



The Qadiryia Mausoleum

Shrine of a famous sufi leader

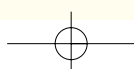
Report - Walid Abdulmir Alwan
Photos - Fadel Abbas Al-Salami

Baghdad (or the "House of the Peace") is certainly a historic city with numerous mausoleums of prophets, imams and saints. It is also the city of historic mosques with their minarets and blue domes, which make it a city of piety and beauty. Baghdad is the center of religious movements and various Islamic trends. It is from this city that the most influential soufi movements sprang and endowed Islamic culture with new spirituality and knowledge. The followers of these movements called for the renouncement of the material aspects of life, and recommended austerity and perfection of the soul so that it merges in God's love. And, it is in Baghdad that the main sheikhs of this current, As-Sahrourdi, Maarouf Al-Karkhi and Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani were buried. ➤



The women's section.

جانب من حرم النساء.





Religious Tourism



The Mausoleum of al-Jilani.

ضريح الشيخ الكيلاني.

To the east of Baghdad, called "Al-Rosafa" or "Assawb al-kabir" (because it is larger than the west side on the Tigris named "Assawb Assaghir"), in Bab Al-Sheik ", is the mausoleum of the founder of the kadiri order, one of the most famous and far reaching soufi currents in the world, Sheikh Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani. It is one of the best examples of Iraq's Islamic architecture, where the traditional domes of bricks and gypsum mix admirably with the new false domes and Italian marble.

A short biography of Al-Jilani

Sheikh Abu Saleh Abdul-Qader Al-Hanbali Al-Bashtiri Al-Jilani, a descendent of Imam Hassan Ben Ali Ben Abi Tale, was born in Jilan, one of the suburbs of the Iranian city of

Resht, in 470 HS. He traveled to Baghdad and studied under Abu Said Al-Makhrami, an ascetic religious scholar who directed a famous religious school in Bab Al-Azaj (now Bab Al-Sheik). His intelligence soon became apparent and sponsorship and patronage was forthcoming.

Sheikh Jilani dedicated himself to teaching and sermons, surpassing his teachers in the observation of piety, renouncement of material things and up-holding his principles. He recommended the friendly welcome of strangers and asceticism and soon became a famous and venerable sheikh with supernatural power, who attracted many followers.

The "Qadiriya Order" which he established is one of the most influential soufi orders, with an international following. It teaches love,

tolerance, austerity and the rejection of violence. The followers have their own way of gaining adherents.

Sheikh Abdul-Qader remained at his school, especially during the last years of his life, because of the conflicts between the Islamic sects of the time. He died in 561 A. H./1166 A. D. and was buried, as he decreed, in the school. He left 12 children, of which only one was a girl.

The Kadirya Mausoleum

Because of Al-Jilani's reputation and holiness, which is recognized by the entire Moslem world, there is a great interest in his tomb, which is visited by thousands of people, especially Indians. The tomb was in a small room of the school but part of the building was transformed into a mosque that has been expanding over the years. A marvelous dome was built on the winter prayer room. The biggest dome in Iraq built in 941 A.H/ 1534 A.D is white and has impressive dimensions and splendid architecture and decorations which can be seen from afar. It has been repainted from time to time. In 1970, it was extensively restored: the blue dome was renewed and other domes, decorated with Qashani, were built close to the white dome.

The kadirya Mausoleum today

This mausoleum is considered one of the largest holy places in Iraq, with its numerous internal and external additions. It has a big esplanade and a "musalla" (place of prayer) capable of welcoming 1,100 persons. It is surrounded by a building on two levels consisting of 66 modern, furnished rooms, serving as residences for the sheikhs. There are also other rooms for the soufi "Dhikr" ritual (recitation), that is usually held on Friday evenings, or on some religious occasions, such as the Mouloud (birthday of the Prophet), or at the time of the burial of the sheikhs and eminent personalities. This ➤



