

## **A Special Piece of Art, scale 1:25, a model to inspire funding A Model of The Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem**

Did Charlemagne know about the octagon that is the base of the Dome of the Rock even before his palace chapel was built in Aachen? This may not be too improbable knowing special diplomatic relations existed between Charlemagne and Haroun al-Rashid, Caliph of Baghdad. Well, today, at the office of the Aachen International Castle Society you can admire a model of the Dome of the Rock, scale of 1:25, meant to serve as an invitation to publicize a planned exhibition, "On a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem – Orient and Occident Meeting". The idea behind it is to look at the two religions, Islam and Christianity, from the point of view of the ways they express themselves in their buildings.

Michael Siepen, carpenter by training and an aficionado of architecture along with his father, Bernhard, chartered architect as well as president of ICS, spent two months producing this special piece of art cutting and putting in place hundreds of beech blocks of different sizes. Featuring a 2 by 2 m base and at 1.40 m high, this model may at first sight look like a toy but is the result of painstaking and patient work based on abstract precision making for authenticity, even allowing an inside view right up the top of the dome. It is a model that is being used to invite and seek funding for a more detailed model of the Dome of the Rock to be built later on.

It was on the suggestion of Dr Nadeem Elyas, long-time president of the Muslim Central Council, that the present model was executed. There is a more detailed model on show at the Museum of David's Citadel in historic Jerusalem. Provided funding can be secured, an even more detailed 1:25 model could be produced of the Dome of the Rock along with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which then together would feature as centrepieces of a planned new travelling exhibition to be called "On a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem –Orient and Occident Meeting".

This exhibition would aim to further the appreciation of the cultural achievements of both religions, Islam and Christianity, as expressed in their architectures. Both sacred places are Byzantine central buildings. The planned exhibition could have bases of 6 by 4 m in each case and present, as in previous exhibitions, hand-painted figurines representing pilgrims of both religions as well as from other nations of the then known world. Both buildings would be shown as they were in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, of the Crusader period. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to judge by 15<sup>th</sup>-century etchings and travel books such as the one by Bernhard of Breidenbach, looked quite different from today eg. where the top is concerned.

The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem's best-known monument and one of the most sacred monuments of Islam, is a masterpiece of Umayyad architecture as it which copied form early Christian Byzantine church construction. It is not considered a mosque but a shrine. It is some 55 m in diameter and the dome originally was covered in black lead then in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century covered with bronze alloy sheets before gold-galvanisation was added in 1993, funded by King Hussein of Jordan. Latest research dates the construction to the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, under Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan und his son and successor, al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Marwan.

The model can be inspected on appointment only on February 15, 22 and 29, 2012, 9 – 5 hours, at the ICS office, 4 Grindelweg, phone 0241-604500.

For further information visit [\*\*GIB-Aachen@burgenkunde.de\*\*](mailto:GIB-Aachen@burgenkunde.de)

Those wishing to support our new project are kindly invited to join the Society or to make donations.

*Traduction: Dr. Jürgen Jansen, Mönchengladbach*