

The Mosque and tomb of Imam Abu Hanifa

Islamic monument in the capital of Al-Rashid

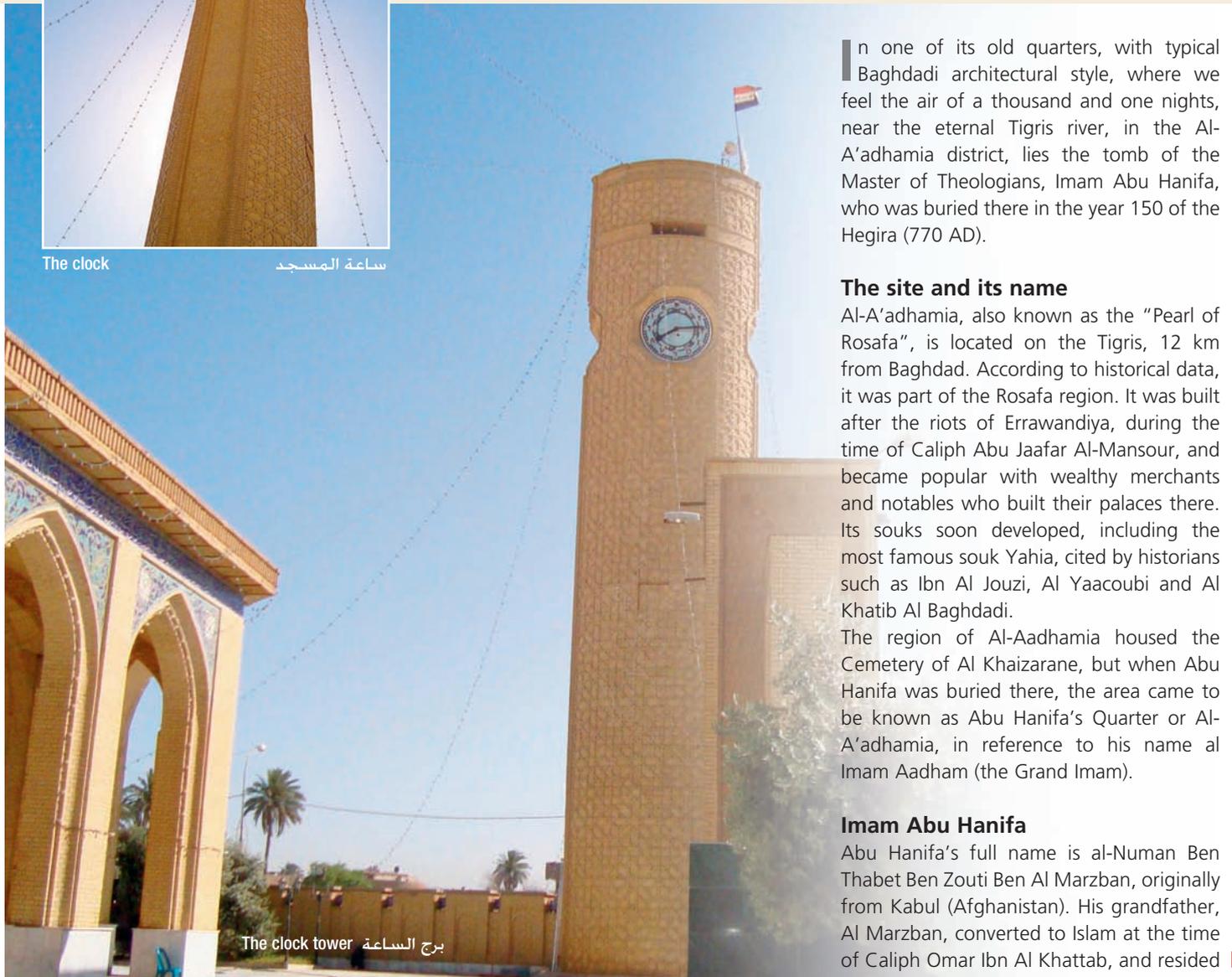
> Reports and photos:
Walid Abdul Amir Alwan

When the Abbasid Caliph Abu Jaafar Al-Mansour built the city of Baghdad, he called it the “City of Peace”. This city quickly became the centre of attraction for scientists and theologians. Some made it a place of scientific and religious learning, and others chose it as a place of residence. The city, dating back to 1289 AD, is also home to the tombs of two of the five founders of Islamic doctrines: Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and Imam Abu Hanifa.



