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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
FATEMI BAB

Aliasgar A Tapyá

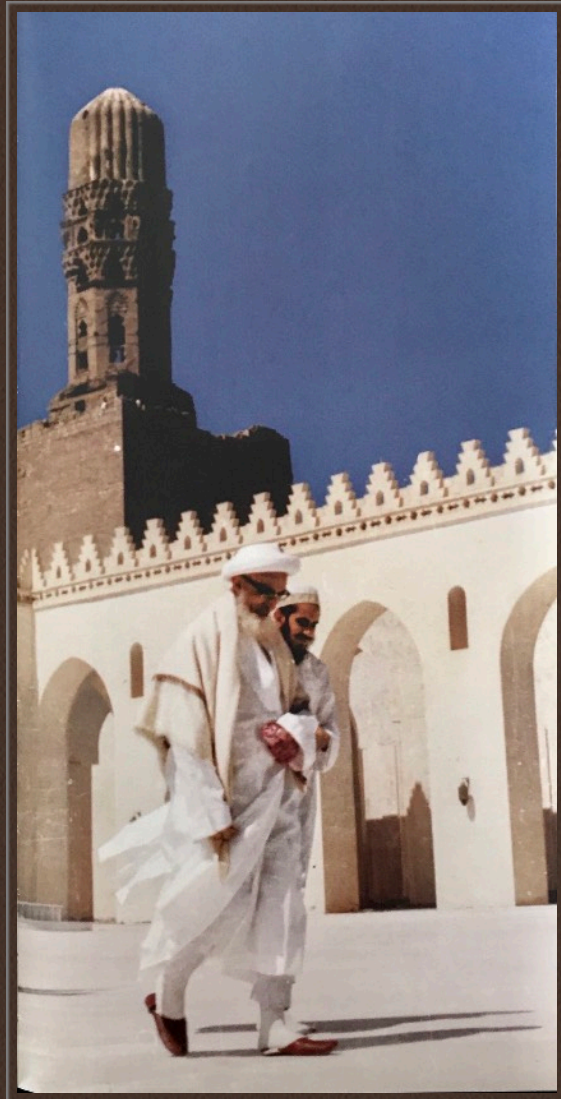
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



الْبَيْتُ بَيْتُ اللَّهِ صَاحِبُ عَصْرِنَا  
وَرِعَاظُهُ لِبَيْتِهِمْ أَسْتَارُهُ

*The House of Allāh is our Imam; the Doat Mutlaqeen are it's curtains.*

*-51<sup>st</sup> Da'i al Mutlaq Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin*



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I humbly dedicate this work to the 52<sup>nd</sup> al Da'i al Fatemi, His Holiness, Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhannudin<sup>RA</sup> and his successor the 53<sup>rd</sup> Da'i al Fatemi, His Holiness, Dr. Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin<sup>TUS</sup>, who's restoration of the Fatemi heritage I derive the inspiration to write this paper from. I benefit greatly from their eternal guidance.

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# Abstract

The reign of the Aimmat<sup>1</sup> Fatemiyeen<sup>2</sup> an era of great prosperity in medieval Egypt. Their purpose for living and their expression of a peaceful pious representation of Islam, demonstrated the honest and true nature of the Islamic religion. They came from a history of severe oppression from within the Arabian Peninsula, but they rose to power in the early tenth century known as 'Asr Dahabi'<sup>3</sup>.

This dissertation intends to analyse the importance of the Fatemi bab<sup>4</sup> by understanding its physical, ceremonial and spiritual functions. By exploring the structural abilities of the Fatemi fortress in al Mahdiyya, and al Qahira<sup>5</sup>, demonstrate the social engagement of the bab in their public rituals and break down the symbolism instilled in the ornamentation of a Fatemi bab. Followed by an analysis of the architectural influence from a Fatemi bab and its doctrine in modern day buildings of the Dawoodi Bohra community. The bab of the Husaini Masjid<sup>6</sup> in west london will be investigated for its demonstration for the Fatemi philosophy and the role of its bab in creating an identity. Raudat Tahera, a mausoleum in Mumbai will be explored for its spiritual harmonisation of Fatemi architectural properties, Lastly the campus of Al Jamea tus Saifiyah, in Nairobi will be examined for its exhibition of Fatemi theology through the architectural significance. This will demonstrate the revival of Fatemi values inscribed, practiced and symbolised through the architecture of its bab and denote the survival of its philosophy through the Dawoodi Bohra community.

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic; Imamate

<sup>2</sup> Plural for Fatemi

<sup>3</sup> Arabic; Golden Period.

<sup>4</sup> Arabic; gateway, door, or portal.

<sup>5</sup> Cairo

<sup>6</sup> Arabic; Mosque

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# Introduction

An entrance signifies a moment of transcendence. A bab is the first interaction an individual has with a selected building or space, it establishes the thresholds and relationship between two spaces whilst inviting and resisting access. The architectural features dictate the intended impression and inscribes the symbolism. The remaining Fatemi masjid's and the bab's from Moulana Badr al Jamali's<sup>7</sup> fort demonstrate their own unique symbolism.

This piece strives to provide a comprehensive analysis engaging in a conversation that will focus on how the Fatemi bab functioned, how it influenced social congregations and what significance it draws from its ornamentation as component of architecture. The Arabic word 'bab' will be implemented in this paper as it harmonises the multiple English translations. Analysis will be furthered by identifying how the elements discussed have translated into the modern day descendants of the Fatemi in the Dawoodi Bohra community. Understanding the inner construct of the Fatemiyyeen will build a context for their values, how they have been represented in their architecture and a study of the revival of this architectural style. It will document how these virtues have survived in a modern day culture, therefore demonstrate how the architecture performs as not only a tool but a symbol expressing their devotion towards their faith.

In order to understand the features and symbolism behind the architecture, a chronological introduction will establish a context for who the Fatemi's were and how they came to power. Then explaining their reign as a formidable dynasty will elaborate their virtues. A study of their architecture will encompass the bab's military functions in relation to the fort wall. An overview of how the bab signified social interactions will explain their illustrious nature. Fatemi philosophy is heavily imbedded in the bab's ornamentation, this will be examined to uncover their intrinsic devotion to their ancestors. In relation to the modern day, an analysis of three Fatemi inspired buildings will reflect their architectural revival, through the patronage of the Dawoodi Bohras, a community of Shi'a muslims branched from the Ismaili Tayibi sect currently based in India. The structures investigated will be the Husaini Masjid in London, UK; Raudat Tahera, the mausoleum of the 51<sup>st</sup> Da'i Syedna Taher Saifuddin<sup>RA</sup> and the 52<sup>nd</sup> Da'i Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin in Mumbai, India and the Islamic University of Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah in Nairobi.

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<sup>7</sup> Badr al Jamali was vizier of Imam al Mustansir, he was of Armenian origin, was the slave of the Amir of Syria Jamal al Dawla Ibn Ammar then later rose to the position of commander. He later served the Imam from 1074- 1094 AD.

# Context

Rising from the Maghreb<sup>8</sup> in the medieval North African Peninsula, the Fatimid Empire established itself as a legitimate dynasty, rivalling the Abbasid Empire<sup>9</sup> to the East. They claimed a right to the caliphate through their descent from Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> (Yeomans 2006), through his daughter Moulatena Fatema al-Zahra<sup>AS</sup> (from whom they derive their name) and her husband Moulana Ali ibn Abu Talib<sup>AS</sup>, who was the Nabi's wali<sup>10</sup>. According to al Maqrizi's<sup>11</sup> accounts, Ubayd Allāh referred to by his regnal name al Madhi Billah<sup>12</sup> asserted his reign as a caliph with support from a berber rebellion in 909 AD. He seized power over from the Aghlabid amirate<sup>13</sup> in Qayrawan who were in command for the Abbasid Empire, (Bloom 1985).

In accordance to Shi'a<sup>14</sup> islamic belief the Imam has authority over both political responsibilities and spiritual guidance. This uprising in power bode a significant statement on the islamic community, as Sunni islam doctrine dominated majority of the islamic regions historically, now as the Imam was officially accepted as Caliph, he was obtained to rule as the leader of the Islamic world.

Imam al Mahdi chose Raqqada for his capital before he built al Mahdiyya in 912 AD, as they intended to make a physical presence in the North African landscape. Imam al Mahdi thoroughly searched for a location to provide adequate security that would cater for an impenetrable fortress, he found a narrow isthmus that measured 175m wide, (Saifuddin 2000) situated in a rocky peninsula between Sfax and Susa in modern day Tunisia. It was strategically planned to be distant from the hostile Sunni influence of Abu Yazid (Bloom 1985) in Qayrawan, but close enough for trade. Imam al Mahdi built Bab Skifa al Kahla at the South western pinch point connecting the city to the mainland etching a route along city, public squares opened up a points of interest such as the Masjid of al Mahdiyya. This was the first Fatemi masjid built in 916 AD, the city also accommodated the Royal Palace, offices and military quarters.

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<sup>8</sup> Maghreb was a Northwestern region of Africa also known as the Berbery coast

<sup>9</sup> Abbasid Empire, The third sect of islamic caliphates who were descendants of Nabi Mohammed's<sup>SA</sup> uncle, Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttatalib. ruled parts of the islamic peninsula from 750-1258 AD and 1261-1517 AD under the Mamluk Sultante.

<sup>10</sup> Wali is an arabic term for custodian or guardian. In the context of Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup>, the custodian of his faith was ali ibn Abu Tablib

<sup>11</sup> Taqi ad-Din ali al Maqrizi was an Egyptian scholar of the Mamluk era in the fourteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Imam al Mahdi Billah, 1<sup>st</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 873- 934 AD.

<sup>13</sup> Aghlabid amirate, An arabian dynasty from the tribe of Banu Tamim that occupied modern day Tunisia between 800-909 AD.

<sup>14</sup> Shi'ism, (derived from 'Shi'atu ali'un' which means 'The adherents of Ali'), is the branch of islam that accept Moulana ali ibn Abi Talib as the rightful successor to the Nabi Mohammad.

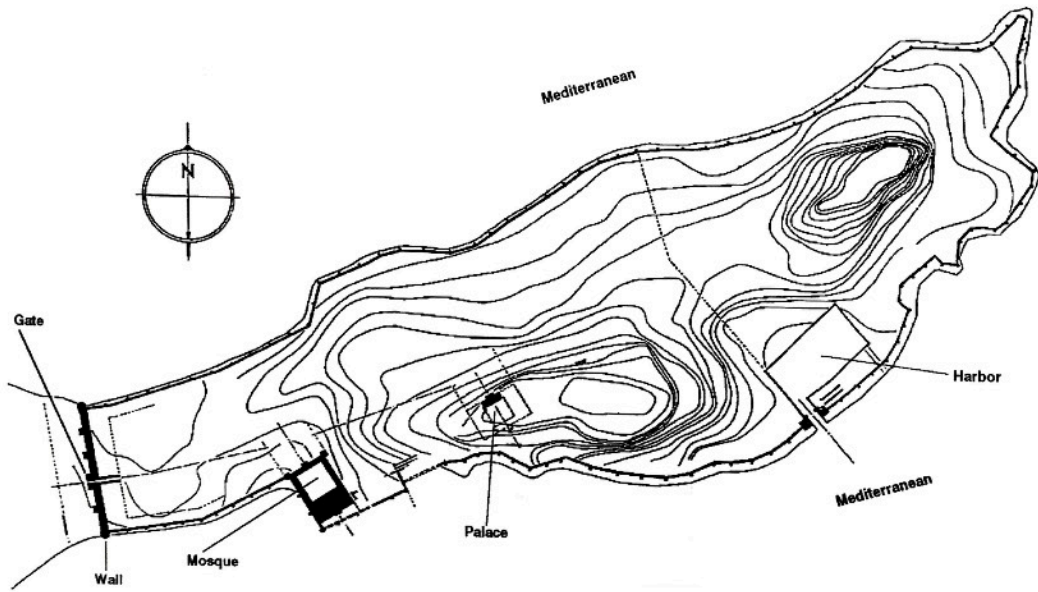


Fig. 1 al Mahdiyya. plan by Lézine (Halm 1996)



Fig. 2 Paintng of al Mahdiyya (Saifuddin 2000)

After the Imam's death in 934 AD, his son Imam al Qaim<sup>15</sup> succeeded the caliphate and maintained his seat in the capital city as he fought ongoing revolts from Abu Yazid (Heinz 1996). It is in Imam al Mansur's<sup>16</sup> time in 948 AD that the dynasty moved to a new capital, al Mansuriyya after the defeat of Abu Yazid military and his eventual capture (Nanji 2004). The city was designed in a circular plan in rival with the plans of Baghdad, but also to emulate inspirations from the Kaaba (Bloom 1985). Fig. 3 illustrates a diagrammatic structure of the city with Bab al Futuh and Bab al Zuwayla that would reappear the citadel of Cairo.

