



POWER RELATIONS AND THE DISCOURSE OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY IN THE ABBASID DYNASTY: A FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction of political legitimacy in the Abbasid Dynasty through Michel Foucault's genealogical lens by exploring three key dimensions: discourse production, power-institution relations, and symbolic cultural strategies. The first finding reveals that religious and intellectual discourses such as claims of ahl al-bayt lineage, historical narration, and theological debates functioned as ideological tools that normalized Abbasid authority within society. Second, political legitimacy was reinforced not only through formal power structures but also through institutional networks including religious scholars, bureaucratic administration, and educational centers, all of which shaped regimes of truth and produced compliant political subjects. Third, symbolic and cultural strategies, including monumental architecture, public rituals, and court symbolism, strengthened legitimacy by forming collective imagination and representations of power. Through a genealogical analysis, the study demonstrates that Abbasid legitimacy was a multidimensional construct arising from the interplay of discourse, power, institutions, and cultural symbols. This research contributes to Islamic political thought by showing that authority in classical Islamic civilization was not static but continuously negotiated through knowledge production and social practices.

Keywords: Abbasid dynasty; Political legitimacy; Discourse; Power relations; Foucault genealogy; Islamic civilization

1. INTRODUCTION

The Abbasid dynasty was one of the most important Islamic dynasties in the history of Islamic civilization (Ichwani & Firmaningrum, 2023; Nasruddin et al., 2022). This dynasty ruled for approximately five centuries, from 750 to 1258 AD, replacing the previous Umayyad dynasty (Siti Syaidariyah Hasibuan, 2020). It was one of the most defining periods in Islamic civilization, not only for its political achievements but more fundamentally for its ability to build an intellectual, religious, and cultural infrastructure that shaped Muslim society for centuries. Political legitimacy under the Abbasids cannot be understood simply as the result of military succession or genealogical claims; rather, it emerged from a complex interaction between power, discourse, and

knowledge production. In this context, Michel Foucault's genealogical approach is highly relevant, offering tools to uncover how power operates through symbolic, discursive, and institutional mechanisms (Foucault, 1977).

The dynasty's rebellion against the Umayyads was led by the descendants of Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, who succeeded in building a broad network of consistency and gaining support from various parties. This revolution culminated in the Abbasid victory at the Battle of Zab in 750 AD (Fathiha, 2021), which ended Umayyad rule and began a new era of Islamic caliphate under the Abbasid Dynasty.

From its inception, Abbasid legitimacy was constructed through narratives that combined political and religious elements, particularly an emphasis on genealogical ties with the ahl al-bayt as a source of moral authority. These narratives served not only as political justification but also developed into a discourse that was continuously reproduced through classical texts, sermons, and historiographical traditions (Hodgson, 1974). Following Foucault, discourse not only reflects reality; it actively shapes the epistemic framework that determines what is accepted as true or legitimate in a society (Foucault, 1980).

At the height of Abbasid power, theological debates, legal traditions, and intellectual activity flourished in a political landscape heavily influenced by power interests. The rivalry between Mu'tazilite rationalism and traditionalist currents in the 9th century was not only an epistemological difference but also a struggle for discursive authority. Al-Ma'mun's implementation of the *mihnah* exemplifies how Abbasid power operated not only through administrative control but also at the epistemic level, regulating what was considered legitimate theological truth (Makdisi, 1981).

The development of knowledge institutions such as the Bayt al-Hikmah demonstrates how intellectual production served as a mechanism to strengthen Abbasid legitimacy. As Foucault argued, knowledge is inseparable from power (Foucault, 1991); thus, the proliferation of scholars and scholarly translation during the Abbasid era reflected a political strategy to consolidate hegemonic authority through institutionalized knowledge.

The relationship between political authorities and ulama also plays a crucial role in shaping legitimacy. Although ulama enjoy relative independence, their moral and legal authority is often mobilized to support state decisions, forming a discursive symbiosis between religious knowledge and political power (Berkey, 1992). Genealogically, this suggests that legitimacy emerges from the dynamic circulation of power, not from a single source.

