, a multitude of adaptations and exchanges with local religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, whether they were pre-Islamic Arabian, Persian (e.g., Zoroastrian and Manichean), Jewish, Christian, African, Mongol, Turkic, Hindu, Buddhist, or Daoist – to name but a few.[15]

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[12] Eric J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007). Crone ("First Civil War," 18) notes that when Abu Bakr claimed succession to the Prophet, who was called Imam, he adopted the title Khalifa (deputy) meaning the Deputy of God (*khalifat Allah*) though later religious scholars asserted the title meant Deputy of the Prophet of God (*khalifa rasul allah*).

[13] Rippin, *Muslims*, 73-87.

[14] Ibid., 89-102.

[15] For examples of scholarship on Islam's influences and adaptive response to preceding religious traditions, see: Rippin, *Muslims*, 10-16. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, *The Rise of Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); and Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

With Islam's institutionalization, religious gathering spaces, such as the well-known Friday congregational mosques (*jama masjids*), emerged, but there were also many other sites of religious life, such as tombs and shrines (*makbaras, gunbads, qadam rasool*), Sufi meeting houses and lodges (*khanqahs, jamatkhanas, zawiyas, tekiyyes, ribats*), religious colleges (*madrasas*), and Twelver Shia mourning centres (*husayniahs, imambaras*).[16] The Quran and *hadith* offered only vague directions on the design and form of religious spaces, but architectural conventions emerged and became entrenched.

Muslim women were historically able to use communal religious spaces with considerable freedom, but their access was limited as time went on. Women came to be relegated to back rows and balconies, and even to the home, as Islam grew more institutionalized and pre-Islamic cultures of gender segregation were woven into Muslim socio-legal tenets.[17] The complexities and contradictions of the multitude of Muslim faith practices, beliefs, and spatialities are not relics of the past; rather, they remain a vibrant part of the present, as the two Islamic centres in Burnaby illustrate.

THE ISMAILI CENTRE AND JAMATKHANA, BURNABY (1985)

The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana in Burnaby, British Columbia, was commissioned by the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader (*Imam*) of the globally dispersed multicultural Shia Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims.[18] It is administered on his behalf by the organization known as His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council for Canada, though religious matters are supervised by the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board. Members are appointed with no evident written restrictions based on gender, although the Ismaili constitution specifies that the *Imam* must be a male descendant of Ali and the Prophet's daughter Fatima.[19] The Nizari Ismailis are one among a group of Ismaili traditions that identify as part of the Shia tradition but they are unlike the majority

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[16] Andrew Petersen, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

[17] Marion Katz, *Women in the Mosque: A History of Legal Thought and Social Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[18] Greg Joyce, "The Aga Khan, Known as His Royal Highness, Prince...," *United Press International*, 27 July 1982, at http://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/07/27/The-Aga-Khan-known-as-His-Royal-Highness-Prince/4750396590400/; Philip Jodidio, "Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana," in *Under the Eaves of Architecture: The Aga Khan: Builder and Patron*, 182-83 (Munich: Prestel, 2007).

[19] "The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims," 1986, at http://www.ismaili.net/Source/extra1.html.

of the Shi'i, who are known as Twelvers (*Ithnaashariyyah*, or *Imamiya*).[20] A celebrated moment in shared Ismaili history is the rise of the Fatimid Empire in tenth-century North Africa, which was initially headed by Ismaili *Imams* presiding over a largely Sunni populace.

It is thought that, during the Fatimid period, early attempts to proselytize among Hindus in South Asia were initiated and that these led to the emergence of the South Asian Nizari Ismailis, who were introduced to Ismaili Islam through a group of beloved poet-missionaries (*pirs*). They and their successors immersed themselves in the religious diversity of South Asia and explained the doctrine in terms of Hindu beliefs, ritual frameworks, and religious hymns.[21] Many South Asian Ismailis migrated to East Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the two regions were under British imperial rule.[22] Their descendants were the principal Ismailis who immigrated to the Greater Vancouver area in the 1970s, many as refugees from Idi Amin's Uganda. However, Nizari Ismailism was not only concentrated in South Asia: other major historical centres included Iran, Central Asia, and Syria, and more recent immigration has diversified the contemporary Vancouver community. In the past, and in the present, Ismaili minorities have experienced sectarian persecution within Sunni and Twelver Shi'i societies, which regarded them as heretical.

In global terms, there are relatively few Nizari Ismailis: they number only in the several millions in contrast to the over 200 million Twelver Shi'i or the more than 1.37 billion Sunni Muslims.[23] Their commitment

[20] The Twelvers maintain the line of *Imamate* was suspended when their twelfth *Imam* went into occultation; he is believed to be destined to return. The Nizari Ismailis differ on who succeeded the sixth *Imam* and maintain that the line of *Imamate* has continued right into the present; the current Aga Khan is believed to be a direct descendant of Ali and, in turn, Muhammad. Azim Nanji and Farhad Daftari, "Isma'ilism XVII: The Imamate in Isma'ilism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* online edition, at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ismailism-xvii-the-imamate-in-ismailism.

[21] Azim Nanji and Farhad Daftari, "Ismaili Sects – South Asia," in *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, vol. 3, ed. David Levinson and Karen Christensen, 185-187 (New York: Thomson, 2002). Ali S. Asani, "From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim: The Articulation of Ismaili Khoja Identity in South Asia," in *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. Farhad Daftary, 95-128 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010). Asani interestingly argues that Ismaili identity evolved from the more diffuse Sat Panth conception to a more distinct one centred on the Aga Khans in India. See also, Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismā'ilī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995); and Michel Boivin, *La rénovation du Shi'i sme Ismaelien en Inde et au Pakistan: D'après les écrits et les discours de Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).

[22] Cynthia Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paperchase Kenya Limited, 1996). Zulfikar Hirji, "The Socio-legal Formation of the Nizari Ismaili of East Africa, 1800-1950," in *A Modern History of the Ismailis*, 129-60.

[23] "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project (blog)*, 7 October 2009, http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-

to Shia tenets and their distinctive ritual practices are Sufi-inspired, multicultural, and multilingual, and they differ from Sunni and Twelver Shi'i norms. This affects their acceptance by larger Muslim communities, who have been swayed in recent decades by the state-sponsored Twelver Shi'i sm of Iran and/or the Gulf state Sunni versions of Islam.

In 1975, the Ismailis of Greater Vancouver initially planned to build a facility for seven hundred worshippers on a 2.7 hectare (6.66 acre) site at 4990 South East Marine Drive. Objections were raised by the "local community,"[24] and the project shifted to 4010 Canada Way, once slated as a site for an elderly care facility. The Vancouver engineering and design firm Cooper, Tanner and Associates Ltd. proposed an initial design (one very different from the final one) and oversaw the site's rezoning for institutional and religious purposes.[25] Architect Bruno Freschi was then selected for the project, and fresh designs were shown to the new site's neighbours at public hearings held on 18 April 1978[26] and again on 17 December 1980.[27] In various submissions, the proposed *jamatkhana* was referred to as either a temple, religious sanctuary, or mosque – reflecting the struggle to explain what exactly a *jamatkhana* was. Again, vociferous concerns were expressed, this time revolving around traffic and parking matters and revealing an unfamiliarity and unease with non-Christian centres of worship. At the public hearing held on 17 December 1980, hundreds stomped and booed and it was questioned whether a *jamatkhana* was analogous to a church and therefore recognizable as a religious institution. Later commentators considered racial and religious intolerance to have played a role at the time, given the South Asian and Muslim backgrounds of the Ismailis proposing the development.[28] Undeterred, the Ismailis made revisions to appease the community – at considerable

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[24] Regular council minutes, 482-84, 5 May 1975, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, City of Burnaby Archives (hereafter City Clerk Fonds, CBA), at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes52058.

[25] Rezoning Reference # 49/77, lot 125, DL 68, plan 47246 (4010 Canada Way), 20 March 1978, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilreport22196. See Report 14673. "Architects renderings of proposed Ismaili Mosque," 18 April 1978, *Columbian Newspaper* collection, City of Burnaby Archives. https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/archivephoto45427.

[26] Public hearing minutes, 18 April 1978, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 277-80, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes60904

[27] Public hearing minutes," 17 December 1980, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 1-5, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes52681.

[28] Baha Abu-Laban, "The Canadian Muslim Community: The Need for a New Survival Strategy," in *The Muslim Community in North America*, ed. Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula Qureshi, 75-92 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), esp. n24.

expense – and worked with elected Burnaby officials and staff to realize their project.

For the Aga Khan, the new centre was not only a building born of practical needs but also a symbol of the outlook of the Vancouver, and larger Canadian, Ismaili community. It was representative of the permanent nature of Ismaili settlement in Canada, a commitment to Canadian integration, and the ways that tradition and modernity could constructively inform one another.[29] In a speech marking the building's opening on 23 August 1985, the Aga Khan gave a retrospective explanation of his intentions behind the commission:

> The Ismaili community has sought to create a building here which is both Islamic in its architectural inspiration and of a quality to enhance the overall distinction of Burnaby. The Jamatkhana is designed to be a social and cultural centre, as well as a place of congregation. It expresses the Ismailis' desire to give of their best to the cultural and economic fabric of Canada. They are proud that it symbolises their commitment both to this country's future and their ancient heritage. Nor is there any dichotomy in this dual aim. Muslims believe their faith is not for one time, but for all times and so there cannot be conflict between tradition and modernity.[30]

The Aga Khan saw the resolution of historical and contemporary architectural traditions within the building's design as an architectural metaphor for Ismaili views on how to sincerely yet flexibly practice Islam in ways consonant with life in contemporary North America.[31] Forging a contemporary, rather than a nostalgic, Islamic architectural aesthetic was seen to be a distinctly Ismaili, yet generalizable, approach to Islam. It was the newly prominent Vancouver firm Bruno Freschi Architects that was entrusted with the ambitious task. Its head, Italian-Canadian Bruno Freschi (who came from a Catholic family and grew up in Trail, British Columbia) was educated at the Architectural Association in London and had worked in the office of the famous Vancouver architect Arthur Erickson. He was also the principal architect of the 1986 Vancouver Expo lands.[32]

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[29] Aga Khan, "Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Ismaili Jamatkhana and Centre, Burnaby, Friday, 23 August 1985," at http://www.theismaili.org/ismailicentres/speech-opening-ceremony-burnaby.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Jodidio, "Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana," 182-83.

