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**Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada**  
**Le Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada**



**Vernacular, Modernist, Historic**  
**Sikh *Gurdwara* Architecture on Canada's West Coast**

Prabhjit Brar, Joginder Dhanjal and Jamie S. Scott

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Volume 46, Number 2, 2021

World religions in Canada  
Religions mondiales au Canada

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1088487ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088487ar>

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Publisher(s)

SSAC-SEAC

ISSN

1486-0872 (print)

2563-8696 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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Cite this article

Brar, P., Dhanjal, J. & Scott, J. S. (2021). Vernacular, Modernist, Historic: Sikh *Gurdwara* Architecture on Canada's West Coast. *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Le Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada*, 46(2), 11–37. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088487ar>

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## VERNACULAR, MODERNIST, HISTORIC Sikh *Gurdwara* Architecture on Canada's West Coast<sup>1</sup>

PRABHJIT BRAR holds Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture degrees from Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario. In 2019, she participated in the Green Building Solutions programme in Vienna, Austria, along with fifty students and young professionals from around the world. Appearing in 2020, her M.A. thesis, titled "A Journey to the Sacred: An Architectural Retreat for the Sikh Diaspora of British Columbia," focuses on sustainability and sacred architecture. An enthusiastic community leader, she volunteers with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and local food banks. As an intern architect at Graziani and Corazza Architects Inc., Concord, Ontario, she is working toward designation as a licensed architect.

JOGINDER DHANJAL received both his Bachelor of Architectural Science and Master of Architecture degrees from Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario. His Master's Design thesis examines selected expressions of diaspora Sikh architecture in Canada. With over twenty years in architectural practice, he has developed expertise in a variety of building types and architectural fields, including higher education, public education, sports and recreation facilities, libraries, community centres, high-rise residential buildings, and master planning. He has worked for leading award-winning architectural firms, including Perkins & Will, Architects Alliance, Quadrangle Architects, and Gensler. He is a member of the Ontario Association of Architects, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and the local chapter of the Hamilton Burlington Society of Architects.

JAMIE S. SCOTT is professor in the Department of Humanities and the graduate programs in English, geography, humanities, and interdisciplinary studies, York University, Toronto. His most recent publications include "Mosques in Canada: From the Qur'anic Masjid to Sharif Senbel's 'Canadian Islamic Regionalism[s]," in Jessica Mace (ed.), *A Medieval Legacy: The Ongoing Life of Forms in the Built: Essays in Honour of Malcolm Thurlby* (Montréal, Patrimonium, p. 373-401). His current research interests include the role of literary tourism in the sustainable repurposing of industrial heritage in Manchester, England; Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia; and Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

>PRABHJIT BRAR,  
JOGINDER DHANJAL,  
AND JAMIE S. SCOTT

In 2011, the National Household Survey recorded that Sikhs made up one point four percent of Canada's population. Directly or indirectly, members of this community trace their origins to the Punjab region of the South Asian sub-continent, for decades divided between Pakistan and India as a result of the partition of the British Crown Raj following the Parliament of the United Kingdom's *Indian Independence Act* (1947). While faith and identity are intimately intertwined for the majority of Sikhs, whether they reside in the homeland or in diaspora, it is a truism that secularized western life may easily pose challenges for members of faith communities attempting to maintain their religious heritage. "Proponents of the so-called 'secularization hypothesis,'" Jamie S. Scott has written, "have long asserted that human reason, consistently applied not only in the black-and-white calculations of hard science, but also to the less cut-and-dried arrangements of economic, social, political and cultural life, systematically reveals the inauthenticity of religion and the efforts of the religious to explain the ambiguities and unruliness of human history."<sup>2</sup>

That is not to say, though, that the progressivist promise of pluralistic tolerance implied in the secularization hypothesis has everywhere materialized; instead, as Stephen D. Smith writes, "in recent years countries and cultures seem to be becoming *more* contentious and polarized, not less."<sup>3</sup> What is more, for diaspora communities, distance from an historic homeland may well complicate efforts to sustain spiritual vitality in a

new home in a new land. In this respect, Pashaura Singh has observed that “a great deal of ignorance still persists in the western world about the Sikhs and their religious traditions,” an ignorance epitomized in Canada by “misunderstandings arising from the wearing of the turban and the ceremonial *kirpan* [sword].”<sup>4</sup> Ironically, however, erstwhile secularists like Peter L. Berger have reversed themselves in more recent times and now talk about the “desecularization” of western societies and cultures, while scholars like Jonathan Sacks have noted “the persistence of faith . . . in a secular age.”<sup>5</sup> As Smith remarks, “in fact religion has not faded away: on the contrary, the old forms of religion have persisted and new forms have arisen.”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the progressivist promise of pluralistic tolerance may well be expressed in other ways. More particularly, in Canada the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)<sup>7</sup> and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988 [1985])<sup>8</sup> provide a framework within which “everyone has the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association and guarantees those rights and freedoms equally to male and female persons.”<sup>9</sup>

Like other minority communities of faith, Sikhs in Canada have flourished under the protection of these guarantees, especially the larger Sikh communities populating the suburban regions around Vancouver, British Columbia, and Toronto, Ontario. In this respect, the historic institution of the Sikh house of worship, known as the *Gurdwara*, lies at the heart of Sikh religious life in Canada no less than in the faith’s historical home of Punjab. Rooted in this premise, this essay locates the architectural tectonics of the Sikh *Gurdwara* in Canada within the wider context of the Sikh tradition’s origins and the development of the Sikh house of worship in

the state of Punjab, India. First, “The Sikh Tradition” outlines principles and practices that are fundamental to Sikh religious identity. Next, “The *Harmandir Sahib* Complex” discusses the architecture of the holiest of Sikh sacred sites, known popularly as the Golden Temple and located in the city of Amritsar, Punjab. “The *Gurdwara* in the Sikh Faith” then examines the fundamental components of the Sikh house of worship, focusing upon two modest local temples in the district of Barnala, Punjab: the *Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib* and the *Gurdwara Tap Asthaan Bibi Pardhan Kaur Ji*. Moving to the Sikh diaspora, the section “Sikhs and the *Gurdwara* on Canada’s West Coast” visits three Sikh sanctuaries in British Columbia: the lost Second Avenue Temple (1908) in Vancouver; the Khalsa Diwan Society’s Gur Sikh Temple (1911) in Abbotsford; and Vancouver’s Ross Street Temple (1970), designed for the Khalsa Diwan Society by Arthur C. Erickson and Geoffrey Massey. An “Afterword” draws these themes together, concluding that once well established in a new home in a new land, Sikh congregations increasingly revert to an historic architectural typology associated with *Gurdwara* design throughout India, most notably the *Harmandir Sahib*. Indeed, the employment of multimedia projection technology for the *IN5 Experium: The Golden Temple of Amritsar* (2019) in Brampton, Ontario, although innovative, nonetheless reiterates the continuing preeminence of the *Harmandir Sahib* for Sikhs in diaspora in Canada.

### THE SIKH TRADITION

The Sikh tradition originates in the sixteenth century in the historic region of Punjab, now divided between the independent nations of Pakistan and India.<sup>10</sup> Practiced by over twenty-five million adherents worldwide, Sikhism

is a monotheistic religion based on the principles of divine unity and the equality of all humankind. The faith has roots in the *Sant*, or “saint,” movement that developed in northern India in the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Capturing a sense of the real and the true, the term *Sant* comes from the Sanskrit verb “to be.” Known as *Sants*, charismatic holy men and women travelled around India, adopting an ascetic lifestyle, singing poems about their gods, and forming communities of followers. Different legends tell the tales of these figures, but generally they opposed religious ceremonialism, Hindu caste and gender distinctions, exclusivist sacred languages, and esoteric scriptures. Instead, they stressed devotional love, meditation, and spiritual and mystical elements gleaned from the Hindu *Bhakti* and Islamic Sufi traditions found throughout the sub-continent.<sup>12</sup> Believing in a God of love and justice, the *Sants* placed importance on the devotee’s need for a *Guru*, or spiritual teacher. They taught that anyone thus guided could be saved by devotion to God through repetition of God’s name; remembrance of God brings one into unity with the divine. At the same time, the presiding religious and political authorities saw the *Sant* movement as a threat to the social and economic structures of India because it included women and people from lower classes.

A *Sant* from a lower caste, the mystical poet Kabir [1440-1518] blended Hindu *bhakti* and Sufi Muslim devotional traditions, teaching “that God may reveal Himself to a devotee by means of his grace, assuming that a person is prepared to receive it.”<sup>13</sup> As a *Sat Guru*, that is “primal teacher,” Kabir made a profound impression on Hindus and Muslims alike, notably a young Punjabi Hindu Nanak [1469-1539] of the Vaishya Khatri caste of traders, who also had a reputation for debating with Hindu holy men.<sup>14</sup>

According to Sikh tradition, at the age of thirty Nanak had the enlightening experience of being swept into God's presence while taking a morning bath in the river Kali Bein, at Sultanpur Lodhi, Punjab. He gave away his possessions, conducted pilgrimages to Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim sacred sites, and composed devotional hymns, known as *Shabads*, which convey a monotheistic gospel of *Ek Onkar*, that is, "One God."<sup>15</sup> He affirmed that this one God is invisible and infinite and dwells within the human heart, and that the love of God is the highest goal of humanity. An egalitarian ethics derives from these fundamental convictions. For Nanak, religion should promote peace, love, unity, respect, service, and dedication to all living things. In this respect, three tenets inform his efforts to create a classless and caste-less society: *Naam Japna*, that is, to meditate and repeat God's name; *Vand Chakna*, that is, to be charitable and to do selfless service for those in need; and *Kirat Karni*, that is, to work hard to earn an honest living. In a nutshell, as Eleanor Nesbitt puts it, "life should be lived meditatively, industriously, and generously."<sup>16</sup>

In 1504, on the banks of the Ravi River in Punjab, Nanak founded the agricultural settlement of Kartarpur, which means "City of God," where the ethical and religious principles he advocated informed the conduct of daily life. In this respect, Sikhs revere Nanak as the founder of their community of faith. This faith teaches that the spirit of God resides in all human beings, although human egoism prevents us from recognizing it and from realizing its potential. For Sikhs, by contrast, the title *Guru* identifies an authentic spiritual leader whose person, deeds, and teachings embody and communicate the divine word.<sup>17</sup> Nanak was the first Sikh *Guru*. Following his death, a succession of nine *Gurus* carried forward and elaborated upon the full significance of the central

principles informing his message: the unity of God and the unity of humankind. The fifth *Guru*, Arjan Dev [1564-1606], compiled nine hundred and seventy-four of Nanak's devotional writings into the first edition of the Sikh scripture, known as the *Adi Granth*, along with his own hymns and those of earlier Sikh *Gurus*, as well as sacred verse selected from the writings of Hindu and Islamic *Sants*, notably Kabir. The tenth *Guru*, Gobind Singh [1666-1708], added hymns composed by himself and by the ninth *Guru*, Tegh Bahadur [1621-1675]. He declared that following his death, the *Adi Granth* shall replace human *Gurus* as spiritual authority for the Sikh community. The *Adi Granth* was designated the eleventh and eternal *Guru* on October 7, 1708.<sup>18</sup> Comprising one thousand four hundred and thirty pages, the sacred text is scripted in *Gurmukhi*, which means "from the mouth of the Guru," and which the second *Guru*, Angad [1504-1552], normalized as the written form of the Punjabi language.<sup>19</sup> The *Adi Granth* opens with the "*Japji*," or "Recital." Composed by Nanak, these verses contain the essential principles of the Sikh faith, beginning with the "*Mool Mantar*," or "Main Chant," which articulates the essential nature of *Ek Onkar*. Sikhs worldwide honour the *Adi Granth* and the beliefs and practices it espouses.

In 1699, Gobind Singh instituted the *Khalsa Panth*, that is, the community of observant Sikhs. Initiates into this community adopt ritual symbols commonly designated the "Five K's": *Kachhera*, that is, cotton breeches; the *Kangha*, or comb; the *Kara*, or steel bangle; *Kesh*, that is, uncut hair; and the *Kirpan*, or sword. These symbols are outward signs of commitment to Sikh beliefs, values, and ritual practices. Inwardly, Sikhs commune with God through prayer. Such devotions commonly feature in Sikh ceremonies and rites, but there are no rules

governing when and where Sikhs can pray. In particular, a priest is not required to be present or to officiate; regardless of gender or age, any individual may lead prayer.<sup>20</sup> Sikhs may pray at any time and in any place, and prayers may vary in length and content. A Sikh's day begins with personal prayer. Compiled over several decades, another authoritative text, the *Reht Maryada*, or *Code of Conduct*, advises devotees to rise in the early hours of morning to bathe, then to commence the day by meditating on God. At the same time, Sikh prayer is communal in its language and subject-matter; the Sikh tradition stresses that individuals are part of a larger body, the *Khalsa Panth*. Prayers focus on the historic sacrifices, successes, glories, and needs of the community as a whole.<sup>21</sup> While personal prayers are encouraged, then, the Sikh house of worship, known as the *Gurdwara*, plays a central role in the devotional life of the community.

## THE HARMANDIR SAHIB COMPLEX

In Nanak's time, local religious sanctuaries were known as *Dharmshalas*. Built of convenient materials like wood, mud bricks, and limestone mortar, these unpretentious structures provided space for devotions and for travellers to rest.<sup>22</sup> The settlement at Kartarpur included such accommodations, as well as rooms for Nanak's followers to congregate to sing hymns, to perform *Kirtan*, and to listen to the discourses of the *Guru*.<sup>23</sup> As the Sikh community grew, however, successive leaders undertook more ambitious projects. In 1577, Ram Das [1534-1581], the fourth Sikh leader, established the town of Ramdaspur in Punjab and began the excavation of a sacred fresh-water tank, fed by the Ravi River. He named the *Sarovar* "Amritsar," which literally means "Pool of the Nectar of Immortality."<sup>24</sup>



FIG. 1. THE AKAL TAKHAT (1986), AMRITSAR, PUNJAB, INDIA: [HTTPS://UPLOAD.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKIPEDIA/COMMONS/2/28/AKAL\_TAKHAT\_AMRITSAR.JPG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE 3.0 GENERIC LICENSE.



FIG. 2. TAKEN IN 1870, THIS PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE ORIGINAL DESIGN OF THE CAUSEWAY LEADING TO THE DARBAR SAHIB IN THE CENTRE OF THE SAROVAR AT THE HARMANDIR SAHIB COMPLEX, AMRITSAR, PUNJAB: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:1870\_PHOTOGRAPH\_OF\_THE\_CAUSEWAY\_TO\_THE\_GOLDEN\_TEMPLE\_SANCTUM.JPG]. | PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Succeeding Ram Das as *Guru*, Arjan [1563-1606] completed the excavation, resulting in a brick-lined tank, seventeen feet deep and four hundred and ninety-two feet square. Originally intended for cooking and bathing, the waters of the *Sarovar* soon served for ritual ablutions, known as *Isnaan*. Arjan also designed the *Darbar Sahib*, which translates literally as “Royal Court.” While Hindu temples in northern India were normally constructed atop a raised platform, Arjan built the *Darbar Sahib* in a topographical depression, intending devotees to descend into it in a gesture of humility. The structure stands on a platform sixty-seven feet square in the centre of the *Sarovar*.<sup>25</sup> Inspired by the way in which a lotus flower arises from a pond, it is the only Sikh house of worship built in this manner. Called a *Parikrama*, or circumambulation, a walkway paved in marble circumscribes the building, allowing devotees to focus their thoughts before entering the inner sanctum. In 1604, Arjan consecrated the *Darbar Sahib* and installed the *Adi Granth*. Known popularly as the Golden

Temple, the *Darbar Sahib* is the most revered Sikh *Gurdwara*, a term first used by the sixth *Guru*, Hargobind [1595-1644]. Every *Gurdwara* is especially significant for Sikhs precisely because it houses the *Adi Granth*.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, *Gurdwara* translates as “Doorway to the *Guru*.”