According to Foucault, there are two models of approach to dismantling epistemes, namely archaeological analysis of knowledge and genealogical analysis of power (Chris Horricks dan Zoran Jevtic, Terj. Agus Kurniawan, Dkk 1997). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the construction of Abbasid political legitimacy through a Foucaultian genealogical framework, uncovering the layered discourses through which authority was produced, disseminated, and normalized. This analysis offers a new understanding of Islamic political history by demonstrating that legitimacy is not fixed, but rather continually negotiated through power relations, knowledge production, and discursive practices.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative historical-textual approach within Michel Foucault's genealogical framework to examine the construction of political legitimacy in the Abbasid Dynasty. The genealogical approach is selected because it allows the researcher to unravel the relationships between power, discourse, and knowledge production, as well as to understand how regimes of truth were produced and normalized within the context of classical Islamic politics.

1. Data Sources

Primary data are derived from classical primary sources, including Abbasid historical chronicles, political records, religious texts, and Islamic legal literature from the 8th to 10th centuries CE. In addition, secondary modern sources—scholarly works on Abbasid history, theology, and power structures are employed to contextualize findings and provide critical interpretation of primary sources.

2. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through library research and document analysis. Each text was carefully examined to identify discourses related to legitimacy, genealogical claims, theological debates, scholarly institutions, and political or social practices reinforcing Abbasid authority. The primary focus was on narratives asserting the interconnection between power and knowledge production.

3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a Foucauldian critical discourse analysis framework. Analytical steps included:

- Identifying discursive regimes relevant to political legitimacy.
- Tracing practices that produce and sustain regimes of truth.
- Connecting discourse to institutional structures and power relations.
- Interpreting how legitimacy was produced, maintained, and normalized through texts, institutions, and social practices.

The analysis was conducted thematically and chronologically, allowing for an in-depth understanding of both continuity and change in Abbasid political discourse. Research validity was ensured through triangulation of primary and secondary sources and critical reflection on interpretive biases.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse Production and Political Legitimation Strategies in the Abbasid Dynasty

The political authority of the Abbasid Dynasty is inseparable from the regime's method of designing, managing, and disseminating discourses that validated its position as the legitimate ruler of the Islamic world. From Foucault's genealogical perspective, power operates not only through instruments of coercion such as the military or legal institutions, but primarily through

mechanisms of discourse production that shape how people understand truth, authority, and political authenticity (Foucault, 1977).

Archaeology aims to elucidate the formation rules of groups of statements. In this stage, hidden elements are revealed, aiming to uncover epistemes and reveal comparisons between specific regimes of truth discoursed in each historical period. Given the presence of the past in a particular place, genealogical analysis of power takes the form of a search for historical continuity and discontinuity through discourse. This demonstrates that patriarchal mechanisms operate through a highly complex symbolic game (Sumintak and Abdullah, ed. 2022). Thus, discourse is not merely a means of communication but also an epistemic device that enables the political order to maintain its dominance across generations.

a. The Ahl al-Bayt Lineage as a Discursive Strategy of Legitimacy

One of the most fundamental discursive strategies employed by the Abbasids was their claim of genealogical affiliation with the ahl al-bayt, the family of the Prophet Muhammad. Although not direct descendants of Hasan or Husayn, the Abbasids constructed the narrative that they were the legitimate heirs of the Prophet's household, a narrative that played a decisive role in displacing the Umayyads, who were portrayed as politically unjust and religiously unrepresentative (Duri, 2011). Foucault characterizes such mechanisms as a "regime of truth" a socially accepted system of truth produced through repetition, institutionalization, and the regulation of knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