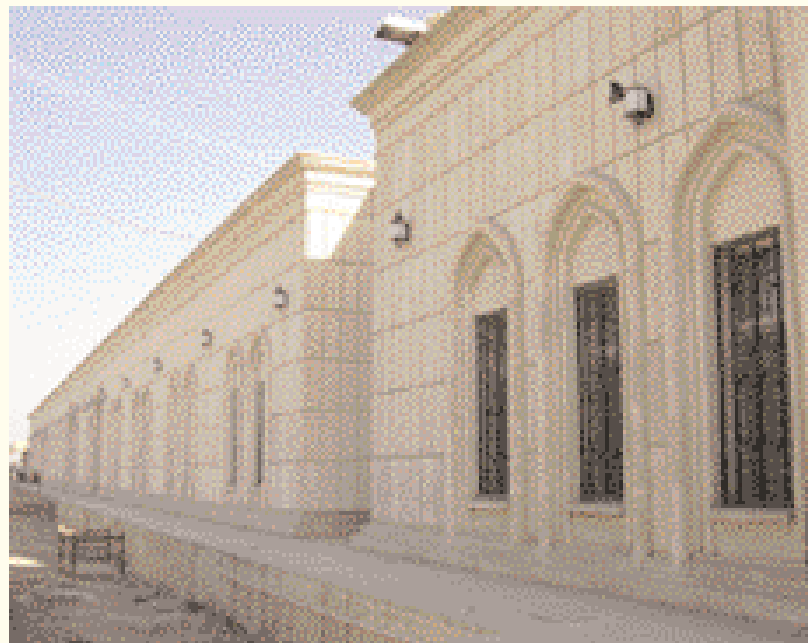


Religious Tourism



Sheik Abdul-Qadir Al-Jilani school.

مدرسة الشيخ عبد القادر الكيلاني.



The administration Office.

إدارة الوقف.

esplanade has an underground entrance leading to the ancient souk underneath, where traditional items, such as rosaries, Korans and some prayer and dhikr books are sold. It is endowed with three minarets: the most recent has a marble base decorated with granite; one of the other two has a beautiful clock on top, installed in 1898 by Abdul-Rahman Al-Naqib, Prime Minister of the first Iraqi government. This imposing clock, 30m in height, was made in Mumbai. There are two gates at the western and eastern ends of this esplanade, which have been restored recently: the western gate leads to Bab Al-Sheik, and the eastern gate to Bab Al-Sharji zone.

The pavilion and the mausoleum

Before entering the mausoleum, there is a vast hall where one finds the Hanafi prayer room. It is about 225 m² and capable of welcoming 800 persons. The hall has a beautiful mihrab decorated with Koranic verses, and an original minbar, with seven steps, covered with marble, which replaced the wooden one. Some criticized the change, believing it weakened the consecrated minbar which was used by many sheikhs and scholars. There are also guest rooms for the the sheikhs, and for

"Dhikr" sessions. Friday prayers are usually held in this hall. This holy place has an internal door that leads to the Shafii and Maleki Harams. The outside door of this haram is made of beautifully engraved wood. Women are also catered for with a haram capable of accommodating 500 worshippers.

It is characterized by the large number of marble columns and beautiful motifs decorating the ceilings and the top of the walls.

At the end of a small alley crossing the middle of this hall is the mausoleum. It is inside a small room and women enter through a lateral door. It appears that the austerity to which Sheikh Abdul-Qader Jilani had become accustomed when he was alive stayed with him after his death. The mausoleum only has a square silver wire fencing over the tomb, surrounded by an iron wall at its left base in order to separate male and female visitors. It may be small but this does not detract from the feeling of sacredness and serenity. The mausoleum is visited by thousands of pilgrims from Iraq, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. There is a large influx of visitors during Mouloud and the birthday of Sheikh Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani - one month after the birthday of the Prophet - as well as on the Night of Destiny, the Night

of Al-Israa wa Al-Mi'raj, the night of the middle of Shaaban, the 10th day of Moharram and on Friday nights.

Famous personalities buried at Al-Jilani mausoleum

A number of famous Iraqi personalities and religious figures are buried in this mausoleum, among them the two sons of Sheikh Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani, Abdul-Jabbar and Salih. They are buried in separate mausoleum closed by an iron door and only accessible to certain visitors. The mausoleum is also the burial place of Abdul-Rahman Al-Naqib Al-Jilani, the first Iraqi Prime Minister during the time of the monarchy and Rashid Aali Al-Jilani, another prime minister and instigator of the 1941 coup which carried his name. Abdul-Muhsin As-Saadoun, another prime minister during the time of the monarchy, is also buried here.