At the same time, Hargobind turned his attention to the practical implementation of Sikh teachings. In 1606, he established the *Akal Takhat*, which means “Throne of the Immortal,” a platform twelve feet high whence the *Guru* administered the economic, social, political, and religious concerns of the Sikh community.<sup>27</sup> Hargobind’s successors elaborated this simple platform into structures of two, then five storeys, the latter underwritten by the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh Sandhawalia [1780-1839] in the late 1700s. Restored in 1986, the *Akal Takhat* stands at an angle on the western embankment of the *Sarovar*.<sup>28</sup> The design blends elements of Mughal Islamic and Rajput Hindu architecture, including arched balconies erected on sculpted pillars; *Chhatris*, that is, small

pavilions or kiosks capped by cupolas; and a large fluted central dome or *Gumbad*, topped with an ornate finial in the form of a stylized urn, known as a *Khalasha* (fig. 1). At night, space in the *Akal Takhat* serves as the *Sach Khand*, that is, as a resting place for the *Adi Granth*. Almost twenty feet wide and two hundred and sixteen feet long, a causeway paved with marble connects the *Darbar Sahib* and the *Akal Takhat* (fig. 2). Early in the morning, a *Granthi*, that is, a designated ceremonial reader or attendant, carries the sacred text across this causeway from the *Akal Takhat* to the *Darbar Sahib*. Once the *Adi Granth* is placed in the *Darbar Sahib*, obeisance to the scripture begins; it continues until the sacred text is returned to the resting room late in the evening.<sup>29</sup> The movement of the *Adi Granth* captures Sikh understanding of relations between things spiritual and things temporal. If the *Darbar Sahib* enshrines spiritual authority, the *Akal Takhat* represents temporal authority, and the daily journey of the *Adi Granth* between the two buildings enacts the perpetual interdependence



FIG. 3. NORTHERN ENTRANCE, CLOCK TOWER AND ARCHED COLONNADE OF THE *HARMANDIR SAHIB*, AMRITSAR, PUNJAB: [HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:GOLDEN\_TEMPLE\_ENTRANCE.JPG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE.

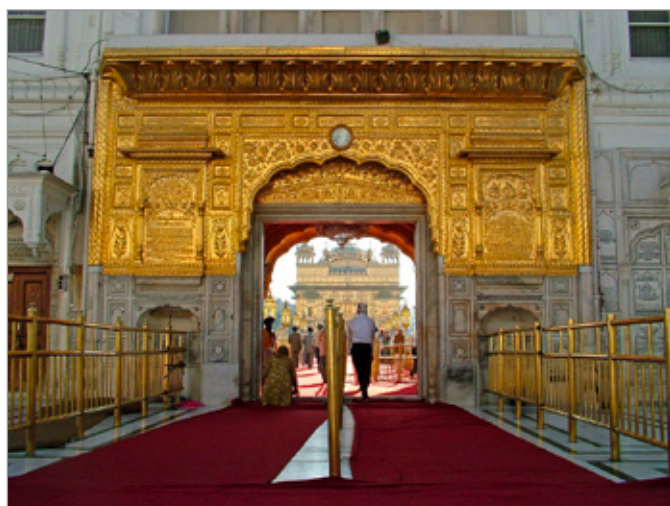


FIG. 4. LOOKING THROUGH THE ARCHED *DARSHANI DEORHI* TOWARD THE *DARBAR SAHIB*: [HTTPS://WWW.PINTEREST.IE/PIN/336081190938914645/]. | VINCE S\*TEELGATE, JUNE 2013.

between these realms of authority for the Sikh community of faith.<sup>30</sup>

In 1757 and 1762, invading Afghani forces rampaged through Amritsar, causing serious damage to the *Darbar Sahib* and the *Akal Takhat*. Major renovations of the structures were undertaken in the 1770s and 1780s, culminating in extensive marble and gold embellishment during the imperial reign of Ranjit Singh [1780-1839], "Lion of the Punjab."<sup>31</sup> In the middle of the twentieth century, a marble pavement sixty feet wide, covered colonnaded passageways, and ancillary buildings were constructed on all four sides of the *Sarovar*, enabling devotees to circumambulate the sacred waters in quiet contemplation. An arched gateway into the sacred precincts of the compound dominates the centre of each colonnade. Expressing the inclusivity of the Sikh faith, the four gateways symbolize equal ease of access to the site for males and females of any class or caste from all four cardinal directions.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, each gateway exhibits a distinct architectural character. On the north side, for example, the main entrance to the complex features a

domed clock tower, while the western gate, known as the *Darshani Deorhi*, or "Gate of Vision," provides devotees with an unimpeded, framed view of the *Darbar Sahib* and access to it across the causeway (figs. 3 and 4).<sup>33</sup> Sikhs refer to the whole complex as the *Harmandir Sahib*, which literally means "Abode of God." Though the *Darbar Sahib*, the *Akal Takhat*, and the *Sarovar* constitute the heart of the *Harmandir Sahib*, the complex also features *Langar* kitchens capable of providing over one hundred thousand free vegetarian meals a day in two expansive *Langar* halls (fig. 5).<sup>34</sup> Other facilities include a library and classrooms, accommodation for the *Granthi* and visiting travellers, numerous shrines commemorating the ten Sikh *Gurus*, and Indian jujube trees marking important historical events in the Sikh tradition (figs. 6 and 7). Visible at a distance, tall steel flagpoles known as *Nishan Sahibs* rise high inside the complex, identifying the site as a Sikh sanctuary and drawing believers to their devotions. Flying from the poles, tapering triangular saffron flags display the *Khanda* symbol, a symmetrical arrangement of paired *Kirpans*, a double-edged

sword and a martial quoit emblematic of the spiritual unity of the *Khalsa Panth* and the Sikh's temporal duty to serve and protect (fig. 8).<sup>35</sup>

Incorporating aspects of both Mughal Islamic and Rajput Hindu architecture, the *Harmandir Sahib* inaugurates a distinct Sikh symbology: it grounds the architectural tectonics of the Sikh faith.<sup>36</sup> The *Darbar Sahib* merits particular attention. As devotees approach the *sanctum sanctorum*, a balustrade of perforated marble screens interposed with marble pillars and lanterns atop marble columns borders both sides of the causeway.<sup>37</sup> The causeway then flows into the walkway which runs around the *Darbar Sahib*, as does the balustrade, while six unpretentious *Chhatris* highlight the seven-sided trapezoidal plan of the *sanctum sanctorum* (fig. 9).<sup>38</sup> In elevation, the *Darbar Sahib* comprises three storeys, featuring balconies supported by carved brackets and bay windows crowned by shallow elliptical cornices. Inlaid marble panels cover the ground floor of the building's exterior, copper sheathing dressed with gold foil the exterior of the upper floors.



FIG. 5. A TYPICAL *LANGAR* VEGETARIAN MEAL. | PRABHJIT BRAR, SEPTEMBER 2018.



FIG. 7. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE *HARMANDIR SAHIB* COMPLEX, AMRITSAR, PUNJAB, INCLUDE THE *DARBAR SAHIB* IN THE MIDDLE OF THE *SAROVAR*, THE *DARSHANI DEORHI*, THE CAUSEWAY CONNECTING THE *SANCTUM SANCTORUM* TO THE *AKAL TAKHAT*, AND COLONNADES DIVIDED BY ENTRANCES FROM EACH CARDINAL DIRECTION: [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/SHRIDARBARSAHIB/STATUS/1114004415654944768]. | PUBLIC DOMAIN.



FIG. 9. A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE CAUSEWAY TO AND WALKWAY AROUND THE *DARBAR SAHIB*, AMRITSAR, PUNJAB, INCLUDING FIVE OF THE SIX *CHHATRIS* ACCENTING THE SIX-SIDED TRAPEZOIDAL PLAN OF THE *SANCTUM SANCTORUM*: [HTTP://MELBOURNEBLOGGER.BLOGSPOT.COM/2017/12/GOLDEN-TEMPLE-IN-AMRITSAR-STUNNING.HTML]. | HELEN W., DECEMBER 2017.

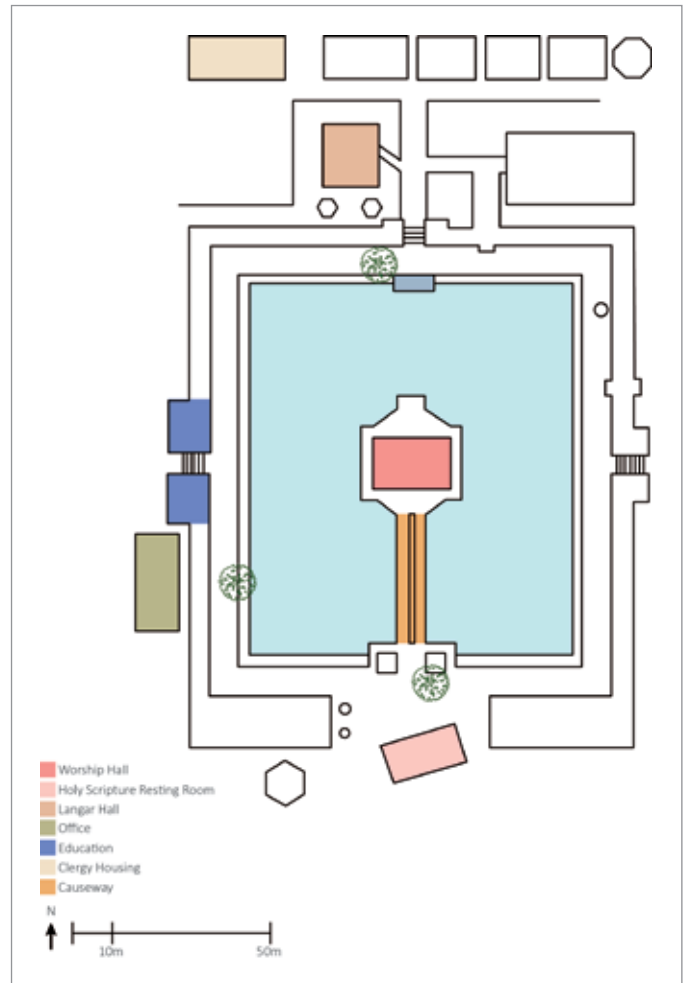


FIG. 6. PLAN ILLUSTRATING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE *HARMANDIR SAHIB* COMPLEX, AMRITSAR, PUNJAB, INCLUDING THE *DARBAR SAHIB* (WORSHIP HALL), THE *AKAL TAKHAT* (HOLY SCRIPTURE RESTING ROOM), THE *SAROVAR*, AND FOUR ENTRANCES PROVIDING ACCESS TO THE SANCTUARY FROM ALL FOUR CARDINAL DIRECTIONS. | PRABHJIT BRAR.



FIG. 8. THE SIKH SYMBOL OF THE *KHANDA*: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:KHANDA\_ORIGINAL.PNG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENSE.

Inspired by the architecture of Mughal mosques, a substantial *Chhatri* dominates the top floor; placed directly over the *Adi Granth*, it is crowned by “a low-fluted, majestic masonry dome covered with gold-plated copper sheets.”<sup>39</sup> Square kiosks rise above the front corners of the building, one receiving a narrow staircase to the top floor terrace, which provides views of the *Akal Takhat*, the *Sarovar*, and the surrounding colonnades and ancillary structures. At the rear corners of the third floor, wider staircases from the second floor emerge inside hexagonal *Chhatris*. Fluted and gilded cupolas cap all four corner *Chhatris*. A marble parapet four feet high runs between the corner kiosks. Reinterpreting the crenellation often found in Mughal architecture, sequences of fifty-eight golden onion “domelets” decorate the parapet.<sup>40</sup> Hindu influences play a part, too. For example, a lotus petal motif forms the base of the dome and an inverted lotus crowns it, the latter supporting a gilded copper *Khalasha*, recognized among Hindus as an auspicious symbol of wisdom and fecundity.<sup>41</sup>

Devotees may enter the *Darbar Sahib* through doors in the north, south, east, and west walls. Inside, marble panels featuring arched reliefs dress the lower parts of the *sanctum sanctorum*, while copper sheeting overlaid with elaborately tooled gold foil covers the upper parts. The *Adi Granth* is located centrally on the ground floor, installed upon a small cushion, known as a *Manji*, atop a *Takhat*, that is, a raised platform or throne (fig. 10). Here, a short ceremony known as *Prakash*, which literally means “light,” celebrates the daily opening of the sacred scripture. Called a *Chanani*, a tasseled canopy studied with jewels rises above the platform, denoting the authority of the *Adi Granth*. As a mark of respect, a *Granthi* fans the sacred text with a ceremonial whisk, or *Chauri*, fashioned from the tail of a white



FIG. 10. THE *ADI GRANTH* IS LOCATED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE *DARBAR SAHIB* BENEATH A TASSELED CANOPY. OPEN IN THE CENTRE, THE GALLERIED SECOND FLOOR PERMITS DEVOTEES TO CIRCUMAMBULATE AND GAIN VISUAL ACCESS TO THE SACRED TEXT: [HTTP://MELBOURNEBLOGGER.BLOGSPOT.COM/2017/12/GOLDEN-TEMPLE-IN-AMRITSAR-STUNNING.HTML]. | HELEN W., DECEMBER 2017.

horse or yak set in a silver or wooden handle.<sup>42</sup> Taking the form of a galleried pavilion, the second storey is known as the *Shish Mahal*, or “Hall of Mirrors.” It is open in the centre, which ensures that no one may commit the “unpardonable sacrilege” of walking over the *Adi Granth*.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, devotees may circumambulate the sacred text and gain visual access to ritual proceedings below through archways in the pavilion’s inner

walls. Throughout the *Darbar Sahib*, interior surfaces, corridors, and ceilings are richly decorated: gold embossing on “the ceiling of the main hall and the upper portion of the rear wall of the main shrine”; marble panels inlaid with “different kinds and colours of stones,” which depict “flowers, leaves, human figures, fruits and animals” in a “multi-chromatic collage” of what is known as *Jaratkari* work; frescos, or *Mohrakashi*,



FIG. 11. ERECTED ON AN OCTAGONAL PLAN, THE CELEBRATED GURDWARA BABA ATAL (C. 1775), AMRITSAR, PUNJAB: [HTTPS://UPLOAD.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKIPEDIA/COMMONS/B/BB/BABA\\_ATAL\\_AMRITSAR.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/BABA_ATAL_AMRITSAR.JPG). | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE.



FIG. 12. THE RARE CRUCIFORM DESIGN OF THE GURDWARA NANAK JHIRA (1948), BIDAR, KARNATAKA, INDIA: [\[HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:BIDAR\\_GURUDWARA\\_NANAK\\_JHIRA\\_SAHIB.JPG\]](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bidar_Gurudwara_Nanak_Jhira_Sahib.JPG). | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 2.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENSE.

which feature mainly floral designs and a few figures of animals in a range of textures and shades; and lime or gypsum plasterwork, known as *Gatch*, which is either inset with *Tukri*, that is, “mirrored glass,” or decorated with quotes in the *Gurmukhi* script from the *Adi Granth* and other Sikh sacred verse painted in gold.<sup>44</sup> In these respects, the décor of the *Darbar Sahib* draws severally upon Hindu Rajput and Islamic Mughal aesthetic traditions and artistic techniques, and in so doing, at once embodies and expresses the sort of inclusivist convictions that animate the Sikh tradition.