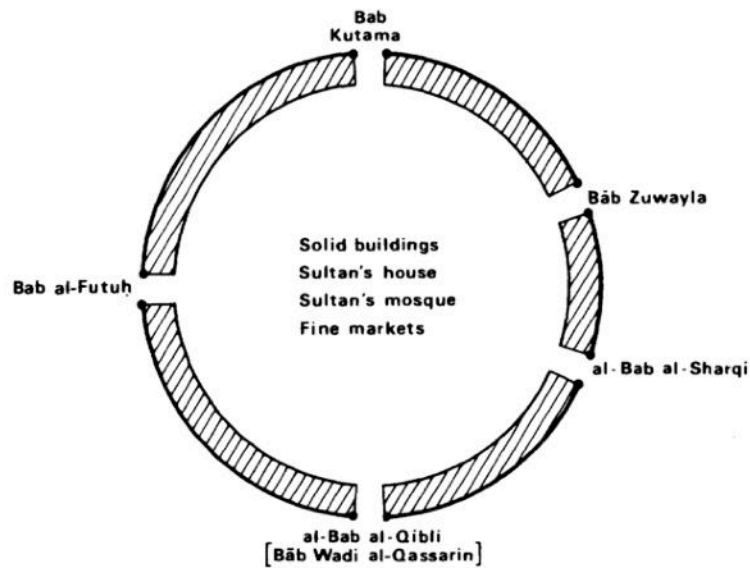


Fig. 3 Hypothetical plan of al Mansuriyya (Bloom 1985)

<sup>15</sup> Imam al Qaim be Amrillah, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 934-946AD

<sup>16</sup> Imam al Mansur be Nasrillah, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 946- 953AD

At the hands Moulana Qaid Jawhar<sup>17</sup>, Egypt was peacefully taken by the Fatemi's in 969 AD at the command of Imam al Mu'izz le deen Allāh <sup>18</sup>. Taking over from the Ikhshidids<sup>19</sup>, al Qaid Jawhar began building the walls of the new seat of the caliphate which was initially named al-Mansuriyya after Imam al Mansur (Abouseif 1998). But when Imam Mu'izz entered the city in 974AD, al Qaid Jawhar's council renamed it al Qahira (The Victorious) denoting the city to being pivot in defeating the Abbasids and in the hopes of conquering the world.

The new capital was built towards the North of al Fustat and al Qata'i (collectively known as Misr) and situated west of the Muqattam hills and east of the Nile, a suitable site that protected the citadel from threats of siege (Saifuddin 2002). Upon al Qaid Jawhar's arrival he read out a message from the Imam to the people of Misr reassuring the inhabitants that they would extend their tolerance for peace with their new city, maintaining freedom from religious and cultural discrimination as he proclaimed a new harmonious take over and transition of power. The empire consisted of a diverse population, the walls of al Qaid Jawhar consisted of ten quarters known as 'mahalla's' housing different soldier's and tribe's arranged in cantonments. The city consisted of multiple gates, Bab al Futuh and Bab al Nasr was to the North, al Qantara, al Khoukha and as Sa'ada to the West, al Zuwayla and al Farj as the southern gates and al Barqiya, al Tawfiq and al Qarratin to the East. The soldiers from Qayrawan and Mahdiyya were housed in the South western quarter at Bab Zuwayla and the South eastern quarter Katama housed the Berber contingents which also included a space for the Iranian refugees from the Caspian Sea (Raymond 2000). al Qaid Jawhar erected the Imam's residence in the centre of the citadel; The Great Eastern Palace called 'Qasre Kabiri', with the glorious Bab al Dahab (Golden Gate) at its entrance, he also constructed Masjid al Azhar (the name derived from Nabi's daughter Moulatena Fatema uz-Zahra) in 972 AD which is known till today as the hub for education, individuals at its time travelled from all over the world to al Qahira to practice all forms of academia.

Imam al Aziz Billah<sup>20</sup> built the western royal palace called 'Qasre Azizi'. His time as Caliph consisted of great conquest to the East as his empire grew profoundly in 990 AD, he also laid the foundations of Masjid al Anwar<sup>21</sup> also known as Masjid al Hakim outside the walls of al Qaid Jawhar's fort. His son Imam al Hakim be Amrillah<sup>22</sup> completed it's construction in 1002 AD, he also commissioned the construction of Masjid al Lulu (The Pearl) in 1015-16 AD (Kamel Mosa Abdu 1995) located away from the city on the Muqattam hills, this small masjid was the imams

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<sup>17</sup> al Qaid Jawhar al Seqlibi also referred to as Jawhar/ Gawhar al Siqilli was the commander in chief under the

<sup>18</sup> Imam al Mu'izz le deen Allāh , 4<sup>th</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 953- 975 AD.

<sup>19</sup> The Ikhshidid Dynasty where Mamluk's governing Egypt from al Fustat under the rule of the Abbasids from 934-969 AD.

<sup>20</sup> Imam al Aziz Billah, 5<sup>th</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 975-996 AD.

<sup>21</sup> al Anwar arabic word for 'the luminous'.

<sup>22</sup> Imam al Hakim be Amirillah, 6<sup>th</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 996-1021 AD

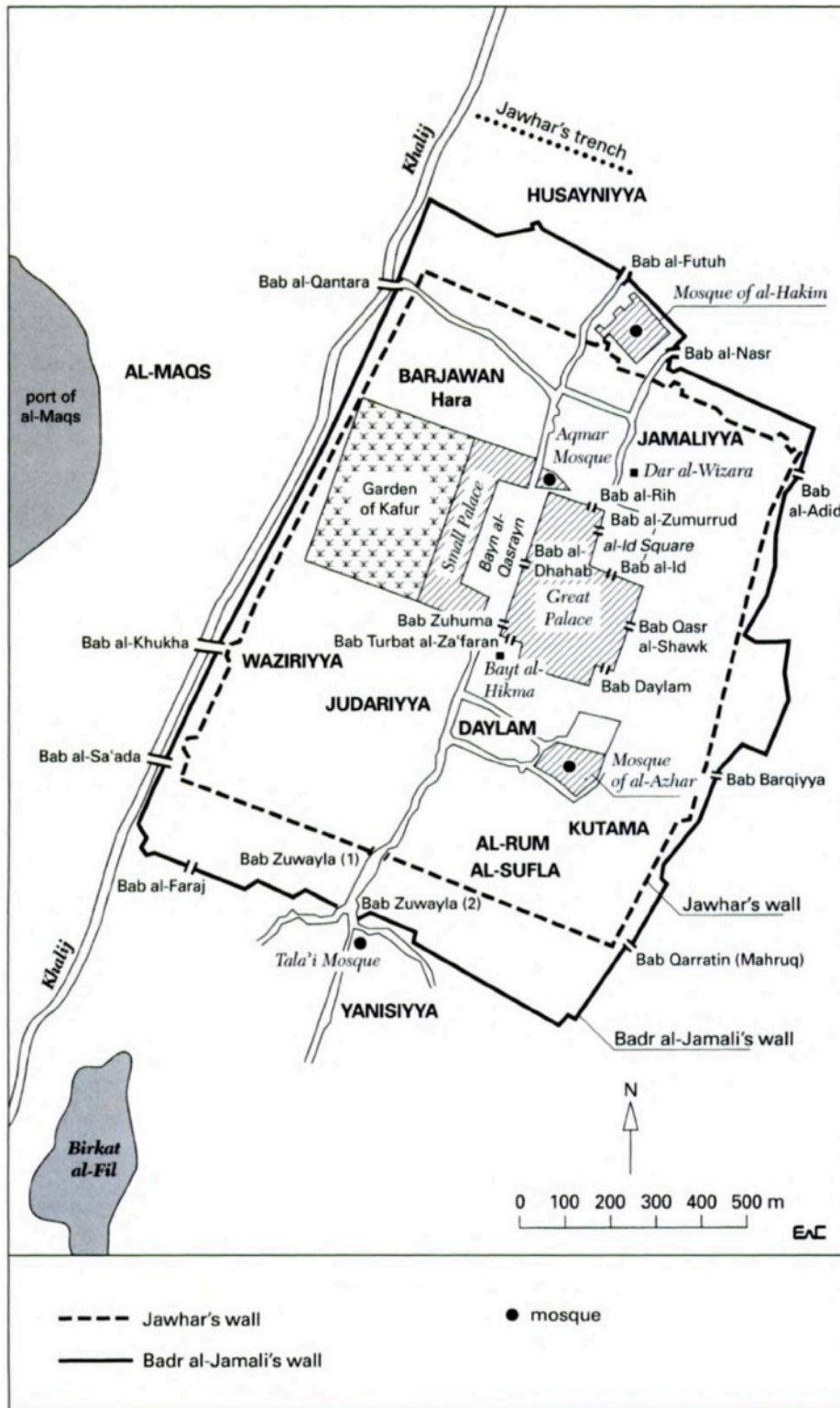


Fig. 4 City plan of al Qahira (Raymond 2000)

place of sanctuary, it is where resided in worship alone (Bloom 2007). Later in the mid to late eleventh century, al Qahira suffered a severe famine and internal conflict between the Turkish and Sudanese military forces, it exhausted the treasury and created years of unrest within the empire. When Moulana Badr al Jamali (Amir al-Juyush) was appointed vizier in 1073 AD he restored order to city and extended the ruined fort of al Qahira under the command of Imam al Mustansir<sup>23</sup>. Fig 4 illustrates a plan of the city with its expanded walls replacing the mud brick structure with cut stone, its inscriptions indicate its construction lasted between 1087 till 1092 (Shalem 1996). Of these structure only the northern wall with Bab al Futuh and Bab al Nasr, and the southern gate of Bab al Zuwayla survive.

Al Jamali also built the Masjid al Juyushi at the top of the Muqattam hills, a small structure that was utilised by his military troops; with high vantage point, it also functioned as a watch tower. One of the most monumental Fatemi buildings is the masjid al Jamea al Aqmar, built in 1125 AD by vizier al Ma'mun al Bata'ih under Imam al Amir be Ahkamillah<sup>24</sup>. This masjid was the last Fatemi structure, it is heavily decorated facade encrypts details of Fatemi philosophy and foresee's the Aimmat Fatemiyeen's seclusion with Imam al Tayib Abdul Qasim after the death of his father Imam al Amir.

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<sup>23</sup> Imam al Mustansir Billah, 8<sup>th</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 1036-1091AD

<sup>24</sup> Imam al Amir be Ahkamillah, 10<sup>th</sup> Fatemi Caliph reigned from 1094-1101AD



*Towers of Bab al Zuwayla*

# 1. The Physical

Walls and fortification existed long before its defensive application. A shift from the nomadic lifestyle gave significance to the invention of the wall. It began as a device that created sense of privacy, as it holds a stronger connection to psychological development in secluded groups and the developed their identities within a village colony (Wilson 1991). It also identified boundaries for sects like in the Neolithic village Ilipinar where internal walls within the village partitioned groups of higher power from those of less. Defence from natural events would become an increasing priority, the famous walls of Jericho were built to protect the city from the nearby river invasion which had the potential to flood the low lying city (Mumford 1961). As social structures evolved, safeguarding settlements from foreign threats became a prime concern. With the development of military organisations and its association with warfare, the fortified wall became a common requirement for prospering citadels and capitals.

