Foucault's power, discourse, author, knowledge, and archaeology in Abdullah Al-Mahjūb's Qurat Al-Ayn Fi Awşāf Al-Ḥarhmayn

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Abstract

In this article, Abdullah Al-Mahjūb's manuscript entitled *Qurat Al-Ayn fi Awsaf Al-Ḥarhmayn* (Delight of the Eye in the Description of the Two Holy Mosques) is analyzed on the backdrop of Michel Foucault's theories of power, discourse, author, knowledge, and archaeology. The article explores how Foucault's theories illuminate the complex interplay between religious authority, political legitimacy, and historical narrative in al-Mahjūb's detailed description of Makkah and Medina during the 15th Calendar century. Al-Mahjūb's account, as motivated by scholarly requests and shaped by his socio-religious context, reveals how knowledge production and historical description, can serve as tools of both spiritual devotion and political expression. Through comparative analysis with other Muslim and Western travelers of that time, the study demonstrates how discourse surrounding the Two Holy Mosques is shaped by the author's perspective, audience, and purpose. The manuscript, viewed through Foucault's lens, underscores how sacred architecture becomes a site of power and memory across time, ultimately contributing to the interpretation of classical Islamic texts through Foucault's postmodern theory. It also provides a model for applying Foucault's analysis to historical Islamic literature, bridging gaps between Western critical thought and Islamic intellectual heritage.

Keywords: Al-Mahjūb, Author, Discourse, Foucault, Knowledge, Power.

1. Introduction

Michel Foucault, the French postmodernist, is one of the few writers who recognize that power is not just a negative, coercive, or repressive force that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive, and positive force in society [1]. He has been hugely influential in shaping understandings of power, leading away from the

analysis of actors who use power as an instrument of coercion, and even away from the discreet structures in which those actors operate, toward the idea that 'power is everywhere', diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and truth. His work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, such as power being understood as diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them [1].

Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by individuals or groups through 'episodic' or 'sovereign' acts of domination or coercion, instead seeing it as dispersed and pervasive. 'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere', so in this sense, it is neither an agency nor a structure [2]. Instead, it is a kind of 'meta-power' or 'regime of truth' that pervades society, and is in constant flux and negotiation. Foucault uses the term 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth': "Truth is a thing of this world. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true"[3].

Al-Mahjūb performed the Hajj pilgrimage to the Holy Mosque of Makkah in 860H (1456G) and visited the Prophet's Mosque. He vividly described both locations as part of a promise he made to the people from his native country. It appears that he was in his prime youth at that time, as evidenced by the manuscript filled with descriptions of historical places, monumental sites he visited, and the developmental facilities of Makkah and Medina that he recorded.

Little is known about his personal life before he came to the Holy Sites to perform Hajj. However, it is believed that he belongs to a family known as al-Mahjūb, which has a notable presence in many cities across the Muslim regions of North Africa, particularly in Mediterranean cities of present-day Tunisia, such as Safaqis, Tunis, and Qairawan.

Since performing the rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage requires physical strength and stamina to travel from one location to another, it can be confidently assumed that he was born in the first half of the 9th Hijri century (15th Century AD) [4].

Regarding his position as a scholar, al-Mahjūb's treatise demonstrates that he was renowned among the most prominent intellectual figures in Western North Africa. The treatise encompasses a broad range of important issues, including a close examination of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) sayings, the interpretation of the Quran, legal theories, significant historical events, and geographical concerns. Furthermore, he made significant efforts to study the Two Holy Mosques and their evolution, highlighting his prominent position within the scholarly circle of Muslim people of his time. Throughout his treatise, he consistently presented himself as one of the primary reference points within his circle of peers, affirming his position as one of the most erudite scholars on issues regarding Makkah and Medina [4].

Al-Mahjūb argues that he authored the manuscript as a command from his companions, mostly scholars or pupils with whom he had deep connections, to whom he refers as ". The ones with whom I have amity and obligation." This consideration also helps to promote his noble reputation, as it was mostly scholars and students who encouraged him to write a paper describing the features of Makkah and Medina, thereby benefiting from his experiential expertise [4].