The clock

ساعة المسجد



The clock tower برج الساعة

In one of its old quarters, with typical Baghdadi architectural style, where we feel the air of a thousand and one nights, near the eternal Tigris river, in the Al-A'adhamia district, lies the tomb of the Master of Theologians, Imam Abu Hanifa, who was buried there in the year 150 of the Hegira (770 AD).

The site and its name

Al-A'adhamia, also known as the “Pearl of Rosafa”, is located on the Tigris, 12 km from Baghdad. According to historical data, it was part of the Rosafa region. It was built after the riots of Errawandiya, during the time of Caliph Abu Jaafar Al-Mansour, and became popular with wealthy merchants and notables who built their palaces there. Its souks soon developed, including the most famous souk Yahia, cited by historians such as Ibn Al Jouzi, Al Yaacoubi and Al Khatib Al Baghdadi.

The region of Al-Aadhamia housed the Cemetery of Al Khaizarane, but when Abu Hanifa was buried there, the area came to be known as Abu Hanifa's Quarter or Al-A'adhamia, in reference to his name al Imam Aadham (the Grand Imam).

Imam Abu Hanifa

Abu Hanifa's full name is al-Numan Ben Thabet Ben Zouti Ben Al Marzban, originally from Kabul (Afghanistan). His grandfather, Al Marzban, converted to Islam at the time of Caliph Omar Ibn Al Khattab, and resided ▶

in Al Kufa, where al-Numan was born in the year 80 H (701 AD), during the reign of Caliph Marwan Ibn Abdul Malek. The governor of Kufa was Al Hajjaj ibn Yusuf Al-Taqaafi, known for his brutality and oppression. Abu Hanifa observed the cruelty of Al-Hajjaj and the suffering of the people. This affected him deeply, led him to hate the Umayyad dynasty, and to participate in the revolt against them by supporting the Abbasids in their call for the defence of Ahl Al Bayt.

Abu Hanifa began his teaching in Kufa. He then went to Baghdad to continue his studies under the leadership of Imam Mohamed Ibn Jaafar Al-Sadek. And subsequently dedicated himself to teaching and issuing fatwas. He became the Imam and founder of a Fiqh school, known as al-Hanafi, a leading Sunni doctrine. Many faqihs were trained by him; the most famous being the Judge Abu Yusuf.

Abu Hanifa issued a fatwa calling on people to support Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah Al-Mahdh, Ibn Al Imam al-Hassan Ibn Ali, in his revolt against the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansour. Ibn Khalkan reports in his book "Death of Notables" that he had written a letter to Ibrahim: "I brought you together four thousands dirhams, the only ones that I have. If it wasn't for what I have been entrusted with by the people, I would have joined you. If you meet these people, and conquer them, treat them as your father did at Saffine, finish them all, and do not

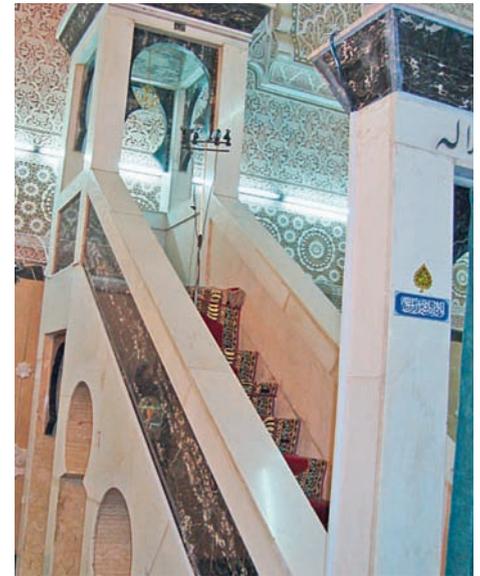
behave as he did at the Battle of the Camel, these people are bad". It is said that the letter fell into the hands of Caliph al Mansour who threw Abu Hanifa in prison and kept him there until his death. It was also said that he was poisoned. He died in the year 150 H in Baghdad where he was buried. He left a rich theological heritage that is still taught in Islamic universities.

The holy shrine

Like most of the holy mausoleums, the construction of this mausoleum passed through various stages - the most important was during the Seljuk period. Thus, Said Abu Sharafeddine Al Khawarizmi, during the reign of Sultan Aleb Arsalan, restored it and constructed a large dome. The present mosque was built in 1871 but its dome dates back to 1638. Then came other developments, the most notable in 1948, which gave the mosque its current form.

