

Anja Zalta, Mesut Idriz (eds.)

READING IBN KHALDUN

His Heritage, Applications,
and Significance for Modern Science



UNIVERSITY
OF LJUBLJANA

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Faculty
of Arts

Reading Ibn Khaldun

His Heritage, Applications, and Significance for Modern Science

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Mourad BEN JOMAA

Poème à Ibn Khaldun

Lucidité et clairvoyance
Perspicacité et rayonnance
Avec la plume de l'histoire
Et la rigueur de la géographie
Justesse est la science de la civilisation
Décryptant l'âme humaine
Eessor et déclin
La marche du monde
Ah offerenda de la vie
Muqaddima ou introduction à l'histoire
Continuant à éclairer
Des dynamiques sociales
Traversant le tumulte
De l'Andalousie et du Maghreb
Et pénétrant en toute finesse
Des situations complexes
L'essence de l'homme
Pouvoir et solidarité
Asabiyya ou cohésion sociale
Guidant la continuité
Et „fils de ses habitudes
Et de son milieu“
Visionnaire de la société
Intemporelle pensée.

Introduction

The present edited volume, *Reading Ibn Khaldun: His Heritage, Applications, and Significance for Modern Science*, is the product of the International Ibn Khaldun Colloquium, co-organized by the Sharjah International Foundation for the History of Arab and Muslim Sciences (SIFHAMS), University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, and the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, held on 10–11 December 2025 in Sharjah. Bringing together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and geographical contexts, the colloquium sought to revisit the intellectual legacy of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), one of the most influential thinkers in the history of Islamic civilization and arguably one of the earliest architects of the social sciences.

More than six centuries after the composition of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn continues to inspire scholars across a remarkable range of fields, including history, sociology, economics, political science, education, anthropology, philosophy, and civilizational studies. His concepts of *ʿumrān* (civilization), *ʿaṣabiyyah* (social cohesion), state formation, economic development, and historical change remain highly relevant for understanding both past societies and contemporary global challenges. The chapters collected in this volume demonstrate the breadth of Khaldunian scholarship today and reveal the enduring vitality of his intellectual heritage.

The volume opens with Dr Badr Hamid Al-Harbi’s chapter, “From Plato to Ibn Khaldūn: Tracing the Idea of ‘Man is Madani by Nature’ Across Greek Philosophy and Islamic Thought”. By tracing the genealogy of one of the most frequently cited propositions associated with Ibn Khaldūn, the author demonstrates how the notion of human sociability emerged from classical Greek philosophy, particularly Plato and Aristotle, before being incorporated

into Islamic intellectual traditions through the translation movement and the works of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Miskawayh, and Ibn Rushd. The chapter highlights the dynamic interaction between Greek and Islamic thought and situates Ibn Khaldūn within a broader intellectual continuum.

The second contribution, “A Critical Analysis of Ibn Khaldun’s Theory” by Dr Mashhad Al-Allaf, offers a critical reassessment of Ibn Khaldūn’s theory of civilization. Through a close reading of the *Muqaddimah*, the author explores the strengths and limitations of Ibn Khaldūn’s conceptual framework, particularly its cyclical model of historical development. The chapter argues for a reinterpretation that places greater emphasis on human agency, adaptability, and the possibility of civilizational renewal.

The economic dimensions of Ibn Khaldūn’s thought are explored in “Ibn Khaldun: A Pioneer of Economic Thought and Its Relevance Today” by Dr Khaliq Ahmad, Shekh Md Ibrahim, and Tharakulath Moosa Sinan. The authors demonstrate that many ideas commonly associated with modern economics – including labour theory, the division of labour, taxation, public expenditure, and economic cycles – can be found in embryonic form in Ibn Khaldūn’s writings. Their analysis underscores the continued relevance of his integrated approach to economics, politics, and ethics.

Questions of leadership and political order are addressed by Dr Hany T. Ibrahim in “From Cohesion to Control: The Dynamics of ‘Aṣabiyyah in Ibn Khaldūn’s Theory of Leadership, Control and Order”. Reinterpreting *‘aṣabiyyah* as Operational Cohesion Capacity, the chapter develops a contemporary analytical model capable of explaining how societies maintain stability, legitimacy, and institutional effectiveness while avoiding the destructive tendencies of exclusionary fanaticism.

In “Solidarity (‘Aṣabiyyah), Luxury (Ṭaraf), and Subjugation (al-Ummah al-Maghlūbah): A Khaldunian Interpretation of Nasrid Granada”, Dr Ghadi Amer applies Ibn Khaldūn’s conceptual vocabulary to the history and cultural production of Nasrid Granada. Through an innovative reading of the Alhambra’s epigraphy and artistic programmes, the chapter illustrates how Khaldunian concepts illuminate the relationship between political legitimacy, cultural refinement, luxury, and civilizational decline.

Fiscal policy and public finance form the focus of Dr Mona Mahmoud Idelbi’s chapter, “The Formulation of Taxes in the Thought of Ibn Khaldun”. The author examines Ibn Khaldūn’s understanding of taxation, public expenditure,

labour, investment, and corruption, demonstrating the remarkable relevance of his fiscal insights for contemporary debates on sustainable taxation and economic governance.

The epistemological dimensions of Ibn Khaldūn's thought are revisited in Dr Rudiger Lohlker's chapter, "Reading the Muqaddima: The Paradox of the Sixth Prolegomenon and Orientalism". Challenging long-standing Orientalist interpretations, the author argues that Ibn Khaldūn's discussions of prophecy, sainthood, and the occult should not be viewed as irrational deviations from scientific inquiry. Instead, they constitute an integral component of his intellectual worldview and demonstrate the need for a more nuanced and genuinely universal epistemology.

