

Ibn Khaldun and American Social Thought: The Dialectic of Reception and Intersection

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Introduction

Ibn Khaldun did more than establish the sciences of history and political economy and the philosophies of history and political philosophy; he also applied sociology to interpret his lived reality. Furthermore, he offered a forward-looking vision that allows us to examine the harms of contemporary civilization and predict its future. His scientific legacy, with its distinct methodological rigour and analytical vision, remains applicable to historians and sociologists worldwide.

The credibility and durability of social theories depend on their ability to achieve internal and external validity. The renewed use of Ibn Khaldun's theory in the 21st century is strong evidence of its external validity. Sociologists' findings in modern societies confirm his statements and theories, providing empirical evidence that supports his arguments and analyses. This demonstrates the practical nature of Ibn Khaldun's ideas and elevates them beyond the limitations of his era. His analyses of the causes of the fall of Andalusia

have been proven applicable to the rise and fall of other civilizations as well, in terms of their underlying structure. This has sparked interest among Western thinkers, particularly Americans, in revisiting his work.

At a time when Western-centric approaches were prevalent in Arab and Islamic circles, Westerners, especially Americans, embarked on the study of pivotal figures in human intellectual history. Among the most notable of these figures was Ibn Khaldun. Conversely, Arab researchers discovered Ibn Khaldun by reconstructing his biography and presenting an overview of his theory of the state and urbanization. They also discussed scattered concepts in his works and compared his theory with those of the founders of Western social science. Additionally, they viewed his historical accounts of North Africa as a source of historical information. The application of his theories of the state and urbanization to empirical historical cases has been limited, which has made his presence in modern social sciences marginal.

This study highlights American intellectuals' interest in introducing Ibn Khaldun's ideas to American society. It attempts to expand the scope of research on his work by examining it in a cultural context different from the one in which he grew up. This approach demonstrates the universal nature of his social theory and its ability to transcend time and place when analysing human and social phenomena. Additionally, the study aims to reveal how Ibn Khaldun was received in America (and the West in general) through translations, and explore the intersection of his ideas with those mentioned in his historical and social writings.

The central issue of the research is to reveal how American social thinkers highlighted Ibn Khaldun's contributions to the foundation of sociology and his theoretical additions to the field. This raises a number of key questions:

What insights did these scholars offer in their interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's work? Were their studies of his legacy objective and fair, or were they influenced by Western-centric tendencies and cultural bias?

These lead to a series of other questions, most notably:

1. Is it possible to consider Ibn Khaldun a universal thinker who goes beyond the limits of his time and society?
2. What are the most prominent translations and studies that have introduced Ibn Khaldun's thought to American awareness?

3. What are the most significant points that enable us to make conceptual and methodological comparisons between Ibn Khaldun's thought and American social thought?

To answer these questions, the research has been divided into four main sections, as outlined below.

The first section, titled "Ibn Khaldun in the horizon of universal human thought", clarifies his philosophical and epistemological position in the intellectual sphere. He was not just a model of his era's thought, as he was a forward-thinking intellectual who could read the future and interpret the mechanisms of human civilization. This broad perspective made him the focus of researchers in both East and West.

The second section, on the motives for Western interest in Ibn Khaldun, identifies the intellectual and methodological reasons that led Western thinkers to turn their attention to Ibn Khaldun's theory. It also explains what is appealing about his thought in terms of the analytical and methodological tools he used to explain the movement of society and civilization and to present a model that differs from traditional Western narratives in the philosophy of history.

The third section, on the history of the reception of Khaldunian ideas in American thought, traces the early history of translating Ibn Khaldun's texts into English and the studies through which American thought became acquainted with his vision of the philosophy of civilization, history, and society. The research focuses on models and preliminary studies that highlight Ibn Khaldun's genius and his ability to establish the science of sociology centuries before its emergence in the West.

The fourth section, titled "Ibn Khaldun and American sociology: a comparison of concepts and methodology", provides an analytical comparison of the conceptual and methodological structures of Ibn Khaldun's ideas and the most prominent theoretical trends in American sociology. This comparison reveals points of convergence and influence and demonstrates how Ibn Khaldun's ideas can reformulate modern sociological concepts or broaden their interpretive horizons.

The research presented here employed a historical approach to track the transmission of Ibn Khaldun's texts to America (and the West in general) and an analytical approach to reveal the theoretical aspects of his philosophy of sociology and potential links to developments in American social thought. A comparative approach was used as an epistemological tool to conduct a focused comparison between Ibn Khaldun's texts and the analyses of leading American sociologists.

This comparison aims to reveal the points of intersection, reception, and influence in their theoretical structures and interpretive concepts.

Ibn Khaldun in the Horizon of Universal Human Thought

Ibn Khaldun was a reflection of his time, yet he also transcended its boundaries. He stood out from most of his contemporaries because of his extensive history of travel, which can even be said to have started before he was born. In the eighth century CE, his ancestors migrated from southern Arabia (Yemen) to Andalusia (southern Spain), a vibrant part of the Islamic world at the time. His full name, Abd al-Rahman Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, reveals his Yemeni origins, as the suffix al-Hadrami refers to Hadramawt, one of Yemen's historical regions. Despite Andalusian society's diversity, consisting of various Arabs and Berbers who intermarried, Ibn Khaldun's distinction in this context did not stem from his Arab ancestry or his Berber connections through marriage. Rather, it came from his central position as a bridge between many cultures.

Ibn Khaldun's consciousness was shaped within the cultural space of the Mediterranean, a space in which diverse religious and cultural structures intertwined, from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic influences, to the presence of Greek heritage with its sciences and philosophies, and Arabic poetry with its artistic and intellectual extensions. The extensive commercial and historical ties that connected this space to Asia also gave it an advanced, global dimension. By the 14th century, the Mediterranean had become a veritable centre of cultural diversity and a niche of intense civilizational interaction, forming the intellectual environment from which Ibn Khaldun's holistic view of history and human society emerged.

Social mobility, along with travel, contributed to shaping the experiences of Muslims in the Mediterranean, especially those who rose to high positions in government, the judiciary, and education, with Ibn Khaldun being one of the most prominent among them. His life's travels became a structural model for his autobiography, which could be titled *The Biography of Ibn Khaldun and His Journeys East and West*.¹ Despite the popularity of autobiographical

1 Rosenthal, F. "Ibn Khaldun in His Time" in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), n. 11, 25.

It should be noted that Muhammad Tawit al-Tangi edited the original Arabic version of *Ibn Khaldun's* autobiography, which was published in 1370 in Cairo. It was reprinted in 1951

writing² in the Islamic tradition before him, Ibn Khaldun's text remains unique because he placed his life's journey at the intersection between East and West. He emphasized the historical and geographical dimension that shaped political events and understood their consequences.

However, geographical travel alone was not the source of Ibn Khaldun's uniqueness. His intellectual imagination expanded, enabling him to delve into his inner world, formulate a perspective, and interact with his contemporaries while transcending them. Regardless of how scholars describe his personality – as fantastical, eccentric, narcissistic, or genius³ – it is important to recognize that this intellectual idiosyncrasy was an essential element of his character.

The features of Ibn Khaldun's intellectual project began to emerge from the moment he began to conceive and write the *Muqaddimah*, a study described by Arnold J. Toynbee, the dean of 20th-century British historians, as “undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind ever created by any mind in any time or place”.⁴

Ibn Khaldun's uniqueness extended beyond his intellectual output and analytical style. It was also evident in his appearance and cultural symbols. While serving as a judge in Cairo, he continued to wear the traditional Moroccan *jilbab* rather than the lighter attire customary among Egyptian judges. While this choice may have caused some discomfort, it reflected clear pride in his Andalusian roots without conflicting with his religious commitment or professional integration into Egyptian government institutions.⁵ In his writings, Ibn Khaldun expressed the concept of difference within clear boundaries,

and translated into French by Abdesselam Cheddadi under the title *Voyage 27: Introduction to the West and the East* (Paris: Sindbad, 1980). Unfortunately, as noted by the translator of the English edition, Franz Rosenthal, Cheddadi omitted almost all of the poems quoted by Ibn Khaldun.