### THE GURDWARA IN THE SIKH FAITH

As Karamjit Singh Chahal, Sandeep Dua, and Sulakhan Singh indicate, in India and Pakistan a number of historic *Gurdwaras* were built “at sites associated with important incidents in the lives of the Gurus or at places which are important milestones in Sikh history; or they have been erected in memory of the martyrs who gave up their lives in defence of their faith during the long period of persecution to which the Sikhs were subjected.”<sup>45</sup>

For the most part, these sanctuaries serve urban populations, as well as significant numbers of regional, national, and even international Sikh pilgrims.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the location, however, the *Gurdwara* may orient in any direction and may comprise a single structure or be divided into a complex of several smaller buildings, as the site allows and as the architect and the congregation deem fit. Although no formal stipulations govern the design of these buildings, they tend to employ an historic typology reiterating features of the *Harmandir Sahib* complex, especially the *Darbar Sahib*. Particular concern attends the status of the sacred scripture. Enthroned within the *sanctum sanctorum* beneath a canopy, the *Adi Granth* rests on a platform higher than the floor on which devotees sit. Ideally, the precincts of an historic *Gurdwara* will include a *Sarovar* for ritual ablutions. Where topography does not allow for a pool, a moat, covered tank or well, a fountain or a trough will provide water for such ablutions. Other components of a *Gurdwara* complex usually include the *Sach Khand*, the *Langar* kitchen and hall, the *Nishan Sahib*, an entrance, or *Deorhi*, on each side of the *Darbar Sahib*, and inside the main

entrance, the *Joda Ghar*, or “shoe house.” Ancillary spaces may contain a school for teaching the history, values, and doctrines of the Sikh faith, and accommodation for *Granthis* and for visitors. The *Gurdwara* may even be used as a medical clinic.

The most important structure in the *Gurdwara* complex, the *Darbar Sahib* is typically finished in white and capped by a golden, ribbed dome styled as a symmetrical blossom of lotus petals and crowned by an ornamental *Khalasha*, fashioned from brass or gilded copper and rising in sections from an inverted lotus design atop the dome. Ranging from one to nine storeys in height, such buildings may be erected upon a square, a rectangular, an octagonal, or a cruciform floor plan.<sup>47</sup> The celebrated Gurdwara Baba Atal (c. 1775) in Amritsar, Punjab, India, represents an atypical interpretation of the octagonal style, while the Gurdwara Nanak Jhira (1948) in Bidar, Karnataka, India, exemplifies the much rarer cruciform design (figs. 11 and 12). At the same time, it is not unusual for an historic *Gurdwara* to feature an octagonal *sanctum sanctorum* within a square or rectangular hall, with a circumambulatory passageway between



FIG. 13. THE GURDWARA SRI TARN TARAN SAHIB (1836), PUNJAB. EMBELLISHMENT OF THIS HISTORIC BUILDING CONTINUES; IN 2005, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SECOND STOREY OF THE EASTERN FAÇADE FACING THE SAROVAR WAS PLATED IN GOLD: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:THE\_SAROVAR\_BESIDES\_THE\_GURUDWARATARN\_TARAN\_SAHIB,\_PUNJAB,\_INDIA.JPG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 2.0 GENERIC LICENSE.

them. Like the *Harmandir Sahib* complex, these various architectural plans ideally provide four points of access to the sanctuary. Ornate décor often identifies the *Deorhi* that serves as a main entrance either to the complex as a whole or more directly to the *Darbar Sahib*. Inside, there is usually no furniture in the worship hall; in fact, as an expression of equality, all members of the congregation sit at the same level on carpeted floors, not on chairs or in pews, regardless of age, gender, and worldly role or rank. Invariably, a central aisle leads to the *Adi Granth*, with males and females seated respectively to the right and left sides of the aisle. Devotees face inward in the *Darbar Sahib*, focusing their attention upon the sacred scripture. Normally, the building has few windows, while some *Gurdwaras* may include skylights above the *Adi Granth*, again denoting the scripture's sacred status.

More specifically, the architectural typology of the more ambitious historic

*Gurdwara* generally combines elements of Hindu Rajput and Islamic Mughal styles, from the structural columns, decorative pilasters, bracketed balconies, and corniced fenestration of the former to the fluted and ribbed domes, cusped and recessed arches, and squared and octagonal minarets of the latter. In another twist, details like the *Jharokha* and the *Bukharcha*—that is, oriel and bay windows respectively—and the popular *Chhatris*, all of which figure in numerous historic Sikh houses of worship, may be found in both Hindu and Islamic Mughal architectural languages.<sup>48</sup> Decorative elements range from sculpted foliage around arched windows and entranceways to interiors featuring geometrical patterns, marble surfaces inset with semi-precious stones and reflective glass, murals depicting episodes in the life of Nanak, and inscriptions from the *Adi Granth*.<sup>49</sup> Numerous eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century *Gurdwaras* instantiate this distinctively

Sikh blending of existing Hindu and Islamic forms. The Gurdwara Sri Tarn Taran Sahib (1836) in Tarn Taran, Punjab, India, epitomizes such structures (fig. 13).<sup>50</sup> In a conventional manner, this sanctuary is square in plan and accessible on each side. Surmounted by a gilded ribbed dome and soaring *Khalasha*, the three storeys of the *Darbar Sahib* rise shimmering white and gold beside the world's largest *Sarovar*. Rows of windows with arched cornices project from each elevation, with domical *Jharokhas* flanking three central windows on the north, south, and west façades. Identical *Chhatris* augment the corners of the building's third storey, while chains of small golden domes form parapets between them. Inside, the *Adi Granth* rests beneath a gilded domical canopy, while walls and ceilings are decorated with geometrical motifs in gold, red, and blue, gilt panelling, and elaborate stucco work inlaid with mirrored glass. A large hall accommodates devotees for the *Langar* meal, and a three-storey minaret capped by a dome dominates the north-eastern corner of the *Sarovar*. The *Nishan Sahib* stands in front of the sanctuary.

At the same time, however, local Sikh communities in the sub-continent have adopted elements of this *Gurdwara* typology to design and construct more modest sanctuaries. Again, examples abound, but two shrines in the city and district of Barnala, Punjab, India, represent such approaches. Unlike the majority of historic Sikh sanctuaries, which accommodate large urban congregations and significant numbers of Sikh pilgrims, the Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib serves devotees in the eponymous village and its rural environs. Like the renowned Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib (1855) in Amritsar, it commemorates the fourth *Guru*, Ram Das. Situated on a plot of roughly one acre amidst surrounding farmland, the Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib comprises two principal

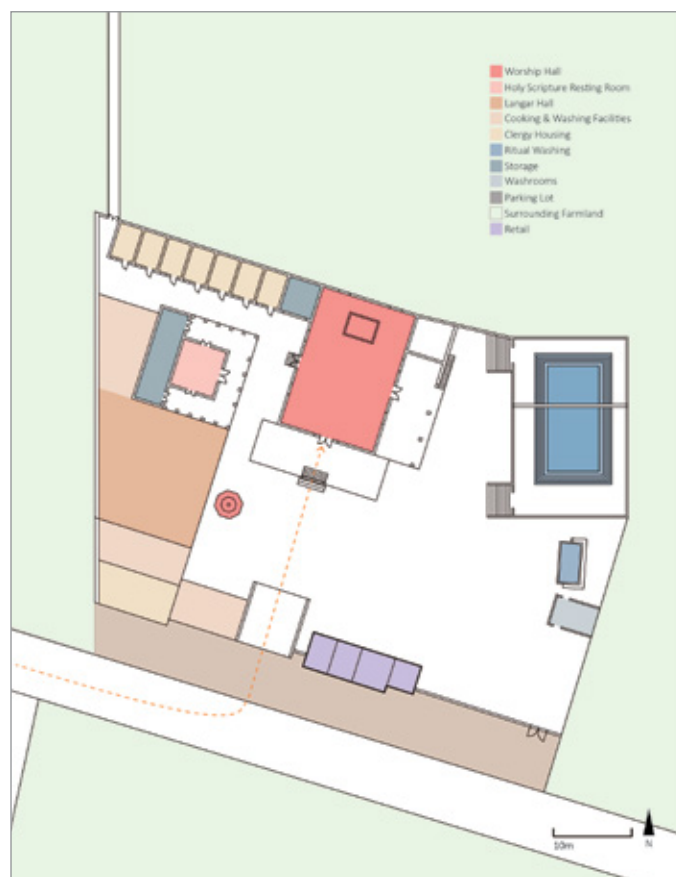


FIG. 14. SITE PLAN OF GURDWARA KOTHE RAMSAR SAHIB, BARNALA, PUNJAB. | PRABHJIT BRAR.

FIG. 15. THE COURTYARD AND MAIN ENTRY OF THE *DARBAR SAHIB* OF THE GURDWARA KOTHE RAMSAR SAHIB, BARNALA, PUNJAB. | PRABHJIT BRAR, SEPTEMBER 2018.FIG. 16. THE INTERIOR OF THE *DARBAR SAHIB* OF THE GURDWARA KOTHE RAMSAR SAHIB, BARNALA, PUNJAB. | PRABHJIT BRAR, SEPTEMBER 2018.

structures of mud, brick, stucco, and concrete (fig. 14). Accessible on all sides, the rectangular *Darbar Sahib* holds about two hundred people. To provide shelter or shade, an open lean-to attaches to the east side of the single-storeyed, flat-roofed structure. There is no designated *Joda Ghar*; devotees remove their shoes and wash their hands and feet outside before accessing the building up steps and through the main entrance (fig. 15). The *Nishan Sahib* stands to the left of this entrance.

Inside the worship hall of the Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib, a glassed-in room holds the *Adi Granth* (fig. 16). Sash and clerestory windows provide sunlight and ventilation. The white interior features restrained décor: tiled wainscoting and gilded copper artwork on suspended fans. Darker carpeting indicates the approach

to the sacred scripture and separates areas for male and female worshippers. Shielded by a verandah on three sides, the second principal structure houses the *Langar* hall and the *Sach Khand*, as well as kitchen facilities. Not presently used, the *Sarovar* is elevated rather than excavated, requiring devotees to climb steps up into it. A tall wall divides the larger men's area from the smaller women's area. Ancillary buildings include accommodation for the *Granthi*, a garage for a single vehicle toward the rear of the complex, and a well and washroom for their ablutions. Beyond the clerical quarters, a doorway opens onto adjacent farmland. The grounds of the *Gurdwara* feature abundant greenery and mature trees provide shaded gathering places. Devotees cross the threshold into the sacred precincts of the *Gurdwara* complex through an arched gateway, beside which four stalls for

vendors front onto the main road and the world beyond. Conceived and constructed in the style of a domestic residence, the *Gurdwara* nonetheless embodies the essential principles guiding the design of a Sikh sanctuary. In this respect, the Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib typifies the vernacular idiom of an unassuming local *Gurdwara* built on a small scale from readily available materials for daily prayers and small family ceremonies.<sup>51</sup>

By contrast, the Gurdwara Tap Asthaan Bibi Pardhan Kaur Ji draws direct inspiration from a revered figure in the Sikh tradition. Having lost her husband and her son to untimely deaths, Bibi Pardhan Kaur [1718-1792] devoted herself to a life of prayer, religious education, and charitable work. Erected in her memory, the *Gurdwara* stands within landscaped gardens among almost six acres of grassland

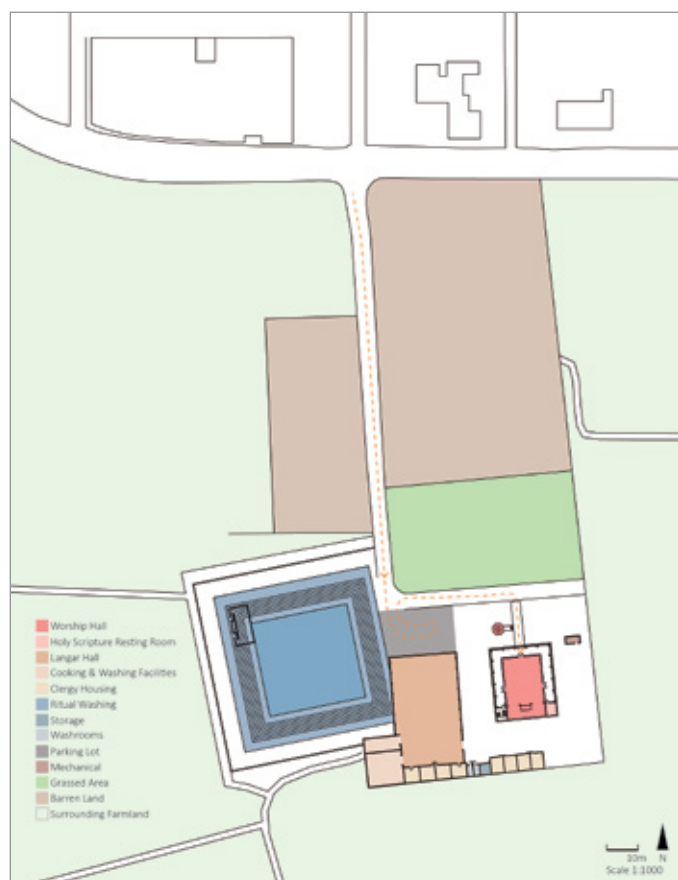


FIG. 17. SITE PLAN OF GURDWARA TAP ASTHAAN BIBI PARDHAN KAUR JI, BARNALA, PUNJAB. | PRABHJIT BRAR.



FIG. 18. THE FRONTAL ELEVATION OF THE GURDWARA TAP ASTHAAN BIBI PARDHAN KAUR JI, BARNALA, PUNJAB, INDIA. NOTE THE SEPARATE WASHBASINS FOR MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ABLUTIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE APPROACH TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE, AS WELL AS THE NISHAN SAHIB AND LANGAR HALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE PHOTOGRAPH. | PRABHJIT BRAR, SEPTEMBER 2018.



FIG. 19. THE INTERIOR OF THE GURDWARA TAP ASTHAAN BIBI PARDHAN KAUR JI, BARNALA, PUNJAB. | PRABHJIT BRAR, SEPTEMBER 2018.

in the city of Barnala (fig. 17). An unpaved access road leads devotees to a large car park. Two very different structures occupy the site: the *Darbar Sahib* and the *Langar* hall. Accommodating approximately six hundred people and elevated one step up from ground level, the rectangular sanctuary manifests as a white brick and stone building in an historic typology (fig. 18). The *Nishan Sahib* stands to the east of the building's main entrance. A covered *Parikrama* frames three sides of the *Darbar Sahib*, each side comprising five pillared bays, each bay rendered into an archway by decorative brackets. A parapet with elliptical cutouts links domed *Chhatris* over each pillar of the *Parikrama*. Accessible on each side, the sanctuary proper sits within the covered walkway.

The frontal elevation features a large domed *Chhatri* over the main entrance, topped by a *Khalasha* and flanked at the corners by domed kiosks of a less imposing profile. Above the *sanctum sanctorum*, an inverted lotus dome, crowned by a larger *Khalasha*, sits atop a square, two-storey tower with smaller domed kiosks at the corners. A narrow terrace with small domed *Chhatris* at the corners delineates the two storeys of the tower, while a second, single-storey square tower with small domed *Chhatris* at the corners contains a staircase leading up to the flat roof of the *Darbar Sahib* at the southwest of the structure. Reiterating the design of the *Parikrama*, a parapet with elliptical cutouts links domed *Chhatris* at the corners of the roof of the

*Darbar Sahib* proper. The absence of a *Joda Ghar* requires devotees to remove their shoes near washbasins for men's and women's ablutions on either side of the approach to the main entrance.

