

The Holy Kaaba

Introduction

The Holy Kaaba (al-*Ka'ba*, lit. "the Cube"), also spelt "*Ka'ba*," "*Ka'bah*" or "*Kabah*," sometimes referred to as "*al-Ka'ba al-Musharrafah*" (lit. "the Honoured Ka'ba," is a stone building at the centre of Islam's most important mosque and holiest site, the *Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

It is considered by Muslims to be the *Bayt Allah* (lit. "House of God") and is the *qibla* (direction of prayer) for Muslims around the world.

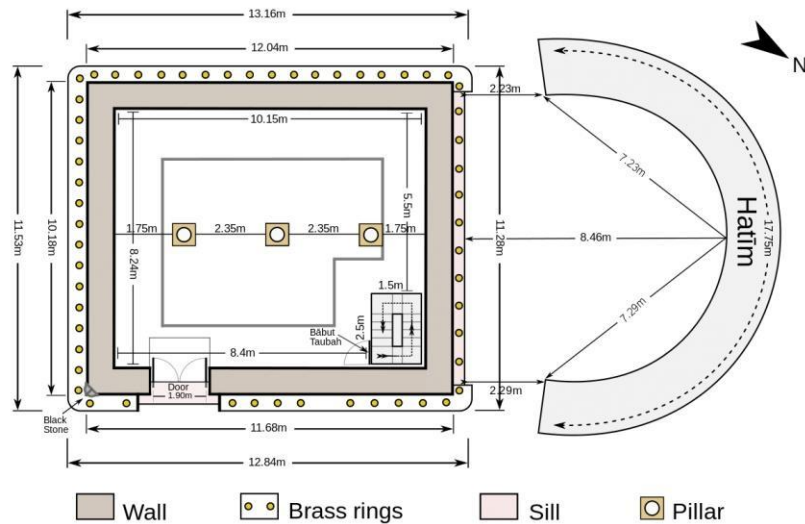
The current structure, constructed of grey stone and marble and oriented so that its corners roughly correspond to the compass points, was built after the original building was damaged by fire during the Umayyad siege of Mecca in 683.

In early Islam, Muslims prayed facing the general direction of Jerusalem as the *qibla* before changing direction to face the Kaaba. This change is believed to have resulted from a Quranic verse revelation to Muhammad.

According to Islam, the Kaaba was rebuilt several times throughout history, most famously by Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son *Ismail* (Ishmael), when he returned to the valley of Mecca several years after leaving his wife *Hajar* (Hagar) and *Ismail* there when Allah commanded him.

The Kaaba

The area around the Kaaba where pilgrims walk is called the "*Mataaf*."

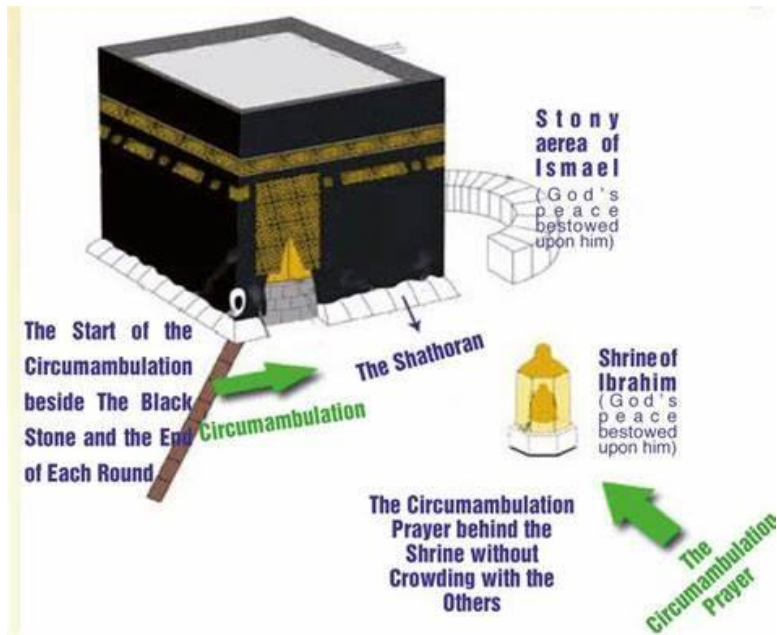


Plan of the Kaaba

The Kaaba is a cuboid-shaped structure made of grey stone and marble. It is approximately 15 m (49 ft 3 in) high with sides measuring 12 m (39 ft 4 in) x 10.5 m (34 ft 5 in) wide (*Hawting states 10 m (32 ft 10 in)). Inside the Kaaba, the floor is made of marble and limestone. The interior walls, measuring 13 m x 9 m (43 ft x 30 ft), are clad with tiled, white marble halfway to the roof, with darker trimmings along the floor. The interior floor stands about 2 m (6 ft 7 in) above the ground area where **tawaf is performed.