The main focus of this article is to investigate Abdullah Al-Mahjūb's Manuscript by using Michel Foucault's ideas with regards to power, discourse, and authorship, as well as combining various other theoretical approaches. The discussion demonstrates that the writer effectively employed Foucault's concepts of power, discourse, authorship, knowledge, and archaeology as influential tools for illuminating the various dimensions of discourse relevant to the study of the manuscript. In order to make things clearer and to make it easier for readers to comprehend, a proper methodological outline was followed, where the writer incorporated Foucault's ideas with regards to this topic within most parts of the article, along with an attempt to specify situations under which Al-Mahjūb's framework of interpretation regarding the Two Holy Mosques could be seen to be valid.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this research follows a comparative descriptive analysis where Foucault's theories of power, discourse, author, knowledge, and archaeology are applied to the historical narrative in al-Mahjūb's detailed description of Makkah and Medina during the 15th Calendar century in order to illuminate the complex interplay between religious authority and political legitimacy.

3. Foucault and Power

First, to amass attention with concern to the holiness of the Ka'bah, one must take into consideration various names with which Arabs referred to it before Islam came into being. The names reflected a storyline of great devotion and respect that the Ka'bah enjoyed among people living in the Arab region at that time. The relations between people and the Ka'bah were complex and two-sided. Inasmuch as these relations flow from basic tenets of those who founded Islam as a community, they are made perpetual by divine instructions, as human beings have been enjoined to make circumambulation around the Ka'bah since times long past:

"Verily, the first house (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (Makkah), full of blessing, and guidance for mankind and jinn" [4].

And then Ibrahim (PBUH) was ordered to call people to perform Hajj:

"And proclaim the pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways" [4].

The power bestowed on this relation between people and the Ka'aba instilled confidence in the hearts of people that Almighty God protected the Ka'aba as this was apparent when Abd al-Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet (PBUH), declared to Abraha Al-Habashi [5] that he would not be able to destroy the Ka'aba and would be defeated by God.

Kings, sultans, princes, and even some noblemen and merchants were keen to participate in the numerous architectural works undertaken in the Ka'aba across successive Islamic eras, as the Ka'aba is the most sacred and important part of the world for all Muslims. Through Foucault's views on his theory of power and knowledge, which posits that power exists everywhere and at all times, it is clear from these acts - some undertaken because they were considered a sacred religious duty - that rulers were aware they would earn the love of all members of the Muslim community. They would also be present in these communities, giving the appearance that they were very interested in these holy sites and were prepared to support them financially. Although this was true, through these actions they have gained what Foucault would define as "power", to support their dominance and position.

Another example of this phenomenon is the traditional practice of writing the names of sultans, nobles, and monarchs; it has physical, religious, and historical aspects. The very practice of recording their names will last on the buildings placed under the Ka'aba for a long period, thus ensuring that their contributions are remembered during their lifetime and thereafter.

Foucault's model posits that this repeated public display of the sultān's name functioned as a form of pacification with the public, who were probably delighted by reassurance of their patron's continued existence, but can also be seen as an act of exercising authority, indicative of that usual vigilance inherent to power, like the idea that "stones can make people docile and knowable" [6].

Through this analysis, the activities conducted by monarchs, sultans, and princes regarding the Ka'aba during al-Mahjūb's time, as well as the various historical events characteristic of the period - including building works, restoration projects, and sets of reforms on multiple historical timelines, as well as the enrichment and decoration of the Ka'aba - were ultimately driven by a combination of religious, political, and economic forces. These activities are determinants of the power arrangements that prevailed, crossing otherwise conventional frontiers not merely between rulers and subjects but also between the devotional and the divine. The latter relationships should not be understood merely as superstructural and cut off from other types of relations, but rather as deeply embedded in broader relational contexts [7].

Based on Foucault's theory of power, the main goals of these works were purely political, aiming to boost their political power. However, some sub-goals are purely religious, rendering the rulers in the same base position before God, just like common people. By doing so, they gain the strength and support of all members of the Muslim community, popularity for the benefactors of these works, and love in the hearts of community members; therefore, succeeding in immortalizing their legacy. Furthermore, those who are vested with power (rulers) are transformed into ordinary individuals and may exchange roles with their subjects by shaping their relationships and roles according to the dictates of the religious and social order [8].

Another exercise of power that may be cited here is the ornamentation and embellishment of the Black Stone, which is believed to be one of the great deeds that Allah rewards to whoever attains it, especially in places where people worship Allah. All rulers, including kings, sultans, princes, and ministers, were naturally very keen to support such deeds and gain prestige from them. Foucault noticed that power is omnipresent and is capable of penetrating any barriers that may exist between subjects and rulers [8].

In this way, according to Foucault, people can be easily judged, understood, and kept content. The ornamentation and embellishment of the various parts of the Ka'aba, including the Black Stone, is a case in point where people positively judge the curators/financiers (kings, sultans, and princes), thus giving them the advantage of boosting their rule and sovereignty.