## Military Functions

The Fatemi fortification was pivotal in establishing its capital and a prosperous reign, their religious stance as Shi'a's came with hostility from the Sunni majority population in Qayrawan and Raqqada (Ibrahim 2017). Doris Behrens describes their defensive structures as the greatest masterpiece of military architecture in Islam (Melikian-Chirvani 2018). They expressed symbolic characteristics that create social impetus in their military structures, from the fort of al Mahdiyya to al Qaid Jawhar's wall in al Qahira, they recognised that the defensive quality of any fortification is as strong as its weakest component, which in this context is a fort's *bab*, due to vulnerabilities for ground access, but one may argue that it is its strongest component, as the military attention expended in the *bab* reinforces its strength.

The first order of construction for the citadel by Imam al Mahdi was of the west wall with its *bab*; Bab al Skifa al Khala (dark portico), the same order was practiced in al Mansuriyya and al Qahira (Halm 1996). al Qaid Jawhar's walls made of mud brick, al Maqrizi describes its proportion as wide enough for two horsemen to ride abreast (Pushkar 2002). Fatemi philosophy maintained the idea that every structure served their purpose at the specific time, it ceased to function once its intended purpose was met, this is emphasised in the narrations made by Syedna Qadi al Numan<sup>25</sup> who states Imam al Mu'izz's comments as he glared the bronze walls of al Mahdiyya, stating the forts preparation to only serve the city for a 'single moment of a day only'. The elements of the city's architecture stretch beyond its physical attributes, the religious influence of the Imam in the buildings assured a sense of divinity for the people living within it, these metaphysical connotations are expressed in Fatemi architecture in the forms of its ornamentation.

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<sup>25</sup> al Qadi al Numan was the most prominent Jurist and Chief Justice serving four generations of Fatemi Caliphate from Imam al Mahdi to Imam al Mu'izz. *Qaid* being the arabic translation for Judge

## Defensive Structure

Imam al Mahdi demonstrated great level craftsmanship in construction, Ibn Hawqal's<sup>26</sup> accounts of the Bab Skifa al Kahla describes:

“The two wings of the gate made from massive iron plates and decorated with representation of animals, were praised as a technical marvel. Their weight-half a ton each was ascertained by loading them into a ship: first it was measured how far down the ship dipped under the weight, then the ship was unloaded and filled up to the same mark with east-to-weigh sand. Fatimid tradition has intertwined the production of the door with legends; the Imam al-Mahdi himself, so it goes, not only explained the techniques for welding the iron plates and the ingenious weighing procedure to the astonished on artisans; he also had the idea of rotating the horrifically heavy wings on supports made of glass, so that a single man could move them” (Halm 1996).

The bab consists of two towers of three bays, with a vaulted corridor of 33 meters long opening into the city, this corridor consisted of a guardroom. Al Qaid Jawhar had foreseen the impending Qarmatian outbreak thus constructed the fort using mud brick to save time in construction as the materials were easy to transport.

Critical enhancements and strategies were developed to bolster defensive attributes , Bab al Nasr (Door of Victory) implemented a ‘bashura’, a custom that consisted of constructing a bend (atf) to the main entrance forcing the infiltration to turn, this obstructed movement for the mass cavalry (Creswell 1953), this strategy also included draping the bab’s alley with thick textiles to absorb projectiles. Another strategy employed in Bab Zuwayla in the south was ‘zalaqah’ which used flint stones



*Fig. 5 Bab Skifa al Kahla  
(Russell Harris 2017)*

*Fig. 6 Bab Skifa al Kahla  
interior*



<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Ibn Hawqal was a Mesopotamian writer and geographer in the mid-tenth century, chronicled accounts of medieval Asia and Africa.

floors leading up the gates, this caused the army of horses to slide and lose their footing, as reported by al Maqrizi in *al-Mawaiz wal Aetebaar fi zikril khetat wal asaar*.

Due to the famine and civil conflict in Imam al Mustansir's time, the fort and its gates were in need of restoration. Al Badr al Jamali's fortification extended the boundary of the citadel, he included Imam al Hakim's Masjid al Anwar within its precincts and erected the walls made of cut stone repurposed from pharaonic temples. Built by three craftsmen of Armerian origin, who combined their foreign expertise sporting advanced methods of construction (Shalem 1996). Taking precedent from previous Fatemi military construction, the bab's of al Qahira fashion twin towers at 20-25 meter high which reflected an imposing stature. The enclosure demonstrated unprecedented level of craftsmanship and masonry work with highly treated smooth stone, intricate inscriptions around the structures, a labyrinth of intertwined internal spaces between the gates with ranging domes and vaults, along with the spiralling vault staircase in Bab al Nasr (Abouseif 1989).

They operated on three levels, the vestibules on the street level were built with varying domed structures, Bab al Futuh incorporated a pendentive while Bab al Nasr contained a cross vault, whereas Bab al Zuwayla demonstrated both a pendentive on its gate level and a cross vault in its upper gallery, these entrances spanning 4-5 meters and around 15 meters deep had ramps leading up to the large doors of the entryway. Two-thirds of the bab's height were built solid up to the second level which held a series of galleries in vaulted rooms running along the perimeter of the walls which housed several guards and breaking at the Bab to open up into halls which employed a machicoulis, this was an opening in the floor strategically



*Fig. 7 Bab al Zuwayla  
machicoulis (Author 2020)*





Bab al Zuwayla



*Bab al Nasr*



*Bab al Futuh*



Fort walls





## 2. The Ceremonial

The role of the Aimmat Fatemiyeen did not conclude with their political and religious positions, it also consisted of social responsibilities, to directly engage with the public. Fatemi traditions were expressed very ceremoniously and the Imam played a significant role in participating in grand processions (al- Dheiesat 2007). Occasions such as the new year (Hijri<sup>27</sup>), Milad un-Nabi<sup>28</sup>, Eid al Fitr , Ghadir e Khum<sup>29</sup> and many others that bore religious significance were celebrated. al Maqrizi explains how the Imam showered his wealth of gold and silver to the people of the city, giving out precious gifts and charity to the poor. He also goes on to describe how the royal kitchens prepared assortments of food and sweets to be gifted to the officials of high ranks and the general population. These events congregated the public at Bayn al Qasrayn (between the two palaces) of al Qahira, and the grand parades were generally led by the Imam and his vizier through the Shari'a al Azam (the Great Street) of al Qahira (Sanders 1994). These public events became the Fatemi's identity, it not only defined their grand nature but was an expression of the dedication to their faith. The functions also focused on its religious rituals, the Imam would engage in public prayers to revel on that spiritual importance the day.

### Ritual significance

The architecture and urban infrastructure of a Fatemi city was designed to accommodate these occasions. The plan of al Mahdiyya (fig 1) and al Qahira (fig 4) indicates a prominent route through the heart of city. Al Mahdiyya maintains an axis from its bab along the spine of the city, opening up squares by the Great Masjid of Mahdiyya and then the by palace, following through to the harbour, al Qahira also emulates the axis along Shari'a al Azam, starting from Bab al Futuh in the north to Bab al Zuwayla in the south, opening a congregational square in the centre between the palaces. The space outside Masjid al Anwar replicates the plaza outside the Great Masjid of Mahdiyya as it sits adorned with the wall, Imam Amir's Masjid al Aqmar therefore demonstrates a very unique characteristic, its bab aligns with the orientation of the street, with the rest of the structure turning as to face the direction of qibla (Mecca).

One may even interpret this as the masjid maintaining its consideration to the street and in turn respect to the Imam who used the passage for procession, indicating the significance of the street and its involvement within Fatemi rituals. The bab plays a momentous role its declaration space, Bab al Futuh represent the commencement of these functions, its grand stature emphasises the divinity of the street and its function. The Bab of al Aqmar representing a form of

*Fig. 18 Projecting portal Ribat, Susa*

<sup>27</sup> Islamic calendar.

<sup>28</sup> Milad un Nabi, is the day of Rasullulah<sup>SA</sup>'s birth.

<sup>29</sup> The day Raullulah<sup>SA</sup> announced Moulana Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor.

prostration to the events and imam, its angled facade also involved a spiritual connotation that involves channeling light through its medallion which will be discussed further in the chapter of its ornamentation. Bab al Dhahab (The Golden Gate) in Bayn al Qasryan opened to the east palace, it marked as gathering point for the public, it was connected to a canopy from which the Imam would watch the parades and public that he was not physically involved in, it is also the area from which the Imam would be presented from to great his people.

## Plan

The Fatemi masjid was not only a place of worship but also the space for ceremonials but a domain for knowledge (ilm), where occasional public and private preachings (*majalis*) were organised by Moulana Qadi Nu'man at the authorisation of the Imam (Daftary 1996). The masjid performed not only as a spiritual entity but also carried forward several social roles that were in line with the religious doctrine. Amongst the ceremonial attributes in Fatemi architecture, the symbolic feature is present in plan, which aligns the main bab with its mebrab as shown in fig 14-17, initially represented in the Masjid in al Mahdiyya, then implemented in the masjid's of al Azhar, al Anwar, al Lulu, al Juyushi, al Aqmar of al Qahira (Saifuddin 2000). This could have functioned to serve ceremonial emphasis, but the significant connotation of this feature lies in the Fatemi doctrine of the Imam and his Da'i, also referred to as the 'Bab' or 'Bab al abwab' (the door of doors), in relation to the Imam known as 'Qibla tul-qibl' (mehrabs of mehrabs), one who leads not only the prayers but the people, the Da'i is his vicegerent, he is in-charge of the religious structure and the execution of the Imams command (Blank 1992). This demonstrates the significance for the alignment of a bab to the qibla in a Fatemi masjid which denoting the symbolism of the da'i's virtues being in tune with the imam's.

This reference of the bab in islamic symbolism is made to bridge its functions architecturally to the role of the da'i, a bab invites one into its precincts but also guards and protects it, the Da'i similarly invites a one into the precincts of Islam but stands guard to protect it. The significance of the architectural symbolism is further emphasised with a statement made by Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> in reference to Moulana Ali ibn Abu Talib<sup>AS</sup> (Saifuddin 2002):



*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gateway, whoever wishes to obtain the knowledge, must come to the door.*

This spiritual connotation of the bab is elaborated by its monumental portal entrance. The masjid's triumphal arch is intended to to emphasise the entrance. Lézine<sup>30</sup> records its influence taken from Ribat in Susa or the arches of Antonius in Sbeitla, modern day Tunisia (Bloom 1985). Originating from the masjid in al Mahdiyya (fig 22) the open space outside its entrance could have channeled ceremonies into the masjid.

Similarly with the masjid al Anwar after the expansion of al Badr al Jamali's fort created a social square, today this space boasts an active atmosphere with a screen of shops adjacent from the masjid and a platform under a canopy of trees that sees many locals gather, socialise all operating in response to the stature of the portal. The bab of masjid al Aqmar in turn has a more intimate relationship with the street, the building at the time of the Fatemi was adjacent to the royal palace Qasre Azizi with an avenue that was much wider than it is today.

*Fig. 9 Monumental portal of The Great Masjid of al Mahdiyya (Tomasz Mikonowics 2013)*



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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Lézine, was a french architect and historian in Tunisia, active in the mid-twentieth century.

