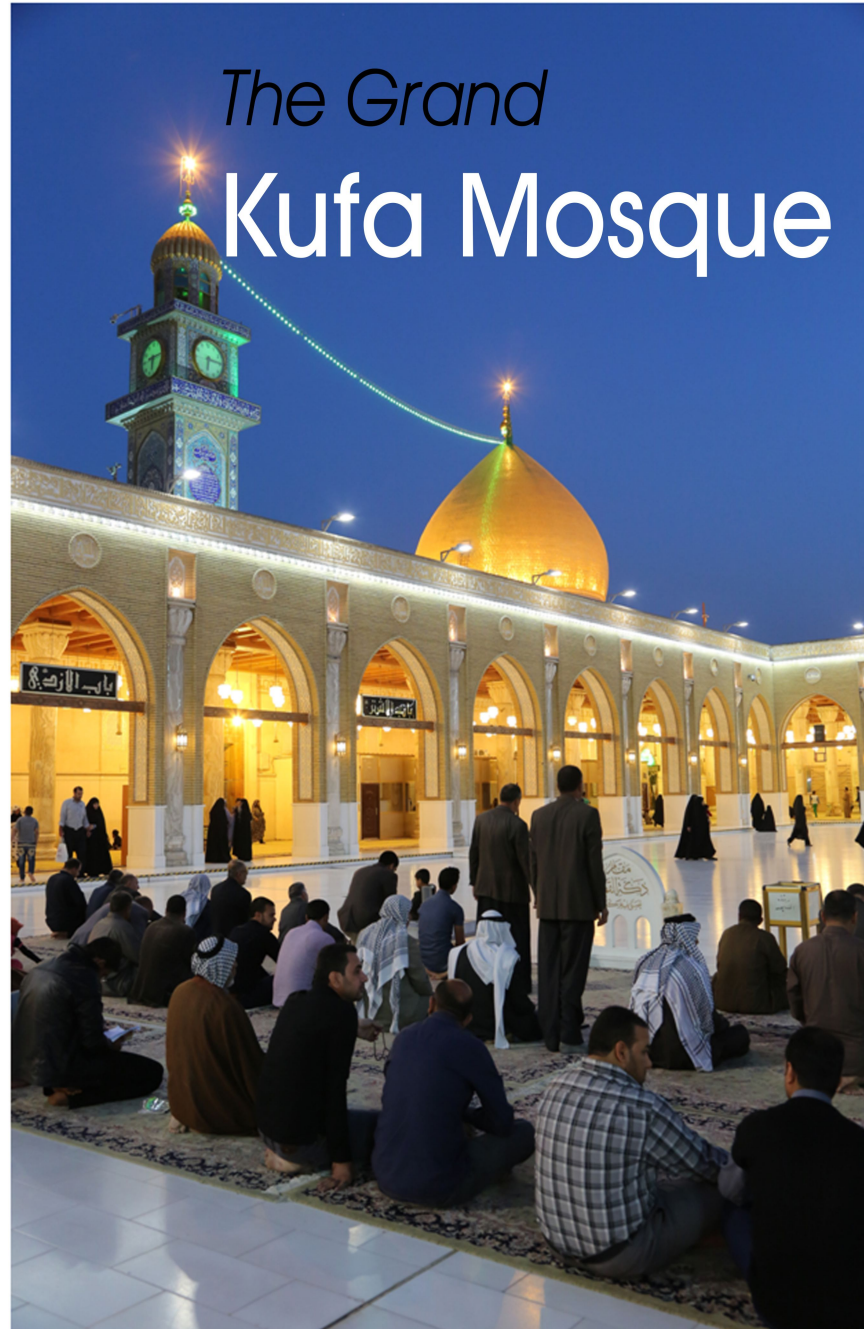
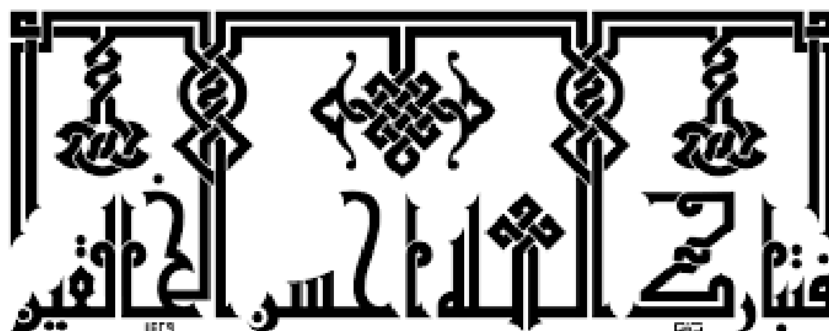