The mausoleum is a masterpiece of Islamic architecture, with beautiful ornaments engraved on bricks and beautiful calligraphy of Koranic verses on blue tiles.

There is a vast courtyard that separates the shrine from its neighbourhood. The visitor will first see the four domes, covered with Kashani tiles, two of which are sharp and the other two rounded. The dome of the mausoleum was restored by covering it with marble. Thus, it resembles Mamluki domes. The mosque has two minarets, in Baghdadi style, which is characterized by a particular



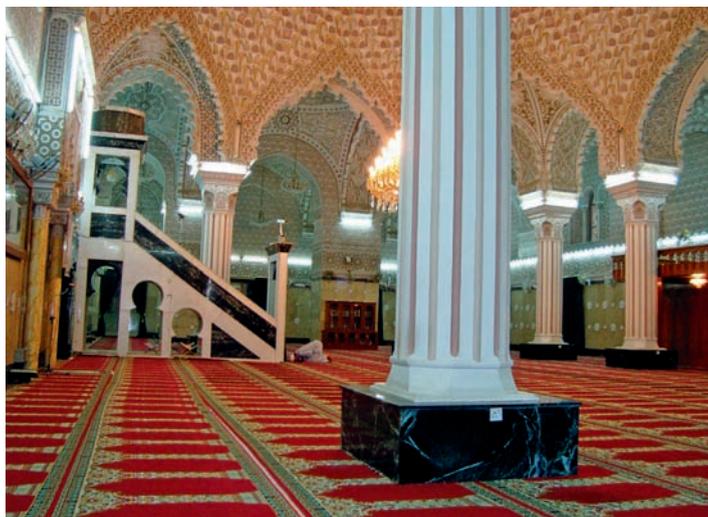
The minbar

المنبر

interest in ornaments. One of them has a golden dome.

The outer wall of the mosque is built on clay bricks with beautiful engravings. It is divided into four equal parts, with a width of one meter each. In the top right of each, there is a board in Kashani of Karbala, with the names of God.

You enter the mosque by two wooden doors, one north and one east. Going through one of these two gates, you get to the esplanade which is characterized by beautiful brick arches, located on its north side, with intricate Islamic patterns of decorations in their upper band. On top of ▶



The large prayer room

الحرم الكبير



Private hall

محفل العزاء



The mausoleum

الضريح

these decorations, are Kashani tiles with calligraphy of Koranic verses. On its eastern part is the minaret of the clock. On the west side, there is a space for rest and various services.

Clock Tower

Entering the esplanade through the northern door, one finds to the right the clock tower, which rises to a height of 20 metres. It is distinguished by its elliptical shape, contrary to the usual style in Iraqi mausoleums, which are mainly square. Richly decorated, this tower is equipped at the top with a clock. It has four facets and was made by an Iraqi craftsman, Mr Mahsoub Abdul-Razzak Al-A'adhami. It took eight years to build, from 1921 to 1929 and it was finally put in place in 1958. In the 70s the tower was covered with gold gilded aluminium plates. This clock is distinguished by its accuracy and the strong tone of its bells. It can be heard clearly every hour from outside the mosque.

The hall

After the esplanade, there is a hall 18 m by 15 m, which can be accessed by two small doors. After that, one enters the tomb of Imam Al-A'adham by a small wooden door. This hall is distinguished by beautiful decorations its ceiling and its fine columns.