- 2 Fischel, W. J. *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane: Their Historic Meeting in Damascus. 1401 A.D. (803 A.H.) : A Study Based on Arabic Manuscripts of Ibn Khaldun's 'Autobiography' : With a Translation into English, and a Commentary*; Rosenthal, “Ibn Khaldun in His Time” (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 14–17.
- 3 Syrier, M. “Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Mysticism”, (Islamic Culture 21, 1947): 264.
- 4 Toynbee, A. J. *A Study of History*, vol. 3, *The Growths of Civilizations*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 322. Cited in Rosenthal, F., translator's introduction to *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, by *Ibn Khaldun*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), vol. 1, cxv.
- 5 Fischel, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*. 70–71; 16–24.

relying mostly on rational reasoning. It is important to note that he was not a historian with an official position, but instead was a well-read scholar of law who approached history as a field for analysing phenomena rather than a bureaucratic profession. Amid the exceptional circumstances in which he lived, he sought to derive lessons that could benefit people.

His autobiography contains many highlights, including his encounters with the Tatar leader Timur Lenk. These encounters are considered some of the most significant and tense moments of his life. They took place in 1401 in Damascus when Timur's army surrounded the city, which had not yet surrendered. Over the two decades preceding this encounter, Timur had established his reputation as the most dangerous warrior in the East since Genghis Khan, and he had inherited more than one trait from Genghis the latter. Not only was he a Muslim Turk, but he was also descended from a Mongol lineage on his mother's side and held mixed shamanistic allegiances. Most importantly, however, he adopted the Mongol ideal of seeking world domination through military force. His campaigns were expansionist, and he systematically plundered from Moscow in the north to Delhi in the south and from Central Asia to Izmir in the west. No one was spared, Muslim or non-Muslim alike. They were captured, tortured, and killed, and all lived in fear.

In January of 1401, Timur summoned Ibn Khaldun. They met outside Damascus, where the invading commander had set up camp while besieging the city. Ibn Khaldun feared for his life, but he knew from accounts that Timur was capable of combining cruelty with tolerance and had previously surrounded himself with scholars and Sufis.⁶ Thanks to his wisdom and diplomacy, Ibn Khaldun was able to gain Timur's trust. The story of their meetings became an important motif in his historical work.

Indeed, Ibn Khaldun gained Timur's trust to such an extent that the story of their meetings became a legitimate pretext for his work as a historian. Not only did Ibn Khaldun claim a role in securing the release of Timur's prisoners from the Mamluks, he also saw the conqueror of Central Asia as a living embodiment of his thesis that civilization, in all times and places, is based on a fundamental difference between urban and primitive modes of existence. He claimed that this difference produces an interaction between nomads and merchants, deserts and cities, and oral traditions and written ones. Perhaps Ibn Khaldun projected some of his own life ambitions onto Timur, presenting him as one of the greatest and most powerful kings. While some attribute

6 Ibid., 30, 64–65.

knowledge to Timur, others attribute magic and sorcery to him. Regardless of the differing accounts, Ibn Khaldun depicted Timur as extremely intelligent, insightful, and fond of argumentation and debate.⁷

Despite their different orientations, one of the most notable characteristics that distinguished Ibn Khaldun from the elite of his time was his innate inclination toward literature.⁸ With his solid background in jurisprudence and broad knowledge of its various branches, he was a true man of letters, with a particular interest in poetry and prose. For example, it is important to note his attention to lyrical poetic sounds, his understanding of poetry as a record of local identity, and his clear poetic ambitions.⁹ This was notable at a time when scientific activity had become so professionally established that it was common to observe that most prominent physicians and astronomers in Syria and Cairo during the 12th and 13th centuries worked as jurists, teachers at medical institutions, or timekeepers at major mosques in the region.¹⁰ This accurately reflected the scientific and institutional structure of the time.

At first glance, it may seem surprising that Ibn Khaldun left the discussion of the sciences until the sixth and final chapter of the *Muqaddimah*. This is not because the sciences were unimportant to the Muslim elite, but rather because – according to Ibn Khaldun – they are not a structural element of urban life. Like other aspects of urban life, the sciences are a form of luxury or extravagance, neither natural nor necessary. Science differs from crafts in this respect, which are considered an existential necessity. Because science is linked to lucrative professions, Ibn Khaldun presents and analyses it in Chapter 5, paving the way for its classification and evaluation in the subsequent chapter.

Ibn Khaldun sought to distinguish himself from his contemporaries and be a true man of his time. Furthermore, he aimed to establish a standard balancing the rules of doctrine, religion, and Sharia with the demands of the state, science, and practical intellect. In developing his vision of history, he methodologically employed observation and critical dialogue in a way that transcended unquestioningly accepting historical accounts as reliable simply

7 Ibid., 47.

8 Cooke, M. "Ibn Khaldun and Language: From Linguistic Habit to Philological Craft," in Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology, ed. B. B. Lawrence, 27–36.

9 Rosenthal, F. Translator's introduction to *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, vol. 1, xlv–xlv.

10 Dallal, A. "Science, Medicine, and Technology: The Making of a Scientific Culture," in *the Oxford History of Islam*, ed. J. L. Esposito. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213.

because they had a valid chain of narrators. For this reason, he adopted the methods of hadith scholars in verification and examination. However, unlike the authority of the *report* in the science of hadith, he presented the concept of *event* as evidence that can be verified or refuted through independent research and intellectual inquiry.

Over the last two decades of the 19th century and the start of the twentieth, a gradual shift in the reception of Ibn Khaldun has emerged. Interest shifted from the historical aspects of his work to its sociological, economic, geographical, and anthropological features. Ultimately, the *Muqaddimah* overshadowed most of the *Al-Ibar* historical encyclopaedia,¹¹ and was incorporated into cosmological thought. Ibn Khaldun was described as rational and modernist, and recognized as a pioneer of the social sciences. In this context, it was confirmed that there was a clear gap between his theoretical and scientific approach and his traditional historiographical practice, which remained linked to Islamic historical traditions in many respects.¹²

However, since the 1950s, with the publication of the new English translation of the *Muqaddimah* by Franz Rosenthal – a comprehensive, accurate, and extensively and critically annotated translation – a more balanced approach to reading Ibn Khaldun has been formulated, one that places him more accurately within his era and at the heart of Islamic thought in general. In parallel, Muhsin Mahdi¹³ presented a comprehensive study of Ibn Khaldun's works, and Walter Fischel, Rosenthal, and others made critical efforts to study his ideas.

Despite the clarity of Muhsin Mahdi's philosophical interpretation of the *Muqaddimah*, subsequent anthropological and historical research on the Maghreb and the Arab and Islamic world has more clearly highlighted the sociological and anthropological aspects of Ibn Khaldun's thought. Thanks largely to Rosenthal's translation, the anthropological value of the *Muqaddimah* has been recognized in the Anglo-Saxon world and incorporated into the

11 Ibn Khaldun ('Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn), *Kitab al-'Ibar wa diwan al-mubtada' wa al-habar fi ayyam al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man 'asarahum min dawī al-sultan al-akbar: al-Juz' al-awwal min Kitab al-'Ibar* [*The Book of Lessons and the Record of Beginnings and Events in the History of the Arabs, the Persians, the Berbers, and Their Powerful Contemporaries*].

12 Cheddadi A, *Ibn Khaldūn: l'homme et le théoricien de la civilisation*, (Gallimard, 2006).

13 Mahdi M. *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture*. (London, 1957; new ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964; 2nd ed., 1971).

history of anthropology. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun occupies a more distinguished place among modern anthropologists than any other thinker from earlier eras. Many anthropologists have developed his models; foremost among them is Ernest Gellner, who placed Ibn Khaldun's model of power and the relationship between agricultural and urban societies at the heart of his studies of the Maghreb and Islamic societies.

However, this broad integration of Ibn Khaldun into modern humanities traditions has raised many problems because the manner in which his thought has been assimilated is ambiguous. Aristotle, Plato, St Augustine, Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd are studied in the history of philosophy. The ideas of Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus on society are usually presented in the history of anthropological thought. Conversely, Ibn Khaldun is placed in the same category as Durkheim, Marx, and Evans-Pritchard. His theories are discussed as if they were contemporary. Indeed, Gellner repeatedly emphasized that he considered Ibn Khaldun the most important sociologist and anthropologist of all time.

