

Kadhimiya:

City Of Domes And Gilded Minarets

Report: Walid Abdul-Amir Alwan

Photos: Saif Abdul-Latif El-Melh

Kadhimiya is one of the suburbs of Baghdad and its holiest place, visited by 150,000 people, Iraqis and others, daily. On Fridays and Saturdays, when people visit Iraq's largest mausoleums: Imam Moussa Al-Kadhim and Mohamed Al-Jawad, the number reaches 500,000.

This city has 70 historical symbols, the tombs of 14 Abbasid Caliphs and the most famous lady of Bani Abbas, Zoubaida, wife of the Caliph Haroun Arrashid, and her son Al-Amine. It is part of Iraq's rich cultural heritage with a school of calligraphy, architecture and science academy. It is also a city where various doctrines coexisted peacefully and convivially. There are beautiful traditional souks, old houses with their pretty, wooden, balconies and Iraq's largest gold souk. Holy Kadhimiya is the jewel of Baghdad and its lung.



The road to the shrine

شارع مؤدي إلى مرقد الإمامين

The City And Its Name

Kadhimiya is situated some 5 km to the north of the center of Baghdad. Its name comes from Imam Moussa Ben el-Imam Jaafar al-Sadek, called Kadhim, (d. 183 H/799), who is buried there with his grandson Imam Mohamed Ben El-Imam Ali Arrida, called Aljawad, (d. 219 H/834). They are the 7th and 9th Shia Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt. It is surrounded by the Tigris on three sides, and is famous for the beautiful gardens at the edge of the river.

Historical sources indicate the city dates back 5,000 years. In the 15th century B.C the Kassites, whose reign lasted 577 years, used it as a store house for harvest and cattle. Akerkouf, in the area then known as Kotr Bal 10 km west of Kadhimiya was their capital.

After the advent of Islam, it took several names such as Bab A-Tabn and Sonaba and was the burial place of the martyrs from the battle of Nahrawan, in 37 Hegira. Before the construction of the town of Baghdad, it was known as Ashounizi, or black grain. During the Abbasid era, when the caliph Abou Jaafar Al-Mansour finished the construction of Baghdad in 149 H, he took part of its northern zone as a cemetery for his family, and called it "the Cemetery of Quraish". His son Jaafar was the first to be buried there in 150 H. It then became the cemetery of Banu Hashim and the first burial was that of Imam Moussa Ben Jaafar, in the year 183 H. His grandson, Imam Mohamed Al-Jawad, was buried there in 219 H. The cemetery of Quraish was developed and an extension which embraced all the area of Kadhimiya added in order to protect, and accommodate visitors. This agglomeration was the first core of Kadhimiya which became an integral part of Baghdad. The city is famous for hosting the largest number of visitors throughout the year.

The Shrine Of Kadhimiya

There have been various stages to the construction of the shrine of Kadhimiya since its creation in 334 H when Moiz Addawlat Al-Bouihi began building the beautiful structure. In 914 H/1509, Shah Ismail Assafoui, carried out the determining work which is still preserved, after his conquest of Baghdad.