A contemporary sociological reinterpretation appears in Dr Fatima Algharbawi's contribution, "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Asabiyyah and Social Capital: A Theoretical Re-Reading", which chapter places *ʿaṣabiyyah* in dialogue with modern theories of social capital associated with Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam. By highlighting the dimensions of trust, reciprocity, collective identity, and moral obligation, the author positions Ibn Khaldūn as a significant contributor to global sociological theory.

The international reception of Ibn Khaldūn's ideas is further explored in "Ibn Khaldun and American Social Thought: The Dialectic of Reception and Intersection" by Dr Suleiman Al Daher, Labidi Bouabdallah, and Khalifa Khalid Abdullah. Their study examines how American sociologists and historians engaged with Khaldunian concepts and evaluates the extent to which these interpretations succeeded in transcending Eurocentric assumptions.

The relationship between nomadic and urban civilization is investigated by Dr Imen Helali in "Bedouin and Urban Civilization in the Thought of Ibn Khaldun: Polarity or Complementarity". Rather than treating Bedouin and urban life as opposites, the chapter demonstrates how Ibn Khaldūn understood them as interconnected stages within a broader process of historical and civilizational development.

Educational thought receives attention in "Intellectual Education in Ibn Khaldun: A Psychological-Educational Approach" by Dr Elhoussine Baaddi, Chaimae Elmajdoubi, and Dr Shaikha Nasir Alkarbi. The authors reveal the striking compatibility between Ibn Khaldūn's educational insights and contemporary theories of psychology and pedagogy, particularly regarding critical thinking, creativity, cognitive development, and mental well-being.

The practical significance of Khaldunian thought in contemporary governance is demonstrated in Dr Noura Nasir Alkarbi's chapter, "Ministry of Tolerance in the UAE: A Practical Application of Ibn Khaldun's Vision in Managing Diversity and Social Integration". Using the United Arab Emirates as a case study, the chapter examines how institutional frameworks promoting tolerance and coexistence reflect core Khaldunian principles of social balance and collective integration.

Reception studies continue with Dr Sead Karišik's contribution, "The Reception of Ibn Khaldun's Thought in Journals in Bosnia and Herzegovina". By analysing academic, cultural, religious, and political journals, the author provides valuable insights into the transmission, interpretation, and appropriation of Ibn Khaldūn's ideas within the Bosnian intellectual landscape.

Contemporary sociological applications are further developed in "Khaldunian Applications in Applied Sociology: A Contemporary Reading in Light of the Emirati Experience" by Dr Shaikha Nasir AlKarbi. The chapter argues that concepts such as *ʿumrān* and *ʿaṣabiyyah* remain analytically useful for understanding institutional development, social cohesion, and sustainable governance in modern societies.

The volume concludes with Dr Anja Zalta's chapter, "Ibn Khaldun's 'Aṣabiyyah and Gender Relations in Nomadic Society: The Case of SADR". Drawing upon fieldwork among Sahrawi refugees, the chapter demonstrates how Ibn Khaldūn's concept of social solidarity provides a powerful framework for understanding transformations in gender relations under conditions of war, displacement, and migration. The study reveals how collective solidarity, religion, and political ideology can facilitate new forms of women's participation in public life while simultaneously reinforcing communal identity.

Taken together, the contributions in this volume illustrate the extraordinary range and continuing relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual legacy. They demonstrate that the *Muqaddimah* is not merely a historical text but a living source of theoretical inspiration capable of informing contemporary debates on social cohesion, governance, economics, education, gender, culture, and civilizational development. By bringing together scholars from different disciplines and intellectual traditions, this volume seeks to advance a deeper appreciation of Ibn Khaldūn's place within global intellectual history and to encourage further engagement with his ideas in the 21st century. The chapters collectively affirm that reading Ibn Khaldūn today is not only an exercise in historical scholarship, but also an opportunity to rethink some of the most pressing questions facing modern societies.

Acknowledgements

The present edited volume, *Reading Ibn Khaldun: His Heritage, Applications, and Significance for Modern Science*, is the product of the International Ibn Khaldun Colloquium, co-organized by the Sharjah International Foundation for the History of Arab and Muslim Sciences (SIFHAMS), University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, and the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, held on 10–11 December 2025 in Sharjah. Bringing together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and geographical contexts, the colloquium sought to revisit the intellectual legacy of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), one of the most influential thinkers in the history of Islamic civilization and arguably one of the earliest architects of the social sciences.

As the editors of this volume, we would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those whose support, encouragement, and contributions made both the colloquium and this publication possible.

Our foremost thanks are due to His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Al Qasimi, Deputy Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah and President of the University of Sharjah, for his unwavering commitment to scholarship, intellectual exchange, and the advancement of academic research. His continuous support of initiatives dedicated to the history of science, civilization, and intercultural understanding has provided an invaluable foundation for endeavours such as this.

We are equally indebted to Professor Esameldin Agamy, Chancellor of the University of Sharjah, whose encouragement and support greatly contributed to the successful organization of the colloquium and the realization of this volume.

We also wish to convey our sincere appreciation to Her Excellency Natalia Al Mansour, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Arab Emirates, for her gracious support and encouragement, which further strengthened the academic and cultural cooperation between the participating institutions.

Special thanks are extended to Professor Abdelrazek Elnaggar and Dr Ahmed Fattouh for their tireless efforts and dedication as members of the organizing committee. Their commitment, professionalism, and careful coordination were instrumental in transforming the idea of the International Ibn Khaldun Colloquium into a successful scholarly gathering that brought together researchers from various parts of the world.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Dean, Prof. Dr Mojca Schlamberger Brezar, and the leadership of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, for

their support in co-organizing the conference. Special thanks are also due to the Department of Sociology, the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, and Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts – particularly Mr Jure Preglau –for their invaluable assistance in publishing this monograph.