[32] A complete list of architects, contractors, consultants, and so on who were involved can be found in: *The Ismaili Jamatkhana and Centre: Burnaby, BC, Canada* (Burnaby, BC: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1985). Freschi's architectural team included: Shanti Ghose, Roland Kupfer,

The new monumental *jamatkhana* belonged not to the genre of congregational Friday mosques (*jama masjid*) but to the historical building genre of Sufi meeting houses (*khanqahs* and *jamatkhanas*) popular in many parts of the Islamic world, especially Greater Iran, Central Asia, and North India. They date to the fourteenth century or earlier and were generally modest in scale. The Chishti Sufi order, which had no clear link to the Ismailis apart from being part of the same milieu, called their meeting places *jamatkhanas*.[33] South Asian Nizari Ismailis, who trace their history to the missionary efforts of the fifteenth-century Pir Sadruddin, maintain he established a *khana* (house) for communal worship and gatherings based on his sacred hymns (*ginans*), which were orally transmitted.[34] The term *jamatkhana* for Ismaili prayer spaces surfaces in an 1866 court case in the High Court of Bombay presided over by British justice Joseph Arnould, in which the history of South Asian Ismailis and their institutions was researched in order to resolve an inheritance dispute.[35] The case became a seminal moment in consolidating the religious identity of South Asian Ismailis. Similarly, British archaeologist James Burgess noted in 1876 that Ismailis in Kachh called their place of worship a *khana*.[36]

Friday congregational mosques (*jama masjids*) are the most commonly known type of communal Muslim prayer spaces, but Sufi centres

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Joyce Drohan, Richard Belli, Julia Meadows, Lynne Werker, and Elizabeth MacKenzie. Landscape design was handled by Garr Campbell Associates Inc. (Salt Lake City) and Vagelatos Associates Ltd. (Vancouver). Mozhan Khadem of Boston served as a calligraphy consultant. German-trained Canadian glass artist Lutz Haufschild, of Kitsilano Stained Glass, worked on the building's windows (Lutz Haufschild, "Lutz Haufschild Website: Places of Worship, Golden Keys, View of Mosque at Dusk," at http://www.lutzhaufschild.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=1173&category=46&secondary=54.) See also: Hafiz-Ur-Rehman Sherali, "The Architectural Character of Islamic Institutions in the West" (MA thesis, MIT, 1991), 199, at http://18.7.29.232/handle/1721.1/41322 and Jodidio, "Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana," 182-83.

[33] C. Ernst and B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Springer, 2016), esp. 185. Mohammad Salim, "Jama'at-Khana of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi," *Proceedings of the Pakistan Historical Conference III* (1953): 183-89. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-U'd-Din Ganj-I-Shakar*, IAD Religio-Philosophy (Original) Series, no. 1 (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1973), esp. 55-56.

[34] Azim Nanji, *The Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1978), 72-77.

[35] Teena Purohit, *The Aga Khan Case: Religion and Identity in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[36] James Burgess, *Report on the Antiquities of Kâṭhiâwâḍ and Kachh, Being the Result of the Second Season's Operations of the Archaeological Survey of Western India, 1874-75* (London: India Museum, 1876), 194.

(*khanqahs*),[37] which include *jamatkhanas*, are also centres for prayer.[38] A medieval *jamatkhana* was, arguably, more a semi-private, residential community centre than an open space of worship. It was primarily a place for a spiritual leader and his followers, to which the general public – including non-Muslims – could be invited, but there were no entrenched design conventions. This was in some ways the conception of the *jamatkhana* that Ismailis built upon in South Asia and carried with them to East Africa. There they built prominent British colonial style *jamatkhanas* during the early twentieth century prior to immigrating to Canada, where they initially renovated rented light-industrial buildings.[39] For the Vancouver Ismaili community, the semi-private character of the *jamatkhana* endures today as, during prayer times, the Burnaby prayer hall is reserved for only Ismailis, although non-Ismailis may tour the Burnaby *jamatkhana* and use its social facilities.

The Building

Altogether, the construction of the Burnaby Jamatkhana complex marks a turn towards monumentality and permanence. It includes a garden court and a double-square planned building. The rectangular, 1.4 hectare site is sunk three metres below ground to accommodate height restrictions and to alleviate the early concerns of the surrounding residential neighbourhood.[40] It is symmetrically planned using an octagonal

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[37] Gerhard Böwering and Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Ḵānaqāh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kanaqah.

[38] Malika Mohammada, *The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2007), 235-37.

[39] For a discussion of Indian Ismailis in Africa with a focus on Kenya and references to their jamatkhanas, see Colette Le Cour Grandmaison, "Nizarite Ismaili in Kenya," in *Indian Africa: Minorities of Indian-Pakistani Origin in Eastern Africa*, ed. Adam Michel, 207-36 (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2015).

[40] The site's details are described in the following sources: Jodidio, "Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana"; Sherali, "Architectural Character"; Bruno Freschi, "Burnaby Jamatkhana," *Architecture and Urbanism (A+U)* 90 (July 1986): 46-52; Bruno Freschi, "Ethnic Eloquence: Burnaby Jamatkhana, Burnaby, BC," *Canadian Architect* 30 (June 1985): 12-15; "Burnaby Jamatkhana," *Mimar 6: Architecture in Development* 6 (October-December 1982): 28-30, at https://archnet.org/system/publications/contents/3827/original/DPT0287.pdf?1392643567. Resistance is discussed in Don Mowatt, *A New Space for Islam*, CBC Radio, Vancouver, March 1993. See also Azim Nanji, "The Cultural and Religious Heritage: Perspectives on the Muslim Experience," in *Religious Conscience, the State, and the Law: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Significance*, ed. John McLaren and Harold Coward, 223-38 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), esp. 229. Records of community objections can be found in: Regular Council Minutes, 5 May 1975, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 482-84, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes52058; Public hearing minutes, 18 April 1978, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 277-81, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/

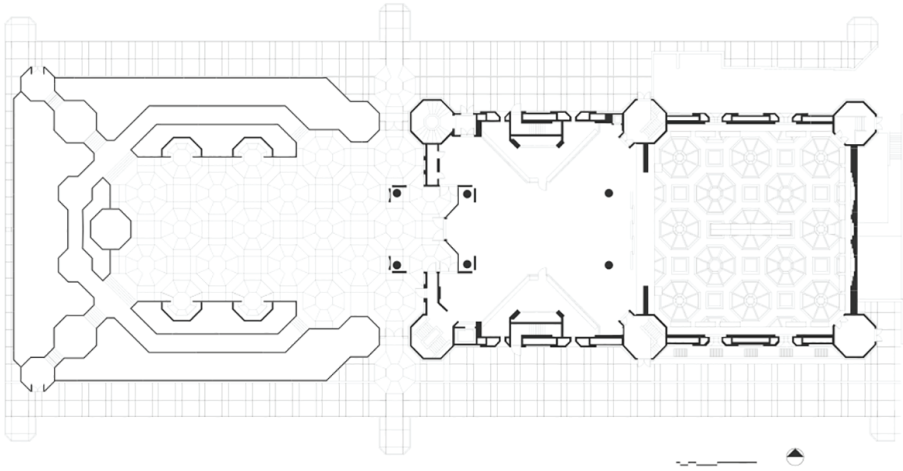

Figure 3. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Ground plan and garden. Redrawn after Bruno Freschi Architects, Ground floor showing the courtyard, loggia and the prayer hall in the Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby, BC, Canada (Islamic Publications Ltd., 1985). Copyright: Hussein Keshani, 2018.

Figure 4. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Courtyard garden. Photograph by Mohib Ebrahim, 2014, essentialismaili.com. Copyright: Mohib Ebrahim (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

grid pattern and aligned along an east-west axis (Figure 3). Unlike many contemporary Friday mosques, the building is not obviously oriented in the direction of the shortest distance to Mecca (*qibla*) – which, in Burnaby, is northeast. However, the octagons, which permeate the design, contain a northeast-oriented face, resulting in the serendipitous reminder of the *qibla* orientation throughout the entire complex while

councilminutes60904; Public hearing minutes, 17 December 1980, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 1-5, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes52681.

Figure 5. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Exterior, prayer hall, portion of Lutz Haufschild's *Golden Keys*. Photograph by Gary Otte, 1985. Copyright: Gary Otte / AKDN.

allowing for the most pragmatic use of the site – a pragmatism that was present in medieval Islam.

The garden consists of two tiers – the main octagonal patterned court paved with concrete and inlaid sandstone and a surrounding u-shaped, elevated pathway (Figure 4). Cedar, London plane, cherry, and magnolia trees (as well as others) are planted at the site, as are various annuals and perennial flowers.[41] The garden court faces the two-storey high sandstone-clad (Italian *pietra etrusca dorata*) building made of poured reinforced concrete walls and precast domes.[42] Entry to the building is seemingly provided through a large set of double doors made of oak and brass inlay that are set within a monumental archway clad in ivory-coloured Italian Carrara marble (Figure 1). Eight three-dimensional, cubic, red steel-framed amber glass windows, cast one-inch thick and stained with silver on either side, are installed in the front and the sides to admit filtered golden light into the banquet and prayer halls; they

[41] Sherali, "Architectural Character," 203.

[42] For a photograph of the cast domes, see "Shah Karim al-Hussayni, The Aga Khan IV," 21 April 1983, *Columbian Newspaper* collection, City of Burnaby Archives, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/archivephoto45784.

Figure 6. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Interior, prayer hall. Photograph by Gary Otte, 1985. Copyright: Gary Otte/AKDN.

were crafted by artisan Lutz Haufschild in a series called Golden Keys (Figure 5).[43]

Upon entering the building, one encounters the one-storey-high foyer above which lies an elegant banquet hall. The foyer provides space to mingle and cloak rooms for shoes and coats. It leads into the voluminous, two-storey, square prayer hall bounded by exposed concrete walls with room to accommodate about one thousand people (Figure 6). The principal east-facing wall bears panels of rose and coral marble and marmorino (crushed marble and lime putty) with sandblasted geometric patterns that adorn the upper walls. Marmorino panels can also be found on the other walls, while an illuminated wood lattice dado surrounds the perimeter at ground level (Figures 6, 7, and 8)

The load-bearing walls of the prayer hall support a geometric network of substantial beams that form octagons supporting five sky-lit domes with brass rings at their base (Figure 6). The domes' exteriors are clad with copper oxidized to a green patina and surmounted by glazed cupolas allowing in natural light. The prayer hall's floor is covered with a con-

[43] Stephen Knapp, *The Art of Glass* (Gloucester, Mass.: Rockport Publishers, 1998), 67. Haufschild, "Places of Worship," at http://www.lutzhaufschild.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=1173&category=46&secondary=54.