4. Foucault and Discourse

According to Foucault, the understanding of objects is revealed solely through discourse, as influential figures across various historical periods interpret them from distinct perspectives. In this context, Foucault asserts that:

"... The regular formation of objects emerges only in discourse. To define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance" [9].

The testimonies of eminent persons who contributed very significantly to turning points in history provide excellent examples of this discourse on their plans to reinstate the architecture of the Ka'aba. One of such persons, Abdullah Ibn Al-Zūbayr, restored the Ka'aba to its original form as it was before the age of the Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail. He cited a hadith of his aunt Āishah that contained one of the accounts which had been related to her by the Prophet (PBUH):

"Has your nation not recently forsaken polytheism? If this claim was true, I would have destroyed the Ka'aba and rebuilt it entirely. In such a case, I would have integrated the Hijr of Ismail into its architecture, since your nation did not have the monetary means to incorporate it when the Ka'aba was first built. I would have also set up two entrances facing toward the east and the west to enhance the ease of people coming and going"[10].

Following the defeat of Abdullah Ibn Al-Zūbayr, Al-Hajāj spoke to the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan about the steps taken by Ibn Al-Zūbayr toward the restoration of the Ka'bah. The Caliph, in turn, directed Al-Hajāj to rebuild the Ka'bah to its pre-Islamic dimensions, as modified by Ibn Al-Zūbayr, while also requiring the dismantling of the changes made at the Hijr Ismail site and the closure of the supplementary entrance. On receiving the commands from the Caliph, Al-Hajāj took the necessary steps [4].

5. Foucault and the Author

According to Foucault [11] the definition of the author is very elusive and enigmatic. Foucault [11] One is considered an author because of the body of work that he or she has created; is his or her identity, though, simply established through the sum of his or her written, spoken, compiled, or archived work? Is his or her corpus simply made up of all published output? If this is confirmed, what exactly does make up that "whole"? Does it include all kinds of material, such as early drafts and early versions that were possibly abandoned? For al-Mahjūb, this problem is both theoretical and practical.

In comparing al-Mahjūb's account of the holy places of Mina, Arafāt, and Muzdalifa to those of Muslim and non-Muslim authors, one can clearly see that al-Mahjūb took extraordinary care to present a correct account. He not only included proper viewpoints from his own observation but also offered a critical evaluation of data gathered from various external sources.

Al-Mahjūb provided a detailed and descriptive account of Arafāt, describing it as a wide plain surrounded by mountains on all sides, with special emphasis on the northern mountain, positioned to face the eastern region like a bow. He went further to describe the quite flat region around the moderately high mountains, such as Mount al-Rahmah, which lies exactly at the very center of Arafāt.

He provided a detailed account of Arafāt, outlining its geographical boundaries along with its varied features, including the surrounding mountains. However, he described a deep sense of awe throughout his account, especially when he felt an emotional connection while observing people making their way from Arafāt to Muzdalifah. He described this major occurrence with words that indicated it made the very earth shake, the mountains tremble, and souls long for divine justice and mercy from Allah Most High [12]. This last description furnished by Ibn Battūta is much akin to the manner in which discourse transcends the factual appearance of objects, as Foucault indicated:

"… To define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance"[9].

The plan of the al-Khīf Mosque was kept and passed down from ancestor to successor since it was built and developed during the successive reigns of the Umayyad and Abbasid Kings; however, as time passed, it became dilapidated due to negligence. Al-Mahjūb mentioned that its wall was destroyed on some sides and damaged on others; additionally, it did not have doors before this damage and destruction [4]. The reasons behind the damage in al-Khīf Mosque during that time can be extracted from three scenarios by three authors:

The first scenario was that the wall of the Mosque was not high, although before it was destroyed, it had been high and featured terraces. Previously, the tallest side had been the front wall, which was 11 cubits high, and the walls on the other sides were seven and a half cubits high [13].

The second scenario was that the wall of the Mosque surrounded a large portion of the Mina land. This indicates that the area of the Mosque had remained sizable for centuries, and destruction and damage occurred in places which could not be easily watched [14].

The third scenario is that the al-Khīf Mosque had no doors that closed and opened, and hence animals and people could enter and wreak havoc in the Mosque [15].

In his essay entitled *What is an author?*, Foucault summarized the role of criticism as a task that is not concerned with the author and their relationship with the text, but rather aims to analyze the work through its structure, architecture, intrinsic form, and internal relationships [9].