We are particularly grateful to all the contributors to this volume. Each author has enriched this collection through original scholarship, thoughtful analysis, and fresh perspectives on Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual heritage and its continuing significance for contemporary academic inquiry. Their contributions collectively demonstrate the enduring relevance of Khaldunian thought across a wide range of disciplines and contexts.

Our sincere appreciation is also extended to the reviewers and proofreaders whose careful evaluations, constructive suggestions, and meticulous attention to detail have significantly enhanced the quality of this publication. Although their names are not individually mentioned here, their contributions are deeply valued and gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, we thank all participants of the colloquium, colleagues, institutions, and friends whose support, cooperation, and belief in the importance of studying Ibn Khaldūn's legacy contributed to the success of this project. It is our hope that this volume will serve as a meaningful contribution to contemporary scholarship and inspire further research into the life, thought, and enduring influence of one of the greatest intellectual figures in world history.

The monograph was published in cooperation with the aforementioned Centre for Middle Eastern Studies FF UL, the Department of Sociology FF UL and within the framework of the research programme Problems of Autonomy and Identities at the Time of Globalization (P6-0194) at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

Anja Zalta and Mesut Idriz
Editors

From Plato to Ibn Khaldūn: Tracing the Idea of “Man is *Madani* by Nature” Across Greek Philosophy and Islamic Thought

Dr Badr Hamid Al-Harbi

Introduction

Aphoristic statements occupy a prominent place in the philosophical and intellectual tradition, as they often come to function as interpretive keys through which entire doctrines and schools of thought are understood. Such statements, however, are frequently attributed to later figures or intellectual movements, whereas careful historical analysis reveals that their roots are far deeper, and that they emerge from a long process of interaction among multiple cultures. Although this observation applies to ideas in general, this brief study focuses specifically on the aphoristic statements themselves as independent units of meaning, without losing sight of the foundational ideas from which they originally arose.

One of the most prominent examples of aphoristic statements that may be traced within this context is the phrase “man is *madani* by nature” (i.e., naturally disposed to civic/political association), which has become widespread in Arabic intellectual literature and is commonly attributed to Ibn Khaldūn, to the point that many regard it as one of his original intellectual contributions.

Yet Ibn Khaldūn himself explicitly acknowledged that the statement belongs to the sayings of the “sages”, a recognition that invites a historical inquiry into the trajectory of this formulation – from its earliest emergence as an idea to the moment of its rearticulation and redeployment by Ibn Khaldūn in his celebrated *Muqaddima*.¹

The earliest foundations of the idea that “man is *madani* by nature” can be traced back to Greek philosophy. In *The Republic*, Plato articulated his conception of the origin of the city, explaining that human association arises out of necessity—namely, the need to secure individual needs, to enable the division of labour, and to establish organized communal life.² Aristotle subsequently endowed this idea with an explicitly ontological dimension in his work *Politics*, where he formulated it in his well-known statement that “man is by nature a political animal”, thereby affirming that social association is an essential and constitutive element of human nature.³

From this perspective, the present study seeks to trace the trajectory of the idea that “man is *madani* by nature” through its principal stages: from Plato and Aristotle, to the Muslim philosophers, and then to later scholars engaged with the Islamic intellectual tradition, culminating in its reuse and strategic deployment by Ibn Khaldūn.

The study relies on textual analysis and historical comparison in order to reveal how this idea was transmitted and how it crystallized into the aforementioned aphoristic formulation, as well as what this process reveals about the dynamics of civilizational interaction between Greek and Islamic thought at its various levels. The ultimate aim of this paper is to understand how philosophical ideas travel across cultures, how their functions are transformed as they pass through different languages and fields of knowledge, and – on this basis, as the present inquiry seeks to demonstrate – how Islamic culture and intellectual heritage engaged with Greek thought throughout its extended historical phases.

Through a review of the relevant literature, two complementary trajectories may be identified: an ancient Greek trajectory, in which the initial semantic

1 Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn* [The *Muqaddimah*], ed. ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Darwīsh, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dār Yaʿrub, 2004), 137.

2 Plato, *The Republic of Plato: An Ideal Commonwealth*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, rev. ed., with a special introduction by William Cranston Lawton (New York: The Colonial Press, n.d.), 47.

3 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), 5; I.2, Bekker 1253a2–3.

nucleus of the idea was formed, and an Islamic–Arabic trajectory, which reengaged this nucleus and recirculated it across multiple Islamic disciplines, culminating in a particularly significant moment when Ibn Khaldūn redeployed the idea within his theory of *ʿumrān*.

This study is grounded in a central hypothesis: namely, that there exists a gradual, diverse, and positively interactive relationship between Islamic thought and Greek philosophy, a relationship made visible through Aristotle’s formulation that “man is *madani* by nature” and its Platonic roots.

The Trajectories of the Idea “Man is *Madani* by Nature”

In tracing Aristotle’s formulation as an indicator illuminating the aforementioned hypothesis, the researcher identifies two principal trajectories through which the Aristotelian statement may be followed: a Greek trajectory and an Islamic trajectory, the latter being predominantly Arabic in character, with the exception of certain Persian influences, which function largely as extensions of the Arabic tradition and therefore do not constitute a primary focus of the present study.

1) *The Greek Trajectory: Plato and Aristotle*

Plato may be regarded as the first philosopher to articulate clearly the idea of the cause of human social association in his work *The Republic*. There, he explains that the emergence of the city arises from humanity’s inability to achieve self-sufficiency, and that the multiplicity of human needs necessitates association and cooperation, which in turn naturally leads to the formation of the city. As he states through the voice of Socrates: “*A state, I said, arises, as I conceive, out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants.*”⁴

Aristotle subsequently elevated this idea to an ontological level in his *Politics*, where he stated that “man is by nature a political animal”⁵ (*zōon politikón*; ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον⁶). In this formulation, human association is

4 Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 47.