Fig. 20 Monumental

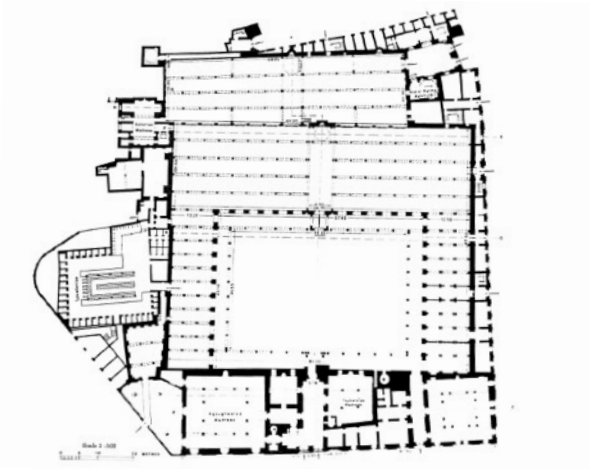


Fig. 11 Plan of Masjid al Azhar (O'Kane 2016)

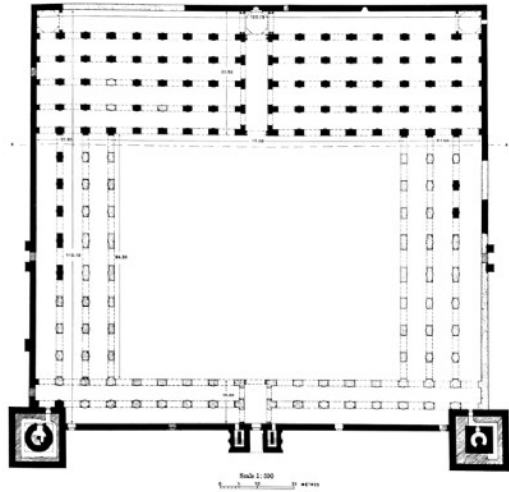


Fig. 12 Plan of Masjid al Anwar (O'Kane 2016)

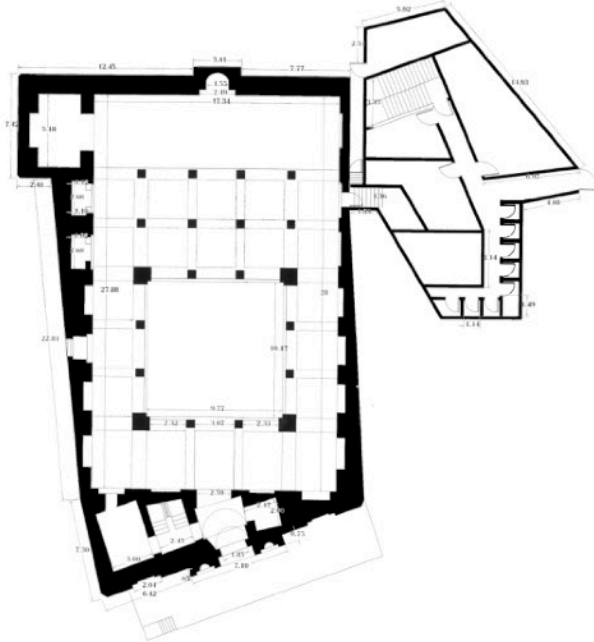


Fig. 12 Plan of Masjid al Aqmar (Saifuddin 2000)

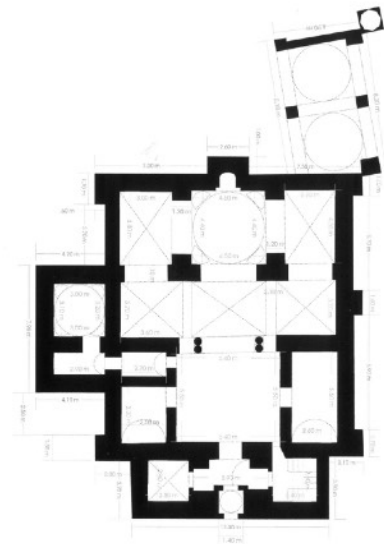


Fig. 13 Plan of Masjid al Juyushi (Saifuddin 2002)

Sons 7 troops of amirs, elite solider  
Lowest ranking amirs  
Amirs of the silver stall  
Amirs of the collar  
Muhannak eunuchs

Prefect of Al Qahira

Porter of Inkstank & entourage  
Porter of Sword & entourage  
Standard of Praise  
Flywhisks  
parasol  
Rikabiyya  
Commander  
Commander  
Commander  
Commander  
Wazir's escort  
Standard of Praise  
Flywhisks  
Commander  
Commander  
Commander  
Commander  
Rikabiyya  
Rikabiyya  
Chief chamberline  
(Sahib al-bab)  
Rikabiyya  
10 men with swords in Brocade sheaths  
Men of the small arms

### WAZIR+entourage

500 Men of Coat of Mail

Drums  
Cymbals  
Flutes

Porter of Lance and shield  
500 arches from fleet

Masamida  
Rayhaniyya  
Juyushiyya  
Faranjiyya  
Waziriyya  
(4000 infantry)

Two elite guards (sibyan al-khass) carrying banner with lions  
21 Rikabuyya carrying banners with Fatemi slogans

Amiriyya  
Hafiziyya  
Hujariyya al-kibar  
Hujariyya al-sighar  
Afdaliyya  
Juyushiyya  
Atrak al-mustana'in  
Daylam  
Akrad  
Ghuzz  
(3000 cavalry)

Commander of armies  
(Isfahsalar)



*Arch of Masjid Ib Tulum*

### 3.The Spiritual

The Fatemi had a divine relationship with their faith, thus their architecture functions as scripture that encrypts a messages of their belief, a message of islam, the word of Allāh and his messenger Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup>. Therefore we can agree that although the decor of a Fatemi building ornate an aesthetic glamour; it represents a much deeper narrative.

#### Fort and it's bab

The Ahl al-Bayt<sup>31</sup> are at the core of Fatemi doctrine and identity. The Aimmat Fatemiyeen expressed their faith through the proclamation of their ancestors. They showed their patronage by heavily in inscribing their structures with decor that manifested around the names and symbolism of Mohammed<sup>SA</sup>, Ali<sup>AS</sup>, Fatema<sup>AS</sup>, Hassan<sup>AS</sup> and Husain<sup>AS</sup>.

The early implementation of this form of ornamentation is expressed in the structures of al Mahdiyya. The diagram in fig 23 outlines the common elements found on a Fatemi bab, a rectangle portal with a keel-arched entryway, in certain structures fashioning a medallion in the centre and two circular motifs above the arch. Fig 24-27 exhibits this circular motif above the arch, Caroline Williams interpreted them as basil flowers (El-Barbary et.al 2016), but others may distinguish the motifs on Bab al Nasr to represent a shield as it paired with words behind them (Shalem 1996). One may argue that they symbolise two stars and is representation linked to the prophets family, in particular his grandson's Imam Hassan<sup>AS</sup> and Imam Husain<sup>AS</sup>, this can be supported by the reflection of Nabi Mohammed's<sup>SA</sup> hadith that translates (Saifuddin 2000):

*“Seek the sun (Mohammed<sup>SA</sup>), should you not find it, seek for the moon (Ali<sup>AS</sup>), should you not find it seek Venus (Fatema<sup>AS</sup>), should you not find them then seek the two stars (Hassan<sup>AS</sup> and Husain<sup>AS</sup>)”*

The representation of the Aimmat in this context is depicted as stars, Imam Hassan<sup>AS</sup> being the first and Imam Husain<sup>AS</sup> the second, radiating the word of Allāh embodied in many religions, more particularly in islam in the form of light. The masjid is a place of harmony, humility and purity, Fatemi philosophy

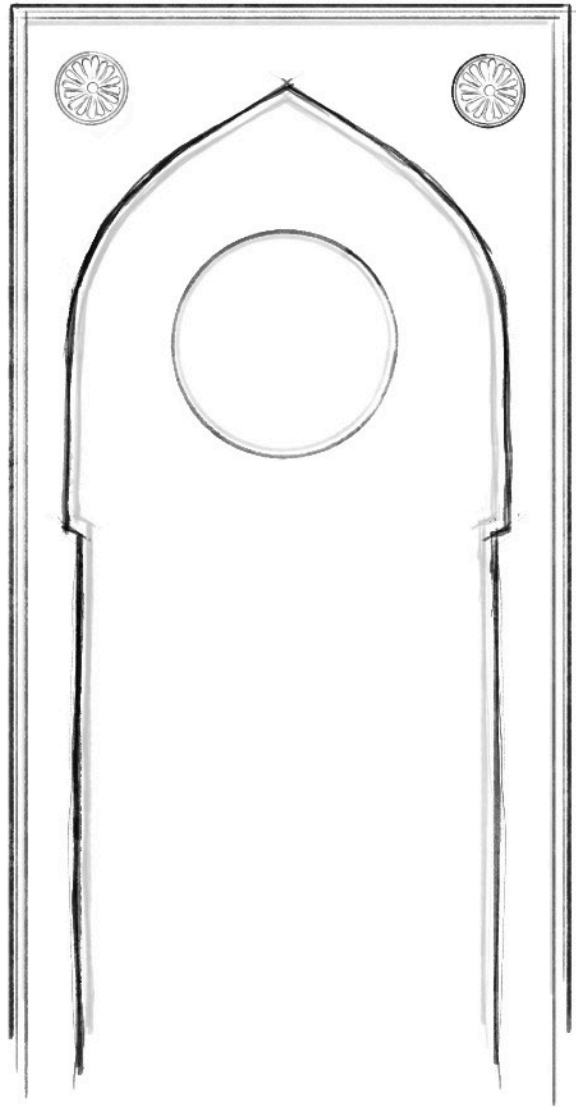


Fig. 14 Motif with swords on Bab al Nasr (left) (Author 2020)

Fig. 15 Motif on Skifa al Kahla (right) (Russell Harris 2017)



<sup>31</sup>Arabic; 'People of the House' referring to the family of the Nabi<sup>SA</sup> consisting of the Mohammed, Ali, Fatema and her sons Hasan and Husain.

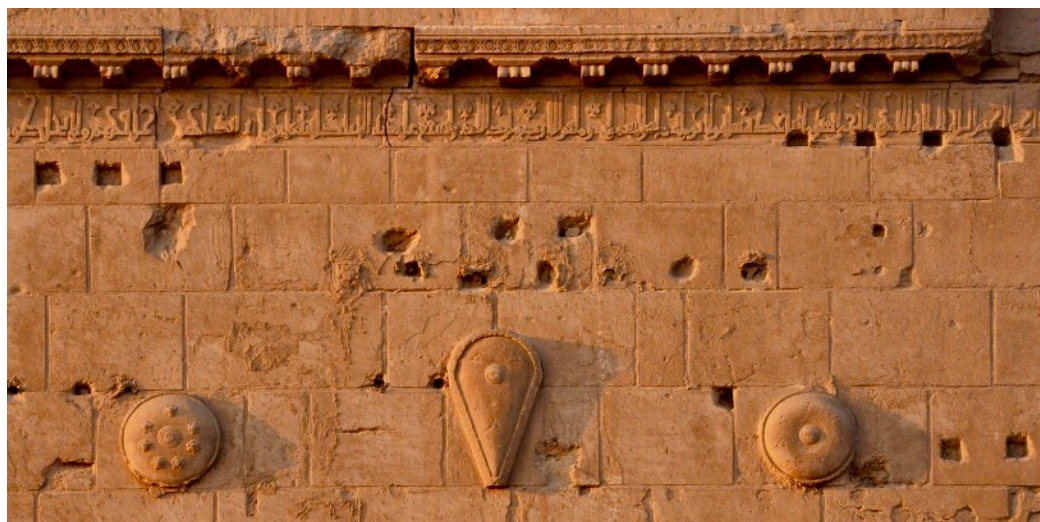


*Fig. 16 Sketch of common entrance Fatemi portal ornamentation elements*

emphasises this by embedding symbolism of the Khamsat Athaar<sup>32</sup> within its bab, insinuating the idea of the cleansing of ones self spiritually upon entering a space of spiritual prominence. According to Creswell's observations, the motifs on the archway of Bab al Futuh as shown on fig 29 depict 65 stars incased in squares (Barbary et.al 2016), again a reference to the blessing of the Imamate upon the entrance of their city. The Bab express their military might in the form of a ram's head in fig 28, a model of the strength and might, but has also been referenced to as an epitomisation of companions of Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> according to Gabr (Barbary et.al 2016).