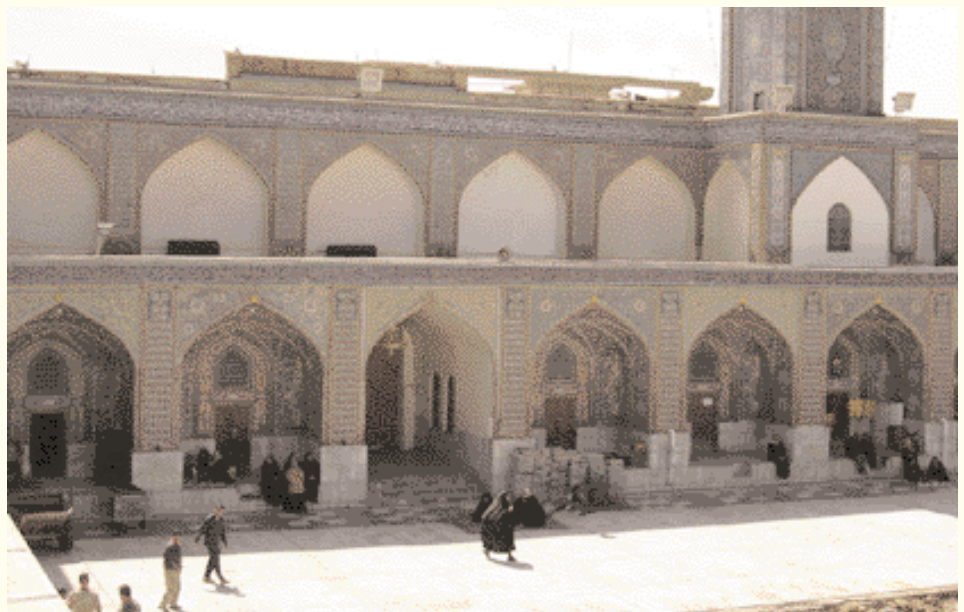
Repairs at the west gate

جانب من عملية اعادة اعمار الجهة الغربية والمسماة بـ“باب الأنباريين“



The view from outside

المرقدان المقدسان من الخارج



One of the 76 halls of the shrine

جانب من الإيوانات حول الصحن والبالغ عددها ٧٦ إيوان.

The shrine is regarded as one of the wonders of Islamic architecture. It has four large identical minarets and two domes of similar size.

The esplanade has four divisions: Quraish on the western side, Bab Al-Mourad in the east, Bab Al-Kiblah in the south and the Assafoui mosque, built by Ismail Assafoui, and known today as the Mosque Al-Jawadine.

This esplanade has ten doors with local names. The three large doors are known as Bab Al-Mourad, Bab Al-Kiblah and Bab Saheb Azzaman. The other doors are known as Bab Arrahmah, Bab Al-Maghfirah, Bab Arrajaa, Bab Quraish, Bab Al-Jawahiriya, Bab el-Ferhadiya in the north-east and Bab Kadi Al-Hajat, south-west.

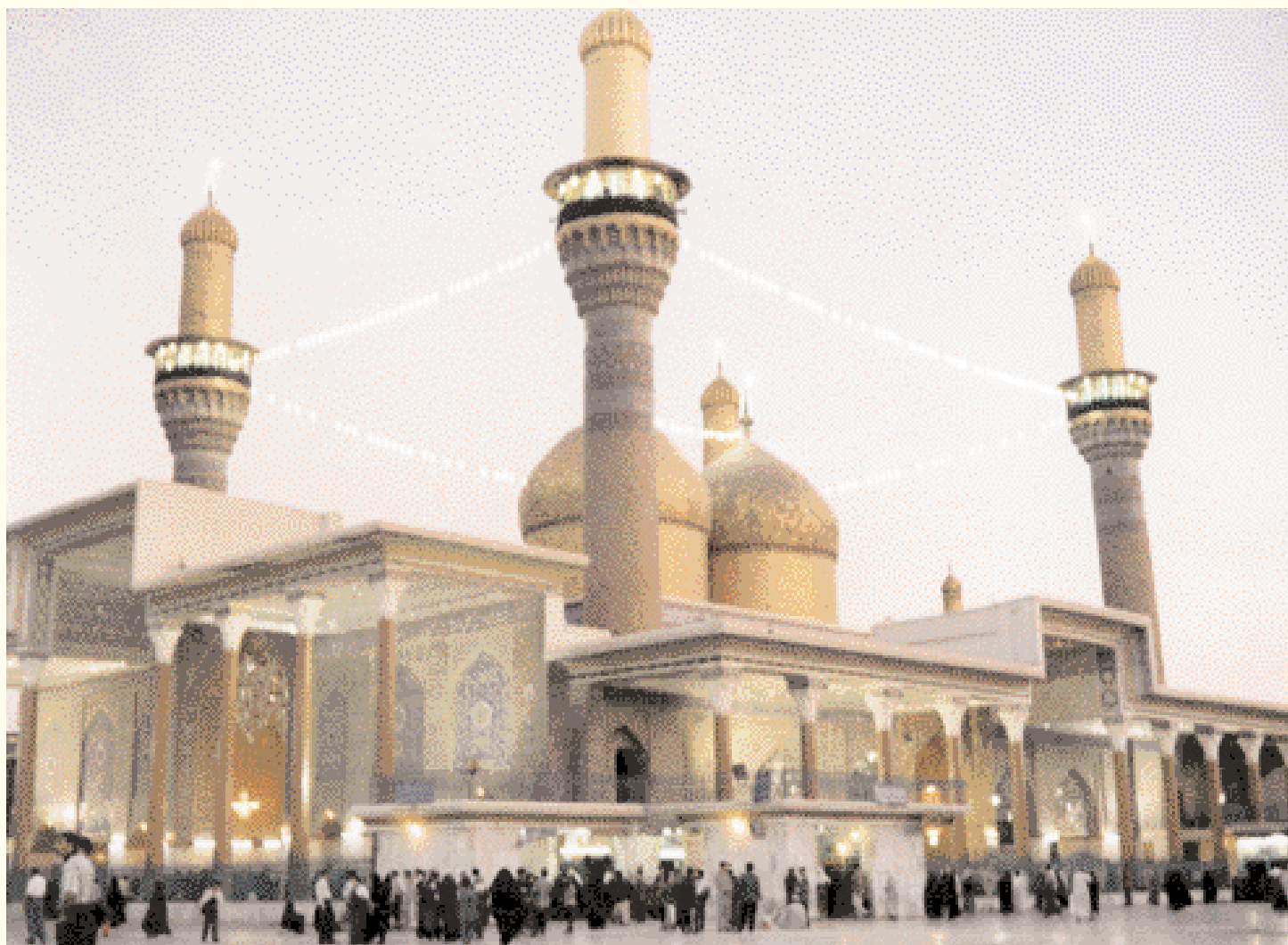
A 190m wall, on two levels, surrounds the