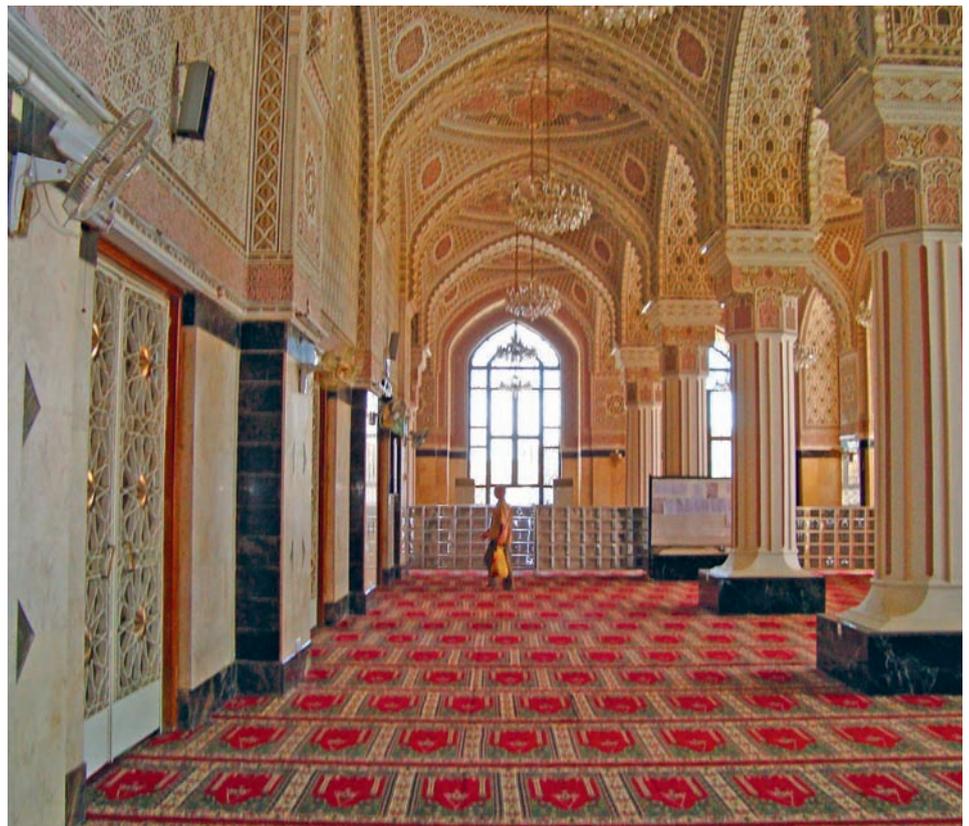
The Place of Isolation (khalwa)

Before entering the mausoleum, there is a ▶



The entrance

المدخل



The prayer room

حرم الصلاة

library and a warehouse for the gifts offered by kings and heads of state who visited the mausoleum (or sent their representatives), as well as some articles offered by wealthy merchants. The library also contains valuable manuscripts relating to the religious science of Hadith (Tradition of the Prophet), theology and the explanation of Koran. But its most prestigious item without a doubt, is a hair of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). It has been said that it is from his beard or his head and was found in the briefing room called khalwa (place of isolation). Entering through the wooden door (2 m high and 1 m wide), from a courtyard with marble columns, one reaches the holy mausoleum.