How can we explain this unique distinction? One that makes Ibn Khaldun belong both to his own era and to ours.

The most vital and effective aspect of Ibn Khaldun's thought today is the form of confrontation allowed by his socio-political model, which Arab-Islamic societies have preserved for at least two centuries after entering the currents of modernity. This is in contrast to the Western socio-political model that emerged between the 15th and 18th centuries. This comparison allows us to reconsider the role of Arab-Islamic culture and its societies in the universal history of the emergence of the modern world.¹⁴

What supports Ibn Khaldun's universality and justifies his cosmic nature is the clear attraction that contemporary Western thought has shown toward him. The most prominent reasons for this attraction will be discussed in the following section.

Motives for Western Interest in Ibn Khaldun

While many factors have contributed to the Western scientific interest in Ibn Khaldun, the focus of this research is on three main reasons that reveal the nature and depth of this interest.

14 Cheddadi, *Ibn Khaldun: l'homme et le théoricien de la civilisation*, 12-13.

Historical Sociology

Historical sociology provides an epistemological framework combining theoretical analysis and practical application to understand human beings, interpret behaviour, and effect behavioural change. Ibn Khaldun's significance lies in the fact that he presented a complete model of what could be considered an early precursor to the science of historical sociology in the pre-modern context. His work was an advanced form of historical writing with sociological dimensions. His extensive archive, spanning eight centuries of political and social transformations in the Islamic cultural space, enabled him to carry out systematic intellectual operations to extract the *sociology of history* from raw historical material. His goal was not historiography for its own sake, but rather to reveal the social structure that produces and directs historical events.

Contemporary researchers in historical sociology have developed a complex definition of the field consisting of three central elements:

1. The necessity of the historical process for understanding social phenomena.
2. Viewing the past as a space free for the movement of individuals and groups.
3. Understanding the dynamics between human agency and social structure.¹⁵

The hypothesis that constitutes the definition of historical sociology is manifestly reflected in Ibn Khaldun's works in three principal domains:

1. In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun presents a well-established theoretical overview of the foundations of the humanities. He provides a historical framework for the development of these disciplines within Islamic civilization from the seventh to the 15th centuries. His work is notable for its ability to link the sciences to their social environments and trace their formation and transformation within the structure of Islamic civilization.
2. Ibn Khaldun's work is a significant and innovative addition to the field of human sciences. His contemporaries praised him not only for the depth of his analysis but also for being the first to present a systematic interpretation of civilization before the modern social sciences emerged. His innovative analytical tools earned him the title of *the first analyst of civilization*, which would later become part of sociology and anthropology.
3. In the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun was one of the first to use the term *social structure*, which later became a central concept in modern sociology.

15 Fischel, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*, 48.

Notably, his use of the concept closely resembles its contemporary meaning; he described the structure that organizes human relationships, values, and institutions. Four centuries later, in 1858, Herbert Spencer used the same term in his writings with almost the same meaning. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, sociologists continued to draw on the *Muqaddimah* as foundational material for developing the first models of social structure.

All of this leads to the logical conclusion that Ibn Khaldun is a foundational figure in the humanities, both past and present, who has helped us to understand society and humanity. Since the mid-20th century, researchers at the Frankfurt School have sought to construct an alternative model for the social sciences. It has become clear that this model aligns with many of Ibn Khaldun's sociological ideas. Contemporary studies demonstrate that Ibn Khaldun developed an original methodological approach to interpreting natural and social history in relation to values, religion, and institutions based on rigorous empirical reasoning.¹⁶

Ibn Khaldun's Model for Addressing the Crisis of Meaning and Establishing an Alternative Approach to Understanding History and Civilization

Ibn Khaldun presented a systematic analysis of the crisis of theoretical foundations in human thought, building upon the rational legacy of Ibn Rushd, whose intellectual project was based on reconciling reason and religion. From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun addressed the theoretical roots of the historical period he studied. He linked his analysis of progress and social order in medieval Islamic societies to philosophical, metaphysical, theological tools, and careful scientific observation.

Despite his critical stance toward philosophy, he continued to identify himself as an adherent of the Ibn Rushd school of thought, which combines wisdom and Sharia. He applied this approach in the *Muqaddimah* when studying Islamic civilization, viewing it and religion from two complementary perspectives: reason and revelation. This vision is based on the same foundations that combine the power of religion and philosophy, transcending worldly meaning and opening up to concepts similar to those of positivist philosophy prevalent in his era.

16 Shahidipak, M. "Ibn Khaldun as a Paradigm for the Past and Future of Sociology and Humanity." *Sociology International Journal* 4, no. 5 (2020): 154.

The *Muqaddimah* systematically addresses the development of educational and political systems in societies. This approach is considered an early application of positivism in the context of the humanities. Ibn Khaldun considered education an industry, linking social systems and administrative methods to urban development and its stages. He combined the concepts of progress and development with divine providence, which governs the course of history. His intellectual project was thus an attempt to overcome the crisis of meaning in civilization by combining a rational interpretation of history with the religious dimension of providence.

In contrast, positivist philosophies have been unable to formulate an epistemology capable of overcoming the intellectual crisis afflicting the contemporary West. According to Levitt, the crisis afflicting Western civilization is one of identity and meaning. The meaning of history itself has become unclear, and humanity continues to struggle to define its place within a comprehensible historical trajectory. History has proven that positivist philosophy, essentially based on excluding religion, has failed to save civilization from chaos.¹⁷ According to Ibn Khaldun's social theory, religion is a structural element in the movement of history and a fundamental driver of human civilization.

The Originality of Ibn Khaldun's Scientific Revolution Structure

There is no doubt that Ibn Khaldun's view of the movement of history, with its basis in empiricism and the use of induction in the analysis of historical facts, represents a true intellectual revolution in the field of human sciences. This revolution is characterized by the integration of three dimensions: epistemological, teleological, and existential. Ibn Khaldun based his conception on the interrelationship between wisdom, history, society, and knowledge, which has material, social, and metaphysical implications.

The results of Arab, Islamic, and local studies, along with most European and American research on Ibn Khaldun, demonstrate the originality of his theory and his profound contribution to establishing a new science of humanity and society. He left behind a vast legacy of social terminology that continues to influence modern research trends in the humanities. In fact, he has been described as *the greatest historian, social theorist, and pioneer* in the humanities because he brought about a philosophical shift in the understanding of the

17 Bacik, G. *The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun* (Edinburgh University Press, 2025), 144.

human experience itself. His approach to historiography is based on studying the evolution of the humanities and the progression of civilization to identify the factors that contribute to the progress and decline of nations.

Interest in Ibn Khaldun's ideas among Europeans first emerged in Ottoman circles. The Turkish scholar Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib Efendi was the first to draw attention to the *Muqaddimah*, a century after Ibn Khaldun's death in 1550,¹⁸ and a Turkish translation appeared in 1749.

Four centuries after his death, Europe began to become more widely acquainted with his work. In 1806, Étienne Marc Quatremère (1782–1857) obtained a complete copy of the manuscript, which was published in Egypt in 1857. This was followed by a three-volume French translation by De Slane in 1868. Clearly, Ibn Khaldun is not a *European discovery*, despite what some Orientalists have claimed. He is part of our shared human heritage and a pivotal figure in the history of the humanities. His work continues to offer vast potential for contemporary research, especially in sociology and the philosophy of history.

Ibn Khaldun refers to the humanities as “the science of nations and urban and rural societies”. One term derived from his intellectual framework is *collective consciousness*,¹⁹ which refers to a deep-rooted and powerful tendency considered a driving force behind the cycle of civilization. Researchers continue to differ in their interpretations of historical dynamics because Ibn Khaldun presented a humanistic model for understanding history as an abstract movement manifested in societies throughout time. The intellectual movement and the stages of development of the human soul were shaped by the human sciences in the context of their development.

Ibn Khaldun crystallized this understanding by presenting a comprehensive model within a philosophical, political, and social framework. Therefore, and as evidenced by original sources, Ibn Khaldun's historical existence surpasses the mental image Orientalism has created of him. Fair-minded researchers

18 Kûrkûn, *al-Mawsû'a al-Islâmiyya [The Encyclopedia of Islam]* (Ankara: Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2020) vol. 31, 118-120.