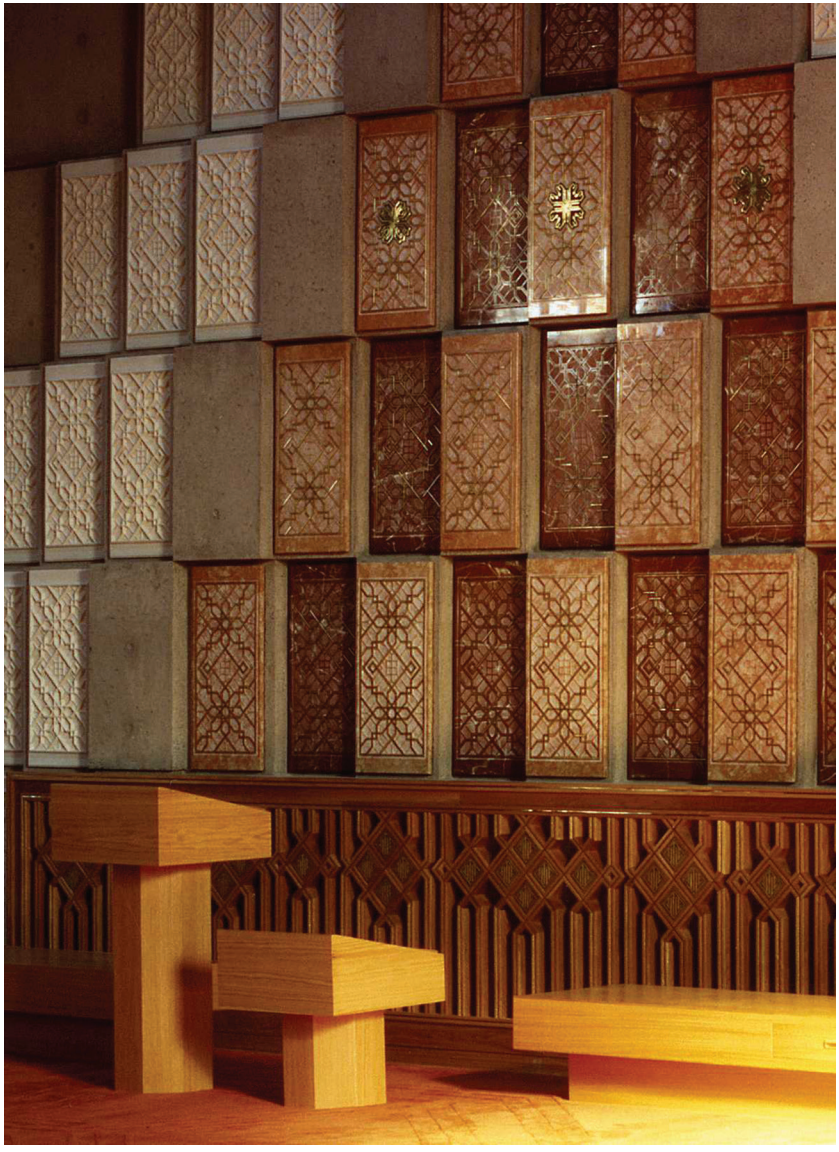

Figure 7. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Interior, prayer hall, detail of stepped wall relief with marmorina and marble tiles with inlaid brass Arabic calligraphic medallions of Muhammad, Allah, and Ali (top right). Photograph by Gary Otte, 1985. Copyright: Gary Otte/AKDN.

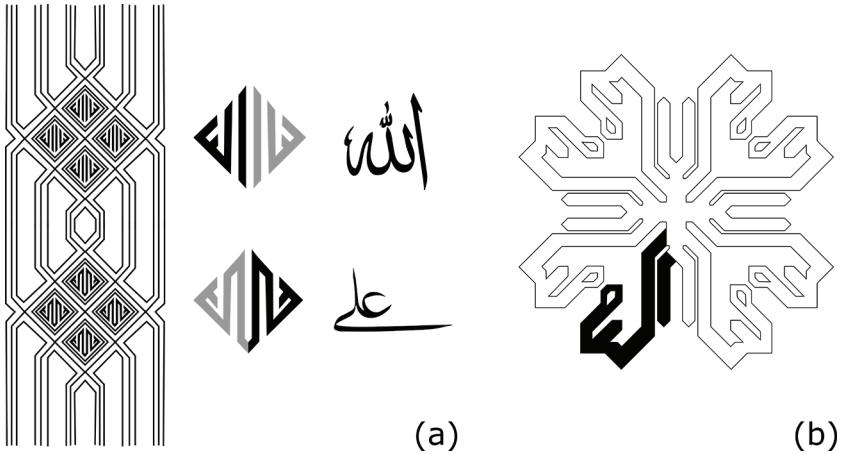

Figure 8. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: (a) Mozhan Khadem's abstracted calligraphy in the Prayer Hall interior – Allah (top) and Ali (bottom) in Arabic; (b) Abstracted calligraphy on brass medallions inlaid in coral marble panel in the Prayer Hall interior – Allah. Digital drawing by Hussein Keshani, 2017. Copyright: Hussein Keshani.

tinuous, rust-coloured wool carpet provided by Hong Kong's Tai Ping Carpets and crafted in China; it is embossed with a geometric pattern reflecting the octagonal pattern of the ceiling structure and the garden court outside. The basement level includes a boardroom with an ivory-coloured Carrara marble table directly beneath the archway clad in the same material, as well as a library, washrooms, and various classrooms. The total budget for the project appears to have been $10 million, but the final building cost at least $15 million to complete.[44]

Calligraphy

Calligraphy, which has often been a prominent part of Muslim religious architecture, is not a visually important feature of the *jamatkhana*, though it is present and significant. The calligraphic program of the centre was largely conceived and designed, it seems, by the Bahai Iranian-American consultant Mozhan Khadem but was subject to the approval of Freschi, the Aga Khan's brother Prince Amyn, and the Aga Khan himself.[45] In

[44] Building costs are reported in the following sources: Joyce Tajdin and Richard Huntington, "Creative Nudges: City Visions Burn Brightly in Minds of UB's Cohen and Freschi," *Buffalo News*, 30 March 1989, at http://buffalonews.com/1989/03/30/creative-nudges-city-visions-burn-brightly-in-minds-of-ubs-cohen-and-freschi/. The $15 million figure reported in Huntington may be in US dollars as it is reported in a US publication.

[45] Sherali, "Architectural Character," 199. Khadem mentions his involvement on his company's website for Boston Design Collaborative (BDC) (http://www.bdcintl.com/past_experience.htm and http://www.bdcintl.com/burnaby.htm). His Bahai background is noted in a caption under his

Figure 9. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Exterior, foundation and opening tablets. Photograph by Karina Nardi, 2015. Copyright: Karina Nardi.

general, calligraphy appears throughout the building on an intimate and discreet, rather than monumental, scale. Each of the two small foundation and opening tablets located on the exterior to the left of the main doors include two instances of calligraphy (Figures 1 and 9). The first, written in cursive Arabic script at the top, is a common opening phrase (the *basmala*), used in chapters of the Quran; it means "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" and is typically uttered before any undertaking. The second is a circular cursive calligraphic design. At the calligraphic circle's centre is the Aga Khan's personal insignia of a turban-crown surrounded by a circle of crescent moons.[46] The logo combining the calligraphic circle, the ring of crescent moons, and the turban-crown insignia was used to mark the Aga Khan's silver

portrait, which was placed at Koç University, and it reads: "Koç university is grateful to the architect of its beautiful campus, Mozhan Khadem, who grasped this project with passion, building upon his Iranian/Bahai heritage, combining it with his deep appreciation of Mevlana, and the Ottoman architectural styles, with courtyards surrounded by buildings, integrated so well with the gradients and contours of its natural forest environment." For Khadem's involvement with other Aga Khan projects, see Jodidio, "Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana," 17.

[46] The turban-crown insignia has appeared on the tail fin of the Aga Khan's private jet.

jubilee – that is, the twenty-five-year anniversary of his assumption of the office of the Ismaili *Imamate* in 1957.

The text of the calligraphic circle is particularly significant. It reproduces a Quranic phrase that reads:

> And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you – when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers.[47]

Ostensibly a call for Muslim unity, the phrase "rope of Allah," (*habl allah*) in this passage, for many Shi'i, this passage is taken to refer to the Quran as well as the Prophet's family (*ahlul bayt*) and, by implication, the hereditary *Imamate*. The verse is seen as Quranic validation of Shia doctrine and historical memory.[48] The incorporation of the Aga Khan's silver jubilee commemorative logo into the Burnaby *jamatkhana* commemorative tablets renders the building a monument to mark the Aga Khan's twenty-five years as *Imam* in addition to it being a symbol of Canadian Ismaili views and aspirations. The passage's significance for the Aga Khan is seen in another silver jubilee project, the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, that bears a seal with the same Quranic citation.[49]

Shi'i readings of the Quranic passage do not prevent Sunni communities from highlighting the same verse, a case in point being that the same verse has appeared on the how-to-become-a-member section on the British Columbia Muslim Association (BCMA) website's About

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[47] Quran, Sahih International 3:103.

[48] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 150-53; Hamid Mavani, *Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism: From Ali to Post-Khomeini* (London: Routledge, 2013), 55-56. See also Aabiss Shakari, "What Is Rope of Allah?," ShiaChat.com (blog), 23 January 2012, at http://www.shiachat.com/forum/topic/234997946-what-is-rope-of-allah/. For South Asian Ismaili reception of this phrase, see Ali S. Asani, "The Ismaili Pir Sadr Ad-Din," in *Tales of God's Friends: Islamic Hagiography in Translation*, ed. John Renard, 261-68 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), esp. 263. For early Sunni uses of the phrase, see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39-40. For a typical Sunni reading of the phrase as referring to the Quran and the Sunnah, see Sheikh Assim Alhakeem, "The Rope of Allah | Assim Al-Hakeem," at https://www.assimalhakeem.net/the-rope-of-allah/. Alhakeem has been an imam of a *masjid* in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for twenty years.

[49] "University Seal The Aga Khan University," at https://www.aku.edu/about/at-a-glance/Pages/university-seal.aspx (viewed 15 February 2018). The emblem also appears on souvenir medallions issued at the time whose obverse sides bore a profile of the Aga Khan. See Whitmore Coins Tokens and Medals, 2016, *1982 Silver Jubilee of the Aga Khan (Shah Karim) Medal 32mm Arabic*, photograph, at https://www.whitmorectm.com (Copyright: whitmorectm).

Figure 10. The Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana, Burnaby: Exterior, main entry oak doors with brass inlay. Photograph by Mohib Ebrahim, 2014, essentialismaili.com. Copyright: Mohib Ebrahim (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

page.[50] The verse's interpretation, then, depends on which community deploys and receives it. The tablets are significant in that they bear one of the few clear visible markers that the building is a Nizari Ismaili congregational space. Yet the tablets are not where calligraphy is most significantly used. For that, one must look closely at the exterior door handles on the front double doors within the monumental archway and inside the prayer hall (Figure 10).

The oversized oak doors to which the inscribed handles belong consist of inlaid brass, lattice-like geometric patterns that catch the sunlight.

[50] BCMA website at http://thebcma.com/Aboutus.aspx.