SUPPLEMENT





## THE GRAND KŪFA MOSQUE

Since time immemorial, the Kūfa desert has been there. Both revered *sahābis*, Salmān al-Fārisi and Huthayfah al-Yemāni chose its location in 17 A.H./638 A.D. to be the camping grounds for the Islamic army during the time of Omar ibn al-Khattab; this is why one of its oldest names is "Kūfat al-Jund", the Army's Kūfa. It was built in 22 A.H./643 A.D. with baked bricks, during the time when al-Mughīrah ibn Shu`bah was the provincial governor over that area, in the shape of seven quarters, one for each tribe that resided in it. In 36 A.H./656 A.D., Imām Ali عليه السلام made it the capital of the Islamic world after the Battle of the Camel, attracting to it the eyes of the Islamic world and turning it into a great commercial and scholarly city up to the time when the Abbasid government was established in 132 A.H./749 A.D. The Abbasids took al-Hashimiyya as their capital then Baghdad, leaving Kūfa to wither up to the year 580 A.H./1184 A.D. when desolation seized it as traveler Ibn Jubair says.

In the Islamic world, reports about mosques in Iraq state that the oldest of these mosques is the Grand Kūfa Mosque according to the testimony of books of biography and history. It is also stated that it used to be a place of worship of the angels before the creation of Adam, that it is *البقعة المباركة* the spot which the Almighty blessed, that it became a place of worship for Adam and the prophets and messengers عليه السلام who followed him and a place of worship for the

friends of Allāh, the truthful ones. It is one of the Signs of the Wisdom of the Almighty that a traveler can cut his prayers short except in four places one of which is this same Kūfa Grand Mosque where he has the option to either perform them in full or shorten them. The first to be built in Kūfa was its Grand Mosque over an almost complete square area of 110 meters, then the Government House (Governor's Mansion) was built.

Many writers of scholarly reports as well as authors of biography and history books have detailed the distinction enjoyed by this Mosque, be they those written by Shī'a Muslims or by Sunnis. This Mosque accommodates forty thousand worshippers. In the midst of its courtyard, there is a low spot to which one descends, and it is called al-Safeena (the boat, i.e. Ark). In this Mosque, Muslim ibn Aqeel, cousin of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام, is buried and so are both Hāni ibn `Urwah and al-Mukhtār ibn Abu `Ubayd al-Thaqafi.

The Governor's Mansion used to be connected to the Mosque from the direction of the qibla, and the Mosque did not have a fence in the beginning. Rather, its courtyard was open surrounded by a ditch. It was later roofed, so the worshippers had some shade, then a fence of baked clay surrounded it. Yāqūt al-Hamawi states that the second caliph, Omar ibn al-Khattab, wrote Sa'd ordering him to make the Mosque large enough for fighting or for forty thousand worshippers. Then the Mosque underwent an expansion, so sixty thousand worshippers could be accommodated, and its walls were built of bricks taken from Hīra ruins.

Imām Ali عليه السلام refused to reside in the Governor's Mansion due to its being so spacious and its facilities numerous, saying that it was the abode of insanity, thus providing an example for his modesty, frugality and renunciation of this life and its embellishments. Presently, the Governor's Mansion is comprised of ruins, and the lengths of the angles of present Kūfa Mosque are: 110, 109, 116 and 116 meters, and the height of the wall is about 20 meters. The fence is supported by 28 semi-circular towers.

The main entrance to the Mosque is located at the end of the northeastern wall and is comprised of a rectangular frame in the midst of which is a pointed built structure surrounded by beautiful carved embossing designs going back to the sixth Hijri century/12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

As for the Mosque's courtyard, it is open, and there is a group of niches in it in the center of which is the Safina site the grounds of which may have formed the Mosque when it was built the first time. This site has an octagon shape to which one descends, leading to an open structure where there is a small room containing a sanctuary. A myth says that the waters of the Great Flood which submerged the whole world during the time of Prophet Noah ﷺ gushed forth from this very place.

There are many sanctuaries in this Mosque one of which is dedicated to Prophet Abraham ﷺ and another for al-Khidhr ﷺ. The other sanctuaries include one called the "basin house", as well as one for the Greatest Prophet Muhammed ﷺ and one for our father Adam ﷺ, for Imām al-Sādiq ﷺ, for Gabriel ﷺ and one for Imām Zaynul-'Abidin ﷺ.