**"The First Dynasty of Islam, The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750", by G R Hawting, 2002, has been acknowledged as the standard introductory survey of this complex period in Arab and Islamic history.*

****Tawaf**—Tawaf is an obligatory rite for completing the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. It is the ritual of circumambulating the Kaaba seven times counterclockwise. The area around the Kaaba where pilgrims walk is called the Mataaf.



Tawaf is an indirect Quranic name for boys and girls that means "circumambulation." It is derived from the T16-W-F root, which is used in many places in the Quran.

The wall directly adjacent to the entrance of the Kaaba has six tablets inlaid with inscriptions, and several more tablets are along the other walls. Along the top corners of the walls runs a black cloth embroidered with gold Qur'anic verses. Caretakers anoint the marble cladding with the same scented oil used to anoint the Black Stone outside.



The Three Pillars

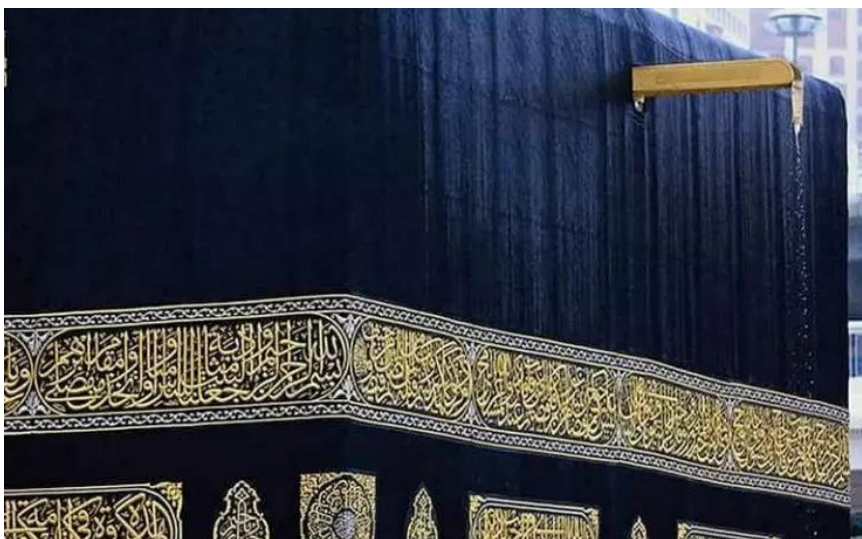
Three pillars stand inside the Kaaba, with a small altar or table set between one and the other two. Lamp-like objects (possible lanterns or crucible censers) hang from the ceiling or are suspended between the pillars.

The ceiling itself is of a darker colour, similar in shade to the lower trimming.

The *Bāb ut-Tawbah*—On the right wall (right of the entrance), a door opens to an enclosed staircase, leading to a hatch that opens to the roof. The roof and ceiling (collectively dual-layered) are made of stainless steel-capped teak wood.



Interior of the Kaaba - The bottom left of the Bāb ut-Tawbah can just be seen on the right-hand-side