esplanade and separates it from the boulevard. Large and broad, it is well preserved, thanks to restoration work which was carried out since its construction in 1301 H. The lower level includes 62 small rooms whose walls are covered with marble and Qashani bricks. The upper level has 14 rooms for religious students. The tombs of the famous theologians and notables of the area are also found here. The wall is decorated on the outside with beautiful yellow bricks locally called "Al-Farshi" and patterns. On the inside, it is decorated with Quranic verses and beautiful Islamic Arabesque.

The large 20m clock, between Bab Al-Kiblah and Bab Al-Mourad is the most prominent feature of this wall. It is decorated with

beautiful Islamic ornaments and Quranic verses, was installed in 1301 and is still working. In days gone by there was a clock above Bab Al-Mourad and another above Bab Al-Kiblah, but they were taken down as they could have damaged the wall.

Today iron netting and two metal doors, one for men the other for women, control the movement of visitors who are searched. Their bags and mobiles are kept in a special room one in Bab Al-Mourad and the other in Bab Al-Kiblah. These measures were dictated by security concerns. Going beyond the esplanade, one finds 12 entrances, called "Al-Kishwania", where visitors leave their shoes as a mark of respect. The entrances lead to the "Taramat" (Corridors). ➤



General view of the shrine

منظر عام للمرقدين الشريفين

The Corridors

There are three "Taramat" (Corridors): in Bab Al-Mourad, Bab Al-Kiblah and Bab Al-Anbarien, which are currently being restored. Their ceilings are decorated with Quranic verses and are used for prayers, because the halls cannot accommodate the large numbers of visitors who arrive from dawn until 9 pm. The corridor has metal netting over looking the esplanade, nicely decorated ceilings and beautiful suspended glosses. After passing through the corridor one arrives at the halls.

The Halls

The shrine is surrounded by four halls. The north hall is close to the tomb of Imam

Mohamed Al-Jawad. It is connected to the shrine by a silver plated door with netting. This hall is the place for prayer and religious rites and has libraries with Qurans and prayer books. Its walls are covered with marble and it has a luminous glass ceiling with various geometrical forms.

