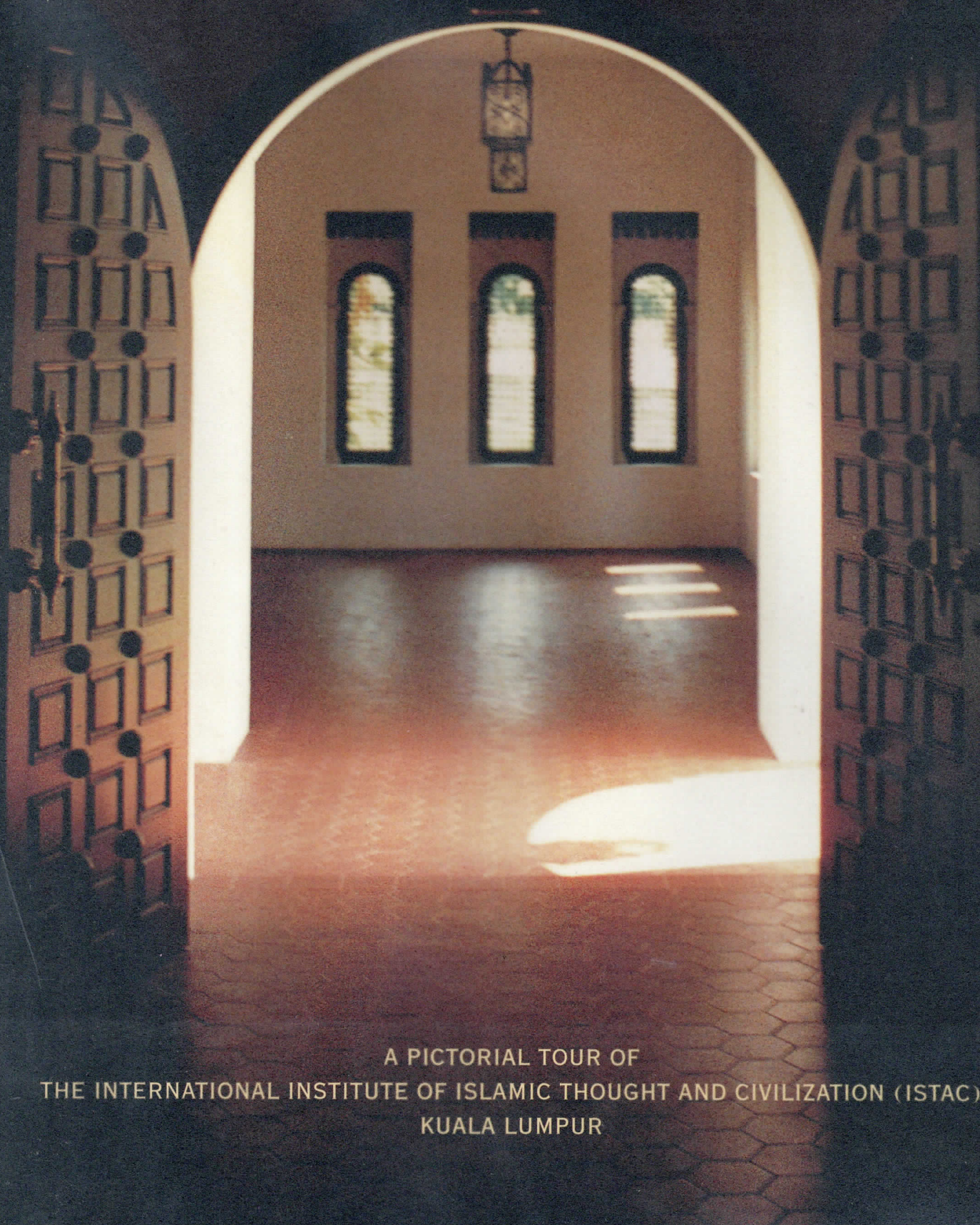


# ISTAC ILLUMINATED

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A PICTORIAL TOUR OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)  
KUALA LUMPUR