The Abbasids communicated this genealogical claim through sermons, political poetry, ideological treatises, and official historical narratives. These texts functioned as discourses that shaped the public understanding of religious-political authority. As a result, legitimacy did not merely rest upon the military power that brought the Abbasids to the throne but on a socially reinforced "truth" about their lineage. According to Foucault, power is not understood in the context of ownership by an institutional group as a mechanism that ensures the submission of one small group to a large group or dominates and is dominated by another through a relationship called powerful-powerless (Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, Jurnal Sosiologi. 2013).

b. The Codification of Knowledge and the Formation of Religious Authority

In the early Abbasid period, the codification of Hadith, jurisprudence, and theology became an integral component in the consolidation of political legitimacy. The state supported the development of intellectual institutions such as the Bayt al-Hikmah, which served not only as a translation center but also as a site where epistemic paradigms favorable to the dynasty were cultivated. In line with the objectives of power according to Foucault, it can be exercised by anyone, both individuals and groups. Power relations operate from thought (ideology) to the body, which ultimately influences behavior, thus becoming interested in power and knowledge, and how the two relate. Foucault is interested in human knowledge and the power that influences humans (Pip Jones, terj. Achmad Feryan Saifuddin, 2003).

From Foucault's perspective, this illustrates the operation of the power/knowledge nexus, whereby the state authorizes certain forms of knowledge while restricting others that threaten its authority (Foucault, 1977). For example, under Caliph al-Ma'mun, the rationalist Mu'tazilite theology was elevated as the dominant discourse and enforced through the mihnah, an

inquisitorial policy that required scholars to accept the createdness of the Qur'an (Hodgson, 2004). The concept of power according to Foucault, who is a pioneer of structuralism, power is one dimension of relations, where there is a relationship there or power (Alexander Aur terj. Mudji Sutrisno & Hendar Putranto (Ed). 2005).

Knowledge in this context was not a neutral intellectual activity; it functioned as a producer of discourse that established the boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Orthodoxy was defined through state-supported knowledge systems, while dissenting interpretations were marginalized through institutional and social pressures, and includes all forms of communication and representation that create social norms, values and human or societal identities. (Michel Foucault, Cet 1, 2017).

c. Representation of Power through Symbol and Ritual

The Abbasids also employed symbolic politics to reinforce discursive legitimacy. Court ceremonies, the adoption of black garments as dynastic identity, and the urban design of Baghdad as a center of administration and scholarship created a symbolic landscape in which Abbasid authority became visually and ritually embedded.

From Foucauldian analysis, such symbols operate within the "micro-physics of power" the subtle, everyday mechanisms through which power influences behavior, including architecture, visual languages, and ritual performativity (Foucault, 1979). Public compliance emerged not only from fear of punitive measures but from the internalization of symbolic structures that normalized Abbasid political authority.

d. Scholarly Discourse as a Tool of Normalization

The Abbasid era witnessed remarkable intellectual advancement: Greek philosophy was translated, rational theology flourished, and jurisprudential discourses were systematized. The state capitalized on these developments to construct the narrative that the Islamic intellectual tradition reached its zenith under Abbasid patronage. This positioned the caliphs as guardians of knowledge, thus establishing them as central figures in defining and distributing truth.

This intellectual project constituted a form of normalizing power a systematic attempt to establish authoritative standards of rationality, truth, and religious correctness (Foucault, 1977). By supporting selected scholars and intellectual tendencies, the state shaped the structure of knowledge, which in turn reinforced its legitimacy as the epicenter of scholarly authority.

e. The Formation of Political Subjectivity

Discursive strategies did not merely structure political order but also shaped the types of subjects the state desired. Abbasid society was encouraged to become pious, obedient, and intellectually aligned with the knowledge systems sanctioned by the regime. In Foucauldian terms, this is the process of subjection where individuals become subjects but simultaneously become subjected to power. power is more towards individuals as subjects with the smallest scope. Foucault's analysis of the implementation of power will lead to his basic idea of wanting to obtain the truth (Konrad Kebung Beoang, 1997).

