



The Minbar of Saladin: Reconstructing a Jewel of Islamic Art

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The story of how this magnificent Islamic treasure was painstakingly reconstructed under the aegis of the Jordanian royal family.

Early one morning in August 1969 a firebomb was set off in the al-Aqsa mosque in the heart of one of the holiest places in Jerusalem. A devastating blaze soon engulfed the thousand-year-old building, severely damaging the interior.

When the firemen had put out the flames, a sodden pile of ashes was discovered, all that remained of one of the jewels of Islamic art—the Minbar of Saladin. An extraordinary piece of craftsmanship, the Minbar, or pulpit, had been installed by Saladin in the mosque on his triumphant recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187. Made of 16,000 pieces of intricately carved wood, adorned with ivory and ebony, it was widely acknowledged as a pinnacle of Islamic design and woodcarving.

This book on the Minbar's reconstruction tells of the quest to fathom the principles of Islamic sacred geometry and to decipher how the Minbar's complex patterns were created. This was followed by a worldwide search for materials and for craftsmen who still possessed the necessary skills—skills that had seemed lost in today's world of mass production and modern technology.

The book also illustrates the work of the Prince of Wales's School of Traditional Arts in London and the College of Traditional Islamic Arts & Architecture in al-Salt, Jordan, where many of the crafts for which Islamic art and architecture are celebrated are being revived.

Published to accompany the documentary film *Stairway to Heaven*, narrated by Kenneth Branagh. Forewords by HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan. 200 illustrations, 170 in color.

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