The two door handles are formed by rotated squares, and, like the doors, they are inlaid with brass strips that trace not only a pattern but also the abstracted name of Ali in stylized geometric Arabic. The name Ali is reflected to form an emblem, meaning it appears four times in total. The interweaving of pattern and calligraphic emblem on the doors foreshadows what will appear on the wooden lattices of the prayer hall and creates a set of visual and verbal signifiers that quietly point to the doctrinal core of the Shia Imami Ismaili tradition – the religious authority of Ali and the *Imams* who descended from him. Given that the Aga Khan claims direct descent from Ali and the Shia mantle of *Imam*, the inscription of the name Ali on the entry doors is highly significant: it marks the building as a Shia place of worship.

One of the interesting things about the Burnaby *jamatkhana*'s front doors is that they are generally used for special occasions such as a formal visit by the Aga Khan or a catered event for a distinguished speaker. Daily visitors, however, use ancillary doors to the right and left of the main doors. The inscribed central doors establish a processional axis for the *Imam* to enter the *jamatkhana* somewhat in the manner that Fatimid caliphs of Egypt entered the congregational mosques of historic Cairo (*al-Qahira*).[51] The epigraphy on the doors and their axial placement within a large symbolic archway then combine to more fully evoke the concept of *Imamate*. The entire ensemble of inscribed doors reserved for the Ismaili *Imam* set within an archway resembling the gatehouse buildings of historical Islamic architecture appropriately invokes for pious Ismailis a treasured Shi'i account of the Prophet in which Muhammad proclaims: "I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its Gate."[52] Furthermore, the meeting chamber for the boards that report to the Aga Khan are located on the same vertical axis in the basement beneath the portal. It features a boardroom table made of the same marble used to clad the portal, a material and spatial link that illuminates the community's hierarchical structure of authority between the *Imam* and his administrative bodies. The archway and its doors, then, can be seen as an architectural metaphor for the Ismaili *Imam* himself and his religious authority for Ismailis (Figure 1).

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[51] Petersen, 45-46. For a brief overview of Fatimid Cairo's architecture, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 9-11. See also, Irene Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 100.

[52] Momen, *Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 14. Parvis Rawji, "The Darkhana, Canada: A Building of Graceful Architecture and Spiritual Nobility," *Simerg - Insights from Around the World*, 6 May 2011, at https://simerg.com/the-jamatkhana/the-darkhana-canada-a-building-of-graceful-architecture-and-spiritual-nobility/.

Beyond the entry doors lies the foyer in which wood geometric tracery resumes along the lower walls, minus the calligraphic emblems. Inside the grand prayer hall, the dado of wooden geometric tracery reappears but now with calligraphic emblems that create continuity between the exterior and the interior (Figure 6). The same emblems on the exterior front door handles, the ones inscribed with the mirrored name of Ali, reappear in the prayer hall located on a lower row of rotated squares on the wooden dado encircling the prayer hall, effectively wrapping the interior with the name of Ali dozens of times. Above these diamond emblems is another series of rotated squares interlaced with the lower ones. This row, unlike the outer door where similar squares are filled with patterns, is filled with the Arabic word "Allah" (God), once again composed in an abstracted stylized, geometric script, and mirrored (Figure 8(a)). The abstracted names of Allah and Ali are effectively interwoven on the wooden prayer hall dado, a visualization of the Ismaili conception of the relationship between divinity and *Imamate*. Furthermore, the dual calligraphic emblems of the prayer hall evoke the common Muslim and, in particular, Ismaili ritual practice of *zikr*, in which the congregation repeatedly and meditatively recites sacred words in unison. The distinctive windows of the building have geometricized Arabic calligraphy as well, but they have been abstracted to the point of illegibility.[53] For the building's architect Bruno Freschi, the use and presence of calligraphy was neither incidental nor ornamental but essential for rendering the space as a spiritual one.

The main wall of the prayer hall, towards which the faithful face when praying, is distinguished from the others with more elaborate ornamentation; it bears rose and coral marble ornamental panels that run above the wood lattice dado (Figures 6 and 7). Three centre panels include inset brass calligraphic emblems rendered in a style known as floriated Kufic, a style that can be associated with Fatimid dynasty but not exclusively.[54] The central emblem bears the name of Allah, which

[53] Freschi mentions the presence of calligraphy on the windows in his interview with Simerg.com in which he is quoted as saying, "An example of 'going out'. That ephemeral quality of spiritual space can best be seen in the calligraphy on the glazing of the 'lanterns' or windows inside the Jamatkhana. The glass is one inch thick providing acoustic insulation. The graphics are fired on both surfaces of the glass. Seen at an angle the calligraphic images are dual and ambiguous, they visually vibrate to the contemplative viewer. This is 'signalectic' architecture, the threshold of the ephemeral sanctuary of spiritual space." See Abdulmalik J. Merchant, "Bruno Freschi, Architect of the Ismaili Centre in Burnaby, in Conversation with Simerg," *Simerg – Insights from Around the World*, 8 April 2009, at https://simerg.com/about/voices-bruno-freschi-architect-of-the-ismaili-centre-in-burnaby-in-conversation-with-simerg/.

[54] Bahia Shehab, "Floriated Kufic on the Monuments of Fatimid Cairo" (MA thesis, American University in Cairo, 2009).

is reflected, and the set is repeated four times along a rotational axis (Figure 8(b)). The emblem on the left employs the name Muhammad, while the one on the right incorporates the name Ali once more; both names are reflected and repeated rotationally as well.

The three emblems together bring to mind the Shia version of the ritual Muslim profession of faith (*shahada*) that Ismailis employ: There is no God but God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God, Ali – the Commander of the Faithful – is from God (*la ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-an rasulullah, wa Aliyun amirul mominin aliyullah*).[55] The calligraphic emblems then signify the three foundational beliefs of the Shi'i – the oneness of God (*tawhid*), Muhammad is the last Messenger of God (*nabuwwat*), and Muhammad's divinely sanctioned designated successor is Ali along with his descendants (*Imamate*).[56] It is important to remember, though, that the name Ali, which means "most high," is also one of the canonical ninety-nine names for God that Muslims of all persuasions employ, so it is not necessarily the presence of the name Ali that marks the *jamatkhana* as a Shia space but, rather, its repetition. In the vast prayer hall of the Burnaby *jamatkhana*, it is in the diminutive and abstracted calligraphic inscriptions that the Shia belief framework of the Ismailis finds distinctive form.

Minarets, Gendered Space, and the Qibla

Tower minarets are a noticeably common feature of contemporary Islamic centres, but the Burnaby *jamatkhana* conspicuously lacks them, a departure from Ismaili *jamatkhana* architecture in East Africa, which often featured a single domed tower minaret doubling as a British-colonial inspired clock tower.[57] The conspicuous absence of tower minarets, or their analogues, in Burnaby represents a self-conscious turning away from the recent past. The surrounding Burnaby community's initial resistance to the building's construction undoubtedly also played a part in the avoidance of tall architectural features like minarets (and its submersion). Yet their absence may also be another subtle way in which more recent Ismaili perspectives are expressed architecturally.

Knowingly or unknowingly, the absence of such architectural features subtly resonates with early Fatimid Friday congregational mosque architecture, once again drawing a connection between (1) twentieth-century, primarily South Asian, Ismailis and the Aga Khan and (2) medieval

[55] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 56.
[56] Momen, *Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* 176-78.
[57] See East African Ismaili *jamatkhanas* in Al-Karim Walli contributions on archnet.org.

Arab-Berber Fatimid Ismailis.[58] Tall slender minarets that protrude into the sky do not appear to have been a part of early Fatimid Friday mosque commissions, though short squat ones were. Whatever the reasons may be, tower minarets, now an icon of the Friday congregational mosque, have not become a part of European and North American expressions of Ismaili Muslim religious space and the *jamatkhana* architectural vocabulary.

Another intriguing absence at the *jamatkhana* is the lack of architectural features that reinforce gender segregation during prayer, as is found in many contemporary mosques. In general, men's and women's use of, and access to, the centre's spaces is equal; male privilege in the community, though implicitly present, is not made explicit through architectural form and design. Both men and women use either of the identical ancillary entry doors, though men tend to use the ones on the right and women the ones on the left. In the foyer, men gravitate to the cloakroom on the right and women to the left, but men and women freely interact in the foyer before and after prayer ceremonies. People of both genders go through a single, common entrance into the prayer hall, but women sit mostly on the left and men on the right, separated by a row of low tables (*paats*) on which charitable food offerings (*nandi*) are presented (Figure 6). Sightlines between the two are not obscured.[59] The gathering of men on the right and women on the left does not seem to be significant as in the past it has been reversed in other *jamatkhanas*. Both men and women take turns at the front facing the congregation delivering ritual prayers.[60] At the Burnaby centre, furniture and ritual practice, not the architecture, inscribe a milder form of gender segregation.

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[58] Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mosque of Al-Hakim in Cairo," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 15-36; Jonathan M. Bloom, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 135-36.

[59] Parin Aziz Dossa, "Ritual and Daily Life: Transmission and Interpretation of the Ismaili Tradition in Vancouver" (PhD dissertation, The University of British Columbia, 1985), 110-115, at https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0058268; Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013) 13.

[60] Tazim R. Kassam, "Balancing Acts: Negotiating the Ethics of Scholarship," in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jose Cabezon and Sheila Greeve Davaney, 133-62 (New York: Routledge, 2004), esp. 142; Amir Hussain, "Muslims," in *The Religions of Canadians*, ed. Jamie S. Scott, 167-218 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), esp. 192. Though gender inequality is less obvious in architectural terms, gender discrimination in the Ismaili community can assume different forms. See Shamsah J. Mohamed, "Ismaili Women's Experiences of in-Group Discrimination" (MA thesis, The University of British Columbia, 2002), https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0099628. For more context, see: Sharmina Mawani, "Sanctuary for the Soul: The Centrality of the Jamatkhana in Religious Identity Formation," in *Perspectives of Female Researchers: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Gujarati Identities*, ed. Sharmina Mawani and Anjoom A. Mukadam, 75-98 (Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH, 2016); Tasleem Damji and Catherine M. Lee,

The centre's lack of architecturally gendered space is an expression of relatively recent Ismaili doctrine. The minimalistic Ismaili approach to gender segregation in prayer halls dates back to the 1930s,[61] if not earlier, and perhaps owes much to the Aga Khan IV's predecessor, the Aga Khan III, who was the Ismaili *imam* from 1885 to 1957 and spent much of his life in India. Active in the Indian independence movement and the emergence of Pakistan as a nation-state, the Aga Khan III was the first president of the All-India Muslim League and took up the issue of Muslim women's political, economic, and religious rights in South Asia in the 1930s as part of his larger interest in modernizing Islam and Ismailism.[62] Following the birth of Pakistan, he critiqued the practice of excluding women from Pakistani mosques in the 1950s. In an address to the Pakistan Women's Association in Karachi in 1954, he urged:

> Oh my sisters, agitate. Leave no peace to the men till they give you religious freedom by opening mosques for prayers not side by side with men but in reserved quarters attached to all the mosques, so that the habit of praying in public and self respect and self-confidence becomes general amongst women. On that foundation of religious equality, you can then build social, economic, patriotic and political equality with men. I pray Allah Almighty to open the eyes of our benighted men and some of our still more benighted women.[63]

Though the Aga Khan III interjected himself into Sunni and Twelver Shi'i discourse on women in the mosque, he curiously did not advocate for the implementation of "side-by-side" seating of men and women in prayer halls, as was the case in Ismaili *jamatkhanas* of the day, but merely equal access. It's worth noting, Ismailis are not the only Muslim

"Gender Role Identity and Perceptions of Ismaili Muslim Men and Women," *Journal of Social Psychology* 135, 2 (1995): 215-23, doi:10.1080/00224545.1995.9711425; and Adil Mamodaly and Alim Fakirani, "Voices from Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari Muslim Women: Reflections from Canada on Past and Present Gendered Roles in Islam," in *Women in Islam: Reflections on Historical and Contemporary Research*, ed. Terence Lovat, 213-36 (New York: Springer Science and Business Media, 2011).