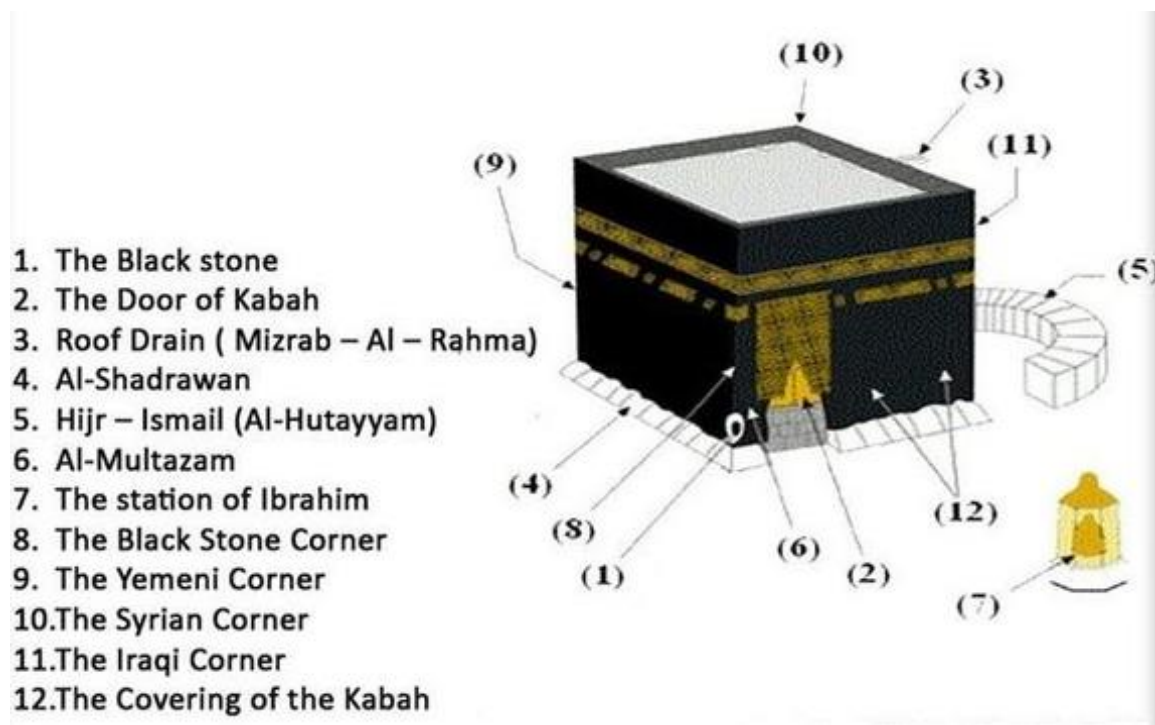
Meezab-e-Rehmat - "Water Outlet of Mercy"

Meezab-e-Rehmat ("water outlet of mercy") is a gold spout on the roof of the Holy Kaaba, between the Iraqi and Syrian corners, from whence rainwater empties onto *Hijr Ismail*.

Hijr Ismail is a semi-circular wall opposite, but not connected to, the north-west wall of the Kaaba known as the *hatim*.

It is 1.33 metres (4 ft 4 in) in height and 0.90 metres (2 ft 11 in) in width and is constructed of white marble. Initially, the space between the *hatim* and the Kaaba belonged to the Kaaba itself, and consequently, it was not entered during the *Tawaf*.

Pilgrims do not walk in the area between this wall and the Kaaba.



Focal Points Around the Kaaba



360 Degree view of the Kaaba interior



C.1900 Photo of the Kaaba

The Black Stone of Mecca - *Al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*



The "Black Stone of Mecca," *Al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*, is a Muslim veneration object built into the Kaaba's eastern wall (Black Stone corner).

The "Black Stone of Mecca"

It dates from the pre-Islamic religion of the Arabs and now consists of three large pieces and several fragments, surrounded by a stone ring and held together by a silver band.

According to Islamic tradition, the stone was given to Adam on his fall from paradise. It was originally white but has now become black because it has absorbed the sins of the millions of pilgrims who kissed and touched it.

Muhammad is acknowledged for setting the Black Stone in its current place in the Kaaba's East wall (Black Stone corner). A story found in "Sirah Rasul Allah" by Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar al-Muttalibi (c. 704–767) tells how the clans of Mecca renovated the Kaaba following a major fire that had partly destroyed the structure.

In 930, the Black Stone was carried away by the fanatics of the Qarmatian sect and was held for ransom for some 20 years - the Qarmatians, under Abu Tahir al Jannabi, defiled the Zamzam Well with the bodies of pilgrims, and the Black Stone at the Kaaba was struck and smashed by a stone fired from a catapult. It was smeared with excrement and later smashed into further fragments, stolen, and taken to the oasis.

The Black Stone was originally a single piece of dark rock polished smooth by the hands of millions of pilgrims; however, today, it consists of eight fragments cemented together into a silver frame fastened by silver nails to the Kaaba's outer wall (Black Stone corner).