5 Aristotle, *Politics*, 5; I.2, Bekker 1253a2–3.

6 Aristotle, *Politica*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), I.2, Bekker 1253a2–3. Romanization follows the ALA-LC Greek Romanization Table.

not understood merely as a contingent means to achieve benefit, but rather as an essential component of human nature and essence.

The Greek term *politikós*, from which the later English word *political* is derived, is itself connected to the term *polis*, meaning “city”.⁷ In this sense, human beings live in politically organized communities by virtue of their very nature.⁸ On this basis, the Arabic translation of the term *politikón* as *madani* (“civil”) emerged, as will be discussed later.

2) *The Islamic Trajectory: From Reception to Localization*

With the translation movement centred in the *Bayt al-Ḥikma* in Baghdad, Greek texts entered the Arab–Islamic intellectual sphere and were subsequently reformulated within newly emerging Islamic–Arabic intellectual frameworks. Among the works translated were writings by the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle.

Although many scholars tend to argue that Aristotle’s *Politics* – in which the aforementioned formulation appears – was not translated into Arabic,⁹ Aristotle’s statement was nevertheless rendered as “man is by nature *madani*”, together with the ideas associated with it in the *Politics*. The same formulation was also adopted in the Arabic translation of another Aristotelian work that has fortunately survived, namely the *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn.¹⁰

According to Rudolph, philological evidence derived from Greek–Arabic translations of the third and fourth Islamic centuries demonstrates that the

7 Fred Miller, “Aristotle’s Political Theory”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, first published July 1, 1998; substantive revision July 1, 2022; last modified September 12, 2022, accessed February 9, 2026.

8 Roar Anfinssen, “Nature and the Political Ideal of Aristotle”, *Contrastes: Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, suppl. 20 (2015): 146.

9 Makram Abbès, “The Influence of Aristotle’s Thought on Arab Political-Philosophical Ideas”, in *A Critical Companion to the ‘Mirrors for Princes’ Literature*, ed. Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 263–313, doi:10.1163/9789004523067_011. One scholar has presented evidence indicating the presence of passages from Aristotle’s *Politics* in the works of al-‘Āmirī, al-Fārābī, and Miskawayh, which suggests that a translated version of this text was available to them. See: Shlomo Pines, “Aristotle’s *Politics* in Arabic Philosophy”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975): 150–160.

10 Aristotle, *al-Akhlaq (Ethics)*, 1st ed. (Kuwait: *Wakālat al-Maṭbū‘āt*, 1979), 66.

term *politikós* was commonly translated by Arab translators as *madani*.¹¹ Consequently, the term *madani* in Arabic usage was not restricted to an urban or architectural sense, but rather denoted human association and public political life – that is, matters pertaining to the city as a human, socio-political unit – precisely in the sense intended by Aristotle.

Determining Influence: Between Plato and Aristotle

Before proceeding to the main section – which traces the transmission of the Aristotle’s famous saying into the Islamic intellectual tradition and the routes through which it circulated – it is necessary to distinguish with precision between the original formulation of the underlying idea in Plato and its counterpart in Aristotle, which ultimately culminated in the wording of the aphorism under investigation. Accordingly, we must set out explicit criteria that clarify the points of divergence in how each of Plato and Aristotle articulates the idea, with the aim of identifying the most direct source of influence on its formation among Muslim thinkers, and of delimiting the framework of citation and attribution in Arabic sources, up to the point at which Aristotle’s famous saying appears in Islamic writings. On this basis, we may state the following.

With respect to Plato, just as he links the emergence of human association to the needs of individuals, he also underscores the necessity of the division of labour among the inhabitants of a single city in order to meet those needs.¹²

As for Aristotle, it is essential to specify the conceptual elements he advances in explaining human association, even in contexts where his well-known aphorism is not explicitly invoked. Indeed, Aristotle’s influence in the earliest phases of his Islamic reception does not always appear through direct citation of the aphorism “man is by nature a social/political being”, as will become clear; rather, some early Muslim philosophers transmitted Aristotle’s account of the causes of association primarily through his ideas and argumentative structure, more than through the aphorism itself. For this reason, it is necessary to trace the impact of these Aristotelian themes in their texts, while noting instances in which the well-known aphoristic formulation is absent.

11 Ulrich Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī”, in *Philosophy in the Islamic World, Volume 1: 8th–10th Centuries*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph, Rotraud Hansberger, and Peter Adamson, trans. Rotraud Hansberger (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2017), 633.

12 Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 47–48.

Among the most prominent Aristotelian ideas that we will observe in the writings of early Muslim philosophers – alongside his celebrated “man is by nature a social/political being” – is the following summary: natural disposition impels human beings toward association, which is constituted by persons who cannot remain in isolation, such as man and woman, and master and slave. Association then develops in stages, from the household to the village, until it reaches self-sufficiency. The polis/state represents the most complete form of association, and the highest and noblest of goods. Human beings, moreover, possess speech or rational discourse, through which they discern and communicate what is beneficial and harmful, what is just and unjust, and can reach mutual understanding concerning these matters; from this, the household arises, and subsequently the state.¹³

The Emergence of the Idea in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

The idea of accounting for the emergence of human social association – drawing on Plato and Aristotle – first appeared in the Islamic intellectual tradition among those influenced by Greek philosophy, namely Muslim philosophers and, in a comparable capacity, figures from the Mu‘tazila. It then spread to other religious scholars across a wide range of orientations and intellectual interests, as I shall show below.