19 Ibn Khaldun's concept of *collective consciousness* is similar to the idea of *common sense* as advocated by pragmatism. Pragmatism is generally based on the idea that experience, reality and direct experience are the primary sources of ideas, values and standards, as is common sense. It is a philosophy that originated in the United States and spread throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. Its discussions and methodologies have expanded to include theoretical epistemological, methodological, and logical issues, as well as psychology and education.

have thus placed him in his rightful position as one of the most prominent founding minds of the humanities.

The History of the Reception of Ibn Khaldun's Text in American Thought

In this section, we explore the historical reception of Ibn Khaldun's text within American intellectual circles. We reveal how the text entered the Western sphere and how early American Orientalist circles revived interest in it at the beginning of the 20th century. Additionally, we consider the academic efforts that introduced the *Muqaddimah* to economic and social studies curricula at American universities, such as scholarly translations that reintroduced Ibn Khaldun to English-speaking readers and analytical studies that highlighted the text's sociological nature and place in the development of social thought.

Researchers of Ibn Khaldun's thought agree that he is one of the most prominent Arab thinkers in academic circles and that a considerable amount has been written about him. Numerous studies have explored various aspects of his work, including his philosophy of history, history, economics, political and social economy, political philosophy, and mysticism. His attempts to analyse human civilization have earned him a special place in the history of sociology. In fact, he has been credited as *the founder of sociology* in a number of studies.²⁰

In the early decades of the 20th century, there was a significant increase in Western interest in Ibn Khaldun. This later paved the way for a distinct, American interpretation of the *Muqaddimah*. In his book, *Ibn Khaldun's Writings*, Abdul Rahman Badawi states that, at the time of writing, there were 276 studies on Ibn Khaldun, 61 of which were in Arabic and 215 of which were in other languages.²¹ These figures represent only the beginning of a growing research movement, as many more studies have been published since then, revealing new aspects of his thought. One notable later work is Yves Lacoste's book, *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World*, written in French. It contributed to reintroducing his ideas to Western audiences before the shift toward more specialized American interest.

20 Al-Khuḍayrī, *Falsafat al-tārīkh 'inda Ibn Khaldūn [The Philosophy of History in Ibn Khaldun]* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2007), 7.

21 Badawī, *Mu'allafāt Ibn Khaldūn [The Works of Ibn Khaldun]*. (Cairo: Publications of the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, 1962), 223-317; 324-338.

Based on this, it is clear that the American reception of Ibn Khaldun's work evolved from an initial discovery stage to a comparative application stage and finally to the integration of the *Muqaddimah* into modern sociological discourse. This reflects Ibn Khaldun's transition from Oriental studies to Anglo-Saxon social thought.

In this context, we will focus on five pivotal research milestones that paved the way for Ibn Khaldun's ideas to gain recognition in the American academic community and established the foundation for subsequent American interpretations of his work.

The Early Beginnings of the Transmission of Ibn Khaldun's Text to the West

The Western world first became acquainted with Ibn Khaldun's texts through two seminal translations that served as the main gateway for Europe – and later the United States – to discover the *Muqaddimah*.

The first complete translation into Ottoman Turkish was carried out by Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib Efendi (1674–1749), who translated the *Muqaddimah* from the beginning to the end of the fifth chapter.²² This translation was published in Cairo in 1859 in a 617-page edition, featuring Pîrîzâde's work up until page 522. The remaining pages reproduced the Arabic text based on the first Bulaq press edition and included brief introductory pages on Ibn Khaldun's biography prepared by Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822–1895). Ahmed Cevdet Pasha later translated the sixth and final chapter. This part was published in Istanbul in 1860, accompanied by extensive marginal notes and explanatory comments.²³

The second translation, *Prolégomènes historiques d'Ibn Khaldoun* (Historical Introductions of Ibn Khaldoun), was the first complete French translation and was published by the Irish orientalist William MacGuckin de Slane. De Slane based his work on Quatremère's copy, comparing his text with the Paris manuscripts while also making partial use of the Boulaq press edition and the Turkish translation. This translation appeared in three volumes in Paris in 1862, 1865, and 1868 as volumes 19–21 of the series "Summaries and Extracts from the Manuscripts of the Imperial Library".

22 Kûrkûn, *al-Mawsû'a al-Islâmiyya [The Encyclopedia of Islam]*, vol. 31.

23 Pasha, *Ibn Khaldun, Sociologist: A Fourteenth Century Pioneer*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, American University, 1952, 3.

It was one of the most important scientific series published by the Imperial Library of France at that time.

Nathaniel Schmidt's Contribution to the Early American Introduction to Ibn Khaldun

In his 1930 book, *Ibn Khaldun: Historian, Sociologist, and Philosopher*, published by Columbia University Press, the American sociologist Nathaniel Schmidt points out that Ibn Khaldun's fame continued to grow as the world approached the six-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Schmidt describes Ibn Khaldun as the greatest Arab historian and one of the most profound scholars of social phenomena. He notes that this thinker, born in Tunisia on May 27, 1332, was virtually unknown in Western circles until 1806, when Antoine Isaac de Sacy published excerpts from his writings. This marked the beginning of Ibn Khaldun's rediscovery after centuries of obscurity.

Since then, especially after the publication of Baron de Slane's French translation of the *Muqaddimah* from 1862 to 1868, European historians, sociologists, and philosophers have taken Ibn Khaldun's work more seriously. Schmidt notes that researchers generally agree to grant him a prominent place among the great thinkers of history. Indeed, some say he discovered *the true scope of history* and its nature, or that he is the actual founder of sociology.

However, Schmidt points out that the educated public in the West has been slow to accept the high status that scholars have awarded an Arab writer, a status that some may consider exaggerated. Nevertheless, Schmidt adds that the mere suggestion that the search for the earliest roots of the modern concept of history and the beginnings of sociology requires a shift from Europe to North Africa is extremely important. The suggestion that the shift should be from Vico, Bodin, and Montesquieu to Ibn Khaldun is also very significant. There is no doubt that interest in this great Tunisian is growing consistently.²⁴

Schmidt references Mohamed Kamil Ayad's study, *Die Geschichts-und Gesellschaftslehre Ibn Khalduns* (The History and Social Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun), noting that the study has two main objectives.

First, and based on the urgent need for a reliable critical text, Ayad seeks to compile the most comprehensive list possible of available manuscripts,

24 Schmidt, *Ibn Khaldun: Historian, Sociologist and Philosopher*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), 61.

editions, and translations. According to Schmidt, this requires a thorough search for unknown manuscripts, photographing known manuscripts, and collecting and examining them with scientific care. Some copies may contain additions or comments in the author's handwriting. This makes it necessary to rely on a translation into English or other European languages based on an accurate text from reliable sources.

Second, Schmidt keenly highlights Ibn Khaldun as a historian, sociologist, and philosopher of history. He does so by presenting a comprehensive overview of his works and referencing their classification dates. The book the *Muqaddimah* naturally received the most attention as part of an attempt to assess the scientific value of Ibn Khaldun's contributions to historical and social thought.

Schmidt says, "Ayad's study focuses specifically on the *Muqaddimah*, a competent and reliable presentation of Ibn Khaldun's key ideas in history and sociology". Schmidt believes the merit of this work lies in its author being an Arabic speaker well versed in Arabic literature who received rigorous training in historical methodology from Professor Kurt Breysig at the University of Berlin; therefore, the German wording is clear and sound, accurately reflecting the essence of Ibn Khaldun's theory. Some of Ayad's corrections refer to De Slane's translation, as well as to Ayad's translations of several passages. According to Schmidt, "these translations lead the reader to wish that we had a complete copy of his work in his handwriting".

Schmidt notes that some of his personal views on certain issues are reflected in Ayad's study titled "Selected Opinion". He also acknowledges the researcher's valuable effort in tracing the development of Ibn Khaldun's ideas among earlier Arab historians and philosophers. These ideas reached their peak in the *Muqaddimah*. According to Schmidt, this evidence reinforces the perception of Ibn Khaldun's remarkable originality.

