

This article is about the Iraqi mosque. For the medieval Egyptian capital, see Al-Askar. Al-Askari Shrine, the 'Askariyya Shrine (Arabic: مَرْقَدُ الْإِمَامَيْنِ عَلِيِّ الْهَادِي وَالْحَسَنِ الْعَسْكَرِيِّ, Marqad al-'Imāmayn 'Alīy al-Hādī wal-Ḥasan al-'Askarīy, meaning "Resting Place of the Two Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hassan the al-Askari") or the Al-Askari Mosque is a Shia Muslim mosque and mausoleum in the Iraqi city of Samarra 125 km (78 mi) from Baghdad. It is one of the most important Shia shrines in the world, built in 944.[1] The dome was destroyed in a bombing by extremists in February 2006 and its two remaining minarets were destroyed in another bombing in June 2007, causing widespread anger among Shias. The remaining clock tower was also destroyed in July 2007.[2] The dome and minarets were repaired and the mosque reopened in April 2009.[3]

The 10th and 11th Shī'ite Imams, 'Alī al-Hādī ("an-Naqī") and his son Hasan al-'Askarī, known as al-'Askariyyayn ("the two 'Askarīs"), are buried in the shrine.[4] Housed in the mosque are also the tombs of Hakimah Khātūn, sister of 'Alī al-Hādī; and Narjis Khātūn, the mother of Muḥammad al-Mahdī.[5] Adjacent to the mosque is another domed commemorative building, the Serdab ("cistern"), built over the cistern where the Twelfth Imam, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, first entered the Minor Occultation or "hidden from the view"—whence the other title of the Mahdi, the Hidden Imam.

Contents

1 History

2 Bombings

2.1 2006 attack

2.2 2007 attack

2.3 Reopening

3 Gallery

4 See also

5 References

6 Further reading

7 External links

History[edit]

The Imams 'Alī al-Hādī ("an-Naqī") and Hassan al-'Askarī lived under house arrest in the part of Samarra that had been Caliph al-Mu'tasim's military camp ('Askar al-Mu'tasim, hence an inmate of the camp was called an 'Askarī). As a result, they are known as the 'Askariyyayn. They died and were buried in their house on Abī Ahmad Street near the mosque built by Mu'tasim.[5] A later tradition attributes their deaths to poison.

Nasir ad-Din Shah Qajar undertook the latest remodelling of the shrine in 1868, with the golden dome added in 1905. Covered in 72,000 gold pieces and surrounded by walls of light blue tiles, the dome was a dominant feature of the Samarra skyline. It was approximately 20 m (66 ft) in diameter by 68 m (223 ft) high.

Bombings[edit]

2006 attack[edit]

Main article: 2006 al-Askari mosque bombing

On 22 February 2006, at 6:55 am local time (03:55 UTC) explosions occurred at the mosque, effectively destroying its golden dome and severely damaging the mosque. Several men

belonging to Iraqi insurgent groups affiliated with Al-Qaida, one wearing a military uniform, had earlier entered the mosque, tied up the guards there and set explosives, resulting in the blast. Two bombs were set off[6][7] by five[8] to seven[9] men dressed as personnel of the Iraqi Special Forces[10] who entered the shrine during the morning.[11]

Time magazine reported at the time of the 2006 bombing that:

al-Askari [is] one of Shi'ite Islam's holiest sites, exceeded in veneration only by the shrines of Najaf and Karbala. Even Samarra's Sunnis hold al-Askari in high esteem. The expression 'to swear by the shrine' is routinely used by both communities".[12]

2007 attack[edit]

Main article: 2007 al-Askari mosque bombing

At around 8 am on 13 June 2007, operatives belonging to al-Qaeda in Iraq destroyed the two remaining 36-metre-high (118 ft) golden minarets flanking the dome's ruins. No fatalities were reported. Iraqi police reported hearing "two nearly simultaneous explosions coming from inside the mosque compound at around 8 am".[13] A report from state-run Iraqiya Television stated that "local officials said that two mortar rounds were fired at the two minarets".[13]

Reopening[edit]

In late 2007, the Iraqi government conducted a contract with a Turkish company to rebuild the shrine. The Iraqi government later cancelled the contract due to delays by the Turkish company.[3] As of April 2009, the golden dome and the minarets have been restored and the shrine reopened to visitors.[3]

Gallery[edit]

The Al-Askari Shrine in 1916.

The Shrine in 2006 after the first bombing

Repairs to the al-Askari Mosque, October 2013

See also[edit]

Shia Islam portal

Iraq portal

Bab al-Saghir

Damage to Baghdad during the Iraq War

Destruction of early Islamic heritage sites in Saudi Arabia

Holiest sites in Shia Islam

Jannat al-Mu'alla

Jannatul Baqi'