Public acceptance of the caliph as "the shadow of God on earth" was not solely a product of coercion but of the internalization of discourses that framed the caliph as a moral, spiritual, and

intellectual authority. Legitimacy was therefore built not only top-down but also bottom-up through the shaping of collective consciousness.

f. Marginalization of Alternative Discourses

Power inherently generates resistance, and the Abbasid era was no exception. However, the regime effectively softened resistance by controlling competing discourses. Groups such as the Shi'ah, Khawarij, and various opposition movements were frequently reduced through narratives that portrayed them as threats to social order.

In Foucauldian theory, this reflects the exclusion of the other the creation of normative identity through the marginalization of alternative voices. Official historical narratives were crafted to assert that Abbasid power aligned with divine will; thus, opposition could be categorized as religious and moral deviance. In this manner, it was discourse not merely force that subdued dissenting groups.

Institutionalization of Knowledge, Scholars, and the Production of Authority in the Abbasid Dynasty

One of the most decisive aspects of political consolidation in the Abbasid Dynasty was its ability to institutionalize knowledge and utilize scholarly authority as an instrument of political legitimacy. Foucault (1980) emphasizes that power operates through a power/knowledge apparatus, a reciprocal relationship in which the production of knowledge and the exercise of power mutually reinforce one another. During the Abbasid era, this relationship materialized through the establishment of learning institutions, the cultivation of scholarly elites, and the enforcement of orthodoxy all of which served as pillars of the political structure.

a. Knowledge as an Instrument of Power

Although the Abbasids inherited intellectual traditions from the Umayyad period, they undertook a major transformation by integrating knowledge into the structure of the state. This development is evident in the establishment of the Bayt al-Hikmah, a translation and research institute directly supported by the caliph, particularly al-Ma'mun (Nakosteen, 1996). The institution was not merely an intellectual hub; it served as a discursive apparatus that shaped official definitions of rationality, morality, and orthodoxy.

Within a Foucauldian framework, the Bayt al-Hikmah may be seen as a space where "truth" was produced through the intervention of political authority. The state determined which forms of knowledge were worthy of inquiry and which intellectual paradigms were necessary to sustain its political architecture (Foucault, 1977). In this sense, science, philosophy, and theology did not flourish autonomously but operated within the gravitational pull of power. This "politics of knowledge" enabled intellectual activity to play a direct role in constructing political legitimacy.

b. Scholars as a Class Supporting Political Legitimacy

Scholars (ulama) became central actors in mediating the relationship between the state and society. Through jurisprudence, Hadith scholarship, and theology, they produced discourses that defined social norms of right and wrong. The Abbasids utilized scholarly authority through two primary mechanisms: patronage and structural integration. Patronage appeared in the form

of stipends, administrative appointments, and honors that effectively embedded scholars within the political network. Structural integration manifested in the creation of the office of qadi al-qudat (chief judge), formalized during the reign of Harun al-Rashid (Hodgson, 2004).

According to Foucault (1979), power becomes most effective when it flows through figures perceived as morally neutral or spiritually authoritative. In this context, scholars played an essential role. When they endorsed the legitimacy of the caliph, their support was interpreted by the public as religious affirmation of governmental authority. Conversely, during episodes of tension such as the mihnah conflicts between scholars and the state revealed a struggle between competing regimes of discourse: scholarly authority versus political authority.

c. The Mihnah and the Struggle Over the Production of Truth

The mihnah (833–848 CE) stands as a concrete illustration of Foucauldian genealogical analysis regarding discursive conflict. Al-Ma'mun attempted to establish the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the "createdness of the Qur'an" as the state's official truth. Scholars who rejected the doctrine, most notably Ahmad ibn Hanbal, were persecuted. Foucault (1977) characterizes such episodes as instances of "disciplinary power," in which authority employs mechanisms of bodily and behavioral regulation to impose a particular discourse.