First: The Idea’s Emergence among Muslim Philosophers

1. *Al-Jāḥiẓ* (c. 776–868/869 CE)

In *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, al-Jāḥiẓ reflects the influence of both Plato and Aristotle. On the Platonic side, he explains human social association in terms of the diversity of people’s needs and the individual’s inability to meet all of them without the assistance of others.¹⁴ A Platonic sense of the division of labour likewise appears in his emphasis on cooperation and mutual support¹⁵ – an emphasis that naturally leads to the idea that each person will undertake what he is capable of and what he does best.

13 Aristotle, *Politics*, 4–6; I.2, Bekker 1252b27–29 and 1253a19–27.

14 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1424 AH), 1:35.

15 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 1:35.

The Aristotelian influence, by contrast, is evident in al-Jāḥiẓ's assertion that people's need for one another is an inherent and enduring feature of their natural dispositions – constant and never absent.¹⁶ This accords with the Aristotelian tendency to treat social association as integral to human nature.¹⁷

In addition, Al-Jāḥiẓ highlights the role of *bayān* (articulate expression) in shaping human social life, treating it as a means through which knowledge and needs are communicated and organized.¹⁸ This is in line with Aristotle's view that speech is fundamental to the establishment of human association.¹⁹

2. *Al-Fārābī (c. 870–950/951 CE)*

Al-Fārābī's treatment in *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* and *Al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* makes plain his reliance on the conceptual architecture of *Politics*, particularly in his assertion that "each human being is fashioned in such a way that, for his subsistence and for attaining his highest perfections, he stands in need of many things that he cannot accomplish on his own", and that a person cannot "attain the perfection for which natural constitution was instituted except through the association of a great multitude".²⁰ This closely parallels Aristotle's view that civic association is natural – and that humans are political by nature. Likewise, al-Fārābī's claim that "the highest good and the ultimate perfection are attained first through the city",²¹ and that the city constitutes "the first rank of perfections",²² conveys the substance of Aristotle's thesis: "*The state, the highest community, aims at the highest good.*"²³

16 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 1:34, 35.

17 Aristotle, *Politics*, 5.

18 al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 1:35, 36.

19 Aristotle, *Politics*, 5.

20 Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq (al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkiyyah), n.d.), 117.

21 Ibid.

22 Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyyah*, 1st ed. (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkiyyah, 1964), 69.

23 Aristotle, *Politics*, 4. I.1, Bekker 1252a3–7.

3. *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa Khullān al-Wafā'* (anonymous collective; active early 10th c.; writings compiled no later than 950 CE)

The influence of Plato is evident in the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*'s epistles, where they ground their account of human association in the principle of need and the individual's insufficiency. As they state, a person "cannot live alone", for the individual "stands in need of a good life secured through the mastery of diverse crafts – something no single human being can attain in its entirety". From this need, the city emerges, and tasks are distributed among "crafts, trades, construction, and forms of governance".²⁴ In the first instance, this is an economic and social model that closely parallels what Plato sets out in *The Republic*.

4. *Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-ʿĀmirī* (913–992 CE)

In his book *Al-Saʿāda wa al-Isʿād* – specifically in the chapter entitled "Clarifying that the human being is in need of people's assistance in attaining happiness"²⁵ – Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī cites Plato and Aristotle directly. On the one hand, he echoes Plato's view that human association is founded upon need and upon the distribution of crafts among individuals. On the other hand, he presents a particularly significant Aristotelian statement: "The impetus toward civic association is necessary and natural; hence we say that the human being is a civic creature by nature, and that whoever does not partake in this association is wretched."²⁶ The importance of this lies in the fact that it appears to represent the earliest explicit occurrence of Aristotle's aphorism: "man is by nature a political animal".

5. *Miskawayh, Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī* (c. 932–1030 CE)

Aristotle's dictum – "man is *madani* by nature" – appears once again in Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq*.²⁷ Yet when he cites it, he does not attribute it to Aristotle, or to any particular philosopher; instead, he

24 *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khullān al-Wafā'* (Qom: Markaz al-Nashr, Maktab Iʿlām Islāmī, 1405 AH), 1:99–100.

25 al-ʿĀmirī, Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, *al-Saʿādah wa-al-Isʿād fī al-Sīrah al-Insāniyyah* (n.p.: Manshūrāt Āyah Ishrāq, n.d.), 185.

26 Ibid.

27 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq*, 1st ed. (n.p.: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, n.d.), 38.

introduces it with the formula, “the sages said”,²⁸ a wording that would later recur among many subsequent writers who mention the same statement.

Miskawayh invokes this Aristotelian dictum in support of a distinctly Aristotelian thesis: namely, that a man cannot attain his full self-perfection except within a civic community.²⁹ He employs the dictum to argue that the practical virtues – such as chastity, courage, generosity, justice, friendship, and love – are not realized in isolation, since they are, by their very nature, relational: their object is only fulfilled in the presence of others, and their effects become manifest only within social life.³⁰ He also alludes to another Aristotelian idea, to the effect that human beings agreed upon sounds that form words signifying meanings, in order to facilitate the exchange of needs and the sharing of benefits.³¹

In *Al-Fawz al-Aṣghar*, however – and in what Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī reports from him in *Al-Hawāmil wa al-Shawāmil* – Miskawayh, even while invoking Aristotle’s dictum, also adopts a Platonic line in explaining the cause of human association. He maintains that social life arises from people’s need to secure their interests: the individual is not self-sufficient but requires the assistance of others.³² He further observes that some people wrong themselves and others when they neglect the needs of the body and rely on others to meet them, whereas the order of the city and the soundness of human livelihood depend on fair cooperation, not on one-sided dependence.³³ He adds that individuals’ needs must persist and differ from one another if the city is to endure and social association to continue.³⁴

6. *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (c. 932–1023 CE)

In *Al-Ṣadāqa wa al-Ṣadīq*, al-Tawḥīdī again cites Aristotle’s dictum without naming him, stating: “The ancients said: man is *madani* by nature”.³⁵ Yet he

28 Ibid.

29 Aristotle, *Politics*, 5, 6.

30 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Taḥḥīr al-Aʿrāq*, 166, 265.