Inside the Gurdwara Tap Asthaan Bibi Pardhan Kaur Ji, three archways span the rear of the sanctuary. The *Adi Granth* rests under the central archway upon a *Takhat* bathed in green fabric beneath a canopy of the same green fabric (fig. 19). Skylights direct the gaze of the devotee to the illumined sacred text. A glazed and curtained *Sach Khand* stands beneath the archway to the right of the *Takhat*. Generous fenestration provides sunlight and ventilation, while a gilded chandelier, patterned red carpeting, red, white, and

blue drapes, and colourful but restrained decorations contrast with the white walls and ceiling. In stylistic juxtaposition to the historic typology of the *Darbar Sahib*, the large *Langar* hall stands to the west of the sanctuary, a covered steel structure open on all sides and housing modest kitchen amenities. Further still to the west, a sizable *Sarovar* provides bathing facilities for men and women, the area for the latter enclosed by tall walls with two entrances. Accommodation for the *Granthi* is located at the rear of the property. The community sometimes uses the surrounding grassland for sporting or other outdoor activities. Not only a sanctuary for daily prayers, then, but also a venue for larger family events and religious festivals embodying an historic typology on a modest scale, the Gurdwara Tap Asthaan Bibi Pardhan Kaur Ji serves urban Sikhs, who comprise about half of the city of Barnala's roughly one hundred and twenty thousand residents, as well as their fellow devotees in the numerous rural villages to be found in the surrounding district of Barnala.

### SIKHS AND THE GURDWARA ON CANADA'S WEST COAST

The vernacular character of the Gurdwara Kotay Ramsar Sahib in the district of Barnala suggests the approach to *Gurdwara* architecture taken by the earliest diaspora Sikh congregations on the west coast of Canada.<sup>52</sup> Kamala Elizabeth Nayar identifies "five waves" of Sikh migration to Canada: "(1) the early arrivals, in the first half of the twentieth century; (2) white-collar professionals, who immigrated in the 1950s; (3) blue-collar labourers, who immigrated during the 1970s; (4) family members who arrived through sponsorship or arranged marriages beginning in 1951 and continuing to the present [2004]; and (5) immigrants arriving after Operation Bluestar

in 1984 on the basis of being 'political refugees.'"<sup>53</sup> The first Sikhs to enter the Dominion were members of the British Indian Army's Sikh Lancers and Infantry regiment returning to their homeland from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in London, England, in 1897. Five years later, British Columbia's rich agricultural land captured the imagination of Punjabi soldiers of the agrarian Jat class, who were visiting the province on the occasion of King Edward VII's coronation.<sup>54</sup>

Significant Sikh immigration followed. According to Nayar, approximately five thousand Punjabi men soon found employment in British Columbia, "mainly in lumber camps and sawmills [*sic*], but also in railway construction, in salmon canneries, on cattle farms, and in fruit orchards."<sup>55</sup> As Valerie Knowles has argued, however, discrimination against East and South Asians was rife.<sup>56</sup> In 1906, seeing the writing on the wall, Sikhs in Vancouver founded the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) as "a forum to consolidate their resistance to Canadian discriminatory policies."<sup>57</sup> The move proved providential: the following year saw the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League, which instigated an anti-Asian riot in Vancouver, while Richard McBride, Conservative Premier of British Columbia, publicly declared his party "in favour of exclusion" and "opposed to the entry of Asiatics into British Columbia."<sup>58</sup> In 1908, Sikh immigration slowed to a trickle after the federal government responded to the Vancouver riot by enacting regulations severely limiting the ability of East and South Asians to settle in Canada.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, however, the KDS consolidated the Sikh presence in Vancouver with the establishment of the first *Gurdwara* in Canada.<sup>60</sup> Pooling resources, the community raised six thousand dollars to purchase the property at 1866 Second Avenue West

in Kitsilano, not far from sawmills on the south shore of False Creek, where many Sikhs lived and worked.<sup>61</sup>

Designed by architect William Henry Archer [1855-1922], the wood-frame Second Avenue *Gurdwara* captures the vernacular style of adjacent residences (fig. 20).<sup>62</sup> Appreciative of their Sikh workforce, local lumber companies agreed to provide timber for the project at cost.<sup>63</sup> Although the building did not feature domes, *Chhatris*, and other more obvious elements of an historic Sikh sanctuary, as photographs show, certain characteristics of the design made it readily recognizable as a Sikh house of worship.<sup>64</sup> A pair of tall concrete pillars defined the entrance to the site, in the manner of a traditional *Deorhi*, each pillar topped by a spherical lamp. Likewise, spherical lamps adorned the corners of the building's frontal façade, perhaps mimicking the domes of historic *Gurdwaras*. In traditional fashion, devotees ascended stairs to the main door of the *Darbar Sahib*, which was rectangular in plan and accessible from all sides. Like contemporary homes in the area, a covered verandah ran around three sides of the structure, conjuring the impression of a pillared *Parikrama*. The frontal elevation comprised five bays rendered as columned arches: flanked on each side by two smaller arches, the central arch guided worshippers from the top of the stairs into the *Darbar Sahib*. A flagpole rose centrally from the roof, flying the Sikh standard. Exterior ornamentation did not run to gilded surfaces and carved marble, but certain refinements gestured toward more restrained historic conventions, notably decorative appliqué and patterned tiling in geometric shapes. In 1936, the congregation installed a mosaic portrait of Nanak, the first *Guru*, on the front gable over the main entrance, further distinguishing the *Gurdwara* from other buildings in the neighbourhood.<sup>65</sup>

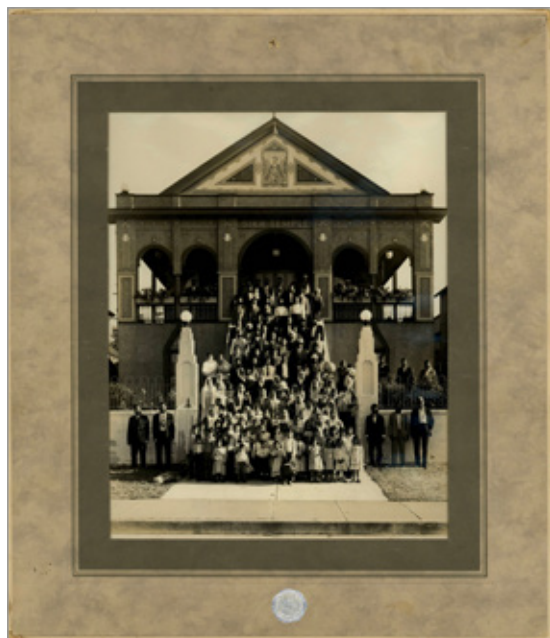


FIG. 20. IN 1910, THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY GATHERS IN FRONT OF THE SIKH *GURDWARA* AT 1866 SECOND AVENUE WEST, KITSILANO, VANCOUVER, BC: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:SIKH\_TEMPLE\_AT\_2ND\_AVENUE,\_VANCOUVER.JPG]. | PUBLIC DOMAIN.



FIG. 21. INTERIOR OF THE SIKH *GURDWARA* AT 1866 SECOND AVENUE WEST, KITSILANO, VANCOUVER, : [HTTPS://SEARCHARCHIVES.VANCOUVER.CA/INTERIOR-OF-SIKH-TEMPLE-AT-1866-WEST-2ND-AVENUE]. | PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Though plainly embodying vernacular influences, then, the exterior design of the Second Avenue *Gurdwara* nonetheless testified to the structure's primary function as a Sikh house of worship. Likewise, photographs reveal pressed tin ceiling tiles and tongue-and-groove pine panelling of local manufacture dominated the interior of the sanctuary; there was no gilt veneer or gemstone inlay or mirrored glass ornamentation, simply portraits of historical Sikh figures (fig. 21). In traditional fashion, however, the *Adi Granth* enjoyed pride of place, resting upon a raised wooden plinth beneath a fringed, fabric canopy at the rear of the *Darbar Sahib*, while a strip of carpet led worshippers to the sacred scripture and delineated separate areas for men and women to sit on the floor, according to the Sikh code of religious conduct. At the same time, the Second Avenue *Gurdwara* offered more than space for Sikh devotions; it also served

as a community centre. Below the *Darbar Sahib*, the building housed a communal kitchen and hall for the *Langar* meal and other gatherings, as well as bathrooms and accommodation for *Granthis* and visitors. In addition to weddings, anniversaries, and religious celebrations, the hall hosted meetings on a range of contemporary issues, from the rights of workers in Canada to famine relief in India. On several occasions, members of the Ghadar Movement, founded by ex-patriate Sikhs in 1913 in San Francisco, California, visited the *Gurdwara* to argue the case for India's independence from Great Britain.<sup>66</sup> Most famously, it was from the Second Avenue sanctuary that the KDS furnished food, water, and legal assistance to three hundred and seventy-six mostly Sikh migrants marooned aboard the Japanese merchantman *Komagata Maru* in Vancouver Harbour from May to July 1914.<sup>67</sup> The activist spirit of the KDS persisted, even though Sikh immigration

declined between World War I and World War II. In 1947, for example, the society took a leading role in the successful campaign for the extension of the franchise to South Asians.<sup>68</sup> Such occurrences readily stimulated the spirit of Sikh ecumenism; the congregation regularly welcomed South Asian Muslims and Hindus to the *Gurdwara*, as well as members of other faiths.

The success of Canada's first purpose-built *Gurdwara* encouraged the KDS to pursue a similar strategy for other Sikh communities in British Columbia. In 1911, the society inaugurated the Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford, and the following year, sanctuaries in Victoria on Vancouver Island and in Fraser Mills, near Coquitlam on the mainland. By 1925, the KDS also had mainland branches in Golden, Ocean Falls, and New Westminster, as well as Coombs, Duncan, and Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. A decade later, the Hillcrest Sikh

temple opened near Duncan. Like the Second Avenue *Gurdwara*, all but the Victoria sanctuary were wood-frame buildings, the construction of which was usually facilitated through agreements between local lumber yards and their Sikh employees.<sup>69</sup> Led by Sunder Singh Thandi [n.d.] and Arjan Singh [n.d.], the Abbotsford congregation raised three thousand dollars to purchase a one-acre plot on high ground on the outskirts of the village. Construction began in 1908. Owned by Joseph Ogle Trethewey [1858-1927] and his brothers, the Abbotsford Lumber Company donated timber, which Sikh workers carried on their shoulders from the company's yard on Mill Lake up the hill to the site. Completed in 1911, the *Gurdwara* officially opened in 1912. Today the Gur Sikh Temple stands at 33089 South Fraser Way in what is now a predominantly commercial area of the city of Abbotsford.

Typical of the vernacular architecture of commercial buildings of the period, the design of the Gur Sikh Temple makes use of local materials in a wood-frame structure of two storeys, with a false front facing the highway and a steep gabled roof (fig. 22). Painted white, pine horizontal drop siding clads the exterior, and pine mouldings, also painted white, frame the doors and windows. Adopting a local form to capture the devotional function of a traditional *Parikrama*, the design includes a veranda with a skillion roof on three sides of the upper level. Linked by wood railings with plain square spindles, slender turned wood columns support the roof of the verandah, which provides shelter from inclement weather. Centred on the structure's south façade, a prominent concrete staircase carries worshippers up to the main entrance into the *Darbar Sahib*, while secondary wooden staircases provide access to the rear of the verandah and the interior on the east



FIG. 22. FACING THE STREET, THE FRONTAL ELEVATION OF THE GUR SIKH TEMPLE (1911), 33089 SOUTH FRASER WAY, ABBOTSFORD, BC: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:GUR\_SIKH\_TEMPLE\_02.JPG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE Alike 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE.

and west sides of the building. Just as spherical lamps atop the entrance pillars and frontal façade of the Second Avenue *Gurdwara* seem to invoke the domes of historic Sikh sanctuaries, here too they crown the concrete newels either side of the main staircase. Undertaken in 1932 and again in the late 1960s, additions

to the prayer hall at the northern end of the structure enhance rather than detract from its authentic local character. Reimagining the traditional *Sarovar*, water flows from a fountain down a concrete chute which curls from east to west around the north end of the building into a small pool. Originally fashioned from

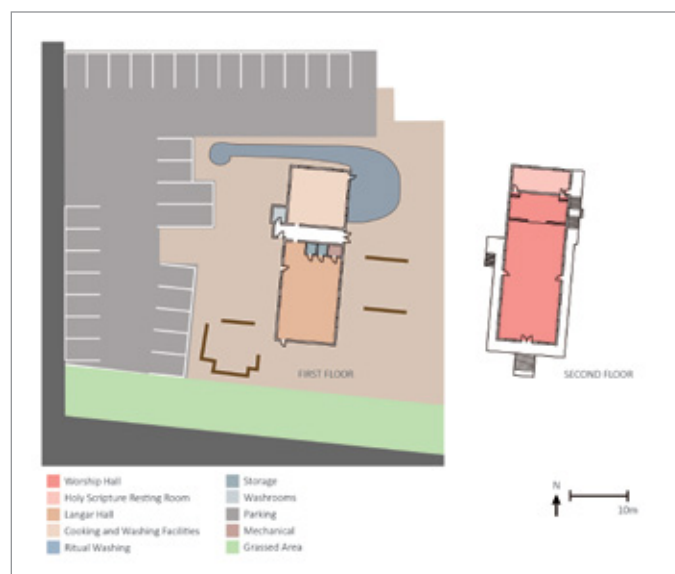


FIG. 23. SITE PLAN OF THE GUR SIKH TEMPLE (1911), 33089 SOUTH FRASER WAY, ABBOTSFORD. | PRABHJIT BRAR.

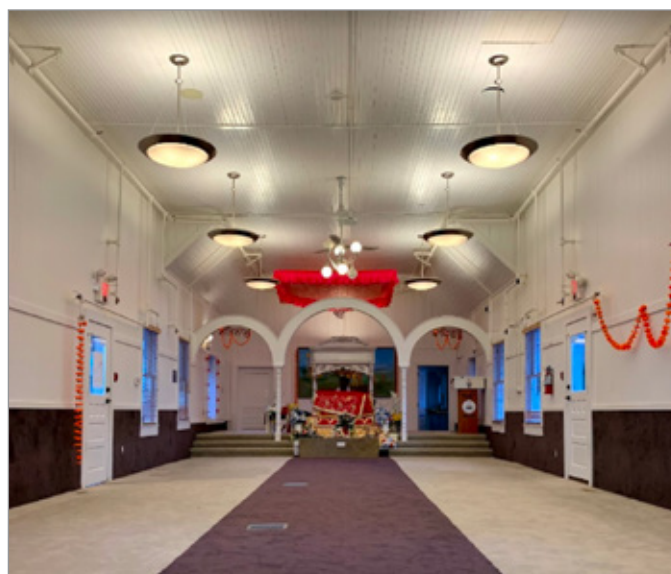


FIG. 24. THE INTERIOR OF THE GUR SIKH TEMPLE (1911), 33089 SOUTH FRASER WAY, ABBOTSFORD: [HTTPS://WWW.GOOGLE.COM/MAPS/UV?PB=!1S0X548435676102068D%3A0X88A133230A4DDC513M117E115145HTTPS%3A%2F%2FLH5.GOOGLEUSERCONTENT.COM%2FP%2FAF1QIPNXOBREWAU\_NG99FBODM6EDOQHEFYCLZEB4Z4CZ%3DW355-H200-K-NO!5SGUR%20SIKH%20TEMPLE%20ABBOTSFORD%20-%20GOOGLE%20SEAR-CH!15SCGIGAQ&IMAGEKEY=!1E10!2SAF1QIPMTWMA4-YQWOAPH6LYV\_K\_VW7EP04P-DSSPTYIS&HL=EN&SA=X&VED=2AHUKEWJLRP7-SYZ0AHWCMIEXHMUDIEQOIP6BAHFEAM]. | AMAN AMAN, JANUARY 2019.

a cedar seventy feet tall, a steel *Nishan Sahib* rises on the southeast corner of the property. Mature trees shade a carefully landscaped courtyard, which contains garden seating and a display of statues commemorating various aspects of Sikh history. At the northeast corner of the site, a restored pioneer cottage provides space for offices and the *Granthi*. There is parking for about thirty vehicles on the west and north sides of the property.