The motifs on Bab al Nasr are of two circular shields with seven studs around it and a kite shaped shield sat in-between the circular ones(fig 29), the same kit-shaped shield is found in the inner flanks on the rectangular structure. They could be denotations of the Norman and medieval indian shields, they also have been suggested by Creswell as being the celebration of the Fatemi army as the circular shields used by the infantry and the kite-shaped by the cavalry (Shalem 1996).

Doris Berhen signifies the towers as the "shields of the city". Whereas Shalem denotes a further more personal significance, he explains how the circular shield is; through the accounts of Ibn al Zubayr<sup>33</sup> is the golden shield called al Asjadah brought from Qayrawan to al Qahira with Imam al Mu'izz upon its conquest, the shield was an artefact that belonged to the Nabi's uncle Hamza Ibn Abdul-Muttalib, it hung from the thrown room during Imam al Hakim's era sporting a gesture of splendour and religious significance. Another interpretation iis that the ornamentation is a memoir of Imam al Mahdi's shield which was sent to al Qahira from Qayrawan by al Mu'izz bin Badis during the reign of Imam al Mustansir, it would represent a more celebrated symbol as it is the



*Fig. 17 Shield motif and Quran inscriptions on Bab al Nasr (Author 2020)*

<sup>32</sup> Khamsat Athaar is an arabic translation for 'The Pure Five' referring to the Ahal al-Bayt.

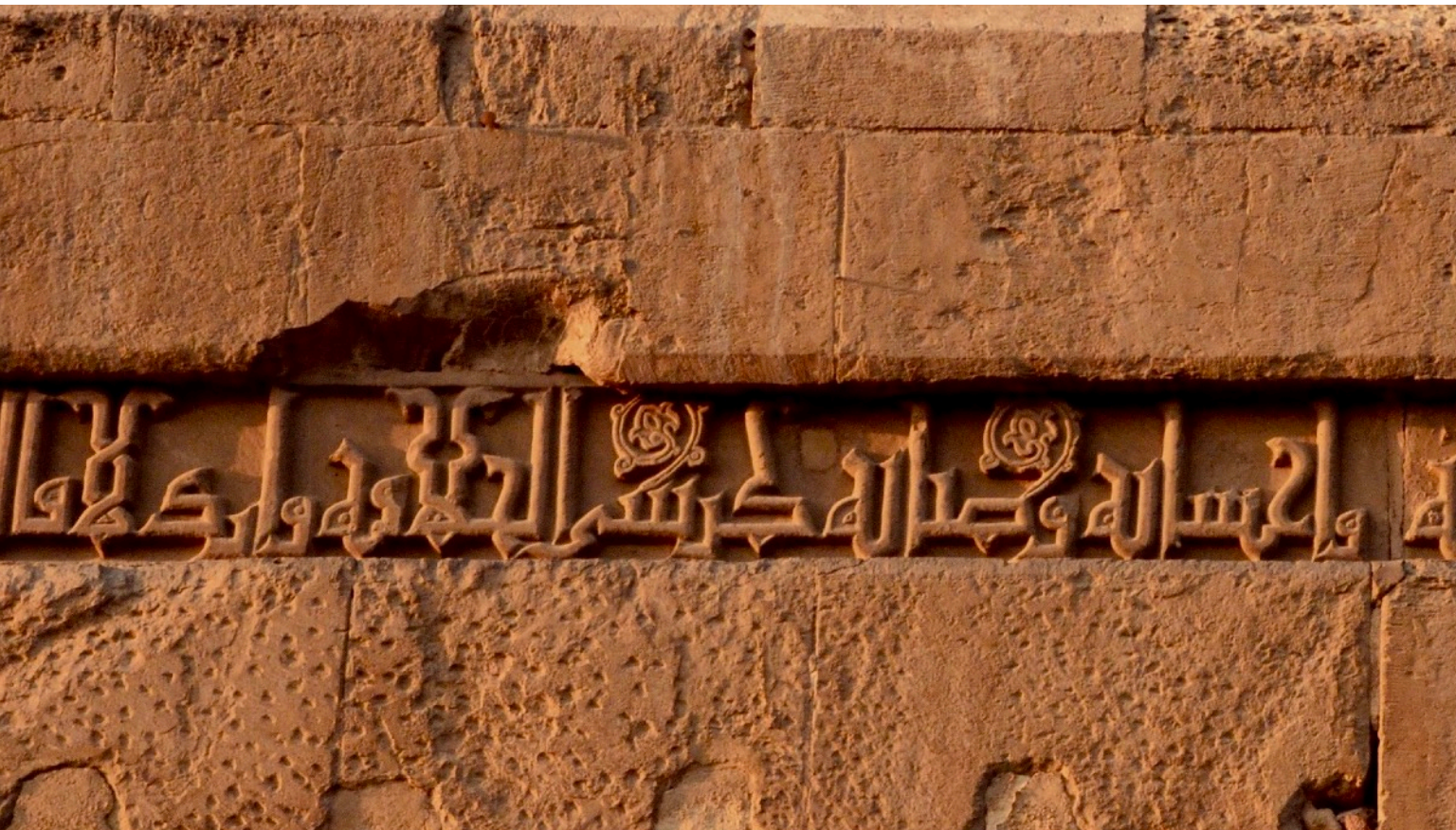
<sup>33</sup> al Qadi al Rashid Ibn al- Zubayr was a member of the Fatimid court in the mid to late eleventh century

## Kufic script

An eminent characteristic about Fatemi art in relation to previous Islamic practices was their use of Kufic script. Derived from the city of Kufa<sup>34</sup>, the capital city of the Islamic Empire under Moulana Ali Ibn Abu Talib's<sup>AS</sup> time as Caliph. The Fatemi's express the Shi'i doctrine through this form of text, implementing a variation of styles in geometric, foliated and the highly decorative floriated calligraphy. These complex styles are a demonstration of the level of craftsmanship, it also connotes an undertone for the beauty instilled in nature (Grohman 1957). Fig 31 and 32 show bands of kufic scripture wrapped around the interior arches of the masjids of al Aqmar and al Azhar, the variation in the style is evident between these and the inscriptions on Bab al Nasr and Bab al Futuh in fig 29 and 30, as its form is less floral and decorative to the interior inscriptions, one can argue that the form represented on the exterior of the gates are meant to convey more of an authoritative expression.

In addition, the calligraphy also represented the piety of the Fatemiyeen as it expresses the word of Allāh , by engraving verses of the Quran within the walls of their buildings. The teachings of the Quran are fundamental to Fatemi philosophy which is why they chose to celebrate it in their house of Allāh , on its facades and its mehrab, to protect and bless their structures on a spiritual level. This was the first time the architecture played a role of not only accommodating the people of the book, but with its ornamentation expressed the words of the book.

As relayed before, the transcendence of space from the bab serves significance in Fatemi philosophy, from its derivation in the Quran, the idea of taqwa<sup>35</sup> is conveyed in the architecture. The foundation script above the bab of masjid al Juyushi reads:



وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرًّا زَاكِرًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ أُولَئِكَ  
 نَجَسٌ مُبِينٌ  
 خَارِجًا لِلدِّينِ وَسُلْطَانًا قَبْلَ الْيَوْمِ الَّذِي كُنَّا فِيهِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ  
 أَهْبِرْ لَكَ ذُبُونٌ لَا تَقْبِرُ فِيهَا بَدَأَ مَسْجِدًا سَسْرًا عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ  
 يَوْمٍ لِحِقَاتٍ تَقْوَمُ فِيهِ رِحَالُ الْحَبِيبِ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا لِلدَّيْمِيِّ الْمَطَهَّرِينَ

*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gateway, whoever wishes to obtain the knowledge, must come to the door. And for those who choose a place of worship out of opposition and disbelief, and in order to cause dissent among the believers, and as an outpost for those who warred against Allāh and His messenger aforetime, they will surely swear:*

*We purposed naught save good, Allāh bearth witness that are liars. Never stand (to pray) there. A place of worship that was founded upon taqwa (of Allāh) from the first day is more worthy that thou shouldst stand (to pray) therein, wherein are men who love to purify themselves, and Allāh loveth the purifiers.*

(al Quran 9:108)

Fig. 18 Quran inscription on Bab al Futuh (Author 2020)



Fig. 19 Kufic inscription in al Azhar (top) (Author 2019)

Fig. 20 Kufic inscription atop the entrance of al Juyushi (bottom) (Saifuddin 2002)

The symbolism of this verse onto the bab of al Juyushi lays emphasis on the concept of taqwa, which epitome of harmonising knowledge, action and intent into finding absolute purity (Saifuddin 2002). The true nature of taqwa perfected by the Bab ul abwab; the Da'i, in this context Amir al Juyush<sup>36</sup>(commander of the armies) al Juyushi is dedicated to. Therefore the of scripture pays homage to the philosophy embodied by the Da'i.



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<sup>36</sup> Title of al Badr al Jamali



Interior courtyard of Masjid al Aqmar



Fig. 21 Facade of al Aqmar  
(Author 2020)

## Medallion and Rays

Fatemi architecture elaborates very prominently, the kinship to the Nabi<sup>SA</sup> and Ali<sup>AS</sup>, just as the Ayat<sup>37</sup> inscribed in al Juyushi esteemed al Badr al Jamali, the masjid of al Aqmar conveys their devotion to the Ahl al Bayt and to express the legitimacy of their ancestry. Every Fatemi design is derived from their philosophy, the bab serves as a cryptograph, that congregates the Fatemi philosophies. The distinctive element on its facade is the twenty rays symbolising the twenty Imam (foreshadowing the 21<sup>st</sup> Imam going into seclusion) and it's central medallion, reading the name of Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> and Ali<sup>AS</sup>, symbolising the sun, On the outer ring of the madallion reads the Ayat al Tattheer:

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<sup>37</sup> Verse from the Quran

The inscriptions reads a story of succession, from the divine light meeting the pierced medallion that writing the names of the spiritually pure (Mohammed and Ali) and the quranic verse of pure in shadow into the courtyard of the masjid, it then inscribes these rays (Fatemi imams) externally on its facade insinuating the line of succession (Saifuddin 2000).



*In the name of Allāh , the most Beneficial the most Merciful,  
Allāh only wishes to remove all abomination from you, O' Members of the  
Family, and to make you pure and spotless  
(al Quran 33:33)*

## Numerical significance

Numerical values are given importance in Fatemi philosophy, The facade deflects at an angle of 21°, linking it again to their seclusion. The hooded arch on both flanks of the facade beams twenty-three rays from its medallion symbolising Moulatena Fatema<sup>AS</sup> to the age of her passing along with the years of Nabi Mohammeds prophethood with the twenty-three rays. To add to the medallion that chains The Nabi's name five time's around Ali referencing the khamsat Athaar.



Fig. 22 ribbed niche on al Aqmar  
(Author 2020)

## Muqarnas

The muqarnas is a striking valuting feature, prominently present in Islamic architecture. Known as transitioning element for domes, or Fatemi's implemented it to span out a short cantilever on al Juyushi's minaret. The element on the corner of al Aqmar's bab Rukn al Mukhallaq (the perfumed cornerstone) opens up the space cantilevering the corner facades corner edge, but also embellishes his space with the inscriptions that read:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

*For Allāh is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good  
(al Quran 16:128)*

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلِيٍّ

*Allāh is with Mohammed and Ali*

To proclaim that Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> and Ali<sup>AS</sup> are the 'cornerstones of the house of religion' (Williams 1983).