# ISTAC ILLUMINATED

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*A Pictorial Tour of the*  
International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)  
*Kuala Lumpur*

*Architectural and Interior Design,*  
*Drawings and Calligraphy by*  
Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas

*Written and Compiled by*  
Sharifah Shifa al-Attas

PUSTAKA PERDANA



1012232

International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)  
Kuala Lumpur



## Acknowledgements

The publisher would like to acknowledge the following for their effort in making this book come to light: Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Founder-Director of ISTAC, who first conceived and planned the idea for the book; Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, Deputy Director and General Student Advisor at ISTAC, whose own research and writings were valuable sources of information, especially for the sections on the founding and history of ISTAC; Aida Melly bte. Tan Mutalib, Editorial Assistant at ISTAC, for her many comments on both the text and layout of the book and for her help in proofreading; the main photographer Eric Peris, for his patience and enthusiasm in undertaking the photography on behalf of ISTAC; Ahmad Azidi Amin who photographed the artefacts and several close-up shots of the manuscripts; ISTAC's Professor Dr. Paul Lettinck for his help in preparing the captions for the artefacts section of the book; Latifah al-Attas for her meticulous readings and suggestions on the text, and ISTAC Visiting Professor Dr. Mehmet Ipsirli. Gratitude also goes to the following: ISTAC Senior Research Fellow Dr. Muhammed Zainiy Uthman; ISTAC Research Fellows Megawati Moris and Ugi Suharto; ISTAC Junior Research Fellows Nurzakiah bte. Saparmin and Adi Setia.

## Notes on the Photographers

Eric Peris is a Malaysian photographer with 24 years' experience as a photojournalist with the *New Straits Times*, Malaysia. He has done art photography for the past 20 years. Ahmad Azidi Amin is a freelance fine art photographer with the National Art Gallery of Malaysia.

Photographs on pages 8-9 and 25, and several photographs in the Appendix, were taken by Haji Mat Ali bin Zakaria, who worked formerly with the National Language and Literary Council of Malaysia.

## Sources

Information for much of Chapters One and Two is based on the following: Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1991, *The Beacon on the Crest of a Hill: A Brief History and Philosophy of The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC); Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1994, "Professor Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas—An Introduction" in *Commemorative Volume on the Conferment of the Al-Ghazali Chair of Islamic Thought* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC); Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, "An Islamic Philosophy of Education: From Conceptualization to Realization" unpublished paper presented at the educational conference organized by the Islamic Unity Convention, 27-29 June 1997 in Cape Town, South Africa; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1991, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, second impression), pp. 8-11, 19 [pages 32,33]; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1993, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, second impression), pp. 44-45, 154 [pages 36,37]; quotations on Professor al-Attas [pages 24, 25], taken from Gulzar Haider, "On the Crest of the Hill: The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur" in *Arts and the Islamic World*, Number 21, Spring 1992, pp. 14-18. Other sources include *The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Program of Graduate Studies 1996-1999* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, n.d.); L. Cranmer-Blyng and Dr. S. A. Kapadia (eds.), 1908, *The Persian Mystics—Jami*, in *The Wisdom of the East Series* (London: John Murray); Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah (ed.), 1933, *The Oriental Caravan* (London: Denis Archer); Sofi Huri (trans.), 1970, *Leyla and Mejnun by Fuzuli* (London: George Allen & Unwin); Reynold A. Nicholson (trans.), 1950, *Rumi—Poet and Mystic (1207-1273)* (London: George Allen and Unwin); Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1986, *A Commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nur al-Din al-Raniri* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture Malaysia); John Ruskin, 1989, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications), pp. 71-72 [quoted on page 24, Chapter One]; Geoffrey H. Baker, 1996, *Le Corbusier: An Analysis of Form*, 3rd edition (London: Van Nostrand Reinhold International Co.); *Sinan—Architect of Süleyman the Magnificent and the Ottoman Golden Age* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992; reprinted 1996). Translations of the Holy Qur'an are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1992, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Brentwood, Maryland: Amana Corporation); *Ibn 'Ata 'illah's Sufi Aphorisms (Kitab al-Hikam)*, 1984 (Leiden: E.J. Brill) [quoted on page 102]; *Al-Shajarah*, Volume 1, Nos. 1 and 2 (1996), p. (i) [quoted on pages 42 and 43].