Based on a rectangular floor plan, the *Darbar Sahib* occupies most of the upper level of the Gur Sikh Temple (fig. 23). A flight of three steps spans the north end of the hall, leading up to the raised platform where the *Adi Granth* is enthroned beneath an unelaborate canopy (fig. 24). The main entrance to the *Darbar Sahib* is on the south side of the building, but devotees may gain access through doors on the other sides. Symmetrically spaced

windows in the east, south, and west walls and period light fixtures suspended from the ceiling illuminate the space. An internal door at the northwest corner of the *Darbar Sahib* leads to the *Sach Khand*. Embellishment is minimal and devotional in character and purpose. Painted white, locally sourced tongue-and-groove paneling covers the ceiling and the walls. In a contrasting dark tone, wainscoting along the east, south, and west walls matches the dark strip of carpeting that leads devotees to the sacred scripture and separates male and female areas on the floor. Three interlinked wooden arches stand toward the northern end of the hall, the larger central arch focusing the attention of worshippers upon the *Adi Granth*. Behind the sacred text, a painting of the ten *Gurus* hangs from a picture rail, also painted white, that runs around the hall's walls. Directly accessible from the courtyard, the lower level houses a community kitchen for the

*Langar*, washrooms, and a large hall for dining and meetings. Self-governing but affiliated with the KDS, the congregation of the Gur Sikh Temple has invariably engaged in the society's social and political activities. Today, the *Gurdwara* survives at 33089 South Fraser Way in what is now a predominantly commercial area of the city of Abbotsford. It still serves as a house of prayer, though Sikh devotees are more likely to attend congregational worship and take part in the *Langar* meal at the larger *Gurdwara* of the Khalsa Diwan Society, built in a modernist style across the highway at 33094 South Fraser Way in 1983. Upon the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the Gur Sikh Temple was designated a National Historic Site in 2002.<sup>70</sup> Restoration work started the following year and the *Gurdwara* reopened in 2007, the *Langar* hall now converted to the Sikh Heritage Museum.

In the decades following World War II, the number of Sikhs coming to Canada once again increased, as the federal government adopted less discriminatory immigration policies.<sup>71</sup> In Vancouver, a burgeoning congregation outgrew the Second Avenue premises. In 1968, the KDS purchased two point seventy-five acres of land at the corner of Ross Street and Southeast Marine Drive south of the city near the districts of Surrey, Richmond, and Delta, where many Punjabis then lived, and a few blocks north of commercial and industrial areas along the Fraser River, where many then worked.<sup>72</sup> The Second Avenue property was sold for one hundred thousand dollars in 1970 to help fund the construction of a larger *Gurdwara* at the new site.<sup>73</sup> Celebrated Canadian architects Arthur C. Erickson [1924-2009] and his partner Geoffrey Massey [1924-2020] were commissioned to design the building.<sup>74</sup> Headed by German immigrant Hans H. Haebler [1929-2019], the Haebler Construction Company—now the Haebler Group—was engaged to undertake the build and the foundation stone was laid on March 30, 1969. Issues

arose during construction, however, like leaks in the roof and travertine tiles that failed to adhere to exterior surfaces, leading to significant cost overruns.<sup>75</sup> Work was completed in 1970 at a cost of four hundred and thirty three thousand dollars, but the overruns led to original designs for a library and a community centre being shelved.<sup>76</sup> Presumably an inventive reimagining of the sacred role of the historic *Sarovar*, plans envisioning access to the *Gurdwara* by means of a bridge across a moat circumscribing the site were also abandoned. Following a *Nagar Kirtan*, that is, a ceremonial procession from the Second Avenue sanctuary, the Ross Street house of worship officially opened on April 25, 1970. The subsequent decades witnessed improvements to the property. In 1988 and 1989, for example, Erickson oversaw renovations, “including site landscaping, an entry pavilion, dormitory addition, and interior alterations.”<sup>77</sup> In 2015, the KDS lavished two million one hundred thousand dollars on further improvements, only for smoke and water damage from a fire to necessitate the closing of the main building in August

2016. After restoration and the construction of extensions to the *Gurdwara*, Ross Street reopened in November 2018.

At the time Erickson and Massey were commissioned for the Ross Street *Gurdwara* design, they were best known for modernist structures like the Academic Quadrangle and Central Mall at Simon Fraser University (1964) in Burnaby and the Macmillan Bloedel Building (1969) at 1075 West Georgia Street, Vancouver.<sup>78</sup> According to historian Hugh J.M. Johnston, however, the KDS advised Erickson to travel “to India, to Amritsar and Agra, so he could educate his sense of form and motif.”<sup>79</sup> The Ross Street structure reflects the interplay of these contrasting South Asian and western influences. As Harold Kalman and Robin Ward put it, Erickson was “inspired by the formal geometry of Indian religious symbols.”<sup>80</sup> More specifically, in Johnston’s words, the design of the *Darbar Sahib* reinterprets “the theme of . . . a lotus rising from the water” in contemporary western architectural terms.<sup>81</sup> Inescapably modernist, to cite Michelangelo Sabatino and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, the “bold geometries” of Erickson’s original design involve three tiers of progressively smaller reinforced concrete boxes stacked on top of two storeys erected over a square floor plan (fig. 25).<sup>82</sup> The five layers mimic in conceptual form the organic geometry of the lotus, as the three upper tiers rotate forty-five degrees in turn, the corners of successive tiers resting at the centre of the spans beneath. Also rotated forty-five degrees, a concrete cube of still smaller dimensions, open to the interior and housing a domed skylight, rises over the centre of the fifth tier. Other exterior features recall aspects of the historic Sikh *Gurdwara*: the travertine tiles cladding the building are painted white; arranged symmetrically, domed skylights punctuate the third and fourth layers;



FIG. 25. AN ELEVATION SHOWING THE FORMAL GEOMETRY OF THE ORIGINAL DESIGN OF THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER GURDWARA, 8000 ROSS STREET [KHALSA DIWAN ROAD], VANCOUVER: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/KDSROSS/PHOTOS/A.333452073349243/1028067617221015]. | THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER.



FIG. 26. AT NIGHT, THE NORTH ELEVATION OF THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER GURDWARA, 8000 ROSS STREET [KHALSA DIWAN ROAD], VANCOUVER, SHOWING THE STEEL AND GLASS PAVILION NOW FRAMING THE MAIN ENTRANCE: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/KDSROSS/PHOTOS/4854923237868748]. | THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER.

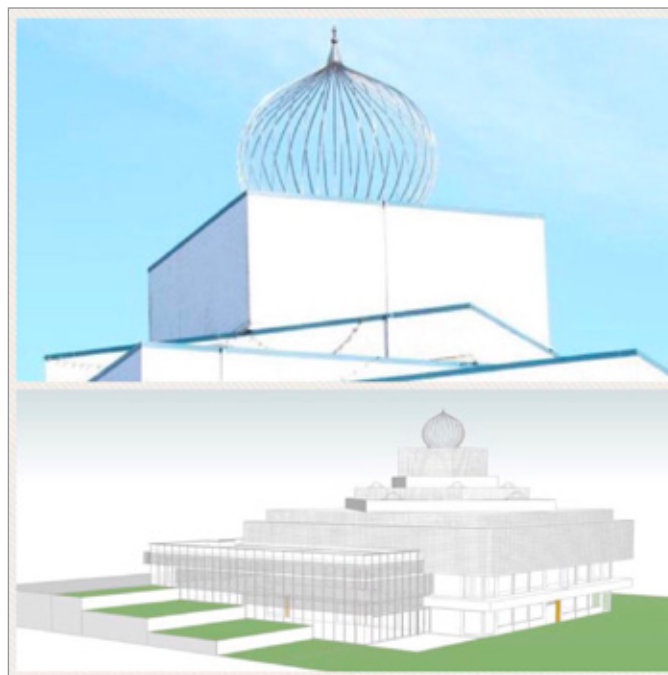


FIG. 27. A SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE SOUTH AND WEST ELEVATIONS OF THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER GURDWARA, 8000 ROSS STREET [KHALSA DIWAN ROAD], VANCOUVER, SHOWING THE TERRACED GARDENS AND STEEL AND GLASS PAVILION ADDED TO ARTHUR C. ERICKSON'S FIVE-TIERED QUADRANGULAR DESIGN AFTER THE FIRE IN 2016: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/270634693090017/PHOTOS/A.272564416230378/962250353928444/]. | PARVEEN BAINS, KENZI DESIGN HOUSE, VANCOUVER, NOVEMBER 2017.

and a domical form comprising “a skeletal ring of lateral bands of polished stainless steel in an S shape” crowns the building in an abstract refiguring of the blossoming lotus flower.<sup>83</sup> Certain architectural elements of the sanctuary recur in secondary structures, notably a smaller stainless steel skeletal dome over the entrance to the administrative building standing to the east of the *Darbar Sahib*. In 2018, glass and steel pavilions were added to the north and west sides of the original structure; contrasting with the white surfaces of the main building, their darker shading almost suggests a postmodern sensibility (figs. 26 and 27).<sup>84</sup> Extensive landscaping features a fountain to the south of the *Darbar Sahib* and a series of staircases and tiered gardens cascading down the building’s west side. Angled at forty-five degrees to the road, the

rectangular pillars of the main gateway to the *Gurdwara* support a stylized stainless-steel arch, while the *Nishan Sahib* dominates the northwest corner of the site to the right of the primary approach to the *Darbar Sahib*.

The modernist reimagining of traditional Sikh architectural tectonics continues inside the Ross Street sanctuary, which combines historic references with a contemporary aesthetic sensibility. Saved from the Second Avenue Temple, the mosaic portrait of Nanak, the first *Guru*, was installed above the main entrance to the *Darbar Sahib*. Glazed entryways on each side of the building enable access to the sacred space from all four cardinal directions, as Sikh tradition prefers. Passing from the main entrance through heavy wooden doors inset with decorative glass

panelling, devotees approach the *Adi Granth* down a strip of golden carpet, which divides a large expanse of geometrically patterned blue and gold carpeting into areas for prayer, men on the right and women on the left. A curtained inside wall separates the *Sach Khand* from the prayer hall. For *Prakash*, the sacred scripture rests upon a cushion within an imposing domed structure known as a *Palki*. Contrasting vividly with the mainly white surfaces of the interior, this singular golden extravagance of ornately carved pillars, arches of decorative fretwork, and linked nelumbinesque domelets evokes the historic tectonics of the *Harmandir Sahib* (fig. 28).<sup>85</sup> A tasselled blue and gold fabric canopy hangs over the *Palki*, which is flanked by large digital flatscreens for multimedia devotions. Though darker shades of curtaining and wainscotting



FIG. 28. THE INTERIOR OF THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER GURDWARA, 8000 ROSS STREET [KHALSA DIWAN ROAD], VANCOUVER: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/KDSROSS/PHOTOS/4162682673759478]. | THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY VANCOUVER.

contrast vividly with plastered surfaces uniformly painted white, the sanctuary almost completely lacks further furnishment. Also reminiscent of the layout of the *Harmandir Sahib*, however, an interior passage runs around the upper level of the Ross Street *Darbar Sahib*, enabling worshippers to circumambulate the *Adi Granth* unaffected by the region's infamously changeable weather. Here, too, balconies on the east, west, and north sides open onto the prayer hall, permitting devotees to witness the ritual proceedings below. Above, the obverse surfaces of the third, fourth, and fifth layers of Erickson's design recede upward in a diminishing sequence of triangular and quadrangular forms beneath the rectangular caisson supporting the central skylight and, beyond it, the stainless steel of the skeletal dome. Symmetrically located toward the perimeter of the interior, exposed slender columns lend the space a functional industrial quality on the one hand, and on the other, offer a tempering vertical contrast to the complex angularities of the structure's sterner

horizontal arrangements. Similarly, the circular skylights not only bathe the *Darbar Sahib* in natural light, but also offer an almost playful complement to the interior's more severe lines, as do the radically oblate spheroids forming the large chandelier that hangs from the central skylight. Below the *Darbar Sahib* at ground level, Erickson's design provides administrative spaces, accommodation for the *Granthi*, washrooms, and communal facilities for the *Langar*.

## AFTERWORD

Today, there are well over one hundred Sikh *Gurdwaras* in Canada, the majority built in the decades since World War II, especially from the 1970s to the present day. Across the country, the architecture of Sikh sanctuaries varies with the circumstances of particular Sikh communities. In the early 1900s, as we have seen, Sikh houses of worship in British Columbia were constructed from readily available materials, notably lumber. These structures were more representative of the site

and the regional context in which they were built than they were of historic Sikh architectural practice. Offering such basic amenities as a *Darbar Sahib*, a *Langar* kitchen and hall, and housing for the *Granthi*, the buildings met the immediate needs of the first diaspora congregations. In succeeding decades, Sikh communities newly established elsewhere in Canada have sometimes opted to repurpose existing residential or commercial buildings. In different ways, for example, Toronto's Shromani Sikh Sangat Temple (1969) and the *Gurdwaras* of the Maritime Sikh Society (1978), Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the Newfoundland Sikh Society, Logy Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador (2005), perpetuate this phenomenon (figs. 29, 30 and 31).<sup>86</sup> In some instances, a burgeoning community has continually enlarged its place of worship from modest vernacular beginnings to include a wide range of improvements, from more expansive prayer and *Langar* halls to classrooms for instruction in language, religion and culture, meeting rooms, a gymnasium and other sports facilities, and accommodation for *Granthis* and visitors. Evolving from repurposed local residences into a vast complex, the Ontario Khalsa Darbar in Mississauga, Ontario, epitomizes this phenomenon (figs. 32 and 33). On occasion, by contrast, a Sikh congregation has converted a property previously used by members of another faith, as is the case with the Temple Gurdwara Sahib Québec-Montréal (1986) (fig. 34).<sup>87</sup>

Moving forward, however, established communities increasingly rich in resources have in recent decades elected to commission and construct Sikh houses of worship purpose-built in authentic imitation of the historic typology embodied in many *Gurdwaras* seen in the Punjab region of Pakistan and India and elsewhere throughout the sub-continent. Today, several impressive examples of such



FIG. 29. THE SHROMANI SIKH SANGAT TEMPLE (1969), 269 PAPE AVENUE, TORONTO, ON: [HTTPS://WWW.ACOTORONTO.CA/SHOW\_BUILDING.PHP?BUILDINGID=9267]. | GOOGLE MAPS.



FIG. 32. A PHOTOGRAPH DEPICTS THE ORIGINAL BUILDINGS OF THE ONTARIO KHALSA DARBAR (1979) ON DIXIE ROAD, MISSISSAUGA, ON: [HTTP://WWW.FLYERMALL.COM/COMPANIES/1716/112/KHALSA-DARBAR]. | PUBLIC DOMAIN.



FIG. 33. THE VAST COMPLEX OF THE ONTARIO KHALSA DARBAR (2021), 7080 DIXIE ROAD, MISSISSAUGA: [HTTPS://M.FACEBOOK.COM/OKDCANADA/]. | ONTARIO KHALSA DARBAR.