In the three scenarios above that describe why the al-Khīf Mosque was destroyed, three separate discursive lines can be observed. Although the overall purpose of the above discourse is to describe the methodology by which this event occurred, it is prudent to assign authorship to all three to avoid potential inconsistencies that can result from compiling texts to create a cohesive discourse, but authored by different writers [3].

6. Historical Claims and Authorship

Foucault's theory of the 'author/artist' requires rethinking traditional methodologies for representing history. Foucault argues that the representation of history is limited by psychological constraints inherent in the discourse of authors, especially through the articulation of perspective and the narration of events. Therefore, this article attempts to deconstruct historical narratives not only by interacting with historians, but also by including alternative perspectives from other narrators.

This aspect of Foucault's discussion regarding the 'author/artist' assumes particular significance when considered in conjunction with the sacred status accorded to the Ka'bah. The Ka'aba has undoubtedly been considered a sacred site at various times in history. For example, Al-Azraqī [16] claimed that the first to build the Ka'aba were angels. This opinion subsequently gained acceptance among historians and exegetical scholars. Nevertheless, the Makkahn historian, Al-Fāsī [13] thought the Prophet Adam (AS) was the original builder of the Ka'aba. The Prophet Seth (AS), with his children, was also considered to be the initial builder of the Ka'aba [17]. According to Ibn Kathīr, such views lack conclusive evidence to support them and, therefore, cannot be accepted due to the lack of evidence from the Sunnah [18].

7. Foucault and Knowledge

Al-Mahjūb offered a vivid description of the Black Stone that transcends the physical attributes that the naked eye can see:

"It was very grand and its grandeur was conceived by all perfect believers, who get no pleasure similar to its taste when they kiss it with the mouth, and when they kiss it, they perceive both its nice taste and its grandeur. In doing so, they inhale a fragrance that does not look like any other mundane smell" [4].

In this discussion, al-Mahjūb explains how importance has been assigned to Black Stone, not just his time but also throughout historical times. The model of Foucault concerning authority and knowledge posits that authority originates from an original source that is disseminated through institutions that can function as separate ruling entities and powers. Using Foucault's theoretical approach can help explain how rulers beautify the Ka'aba, thereby potentially increasing their command and influence over people, as expressed in the idea that "stones can make people docile and knowable" [6].

It can be argued, following Foucault [8] that a stone of considerable size possesses a divine power bestowed by a higher authority, thereby exerting influence in various directions. This is in conformity with Foucault's theoretical understanding of power relations:

"Power must be analyzed as something which circulates or as something which only functions in the form of a chain ……….. Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization ……….. Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" [7].

8. Knowledge and Power

In this section of the article some of the points of Foucault's theory of Knowledge and Power that fit in here will be discussed, along with some examples where Foucault's theory can be applied.

In 802 AH/1399 CE, a fire at the Holy Mosque's Western façade caused Sultān al-Nāsir Faraj Ibn Barqūq to send one of his viziers to Makkah in 803 AH/1400 CE with a specific mission to carry out a total renewal of all of the Holy Mosque. He could not, though, fully accomplish this mission, as there existed at that period no teak wood that could be found locally in Makkah to make up for the shortage. Therefore, he was unable to complete the roofing of that part fully. Later, he sent that very vizier to Makkah in 807 AH/1404 CE to complete the roofing and to inspect the walls for cracks. The great renovations carried out by Sultān Faraj Ibn Barqūq are evidenced by brief inscriptions made up of three lines that bear the pertinent details:

1. In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful, and the name of His Highness Sultān al-Nāsir Faraj Ibn Barqūq who ordered the restoration of what was destroyed by fire in the Holy Mosque.
2. This year of the restoration 802 AH.
3. The restorations were made by the one who is hoping for the forgiveness of his Lord.

This specific discourse serves three specific purposes: religious, political, and economic. The religious aspect is founded upon that which is enjoined as an Islamic tenet that one should serve the Two Holy Mosques with the aim of gaining the favor of Allah. But if this ruler were merely motivated by his religious obligations, he would not need public recognition of such activities; however, he is aware that his activities to promote the Mosque are primarily geared toward calling out to Allah Most High for forgiveness. Ultimately, one sees that believers reach Paradise after their demise due to such activities.

The political achievements are meant to prove to the leader's supporters why such activities are necessary, thus making it easier to obtain their support and receive approval from the rest of the Muslim population within the Islamic state, as well as the modern Muslim population.

