

Fall 2019 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Seeking the Divine: The Lesser-Known Religious Traditions of Asia
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**Seeking the Divine through Architecture:
A Bahá'í Architect's Perspective**

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Bahá'í era: begins in 1844

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892): is the prophet Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. In the mid 19th century, Bahá'u'lláh— meaning the “Glory of God”— delivered a new Divine Revelation to humanity. His teachings advocate universal peace and unity among all races, nations, and religions. Bahá'ís regard Bahá'u'lláh to be a Manifestation of God, fulfilling the eschatological expectations of Islam, Christianity, and other major religions

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings...now present us with the highest and purest form of religious teaching...

— Count Leo Tolstoy, Russian author

The Báb (1819-1850): is the herald of the Bahá'í Faith. In the mid 19th Century, The Báb— meaning “the Gate”— announced that humanity stood at the threshold of a new era. His mission was to prepare the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

“His life is one of the most magnificent examples of courage which it has been the privilege of mankind to behold...”

— Tribute to the Báb by the 19th century French writer A.L.M. Nicolas

‘Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921): is the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh and was appointed by his father to serve as head of the Bahá'í Faith from 1892. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is deemed as the perfect exemplar of the Faith's spirit and teachings. After His release from a lifetime of imprisonment, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá set out on a series of journeys which took Him to Egypt, Europe and North America to spread the message of peace and unity.

“He is a very great man. He is complete. There are worlds in his soul. And oh what a remarkable face—what a beautiful face—so real and so sweet.”

— Khalil Gibran, Lebanese poet and artist, upon meeting ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in New York city in 1912

Shoghi Effendi /The Guardian (1897-1957): was the grandson of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian and appointed head of the Bahá'í Faith from 1921 until his passing in 1957, at which time the leadership of the Faith changed from the individual to an administration. He studied at the American University of Beirut and later to Balliol College, Oxford, England.

The Universal House of Justice: is the elected international governing council of the Bahá'í Faith. Its creation was ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, as there is no clergy in the Bahá'í Faith. The guidance provided by the Universal House of Justice ensures unity of thought and action in the Bahá'í community.

The Bahá'í World Centre: is the name given to the spiritual and administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith. It consists of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh near Akká, Israel, the Shrine of the Báb and its gardens on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and various other buildings in the area including the administrative buildings. The Universal House of Justice, representing the supreme governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, resides in Haifa. The Bahá'í World Centre is also the current destination for Bahá'í pilgrimage. Many of the locations, including the terraces and the Shrine of the Báb were inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2008

Bahá'í House of Worship: is the designation of a place of worship, or temple, of the Bahá'í Faith. There are ten Bahá'í Houses of Worship in the world today. They are required to have a nine-sided shape, doors must be open to all regardless of religion, or any other distinction. The holy scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith and other religions can be read or chanted inside in any language, no sermons may be delivered, and no ritualistic ceremonies practiced.

Suggested Reading

Boyles, Ann. "For the Betterment of the World, to the Glory of God. The Emergence of Bahá'í Houses of Worship." *The Baha'í World Publication*,
<https://bahaiworld.bahai.org/articles/betterment-world-glory-god>

Esslemont, John Ebenezer. *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: an Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith*. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006.

Hariri Pontarini Architects. *Embodied Light: The Bahá'í Temple of South America*. Birkhauser Architecture, 2017.

Hatcher, W.S and Martin, D. *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. Baha'í Publishing Trust, 2002.

Whitmore, Bruce. *The Dawning Place: The Building of a Temple, the Forging of a Global Religious Community*, 2nd ed, revised and expanded. Bahá'í Publishing, 2015.

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