31 Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa-al-Shawāmil*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr, introd. Ṣalāḥ Raslān (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-ʿĀmmah li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 2001), 6.

32 Miskawayh, *al-Fawz al-Aṣghar* (Beirut: n.p., 1319 AH), 62–63.

33 al-Tawḥīdī, Abū Ḥayyān, and Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa-al-Shawāmil* 35.

34 Ibid., 87.

35 Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Ṣadāqah wa-al-Ṣadīq*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir; Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1419 AH/1998), 161.

explains the basis of human association from a more Platonic angle, arguing that a human being “cannot, on his own, achieve completion in all his interests, nor be self-sufficient in all his needs”, and therefore stands in need of “help and mutual assistance”.³⁶

The claim al-Tawḥīdī seeks to support through this dictum is that human beings are inevitably drawn into a web of diverse relationships – both positive and negative – imposed by need and the exchange of benefits. Hence, no one is ever entirely free of ties, dealings, and even disputes.

7. *Ibn Hindū (fl. late 10th c.; d. c. 1019 CE)*

In his book *Miftāḥ al-Ṭibb wa Minhāj al-Ṭullāb*, Ibn Hindū blends Aristotelian and Platonic perspectives, much like other Muslim philosophers. He begins, in an Aristotelian vein, from the premise that “man is *madani* by nature” while he explains the emergence of the city in terms of need and the division of labour among people – factors that, in effect, give rise to the various crafts within the city almost spontaneously. He uses this to argue that knowing the crafts and mastering at least some of them is a prerequisite for an individual to count as part of the city.³⁷

8. *Avicenna (980–1037 CE)*

A distinctly Platonic rationale is apparent in *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, where he maintains that a human being “cannot be self-sufficient in managing his own affairs” and therefore requires “the participation of another from among his own kind”. He further explains that tasks are apportioned among people through *mu‘āraḍa* and *mu‘āwaḍa* – that is, reciprocity and exchange, an interchange of benefits and roles – which he presents as the very cause of social association.³⁸ The same line of reasoning also surfaces in *Kitāb al-Shifā’*.³⁹

In *Al-Siyāsa*, however, he advances a social “design” whose contours are markedly Aristotelian: he begins with procuring sustenance, then storing it;

36 Ibid.

37 Abū al-Faraj ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Hindū, *Miftāḥ al-Ṭibb wa Minhāj al-Ṭullāb* (Tehran: Mu’assasat Muṭāla‘āt Islāmī, n.d.), 4.

38 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, commentary by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 4:60.

39 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*, *Qism al-Ilāhiyyāt* (Qom: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-‘Uẓmā al-Mar‘ashī al-Najafī, 1405 AH), 441.

next comes establishing a dwelling to safeguard property and life, followed by the need for protection and guarding; then the household takes shape through spouse and child, and thereafter through helpers and servants – until a wider social circle unfolds from this domestic economy. This sequencing parallels the progression found in *Politics*, even as the background element of need and mutual complementarity – Platonic in tone – remains clearly at work.⁴⁰

Moreover, in both *al-Ishārāt* and *al-Shifāʾ*, he takes the established fact of humanity's need for social life as an entry point for arguing the necessity of a revealed law, brought by an obeyed prophet who lays down regulations that preserve justice among individuals. In *al-Siyāsa*, by contrast, he emphasizes that the very nature of social life itself generates the need for an orderly human governance that regulates relations and safeguards interests.

Although the celebrated Aristotelian formula does not appear verbatim in his major, widely circulated works, it does occur in a brief epistle, *Ajwiba ʿan ʿAshr Masāʾil* (“Replies to Ten Questions”). There, it is cited not in a direct discussion of social association, but while explaining the meaning of *ṭabʿ* and *ṭabīʿa* (disposition and nature), where he offers, by way of illustration, the saying: “man is *madani* by nature”.⁴¹

Second: The Idea's Full Diffusion into the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

Close textual tracking shows that the maxim “man is *madani* by nature” – appearing alongside the Platonic explanation for the emergence of human social association – came to circulate widely within Islamic culture, cutting across doctrinal orientations (Sunni, Shiʿi, Māturīdī, Ashʿarī, and Salafī) as well as across fields of knowledge (creedal theology and *kalām*, Qurʾanic exegesis, ḥadīth commentaries, *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *fiqh*, linguistics, history, and philosophy).

Aristotle's dictum, together with Plato's explanation of human sociality, was employed to elucidate numerous discussions within disciplines and bodies of

40 Ibn Sīnā, “al-Siyāsaḥ”, in *Majmūʿfi al-Siyāsaḥ min Turāth al-Fiqh al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī*, ed. and study by Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Munʿim Aḥmad, 1st ed. (Alexandria: Muʾassasat Shabāb al-Jāmiʿah, 1982), 84–85.

41 Ibn Sīnā, “Ajwibah ʿan ʿAshr Masāʾil”, in *Rasāʾil Ibn Sīnā*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat Ibrāhīm Kharūz, 1953), 77.

knowledge that are distinctly Islamic in character. The depth and breadth of this dictum's influence are further underscored by the fact that the Salafi trend – despite its well-known cautions against Greek philosophy, particularly in matters of theology – nevertheless drew upon the notion that “man is social by nature” and upon Plato's conception of human association in order to articulate and substantiate important doctrinal issues, as is evident in the works of Ibn Taymiyya⁴² and his student Ibn al-Qayyim.⁴³

Just as the first phase was inaugurated by Islamic philosophy in its role as a foundational mediator between Greek and Arabic culture, the subsequent phase of scholastic reception provided a broader setting for the spread of the Aristotelian aphorism and the Platonic rationale. This was further facilitated by the presence of certain philosophers in this period – most notably Averroes.