The economic purpose is basically rooted in the idea that as a sovereign distributes resources from a government budget to a geographic area - like the Holy Mosque - especially one that society holds sacred, this act legitimizes all subsequent economic activities linked to the state. The occurrence appears to mirror modern-day corporate social responsibility efforts by corporations to enhance their public image. In the past, rulers attempted to beautify the appearance of cities within the Hijāz region that surrounded Makkah; for example, Khālid traditionally beautified the road that led to the Ka'aba by having it made of pure gold that shimmered with exceptional luminosity.

According to Foucault [9] when pursuing knowledge, it is essential that one investigates historical events from a diverse array of sources. According to Foucault, the aim is to achieve a pluralistic understanding by analyzing events from multiple perspectives and employing various methodologies. It is vital not to exacerbate contradictions or allow differences and shifts in the discourse surrounding events to impede progress in understanding:

" … not to multiply contradictions uselessly; not to be taken in by small differences; not to give too much weight to changes, disavowals, returns to the past, and polemics; not to suppose that men's discourse is perpetually undermined from within by the contradiction of their desires, the influences that they have been subjected to, or the conditions in which they live; but to admit that if they speak, and if they speak among themselves, it is rather to overcome these contradictions, and to find the point from which they will be able to be mastered" [9].

9. Knowledge and Discourse

Al-Mahjūb fits very much into the enigmatic and elusive description of the author as defined by Foucault, who saw the relationship between the author and their work as vague and sometimes ambiguous. He persistently asks:

"What is a work? What is this curious unity which we designate as a work? Of what elements is it composed? Is it not what an author has written? Difficulties appear immediately. If an individual were not an author, could we say that what he wrote, said, left behind in his papers, or what has been collected of his remarks, could be called a 'work'?" [3]

Regarding al-Mahjūb, he performed Hajj in the year 860/1456. We also come to know that, although he did not write this manuscript in the year he performed his Hajj, he was very active in recording his observations, which he used as source

material for his manuscript when he returned home. He drew upon the information when he wrote the book requested by his students and fellow scholars about the Two Holy Mosques [4].

When al-Mahjūb performed his Hajj pilgrimage, he must have been in his prime youth, because the manuscript is replete with visits to many historical features and archaeological locations, as well as to physically demanding places. The manuscript also indicated that al-Mahjūb was born in what now corresponds to Tunisia, where many families still use the surname of al-Mahjūb.

A comparison of one of his manuscripts of *Qurrat al-Ayn fī Awṣāf al-Ḥaramayn* shows that he made the definitive version of this manuscript, later comparing this with the original version he had made in 888/1483. He must therefore have been alive at that time but died afterwards, which leads one to deduce that al-Mahjūb lived most of his life during the 9th/15th century [4].

The above account clearly discloses the author's name, along with the title published *Qurrat al-Ayn fī Awṣāf al-Ḥaramayn*, as claimed by the author himself, thus meeting the criteria set by Foucault. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that a few years after the author completed the Hajj pilgrimage, which he undertook during circa 860/1456, this particular text was written. Additionally, he had enough time to contrast this text with the original composition in circa 888/1483, thus proving that he had enough opportunity to make amendments to the text, insert footnotes, and add commentary for the sake of future revisions and corrections. Therefore, this text can be clearly attributed to the author, as all the criteria described by Foucault are met within this published text. Consequently, all questions raised by Foucault are given the correct answers. Therefore, this work clearly stands out by proving that the writings, collections, or compositions attributed to al-Mahjūb are actually written by the author himself and were created under the aforementioned title [3].

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault argued that the discovery of knowledge requires an investigation of past events with various sources. The process that follows is an attempt to achieve a multi-perspectival understanding by employing various methods to analyze the phenomenon from multiple standpoints. The process helps one move beyond simplistic claims of opposition, as subtle differences should not be a stumbling block to knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, placing too great an emphasis on differences expressed by specific writers of data must be circumvented. Omission of this consideration may ultimately compromise the project's credibility at its very basis [9].

10. Foucault and Archaeology

Foucault employs the term "archaeology" to propose a rigorous method for writing about history. The term "archaeology" denotes an approach where the historian digs deep in search of information. Foucault demonstrates how archaeology enables one to observe how events unfold through discourse, rather than necessarily through the exact truth. This may be carried out through two stages: first, to remove the upper layers of trivial information in order to uncover the historical period of interest. By digging deeper than historians, as an archaeologist would, the truth about a certain period of time beyond discourse would unfold [9].

Second, one needs to apply Foucault's 'discontinuity' theory, as there may be a variety of viewpoints depending on the origin of the information, the era in which it occurred, and the author who presented it. Different authors approach the various pieces of historical information from different viewpoints, through discourse rather than through a singular "truth" [9].