Schmidt also praises Ayad's accuracy in referencing the Arabic text, De Slane's translation, and the glossary of terms at the end of the book. The glossary contains precise definitions of the most important concepts Ibn Khaldun defined. However, Schmidt feels that the glossary could have been slightly expanded. Schmidt notes the influence of Ayad's teacher, Professor Breysig, the editor of the series *Research in History and Society*, in which Ayad's study was published.²⁵

25 Ibid., 62–63.

In conclusion, despite being written independently and published at approximately the same time, Schmidt points out that his two studies and Ayad's study clearly complement each other. Together, they can contribute to expanding knowledge of Ibn Khaldun in the English-speaking world and encourage researchers to undertake the major task that still awaits completion: presenting an accurate, scientific picture of this exceptional thinker. Schmidt emphasizes that the goal is not merely to praise Ibn Khaldun's virtues but also to allow his brilliant ideas to contribute to the development of social thought, particularly in addressing issues at the forefront of contemporary scientific debate.

The Impact of Charles Issawi's Translation in Reintroducing the Muqaddimah to American Readers

In 1950, Charles Issawi published selections from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* under the title *An Arab Philosophy of History: Selections from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (1332–1406)*. Issawi published this work while he was a professor at the American University of Beirut.

As Issawi explains, the aim of this translation is to introduce English-speaking readers to Ibn Khaldun through carefully selected excerpts from the *Muqaddimah*. These excerpts thus provide a concise overview of his ideas in history, geography, economics, sociology, politics, education, metaphysics, and other areas of knowledge. The work is not primarily intended for Arab specialists but rather for students of political science, economics, and sociology, as well as individuals interested in the Arab World and its deep intellectual background.

Therefore, Issawi attempted to present Ibn Khaldun's ideas using language and terminology familiar to social science students in the West. He avoided a complete translation because he believed it would hinder contemporary readers' reception of the text. A complete translation might obscure the originality of Ibn Khaldun's perspective and the modernity of some of its elements.

As Charles Issawi emphasizes: "No selections can satisfy the real need for a complete translation of the *Muqaddimah*. However, a comprehensive translation must await the preparation of a reliable and authoritative text." He then quotes Nathaniel Schmidt, who made the same point:

The publication of the Arabic text cannot be achieved in a scientifically sound manner unless a more suitable critical apparatus than is currently available

is prepared for it. one that meets all modern scientific requirements. Only from this text can a complete translation into Western languages be achieved, which has become a necessity given the growing importance that students of history, philosophy, sociology, economics, and education attach to the ideas of the greatest Arab historian.²⁶

Issawi points out that given the considerable difficulties involved in this work, it is unlikely to be undertaken for many years. In the meantime, he hopes that his selection will spark interest in a largely neglected thinker and encourage researchers to undertake the important work of textual criticism and translation. For this reason, the selections have been classified by theme to facilitate comparison with corresponding themes in the modern social sciences. These selections are not in the same order as Ibn Khaldun's original text, but the main lines of its structure can be identified in the introduction with which Issawi opens this volume.

In explaining his approach to translation, Issawi adds:

Ibn Khaldun's intended meanings are easily understood and can be translated into a foreign language. However, the available texts are incomplete, and there are many cases where I had to choose between more than one possible interpretation. In particular, Ibn Khaldun's use of pronouns is often imprecise, and some personal terms have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, while I have tried to clarify pronoun references as much as possible, I have deliberately left some sentences ambiguous rather than imposing unjustified interpretations, and I have translated some words differently in different places. At the same time, some passages have a more specific meaning in translation than in the original.²⁷

This statement highlights Issawi's commitment to maintaining methodological integrity in his translations. He avoids imposing meanings not established in the text because there is no definitive critical text to resolve discrepancies between different versions of the *Muqaddimah*.

Zahida Pasha's Reading of the Muqaddimah and Its Impact on the Development of American Reception

Zahida Pasha's study was one of the first American academic works to address Ibn Khaldun from a purely sociological perspective. She submitted it

26 Issawi, *Ibn Khaldun: An Arab Philosophy of History: Selections from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (1332-1406)*, (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1950), xii.

27 Ibid., p. xiv.

as a doctoral thesis to the American University in 1952 under the title *Ibn Khaldun, Sociologist: A Fourteenth-Century Pioneer*.

It is considered one of the pioneering studies that changed the views of American sociologists on Arab sociological heritage, reevaluating Ibn Khaldun as a major contributor throughout the history of the field.

This study argues that Ibn Khaldun occupies a unique position in the development of sociological thought. According to the researcher, he is one of the greatest original thinkers in human history. His scientific legacy has been overlooked in both the East and West. The researcher considers this *a research tragedy*, as Ibn Khaldun formulated principles and theories that Western sociologists attempted to develop centuries later.

The second part of the thesis is devoted to studying Ibn Khaldun's autobiography. At the time, there was no complete English translation of this text, though there were a number of Western commentaries and critical studies on his works. In this section, Pasha presents a brief yet profound portrait of Ibn Khaldun's personality based on information from the autobiography. Pasha begins with a methodological conviction expressed by Pasha: "all philosophy is essentially a spiritual autobiography. Knowledge of one sheds light on the other".²⁸ She uses this idea to analyse Ibn Khaldun's personality, which is a key to understanding his intellectual project.

The third part of the study presents the terminology and basic principles of modern sociology. The researcher treated and classified this material more systematically than in some earlier Western psychological studies. Ibn Khaldun's adoption of a *unitary concept of society* aided her in this task, as he made it the focus of all his observations and interpretations. Based on this concept, Ibn Khaldun developed his social theory, defining the laws of the emergence and decline of these principles and their significance in major social processes, such as social solidarity, social conflict, social imitation, the social construction of reality, and social change. These concepts later permeated American sociology and became central analytical tools of the American sociological school.

The fourth part briefly discusses Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the stages of society's development through the study of its economic, political, and cultural aspects, as well as the structures that form the general framework of social life. The researcher highlights Ibn Khaldun's unconventional approach to these

28 Pasha, *Ibn Khaldun, Sociologist: A Fourteenth Century Pioneer*, 4.

institutions and challenges the misconception that he was primarily a political scientist. However, careful reading reveals that his position differs from the traditional legal view that the state is the origin of sovereignty and the source of rights. Ibn Khaldun defined the state as a social entity that responds to collective needs and arises from the internal laws and structures of society.

As a sociologist, he interpreted educational, religious, and economic transformations as integral aspects of a comprehensive dynamic social system. In this system, no part can be understood in isolation from the others. This holistic perspective gave his social theory originality and analytical depth, attracting the attention of American sociologists.

As Zahida Pasha says of her work:

This study is not intended to be a substitute for Ibn Khaldun's writings, but rather a summary until they are translated. In addition to this modest purpose, it is hoped that students of sociology will find an interpretive introduction to his work and an accurate, concise methodological treatment of it compared to his writings.²⁹

The study states that this summary aims to provide researchers with a preliminary framework to help them understand Ibn Khaldun's major themes. It also aims to present an organized overview of his most prominent sociological concepts and themes. This is intended as a prelude to using complete and accurate translations, when available.

This statement reflects the researcher's awareness of the limitations of her work and her acknowledgment that any brief treatment is subject to the original text, which lacks a complete and reliable translation. Therefore, Zahida Pasha emphasizes that her primary goal is not to present an alternative to Ibn Khaldun's work, but rather to provide a clear and organized academic framework that helps scholars, particularly American readers, understand the theoretical foundations on which Ibn Khaldun based his methodology.

The researcher adds that this study is an attempt to present the methodological structure of Ibn Khaldun's analysis of society and highlight the consistency and coherence of his ideas. The study also seeks to shed light on the central concepts that recur in his works and link them to the social and intellectual context from which he emerged. In this context, the study seeks to bridge the gap between Arab heritage and Western researchers. It accomplishes this by offering an intermediate interpretation that makes Ibn Khaldun's theory more

29 Ibid.

accessible to those who are not familiar with the original texts or the historical context in which the theory was developed.