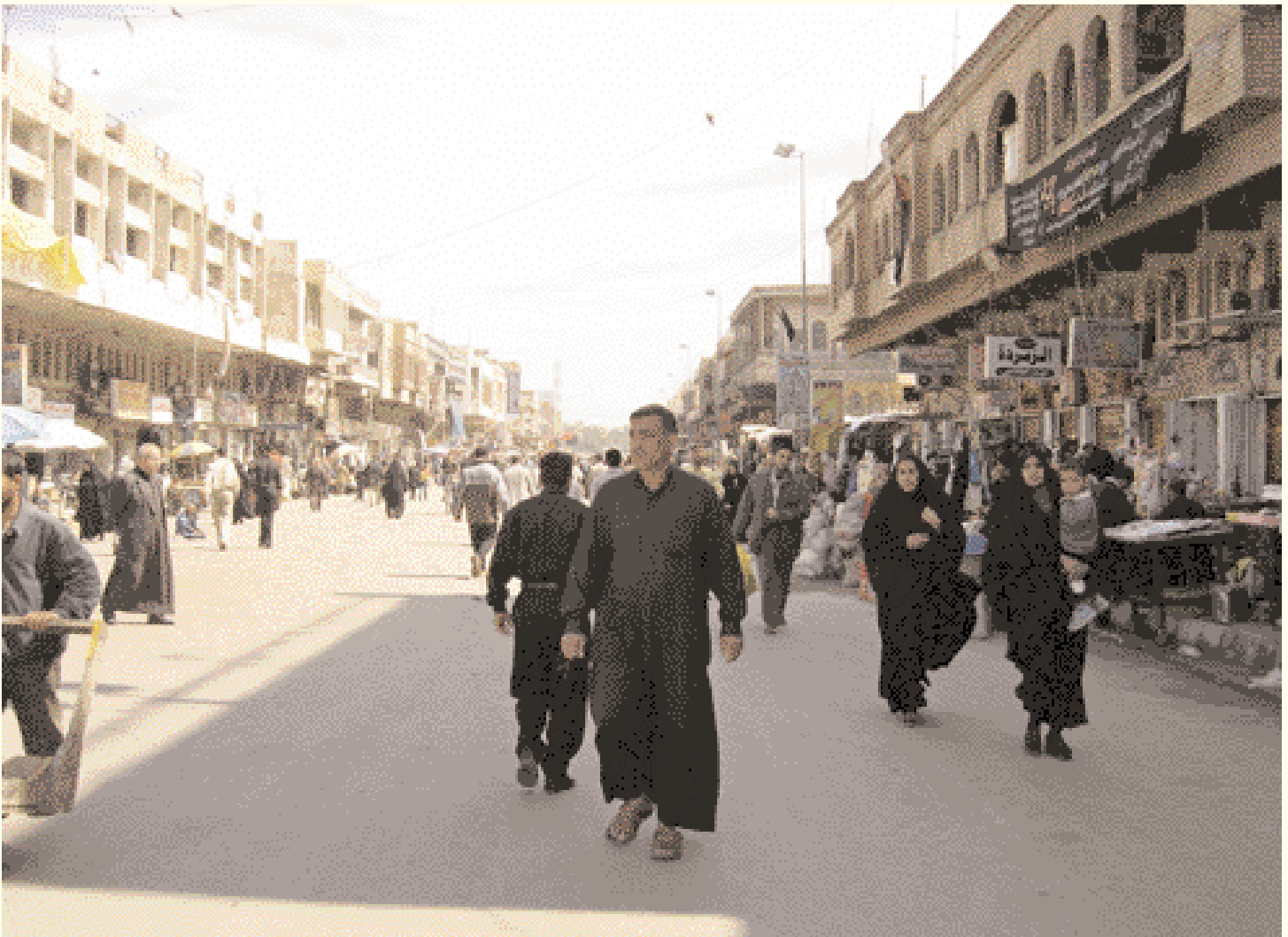
The second hall is located close to the tomb of Imam Moussa Ben Jaafar and is connected to the shrine by a gilded door. Eminent scholars are buried there. The Eastern hall is situated at the feet of both Imams and is connected to the shrine by two doors: a gold door on the side of the tomb of Imam Moussa Ben Jaafar, and a silver door close to the tomb of Imam Mohamed Al-Jawad.