The mihnah demonstrates that scholarly authority is not a natural given but the outcome of contested regimes of truth. The state engineered a rationalist orthodoxy to restructure power relations, yet the resistance of traditionalist scholars revealed that the production of truth can never be wholly monopolized by political authority. Thus, the mihnah is a critical example of how discourse, authority, and resistance intersect within Abbasid political life.

d. The Formation of Legal Schools and the Normalization of Sharia

After the mihnah, the state adopted a more conciliatory approach toward traditionalist scholars. During the reign of al-Mutawakkil the major schools of jurisprudence particularly the Hanafi and Hanbali schools gained formal reinforcement. This development illustrates a mode of power consistent with what Foucault (1979) calls techniques of governance, in which law becomes a mechanism for producing social order.

These legal schools did not merely serve as systems of jurisprudence; they became mechanisms for shaping subject formation. Religious identity was organized through the framework of the madhhab, which gradually influenced patterns of thought, behavior, and political perception. In this way, legal schools functioned not only as legal traditions but as instruments for crafting particular forms of political subjectivity aligned with state interests.

e. The Development of Historiography as a Discursive Tool of Legitimacy

Historiography during the Abbasid era was not simply a narrative enterprise; it functioned as an ideological instrument. Works such as *Tarikh al-Tabari* and *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi* constructed narratives that affirmed Abbasid legitimacy by selectively organizing the historical record (Humphreys, 1991). Foucault (1977) refers to such practices as the production of "subjugated knowledge" forms of knowledge filtered, arranged, and reshaped to serve dominant interests.

Through historiographical discourse, the Abbasids were portrayed as the culmination of Islamic civilization, characterized by order, piety, and scholarly patronage. Conversely, earlier

dynasties, especially the Umayyads, were frequently depicted as symbols of tyranny and moral decline. This reveals how the management of collective memory becomes part of the state's apparatus of legitimacy.

f. The Integration of Knowledge, Religion, and the State

The mechanisms described above intellectual institutions, scholarly authority, legal normalization, and historiographical production demonstrate how the Abbasid state integrated various branches of knowledge to generate social consensus. In Foucauldian analysis, such integration forms a "regime of truth," a system that determines what may be spoken, what must be believed, and who has the legitimate right to speak (Foucault, 1980). Political legitimacy in the Abbasid era thus operated not merely at the level of governance but at the epistemological level, shaping the fundamental structures through which society understood authority.

Discipline, Surveillance, and the Formation of Political Subjectivity in the Abbasid Dynasty

If the previous discussion highlighted the discursive dimension and the institutionalization of knowledge, this section examines how Abbasid power operated at the level of social practices, mechanisms of surveillance, and the formation of political subjects. This analysis closely aligns with Michel Foucault's conceptualization of discipline, governmentality, and the production of obedient subjects.

a. City, Architecture, and Social Discipline

Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Empire, was designed not merely as an economic or political center but as an instrument of social organization. The circular structure of Madinat al-Mansur, with the palace and the central mosque placed at its core, reflects a hierarchical and centralized spatial order (Kennedy, 2004). From a Foucauldian perspective, such an architectural layout represents an early form of disciplinary space a spatial mechanism that arranges interaction, produces order, and implicitly embeds obedience.

The presence of markets monitored by the muhtasib, mosques functioning as sites of moral regulation, and administrative offices keeping records of residents, created a subtle network of supervision akin to what Foucault describes as the panopticon (Foucault, 1977). Although not explicitly articulated, Abbasid society existed within spatial arrangements that enabled continuous and diffuse surveillance.

b. Bureaucracy and the Technologies of Government

The Abbasid regime relied on a highly sophisticated bureaucracy, far more complex than its predecessors. Positions such as wazir, katib, qadi, and amil formed an administrative network that ensured state authority penetrated everyday life. Foucault (1991) refers to such phenomena as governmentality the way the state regulates populations through administrative, statistical, and normative instruments.