Persian texts, moreover, will reveal a noteworthy tendency to preserve the Arabic wording of the Aristotelian maxim. This both reflects a shared Islamic cultural belonging and underscores the Arabic source of philosophical writing composed in Persian, as well as the cultural predominance of Arabic among Muslim societies.

Within an even wider Arab-Islamic horizon, Maimonides may also be included, despite his Jewish identity, given that his intellectual activity, writings, and influence were formed and matured within an Arabic-speaking Islamic environment.

42 See: Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah fī Taʾsīs Bidaʾihim al-Kalāmiyyah*, 1st ed. (n.p.: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf, 1426 AH), 3:453; Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Hisbah fī al-Islām*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, n.d.), 7; Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Maʿrifah, n.d.), 329; Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā Majmūʿ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (n.p.: n.p., 1418 AH), 1:193; Ibn Taymiyyah, *Darʾ Taʾarūḍ al-ʿAql wa-al-Naql*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Suʿūd al-Islāmiyyah, 1411 AH), 7:136.

43 See: Ibn al-Qayyim, *Shifāʾ al-ʿAlīl fī Masāʾil al-Qaḍāʾ wa-al-Qadar wa-al-Ḥikmah wa-al-Taʾlīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1398 AH), 246; Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Ṣawāʾiq al-Mursalāh ʿalā al-Jahmiyyah wa-al-Muʿaṭṭilah*, 1st ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀshimah, 1408 AH), 1:342–347.

“Man is madani by nature”: Platonic and Aristotelian Antecedents and Their Reception in Islamic Sources

No.	Author	Work(s)	Discipline	Influence
1	al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 1108) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-Dhari’a ila Makarim al-Shari’a</i>	Ethics	P–A
		<i>al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur’an</i>	Qur’anic Exegesis	P–A
2	Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din</i>	Sufism	P
3	al-Lawkari (Abu al-’Abbas Fadl ibn Muhammad) (d. 1124) philosopher	<i>Sharh Qasidat Asrar al-Hikma – Persian (Fa.)</i>	Philosophy	P–A
4	al-Sharif al-Jurjani (d. 1413) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-Hashiya ‘ala al-Kashshaf</i>	Qur’anic Exegesis	P–A
5	Ibn al-’Arabi (Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah) (d. 1148) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-Mahsul fi Usul al-Fiqh</i>	Legal Theory	P–A
6	Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (Muhammad ibn Ahmad) (d. 1198) philosopher	<i>al-Daruri fi al-Siyasa</i>	Philosophy	P–A
		<i>Talkhis Kitab al-Jadal</i>	Legal Theory	A
7	Mūsā b. Maymūn (Maimonides) (d. 1204) Philosopher (Jewish)	<i>Dala’il al-Ha’irin</i>	Philosophy	A
8	Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1209) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Muhassal Afkar al-Mutaqaddimin wa al-Muta’akhhirin</i>	Theology	P–A
		<i>Sharh ‘Uyun al-Hikma</i>	Philosophy	P–A
		<i>al-Mabahith al-Mashriqiyya</i>	Philosophy	P–A
		<i>Mafatih al-Ghayb</i>	Qur’anic Exegesis	P–A
9	Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240) Şūfī	<i>Tafsir al-Shaykh al-Akbar</i>	Qur’anic Exegesis	P–A
10	Ibn Abi al-Hadid (d. 1258) Mu‘tazilī	<i>Sharh Nahj al-Balagha</i>	Arabic Literature	P–A
11	Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274) Shi‘i	<i>Risala Qawa’id al-’Aqa’id</i>	Theology	P–A
		<i>Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat</i>	Philosophy	P–A

No.	Author	Work(s)	Discipline	Influence
12	Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (d. 1280–1281) Shi'i	<i>Sharh Mi'at Kalima li-Amir al-Mu'minin</i>	Theology	P–A
13	Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini (d. 1283) Sunni – Ash'arī	<i>Mufid al-'Ulum wa Mubid al-Humum</i>	Arabic literature	P–A
14	Ibn al-Nafis ('Ala' al-Din 'Ali ibn Abi Hazm) (d. 1288) Sunni – Ash'arī	<i>al-Risala al-Kamila fi al-Sira al-Nabawiyya</i>	Prophetic Biography	P–A
15	Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Shahrazuri (d. 1288) Şūfī	<i>Rasa'il al-Shajara al-Ilahiyya fi 'Ulum al-Haqa'iq al-Rabban-iyya</i>	Philosophy	P–A
16	Shams al-Din al-Samarqandi (d. 1302) Sunni – Ash'arī	<i>al-Sahā'if al-Ilahiyya</i>	Theology	P–A
17	Shihab al-Din al-Khuwayyi (d. 1294) Sunni – Ash'arī Najm al-Din al-Qumuli (d. 1327) Sunni – Ash'arī	<i>Mafatih al-Ghayb</i> (They completed the book jointly, without any clear indication of the extent of each contributor's role.)	Qur'anic Exegesis	P–A P–A
18	Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah al-Hamadani (d. 1318) Sunni – Ash'arī	<i>Jami' al-Tawarikh – Persian (Fa.)</i>	History	A
19	Ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli (d. 1325) Shi'i	<i>Minhaj al-Karama fi Ma'rifat al-Imama</i>	Theology	
		<i>al-Alfayn</i>	Theology	P–A
		<i>al-Jawhar al-Nadid</i>	Logic	P–A
		<i>Tadhkirat al-Fuqaha</i>	Islamic Law	P–A
		<i>'Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-'Itiqad</i>	Theology	P–A
20	Ibn Taymiyya (Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Salam) (d. 1328) Sunni – Salafī	<i>Bayan Talbis al-Jahmiyya</i>	Theology	
		<i>al-Hisba fi al-Islam</i>	Islamic Law	P–A
		<i>al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin</i>	Theology	P–A
		<i>al-Mustadrak 'ala Majmu' Fa-tawa Shaykh al-Islam</i>	Islamic Law	A
		<i>Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql</i>	Theology	P–A