In 1294, A H Al-Kurdi noted that there were 15 visible pieces of the Black Stone; however, some of the pieces were hidden under the putty that had been used to repair the stone. Whenever any piece became

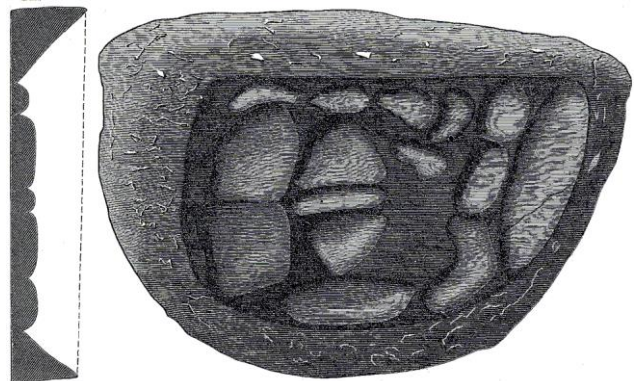
loose, it was attached to the top of the stone with wax, musk, and ambergris, which were kneaded together.

Although the Black Stone has often been described as a meteorite, this hypothesis has never been fully proven.

Anthony Hampton and his team of geologists from Oxford University studied the local samples collected from the stone's emplacement and found essential quantities of iridium and many shatter cones—a rare geological feature only known to form in the bedrock beneath meteorite impact craters. This favoured the findings of Paul Partsch, the curator of the Austro-Hungarian imperial collection of minerals and published the first comprehensive analysis of the Black Stone in 1857.

Partsch, Paul Maria (1857). *"Über den schwarzen Stein der Kaaba zu Mekka, mitgetheilt aus den hinterlassenen Schriften des wirklichen Mitgliedens"* (PDF). *Denkschriften der Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien. Erste Abtheilung (13): 1–5.*

"The Black Stone," By William Muir: *"The Life of Mahomet from original sources"*. London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1894. p. 27.



The fragments are made of smaller pieces combined to form the eight visible fragments today.

The Stone's exposed face measures about 20 centimetres (7.9 in) by 16 centimetres (6.3 in). Its original size is unclear, and the recorded dimensions have changed considerably over time as the pieces have been rearranged in their cement matrix several times.

In the 10th century, an observer described the Black Stone as being one cubit (46 cm or 18 in) long. By the early 17th century, it was recorded as measuring 140 by 122 cm (4 ft 7 in by 4 ft 0 in). According to Ali Bey, in the 18th century, it was described as 110 cm (3 ft 7 in) high, and Muhammad Ali Pasha reported it as being 76 cm (2 ft 6 in) long by 46 cm (1 ft 6 in) wide.

The Black Stone is attached to the east corner of the Kaaba, known as *al-Rukn al-Aswad* (the "Corner of the Black Stone"). Another stone, the Hajar as-Sa'adah (the "Stone of Felicity"), is set into the Kaaba's opposite corner, *al-Rukn al-Yamani* (the "Yemeni Corner"), at a lower height than the Black Stone.

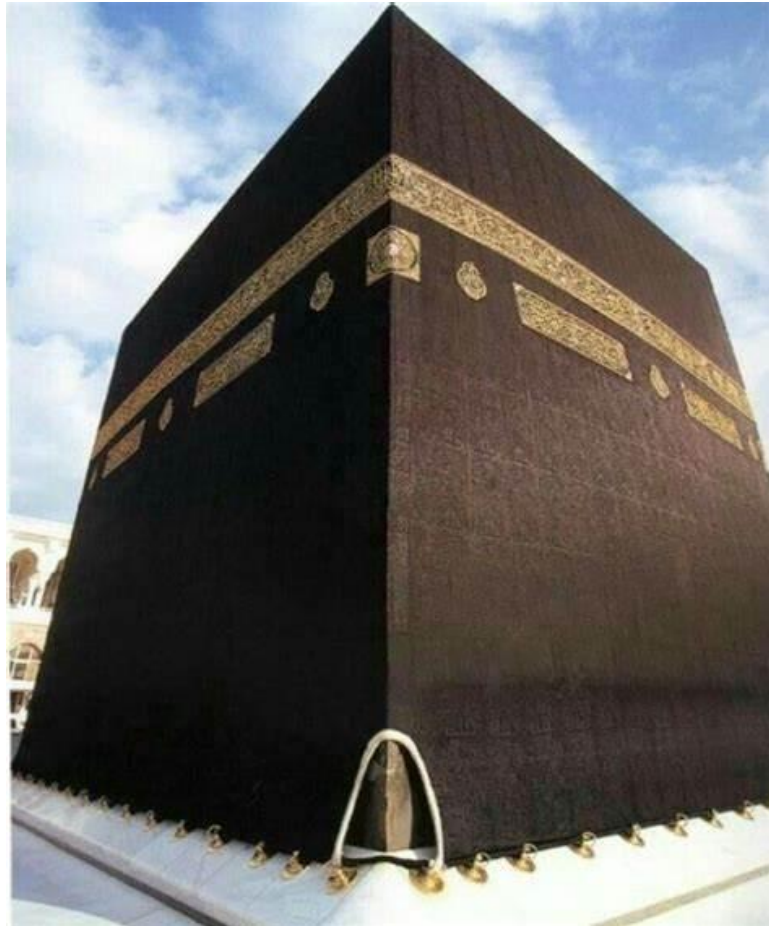
The choice of the east corner for the Black Stone may have had ritual significance - it faces the rain-bringing east wind (*al-qabul*) and the direction from which Canopus rises.