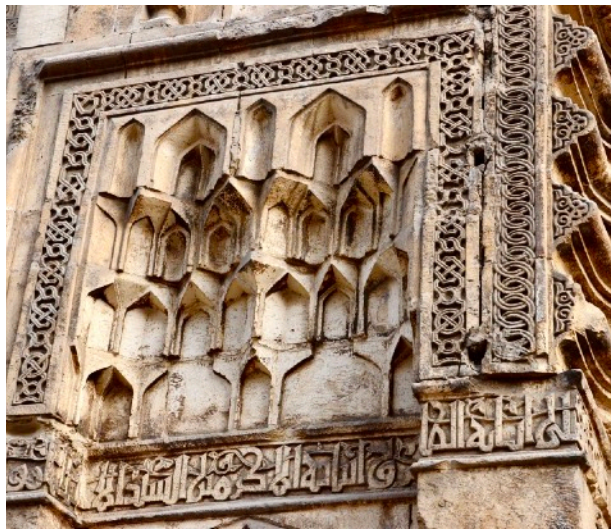


Fig. 23 left side Muqarnas (left)  
(Author 2020)



Fig. 24 Rukn al Muklallaq (right)  
(Taha Rajbhai 2012)

The muqarnas pattern found on the flanks on the main projecting portal shown in fig 38 found on Bab al Futuh and al Juyushi is created from a lattice of hexagonal niches. This pattern resembles that of a honeycomb, citing the Fatemi concept derived from Nabi Mohammed's<sup>SA</sup> teachings of how a societies should operate like honeybees, interlaced and collaborating in unison. It also suggests the properties of honey which holds a strong identity, it maintains its integrity over time, insinuating the survival of the Fatemi faith (Saifuddin 2000).

## Light

To relay the importance of light in Islamic doctrine, the motifs on the two far sides of the facade shown in fig 40 indicate a window with a lantern (mishkat) over a hexagonal star. Willams refers to the poem attributed to Imam al Husain<sup>AS</sup> upon his martyrdom: Attributing it to the Ayat al Nur in the Quran that highlights that "Allāh is the light of

*'My father is the sun, my mother a mood and i am the star the son of two moons: My grandfather was the lamp of Guidance'*

the heavens and the earth, the example of his light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass", this denoting the parable of the light existing in Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> and thus in the house of Ali<sup>AS</sup> and his descendants, the Aimmat Fatemiyeen. This motif was identified by Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin<sup>RA</sup> to be used precedent for the mishkat's the Fatemi masjids.

Therefore to conclude on a selected expressions of the Fatemiyeen encrypted in their last masjid. Utilising its bab as messenger, that celebrates their lineage and harmonises their devotion to their faith, but also inculcate their origins into the future by manifesting their art with their doctrine, into societies that still align their wallayat (allegiance) oh Allāh through the Fatemiyeen.



Fig. 24 mishkat ornamentation in the facade (left) (Author 2020)

Fig. 25 mishkat and window inscription panel in the interior (right) (Author 2020)



## 4.Modern day Fatemi

After the assassination of Imam al Amir, the Da'i al Multaq were anointed under Moulatena Hurat ul Maleka, the Queen of Yemen. With the Immate in seclusion, and with the Fatemi caliphate under Abd ul Majeed<sup>38</sup> slowly diminishing in al Qahira, the religious position was being reinstated in Yemen with the first Da'i al Mutlaq<sup>39</sup> Sayedna Zueb bin Musa. Having moved from Yemen to India in the mid sixteenth century, the fatemi doctrine survives globally under the 53<sup>rd</sup> Da'i al Fatemi Dr. Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin of the Dawoodi Bohra community.

*Fig. 26 Husaini Masjid , Northolt  
(James O Davies 2012)*



### Husaini Masjid, London

With the restoration of the Fatemi masjid's in the 1970s, a revival of Fatemi architecture was adopted in modern structures. Located in West London, the Husaini

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<sup>38</sup> Abd ul Majeed was Imam Amir's cousin, appointed as regent to Imam Tayyib, but chose to proclaim the caliphate after the seclusion of Imamate in 1130.

<sup>39</sup> *Mutlaq*; derivative of the arabic word *itlaaq* which means complete. *Da'i al Mutlaq* is the vicegerent in place of the Imam.

Masjid is the first Fatemi masjid in the UK completed in 1996 (Bowen 2014). Its architecture has taken direct influence from the masjid' S in al Qahira, yet maintains an awareness of its local vernacular. According the Saleem the Mohammedi Park Complex is intended to serve as a mahallah (*community*), thus a row of terrace houses around the perimeter of the site creates a familiar facade to the urban landscape in contrast to the striking Fatemi features.

The Bab of the Husaini Masjid in Fatemi fashion distinguishes itself from the rest of its facade. Its red-stone portal contrasts with the buff-stone finish for the building. Its bab is aligned with an axis to the mehrab. The madressa building indicated in the plan on fig 41 serves as the ceremonial entrance on the ground level and a madressa (*school*) that wrap around the iwan on the first floor. Maintaining this alignment to the qibla instills ritualistic and symbolic connotation derived from Fatemi theology. General public access to the building is through the doors on either wing of the building. The arabic mosque plan that includes a courtyard is also implemented in this structure, but due to climatic conditions, an open space would serve impractical, thus, collonates surrounding the central iwan is covered with a roofing structure with three large octagonal skylights, giving the space the identity of an arabesque courtyard that response to its context.

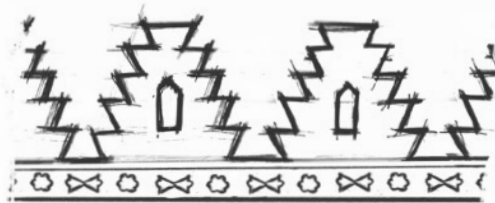


Fig. 27 sketch of crestings on Masjid al Anwar(Author 2019)

The redbrick trim running along the perimeter of the building has been adopted from the cresting of al Anwar, the stepped element is incorporated in the original design but is yet To retain permission from the council according to the architect Shk. Aliasgar Jivanjee.

The protruding portico encompasses traditional Fatemi Influence, the rectangular form may take its inspiration from the masjid of al Aqmar, with the proportions of its keel arched entryway in response to the placement of the medallion in the centre and the two rosette motifs that represent Imam Hassan and Imam Husain. The rounded top crenelations wrapping the top of the frame and above the doorway takes its crenelation from the walls of Badr al Jamali, implying the a symbolism to the strength of the fortress instilled in the strength of its faith in this masjid. One would criticise with the assumption that the rectangular heading above the crenelation may be another incomplete feature as it is an ideal location to inscribe literary scriptures, but comments by the architect state that it is serves as part of the facades architectural proportions.



Monumental entrance portal Husaini Masjid

In the context of scriptures the Medallion in the core of the bab reads the 'Allah' in kufic script incased in two interlocking pentagons. This kufic scripture is present in 21 different of variations in the inscriptions around al Juyushi (saifuddin 2002) like the pierced madallion on al Aqmar, this centre piece conveys its identity from the golden inscription of Allah, announcing in the same manner the purpose and importance of the edifice as the House of Allah. The public entrance (fig 49) fashions a five-point star medallion, with its edges encased in rings, it is wrapped in a trim with semi-circular intervals that eject externally, also taken from the minaret of al Anwar, Numerical insinuations are made giving importance to the value five, the boundary is of a five sided shape interweaving twice, with five circular junctions around the inscription. To further analyse the word Allah touches this outer rim five times, similarly the repetition of the five elements in the second medallion signifies referencing the five members of the Ahl al Bayt as well as other doctrines.

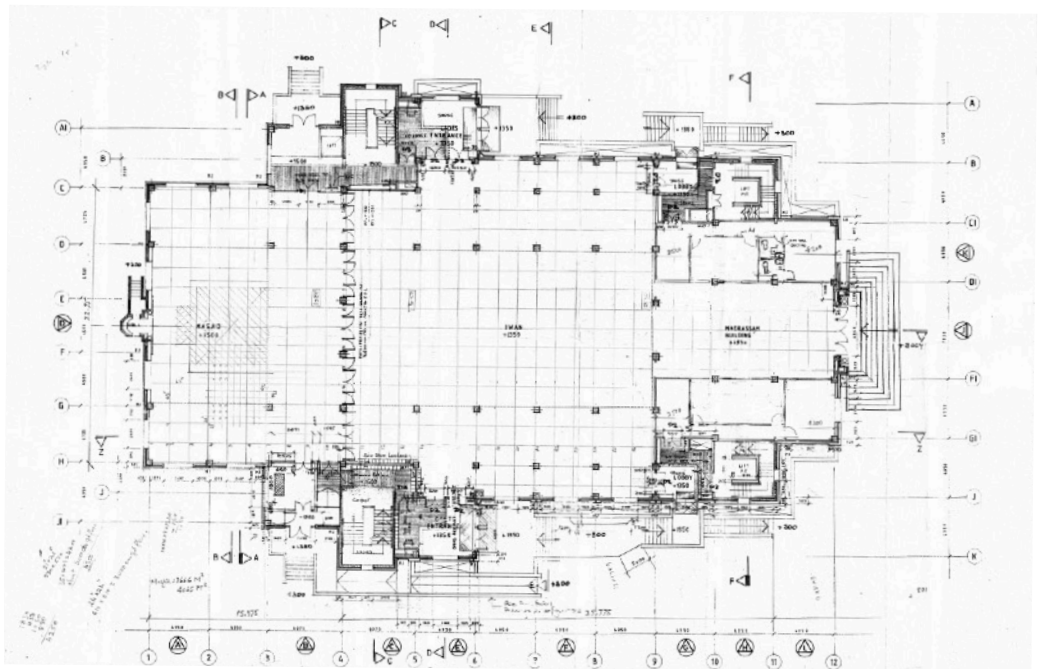


Fig. 28 Ground Floor plan  
(courtesy of the architect)

The order in which the columns support the archway reminisce the proportions of the original mehrab of al Juyushi which has been reproduced and added al Anwar and other Fatemi masjids,. Symbolism for this is taken from the merging of elements between the mehrab and the bab, an example of such is shown in al Anwar's mehrab itself with hold the medallion from al Aqmar's bab referencing the intertwined alliance of the Da'i with the Imam (Saifuddin 2000)

This repetition of geometrical patterns from al Anwar also evident in the lozenge motifs stapled around the exterior walls of the masjid in pairs, also evident above the entrance bay of the portal and inscribed in the wooden doors. These designs originate from the western minaret, they are compiled in a series of rotated squares forming a star and floral motif, indicating the Fatemi philosophies of the star in relation to the

Imam and the floral patterns that express the beauty of nature and growth .

The concept of growth is very significant in this society. Practicing their faith by converting church in Fulham, to a jewish boys club in Hanwell, the Husaini Masjid signifies the fruit of a community growing in London.

Al Anwar stands as a prominent precedent for architectural and non-architectural decor associated with the community, the emphasis for these elements is merited to magnanimous renovations of the masjids in al Qahira by Dr.Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin<sup>RA</sup>. This gave the Dawoodi Bohra community a revival of their Fatemi identity, after over nine centuries of despair the radiance of the Fatemi identity was restored. The repetiton of designs creates a hyperlink between Fatemi structures of Dawoodi Bohra patronage.