Foucault suggests studying writing of the time, different authors pieced together, giving a different, perhaps innovative view of the past, although Foucault suggests that there are no primary sources to construe:

"When all is said and done, underneath it all, everything is already interpretation" [9].

Although authors may introduce unrelated information, their discourses can still help us understand the changes that transpired in the 9th/15th century during al-Mahjūb's visit to the Two Holy Mosques. This will not entirely preclude the details they offer, despite the differences that exist in their psychological entities, dispositions, and specializations. When Foucault refers to the "author artist", he mentions other rules as well as contradictions, as there are always different rules for different pieces of writing, according to Foucault [9].

At one point, Foucault was of the opinion that there is no sense in focusing on the author's biography and life details, because his biography is not instrumental in making him an author [19].

Foucault insists that authors can play various roles, one of which is to mediate between possible conflicts that could arise from a collection of texts by a single writer. He ponders his initial stand, considering the great diversity of works that fall under one writer's name [19].

For example, al-Qalsādī, who traveled to Makkah in the same century as al-Mahjūb, gave no further information about the physical changes of the Ka'aba. Contrary to the descriptions given by al-Mahjūb in his manuscript, al-Qalsādī elaborated greatly on how he was deeply impacted by the shape of the Ka'aba upon seeing it, expressing his wonder at its grandeur and beauty. It was an experience that left a lasting impact on him, compelling him to impart to his readers the grandeur that this building evoked and the deep respect it commanded among Muslims. He then went on to describe the rituals experienced during Umrah. It is interesting to note that al-Qalsādī totally avoided discussing the changes in the Ka'aba's physical appearance, thus establishing a strong deviation from the viewpoint provided by al-Mahjūb; this is in support of Foucault's claim regarding how far personal inclinations and outside factors influence individuals. He interprets things according to his own inclinations or those influenced by external forces. He shared knowledge related to almost all aspects of that destination, the Ka'aba, such that he alludes to renowned academically-credited events involving himself and fellow scholars at these holy places. Additionally, al-Qalsādī is noted as one of the first Muslim scholars of the 9th/15th century, renowned for his acumen in applied sciences, especially algebra. In light of such information about al-Qalsādī's inclinations and interests, it is no wonder that he displays a complete lack of interest when describing the cultural and aesthetic changes

related to the Ka'aba. He will analyze this phenomenon using his discursive approach, which enables the comprehension of history through various perspectives. Considering the scientific horizon and activities connected to the Ka'aba, one may refer to the remarks offered by al-Qalsādī, who lived during this period in the 9th/15th centuries [20].

11. Descriptions by Muslim and Western Authors

This section discusses the accounts provided by al-Mahjūb, as well as those of two Muslim writers and two non-Muslim scholars, regarding various aspects of the Sacred Mosque located in Makkah. The center of this Mosque is the Ka'ba, along with other notable features such as its spacious interior, the encircling walls, arcades, columns, doorways, stones, Ibrahim's Maqam, the circumambulatory area, the Zamzam Well, the Drinking Dome, and areas referred to as al-Safa and al-Marwah.

The researcher analyzed the various explanations provided by writers regarding the Hajj pilgrimage of al-Mahjūb, taking into account the architectural developments in the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, if there exists concurrence among the writers, the historical record must have authenticity despite the differences in status and point of view among the writers, and slight differences may be overlooked. However, significant divergences suggest the existence of serious inaccuracies, and one questions the nature of such sweeping concurrence [20].

In line with Foucault's theory, the researcher was keen to explore the reasons behind the disagreement between the discourses of the authors who were contemporaries of al-Mahjūb, the author of the manuscript. For example, he noted that according to al-Mahjūb, there were eight doors in the Holy Mosque in the second half of the 9th/15th century, which contradicts other historical sources that cite the number as 19 [21]. It seems that al-Mahjūb counted only the doors that he considered main doors, or the ones with larger measurements, which he may have perceived as noteworthy.

Another reason for the disagreement regarding the number of doors between al-Mahjūb and other authors was that al-Mahjūb was not a resident of Makkah, unlike Ibn Fahd, who was. Therefore, al-Mahjūb was seeing the buildings for the first time. Hence, al-Mahjūb was very keen to record what he actually saw, as he was required to leave a truthful impression with high credibility among his fellow scholars and students in Tunisia, who had asked him to write the book and were in need of a great deal of information for themselves [4].