In the Mosque's courtyard there are large halls along its angles, and there is a room for hosting its pilgrims. Some narratives have said that when the Prophet ﷺ went during the Isrā' (Night Journey to the heavens), he landed in the site of the Kūfa Mosque where he prayed.

#### **SANCTUARY AND MARTYRDOM SPOT OF THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL**

Modernity has found its way to this historic monument, so an imposing building has fairly recently been built containing a prayer hall and incorporating the sanctuary of Commander of the Faithful Ali ﷺ which is the place where he was martyred in 40 A.H./660 A.D. The most modern architectural methods and arts have been employed in its construction and decoration, and its walls and sanctuary have been covered with the most precious type of seabed marble and with gilt aluminum. The pulpit is built of excellent streaky Italian marble in honor of the master of eloquence and logic,

Imām Ali عليه السلام, who delivered from that pulpit the most beautiful wise sermons which formed a school in the art of oratory and rhetoric. This structure falls among a group inside the Grand Mosque along the wall that faces the qibla.

### SHRINES OF MUSLIM AND HĀNĪ

From the north, a building falls adjacently to the Mosque housing the Shrines of both Muslim ibn Aqeel ibn Abu Talib, ambassador of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام to the people of Iraq, and of Hānī ibn `Urwah. Muslim was born in Medina in 22 A.H./643 A.D. and was martyred in Kūfa on Thul-Hijja 9, 60 A.H./September 18, 680 A.D. Hānī ibn `Urwah al-Murādi is the great *sahābi* who was killed because of his loyalty to and support for Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام. It also houses the resting place of al-Mukhtār ibn `Ubayd al-Thaqafi who avenged the killing of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام. Al-Mukhtār was born in the first Hijri year and participated, in the company of his father and brothers, in the Jisr Battle (Battle of the Bridge)<sup>1</sup>. When Muslim ibn Aqeel came to Kūfa, he became the guest of al-Mukhtār. During the martyrdom of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام, al-Mukhtār was jailed by `Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad. Al-Mukhtār was killed in 67 A.H./686 A.D. by Mus`ab ibn al-Zubayr.<sup>2</sup> His grave is inside the Grand Kūfa Mosque and is visited by many pilgrims all year round.

A large gilt dome covers the Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel, while color kashāni decorates the dome on that of Hānī ibn `Urwah's Shrine. This spacious building is connected to the courtyard of the Grand Mosque.

The Grand Kūfa Mosque is not only a Mosque, it also houses a great school from which thousands of scholars have graduated, specializing in *fiqh*, hadith, language, grammar, chemistry,

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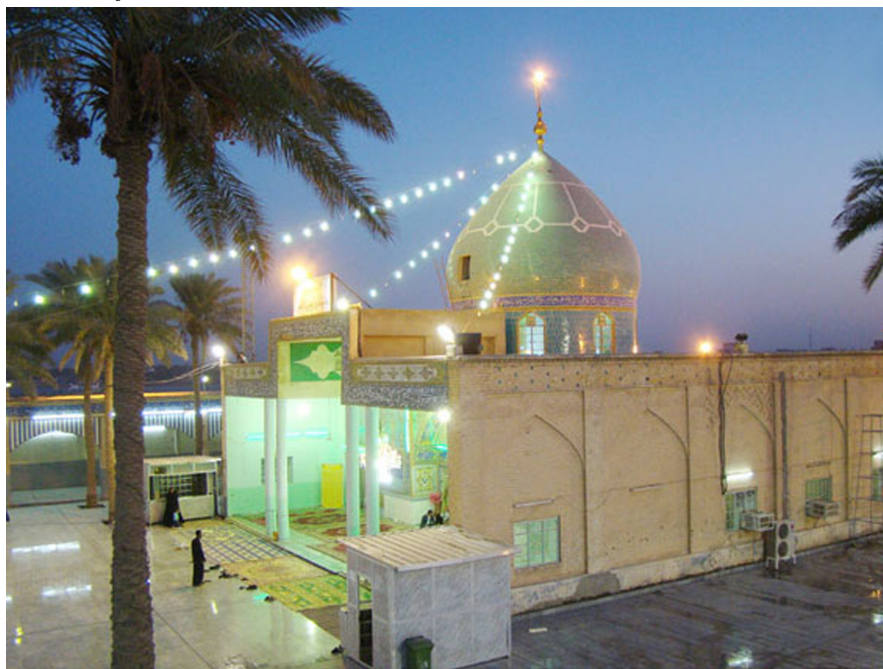
<sup>1</sup>The Battle of the Bridge معركة الجسر took place in 634 A.D. on the bank of the Euphrates River between Muslims led by Abu Ubaid al-Thaqafi and the Persian Sassanian forces led by Bahman Jaduya, and it was the only Sassanian victory over the Muslim armies.