FIG. 30. THE GURDWARA OF THE MARITIME SIKH SOCIETY (1978), 10 PARKHILL ROAD, HALIFAX, NS: [HTTPS://WWW.GOOGLE.CA/MAPS/@44.6243341,-63.6006573,3A,75Y,309H,100.82T/DATA=!3M6!1E1!3M4!1STMLUGSIZTGCK7RNKYF W4HQ!2E0!7!16384!8!8192?HL=EN]. | GOOGLE MAPS.



FIG. 31. THE GURDWARA OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND SIKH SOCIETY (2005), 680 LOGY BAY ROAD, LOGY BAY, NL: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NEWFOUNDLANDSIKHSOCIETY/PHOTOS/A.295900924438252/2959009254382521]. | NEWFOUNDLAND SIKH SOCIETY.



FIG. 34. FORMERLY A BAPTIST CHURCH, THE NEO-GOTHIC TEMPLE GURDWARA SAHIB QUÉBEC-MONTRÉAL (1986), 2183, RUE WELLINGTON, MONTRÉAL, QC: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:TEMPLE\_GURDWARA\_SAHIB\_QUEBEC-MONTREAL.JPG]. | CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL.



FIG. 35. THE NANAKSAR GURDWARA GURSIKH TEMPLE (1983), 18691 WESTMINSTER HIGHWAY, RICHMOND, BC: [HTTPS://WWW.GOOGLE.COM/MAPS/@49.1704518,-123.015966,3A,78.3Y,258.14H,106.95T/DATA=!3M7!1E1!3M5!1SAF1QIPMXBWT EBF6FEU3ZZALGWCL9OPG5AVJVON9XTOW!2E10!3E12!7I4000!8I2000]. | GOOGLE MAPS.



FIG. 36. THE NANAKSAR GURDWARA GURSIKH TEMPLE (1996), 1410 HORSEHILLS ROAD NORTHWEST, EDMONTON, AB: [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/BENCITO\_TRAVELLER/5748196025/IN/PHOTOSTREAM/]. | BEN HSU, AUGUST 2008.



FIG. 37. THE DASHMESH DARBAR, 555 EBENEZER ROAD, BRAMPTON, ON: [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/15546179@N08/14160104469]. | PAUL VAN DAMME, JUNE 2014.

architecture may be found across Canada. Not surprisingly, British Columbia provides an early instance: located in Richmond, the Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple (1983) was designed by Ragbir Singh Jagdev of the Edmonton firm Raj Saunders Architects (fig. 35). The *Gurdwara* is associated with the conservative Nanaksar Movement, founded in the Punjab in 1943 by disciples of the renowned Sikh preacher and healer Baba Nand Singh [1870-1943].<sup>88</sup> Some years later, a related branch of the movement commissioned Jagdev to design the Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple (1996) in Edmonton, Alberta, in the same traditional style, while further east the Dashmesh Darbar

(2011) in Brampton, Ontario, quickly attracted plaudits for its authentic historic architectural tectonics (figs. 36 and 37). Although they employ modern building methods and materials, these monumental structures feature what Hugh J.M. Johnston<sup>89</sup> has called a “remarkably ornate” style of historic Sikh *Gurdwara* architecture. That said, however, the instantiation of an historic typology need not foreclose efforts to incorporate elements of western design. If Vancouver’s KDS Ross Street sanctuary, as conceived by Erickson and Massey, represents an adventurous experiment in *Gurdwara* architecture on Canada’s west coast, the Guru Nanak Darbar in the Montréal borough

of LaSalle, Québec, takes a different tack; it combines elements of historic Sikh design with western postmodernist aesthetics. More specifically, the exterior of the LaSalle *Gurdwara* manifests such traditional characteristics as uniformly white surfaces, arched windows, golden domes, and a crenellated parapet, while the interior’s industrial aura of exposed tubular steel rising in clerestoried boxes toward a symmetrically illuminated dome reads like a postmodernist commentary upon the modernist interior of the Erickson and Massey structure (figs. 38 and 39). Indeed, Hardial Dhir, the Toronto architect who designed the Guru Nanak Darbar, once worked with Erickson.<sup>90</sup>



FIG. 38. FRONTAL ELEVATION OF THE GURDWARA GURU NANAK DARBAR, 7801 RUE CORDNER, LASALLE, QC: [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/APPALOOSA/35960779891/]. | ©APPALOOSA®, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, JULY 2014.

Whether conceived and constructed in a vernacular, modernist, or historic idiom, as the home of the *Adi Granth*, the *Darbar Sahib* constitutes the most significant space of the *Gurdwara*. Strictly speaking, the only requirements for the *sanctum sanctorum* are the sacred scripture and the congregation. In this respect, physically and figuratively the *Darbar Sahib* represents the core principles of the Sikh faith. Here, uninterrupted readings of the sacred text take place, ranging in length from one to forty-eight hours. It is where individuals pass time in quiet prayer and contemplation, and where the community meets for *Diwan*, that is, congregational prayer.<sup>91</sup> Devotees gather in the *Darbar Sahib* in the morning and in the evening, though devotions continue throughout the day, their mood and atmosphere adapting appropriately to the hour.<sup>92</sup> When a child is born, the family will often offer prayers and hold a naming ceremony in the *Darbar Sahib*. Sikhs perform

baptism, marriage, and funeral rites there. Various Sikh celebrations also take place in the *Darbar Sahib*, especially ceremonies marking “the anniversaries of the Sikh Gurus and other important events in Sikh history.”<sup>93</sup> On such occasions, the premises become “scenes of festivity.”<sup>94</sup> At the same time, the “Gurdwara is more than a place of worship; it is a place of learning for the student, a Guru for the spiritual person, a hospital for the sick, and a rest house for the pilgrim.”<sup>95</sup> In sum, the



FIG. 39. THE CLERESTORIED INTERIOR OF THE GURDWARA GURU NANAK DARBAR, 7801 RUE CORDNER, LASALLE: [HTTP://WWW.DHIRARCHITECTS.COM/INDEX.PHP/PROJECTS-HARDIAL-DHIR-ARCHITECTS-INC/42-RELIGIOUS/26-SIKH-GURDWARA-DESIGN-ARCHITECTURE-MONTREAL-QUEBEC-HARDIAL-DHIR-ARCHITECTS-INC]. | HARDIAL DHIR ARCHITECTS.

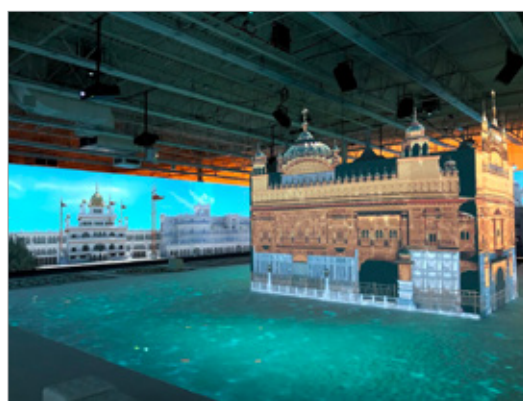


FIG. 40. THE IN5 EXPERIUM *HARMANDIR SAHIB* VIRTUAL EXHIBIT (2019), 70 PEEL CENTRE DRIVE, BRAMPTON, ON: [HTTPS://CDN.CANADA247.INFO/ASSETS/UPLOADS/8728D6D9BB2BD346A7F133F0CF085BB1\_-ONTARIO-REGIONAL-MUNICIPALITY-OF-PEEL-BRAMPTON-IN5-EXPERIUM-THE-GOLDEN-TEMPLEHTML.JPG|85BB1\_-ONTARIO-REGIONAL-MUNICIPALITY-OF-PEEL-BRAMPTON-IN5-EXPERIUM-THE-GOLDEN-TEMPLEHTML.JPG]. | KULVIR GILL, APRIL 2019.

*Gurdwara* is “the place towards which a Sikh turns . . . in times of any celebration, in times of grief, in devout moments, in moments of solace and in times when one needs a sense of direction.”<sup>96</sup> For Sikhs, Chahal, Dua, and Singh write, having the “Gurdwara in the neighborhood . . . is indispensable.”<sup>97</sup> “Since Sikhs migrated to almost every part of the world,” they continue, “we can easily find a Gurdwara anywhere in the world.”<sup>98</sup> This assertion likely holds true for Sikhs in Canada,

beginning with early twentieth-century communities in British Columbia and continuing eastward across the country into the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, wherever Sikhs find themselves—and this point may not be stressed enough—it is unlikely that the unique status of the *Harmandir Sahib* will weaken among Canada's Sikhs. In the words of historian Pardeep Singh Arshi: "The Golden Temple is not merely a pilgrimage centre but a source of continuous spiritual and mystical inspiration for the hundreds of thousands of devotees who draw the very essence of their life from its holy presence."<sup>99</sup> As if to confirm this reality, a virtual experience of the *Harmandir Sahib* opened in Brampton, Ontario, on Vaisakhi day, April 14, 2019, the festival celebrating the birth of the Sikh religion. Titled *IN5 Experium: The Golden Temple of Amritsar*, a temporary exhibit occupying a thirty-thousand-square-foot commercial building near Bramalea City Centre featured a multimedia presentation of the *Harmandir Sahib*. Deploying forty-two state-of-the-art projectors, motion sensors, smart walls, and kindred technology, the curators of the exhibit delivered a captivating presentation of sights and sounds that recreated the atmosphere of the *Harmandir Sahib* (fig. 40).<sup>100</sup> An original and inspiring undertaking, this immersive multimedia journey engaged diaspora Sikh communities of Toronto and the surrounding region in a different kind of architectural narrative, enabling a fresh perspective on the meaning of their faith and its history, traditions, teachings, and values.<sup>101</sup> In so doing, the virtual exhibit revived a sense of devotion for Sikhs who had actually visited the *Harmandir Sahib* on the one hand, and on the other, encouraged Sikhs who had not had the opportunity to journey to Amritsar to think about what it might be like to explore the sacred precincts of the *Harmandir Sahib* in reality. As Brahmjot

Kaur<sup>102</sup> has remarked, "[t]here is very limited literature available on the subject of Sikh Architecture."<sup>103</sup> In fact, in relative terms, there is still less published research on Sikh architecture in Canada. It is to be hoped that the postmodernist interior of Dhir's Guru Nanak Darbar in LaSalle, the *IN5 Experium*, and other innovative initiatives inspire further scholarly studies of Canada's Sikh religious architecture, which has its roots in the pioneer vernacular of early twentieth-century British Columbia, but which today, over a century later, is at once embodied and expressed in a variety of buildings in several styles serving congregations large and small across the country.

## NOTES

1. In many respects, this essay draws upon the earlier work of Joginder [Joe] Dhanjal (2009) and Prabhjit Brar (2020). See Dhanjal, Joginder, 2009, "Contemporary Sikh Architecture in the Canadian Diaspora," unpublished M.Arch. thesis, School of Architectural Science, Ryerson University, Toronto, [file:///C:/Users/esouser/AppData/Local/Temp/OBJ%20Datastream.pdf], accessed June 4, 2021; Brar, Prabhjit Kaur, 2020, "Journey to the Sacred: An Architectural Retreat for the Sikh Diaspora of British Columbia," unpublished M.Arch. thesis, McEwen School of Architecture, Laurentian University, Sudbury, [https://zone.biblio.laurentian.ca/handle/10219/3529], accessed April 1, 2020.
2. Scott, Jamie S., 2012, "Introduction: Religions and the Making of Canada," in Jamie S. Scott (ed.), *The Religions of Canadians*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. xxv-xxvi.  
  
The phrase "secularization hypothesis" means different things to different commentators. Stephen D. Smith provides a helpful elaboration. For him, the phrase encapsulates "the idea that the modern world would become steadily more secular in the sense of 'not religious' and that this development would be accompanied by increasing toleration." Smith, Stephen D., 2020, "The Resurgence of (Immanent) Religion and the Disintegration of the Secularization Hypothesis," in Vyacheslav Karpov and Manfred Svensson (eds.), *Secularization, Desecularization, and Toleration. Cross-Disciplinary Challenges to a*

*Modern Myth*, Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 148.

3. Smith, *id.*, p. 136; italics in the original.
4. Singh, Pashaura, 2012, "Sikhs," in Scott (ed.), *The Religions of Canadians*, *op. cit.*, p. 343, 331. See also, O'Connell, Joseph T., 2000, "Sikh Religio-Ethnic Experience in Canada," in Harold Coward, John R. Hinnels, and Raymond Brady Williams (eds.), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, Albany, State University of New York Press, p. 191-209.
5. Berger, Peter L. (ed.), 1999, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Washington, DC, Ethics and Public Policy Center, p. 2; Sacks, Jonathan, 2005, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age*, New York, Continuum.
6. Smith, "The Resurgence of (Immanent) Religion," *op. cit.*, p. 136.
7. Department of Justice Canada, 1982, *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Ottawa, Government of Canada, [https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html], accessed April 15, 2021.
8. Department of Justice Canada, 1988 [1985], *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, Ottawa, Government of Canada, [https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html], accessed May 1, 2021.
9. *Ibid.*
10. The word "Punjab" refers to the land of the five rivers: the Sutlej, the Beas, the Ravi, the Chenab, and the Jhelum. The history of this region dates to the Bronze Age civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro [3300-1300 BCE]. Ancient poets romanticized the flowing torrents and picturesque hills of Punjab. Here were sung the melodious Sanskrit hymns of the Vedic Hindu scripture, the *Samaveda* [c. 1200-1000 BCE]. Here, too, the legendary versifier Valmiki composed the Sanskrit Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*, compiled and variously revised and expanded from the seventh century BCE to the fifth century CE. For the *Ramayana*, see Goldman, Robert P. and Sally Sutherland Goldman, 1984-2016, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, 7 vols. Princeton University Press.
11. For studies of various aspects of the *Sant* movement, see Schomer, Karine and W. Hew McLeod, 1987, *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, Delhi, Motilal Banaridass. On *Sants* in northern India, see Gold, Daniel, 1987, *The Lord as Guru: Hindi Sants in the Northern Indian Tradition*, New York, Oxford University Press.

12. On Hindu *Bhakti* traditions in South Asia, see Pechilis, Karen, 1999, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, New York, Oxford University Press. On Islamic Sufi traditions, see Knysh, Alexander, 2017, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
13. Olson, Carl, 2016, *Religious Ways of Experiencing Life: A Global and Narrative Approach*, New York, Routledge, p. 242.
14. Hopfe, Lewis M., 2007 [10<sup>th</sup> ed.], *Religions of the World*, New Jersey, Pearson Education, p. 152. For concise renderings of the life and work of Nanak, see Jakobsh, Doris, 2012, *Sikhism*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 12-22; and Nesbitt, Eleanor, 2016 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 12-30.
15. Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *id.*, p. 18-24.
16. *Id.*, p. 27.
17. Johar, Surinder Singh, 1976, *The Sikh Gurus and their Shrines*, Delhi, Vivek Publishing Company, p. 12-13.
18. Foy, Whitfield (ed.), 1988, *The Religious Quest: A Reader*, London, Routledge, p. 265.
19. Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.  
  