*Fig. 29 illustration of the Allah medallion*







*Door inscription*



*Materiality*

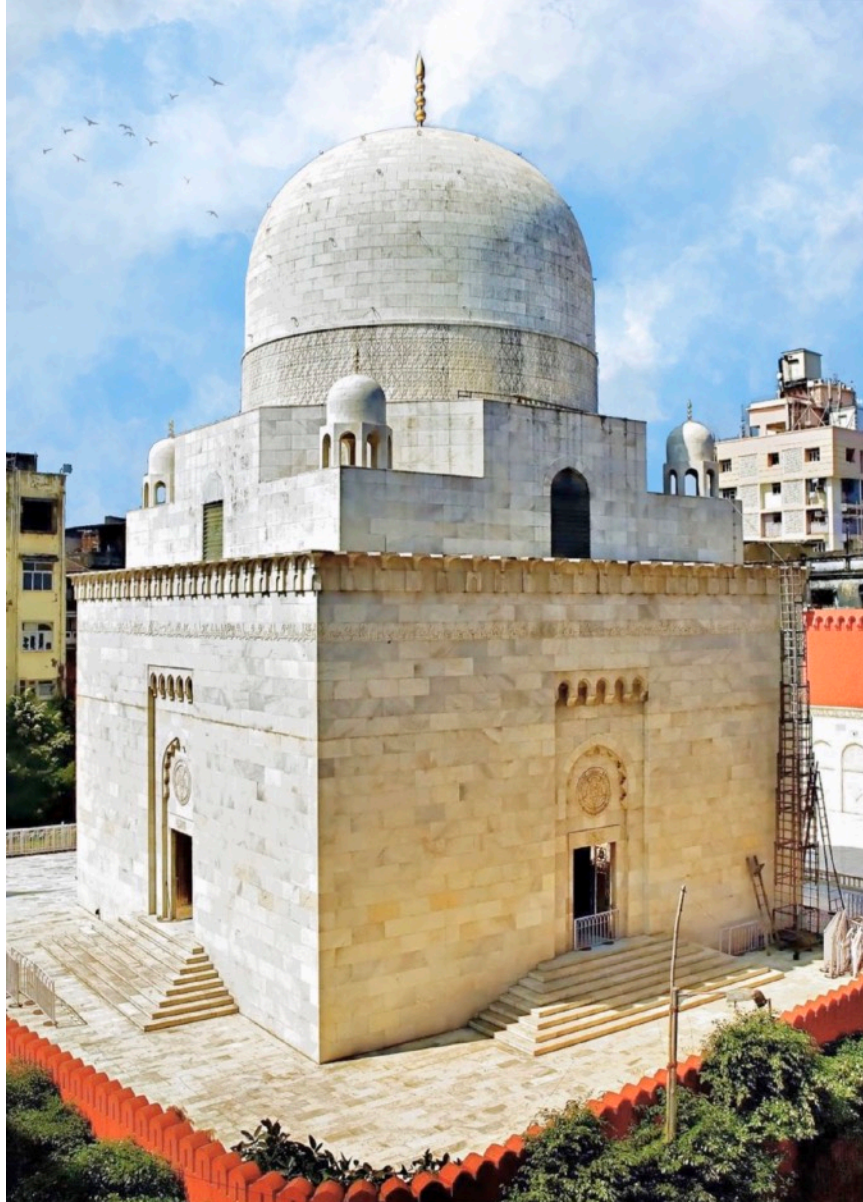


Fig 29 Raudat Tahera, Mumbai

## Raudat Taher, Mumbai

Built in 1975 by Indian architect Yahya Merchant, Raudat Taher is the resting place of the 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Da'i al Mutlaq Syedna Taher Saifuddin<sup>RA</sup> and Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhannudin<sup>RA</sup>. Situated in the crowded district of Bhendi Bazaar in the south of Mumbai, this mausoleum sits in the heart of a heavily Bohra influenced market (Abdulhusein 2001) Its urban landscape consists of an bustling neighbourhood of shops, apartments and workshops, originating as a Labour camp for the development of the city during colonial times. The area is currently under an uplifted project led by Syedna Muffadle Saifuddin.

Raudat Tahera serves as a sanctuary and a place of pilgrimage for people of the community. The architecture harmonises its space, informing the context a sense of unity with its square plan that opens from all four sides, its large dome accented by four smaller secondary domes monumentalises its stance. These features are a repetition from Fatemi mausoleums and which was in the mausoleums of Da'i's that preceded, its ornamentation though varied, coinciding an Indo Islamic style of architecture. Exposure to the Fatemi structures in the 1960s gave the community a new corpus of architectural designs to repurpose (Blank 1996).

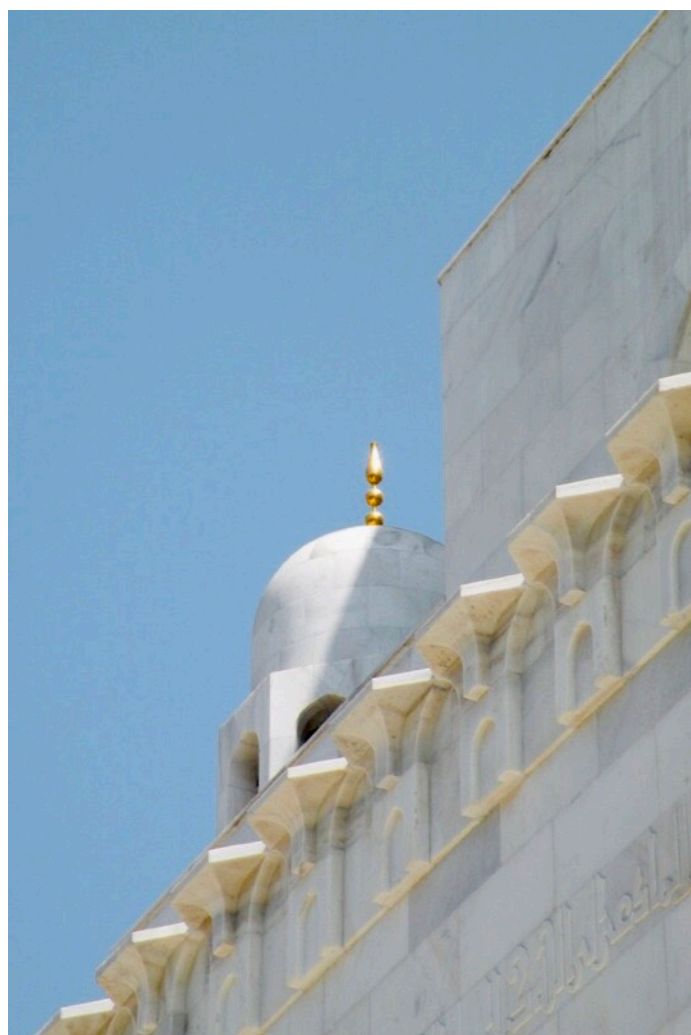
The Fatemi's gave significant patronage to burial grounds of their ancestors, restoring the mausoleum of Moulatena Nafisa under Imam al Mustansir and the mausoleum of Moulatena Ruqaiyyah under Imam Amir (El-Barbary et al 2016), heavily linking these sacred spaces as the divinity of Allāh .

The architecture is a consistent reminder of this as they Fatemi aspired to align themselves the Ahl al Bayt, the Bohra community similarly in this context align themselves to the Fatemi.

*Fig 30 top crenelation pattern*

Raudat Taher in this context reconnects to its heritage by taking direct implementation of certain Fatemi features. The silver door's replicated from the wooden doors on al Aqmar, inserted in an arched frame with floral ridged silhouette, similar to the floral ends of al Aqmar's rays. This motif is encased in a second rectangular frame crowned in five rounded crenelations of al Qahira's fort. The significance of the number 5 (Ahl al Bayt) is continuously repeated in Fatemi architecture and now elaborated again on these structures, the central medallion contributes to this; Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin's name inscribed in a circular casing sported with a five pointed radiating pattern. The use of numerical symbolism is not overlooked in this structure, the basis on its proportions are led with this ideology, the walls amount to a thickness of 5 feet, the Nabi's name amounts to the numerical figure of 92, reflected in the 92 piles of the structures foundation. Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin<sup>RA</sup> is also honoured in this context, his seat of the 51<sup>st</sup> Da'i, expressed in the interior space measuring 51x51 feet, its internal height of 80 ft referencing the age of his passing and the dome that measures 28 feet reflects the age of his succession (Abdulhussein 2001).

The bab and their names hold importance as they pay homage to their ancestors, Bab e Hakim, facing east to Sayedi Abdulqadir Hakimuddin in Burhanpur, Bab e Zaini facing south to Syedna Tayyab Zainuddin (his grandfather) in surat and the northward Bab e Fakhri facing Syedi Fakruddin Shaheed's mausoleum in Galiyakot (Abdulhussein 2001).The facade of Raudat Tahera is



segmented into 4 bays that reflect the order of al Juyushi's minaret. The square body is accented with the Fatemi muqarnas, Nabi Moahammed's<sup>RA</sup> teachings on the honeybee is reflected in this holy shrine to celebrate this philosophy over the names of the Imam in Kufic. This is ab emphasises architectural sequence, as it arrays into an inset square that supports the smaller domes and the octagonal frame, which transitions into the monumental dome. The dome stands out as the most striking element from its composition, referring back to its symbolism of a parosol, the large structure demonstrates the prominence in humility even at after death.

The most significant feature of this shrine is expressed internally. Reflecting the practice of the Fatemi's, inscribed quranic verses on the architecture, Raudat Taher holds inscriptions of the whole Quran in gold within its interior devoting the word of Allah to the Imam's Da'i in an unprecedented manner.





## Al Jamea tus Saifiyah, Nairobi

Academia is one of the core foundations Fatemi thought, instilling divinity and piety (Yoemans 2006). Al Azhar, the first Fatemi masjid in al Qahera was built by al Qaid Jawhar along with the walls. Around a decade later Ya'qub ibn Killis recognised it as an academy under Imam Aziz. Its reputation as the global centre of academia, attracted philosophers, mathematicians, particularly astronomers etc. from all over the world. Imam al Hakim contributed significantly to this cause as he founded the Dar al Hikmah (House of Wisdom) and Dar al-Ilm (House of Knowledge) in 1005 AD (Dodge 1960). Accounts by Ibn Hawqal describes its library to of storing between 120,000 to 300,000 books, only to be destroyed by Sala al-Din in the later eleventh-century (Yoemans 2006).

The Dawoodi Bohra community has maintained this theology for education, establishing the Islamic Institute of Al Jamea tus Saifiyah in 1960s under Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin<sup>TUS</sup>. Today the institute spans 4 campuses, its first in Surat (India), Karachi (Pakistan), Nairobi (Kenya) and Marol (India), the Nairobi campus being the

latest completed, inaugurated in 2017.

Situated in Saifee Park, a Bohra mahalla in the outskirts of Nairobi, the campus demonstrates the the pinnacle of Fatemi architecture incorporated in a modern day society. Its urban structure presents the processional symmetry in the likes of a Fatemi citadel. The journey into the campus is celebrated with a curtain walled glass facade that celebrates an octagonal structure, Mahad al Zahra<sup>40</sup>. The bab is ornamented with sandblasted motifs of Imam Hassan<sup>AS</sup> and Imam Husain<sup>AS</sup> over a rounded arch commissioning the institute the blessings of the Ahl al Bayt. Embedded in the centre of the arch is Al Jamea's emblem, composed of an arch from al-Azhar with kufic inscription, a Hadith<sup>41</sup> from Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> in the style of Turkish calligraphy, an Ayat from the quran, and panegyric's in praise of the Fatemi written by Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin<sup>RA</sup> collectively showcasing a harmony of the islamic narrative and faith (Tajbhai).