Note: Arabic and Persian names and terms have not been transliterated with diacritics into English as this book is a non-academic work intended to appeal not only to the scholar but also the general reader. Accents have, of course, been maintained for those languages which are based on the Latin script, such as French, Turkish, German, and Bosnian.

First published in 1998 by  
The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC),  
205A Jalan Damansara, Damansara Heights, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Architectural and Interior Design, Drawings and Calligraphy © Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1998  
Text © Sharifah Shifa al-Attas, 1998  
Design concept and art direction by Sharifah Shifa al-Attas, General Editor, ISTAC

Produced by Editions Didier Millet,  
25, Jalan Pudu Lama, 50200 Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia

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Printed by Tien Wah Press Pte. Ltd.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Sharifa Shifa al-Attas  
Istac illuminated: a pictorial tour of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Kuala Lumpur/written and compiled by Sharifah Shifa al-Attas; architectural and interior design, drawings and calligraphy by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.  
ISBN 983-9379-11-9

1. Institut Antarabangsa Pemikiran dan Tamadun Islam (ISTAC)—Pictorial works. 2. Institut Antarabangsa Pemikiran dan Tamadun Islam (ISTAC)—History. 3. Architecture, Islamic—Malaysia—Designs and plans. I. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization. II. al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, 1931-. III. Title.  
297.6509595

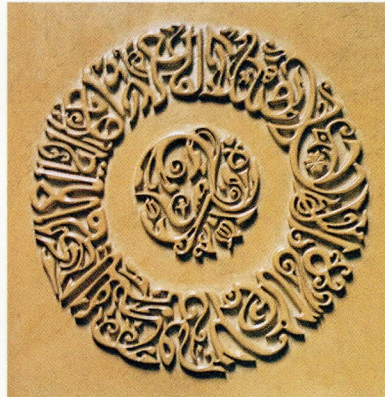
(PAGES 6-7) ISTAC'S BUILDINGS—A LIBRARY, MAIN BUILDING, MOSQUE AND ADJOINING CONFERENCE HALL—LIE SHELTERED IN A SHADY PART OF KUALA LUMPUR'S DAMANSARA HEIGHTS AREA.

(PAGES 8-9) THE COURTYARD OF ISTAC'S MOSQUE HAS AN ANDALUSIAN FEEL TO IT. AS IN MANY MOSQUES, THE QUR'ANIC INSCRIPTION "THERE IS NO VICTOR BUT ALLAH"—*WA LA GHALIBA ILLA ALLAH*—IS INSCRIBED BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE MOSQUE AREA. IN THE COURTYARD, THE INSCRIPTION RUNS ALONG THE TOP OF THE WALL FACADE, ABOVE ITS DECORATIVE POMEGRANATE MOTIF. BOTH THE CALLIGRAPHY AND THE POMEGRANATE PATTERN, LIKE ISTAC'S OTHER INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR DECORATIVE FEATURES, ARE THE WORK OF ISTAC'S FOUNDER-DIRECTOR PROFESSOR DR. SYED MUHAMMAD NAQUIB AL-ATTAS.

(PAGES 10-11) A BEAUTIFUL SPREAD FROM ABU AL-QASIM MANSUR FIRDAUSI AL-TUSI'S FAMOUS LEGEND OF PERSIAN KINGS, THE *SHAHNAMA*. THIS PARTICULAR TEXT IN ISTAC'S LIBRARY IS DATED 1021 A.H./1612 A.C. AND CONTAINS ALTOGETHER 29 MINIATURES. THESE, LIKE THE ONE SHOWN, ARE IN THE ISFAHANI STYLE. *ISTAC ILLUMINATED*, AS A DESCRIPTION OR "ILLUMINATION" OF ISTAC, MALAYSIA'S ONLY HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION GRANTING MASTER'S AND PH.D.'S, INCLUDING ALLOWING FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH, BEGINS APPROPRIATELY WITH THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF A MINIATURE DEPICTING A MASTER GIVING HIS STUDENTS A LESSON.