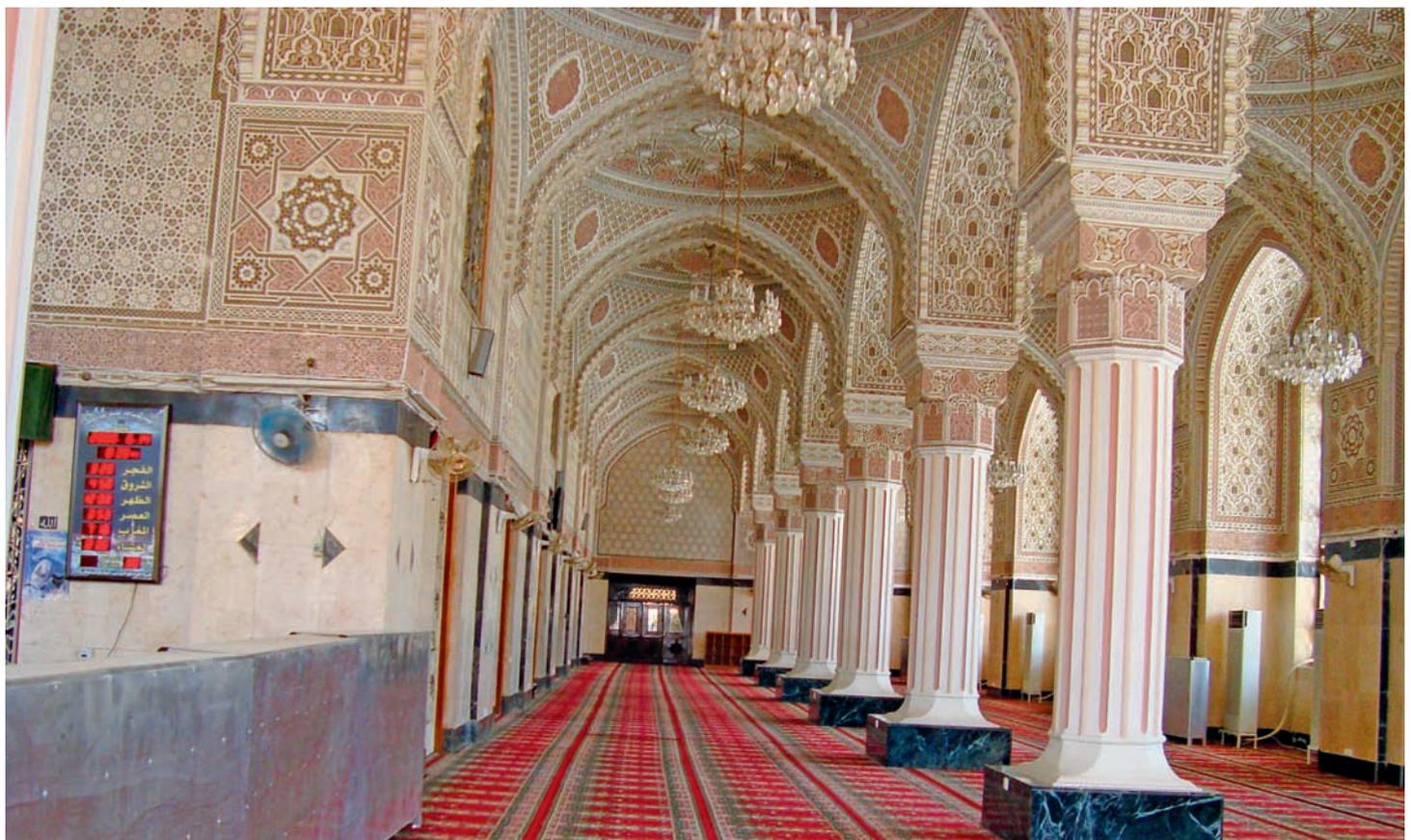
The mausoleum

The mausoleum is located in the centre of the room with an area of 36 sq. m. The tomb is covered by a wooden box, with silver grids numbering 14, of which eight are on its left and right sides and six on the north and south sides. A band wraps up ▶



The entrance

المدخل



The small prayer room

الحرم الصغير

this box with beautiful calligraphy of Koranic verses.

The walls and ceiling of the mausoleum are decorated with white marble in beautiful patterns. A chandelier descends from the ceiling directly above the tomb. On the two corners are two boards bearing pieces of the fabric of the holy Ka'aba of 150 cm by 75 cm, inside a fine wooden frame.

The prayer room

In the mausoleum room, there is a small door that leads to the place reserved for prayer. This place of worship is vast and includes columns and discs decorated with beautiful Moroccan decorations. In the middle is the minbar of the Imam, built of brick covered with marble, overhung by a small dome, with a marble belt in the form of a crescent.

The mihrab, which is to the left of the minbar, is surrounded on each side by two columns covered with beautiful Kashani loops at the top. The floor is covered with high-quality carpets and beautiful continuous colours, and gives the impression that this is a single carpet.

From this place of worship one can go through a back door to another place, protected by a partition, which is reserved for women.

Here one finds a space reserved for reading Koran, a wooden platform of about three metres high, with a small staircase. It is most often used during the celebrations of the birthday of the Prophet (PBUH).



Surrounding area

المنطقة المحيطة بالجامع

The Prophet's birthday celebration

This shrine is distinguished by the large number of visitors at night. The inhabitants of Al-Aa'dhamia and neighbouring regions have become accustomed to visiting at night. It also became customary to celebrate the evening of the holy month of Ramadan there. The finest celebrations at the shrine are probably on Mawlid (The birthday of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), which falls on the 12th of Rabia' al-Awal of each year of the Hegira. The shrine is the centre of festivities both official and popular. Thus, the mausoleum is decorated with lights and its neighbourhood is

decorated with flowers and flags. Delegations from different regions of Iraq come to celebrate this event until dawn. They end their ceremony with a procession around the mausoleum, chanting praise to the Prophet (PBUH).

The Baghdadis, particularly the inhabitants of this region, have become accustomed to gathering in this place to welcome delegations from other provinces, offering them food, drinks and cakes. It is their way of celebrating the event. The mosque is therefore a place of worship and a centre for festivities to praise Prophet Mohammed, whose birthday must be honoured. ■



The prayer room

حرم الصلاة



The large prayer room

الحرم الكبير