This axis extends from Mahad al-Zahra to a hypostyle courtyard with a crossed routes meeting at its centre. This space emulates a typical Fatemi masjid plan (in particular al Anwar), but serves as a pivot for the campus, the precincts of the masjid begins at the end of this courtyard with a projecting monumental portal. The bab to the masjid elaborates the quintessential Fatemi characteristic of al Anwar , although the masjid in al Qahira sports 10 niches in its bab, this structure fashion 2, but its wooden doors, ornamentation, kufic script, crenellation crown and medallion derive identical to the Luminous masjid. This bab opens to a smaller courtyard with a smaller wooden keel arched bab with the axis concluding at the mehrab. The plan of the campus emulates a sequence of bab's that is also inline with the qibla (fig 61) , signifying not only the Bab ul abwabs alignment with the Qiblat ul qible but the alignment of the students



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<sup>40</sup> The institute/ department dedicated to the art of recitation and memorisation of the Quran, named after Mo

<sup>41</sup> Statements, reports or actions of Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup>

and the institute of Al Jamea tus Saifiyah to being in nuisance with the Da'i and his Imam's philosophy. The central courtyard asserts to round horseshoe arches that are not typical of the Fatemi keel arched hypostyle, but can be traced back to an arcade of the Great masjid of Kairoaun, although it preceded the Fatemi, they used its plan as a precedent in the construction of al Mahdiyya. The upper trim crowns the muqarnas of al Juyushi (Saifuddin 2002), the Arched openings around the campus practice different elements of Fatemi design or construction, i.e fig 60 distinguishes its features to resonate with Babs of Al Qahira, its rounded crenelations, doorways of jogged voussoirs encased in a keel arched frame. Inscriptions and patterns such as the trim around the auditorium is inspired from bab al Nasr's floral motifs, the porous geometric patterns in the arches of the courtyard emulate the concept of the imams shubbak (*window*) at Bab al Darb. The concept of the honeybee pairs a significant correlation with the institution as the social structure of a bee colony inspires the workmanship and the united communal characteristics of Al Jamea, this is replicated in the hexagonal motifs in the muqarnas, the cladding around its library and expresses sources from its sister campuses such as Surats hexagonal facade around their accommodation block emanating a honeycomb.



The architecture during the Fatemi's was recognised to function not only as a sanctuary for Allah's scripture but expressed the the words within its walls, in a sense becoming the scripture, Similarity, the architecture of Al Jamea not only accommodates an environment for knowledge but Represents the campus as an exhibition of ranging Fatemi and non-Fatemi elements that propagate its ideology an lineage.



# Conclusion

This Literary work elaborate the historical chronology of the Aimmat Fatemiyeen, describing their lineage from Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> and expressed an overview of their rise to power under Imam al Mahdi. Highlighting significant moments of patronage during the reign of individual Imam's until their seclusion. This prepared a context to elaborate the virtues and ethics of the Fatemiyeen. Implementing the architectural analysis of their bab to emulated their strength, intuition and craftsmanship in their military. Understanding the grand nature and social impetus of the Fatemi, signifies the role for the city's bab, identifying it as a monument that governed the flow, direction and congregation of its public. Expressing the spacial symbolism in a Fatemi masjid emphasised the link between the Imam and his Da'i in reference with Nabi Mohammed<sup>SA</sup> and his wali Ali ibn Abu Talib<sup>AS</sup>. Lastly with a detailed examination of the ornamentation of the Fatemi, its connotation, symbolism and its rhetoric, decrypted emphasis to an ideology of devotion and homage to Allah, through the recitation of the holy scripture and the names of the their ancestors, the Ahl al Bayt.

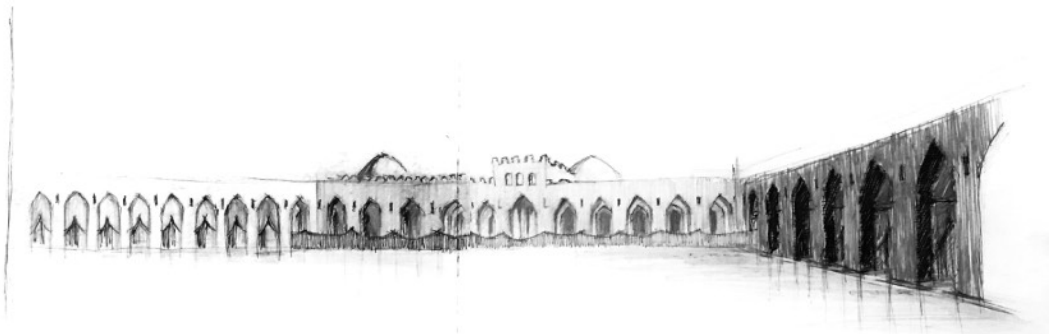
A demonstration of descendants in the Dawoodi Bohra community explains the transcendence of the Fatemi doctrine over a period of 1000 years. Analysing the Husaini Masjid uncovered the influence of the ornamentation a Fatemi bab had in the expression of piety which us maintained within a structure. In return this derives a social identity for the building and it's community in a culture that is foreign to Islamic norms. An exploration of Raudat Tahera shows how the articulations and philosophy behind numerical significance derived from the Fatemi theology present in their bab, invokes a harmonious architectural composition. It also emphasises the Fatemi doctrine for quranic inscription within architecture. Lastly, the Investigation of Al Jamea tus Saifiyah displays how a series of buildings that illuminate Fatemi philosophy, harmonises a composition of Fatemi architectural elements throughout its campus, with the pinnacle of this doctrine instilled in the symbolism for the route to Allah's divinity, the expression presented through the alignment to the Imam, through the Da'i in the canopy of knowledge.

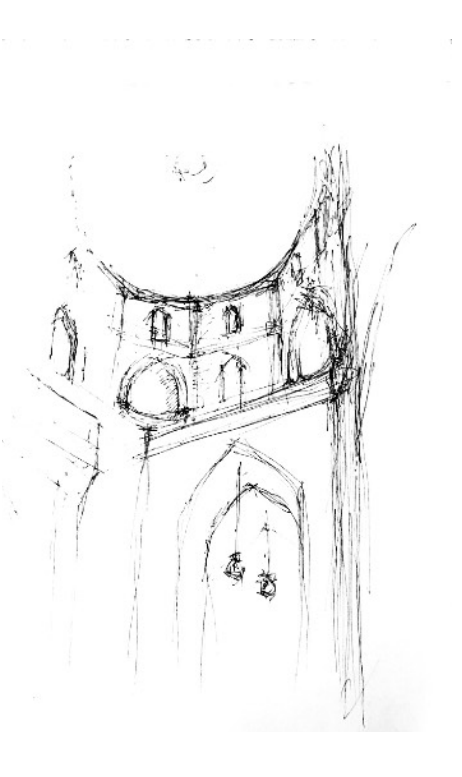
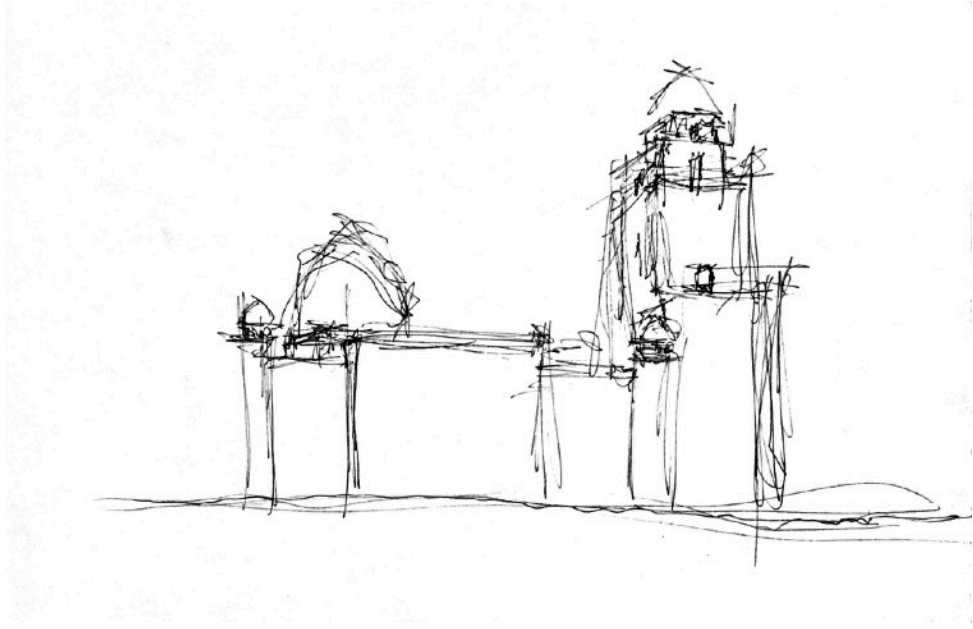
In conclusion the essay demonstrated how Fatemi doctrine represents a sense of harmony between the internal, external and public entities of architecture, respresented at the point of transcendence into a Fatemi space. These structures express a continual reference that lies at the core of every concept, the of humility towards Allah, him Imam and his Da'i.

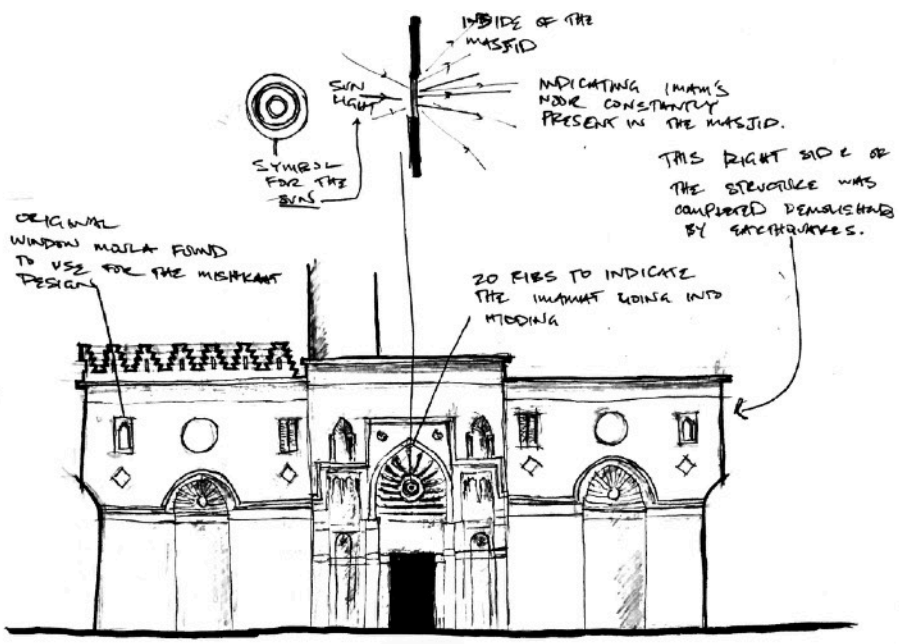
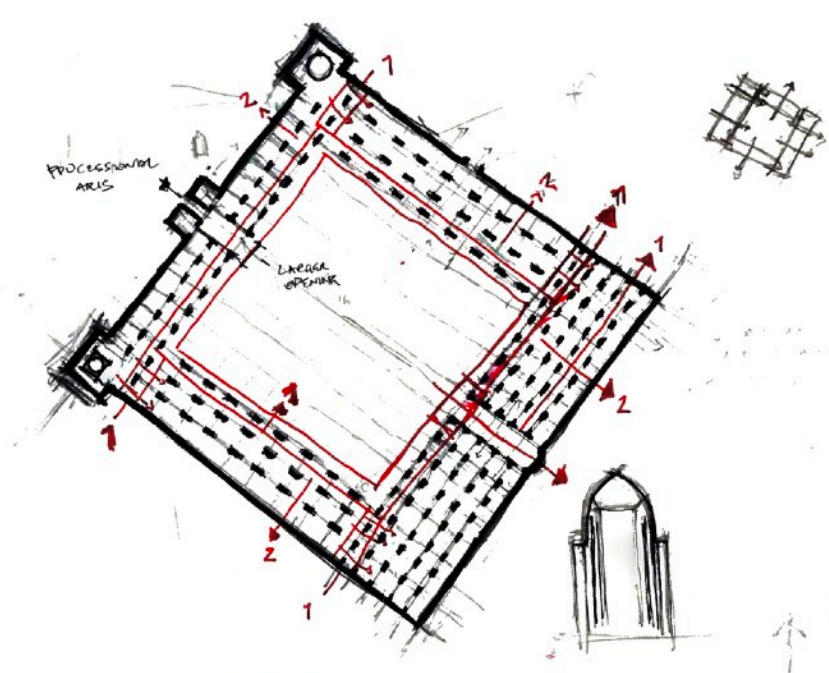


# Observational Drawings









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