[61] S.M. Hafeez Zaidi, *The Muslim Womanhood in Revolution: Being an Exhaustive Survey of Modern Movements among the Muslim Women All Over the World with Special Reference to Their Social, Educational, and Political Awakening* (Calcutta: Zaidi, 1937), 131-32.

[62] For a discussion of Aga Khan III's gender policies for Ismaili women, as well as his successor's, see Zayn R. Kassam, "The Gender Policies of Aga Khan III and Aga Khan IV," in *A Modern History of the Ismailis*, 247-66.

[63] Aga Khan III, *Message of H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan III to Nation of Pakistan and World of Islam* (Karachi: Ismailia Association of Pakistan, 1977), at http://www.amaana.org/sultweb/message.htm. See also Shenila Khoja-Mulji, "Redefining Muslim Women: Aga Khan III's Reforms for Women's Education," *ResearchGate* 20 (January 2011): 1-17, at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282052660_Redefining_Muslim_Women_Aga_Khan_III's_Reforms_for_Women's_Education.

community to eschew gender-segregating architecture. For example, the Shia Alevis of Turkey and elsewhere, another minority Shia community, also practise gender integration in prayer spaces.[64]

Two additional features of the prayer hall are noteworthy. First, there is the potential for numerical symbolism to be read from the five domes in the prayer hall. For example, in his study of the centre, graduate student Hafiz-Ur-Rehman Sherali sees the number as simultaneously alluding to both the five pillars of Islam and the early sacralized family of the Prophet Muhammad, Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and Fatima, whom the Shia (and Sufi) especially revere and whose names are used in prayerful *zikrs*, or chants.[65]

Second, small photographs of the Aga Khan hang on the side walls of the prayer hall.[66] In addition to the exterior foundation tablet with the Aga Khan's insignia and name, these photographs, although they are not architectural features, mark the site as a Nizari Ismaili one, as images of people are generally considered forbidden in Sunni and Twelver Shi'i mosques but permissible in Ismaili centres. The inclusion of the images of a community's spiritual leader is not exclusive to Ismailis and resembles popular Shi'i and Sufi practices in which images of Ali and Sufi masters are included in various Sufi (Bektashi) and Alevi and Twelver Shia shrines and places for religious gatherings (as well as in homes).[67]

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[64] Jenny B. White, "The End of Islamism? Turkey's Muslimhood Model," in *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, ed. Robert W. Hefner, 87-111 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. 93.

[65] Sherali, "Architectural Character," 201. The group is called *al-aba*, *ahl al-kisa*, *ahl al-bayt*, and *khamsat at-tāhirah* in Arabic; *panjatan* in Farsi; and *panjatan pak* in Urdu. See I.K.A. Howard, "Ahl-e Bayt," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* online edition, at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ahl-e-bayt. For the potential importance of numerical symbolism in Shi'i visual culture, see Oleg Grabar "Are There Shi'i Forms of Art?" in People of the Prophet's House, 36. For a discussion of *panjatan* symbolism in the Ismaili centre in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, see Philip Jodidio, *Under the Eaves of Architecture: The Aga Khan – Builder and Patron* (Munich: Prestel, 2007), 188. See also Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 115.

[66] For a photograph of the interior with the Aga Khan's photograph, see Haufschild, "Places of Worship," at http://www.lutzhaufschild.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=1173&category=46&secondary=54. For discussions of the earlier use of the Aga Khan's photographic portrait, see Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali, *Lawfulness of Imam's Photograph in Prayer-Hall in Islam: Tradition of Ismaili Muslims Examined and Elucidated* (Karachi, Pakistan: M.A.T.S. Ali, 1990); and Dossa, "Ritual and Daily Life," 110-15.

[67] Ingvild Flaskerud, "The Votive Image in Iranian Shi'ism," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad, 161-78 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Mohammed Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Icon and Meditation," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad, 25-45 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012). See also: Sophia Rose Arjana, *Pilgrimage in Islam: Traditional and Modern Practices* (n.p.: Oneworld Publications,

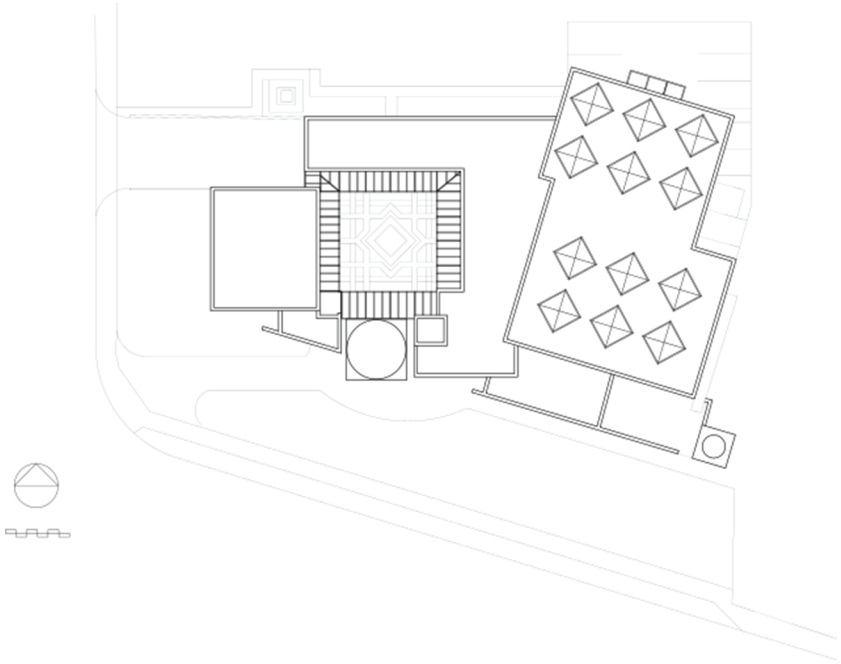

Figure 11. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Site plan. Digital drawing (redrawn after Studio Senbel, 2005, *Al Salaam Mosque: Site Plan* in: archnet.org). Copyright: Hussein Keshani, 2018.

MASJID AL SALAAM AND EDUCATION CENTRE, BURNABY (2008)

The innovative and elegant Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana in Burnaby would pave the way for the raising of another remarkable Islamic centre in the city. Over two decades after the completion of the Ismaili Centre, the British Columbia Muslim Association, which was incorporated in 1966 and had built other mosques in Greater Vancouver, completed construction in 2008 of a nearby Friday congregational mosque designed by Studio Senbel Architecture and Design (Figure 11).[68] The site was identified by Nizam Dean and his friend Wojciech Grzybowicz of WG

2017), 148-89; Muhammad Asghar, *The Sacred and the Secular: Aesthetics in Domestic Spaces of Pakistan/Punjab* (Münster: LIT Verlag Münster, 2016), 96-97.

[68] For the 1998 development proposal, see: "Rezoning Reference #98-13 - Mosque Development - 5060 Canada Way," 28 September 1998, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 158-161, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilreport5416; Sharif Senbel, "Architect's Record, Al Salaam Mosque and Education Centre" (Aga Khan Trust For Culture/Award for Architecture, 2010), at https://archnet.org/sites/6720/publications/2218; Masonry Institute of British Columbia, "Masonry Design Awards," 2008, at http://www.masonrybc.org/document/2008-masonry-design-awards-brochure. Other companies involved include: Engineer: O & S Engineering; Sun Valley Masonry; I-XL Industries Ltd.; Tristar Block; and Sakkal Design

Architects, and a rezoning and development proposal with Senbel's design was presented to city council. Unlike the case of the *jamatkhana*, few concerns were raised at the 27 October 1998 public hearing held to discuss the development proposal.[69] One resident, who supported the project, did express a concern that loudspeakers might be used to sound the call to prayer, which the BCMA agreed not to use. The land for the site was purchased for $750,000 in 1999,[70] the building was occupied by 2006, and the minaret was completed two years later in 2008. The BCMA's project manager was Daud Ismail.

Established in Vancouver in 1998, Studio Senbel consists of the principal Sharif Senbel, an Egyptian Canadian Muslim architect who studied architecture at the University of Oregon; his father Wagdy, also an architect; and his father's brother Maged, a professor with the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia.[71] Regarding the mosque, Senbel articulated his vision as follows:

> A true mosque is a reflection of its community and its place.
> A place, which is filled with tranquility and serenity when we enter it to pray.
> A place where our Grandmothers feel welcome and comfortable.
> A place where mothers can come, their children having a place to play, as to not disturb others in prayer.
> A place where the youth can gather to socialize and organize.
> A place of learning where we can all continue to learn from Muslim scholars.
> A place where we can bring non-Muslims to experience the beauty of our religion.
> A place that inspires us through the play of space, light

(see "Sakkal Design: Burnaby_Mosque_Calligraphy.html," at http://www.sakkal.com/calligraphy/burnaby_mosque.html).

[69] Public hearing minutes, 27 October 1998, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, 2-7, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilminutes60005; "Rezoning Reference #98-13 - Response to Public Hearing Comments," 1 March 1999, City Clerk Fonds, CBA, at https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/councilreport5139.

[70] British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association: Serving the Community for Forty Years," 2006, 70, at http://www.thebcma.com/upload/PDF/BCMA.pdf.