*If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge,  
Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise,  
the angels will lower their wings from good pleasure with one  
who seeks knowledge, and the inhabitants of the heavens and  
the earth and the fish in the depth of water will ask forgiveness  
for the learned man The superiority of the learned man over  
the devout is like that of the moon on the night when it is  
full over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the  
Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham,  
leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it  
takes an abundant portion*

*A hadith of the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him.*





# C O N T E N T S

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## PREFACE

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## FOUNDATIONS

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## ISTAC'S BUILDINGS AND THEIR CONCEPTION

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## THE MOSQUE

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## THE LIBRARY

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## APPENDICES

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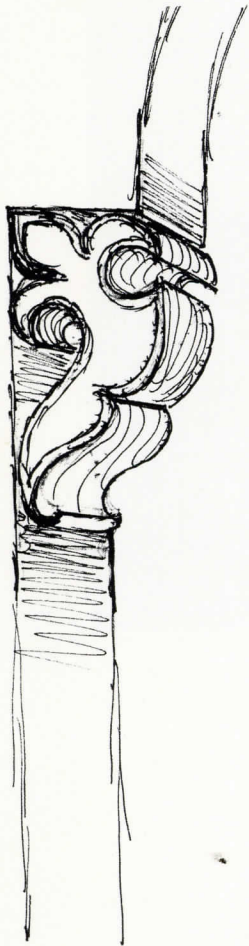
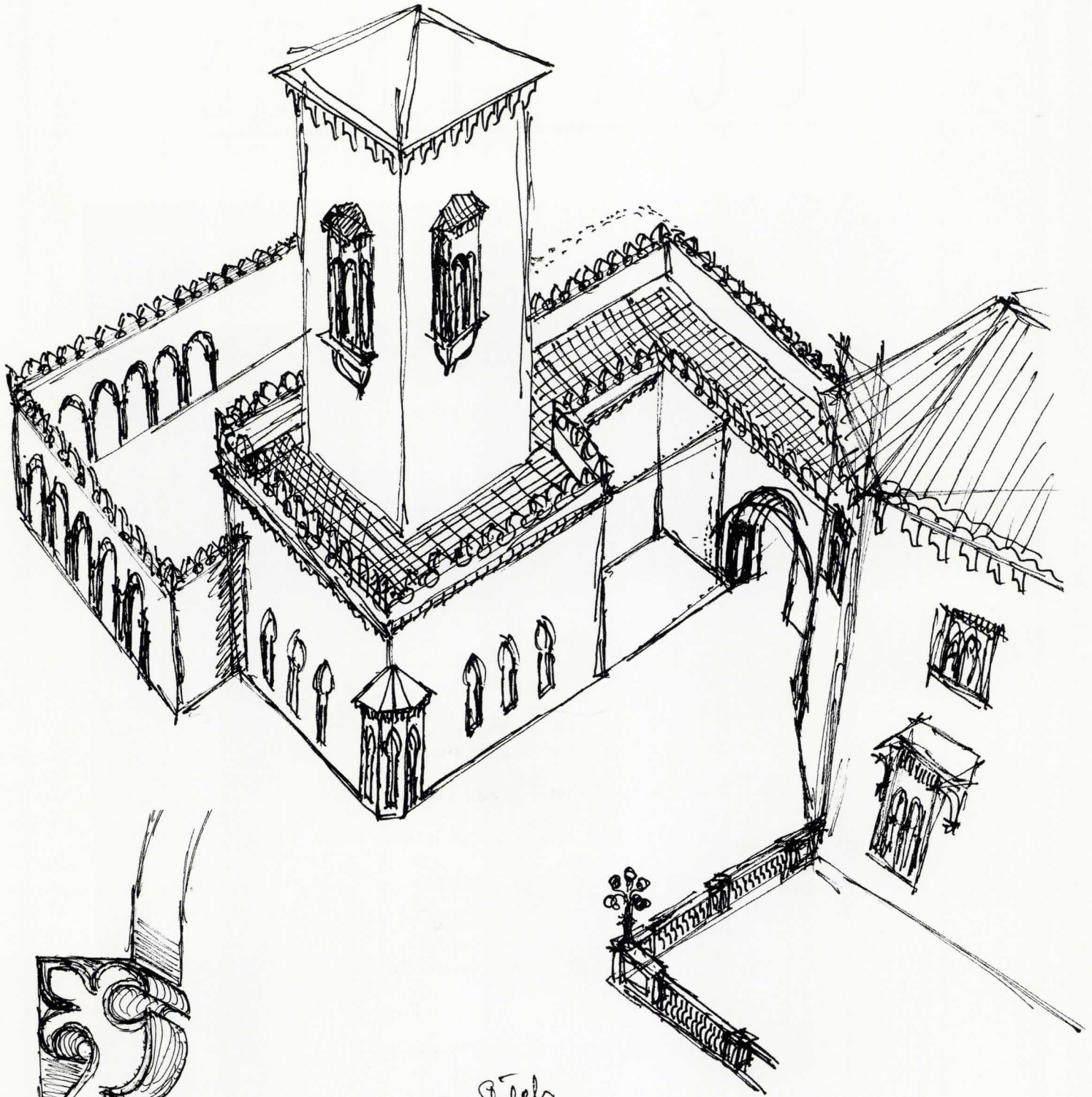
ISTAC's Future Campus