The Role of Franz Rosenthal's Translation in Shaping the Modern Anglo-Saxon Reading of the Muqaddimah

Franz Rosenthal's 1958 three-volume translation of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, published by the Bollingen Foundation, marked a decisive turning point in the reception of Khaldunian thought in the Anglo-Saxon world. This full translation remained the primary reference for American researchers for decades and allowed the *Muqaddimah* to be incorporated into historical and sociological methodologies, opening the door to new approaches in these fields. An abridged version of the translation was republished in 2015, confirming its continued presence and influence in modern studies. Rosenthal describes Ibn Khaldun's work as follows: "the *Muqaddimah* is considered the most important and critical Islamic history of the premodern era. It was written by Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), the 14th-century Mediterranean scholar."³⁰ This testimony reveals Rosenthal's understanding of the nature of Ibn Khaldun's text and the place it deserves within the global intellectual heritage.

In his treatment of Ibn Khaldun's text, Rosenthal recognized the weight of responsibility placed on the translator to achieve a reconciliation of the requirements of literal translation on the one hand with the demands of modern English style on the other, ensuring the creation of a readable text without compromising the spirit of the original.

However, achieving this balance was not always easy, as the translator himself explains:

It must be acknowledged that with each subsequent revision, the translator felt an irresistible desire to adhere more closely to the original text's linguistic form. This version's literal nature aims to minimize the amount of interpretation necessary in any translation so as not to burden readers unfamiliar with the original Arabic text with more than the minimum unavoidable personal interpretation. Furthermore, it was necessary to preserve Ibn Khaldun's terminology as much as possible. He developed it with great effort for his new science, and it must have impressed his contemporary readers as unfamiliar. Therefore,

30 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Translated and Introduced by Franz Rosenthal; with a New Introduction by Bruce B. Lawrence. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 27.

key terms such as *imran*, *asabiyya*, and *badawiyya* were kept in the translation, along with their approximate translations: “civilization”, “group spirit”, and “desert life or behaviour” accordingly. This included the occasional appearance of expressions such as *great civilization*. Any other approach would have irrevocably destroyed the essential unity of Ibn Khaldun’s work.³¹

Rosenthal adopted an approach based on preserving the literal repetitions found in the *Muqaddimah*. However, he acknowledges that the repetitions were so frequent and complex that this endeavour was unsuccessful, or, at best, only partially successful. This reflects his awareness of the difficulty of balancing fidelity to the original text with producing a text that is readable today.

As Rosenthal says of this approach:

For the sake of being literal in the translation, an attempt was made to use the same method each time to translate repeated passages in the original text with identical or nearly identical words. However, given the frequency of such repetitions in the *Muqaddimah*, it is likely that this approach was unsuccessful, or only partially successful at best. The translation still has some modernizing tendencies, but these mainly affect grammatical and stylistic features, rarely affecting vocabulary. Ibn Khaldun’s contemporaries praised the *Muqaddimah*’s literary quality, and Ibn Khaldun himself used rich language to discuss the linguistic perfection of his work in a poetic dedication to his history: “I have tamed obscene speech, and it can be said that the harsh language in my work becomes compatible with the words I utter.”³²

This testimony reveals Rosenthal’s keen awareness of the specificity of the Khaldunian terminology and his commitment to preserving its conceptual structure. He realized that any radical modification could cause the text to lose its epistemological unity and terminological consistency. This is what made his translation a foundational text for Western studies of the *Muqaddimah*.

The frequent use of parentheses in translation stems from the methodological necessity of explaining the stylistic shifts required by the translation process. These parentheses indicate passages in which the translator has added something that does not exist in the Arabic text for the purpose of clarifying the context or completing the meaning. These additions can be viewed as extraneous elements that can be disregarded, but they are actually a complementary part of the text’s semantic structure.

31 Ibid., 10.

32 Ibid., 11.

However, Rosenthal points out that parentheses are sometimes used to provide brief explanations of preceding words. He adds that translators have greater freedom in choosing and formulating explanatory footnotes, since understanding Ibn Khaldun's ideas and style is not difficult. Thus, his treatment of the margins is more technical than epistemological.

This analysis emphasizes the significant challenges associated with understanding the *Muqaddimah* in a historical context. Written during the late stage of the development of Islamic thought in the Middle Ages, the text encompasses nearly all aspects of that heritage.

Therefore, placing each of Ibn Khaldun's ideas in its precise historical context would require an enormous amount of commentary, which is nearly impossible. Nearly a century ago, De Slane realized this, and despite feeling capable of providing endless observations, he opted for brevity in his introduction and added only a limited number of comments to his translation.

Since then, the amount of scientific material requiring attention and interpretation has multiplied many times over. At that time, we only had a few printed Arabic texts, while most of the relevant information was hidden in manuscripts. Today, despite the expansion of printed Arabic texts, working on the *Muqaddimah* still requires frequent reference to manuscripts due to historical issues in the text that cannot be adequately addressed in the margins.

Therefore, the task of detailed interpretation should be left to specialized studies that address specific parts of the text. Little has been accomplished in this regard. In the context of this translation, the main difficulty lay in carefully selecting references to provide as much information as possible in an easily accessible, concise form.

Preparing the footnotes required a level of conciseness beyond what De Slane had intended, as most of the historical examples cited by Ibn Khaldun, especially those related to political history, no longer necessitated extensive commentary as they had in the 19th century. Additionally, the accuracy of his historical interpretations is not as important as it once was,³³ given the developments in modern history and sociology curricula and the robust analytical tools they provide.

Regarding references to authors and literary texts, Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (History of Arabic Literature) is sufficient in most

33 Ibid., 11–12.

cases. The book has been carefully reviewed for very recent bibliographical material. The Index of Islamic Heritage – a chapter of the Encyclopaedia of Islam – is a reliable and timesaving reference tool that directs the reader to more extensive studies when necessary.

In addition to these fundamental references and the indispensable linguistic commentary they required,³⁴ the selection method used in the footnotes was based on one guiding principle: highlighting the sources Ibn Khaldun had or could have accessed. Identifying the texts that shaped his intellectual horizon is crucial to determining his place in intellectual history and understanding the value of his contributions.

Although this is only a limited start, the translator believes this type of commentary should be prioritized because it illuminates the internal structure of Ibn Khaldun's thought and clarifies the connections between the *Muqaddimah* and Arab and Islamic scholarship.

The topics covered in this section demonstrate how Ibn Khaldun's text evolved from scattered initial references to an established position in American academic history and social thought. Early translation attempts paved the way for the introduction of the *Muqaddimah* to the West, and early American scholars provided interpretations that established an awareness of Ibn Khaldun's importance beyond the Arab-Islamic context. Subsequent scholarly translations and analytical studies have solidified his position in sociology and political economy curricula, revealing the depth of his thesis on human civilization. Clearly, Ibn Khaldun's influence on American thought was not an epistemological coincidence, but rather the result of a cumulative process that established an important link in the broader global rediscovery of the *Muqaddimah* as a foundational text for understanding human society.

Ibn Khaldun and American Sociology: A Comparison of Concepts and Methodology

The American sociologist Harry Elmer Barnes introduced Ibn Khaldun in the following passage:

The first thinker to have a modern, dynamic conception of history and progress based on the unity and continuity of the social process was the Arab historian

34 Ibid., 13.

and statesman Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406). In the introduction to his book, *The Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun systematically and meticulously presents his theoretical ideas and clearly distinguishes between “incidental history”, which is limited to the popular transmission of events, and history as a science that explores the origins of civilization and the course of its development. Ibn Khaldun asserts that humans are social by nature due to the diversity and breadth of their desires, which can only be satisfied through cooperative effort. However, conflict arises from these desires, making the establishment of the state necessary to ensure order and stability.