[71] Trever Boddy, "Spiritual Isles in an Urban Sea," *Globe and Mail*, 10 August 2007, at https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/spiritual-isles-in-an-urban-sea/article691648/. Douglas Todd, "Mosques for the Ages: Sharif Senbel's Spiritual and Environmental Innovations," *Vancouver Sun*, 1 December 2009, at http://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/mosques-for-the-ages-sharif-senbels-spiritual-and-environmental-innovations.

and materials to the greatness and oneness of Allah.[72]

The mosque, an official branch of the BCMA, is intended to serve Burnaby's culturally diverse Sunni Muslim community, whose members hail from South Asia, Fiji, South Africa, Bosnia, and various Arab states. The facility accommodates roughly twelve hundred people and is open to all, even non-Muslims, though one needs to identify as a Sunni Muslim to be a formal member of the BCMA.[73] Headquartered in Richmond, the BCMA is a province-wide, non-profit organization that directly owns and operates eight mosques as well as accredited schools. Electoral processes are used to select its primarily male leadership, although a parallel women's chapter was established in 2007 and the BCMA constitution was revised around 2011 to be less overtly exclusive in terms of gender.[74] The use of elected, non-profit societies to oversee Muslim communities is arguably a new innovation in Muslim history and a popular approach taken by Sunni communities living in North America.

The BCMA employs prayer leaders (*imams*), exclusively male, to run the services in their mosques and coordinate religious education, and they help set the doctrinal tone for the community, which has been influenced by Saudi-Wahhabi and South Asian-Deobandi views. In 2005, former BCMA *imam* Fode Drame commented: "The leadership of the BCMA is inclined toward Wahhabi teachings, and that is a major factor. The BCMA has received Saudi money in the past, and with that money comes pressure to support Wahhabi teachings."[75]

Wahhabism, informed by the Hanbali legal tradition, is the Sunni interpretation of Islam institutionalized in Saudi Arabia.[76] The BCMA's forty-year anniversary commemoration brochure states the embassy of the Saudi government in the United States contributed US$5,000 to their mosque fund in 1970. It also states that it contributed $5,000 (possibly CDN) in 1974 towards the land purchased for the Richmond mosque in 1974, though this may be a reference to the earlier contribution. However,

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[72] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 70.

[73] British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association Constitution & Bylaws [2011]: Table of Contents," 1 July 2011, at http://www.thebcma.com/upload/PDF/BCMA%20Constitution%20Index%202011.pdf(Final).pdf. For an account of a non-Muslim reporter's inclusion in prayers, see Douglas Todd, "Is Burnaby Mosque a Victim of Its Own Openness?," *National Post*, 23 October 2014, at http://www.nationalpost.com/m/ottawa+shooting+burnaby+mosque+victim+openness/10322923/story.html.

[74] Sheema Khan, "The Mosque Must Evolve," *Globe and Mail*, 18 February 2014, at https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-mosque-must-evolve/article16930019/.

[75] Tom Sandborn, "Breaking Faith," *Vancouver Courier*, 13 November 2005, at http://zawiyah.ca/november-13%2C-2005.html.

[76] Natana J. Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the bulk of the funds for the purchase was raised by locals. Other governments with Sunni leanings also made contributions. In December 1978 the Kuwaiti government offered US$4,000; Iraq gave CDN$2,000 in October 1981; and Brunei gave the BCMA CDN$20,000 in 1988.[77]

From 1980 to 1984, the salary of BCMA *imam* Sheikh Ahmed Sharqawy was paid by the Muslim World League, a Saudi funded non-governmental organization based in Mecca that arguably disseminates Saudi-endorsed Wahhabi Islam.[78] In 1988, the Saudi embassy donated $200,000 towards the BCMA school in Richmond, and the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia provided $315,000 towards a high school in 1996.[79] In 1990, Syrian-born *imam* Saber Zakieh, who trained at Medina University in Saudi Arabia, joined the BCMA.[80] BCMA directors travelled to the United Arab Emirates in 2000 to solicit funds.[81] According to the BCMA president's 2011 annual report, the Saudi government helped finance the BCMA's mosque in Victoria, British Columbia, granting $600,000, and then president Sikander Khan made a trip to the Saudi and Kuwaiti embassies in Ottawa as well.[82] However, no Saudi funds are reported to have been raised specifically in relation to the Burnaby mosque's construction, which depended on extensive grassroots fundraising efforts. Nevertheless, the Burnaby mosque is administered by the BCMA.

The BCMA has also been subject to the influence of South Asian Sunni schools of thought and, in particular, to Deobandi views.[83] Qari Wahab, who studied at the Madressa Tajwidul Quran and at the Jamia Islamia Arabia in Dabhal in India, and Abdu Samad Musa, who was a graduate of Darul-Uloom in India, were both responsible for developing the BCMA's religious education programs.[84] Zijad Delic, who was appointed the *imam* of Richmond mosque in 1996, obtained a degree in Islamic Studies and Quranic Arabic from the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan, which receives Saudi funding and is

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[77] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 28, 31, 52.

[78] Ibid., 46; "Muslim World League History," *Muslim World League*, at http://en.themwl.org/mwl-history.

[79] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 57-58.

[80] Ibid., 65.

[81] Ibid., 74.

[82] British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association 2011 Annual Report," 2011, 2 at http://www.thebcma.com/upload/PDF/BCMA%202011%20Annual%20Report.pdf.

[83] Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Muhammad Moj, *The Deoband Madrassah Movement: Countercultural Trends and Tendencies* (London; New York: Anthem Press, 2015).

[84] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 46.

shaped by Jamat Islami views. It is a gender segregated institution and has recently introduced a gender segregation policy for faculty members.[85] In 2011, Mufti Aasim Rashid, who is a specialist on the Hanafi Sunni legal tradition and has studied at several highly gender-segregated Deobandi institutions – Jaamiah al-Uloom al-Islamiyyah in Ajax, Ontario; Dabhel Jamiah Islamiah in India; and Jamia Uloom-e-Islamia in Binnori Town, Karachi – was appointed as the director of religion and Islamic studies.[86] Since 2014, the current *imam* of the Al Salaam mosque in Burnaby is Yahya Momla, a son of Indian Canadian immigrants who studied Islamic theology and jurisprudence in India for seven years at Daru Uloom Falahe Darain (a Deobandi institution),[87] in Tarkeshwar, Gujarat, and at the Islamic Higher Institute in Hyderabad.[88]

Deobandi Sunni Islam is a complex influential tradition stemming from South Asian British anti-colonialism, some of whose strains have been affiliated with Sufism (notably the Chishtis). It is steeped in the Hanafi-Maturidi legal tradition, but its beliefs and practices have overlapped with Wahhabism. While it is difficult to generalize, contemporary Wahhabi and Deobandi thought is inclined towards more purist, singular, and scriptural literalist conceptions of Islam and generally regard Shi'ism and strands of Sufism as unorthodox and illegitimate.[89] Both traditions also have extremist minorities with which they contend.

Historical revivalism and religio-cultural preservation guide both Sunni traditions, as does a renewed emphasis on gender segregation,

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[85] Ibid.; British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association 2011 Annual Report," 68; Kashif Abbasi, "Islamic University Dean Forcing Gender Segregation on Faculty," dawn.com, 12 November 2014, at http://www.dawn.com/news/1143907. Delic would go on to complete his master of science in education at the University of Oregon in 2001 and his PhD from the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in 2006.

[86] Mufti Aasim Rashid, biography at http://aasim.ihsan.ca/me/bio/; British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association 2011 Annual Report," 2.

[87] Praveen Swami, "Roads to Perdition?," in *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia*, ed. K. Warikoo, 52-66 (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), esp. 56.

[88] The Burnaby mosque leadership team is listed on the BCMA website (http://org.thebcma.com/Home/About/Burnaby). Momla's background is described in New Westminster Public Library, "New West Talks: Arabia to Canada, Islam Then and Now | New Westminster Public Library," at http://www.nwpl.ca/events_programs/index/events/10325.php. His education is described on his Linkedin profile at https://ca.linkedin.com/in/yahya-momla-251b9455. Momla's views on homosexuality are expressed in Sharon Nadeem, "Vancouver's LGBTQ Muslims Create Safe Spaces to Reconcile Religion, Sexuality," thethunderbird.ca, 1 May 2017, at https://thethunderbird.ca/2017/05/01/vancouvers-lgbtq-muslims-create-safe-spaces-to-reconcile-religion-sexuality/.

[89] J. Syed, "Barelvi Militancy in Pakistan and Salmaan Taseer's Murder," in *Faith-Based Violence and Deobandi Militancy in Pakistan*, ed. Jawad Syed, Edwina Pio, Tahir Kamran, Abbas Zaidi, 231-72 (New York: Springer, 2016), 233-34.

especially in the mosque.[90] Religious authority in these traditions emanates from their top-tier religious education institutions in South Asia and Saudi Arabia. Though these influences run strong, it is important to recognize that they do not define the views of the BCMA and its diverse congregation in their entirety. Contemporary voices foregrounding adaptation, peaceful coexistence, community integration, and contribution to the Canadian environs have an important place too.

The Building

A milestone for Burnaby's Sunni muslims, the Burnaby mosque complex cost $4.8 million to construct and is built largely with tilt-up concrete walls with buff-coloured brick cladding (Figure 2).[91] The freestanding, ascendable minaret is made of the same coloured hollow load-bearing bricks secured with steel ties; it incorporates green-tinted glazing and is capped with a small zinc-clad dome similar to the larger one installed above the mosque's entry portico.

The entry leads to a glass-enclosed courtyard two-storeys tall surrounded by wood pillars and decorative aluminum strips adorning the upper level (Figure 12). Rose, pink, and grey concrete pavers trace out a rotated square pattern on the courtyard floor. Left of the courtyard is a multi-purpose room and gym. To the right of the courtyard is a small angular-shaped anteroom for men's shoes that leads to a male washroom with customized ritual washing (*wudu*) area. Ritual washing before prayer is prescribed in the *hadith*.

A door leads into the skewed two-storey ground-level prayer hall used by men. The hall features a large glass niche area (*mihrab*) on the centre wall (Figure 13) and is mostly open; however, tall wood pillars, like those used in the courtyard, extend to the ceiling and, along with the drywall-clad concrete walls, support an elaborate ceiling (Figure 14). The wood-panelled ceiling of the prayer hall is composed of thick wooden glue-lam beams with blocks forming a grid of squares with twelve rotated square skylights flooding the chamber with natural light. The ceiling

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[90] For a good discussion of Saudi-Wahhabi gender segregation doctrines in the mosque, see Eleanor Abdella Doumato, *Getting God's Ear: Women, Islam, and Healing in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 94-129. For an example of Deobandi reasoning on women attending the mosque, see Fatwa, 1478/1478/M=01/1434 on the Darul Ifta – Darul Uloom Deoband – India website at http://www.darulifta-deoband.com/home/en/Womens-Issues/49168.

[91] Senbel, "Architect's Record."