Despite the fact that the writings of authors are often unrelated, their discourses can be used to reveal the changes that took place in the 9th/15th century. Contradictions do exist due to the disposition and tendencies of each author, as indicated by Foucault in his discussion of the "author artist", as well as contradictions that may arise from the different rules that govern different passages of writing, as explained by Foucault [9].

For example, Ibn Battūta indicated that there were 491 pillars in the Holy Mosque and that they were made of marble [12]. However, Al-Mahjūb [4] describing 44 of them as having been built of stone coated with plaster made by the Abbasid Caliph, al-Mahadi. Here, we can see that the two authors reached a consensus, despite minor differences or the failure of one of them to point out certain pieces of information. However, we should also consider the nearly one-century time gap between Ibn Battūta and al-Mahjūb, during which changes must have occurred.

Another instance can be seen from the works of Ibn Battūta, who did not determine the measurements of the Holy Mosque through his own calculations but instead used the recorded measurements available from the historian al-Azraqī of Makkah. This observation is noteworthy, especially considering that Ibn Battūta made multiple visits to Makkah and undertook multiple Hajj pilgrimages. Moreover, his reference to al-Azraqī had errors, as he stated the length of the Holy Mosque wrongly as 400 cubits and the width as 170 cubits, which is incorrect. However, Al-Mahjūb made an accurate report based on al-Azraqī, albeit with minor divergences, indicating that the length of the Holy Mosque is 404 cubits and the width is 171 cubits [4]. In this case, it is clear that both authors reached nearly the same findings, as the differences between their measurements are small, despite one author deviating from these figures, despite having faced similar problems.

In his book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault maintains that inconsistencies or differences could stem from the prejudgments inherent within the author himself. Nevertheless, this prejudgment must be eliminated by the researcher, an issue to which he paid great attention [9].

As indicated above, Foucault's Theory of Knowledge teaches that opinions and events should be judged from several different perspectives to arrive at the truth and knowledge [9] especially as these authors visited the Holy Mosque with different goals and purposes in mind. Hence, the investigator needs to examine the different perspectives, views and objectives of the above-mentioned authors in order to come up with an integrated picture of the developments that took place in the Holy Mosque.

As mentioned earlier, Foucault's Theory of Knowledge stipulates that to achieve a high level of knowledge, opinions and events should be evaluated from multiple perspectives [9].

Indeed, each of the travelers who visited the Holy Mosque and were cited in this article had different goals, which is why they were chosen as a sample of travelers from Muslim and Western countries. Hence, it is relevant here to examine those with different perspectives, views, and objectives in order to obtain an integrated picture of the developments described in the Holy Mosque.

For instance, the traveler al-Qalsādī, who visited Makkah in the same century as al-Mahjūb, was greatly concerned about providing details about the physical developments that had taken place in the Holy Mosque. However, when he saw the Ka'aba, he was awe-stricken and described himself as being taken away by its beauty and splendor. It had a profound impact on him, and he described to the reader the prestige it held and the wonder it inspired in the hearts of Muslims. Then he began to describe to the reader how he and others performed Umrah.

Al-Mahjūb, on the other hand, was very practical, as he presented in his manuscript a lot of information about the grandeur of the Holy Mosque. Nevertheless, al-Qalsādī completely ignored the description of the physical developments of

the Holy Mosque, which was in stark contrast to al-Mahjūb; thus illustrating Foucault's theory that individuals care and are led predominantly by their tendencies and orientation. This is because he views things from a different perspective, influenced by his tendencies or the direction of his influences. He has taught some of these sciences about the Holy Mosque and the Holy Shrines, and mentioned the wonderful scientific discussions that took place between him and other scholars while they were in these holy places.

Moreover, we should not forget that al-Qalsādī was one of the first Muslim scholars of the 9th/15th century, who was well-informed in applied sciences, particularly in the science of algebra. When we gain a general understanding of al-Qalsādī's tendencies and interests, we are no longer surprised by his lack of interest in the aesthetic and cultural developments in the Holy Mosque. This is what Foucault, in his theory, would describe as an example of seeing history through the eyes of others. Hence, to understand the actual situation and activities that took place around the Holy Mosque, a good example is provided through the eyes of al-Qalsādī during the 9th/15th century [20].

In stark contrast to al-Qalsādī, Ibn Battūta was comparable with al-Mahjūb, being interested in the physical developments of the Ka'aba and the Holy Mosque in general. Ibn Battūta was a Moroccan traveler who had traveled to Makkah one-century prior to al-Mahjūb. While al-Qalsādī was interested in the Quran and its interpretations, as well as other sciences of the religion, Ibn Battūta shared similar goals, objectives, and style with al-Mahjūb. He furnished us with detailed architectural descriptions and measurements of the Holy Mosque, as well as accurate descriptions thereof. In fact, his travel book was replete with detailed descriptions of the places he visited during his travels, including architectural and physical details [12].