<sup>2</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, Vol. 4, p. 347; *Al-Kāmil fīl Tārīkh*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

astronomy and philosophy.

### **MOSQUES, SHRINES AND SANCTUARIES NEAR THE KŪFA GRAND MOSQUE**

Near Kūfa, there are several mosques, sanctuaries and Shrines, including the Shrine of Maytham al-Tammār, one of the righteous companions of Imām Ali عليه السلام. To the south is the house of Imām Ali عليه السلام where he resided during the period of his caliphate. On the day of his martyrdom, both his sons, al-Hassan and al-Hussain عليه السلام, performed the ceremonial funeral bath for him from the water of a well which remains to be there, and there is the room in which the Imām عليه السلام lived. It remains the same as it has been since then...!



### **MASJID AL-SAHLA↑**

One of the mosques sought by Arabs and Muslims is the Sahla Mosque (image above of this Mosque from the outside) in Kūfa which is one of the sacred places in the Islamic world. Imām al-Sādiq عليه السلام says that nobody who for any reason goes to Masjid al-Sahla feeling distressed and who performs two *rek'ats* during the time between the *maghrib* and *'ishā* then supplicates to Allāh, the most Exalted One and the most Great, save Allāh removes the cause

of his distress. There are many consecutive narratives that indicate that some Prophets and Imāms ﷺ passed by it and performed their prayers inside it. In the center, there are sanctuaries for some Prophets, including Prophet Abraham and Idris, peace be upon them both, and also for Imāms al-Sādiq and Zaynul-`Ābidīn ﷺ as well as one for the Awaited Mahdi, may Allāh hasten his ease. Among these narratives there are those that indicate that this Mosque used to be a house for Prophet Idris عليه السلام who used to pray there.

A high 20-meter fence surrounds Masjid al-Sahla having semi-circular towers. In its center there is a large dome covered with color mosaics. It is said that the pilgrims' prayers at this Mosque are surely answered by the will of Allāh Almighty.

## **SHRINES INSIDE THE KŪFA GRAND MOSQUE**

### **Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel**

Many renovations have been done to both Shrines of Muslim ibn Aqeel, peace be upon him, and Hāni ibn `Urwah perhaps because they are adjacent to the Grand Kūfa Mosque which has been the object of the Muslims' care. From time to time, repairs and renovations take place at it. Both Shrines fall within the development and reconstruction plan undertaken by the management of the Kūfa Grand Mosque.

Narratives say that when Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hāni ibn `Urwah were buried by the tribe of **منح** Mathhaj by orders of Ibn Ziyad near the Governor's Mansion, the intention was for the police to keep an eye on both grave sites so nobody would visit them nor mourning *majālis* would be held for them nor elegies or even Surat al-Fātiha recited for them. Despite all of this, Shī`a Muslims never stopped doing all of that, first secretly then openly. Secret visits were carried out in the depth of the night for fear of the guards and police. The fact that the Shī`as never stopped visiting them and that each generation handed the responsibility of looking after these sites to the next is evidence proving the authenticity of the location of both grave sites.

Apparently, the first structure built over the resting places of Muslim ibn Aqeel and Hāni ibn `Urwah took place during the time of al-

Mukhtār ibn Abu `Ubaydah al-Thaqafi in 67 A.H./687 A.D. The previous source states the following: "Both graves remained in a normal condition up to the time when al-Mukhtār ibn Abu `Ubaydah al-Thaqafi built both graves, building on them small domes and placing on them both marble markers identifying each. These marbles were found some time back. Al-Mukhtār built both of these graves after having constructed the grave of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام.

Ibn Jubayr described in 580 A.H./1184 A.D. the structure built by al-Mukhtār saying, "On the eastern side of the [Kūfa Grand] Mosque, there is a small room accessible through ladders, and the grave of Muslim ibn Aqeel ibn Abu Talib is in it." Contemporary Iraqi writer and historian Kāmil Salman al-Jibouri (b. 1369 A.H./1950 A.D.) writes saying that al-Mukhtār built both Shrines of Muslim and Hāni on grounds higher than those of the Kūfa Mosque.