Figure 12. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Courtyard. Photograph by Studio Senbel, 2010, flickr.com. Copyright: Studio Senbel - Architecture + Design Inc.

Figure 13. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Interior, prayer hall *mihrab*. Photograph by Studio Senbel. 2010, flickr.com. Copyright: Studio Senbel - Architecture + Design Inc.

Figure 14. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Interior, women's balcony overlooking the main prayer hall. Photograph by Studio Senbel, 2010, flickr.com. Copyright: Studio Senbel - Architecture + Design Inc.

extends over a large balcony, or mezzanine, for women, which has glass panels that look onto the main hall (Figure 14).[92]

The women's prayer balcony has an enclosed room for nursing mothers at the rear. Women are expected to gain access to the balcony via stairs or elevator and by passing through a small anteroom, shoe removal area, and washroom facilities that are also equipped with a ritual washing area (*wudu*). The second level, which leads to another balcony surrounding the courtyard, gives access to the mosque's three classrooms (Figures 11 and 12). The building also includes a small library, youth centre, kitchen, and underground parking. In 2011, construction of cold storage and washing facilities for the deceased was completed as well.[93]

Calligraphy

Unlike the Ismaili *jamatkhana*, calligraphy features prominently on the mosque's exterior, which faces a busy road (Figure 15). A Quranic Arabic inscription (22:77) designed by Sakkal Graphic Design and Illustration of Bothell, Washington, USA, is etched in granite in a floriated Kufic script, a style coincidentally once favoured by Fatimid Ismailis. At the end, the inscription includes an English translation by Yusuf Ali, which reads: "O ye who believe! Bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper."[94] The inscription appropriately designates the building as a place of prayer.

On the other side of the domed entrance another inlaid granite panel bears the building's name MASJID AL SALAAM & EDUCATION CENTRE and its address in English. Along the top of the wall, in raised brick, the Arabic word for God, "Allah," is formed with relief brickwork and repeated in a series of three in two rows (Figure 15). Brickwork like this resulted in an award bestowed by the Masonry Institute of British Columbia in 2008.[95] The architect explained that the epigraphs served to create "a figurative rosary in the brickwork."[96] Rosaries, or *tasbihs*, as they are called in Arabic, are often used in contemplative *zikr* recitations. In the building's interior courtyard, the word "Allah" reappears around

[92] The women's area is discussed in Tammy Gaber, "Beyond the Divide: Women's Spaces in Canadian Mosques," 2014, 7, at http://www.acsforum.org/symposium2014/papers/GABER.pdf and Tammy Gaber, "Gendered Mosque Spaces," *Faith and Form* 48, 1 (2015), at http://faithandform.com/feature/gendered-mosque-spaces/.

[93] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 6.

[94] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an*, 1st ed. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000).

[95] Masonry Institute of British Columbia, "Masonry Design Awards."

[96] Senbel, "Architect's Record."

Figure 15. Masjid Al Salaam and Education Centre, Burnaby: Exterior, inscriptions. Photograph by Studio Senbel, 2010, flickr.com. Copyright: Studio Senbel - Architecture + Design Inc.

the perimeter in a single row, this time rendered with aluminum strips (Figure 12).

Calligraphy appears again inside the prayer hall and is etched on the glass *mihrab* niche that looks onto greenery while signalling the direction of Mecca (Figure 13). Surprisingly, it is located near the ground and is best observed while kneeling or seated. The Arabic epigraph is conceived in a highly geometric style and wraps around clockwise conforming to

the shape of a square. Translated, it includes the phrases "There is no God but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God," the standard profession of faith common to all Muslims and the one espoused in the constitutions of both the BCMA and the Ismailis.[97]

Minarets, Gendered Space, and the Qibla

A sole tower minaret is a prominent design element of the Al Salaam mosque (Figure 2). Its principal purpose is to serve as a landmark, but it is also a recognizable sign of Islamicity referencing historic and contemporary Friday mosques around the world. Minarets historically were lit up at night and served as both watchtowers and landmarks. They were known as sites from which to proclaim the ritual invitation to prayer in Arabic in accordance with the Quran (5:58), which includes the profession of the faith, thus signalling the broad doctrinal position of the mosque.[98]

Formulas for the call to prayer (*adhan*) vary in the number of times various lines are to be repeated, depending on which specific Sunni (and Shia) legal traditions a community follows, but they typically include the following passages:

> I bear witness that there is no deity except God.
> I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
> Come to pray.
> Come to success.
> God is greatest.
> There is no deity except for God.[99]

As minarets are also thought to have served as lighthouses in a dark landscape, the windows in the minaret emit light at night, reflecting an understanding of its historical functionality. Though the minaret can be ascended it is not generally used to issue the five daily calls to prayer to permeate the surrounding urban soundscape; this occurs in the prayer hall, the sounds being limited within the confines of the building in deference to community concerns and noise bylaws.[100] The minaret then serves as a silent visual and spatial sign triggering for the knowing

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[97] British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association Constitution," 2. "The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims."

[98] For a comprehensive discussion of the minaret, see Bloom, *Minaret*.

[99] For a comparison of different *adhans*, see: "Adhan & Iqamah | Inclusive Mosque Initiative," 6 June 2017, at http://inclusivemosqueinitiative.org/resources/resources-salah/adhan_iqamah/. The Shia *adhan* differs by including a statement proclaiming belief in Ali as the friend or guide of God.

[100] Mary Ann Mckenzie, "Visiting the Burnaby Mosque," *Tenth to the Fraser*, 21 February 2017, at http://www.tenthtothefraser.ca/2017/02/21/39048/.

auditory memories of the vocalized Sunni *adhan*, with its profession of faith and reminder to fulfill the obligatory prayer.

The orientation of the prayer hall is noticeably angled in relation to the entrance and courtyard (Figure 11), conspicuously drawing attention to the fact that it is angled to the northeast, the direction of the shortest line towards Mecca. *Qibla* orientation customs are derived from Quranic passages (e.g., 2:149-50), which are interpreted as directing praying Muslims to face the Kaaba in Mecca, a structure Muslims believe to be the first house dedicated to the worship of one god and built by the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) prior to Muhammad. However, the glass *mihrab* niche in the prayer hall is the strongest indicator of orientation.

The glass recessed niche alludes to the conventional concave *mihrab* niches of Friday congregational mosques, a place where an *imam* leads the prayers and issues sermons (*khutbas*) atop steps (*minbar*) (Figure 13). The carpeted floor of the mosque is covered with rows of *mihrab* niche images indicating how the faithful should line up for prayer shoulder to shoulder in straight lateral rows in keeping with convention and with *hadith* instructing the faithful to follow the example of how angels prayed. Greater proximity to the first row is considered more blessed.

The innovative choice to render the *mihrab* niche in glass at the centre of the *qibla* wall extends the faithful's sightlines beyond the hall pointing the way to the distant Kaaba, but it also allows for the vegetation outside to be visible (in daylight) from within the prayer hall illuminating the spot the male prayer leader (*imam*) stands while leading the prayer is filled with light and greenery. The inclusion of greenery is purposeful as the architect sees trees as God's creatures and evocative of the Quran's descriptions of paradise for the faithful.[101] The *imam*'s spatial presence as a source of prayer and sermon becomes associated with Quranic descriptions of fecundity (71:17) and light (24:35). The minaret, the emphasis on *qibla* orientation, and the *mihrab* (as well as *mihrab* imagery) clearly mark the space as prayer space in keeping with the established norms of the majority of congregational mosques.

Though the BCMA constitution says nothing about men's and women's access to the prayer spaces of the Al Salaam mosque, gender segregation is enacted in the prayer hall (during prayer times) through architectural design and ritualized cultural practice.[102] Men and women both use the mosque's multi-purpose room and courtyard, but the

[101] Todd, "Mosques for the Ages."

[102] For an account of a Muslim woman's appreciative experience of the mosque, see "Mosque Tour: Masjid Al-Salam and Education Centre (Vancouver)," at http://www.eatflyhalal.com/2016/06/mosque-tour-masjid-al-salam-education.html.

situation changes when it comes to entering the prayer hall. The hall is two storeys high, with a large balcony with clear glass panels designated for women (Figure 14). Women's balconies are a feature that appears to date back to the thirteenth century, though their use was not uniform.[103] Men use the ground floor and women ascend stairs or elevator to use the balcony, which has an area comparable to the men's area as well as a narrow soundproof nursing area at the rear. Though women do not use the principal part of the prayer hall at ground level, the architect, who had to respect the desires of his clients – who, in the past, had required even more extensive gender segregation – advocated for greater integration and improved quality of space for women.[104] Regarding his resolution, Senbel argues that men and women still have equal opportunity to communicate with the creator: "In the prayer hall, the ceiling is a geometric synthesis of wood beams, skylights and hanging lights. This continuous ceiling treatment extends above the men and women's prayer areas; allegorical of a single expansive sky, below which men and women communicate equally with their Creator."[105] Despite various "women in the mosque" and women's mosque movements worldwide, for many contemporary Sunni mosques around the world, gender segregation remains the norm, stemming from canonized interpretations of historical *hadith* and jurisprudential literature, which often advises women to pray behind men and out of their view in order to preserve modesty and which sometimes prohibits access altogether. This is in contrast to early accounts of women's more equitable access to prayer halls.[106] Regardless, the design of the Al Salaam mosque facilitates gender segregation during prayer in keeping with contemporary mainstream Sunni doctrine and practice. The Darul Uloom Deoband's fatwa website, for instance, issues guidance discouraging women from attending mosque, citing canonized *hadith* in support.[107]

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

At first glance it may seem like the histories of the two Burnaby communities – the Ismailis and the BCMA – and the designs of their centres of worship have little in common. Yet there are convergences.

[103] Katz, *Women in the Mosque*, 183.
[104] Gaber, "Beyond the Divide." Gaber, "Gendered Mosque Spaces."
[105] Senbel, "Architect's Record."
[106] Katz, *Women in the Mosque*.
[107] Darul Ifta, Darul Uloom Deoband India, "English Fatwas, Social Matters, Women's Issues: Question # 49168 and Answer 49168," 16 November 2013, at http://www.darulifta-deoband.com/home/en/Womens-Issues/49168.

The Ismailis established an important precedent for the construction of Islamic centres in Burnaby, paving the way for the BCMA complex. When the idea for the Al Salaam mosque was conceived, BCMA Burnaby branch secretary David Ali and his wife Farida approached Ismaili federal political candidate Mobina Jaffer, a woman, for support, and she helpfully advocated for the project with the Burnaby mayor and continued to support the project after becoming a senator in 2002.[108] Jaffer's willingness to engage and support the BCMA shows the rich possibilities of intra-Muslim mutual support and cooperation. Also, Senbel, the architect of the Burnaby *masjid* (and who, like the Aga Khan, is committed to innovative, forward-looking Islamic architectural design that transcends clichés), was a nominee for the Aga Khan Award for architecture in 2006. The award was established by Aga Khan IV to encourage the development of a modern, contemporary approach to the architecture of Muslim societies.