The Western hall is located close to the head of both Imams and is connected to the shrine by two silver plated doors. It has only one door which opens onto the external corridor with the tomb of the famous scholar and philosopher Nasir-eddine Attawsi, surrounded by a high grid.

The halls are used for prayers. They also house the tombs of Sheik Moufid and Sheikh Attawsi. The holy shrine lies beyond the halls.

The Holy Shrine

The shrine is divided into two parts. The southern part is known as the shrine of Imam Moussa Al-Kadhim, and the northern part is known as the shrine of Imam Mohamed ➤



A street in Kadhimiya empty of cars because driving is not allowed in the vicinity of the shrine due to the security situation

احد شوارع مدينة الكاظمية ويلاحظ خلو الشوارع من السيارات وذلك لعدم السماح بدخولها الى مكان قريب من الحضرة الشريفة بسبب الوضع الأمني



Prayers in one of the halls

صلاة في أحد أروقة المرقد الطاهر



The shrines of the two Imams

ضريحا الإمامين



A window of Al-Mortada

شباك ضريح الشريف المرتضى المطل على الشارع



Bookshop at the southern gate of the shrin

محل لبيع الكتب عند مدخل باب القبلة

Al-Jawad. They are connected by two narrow alleys. The mausoleum is located between these two shrines, and an iron barrier reserves a section for women. The tombs of Imam Al-Kadhimi and his grandson Imam Al-Jawad, are located in the centre and covered with thick glass to protect them from dust. They are decorated with beautiful Islamic mosaics. A silver grid surrounds them. Two Quranic verses (Suras Addahr and Alfajr) are engraved in gold.

The large number of visitors prompted the recent widening of the alleys (from 1.7m to 3 m) under the direction of Mohamed Ali Shahrestani.

The ground and the walls of the shrine are covered with marble. At the top of the walls one finds Quranic scripts, followed by beautiful glass engravings going up to the interior of the two domes covered with Qashani mosaic. Inside the domes are beautiful chandeliers and large clocks. Two,

25m domes dominate the shrine. They are decorated with beautiful Qashani patterns and Quranic verses. The outside is covered with 9,000 plates of solid gold. Four 35m minarets topped with solid gold surround them. They in turn are surrounded by 4 small 4.3m minarets.

The Town Of Kadhimiya

The town of Kadhimiya is a cemetery with the graves of many caliphs, sultans, ➤

theologians and historians. The tombs of 14 Abbasid caliphs, the son of the theologian Ahmed Ben Hanbel, the historian Ibn Al-Athir, author of "The Complete History", Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, author of the largest encyclopedia of Baghdad, "The History of Baghdad" and Ibn Al-Jouzi, author of "Al-Montadham", have not been preserved.

But it is still possible to visit a number of famous tombs including those of Abdullah Al-Talaburi Al-Baghdadi, known as Sheik Al-Moufid, (d. 413 H), which is in one of the halls of the Kadhimiya shrine, together with Sheik Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qomi, (d. 368 H), whose tomb is surrounded by beautiful silver netting. In another hall, one finds the tomb of Sheik Nasir-eddine Attawsi, as well as judge Abu Youssouf author of "Al-Kharaj", located on the left hand side of Bab Al-Mourad.

A few meters from the outside of the shrine is the mausoleum of the Sherif of the Alawites of Baghdad, one of the grandsons of Imam Al-Kadhim, the Sherif Al-Mortada, author of "Al-Amali". His tomb is located inside a large mosque with interlaced wood on top. Not far, one finds the mausoleum of Mohamed Al-Aaraji, also a descendent of Imam Al-Kadhim.

When one is walking through Kadhimiya one is on holy ground among the tombs of the great men of the Abbasid era.