The silver frame around the Black Stone and the black *kiswah*, or cloth, enveloping the Kaaba, were maintained for centuries by the Ottoman Sultans as the Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques.

The frames have worn out over time because of the constant touching by pilgrims and have been periodically replaced. Worn-out frames are returned to Istanbul, where they are kept as part of the sacred relics in the Topkapı Palace.

***Hajar as-Sa'adah* - "Stone of Felicity"**

Another stone, known as the *Hajar as-Sa'adah* ("Stone of Felicity"), is set into the Kaaba's opposite corner to that of the Black Stone, *al-Rukn al-Yamani* (the "Yemeni Corner"), at a lower height than that of the Black Stone.



Hajar as-Sa'adah - Stone of Felicity - al-Rukn al-Yamani (Yemeni Corner)

The Yemeni Corner (*al-Rukn al-Yamaani*) is the southwest corner of the Kaaba and parallel to the Black Stone Corner, al-Rukn al-Yamaani. It precedes the Black Stone Corner during *Tawaf* and is named the "Yemani corner" because it faces the Yemen countryside.

Rukne Yamani is the crack in the holy Kaaba where Ali was born.

In the book *The Ancient History of Makkah and the Noble House of Allaah* by Muhammad Taahir al-Kurdi al-Makki (vol. 3, p. 256), the stone in the Yemeni Corner (al-Rukn al-Yamaani) dates back to the time of Abd-Allaah ibn al-Zubayr (born in Medina in the Hejaz, western Arabia, in May 624) and has remained unchanged to this day. Everyone who has Maintained the Kaaba has kept this stone as it was.

Muhammad Taahir al-Kurdi al-Makki also said that during the time of Ottoman Sultan Murad IV (1623 to 1640), who maintained the Kaaba, the edge of the stone of this corner (Yemani corner) was broken off, and molten lead was poured in its place.

You should touch this corner without kissing it or saying, Allaahu Akbar. If pilgrims cannot touch it, they should not point to it because the Prophet did not narrate it.

Concerning touching the Yemeni Corner, the Prophet said that touching the Black Stone and the Yemeni Corners would erase sins."

New Images of the Black Stone - May 2021

Saudi Arabia has revealed high-resolution images of the Black Stone for the first time.



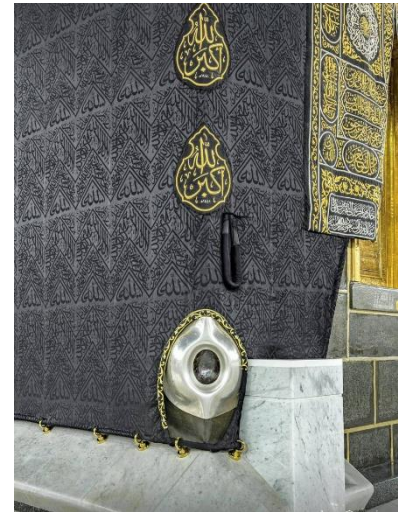
New High-Resolution Photographs of the Ancient Black Stone

In a historic development, the Saudi Arabian government has released several high-resolution photographs of the ancient Black Stone, *al-Hajar al-Aswad*, located at Mecca's holy Kaaba.

These images are up to 49,000 megapixels in resolution, and according to the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Saudi Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, they took more than 50 hours to shoot and develop.

Black Stone of Mecca - Al-Hajar al-Aswad)

The "**focus stacking" technique was used to capture 1,050 photos of the Black Stone. The General Presidency worked with the Two Holy Mosques' engineering agency while the holy stone was photographed for seven hours.



***Focus stacking* is a technique designed to achieve a deep depth of field by blending (or stacking) several images together. Each stacked shot is focused in a different spot, so the combined depth of field is deeper than the depth of field produced by any of the individual images.