Comparing the two contemporary Islamic prayer centres shows that it is principally through the use (or lack) of minarets, calligraphy, and gender segregation design that the positions of the two Muslim communities within the vast spectrum of Islamic doctrines in the past and present are signalled. Minarets are potent contemporary markers of Islamicity, but the two buildings take opposite approaches to their inclusion. The *jamatkhana* eschews them and sees them as non-essential – their absence providing perhaps a stronger, not weaker, link to Fatimid Ismaili heritage. For the Burnaby *masjid* the minaret is, in the architect's view, an essential symbol of ritual practice – the call to prayer and the profession of the faith.

When it comes to calligraphy, the Ismaili centre has little exterior epigraphy, but on the interior of the prayer hall, the names of Allah and Ali are repeatedly interwoven, privately embodying the Ismaili notion of *Imamate* and commitment to the Shia tradition of Islam. The Al Salaam centre, in contrast, repeats the name of Allah on the building's exterior and courtyard – a public, outwardly oriented gesture – but the calligraphy in the prayer hall is limited to just the one instance of the profession of belief in God and Muhammad. Yet both centres share the repeated use of calligraphy to invoke a memory of the shared religious ritual practice of *zikr*.

[108] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 70. Jaffer is identified as Ismaili Muslim in Adriana Barton, "Ismaili Success: Made in Vancouver," *BCBusiness*, 1 July 2006, at https://www.bcbusiness.ca/ismaili-success-made-in-vancouver.

The Ismaili centre's prayer hall design, in keeping with the views of the current Aga Khan and his predecessor Aga Khan III, does not significantly encode gender segregation, unlike the Al Salaam Mosque, which clearly gives form to contemporary mainstream Saudi-Wahhabi and Deobandi Sunni views on the matter. On the one hand, the Aga Khan IV has exercised his authority as Imam to continue the minimalistic Ismaili approach to gender-segregated prayer through his close oversight of the building's design. The *jamatkhana*'s resolution, then, is perhaps less an expression of Ismaili doctrine on gender segregation than it is an expression of the Ismaili view that the *Imam* has the ultimate right to decide such doctrinal matters. On the other hand, the predominantly male BCMA leadership and religious experts see a gender-segregated prayer hall as essential to their practice of Islamic prayer. Though the approach to gender segregation in the two buildings varies significantly, both cases share the primacy of male voices in determining what kind of gender segregation to be implemented, which is perhaps not surprising given the patriarchal character of the Ismaili *Imamate* and the BCMA institutions.

When it comes to matters of design input, no Ismaili women are recorded to have been actively involved in the design and development of the Ismaili centre, though architect Bruno Freschi's team did include five women – Shanti Ghose, Joyce Drohan, Julia Meadows, Lynne Werker, and Elizabeth MacKenzie. In the various literature produced by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Ismaili institutions concerning the *jamatkhana*, including the scripts used by tour guides, narrating women's roles in the building's development has not been a priority; accounts of women's involvement are conspicuously absent. While Ismaili institutions, with the exception of the *Imamate* itself, allow for women's involvement, their actual involvement in the design and development of the Burnaby *Jamatkhana* to date remains obscure and is a subject for future research.

In contrast, BCMA narratives explicitly stress that the BCMA Burnaby mosque design process solicited community input, including women's voices, to complement the BCMA's directives, likely due to mounting internal criticism.[109] In a 2006 publication commemorating the forty-year anniversary of the BCMA, President Daud Ismail acknowledges women's contributions:

[109] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years." For a related account of Surrey Muslim women's objections to the BCMA Surrey mosque plans in 1998 and their success in securing changes, see MacLean, "Religion, Ethnicity, and the Double Diaspora," 70.

> It is heartening to note that our sisters have been very active and equally contributed their share in the activities of the BCMA and on issues affecting women. They are on equal footing and an integral part of our success in every aspect of our operation. We are blessed with so many capable, dedicated, and loyal sisters who work diligently to cater to the needs of the sisters of all ages. They were equal partners in our construction projects working side by side with brothers; raising funds, participating in decision making and assisting in every way they could. They have been an inspiration to our youth and the elders.[110]

While women's balconies are convincingly argued to be exclusionary, they can also, paradoxically, be seen as structural legitimations of women's presence in the mosque. Relative to more stringent Wahhabi and Deobandi views that mosques should be principally male spaces, women's balconies, then, are a rejoinder, legitimating women's rights to pray in the mosques. In this vein, the chairperson of the BCMA Women's Council, Tazul Nisha Ali, observed:

> We were very fortunate to participate in the building of the Burnaby Masjid. Sisters were consulted and asked for the input especially in the sisters' area of the Masjid. For me it was God blessed time when we participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Burnaby Masjid. This kind of event rarely passes a person's life, especially in this part of the world. The Muslim women have the accessibility to any of the BCMA Masjid.[111]

Women have continued to shape the Burnaby mosque, with the women's chapter raising funds for the development of a commercial kitchen to support their community and charitable activities.[112] That said, the resulting segregated prayer hall clearly privileges the BCMA male leadership's priorities, even though these are somewhat tempered by the efforts to legitimate women's access, improve the quality of the women's prayer space, and provide child care facilities that support women's participation.

The two buildings, one designed by a team of non-Muslims and the other by a team of Muslims, ultimately subscribe to two very different architectural genres – the semi-private *khanqah/jamatkhana* and the more public Friday congregational mosque – and this is reflected in the way *qibla* orientation is handled and emphasized. When it comes to *qibla* ori-

[110] British Columbia Muslim Association, "Serving the Community for Forty Years," 7.
[111] Ibid., 62.
[112] British Columbia Muslim Association, "British Columbia Muslim Association 2011 Annual Report," 22.

entation, the Ismaili centre yields to pragmatism, faces east not northeast, and maximizes the use of the site. However, the omnipresent octagons in the design conveniently make the northeast direction apparent. *Qibla* orientation is not necessarily a defining feature of the *jamatkhana* prayer hall, and historically there was flexibility on whether *jamatkhanas* and many *khanqahs* needed to face Mecca; they were meeting halls, after all. In contrast, the *qibla* orientation of the Al Salaam mosque is viewed as essential to rendering the place a legitimate place of prayer.

Incidentally, determining *qibla* orientation was not so straightforward in the past and a great degree of variation was tolerated.[113] Flexibility and pragmatism was the prevalent approach. Historically, *qibla* orientation was determined in rather imprecise ways, and using the general direction was deemed sufficient; for example, variances as high as sixty degrees in the case of Cordoba occurred.[114] As scholar David King puts it, "If for example the *qibla* is somewhere in the south-east, it is permissible to pray due east or due south."[115] For medieval Muslim scholars the *jamatkhana*'s eastward direction would have been regarded as oriented to the *qibla* even though, more precisely, the direction is northeast.

Both centres are clearly enmeshed in transnational economic and religious relationships. Their design and financing are tied to remote international centres of religious authority and funding, yet the natures of these transnational connections are very different, stemming from the Islamic doctrines they espouse. In the case of the Ismaili *jamatkhana*, the Aga Khan, who is based in France (soon to be Portugal) serves as the principal catalyst, decision maker, and conduit for community resources for the Burnaby centre, ensuring the building subtly reinforces the concept of *Imamate* and embodies his proactive conception of Islam as constantly adapting to contemporary circumstances while staying true to its roots – values that permeate his patronage as well as his award for architecture. The Al Salaam mosque, with its bold design, engages with these views, while enwrapped in the BCMA's financial and doctrinal ties to Saudi Arabian Wahhabi and South Asian Deobandi centres of religious training. Both sites, then, are centres of local Muslim community-making connected to global Islamic doctrinal networks and currents that exert their influence on the landscape of Burnaby. In

[113] "More than 200 Mecca Mosques 'Face Wrong Direction,'" 6 April 2009, at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudiarabia/5110754/More-than-200-Mecca-mosques-face-wrong-direction.html.

[114] David A. King, "The Orientation of Medieval Islamic Religious Architecture and Cities," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 26, 3 (1995): 253-74, esp. 264, doi:10.1177/002182869502600305.

[115] Ibid., 259.

many ways, the "glocal" natures of the two religious buildings are not new in the history of Greater Vancouver's religious architecture, which has always linked faraway places and traditions with local spatialities and people.

Both communities use subtle architectural choices to articulate their positionality within the spectrum of Islamic discourse and establish spatial norms, while carving out a sense of sanctuary for their communities. At the same time, they use architecture to lay claim to the rights of public worship and assert communal presence in the urban fabric of Burnaby. It is useful to see the two works as instances of creative reckoning, as conceptualized by the scholar Jessica Winegar. She explains: "To reckon is to think about something, to figure it out … Reckoning, therefore constitutes an inherently interpretive and social process … a way of creating knowledge that can be a new formulation, but is never without reference to a 'tradition.'"[116] Architecture in these cases serves as a means to keep tradition alive while, at the same time, presenting an opportunity for renewal in an unfamiliar present.

These reckonings result not in passive objects but in active carriers of different, but related, ways to believe and practice Islam. As Dan Hicks explains, scholars concerned with material culture have come to see "both things and theories as simultaneously events and effects: rather than as passive objects, active subjects."[117] In the case of the two centres, architecture becomes a means of tacitly transmitting religious doctrine and identity into the future through its daily impact on visitors. In arriving at the details of design both communities and their designers embarked on a series of creative reckonings of what it means, as religious minorities, to practice Islamic worship in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Burnaby within a secular, pluralistic, and multi-religious environment in which religious illiteracies abound.

Building religious literacies has been argued to be of great importance to understanding contemporary human affairs at local, regional, national, and international levels as well as to facilitating peaceful coexistence, tolerance, empathy, social cohesion, and respectful criticism. A crucial part of building these literacies is a rich, not superficial, understanding of the material cultural dimensions of religious traditions for they consist not simply of abstract ideas that exist in a vacuum but, rather, of

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[116] Jessica Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 6-7.

[117] Dan Hicks, "The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, 25-98 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 30.

embodied ritual practices and material culture. When it comes to social tensions, particularly between Muslim diaspora and minorities and majority communities in Europe and North America but also between Muslim communities, major flashpoints are often sparked by conflicts over material culture – hijabs, niqabs, burkahs, mosque development, minarets, shrines, and so on – for they are the most immediate and inescapable demarcators of difference. Delving into the details of the doctrinal dimensions of the two Islamic centres in Burnaby reveals how, sometimes, the most profound community-defining convictions can be embedded in the smallest details – details that do not just express beliefs for their communities but sustain them into the future.