The Abbasid bureaucracy managed taxation, population records, urban order, and commercial regulation. Power thus shifted from a personalistic model as seen in early Islamic governance to a bureaucratic apparatus that generated new modalities of surveillance. Record-keeping, policing of markets, and price regulations exemplify how the state directed social life with increasing precision.

c. Moral Surveillance and the Regulation of Religious Life

A defining feature of Abbasid governance was its elaborate moral surveillance system carried out through the institution of *hisbah*. The *muhtasib* was not merely an inspector of markets but a guardian of public morality tasked with ensuring compliance with Islamic ethical norms. In Foucauldian terms, this mechanism constitutes a form of pastoral power a technique of governance that shapes moral conduct through guidance, monitoring, and correction (Foucault, 1979).

Religious and social life from commercial ethics to interpersonal norms was regulated through this apparatus. The *muhtasib* could warn, reprimand, or publicly expose violators. Consequently, Abbasid citizens were subject not only to legal structures but also to moral normalization sustained by the state.

d. The Formation of the Muslim Subject

The Abbasids did not merely govern territory; they also shaped a particular model of human subjectivity. Through *madrasah* curricula, Friday sermons, legal discourses, and social rituals, the population was encouraged to embody traits of piety, obedience, rationality, and alignment with state authority.

Explains that subject formation involves two processes: subjectification (the creation of identity through discourse) and subjugation (the subordination of individuals through power). Both processes were visible in the Abbasid context. The construction of orthodox Muslim identity through legal schools and *hadith* scholarship exemplifies subjectification, while legal enforcement, taxation, and moral oversight represent subjugation.

e. Resistance as an Integral Element of Power

For Foucault, power is never absolute; it always generates resistance. Under Abbasid rule, resistance arose from many directions: Shi'a movements, the Zanj rebellion, critiques by philosophers, and the objections of scholars to state intervention. These instances of resistance were not merely political disruptions but essential components of the power dynamic itself.

Foucault (1977) argues that resistance reveals the genealogical traces of power because every act of refusal exposes the operations of authority that power seeks to conceal. Thus, the ideological and socio-political conflicts of the Abbasid era provide crucial insight into how power was produced, exercised, and contested.

f. The State and the Regulation of Collective Memory

The Abbasid rulers also exercised power by shaping collective memory through the control of historiography. Official chronicles, public sermons, and ceremonial rituals were organized to construct a preferred narrative of the past. In Foucauldian terms, this constitutes a politics of memory a strategy through which power influences how society interprets its historical trajectory in order to preserve contemporary legitimacy.

The portrayal of the Umayyads as tyrannical and the Abbasids as rightful saviors of the Muslim community illustrates how memory was selectively engineered to reinforce the ruling dynasty's authority (Humphreys, 1991).

Correlation of the Three Discussions: Discourse, Knowledge, and Mechanisms of Power in the Abbasid Dynasty

The three preceding discussions can be understood as an integrated analytical framework illustrating how power operated in the Abbasid Dynasty through interconnected relational networks. Drawing on Foucauldian theory, the relationship between discourse, knowledge, and disciplinary practices forms a configuration of power that does not depend solely on formal political structures. Instead, it rests on the state's ability to produce truth, regulate populations, and shape obedient subjects. In this sense, power does not appear as a single entity, but as an ensemble of interrelated mechanisms that reinforce one another.

a. Discourse Production as the Foundation of Legitimacy

The first discussion demonstrates that Abbasid legitimacy was built through the systematic production of discourse: narratives of ahl al-bayt lineage, the establishment of rationalist theology, and portrayals of political opponents as deviants or threats to order (Hodgson, 1974). In Foucault's analysis, such discourse constitutes a regime of truth a set of statements accepted as valid because they are produced, circulated, and authorized by institutions of power (Foucault, 1980).

Thus, discourse is not merely a rhetorical instrument but a mechanism of power that determines who may speak, what may be said, and which knowledge is accepted as truth. At this level, discourse becomes the foundational layer that enables the Abbasids to assert and maintain political legitimacy.

b. Institutionalization of Knowledge as a Mechanism for Reinforcing Discourse

The second discussion shows that discourse cannot sustain itself without institutional support. The Abbasids constructed a vast network of institutions Bayt al-Hikmah, madrasas, the judiciary, patronized ulama, and centers of textual production through which preferred discourses were studied, taught, and reproduced (Gutas, 1998).