The Souks Of Kadhimiya

This area is famous for its beautiful traditional, covered souks, which still preserve their old architectural style. The streets and narrow lanes are devoted to the sale of certain products. Traveling salesmen display their goods on carts, or special carriers, "Basstat". These souks have remained prosperous throughout the centuries thanks to the large number of customers who come mainly from Baghdad and the neighbouring provinces and go shopping after visiting the holy places. The most famous souk is probably Al-Astrabadi, located not far from the tombs of both Imams, on the side of the south door, the souk of Bab Addarwaza, souk Al-Fadhwah and the largest second-hand souk which extends for hundreds of meters.

The Gold Market

The town of Kadhimiya has Iraq's largest gold souk. At the beginning of last century, the jewelry trade started in the Aljawahiriyah souks and Al-Anbariyine, and then extended to other souks: Asharif Arredi, Bab Al-Kiblah and Bab Al-Mourad. Baghdadis buy gold and jewels for engagement, "nishane", from this souk, where tradesmen compete to offer

the most beautiful articles.

This trade has been practiced by families from generation to generation, including the famous Al-Jawahiri and Al-Wardi, who shape the gold and do all the repairs themselves. They also manufacture the silver rings loved by the Iraqis, and wear them on their right hand, following the tradition of the Prophet and Ahl Al Bayt. These rings are ➤



Al-Jawadine library the grave of its founder, the eminent scholar Hibat-eddine Shahrestani

مكتبة الجوادين ويلاحظ قبر مؤسس المكتبة السيد هبة الله الشهرستاني وسطها



The writer in Al-Jawadine library

الكاتب في زيارة لمكتبة الجوادين

decorated with the name of God or Quranic verses in Yemeni Agate (Aqiq), red, green and Najaf pearl.

Certain traditional practices, which have disappeared from other areas, are kept alive in Kadhimiya including date juice production. There is no modern extraction machinery so the dates are boiled in water to remove the nutritive juice, which is very much appreciated by the families of Baghdad.

The restaurants and itinerant salesmen offer popular dishes which are no longer found in the other districts of the capital such as: "Al-Harissa", "baqilla Bi dahn" (broad beans in oil) and the drink "arq assous".