Visitors to ISTAC

The Programme of Graduate Studies

ISTAC's Publications

List of Manuscripts and Artefacts



Perspective Sketch  
Serai  
12.12.91  
Preliminary Sketch

# PREFACE

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This is a book about an institution. It is also a book about an idea, and how it became a reality. The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, or ISTAC as it is more commonly known, is both the idea and the reality. The idea for this graduate institution of Islamic learning originated in the mind of its founder and director Professor Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, becoming a reality with the combined assistance of his deputy director Professor Dr. Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, and of his registrar Haji Mat Ali bin Mat Daud. Professor al-Attas' sketches represent the idea of ISTAC, whereas its reality is represented before us in the form of the photographs laid out in this book. The sketches are all reproduced for the first time from the originals, unearthed after many hours of searching in the piles stored away in the Professor's study. They reveal how the idea for ISTAC grew and then manifested itself in the reality of the buildings standing today. The sketches are, we feel, artistic in their own right, as are the photographs. The latter were scrupulously taken over a period of more than two years, and with much patience, certain shots being redone over and over again. Mostly natural light was relied upon, so as to produce as faithful as possible a representation. Thus the project was very much subject to the vagaries of weather, demanding of our main photographer much resilience and patience.

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(OPPOSITE) EARLY SKETCH BY PROFESSOR AL-ATTAS FOR ISTAC'S MOSQUE, WHICH WAS BUILT AND COMPLETED (TOGETHER WITH AN ADJOINING CONFERENCE HALL) THREE YEARS AFTER ISTAC'S MAIN BUILDING AND LIBRARY.



*“I want to express my warmest wishes for the success of your Institute—I am sure that an institution, whose zahir and batin has been laid out with so much love, devotion and idealism will flourish and be a real beacon light for humanity. I was very impressed by the speeches made during the opening ceremonies, and by the deep interest in and love for the progress of a new world order based not on materialistic criteria but on the harmony of the spirits and the understanding of the deepest values given to mankind through religion. If they would only know and think of the Primordial Covenant between God Almighty and humanity! I am convinced that your efforts and those of your colleagues and the delightful group of your helpers will bear rich fruit in the future, and I am extremely grateful for the chance to have seen you and your Institute and to feel like a minute particle in the large network of your efforts!”*

— Annemarie Schimmel, Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Bonn, former Professor of Indo-Muslim Culture at Harvard University, in her letter to ISTAC's Founder-Director Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, after attending its official opening in October 1991.

ISBN 983-9379-11-9



917898391379112