From a Foucauldian perspective, this is part of the genealogy of knowledge: the process by which power structures shape knowledge, and knowledge in turn strengthens those structures. State-authorized knowledge functions as an instrument for guiding public opinion, determining orthodoxy, and marginalizing competing perspectives.

In this way, the discourse analyzed earlier finds its institutional embodiment here. Without institutions, discourse remains narrative; with institutions, it becomes a truth norm.

c. Discipline, Surveillance, and the Formation of Subjectivity

The third discussion expands the analysis by showing how power penetrated everyday life through disciplinary mechanisms. Through urban design, moral policing, bureaucratic regulation, and administrative surveillance, the Abbasids created a social environment that shaped behavior, moral norms, and public conduct (Kennedy, 2004; Foucault, 1977).

This demonstrates that Abbasid power operated in a capillary manner diffusing through subtle networks that reached deep into social practices. The Abbasid subject was formed not only

by beliefs or discourse but by practices that constrained action, supervised behavior, and normalized particular ways of living (Foucault, 1979).

The Interconnection of the Three Dimensions of Power

- 1) Discourse creates legitimacy, Knowledge institutionalizes discourse, Discipline shapes subjects.

The three discussions reveal that Abbasid power functioned through a multilayered process:

- Discourse created authoritative narratives about rightful rule.
- Knowledge and institutions ensured these narratives were reproduced.
- Disciplinary and surveillance practices ensured public behavior aligned with these narratives.

This reflects what Foucault describes as the power/knowledge nexus the inseparable relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

- 2) Power is not only repressive but productive

- Abbasid power did not merely suppress rivals; it also generated:
- new religious subjectivities,
- coherent moral norms,
- an orderly social space,
- and specific ways of thinking about authority.

Here, power is not simply coercive it creates and shapes the social, intellectual, and cultural conditions that allow it to endure.

- 3) The Three Dimensions Produce the "Abbasid Political Subject"

Through discourse, institutional knowledge, and discipline, the Abbasids produced a subject who:

- accepted Abbasid authority as natural,
- internalized religious-social norms beneficial to the state,
- behaved as if constantly observed,
- complied not because of force but through normalization.

This exemplifies what Foucault calls the production of subjectivity (Foucault, 1982).

By connecting these three discussions, it becomes clear that Abbasid power cannot be understood solely through formal political institutions. It emerges as a synergy between discourse production, the institutionalization of knowledge, and mechanisms of social regulation. Viewed through a Foucauldian lens, this power appears as a network of relations that produces truth, shapes identities, regulates conduct, and creates obedient political subjects a form of power operating through speech, knowledge, and the body.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the three discussions, this study demonstrates that the political legitimacy of the Abbasid Dynasty was constructed through a multidimensional mechanism involving discourse, institutions, power, and cultural symbols.

Legitimacy was produced through political and religious discourse, including genealogical narratives, official sermons, historical texts, and theological debates, which normalized the authority of the caliph and shaped societal perceptions of political truth.

Legitimacy was reinforced through structured power relations and social institutions, wherein the ulama, bureaucracy, and educational institutions played crucial roles in enforcing regimes of truth while shaping compliant subjects attuned to political norms and authority.

Legitimacy was further enhanced through symbolic and cultural strategies, including architectural projects, public rituals, art, and official symbols, which produced a collective identity and strengthened social acceptance of power.

Therefore, Abbasid legitimacy cannot be reduced merely to genealogical claims or administrative authority; it was a product of the dynamic interaction between discourse, institutions, power, and symbols. Foucault's genealogical approach allows us to understand legitimacy as a process that is continuously negotiated and normalized through social practices, knowledge production, and symbolic mechanisms. This study contributes to Islamic political studies by emphasizing that legitimacy in classical Islamic civilization is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon, rather than a static entity.

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