For ease of reference across histories and geographies, every edition of the *Adi Granth* runs to the same 1430 pages, laid out in the same way. More specifically, the sacred scripture contains nearly 6000 hymns, 974 by the first *Guru*, Nanak [1469-1539]; 62 by the second *Guru*, Angad [1504-1552]; 907 by the third *Guru*, Amar Das [1479-1574]; 679 by the fourth *Guru*, Ram Das [1534-1581]; and 2218 by the fifth *Guru*, Arjan [1563-1506]. Mitra, Swati, 2004, *Walking with the Gurus: Historical Gurdwaras of Punjab*, New Delhi, Eicher Goodearth, p. 47. In addition, the *Adi Granth* includes compositions by Muslim Sufi and Hindu *Bhakti* devotional poets of all castes and social strata, including Dalits. For a succinct account of the language, script, compilation, format, structure, status, and message of the *Adi Granth*, see Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-42.
20. Singh, Teja, 1964 [1938], *Sikhism, Its Ideals and Institutions*, Bombay, Orient Longmans, p. 126-127.
21. *Id.*, p. 126-129.
22. Kaur, Tavleen, 2017, "Architecture (Sikhism)," in Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair (ed.), *Sikhism*, Dordrecht, Springer Netherlands, p. 28.
23. Cole, William Owen and Piara Singh Sambhi, 1978, *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 61-62.
24. Cassio, Francesca, 2019, "The Sonic Pilgrimage: Exploring Kīrtan and Sacred Journeying in Sikh Culture," *Sikh Formations*, vol. 15, nos. 1-2, p. 165.
25. Singh, Rishi, 2019, *Sikh Heritage: A History of Valour and Devotion*, New Delhi, Lustre Press/Roli Books, p. 94.
26. Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
27. Mann, Gurinder Singh, 2016 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.], "Sikhism," in Linda Woodhead, Christopher H. Partridge, and Hiroko Kawanami (eds.), *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, New York, Routledge, p. 123. The height of Hargobind's platform constituted an overt challenge to the authority of reigning Mughal Islamic emperor, Jahangir Khan [1569-1627], who had ruled that none but he might sit on a platform higher than three feet.
28. In 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi [1917-1984] ordered the Indian army to storm the *Harmandir Sahib* after militants seeking the establishment of an independent Sikh state of Khalistan occupied the site. Operation Blue Star resulted in severe damage to the *Akal Takhat*. India's federal government restored the building, but Sikhs considered its sacred status compromised, tore down the repaired structure, and totally rebuilt the *Akal Takhat* in accordance with the Sikh tradition of *Karseva*, that is, selfless public service. For a brief account of these events and their aftermath, see Rai, Jasdev Singh, 2017, "Blue Star (Operation)," in Singh Mandair (ed.), *Sikhism*, *op. cit.*, p. 73-80.
29. Most *Gurdwaras* around the world follow this schedule, adapting it to their own time zone.
30. Sikh tradition holds that Hargobind carried two swords—*Miri* and *Piri*—the former representing temporal, the latter spiritual power. For succinct accounts of these and related Sikh teachings, see McLeod, W. Huw, 1999, *Sikhs and Sikhism*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press; and Jakobsh, *Sikhism*, *op. cit.* For an interpretation of Sikh diaspora experience in Canada in terms of these ideas, see Jakobsh, Doris and Margaret Walton-Roberts, 2016, "A Century of *Miri Piri*: Securing Sikh Belonging in Canada," *South Asian Diaspora*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 167-183.
31. In the early nineteenth century, Ranjit Singh succeeded in uniting eleven independent Sikh states, or *Misls*, to establish the Punjab at the heart of a Sikh empire in the northwest of the sub-continent. For a succinct account of this important period in Sikh history, the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849, and subsequent relations between the Sikh people and the British Raj, see Grewal, Jasjit Singh, 1998 rev. ed. [1990], *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 99-180.
32. Jones, Lindsay, 2000, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, Volume 1: *Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture*; Volume 2: *Hermeneutical Calisthenics: A Morphology of Ritual-Architectural Priorities*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, vol. 2, p. 137-138.  
  
As early as the second century BCE, Sanskrit texts like the *Manusmṛiti*, known as the *Laws of Manu*, speak about the Hindu caste system, or *Varna*, which literally means "colour," in terms of four major divisions: first, *Brahmins*, who were priests and scholars; second, *Kshatriyas*, who were warriors and administrators; third, *Vaishyas*, who were agriculturalists and merchants; and lowest, *Shudras*, who laboured in the service of the other castes.
33. Singh, Rishi, *Sikh Heritage: A History of Valour and Devotion*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
34. As Jakobsh has noted, Nanak likely initiated the charitable custom of the *Langar* meal at Kartarpur, but it was reaffirmed and institutionalized by the second and third *Gurus*, Angad [1504-1552] and Amar Das [1479-1574]. Jakobsh, *Sikhism*, *op. cit.*, p. 23. Challenging Hindu conventions about caste and commensality, the meal is available to allcomers, regardless of religion, gender, years, ethnicity, or economic and social standing. Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *op. cit.*, p. 114. In another egalitarian gesture, all partakers sit within lines marked on the floor, not on chairs at tables, with exceptions made only for those whom age or ill health renders infirm. Made and served by congregants, male and female, typical fare includes wheat roti, lentil soup, plain yogurt, and rice pudding. Devotees preparing the food recite passages from the *Adi Granth* and other writings by Sikh *Gurus*, collectively known as *Gurbani*, that is, "words of the *Guru*." The meal thus nourishes the soul, not just the body. "While the majority of Sikhs are not vegetarian," Jakobsh observes, "food offered at the *Gurdwara* must be vegetarian . . . so that the needs of those who are strictly vegetarian, both Sikhs and

- non-Sikhs, can be met." Jakobsh, *Sikhism*, op. cit., p. 55. Nesbitt (p. 61), on the other hand, remarks that "most Sikhs avoid beef in conformity with Hindu respect for the cow" and follow stipulations in the *Reht Maryada* "forbidding Sikhs to eat the flesh of animals slaughtered in the Islamic manner."
35. Singh, Teja, *Sikhism, Its Ideals and Institutions*, op. cit., p. 103.
  36. This symbology includes numerological considerations. For example, the *Darbar Sahib* and the causeway leading to it each rest upon 38 vaults. This figure recapitulates the number of *Pauris*, or stanzas, between the opening and closing verses of the *Mool Mantar* at the beginning of the *Adi Granth*. Aulakh, Rawal Singh and Karamjit Singh Chahal, 2014, "The Spatio-geometrical Analysis of First Sikh Shrine, Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar: Historicity and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Sikh Studies*, vol. 38, p. 9.
  37. Kaur, "Architecture (Sikhism)," op. cit., p. 46.
  38. In this respect, Bhatti invokes Pardeep Singh Arshi, who uses the term "hexa-square" to describe the plan of the *Darbar Sahib* as "a compounding of a square in the front with a half-hexagon in the rear." Bhatti, S.S., 2013, *Golden Temple: Marvel of Sikh Architecture*, Pittsburgh, RoseDog Books, p. 23; citing Arshi, Pardeep Singh, 1986, *Sikh Architecture in Punjab*, New Delhi, Intellectual.
  39. Kaur, "Architecture (Sikhism)," op. cit., p. 46.
  40. Id., p. 47; Bhatti, *Golden Temple: Marvel of Sikh Architecture*, op. cit., p. 36.
  41. Singh, Rishi, *Sikh Heritage: A History of Valour and Devotion*, op. cit., p. 95-96.
  42. Cole and Sambhi, *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, op. cit., p. 62-63.
  43. Bhatti, *Golden Temple: Marvel of Sikh Architecture*, op. cit., p. 24.
  44. Singh, Balvinder, 2007, "Art Work in Historic Sikh Shrines: Need For Documentation and Conservation," XXI International CIPA Symposium, October 1-6, 2007, Athens, Greece, [https://www.isprs.org/proceedings/XXXVI/5-C53/papers/FP132.pdf], accessed May 24, 2021. Unlike Hindu temples, the Sikh *Gurdwara* does not house figures of mythical beings—animal, human, or divine.
  45. Chahal, Karamjit Singh, Sandeep Dua, and Sulakhan Singh, 2012, "Architectural Evolution of Gurdwaras: An Overview," *IUP Journal of Architecture*, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 31.
- There are numerous examples of *Gurdwaras* built for such reasons. Chahal, Dua, and Singh (p. 8) cite *Gurdwara Sis Ganj* (1783) in Delhi, India, which is associated with the beheading of the ninth *Guru* Teg Bahadur [1621-1675] on the orders of Mughal emperor Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad [Aurangzeb] [1618-1707], and the *Gurdwara Shaheeda Sahib* (c. 1820) in Amritsar, Punjab, which commemorates the scholar and military leader, Baba Deep Singh [1682-1757], who died defending the *Harmandir Sahib* against Afghani invaders. For an account of Sikh architecture in the Punjab, see Arshi, *Sikh Architecture in Punjab*, op. cit.
46. Jutla, Rajinder S., 2002, "Understanding Sikh Pilgrimage," *Tourism Recreation Research*, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 71.
- "Despite not being required or even encouraged to undertake pilgrimage," Jutla notes, "Sikhs still visit sites of religious importance to pray for health, happiness, and prosperity and to thank God for showering them with blessings." "They visit shrines associated with their Gurus and their history," he continues, "particularly . . . Sikhs living outside Punjab in India and abroad" (p. 71).
47. El Gemaiey, Ghada, 2021, "The Influences of Islamic Architecture on Sikh Architecture in Punjab Region from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> CE," *Shedet*, vol. 8, p. 19.
  48. Zulfiqar, Zain, 2018, "Tracing the Origin of Jharokha Window Used in Indian Sub-continent," *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 73.
  49. Cole and Sambhi, *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, op. cit., p. 60-61.
  50. The fifth *Guru*, Arjan Dev [1564-1606], initiated excavation of the *Sarovar* at the *Gurdwara Sri Tarn Taran Sahib* in 1590. Various buildings occupied the site till the present complex was developed between 1836 and 1837. Additions and improvements to the complex continued throughout the twentieth century, culminating in a major renovation in 2005. Unlike other Sikh houses of worship in Pakistan and India, the new buildings and remedial work have for the most part retained the historic character of the complex. For a study of issues surrounding the fate of historic Sikh sanctuaries in the Punjab in India, see Glover, William T., 2012, "Shiny New Buildings: Rebuilding Historic Sikh Gurdwaras in Indian Punjab," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 33-47. As Glover observes (p. 34), the "debate often pits enthusiastic lay volunteers, building contractors, and donors, who rebuild historic sites using up-to-date construction materials and methods, against academically trained preservationists, historians, and heritage activists who argue for the preservation of older sites intact and who sometimes deplore the work of the former groups as crass, destructive, and misguided."
  51. In this respect, the *Gurdwara Kothe Ramsar Sahib* somewhat recalls the earliest Sikh sanctuaries, which were likely "huts or other such types of dwelling units," in the words of Chahal, Dua, and Singh ("Architectural Evolution of Gurdwaras: An Overview," op. cit., p. 13), "simple, small and constructed from less durable materials such as timber, brick and plaster."
  52. Traditionally, the Sikh diaspora begins in 1854 with the exile to Great Britain of Duleep Singh [1838-1893], the last Sikh *Maharaja* and youngest son of the celebrated "Lion of the Punjab," Ranjit Singh [1780-1839]. Today, the Sikh diaspora stretches around the world, with large communities in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. On various aspects of the Sikh diaspora, see the essays collected in Barrier, N. Gerald and Verne A. Dusenbery (eds.), 1989, *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience beyond the Punjab*, Delhi, Chanakya Publications; and Hawley, Michael E. (ed.), 2013, *Sikh Diaspora: Theory, Agency, and Experience*, Leiden, Brill. For a succinct account, see Kaur, Harpreet, [2011] 2012, "Reconstructing the Sikh Diaspora," *International Migration* vol. 50, no. 1, p. 129-142.
  53. Nayar, Kamala Elizabeth, 2004, *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. 15-16.
- "Operation Bluestar" marks a dark day in Sikh history. In 1984, Sikh nationalist Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale [1947-1984] led an armed occupation of the *Akal Takhat* in the name of an independent Sikh state of *Khalistan*, that is, the "Land of the Pure." Prime Minister Indira Gandhi [1917-1984] ordered the Indian army to expel the radicals. Operation Blue Star resulted in the deaths of over 500 Sikhs, including Bhindranwale. Within weeks, the World Sikh Organization (WSO) was founded in New York to promote and protect the interests of the Sikh diaspora in the context of the human rights policies of the United Nations. The WSO works from twin headquarters in New York and Ottawa. There are WSO chapters in other Canadian and American cities. Less than five months after Operation Bluestar, Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards assassinated her for defiling the sacred precincts of the Golden Temple.

54. The Sikh military units arrived in Victoria from Hong Kong aboard the *RMS Empress of Japan*, a Canadian Pacific Steamship Company ocean liner.
55. Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations amid Tradition*, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Nayar gives specific dates and numbers: "Between 1904 and 1908—a time when immigration was unregulated—the numbers increased to 5185 (5158 men [99.5 per cent], 15 women [0.3 per cent], and 12 children [0.2 per cent])." *Canadian Immigration Law* did not permit men to bring their wives and children.
56. Knowles, Valerie, 2000, *Forging Our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900-1977*, Ottawa, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
57. Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations amid Tradition*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
58. Quoted in Roy, Anjali Gera, 2018, *Imperialism and Sikh Migration: The Komagata Maru Incident*, New York, Routledge, p. 78-79.
59. Roy, *id.*, p. 69.