The Kadirya Library

There are a number of other important buildings at the end of the summer haram on the ground floor, the most important of which is the Kadirya library, the oldest library in Iraq, dating back to the beginning of the 6th century Hejri (beginning of the 12th century). It was first established within a Hanafite ➤





Religious Tourism



The library has about 65,000 books on various religious subjects, especially those related to soufism and 1,949 manuscripts. Most of these books have been acquired by the Al-Jilani family, from other libraries, gifts from inside and outside Iraq, and through purchases from the local souks and fairs. Among its treasures is a handwritten copy of the holy Koran in large format dating from 1796, which was donated by the governor of Kashmir, As-Serdar Abdallah Khan Addarati and the manuscript of the famous book "Strange Terms in the Koran", with the following note: "I saved this work that has been thrown by the Tatars to the Tigris River in 656 A. H., I am the needy to Allah Abdallah Ben Abdul-Qader Al Mekki".



The present director, Mr. Abdul-Rahman Al-Jilani, talking to the writer.

المؤلف السيد عبد الرحمن الكيلاني يتحدث لمندوب المجلة.

religious school and has been extended and renovated several times, most recently in 1993 when it was transferred to its present location.

The library is a two-storey building with two vast reading rooms, one for men and the other for women, a section for manuscripts which are kept in wooden bookcases with a transparent glass front, as well as a section for storing books. The first floor has a vast reading room and book stores, just like the floor beneath.

The library has about 65,000 books on various religious subjects, especially those related to soufism and 1,949 manuscripts. Most of these books have been acquired by the Al-Jilani family, from other libraries, gifts from inside and outside Iraq, and through purchases from the local souks and fairs. Among its treasures is a handwritten copy of the holy Koran in large format dating from 1796, which was donated by the governor of Kashmir, As-Serdar Abdallah Khan Addarati and the manuscript of the famous book "Strange Terms in the Koran", with the following note: "I saved this work that has been thrown by the Tatars to the Tigris River

in 656 A. H., I am the needy to Allah Abdallah Ben Abdul-Qader Al Mekki".

Additions to the Al-Jilani mausoleum

Numerous additions have been made to the Al-Jilani mausoleum, including the administration of the kadiri awkafs (endowments) and the seat of the administration of the Al-Jilani mausoleum. It is managed by the "Metwalli", exclusively from the Al-Jilani family. Hadj Abdul-Rahman Dhahr-eddine Abdallah Al-Jilani is the present manager, assisted by a team of employees. His office is on the boulevard in front of the kadiri mausoleum. It consists of a big reception room, a prayer room and

offices. Haj Abdul-Rahman has a masters degree in political science from George Town University and another masters degree in international relations from George Washington University.

The charity kitchen

The mausoleum has the most famous kitchen in Iraq which prepared meals for 1,500 people. Every day, 20 sheep were slaughtered until March 2003 and the tradition of looking after the poor continues to this day. In spite of the present difficulties and the scarcity of assistance and grants, this kitchen offers a free daily meal, after Asr prayers to 400 people, mostly those in need but some well to do worshippers also ➤





Religious Tourism



Charity kitchen.

مطبخ الخيرات.



Charity kitchen.

مطبخ الخيرات.

partake to receive blessings.

This kitchen is situated within the administrative building and provision is made for men and women to be served separately. It also has rooms for keeping live stock, a warehouse for dry food, a slaughter house, refrigerators and a dining room for employees and their visitors.

The usual meal consists of rice with stew, the preferred dish of the Baghdadis. Also on offer is a soup rich in meat and vegetables. The meals are served every day after Asr (afternoon) prayers, mostly to students and Pakistanis.

Function hall

Next to the administration is a function hall where prayers are said to commemorate the dead and for the deceased members of the Al-Jilani family. The hall is also the place for religious festivities.

The school of sheikh Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani

The school of sheikh Abdul-Qader Al-Jilani, with 275 students and 25 teachers, is adjacent to the holy kadiri place and follows the "Mula method" of traditional Koranic instruction. It was opened in 1991 by the Ministry of Endowment. There are six levels and graduates go to the Sharia College, to be trained as imams, preachers or teachers of religious sciences. Besides the religious disciplines, students are taught the Arabic language, English and IT. The school has nine classrooms, accommodation for foreign students and a mosque. Financing comes from the Sunni endowment.

Development is continuing: a new holy place named the "Hanbali Haram" for 4,500 people is under construction near the east gate, along with four new pavilions for VIP's, a fourth 43m minaret, hammams and parking lots.

The surrounding area

This mausoleum is situated in one of the oldest and most popular areas of Baghdad with traditional houses. The alley ways are narrow and difficult to access by car. It is surrounded by a traditional souk where artisans sell cloth, rosaries, toys, Korans and works of soufis, "Dhikr" and prayer books. ■