Barnes compares this perspective with Professor Giddings’s view on the importance of social homogeneity for the survival of the state. He notes that Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of Arab tribal society, completed centuries before Morgan’s, is a unique study of that stage in the development of human society. His treatment of the influence of the natural environment on society exceeds what had been presented in this field until the time of Bodin and perhaps even Montesquieu in its comprehensiveness. The most important feature of his intellectual project, however, is his deep understanding of the unity and continuity of the historical process. This understanding contrasts with the rigidity that characterized the Christian philosophies of history that prevailed at the time. Ibn Khaldun believed that civilization goes through stages of change similar to an individual’s life, and that this development results from a complex interaction of psychological and environmental factors. Therefore, Barnes concludes that Ibn Khaldun, rather than Vico, should be given precedence in establishing a philosophy of history, since Khaldun’s view of the nature of the historical process is more accurate, mature, and modern than the conception presented by the Italian thinker three centuries later.³⁵

Early 20th-century American sociological literature highlights a significant issue in the history of social thought: thinkers from different cultural, temporal, and geographical contexts can recognize the scientific value of their predecessors’ work and acknowledge its importance in the development of science. This phenomenon is rare in sociology. However, among the notable exceptions are the sociologists Howard S. Becker and the aforementioned Harry Elmer Barnes. They devoted entire chapters to Ibn Khaldun and traced the influence of his ideas on modern European thought. This provides a clear example of *the convergence of civilizations* in the history of sociology itself.

35 Alatas, S. F. “Ibn Khaldun and Contemporary Sociology.” *International Sociology* 21, no. 6 (November 2006): 782–795; 787.

Becker and Barnes note that Ibn Khaldun's direct influence on European sociology likely began in 1899 when Ludwig Gumplowicz published *Sociological Essays*, a collection that included an analytical chapter on Ibn Khaldun. They also point to Ibn Khaldun's clear influence on Franz Oppenheimer's conquest theory of the state, particularly in the latter's analysis of agricultural reform, in which he explicitly drew on Ibn Khaldun's ideas.

The value of Baker and Barnes's contribution lies in their ability to recognize the modern elements in Ibn Khaldun's thought without projection or fragmentation. They acknowledged that his text was written in a historical and cultural context that was radically different from 19th-century Europe. Nevertheless, they were able to reveal the universal aspects of his theory. They also revealed its ability to transcend its original temporal framework.

Unlike the normative studies that were prevalent at the time, Ibn Khaldun developed theoretical concepts and methodological tools of great value for the positivist study of history. However, subsequent scholars did not develop or integrate these tools into a broader theoretical framework that would benefit from modern sociological approaches. Consequently, research has largely focused on conceptual comparisons between Ibn Khaldun and Western sociologists without effectively integrating the Khaldunian system with contemporary sociological tools or testing its applicability to historical facts and empirical data.³⁶

In this context, we will examine three prominent American sociologists whose work intersects with the Ibn Khaldunian system in terms of concepts or methodology: Howard S. Becker, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Talcott Parsons. Referring to these thinkers is a necessary starting point for analysing the possible points of convergence between Ibn Khaldun's vision of human civilization and modern American sociological approaches. Examining each thinker within the framework of his project highlights elements of intersection and reception, identifying the nature of the theoretical bridges that can be built between Ibn Khaldun's thought and 20th-century social thought traditions.

36 Ibid.

*Howard S. Becker*³⁷

Howard S. Becker rose to prominence with his classic 1953 article, “Becoming a Marijuana User”, published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. It is considered one of the first studies to apply *labelling theory*³⁸ to behaviours associated with drug use. Becker explained how the social structure produces a *deviant* identity among marijuana users through mechanisms of classification and labelling. He also explained how these users undergo a gradual social learning process that leads them to adopt this role and engage in a network of practices that conform to the meanings and standards defined by society.³⁹

Howard S. Becker’s book *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963) is the most prominent foundational work on labelling theory in the sociology of deviance. In the book, Becker explains how social groups create the concept of deviance. They do so by establishing rules and standards, defining acts that violate these rules, and labelling and classifying the perpetrators as deviants. Deviance is thus not an intrinsic characteristic of behaviour, but rather the result of a social process that determines how the act and its perpetrator are viewed.

37 An American sociologist born in Chicago in 1928, he was a student of Everett Hughes and one of the representatives of the Chicago School of Sociology. He had a significant influence on French sociology. He devoted his work to the study of deviance by researching marijuana smokers and jazz singers. He was also considered the first to take an interest in sociological writing. See Rachid Ben Bay, “Howard Becker and the problem of transition from values to norms: a study of the use of values to justify the imposition of norms”, an article published on the website of the Moroccan Center for Contemporary Studies and Research, May 27, 2020, accessed on November 4, 2025, <https://cmerec.ma/>.

38 Labelling Theory: This sociological approach views deviance as the result of a social process that defines certain acts as deviant and labels those who commit them as *deviants* through mechanisms of classification and criminalization, rather than as an inherent characteristic of the act itself. This process can lead to an individual’s transition from transient deviance to secondary deviance. In secondary deviance, the individual adopts the identity of a deviant as a result of the interaction of formal and informal social institutions. Thus, labelling itself becomes a factor that produces deviance. This theory is primarily associated with Howard S. Becker, Edwin Lemert, and Erving Goffman.

39 Becker, H. S. “Becoming a Marijuana User”, in Gerry Rose (ed.), *Deciphering Sociological Research* (Macmillan Education Ltd., 1982), 170–180; 172; see also Becker, H. S. “Becoming a Marihuana User,” *American Journal of Sociology* 59 (1953): 235–242, reprinted with permission of the publishers and the author.

This study is notable for shifting the approach to deviance from focusing on individual characteristics or biological factors to understanding the process as an interactive product influenced by groups, patterns of interaction, and symbolic structures.

In the 1973 reissue of *Outsiders*, Becker added an important chapter – entitled “Reconsidering the Labeling Theory” – in which he addressed criticisms and provided a precise clarification of the theory’s limitations and objectives. He emphasized that the theory’s purpose is not to explain all patterns of deviance but to highlight the impact of social classification processes on the formation of an individual’s identity and subsequent behaviour in social interactions.

In developing his theory of labelling, Becker made a significant contribution to the study of social deviance by combining key elements of symbolic interactionism to formulate two central hypotheses:

First, actions are not inherently deviant, but are defined as such through social interaction. Deviance is a social construction produced by processes of interpretation and labelling, not an intrinsic characteristic of the action itself.

Second, based on Edwin Lemert’s distinction between *primary deviance* and *secondary deviance*, Becker argues that individuals who are negatively stigmatized as a result of their initial involvement in deviant behaviour are pushed by active social institutions – through classification, labelling, and closing avenues for integration – to adopt the deviant identity itself. When these individuals lose the potential for social recognition and positive opportunities within the traditional group, they may find themselves integrated into deviant subcultures. These subcultures reinforce and deepen the logic of deviance and reproduce labelling at a more entrenched level.

According to labelling theory, society produces deviance by establishing rules that define certain acts as deviant. Studying how these rules are formed and applied is important, because definitions of deviance are not applied equally to everyone. For instance, rioting by privileged college students may be viewed as a sign of high spirits, whereas the same behaviour by working-class youth is considered a sign of criminality.⁴⁰

Ibn Khaldun’s concept of deviance is best understood in the context of his ideas about tribalism (*‘asabiyyah*) and its decline. According to Ibn Khaldun, if tribalism is a prerequisite for establishing the state in its early stages, then kingship naturally leads to *luxury and humbling the tribalists*.

Regarding luxury, Ibn Khaldun constantly warns of the dangers of the state becoming immersed in *luxury and civilization* and of the evils that arise from

40 Bruce and Yearley, *The SAGE Dictionary of Sociology* (SAGE Publications, 2006), 166.

it, such as increased taxation, the need for people's money, and *the gentleness of the garrison and the delicacy of their entourage*.