Amendments to the *Immigration Act* (1908) compelled migrants to travel continuously to Canada from their country of origin and to possess no less than \$200 in cash upon arrival. The cash requirement was well beyond the means of the vast majority of South Asians, and continuous travel became impossible when the federal government forbade the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company, who alone sailed directly between India and Canada, from offering such passage. From the standpoint of its proponents, this discriminatory policy was successful. According to Hugh J.M. Johnston, for example, only 112 South Asian immigrants gained entry into Canada between 1910 and 1920. Johnston, Hugh J.M., 1984, *The East Indians in Canada*, Ottawa, Canadian Historical Association, p. 7. For a concise account of the federal legislation, see Kelley, Ninette and Michael Trebilcock, 2000, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. 145-148.
60. For the social and political context of the Sikh *Gurdwara* in British Columbia, see Nayar, Kamala Elizabeth, 2010, "The Making of Sikh Space: The Role of the *Gurdwara*," in Larry DeVries, Don Baker, and Dan Overmyer (eds.), *Asian Religions in British Columbia*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 43-63. Nayar identifies five phases in its development: "the 'mill colony' *gurdwaras* and the Khalsa Diwan Society during the first half of the twentieth century"; "the creation of the Akali Singh Society in Vancouver and Victoria during the 1950s"; "the burgeoning of *gurdwaras* in small BC towns and the building of actual *gurdwara* structures in the British Columbia Lower Mainland during the 1970s and 1980s"; "the emergence of the 'fundamentalist' and 'moderate' *gurdwaras* beginning from 1998"; and "the establishment of 'sectarian' orthodox *gurdwaras*, especially after 1998" (p. 45).
61. On South Asians in British Columbia's lumber industry, see Rajala, Richard A., 2002, "Pulling Lumber: Indo-Canadians in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1900-1998," *British Columbia Historical News*, vol. 36, no. 1, p. 2-13.
62. William Henry Archer [1855-1922] was quite ecumenical in practice. His religious architecture in Vancouver included not only the Sikh *Gurdwara* (1908) at 1866 Second Avenue West, but also St. Paul's Anglican Church (1904) at 1130 Jervis Street, Saint Michael's Episcopal Church (1908) at 2474 Prince Edward Street, and the Japanese Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist temple (1910) at 1603 Franklin Street, the city's first purpose-built Buddhist house of worship.
63. Jagpal, Sarjeet Singh, 1994, *Becoming Canadians: Pioneer Sikhs in Their Own Words*, Madeira Park, BC, Harbour Publications, p. 41.
64. The Kalsa Diwan Society (KDS) sold the Second Avenue property in 1970 for \$100,000. Monies from the sale helped to underwrite the cost of a new KDS *Gurdwara* at 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver. An apartment building now occupies the site.
65. Sikh entrepreneur and philanthropist Kapoor Singh Siddoo [1885-1964] gifted the mosaic portrait of Nanak to the Second Avenue congregation. Johnston, Hugh J.M., 2011, *Jewels of the Qila: The Remarkable Story of an Indo-Canadian Family*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, p. 194-195.
66. A militant Indian nationalist organization originally known as the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association, the Ghadar Movement drew members "from Indian immigrants in North America, the majority of whom were Sikh workers, as well as from students enrolled in American Universities." Roy, *Imperialism and Sikh Migration*, *op. cit.*, p. 95-96.
67. The *Komagata Maru* carried 337 Sikh, 27 Muslim, and 12 Hindu Punjabi migrants. Intending to challenge Canada's exclusionary immigration laws, the Sikh entrepreneur Gurdit Singh Sirhali [1860-1954] chartered the ship in Hong Kong. Although 24 migrants succeeded in gaining admission to Canada, the *Komagata Maru* was escorted out to sea by *HMCS Rainbow*, later turned away from Hong Kong and forced to land the remaining 352 passengers in Kolkata [Calcutta], India, where confrontation with the authorities led to 20 deaths. In 2012, a monument commemorating these events was unveiled near the sea wall in Vancouver's Harbour Green Park. Hugh J.M. Johnston has written a detailed account of the *Komagata Maru* incident (1989). For a variety of scholarly perspectives, see the essays collected in Dhamoon, Rita, Davina Bhandar, Renisa Mawani, and Satwinder Kaur Bains, 2019, *Unmooring the Komagata Maru: Charting Colonial Trajectories*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press.
68. Vancouver Island lumber industry entrepreneurs and philanthropists Mayo Singh Minhas [1888-1955] and Kapoor Singh Siddoo [1885-1964], both Sikhs, also played leading roles in this campaign. The victory caught the attention of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru [1889-1964] and his daughter Indira Gandhi [1917-1984], who visited *Gurdwaras* associated with the KDS and Mayo and Kapoor in 1949. Rajala, "Pulling Lumber: Indo-Canadians in the British Columbia Forest Industry," *op. cit.*, p. 10.
69. As Rajala has noted, for example: "The Canadian Western Lumber Company [formerly the Fraser River Lumber Company] . . . built a temple for Sikh workers at Fraser Mills," while "Sikh millworkers at Abbotsford purchased lumber from area plants for a *Gurdwara*" (*id.*, p. 5). Departing from the wood-frame norm, architect Henry Sandham Griffith [1865-1943] designed the Victoria *Gurdwara* as a concrete block and red brick structure. Located at 1210 Topaz Avenue, Griffith's building was expanded and modernized in 1969. In a singular case on Vancouver Island, an immigrant Sikh businessman played the central role in establishing both the lumber mill and the house of worship. Mayo Singh Minhas [1888-1955] led a group of Sikh workers first in 1912 in the takeover of the failing Fernridge Lumber Company in Rosedale, then in 1916 in the acquisition of logging rights along the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway corridor between Duncan and Lake Cowichan. The following year, Mayo founded the settlement of Paldi, named for his home village in the Punjab, and opened a lumber mill there. In 1919, he funded the construction of a wood-frame *Gurdwara* in Paldi. Both the industry and the community of Paldi declined after World War II, but the *Gurdwara* remains, if much altered from its original design. Jagpal,

- Sarjeet Singh, 1994, *Becoming Canadians: Pioneer Sikhs in Their Own Words*, Madeira Park, BC, Harbour Publications, p. 67.
70. On site, a National Historic Sites of Canada plaque commemorating the Gur Sikh Temple reads: "In 1911, determined Sikh pioneers from India built this temple, or Gurdwara, with lumber carried from the nearby sawmill where many of them worked. Blending traditional Sikh and western frontier designs, the temple includes a prayer hall and a community kitchen. Not only a place of worship, it also became a centre for the social and political life of South Asian immigrants, helping them forge a vibrant community. Today, this oldest surviving Gurdwara reminds us of the immigrant experience of Sikhs in Canada, and continues to be a sacred symbol of their spirituality." Parks Canada Directory of Federal Heritage Designations, 2002, "Abbotsford Sikh Temple National Historic Site of Canada," [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\_nhs\_eng.aspx?id=10044&i=75103], accessed November 10, 2021.
71. In the 1960s and 1970s, revisions to the *Immigration Act, 1910* and its successor, the *Immigration Act, 1952*, resulted in a points system taking account of education, employability, and knowledge of English or French rather than factors like race, ethnicity, and religion in assessing eligibility for immigration. These revisions include the *Immigration Regulations, Order-in-Council PC 1962-86, 1962*, the *White Paper on Immigration, 1966*, the *Immigration Regulations, Order-in-Council PC 1967-1616, 1967*, and the *Immigration Act, 1976*. On the history of this legislation, see Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, *op. cit.*; for a critical account of it, see Liew, Jamie Chai Yun and Donald Galloway, 2015 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], *Immigration Law*, Toronto, Irwin Law. The results of these changes in policy are significant for South Asians generally and for Sikhs in Vancouver in particular. "In 1961," writes Hugh Johnston, "the total South Asian population in Canada was less than 7,000." Johnston, Hugh J.M., 1988, "The Development of the Punjabi Community in Vancouver since 1961," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, p. 3. "The 1981 census," he says (p. 2), "showed a Canadian population of 67,710 Sikhs and 69,500 Hindus, with 22,392 Sikhs and only 6,865 Hindus in Vancouver."
72. Johnston, *id.*, p. 7.
73. A plaque now commemorates the site of the Second Avenue sanctuary. It includes texts in English and in Punjabi. The English reads: "Built in 1908, the Second Avenue Gurdwara was the first Sikh Gurdwara in Canada. Operated by the Khalsa Diwan Society (est. 1906) it was the center for spiritual, political, social, and economic life for Indians of all faiths as well as at the forefront for social justice campaigns supporting the Komagata Maru and regaining the right to vote for South Asians in 1947. Sold in 1970 to help build the Ross Street Gurdwara, its impact lives on in the stories of the community and the memories of the pioneers." Places that Matter, 2021, "First Sikh Temple," [https://www.placethatmatter.ca/location/first-sikh-temple/], accessed November 5, 2021.
74. A singular structure, the Khalsa Diwan Society's *Gurdwara* on Ross Street in Vancouver merits a comprehensive study, especially given the status of Arthur C. Erickson and Geoffrey Massey in the pantheon of Canadian architects. Held by the Canadian Centre for Architecture—located at 1920 Rue Baile, Montréal, Québec—the "Sikh Temple" archive in the *Arthur Erickson Fonds* contains a wealth of visual, textual, and contextual materials concerning the planning and design of the project, including correspondence; inspection reports; perspectives; and balcony, ceiling, elevation, floor, landscape, section, site, and temple plans and related architectural details. Canadian Centre for Architecture / Centre Canadien d'Architecture, 2021, "Sikh Temple," *Arthur Erickson Fonds*, [https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/108951/arthur-erickson-fonds/397577/architectural-projects/414078/sikh-temple], accessed November 11, 2021. On the life and work of Arthur C. Erickson, see Olsberg, Nicholas and Ricardo L. Castro, 2006, *Arthur Erickson: Critical Works*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre; and Stouck, David, 2013, *Arthur Erickson: An Architect's Life*, Madeira Park, BC, Douglas & McIntyre.
75. Johnston, "The Development of the Punjabi Community," *op. cit.*, p. 7.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Canadian Centre for Architecture / Centre Canadien d'Architecture, 2021, "Sikh Temple Renovations," *Arthur Erickson Fonds*, [https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/108951/arthur-erickson-fonds/397577/architectural-projects/418065/sikh-temple-renovations], accessed November 11, 2021.
- The "Sikh Temple Renovations" archive in the *Arthur Erickson Fonds* at the Canadian Centre for Architecture includes numerous materials relating to the alterations and additions to the Ross Street *Gurdwara*. Canadian Centre for Architecture, "Sikh Temple Renovations," *op. cit.*
78. As Coulson, Roberts, and Taylor have written, "Simon Fraser was published in journals the world across as the new paradigm for the expansion of higher education, and its designer went on to enjoy a degree of fame unparalleled by a Canadian architect." Coulson, Jonathan, Paul Roberts, and Isabelle Taylor, 2015, *University Planning and Architecture: The Search for Perfection*, New York, Routledge, p. 236. No less satisfyingly, the Macmillan Bloedel Building won Canada's Massey Medal for Architecture in 1970. That said, Erickson's attitude toward Modernism might seem ambiguous. Liscombe has remarked, for example, in 1958 a chorus of reputable Vancouver architects coined the term "urbanicide" to describe the way in which "Modernist architectural and socio-political attitudes" had led to the destruction of the city's "downtown core through unregulated demolition and construction." Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor, 2000, "Conditions of Modernity: Si[gh]tings from Vancouver," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Journal de la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada*, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 7. This group, Liscombe continues, included "Arthur Erickson, Geoffrey Massey, E.J. Watkins, Peter Oberlander and Wells Coates, the Canadian who had moved to Britain in the 1920s there to become the leading industrial designer and proponent of Modernism" (p. 14).
79. Johnston, "The Development of the Punjabi Community in Vancouver since 1961," *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- Amritsar and Agra, of course, feature two of the sub-continent's many masterpieces of religious architecture, respectively Sikhism's *Harmandir Sahib*, more popularly known as the Golden Temple, and Islam's Taj Mahal. In fact, Erickson was already familiar with the Taj Mahal. During World War II, his service in the Canadian Army Intelligence Corps included a posting in India, when he visited Agra. Stouck, *Arthur Erickson: An Architect's Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
80. Kalman, Harold and Robin Ward, 2012, *Exploring Vancouver: The Architectural Guide*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, p. 97.
81. Johnston, "The Development of the Punjabi Community," *op. cit.*, p. 7.
82. Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor and Michelangelo Sabatino, 2016, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History*, London, Reaktion Books, p. 275.

83. Arthur Erickson Foundation, 2021, "Sikh Temple," [https://www.arthurerickson.com/cultural-buildings/sikh-temple/6/caption], accessed October 30, 2021.

In some respects, the attempt to reinterpret South Asian Sikh architectural conventions in western modernist terms resulted in awkward tensions. The Arthur Erickson Foundation records that the KDS committee overseeing the planning and construction of the Ross Street building insisted on a "typical onion dome . . . as the necessary crowning symbol" of the sanctuary, but as Johnston reports, there were "objections to the sculptural form on top of the gurdwara because it was a representation of a dome and not an actual dome." Arthur Erickson Foundation, 2021, "Sikh Temple," [https://www.arthurerickson.com/cultural-buildings/sikh-temple/6/caption], accessed October 30, 2021; Johnston, "The Development of the Punjabi Community," *op. cit.*, p. 7.

84. We shall never know what Erickson thought of these glass and steel additions to his original design, but his feelings about postmodernism seem as mixed as his feelings about modernism. As Richards notes, "highly respected Canadian architect Arthur Erickson [1924-2009] decried postmodernism, while giving more than a nod to it in his 1989 Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC—an elegant but stylistically ambiguous work that translates aspects of Washington's classicism." Richards, Larry Wayne, 2019, "Postmodernism: Reconnecting with History, Memory, and Place," in Elsa Lam and Graham Livesey (eds.), *Canadian Modern Architecture: A Fifty-year Retrospective (1967-2017)*, Hudson, NY, Princeton Architectural Press, p. 186.
85. It should be noted that the *Adi Granth* is not enthroned within a *palki* at the *Harmandir Sahib* in Amritsar. The majority of *Gurdwaras* serving Sikh congregations outside India, however, do feature this sort of embellished housing for the sacred scripture, thus reiterating in symbolic miniature the tradition's most holy shrine for devotees in diaspora.
86. The Maritime Sikh Society is expanding the original sanctuary into a "two-storey, 20,000-square-foot building . . . to host roughly 400 to 500 people compared to a maximum of 150 in the former gurdwara." Ziafati, Noushin, 2020, "Maritime Sikh Society Raises Funds for New Place of Worship, Gathering that Is 'Open to Anyone,'" *Saltwire*, [https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/news/maritime-sikh-society-raises-funds-for-new-place-of-worship-gathering-that-is-open-to-anyone-475925/], accessed November 29, 2021.
87. As Stoker has discussed, the Sikh congregation in Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montréal, secured funds from the *Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec* [Religious Heritage Council of Québec] to preserve but creatively adapt a Neo-Gothic Baptist Church, built in 1900, for reuse as the Gurdwara Sahib Québec. Stoker, Valerie, 2013, "Other Accommodations: Sikh Advocacy, Religious Architecture, and Cultural Preservation in Quebec," *Sikh Diaspora*, vol. 144, p. 193-216. This repurposing of the building effectively redoubles its heritage status, since it is not only a significant Neo-Gothic structure, but also, as Stoker remarks, "the oldest continuously used Sikh religious space in Montreal" (p. 197).
88. Followers of Baba Nand Singh [1870-1943] consider him a saint. His successor, Baba Mihan Singh, was responsible for organizing a branch of the Nanaksar Movement in Richmond and for initiating the construction of the Richmond *Gurdwaras*. For scholarly accounts of the Nanaksar Movement, see Nesbitt, Eleanor, 1985, "The Nanaksar Movement," *Religion*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 67-79; and Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, *op. cit.*
89. Johnston, "The Development of the Punjabi Community," *op. cit.*, p. 10.
90. Hardial Dhir Architects, 2021, "History," [http://www.dhirarchitects.com/index.php/about/history], accessed November 30, 2021.
91. Cole and Sambhi, *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
92. *Id.*, p. 63.
93. Chahal, Dua and Singh, "Architectural Evolution of Gurdwaras: An Overview," *op. cit.*, p. 9.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Id.*, p. 8.
96. Rajguru, Suparna and M.S. Siali, 2001, *Gurdwara in the Himalayas: Sri Hemkunt Sahib*, New Delhi, Hemkunt Publishers, p. 5, [http://www.discoverikhism.com/sikh\_library/english/gurdwara\_in\_the\_himalayas\_sri\_hemkunt\_sahib.html], accessed May 25, 2021.
97. Chahal, Dua, and Singh, "Architectural Evolution of Gurdwaras: An Overview," *op. cit.*, p. 8.
98. *Id.*, p. 9.
99. Arshi, *Sikh Architecture in Punjab*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
100. Marychuk, Marta, April 14, 2019, "'IN5 Experium: The Golden Temple' Comes to Brampton," *Brampton Guardian*, [https://www.bramptonguardian.com/news-story/9281224--in5-experium-the-golden-temple-comes-to-brampton/], accessed April 20, 2021.
101. IN5 Experium, 2019, "The Golden Temple: Exhibit Objectives," [https://in5experium.com/exhibit-objectives], accessed December 16, 2019.
102. Kaur, Bhahmjit, 2018, *Sikh Architecture: The Unsaid Tale of History*, p. 4, [https://issuu.com/brahmjotkaur/docs/sikh\_architecture\_the\_unsaid\_tale\_of], accessed April 2021.
103. Research on Sikh architecture tends to focus upon the *Harmandir Sahib*, but there are exceptions. Qaiser, for example, has documented historical Sikh shrines in Pakistan, while Parihar has written in depth about the architectural heritage of the Sikh state of Faridkot [1763-1947], Punjab. Qaisar, Iqbal, 2001, *Historical Sikh Shrines in Pakistan*, Lahore, Punjabi History Board; Parihar, Subhash, 2009, *Faridkot: Architectural Heritage of a Sikh State*, New Delhi, Aryan Books International. In another vein, many scholars consider that the *Samādhi* of Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Pakistan, should be regarded as an iconic instance of Sikh art and architecture. For a recent study of this funerary monument, which was completed in 1848, see Khan, Nadhra Shahbaz, 2018, *The Samādhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore: A Summation of Sikh Architectural and Decorative Practices*, Berlin, EB-Verlag.