During the time of the Buwayhids (some spell it Būyids or Buyyids, but our spelling is much better and closer to the way this word is pronounced) البويهيون (334 – 448 A.H./945 – 1056 A.D.), the latter added some renovations to the Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel, urging people, especially Buwayhids, to reside in its neighborhood, and there are still many who live adjacently to the Kūfa Mosque and to both grave sites of Muslim and Hāni whose lineage is traced back to the Buwayhids.

Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta (1304 – 1377) visited Kūfa during a trip in 725 A.H./1325 A.D.), but he did not point out to al-Juwaini's Shrine; instead, he described the grave of Muslim ibn Aqeel similarly to the way it was described by Ibn Jubayr. German explorer Carsten Niebuhr (1733 – 1815), who visited Iraq and stayed in it from 1765 to 1766), drew a map of a number of landmarks and historic sites, including the Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel which is adjacent to the Kūfa Grand Mosque. He mentioned the Shrine which was built by `Atāul-Malik Muhammed al-Juwaini عطاء الملك محمد الجويني (d. 683 A.H./1284 A.D.) and his brother, Shamsud-Dīn, had made saying, "This building houses the Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon him, during the time of both (rulers) who are served according to righteousness and to the creed, `Atāul-Malik عطاء الملك and his brother Shamsud-Dīn, sons of Mahmoud ibn



Muhammed al-Juwaini, may Allāh elevate those who support their State through the *wilaya* of their servant slaves, Muhammed ibn Mahmoud al-Razi and Abul-Mahāsin ibn Ahmed al-Tabrizi, may Allāh forgive them, in the months of the year 681 A.H. (1282 A.D.)." A writing inscribed on it indicates that the structure was built in the year 681 A.H./1282 A.D.

The third time this Shrine was renovated took place in 767 A.H./1366 A.D. when Mongol King Aws (or Awais) ibn al-Sheikh Hassan [Buzurg] al-Jalā'iri (or Jalairi or Jalayirid) أوس بن الشيخ حسن الجلائري (founder of the Jalā'iri Sultanate which ruled Baghdad and other Islamic lands and which was founded in 1335 and disintegrated in 1432 A.D.). Right photo shows a coin minted in Baghdad during the Jalā'iri period.



In the same year (767 A.H./1366 A.D.), the founder of the Jalā'iri Sultanate spent a good deal on building the Shrine of Imām al-Hussain عليه السلام and also renovated both Shrines of Muslim and Hāni.

Sheikh Muhammed Hirz ad-Dīn describes the said Shrines saying, "His [Muslim's] Shrine in Kūfa is adjacent to the Grand [Kūfa] Mosque and is connected to it through its southeastern side. It is an old Shrine in the center of which there is a small silver window, and on his grave there used to be a wooden window plated and decorated with yellow copper. A high dome tops it blue in color and covered by kashāni bricks. His Shrine is always full of pilgrims and delegates from every Islamic land coming to Iraq visit these holy places."

### **Shrine of Hāni ibn `Urwah**

Since the Shrine of Hāni ibn `Urwah is located in the piazza of Muslim's Shrine, it used to be renovated whenever Muslim's Shrine was renovated or developed. Fairly recently, a portion of a wooden Shrine was found; it was transported to Egypt [from Kūfa] and a writing on it says that it was made specifically for Hāni's grave in

Kūfa, and it dates back to the Fatimid era. This proves that the Fatimids have relics in Kūfa, including this box.



Muhammed-Saeed al-Turaihi<sup>1</sup> has stated that, "Shah Safi I (image to ←the left) visited Najaf in 1042 A.H./1633 A.D. and ordered a deep and wide river dug up from Hilla to the Kūfa Grand Mosque and defined its area up to **الخورنق** the Khawarnaq<sup>2</sup>. This river used to pass by Hāni's Shrine. People built their homes near this Shrine." In other words, a river used to pass by the Kūfa Grand Mosque and Hāni's Shrine used to overlook it.

Sayyid Ali al-Hāshimi<sup>3</sup> describes this grave saying, "There is a built Shrine for Hāni ibn `Urwah with a high dome of green kashāni, and his grave falls behind the eastern wall of the Kūfa (Grand) Mosque before which the grave and Shrine of

<sup>1</sup>He is Muhammed-Sa`eed son of Sheikh Muhammed-Kadhim son of Sheikh Katib son of Sheikh Radhi al-Turaihi, an Iraqi writer, researcher and historian and head of the Dutch Shi`ite Parliament (*De Overkoepelende Shiitische Vereniging OSV*). He was born in Kūfa in 1957.