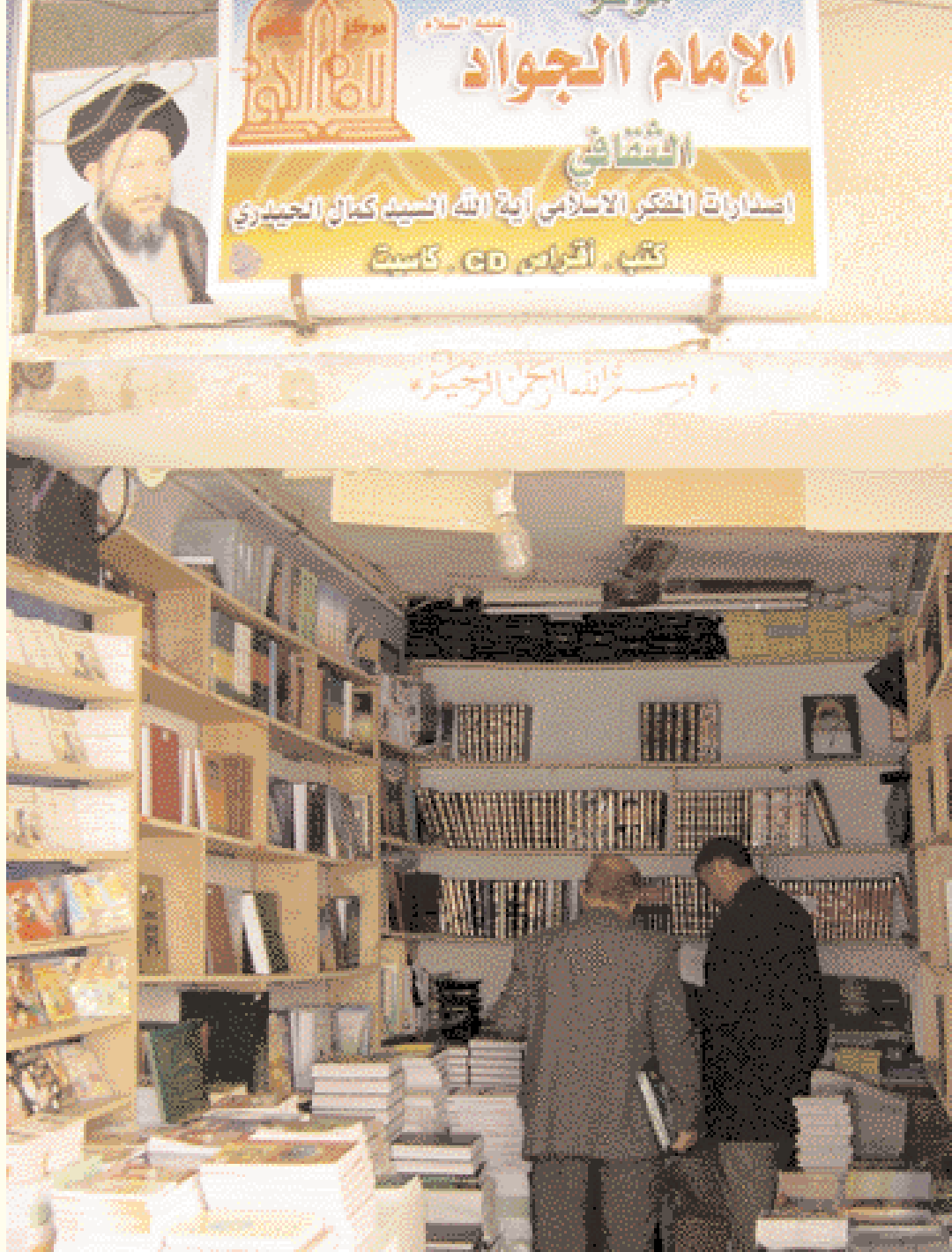
The City's Mosques

Kadhimiya is the city of 52 mosques used for prayer, condolence ceremonies, preaching during the month of Ramadan and for the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. The Aqd (street) of the Saids mosque is the most famous. Its construction goes back to the middle of the 19th century and it specializes in studies of the Quran.

Libraries Of Kadhimiya

Like all religious cities, Kadhimiya has many public libraries in the shrines and mosques and private libraries belonging to famous scholars and researchers. One of most famous is the library of Al-Jawadine, established by the eminent scholar Hibat-eddine Shahrestani, the first Minister of Education in the first Iraqi government in 1921. It was dedicated to the visitors of the shrine. Shahrestani is buried there with the members of his family and his turban and stick have been placed on his tomb. The library is a spiritual place of profound peace located at the end of the esplanade on the left hand side of Bab Al-Mourad. It has two floors and thousands of books of different disciplines, with two reading room. Used mainly by researchers and advanced students.

The library Jamaa Akd Assada is also significant. It contains thousands of books dating back to the establishment of the mosque 150 years ago. Among the private libraries, are those of Hussein Ben Assayid Ismail al-Sadr, Ali Al-Waidh and Al-Yassin.



A Bookshop

محل لبيع الكتب

Religious And Cultural Life

Kadhimiya has numerous religious schools, where religious and modern sciences are taught. The city is characterized by schools for women called "female religious circles". Among the most famous, is the school of the eminent scientist Ali Al-Waidh, the Institution of the Martyrdom of Mihrab for Islamic Preaching, which also organizes cycles of training and readings of the Quran, as well as sharia courses.

Kadhimiya is also a distinguished cultural city, home to many scholars, men of letters, intellectuals and politicians. Diwane Al-Khaqani, one of the most prestigious cultural

institutions, holds monthly intellectual discussions, literary or religious conferences. The area also has a TV and radio station operated by the office of the religious leader Sayeed Hussein al-Sadr. Many cultural institutions publish reviews, including the famous "Al-Kadhimiya" and "Al-Fourat".

This city gave birth to eminent personalities, such as the martyr Mohamed Baqir al-Sadr, his sister Bint Al-Hoda, the father of Arab sociology Dr. Ali Al-Wardi and the teacher of all Iraqi scholars and dean of Iraqi culture, Dr. Hussein Ali Mahfoudh. It stands proud in troubled times preserving the best of Iraq's religious traditions and cultural heritage. ■