In general, Ibn Battūta was more informative than other historical sources and is comparable to al-Mahjūb, as the two travelers agreed on many of the developments that occurred in the Holy Mosque across successive Islamic eras. However, Ibn Battūta was dependent on the historical sources that preceded him, such as al-Azraqī [12].

To apply the most important ideas of Foucault's Theory of Knowledge in this article, we must remember that a person's cultural heritage and experiences inform their priorities for recording details and descriptions. We can also take advantage of other non-Muslim travelers who have had the opportunity to visit the Holy Mosque, such as the Italian traveler Varthema and the Englishman Joseph Pitts, who was brought to the Holy Mosque of Makkah by his Muslim captors.

Varthema, the Italian traveler, managed to enter the Holy Shrines of Makkah one-century after al-Mahjūb by disguising himself as a Muslim. He joined a convoy of people going to perform Hajj after convincing them that he was a Muslim. He aimed to discover the Egyptian political goals in order to know the conditions of the Islamic world. The aim was to control the Islamic world by disseminating information to Europe. The information furnished by Varthema was of particular importance because it was the only information from a European traveler to reach European politicians in their quest for political control of the East. It is in this information that he mentioned the location of the Ka'bah in the middle of the Holy Mosque and likened the Ka'bah, which he called a "temple," to the Coliseum of Rome [16].

Indeed, Varthema was very honest, albeit far from being truthful, in calling the Ka'aba a "temple" and comparing it with the Colosseum of Rome, because this was the kind of discourse that prevailed in his European culture. Such a discourse is also unique because Varthema describes not only the physical appearance of the two objects, which he finds similar, but also their places in the hearts of the people who sanctify them and take pride in having them in their countries. Based on Foucault's Theory of Knowledge and power, holy things give strength and energy to the people and produce more love and devotion. Varthema recognized that the Ka'aba was a highly significant place and held it in high esteem, comparing it to the great ancient monuments in his own country.

The most important topic tackled by Varthema in connection with the Holy Mosque during his journey was the number of the doors of the Holy Mosque, which he exaggerated, mentioning that they were 99 or 100, and he described them as being arched, but did not give details about their names, positions, and architectural descriptions [22].

Other perspectives were provided by the English traveler Joseph Pitts, who converted to Islam and accompanied his master from Algeria to perform the Hajj. He provided a rough estimate of the Holy Mosque and its area, stating that during his visit, it was ten times wider than the Royal Exchange in London [23].

12. Conclusion

Foucault argues that relations of power under societal systems go beyond simple hierarchy. The article, applying Foucault's thoughts on power, demonstrates how al-Mahjūb, the author of the *Qurat al-Ayn* manuscript, met the needs of students and scholars of his time by utilizing Foucault's theory to expound on the authority of the Holy Mosque of Makkah under the rule of the Egyptian Mamlūk sultans. On this note, al-Mahjūb developed a unique discourse characteristic of authors under similar conditions to serve this purpose.

Foucault argued that power, which exists through knowledge and discourse, is not centralized but is dispersed throughout society. Toward this end, his conceptualization of power significantly diverges from previous theories that defined power as being central and controlled by elite institutions, which impose hierarchical orders upon subordinate social groups, thereby commanding and dominating others. He views power as being decentralized, exercised by embodied selves and not owned, inherently discursive as opposed to being merely coercive, and available to society as well as not being confined to being exercised by societal agents. The researcher utilized Foucault's conceptual outline of power to describe how al-Mahjūb deduced that authority of this sort found between the ruler and subjects of Makkah originates within the Ka'aba, since such places confidence within individuals by being rendered sacred by Almighty Allah.

In the current research, the researcher aimed at acquiring views from various authors on how al-Mahjūb and his contemporaries represented the architectural developments they experienced personally at the Holy Mosque, and the ways in which these accounts vary with developments experienced in previous times. Al-Mahjūb mentioned instances of authors

showing consistency, as opposed to instances of inconsistency, even among authors who wrote within the same time frame. These inconsistencies may be due to the unique viewpoints presented by such authors, their differing interpretative methods for various historical occurrences, and the reasons behind individuals' visits to the Holy Mosque. Therefore, it is necessary to factor in the contextual factors surrounding the occurrence that impact the governing circumstances.

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