<sup>2</sup>The Khawarnaq Castle and Mansion was built in the fifth century A.D. by the Lakhmid ruler al-Nu`man son of Imri`ul-Qais, king of Hīra, east of Najaf. Al-Tha`ālibi **الثعالبي** attributes it to al-Nu`man ibn al-Munthir who died in 602 A.D.

<sup>3</sup>I apologize to the kind reader for having failed to identify this man. I translated this text from Arabic into English due to the scarcity of sources. One of the challenges I always face and which frustrate me and waste a good deal of my time is the absence of precision in many essays written about our religious Shrines...

Muslim ibn Aqeel ibn Abu Talib, Ambassador of al-Hussain, is located. Muslim's Shrine has a dome of the best green kashāni, and it is not smaller than that of the Shrine of Muslim ibn Aqeel and does not differ from it in color or engineering. Over Hāni's grave there is a silver Shrine. In the past, this Shrine was built of yellow *embelia robusta* (beringer)."



### **Al-Mukhtār's Shrine**

It seems that al-Mukhtār's house used to be adjacent to the Kūfa Grand Mosque. A narrative says that when the wall of the Mosque adjacent to the house of al-Mukhtār ibn Abu `Ubayd al-Thaqafi collapsed during the time of Yousuf ibn Omar al-Thaqafi after 120 A.H./738 A.D., this *wali* (provincial governor) rebuilt it. This means that al-Mukhtār was buried in his house after having been killed on Ramadhan 16, 67 A.H./April 5, 687 A.D. His grave was unmarked, then a stone was found on which it was written in the Kufic script "This is the grave of al-Mukhtār ibn Abu `Ubayd al-Thaqafi who avenged the killing of al-Hussain". Several renovations have taken place to it.

It is narrated that when Sheikh Abdul-Hussain al-Tehrani<sup>1</sup> undertook the task of renovating and renewing Iraq's holy places by orders of his contemporary Qajari king, Shah Nasir ad-Dīn (1831 – 1896), who ruled Iran from 1848 to 1896, al-Tehrani renewed the building of al-Mukhtār's resting place, and the sign of his grave in the courtyard of Muslim ibn Aqeel's Shrine, which is adjacent to the Kūfa Grand Mosque, was a large terrace. It was dug up, so marks of a bath house appeared and it became obvious that it was not al-Mukhtār's grave; therefore, it was obliterated. The Sheikh kept looking for it, whereupon the great scholar Sayyid Ridha son of Sayyid Muhammed-Mahdi Bahrul-Uloom advised him that whenever his father passed by the eastern angle beside the wall of the Kūfa Mosque facing the *qibla*, he would find al-Mukhtār's grave. Sheikh al-Tehrani found it and ordered the digging for the foundations to start there upon finding a rock on which it was written "This is the grave of al-Mukhtār ibn Abu 'Ubaydah al-Thaqafi".

The reader may come to the conclusion that followers of Ahlul-Bayt عليه السلام were fought even when they were in their graves, and that the graves did not escape the mischief of enemies of Ahlul-Bayt عليه السلام,

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<sup>1</sup>His full name is شيخ عبد الحسين الطهراني الحائري Sheikh Abdul-Hussain al-Tehrani al-Ha'iri. He was born in Tehran around the year 1226 A.H./1809 A.D. and was taught fiqh and religious sciences by a number of Tehran scholars. His title is The Sheikh (mentor) of the Iraqis. The then Qajari king, Shah Nasir ad-Din, delegated him to go to Iraq to renovate and renew Iraq's holy places, giving him his full support and authorization in so doing, so he oversaw the renovating of the holy places in Kerbala, al-Kadhimiyya and Samarra and supervised the covering of the Samarra Dome with gold bricks as well as the building of its piazza and the expansion of its courtyard. In 1280 A.H./, he left Tehran with his family and went to Holy Kerbala which he made it home, and he resumed playing a major role in renovating the holy Shrines throughout Iraq. The Sheikh was passionate about books and was always keen about collecting them and making them available to the public. He, therefore, established a school adjacent to the Samarra Shrine which he enriched with a great library containing precious books and rare manuscripts.

and one can only imagine how mean and lowly such enemies are and will always be.

It is my desire and intention to write a book about Kūfa's Grand Mosque and about Muslim ibn Aqeel if Allāh permits me to live long enough. I am now advancing in age, and if you wish to see such a book published, please pray the Almighty to enable me to do it...  
*Wassalamo Alaikom.*

*Yasin T. al-Jibouri*  
September 13, 2017