This is the first time an official magnified digital photo of the Black Stone has been released, and it allows visitors to really experience it up close and personal.



*Previous Photo of the Black Stone (the Hajar al-Aswad)
with detail showing (left Pic) the position of the eight pieces*

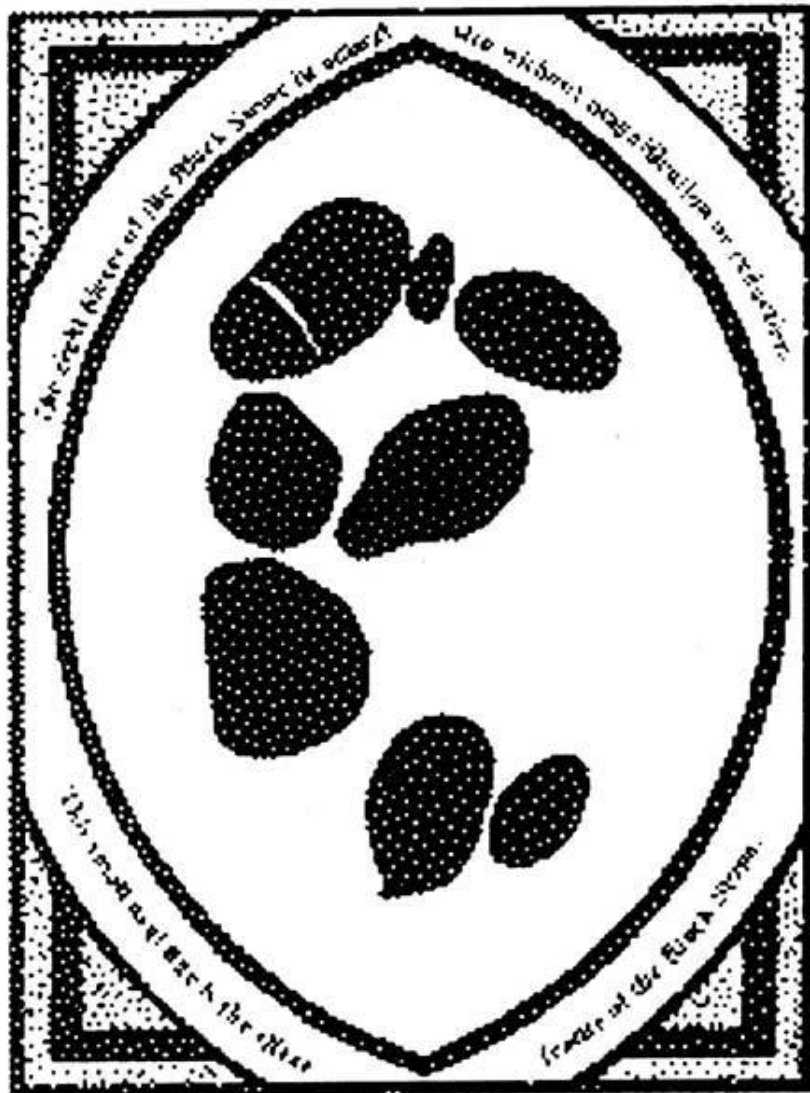


Fig. 2

This is the picture of the black stone where eight pieces are visible. It was drawn by the calligrapher al-Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Al-kurdi who put transparent paper on the black stone itself and drew each piece separately (1st of Rabie al-Awwal, 1376 AH)

Six Additional Pieces of the Black Stone

It is claimed that six additional pieces of the Black Stone are to be found in Istanbul, Turkey:

- One piece is displayed in the *** *mihrab* of the Blue Mosque

****Mihab*

A mihrab is a niche in the wall of a mosque or religious school (madrasa) that indicates the direction of Mecca (qibla), which Muslims face when praying. It is the architectural and symbolic focal point of religious buildings.

- One piece is above the entrance of the tomb of Sulaiman the Magnificent
- Four pieces are in the Sokullu Mehmet Pasa Mosque:
 - One piece is over the *mihrab*
 - One piece is below the lower pulpit
 - One piece is above the upper pulpit
 - One piece is over the entrance door

The authenticity of these additional pieces has never been proven; however, the Turks ruled for many years over what Saudi Arabia is now, and they acquired many historic Islamic relics.

Kaaba - Without its Brocade Covering



Exposed Kaaba as a New Brocade Covering is being fitted

End

30/06/2023