As for tribalism, the *abandonment of the creed of strength and manliness* that accompanied the founding phase and acquisition of the garrison, as well as the *pride of aspiring to and disputing the presidency*, exposes their leaders to murder and destruction. This leads to the breaking of the state's power and the loss of its prestige. Ibn Khaldun adds that: "the ruler himself turns his jealousy of them into fear for his kingdom, so he kills them, humiliates them, and deprives them of the blessings and luxuries to which they have become accustomed, so they perish and diminish."⁴¹

If the ruler's tribalism, which is the greatest tribalism based on kinship, is corrupted, he is forced to seek the tribalism of *the entourage of clients of bounty and protégés of beneficence*, which is weaker and less intense. These people are not *people of innate tribal pride*, so it becomes easy for the people of the greater tribalism to challenge the ruler and his inner circle with *natural daring*, forcing him to fight them one by one until they lose their group feeling (*'asabiyyah*) forgetting its zeal and intensity. They become content to serve as hired protectors. As their numbers diminish, the garrisons stationed at the peripheries and border outposts dwindle accordingly. This is where the imbalance in the state's structure begins.⁴²

Comparing Ibn Khaldun's analysis of tribal disintegration with Howard S. Becker's interpretation of deviance within labelling theory reveals an intersection in their understanding of social phenomena as products of group conditions and mechanisms rather than intrinsic characteristics of actions or individuals. Ibn Khaldun views political and social deviance as the result of structural transformations affecting tribalism. These transformations include extravagance, laxity, and division among the ruling class. They lead to a change in the position of actors in the social structure. Similarly, Becker argues that deviance is produced by the classification and labelling processes imposed on individuals by groups, which push them to adopt a deviant identity as defined within the subculture.

This parallelism suggests an indirect influence of Ibn Khaldun on Becker's theory given that they belong to different epistemological contexts and

41 Al-Muṭaylī A, *Ibn Khaldūn Wa-Naẓariyyat al-Markaz Wa-al-Aṭrāf [Ibn Khaldun and the Center-Periphery Theory]* (Morocco: Mominoun Foundation, 2021), 10.

42 Ibid.

analytical fields. The crux of the comparison lies in what this intersection reveals about the unity of the general sociological view. According to this view, deviance is attributed to the structure of society and its mechanisms of operation, rather than to individual behaviour *per se*.

Harry Barnes

Harry Elmer Barnes is one of the most prominent American researchers in the history of social thought. His work was an important milestone in the field of historical sociology, allowing for a comparative approach with Ibn Khaldun on the following four fundamental issue.

The concept of social history

Barnes was a strong advocate of viewing history as a necessary gateway to understanding social phenomena. In his book *The New History and the Social Sciences* (1926), he clearly presented this position, arguing that integrating history and the social sciences is necessary for understanding social processes in their structural and temporal contexts. This approach aligns closely with the Ibn Khaldunian view, which treats history as a science that reveals the laws of human civilization.⁴³

Social Criticism and Analysis of Institutional Structures

In his book *The American Way of Life: Our Institutional Patterns and Social Problems* (1942), Barnes addresses the direct impact of institutional structures on the production of social and economic problems in American society. His critical interest in institutional structure is similar to Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the impact of existing institutions on the disintegration or strengthening of tribalism, the course of the state and urbanization, and how institutions affect the daily lives of individuals.⁴⁴

Historical Sociology

In his book *Historical Sociology: Its Origins and Development* (1948), Barnes provides a systematic overview of the development of sociology in relation to history. He emphasizes that understanding society is inseparable from its

43 Barnes, *The New History and the Social Studies* (New York: The Century Company, 1926), 604.

44 Barnes, *Historical Sociology: Its Origins and Development* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948), 186.

long historical development. This thesis is one of the most important points of parallelism with Ibn Khaldun's project, which essentially attempts to construct a historical sociology predating the modern academic crystallization of the field.

Analysis of Social Classes

Barnes was preoccupied with analysing social classes and their dynamics, as he believed that understanding these phenomena was key to explaining social and economic change. This view aligns with Ibn Khaldun's interest in social inequality and how tribalism, economics, and luxury transform social and political structures.

These four themes reveal the nature of the convergence between Barnes and Ibn Khaldun. They allow us to consider the extent to which Ibn Khaldun's vision is present in Barnes's work. This is especially relevant since translations of Ibn Khaldun's works were circulating among Barnes and the American sociological community in the first half of the 20th century. While measuring the direct impact requires more in-depth textual analysis, preliminary evidence suggests the existence of parallels and intersections between the two projects.

Talcott Parsons

Talcott Parsons was one of the most prominent theorists in modern American sociology, and his structural functional approach provides a rich framework for a detailed comparison with Ibn Khaldun's conception of social cohesion and urban structure. Despite their differences in historical and methodological contexts, the two thinkers have clear points of convergence in three main areas, as outlined below.

The Concept of Social Cohesion

Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the centrality of tribalism as the unifying force that gives a group cohesion, enabling it to establish a state and protect its civilization. Parsons, on the other hand, believed that social cohesion is the product of a system of shared values and norms that integrates individuals into society.⁴⁵ Despite their different analytical tools, both scholars view social cohesion as

45 Pinello, "The Social Act, the Social Action and the Social Interactions: A Secure Basis for Social Bonding," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 12, no. 8 (August 2022): 1.

crucial to the stability and continuity of society. Thus, the basis on which people build social unity differs between the two, even though they agree on the centrality of cohesion in the development and continuity of society.

The State and Its Social Structure

Ibn Khaldun based his concept of the state on tribalism, which posits that political power arises from group dynamics and their strength and cohesion. In contrast, Parsons includes the state within the overall social system, describing it as a basic function that maintains balance and continuity within the system.⁴⁶ Thus, it is clear that Ibn Khaldun views the state from a dynamic, historical perspective, while Parsons understands it as part of a normative, functional system.

History as a Tool for Sociological Understanding

Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* takes a rigorous, critical approach to history to understand the movement of societies and the laws of urbanization. Although Parsons was not a historian, he relied on historical analysis to trace the formation and development of social systems in both his theory of action and his structural-functional model. The intersection of using history to understand social structure is one of the most important points of contact between the two scholars' projects.

These comparisons suggest that Ibn Khaldun's position in American social thought can be understood through thematic intersections with major theorists such as Parsons. However, more in-depth studies are needed to trace his presence, whether explicit or implicit, in modern American sociological theories.

Conclusion

This study contributes to clarifying Ibn Khaldun's place in global social thought by highlighting his connections to the modern American sociological tradition. It does so within the framework of the dialectic of reception and influence that shaped the transmission and transformation of his ideas in the American context.

First, Ibn Khaldun was a thinker with a universal outlook. He approached sociology from a historical perspective, establishing what could be described as

46 Taylor, "Spencer and Parsons on Functional Differentiation: Some Illustrative Parallels," *History of the Human Sciences* 1 (July 2025): 5.

social history and the *science of the sociology of knowledge*. In doing so, he set the foundation for any science concerned with human civilization and its laws. His complex background as a traveller, writer, historian, and jurist made this ability possible and enriched his project, extending its impact throughout the East and West. The telling irony is that many branches of modern Western sociology—from structural analysis to historical sociology—have parallels or roots in Ibn Khaldun’s work. This reflects his forward-thinking nature and ability to transcend the limitations of his era.

Second, the West, particularly the United States, became familiar with Ibn Khaldun through a series of translations and studies that introduced his ideas. First, Issawi published selections from the *Muqaddimah* under the title *An Arab Philosophy of History*. This was followed by a study by Muhammad Ayad Kamel, a commentary by Nathaniel Schmidt, and finally, a thesis by Zahida Pasha submitted to the American University in 1952 entitled *Ibn Khaldun, Sociologist: A Fourteenth-Century Pioneer*. This thesis contributed to reshaping the American view of the Arab sociological heritage. Franz Rosenthal’s complete translation, accompanied by extensive excerpts and commentary from contemporary modernists, solidified Ibn Khaldun’s presence in Western social studies and reinforced the dialectic of reception and influence in American sociology.

Third, it is clear that the areas of convergence between Ibn Khaldun and several American social scientists are numerous and extend across multiple levels. We have chosen three examples: Becker, Barnes, and Parsons. We studied the points of intersection between their work and Ibn Khaldun’s vision. Our analysis is not limited to these three scholars, and instead we compare a wide range of American sociological theories and trends. The goal of this research is to pave the way for further comparative studies and encourage the development of in-depth research that explores Ibn Khaldun’s influence on American social thought in terms of direct impact, as well as structural and methodological parallels.

These three findings introduce a reinterpretation of Ibn Khaldun in light of the history of modern social thought. They highlight the need to broaden research on his connections to American sociology. Analysing this reception raises questions of objectivity and Western-centricity. These questions constitute the central problem of this research and call for continued evaluation of the extent to which American studies of Ibn Khaldun are fair or subject to underlying epistemological and cultural biases.

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