No.	Author	Work(s)	Discipline	Influence
21	Nizam al-Din al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Qummi al-Naysaburi (d. 1328–1329) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Ghara’ib al-Qur’an wa Ragha’ib al-Furqan</i>	Qur’ānic Exegesis	P–A
22	Burhan al-Din Ibrahim ibn ‘Umar al-Ja’bari (d. 1332) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Rusukh al-Ahbar fi Mansukh al-Akhbar</i>	Qur’ānic Exegesis	P–A
23	‘Ala’ al-Dawla Simnani (d. 1336) Šūfi	<i>Musannafat Farsi – Persian (Fa.)</i>	Sufism	P–A
24	Ibn al-Qayyim (Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ayyub) (d. 1350) Sunni – Salafī	<i>Shifa’ al-’Alil fi Masa’il al-Qa-da’ wa al-Qadar wa al-Hikma wa al-Ta’lil</i>	Theology	A
		<i>al-Sawa’iq al-Mursala ‘ala al-Jahmiyya wa al-Mu’attila</i>	Theology	P–A
25	Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Amuli (d. 1352–1353) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Nafais al-Funun fi ‘Ara’is al-’Uyun – Persian (Fa.)</i>	Philosophy	P–A
26	Sayyid ‘Amid al-Din al-’Ubaydili (d. 1353) Shi‘i	<i>Ishraq al-Lahut fi Naqd Sharh al-Yaqut</i>	Theology	A
27	‘Adud al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Iji (d. 1355) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-Mawaqif</i>	Theology	P–A
28	Fakhr al-Din Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Isfarayini (d. ca. 1359) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Sharh Kitab al-Najat li-Ibn Sina</i>	Philosophy	P–A
29	Qutb al-Din al-Razi (d. 1364–1365) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Sharh Matali’ al-Anwar fi al-Mantiq</i>	Logic	P–A
30	Ibn al-’Allama al-Hilli (d. 1369–1370) Shi‘i	<i>Idah al-Fawa’id fi Sharh Mushkilat al-Qawa’id</i>	Theology	P–A
31	Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tilimsani (d. 1369) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Miftah al-Wusul ila Bina’ al-Furu’ ‘ala al-Usul</i>	Legal Theory	A
32	Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Babarti (d. 1384) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-’Inaya Sharh al-Hidaya</i>	Islamic Law	P–A
		<i>al-Rudud wa al-Nuqud Sharh Mukhtasar Ibn al-Hajib</i>	Legal Theory	P–A

No.	Author	Work(s)	Discipline	Influence
33	Shams al-Din al-Kirmani (d. 1384) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>al-Kawakib al-Darari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari</i>	Prophetic Tradition	A
34	al-Shahid al-Awwal (d. 1384) Shi‘i	<i>Arba’ Rasa’il Kalamiyya</i>	Theology	P–A
35	Sa’d al-Din Mas’ud ibn ‘Umar al-Taftazani (d. 1390) Sunni – Ash‘arī	<i>Sharh al-Maqasid</i>	Theology	P–A
		<i>al-Mutawwal Sharh Talkhis Miftah al-‘Ulum</i>	Islamic Rhetoric	P–A

Legend: P = Plato, A = Aristotle. Legal Theory = *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*

Third: Ibn Khaldūn (732–808 AH)

Aristotle’s dictum that “man is *madani* by nature” appears in Ibn Khaldūn at the very outset of his foundational project in the *Muqaddima*, where he lays the conceptual groundwork for his theory of human *‘umrān* in his celebrated work that is commonly known as *The Muqaddima of Ibn Khaldūn*.⁴⁴ He begins by establishing the necessity of human association and cites this formulation as a saying of the “sages”, without identifying any particular philosopher. He then supports this claim with a set of arguments that draw on the Platonic conception grounded in economic and material needs and in the division of labour among members of society. In this way, he follows the general pattern of earlier thinkers who treated the issue within the Islamic intellectual tradition, while addressing it specifically within the subject matter of the science of *‘umrān*, rather than in the manner of the predecessors.

Ibn Khaldūn attributes people’s need for one another to two fundamental factors. The first is that human beings are compelled to cooperate with others of their kind in order to obtain food, which is the first and most essential of their necessities. The second is that they require one another’s assistance in warding off attacks by animals that could threaten the survival of the human species itself.⁴⁵

After firmly grounding the principle of the necessity of human association with these arguments, he moves to a second principle: the necessity of a restraining

⁴⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 137.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 138.

authority (*wāziʿ*) that prevents people “from harming one another, given the animal element in their natures that inclines them to aggression and injustice”. This restraining force is embodied in kingship or political authority. In this respect, Ibn Khaldūn remains connected to the intellectual horizon delineated by Greek philosophy and carried forward within the Islamic tradition.⁴⁶

From this starting point, Ibn Khaldūn engages Aristotle’s dictum through three interrelated steps. First, he turns it into a foundational principle for the science of human *ʿumrān*. Second, he builds his demonstration upon it through the principle of cooperation and the division of labour, both of which have Platonic roots. Third, he concludes that the realization of *ʿumrān* necessarily leads to the need for authority and the state.

While Ibn Khaldūn accepts the implications of the Aristotelian dictum “man is *madani* by nature” and what it indicates regarding the inevitability of human association and the establishment of *ʿumrān*, he nevertheless criticizes the philosophers’ line of reasoning that treats society’s need for order and legal regulation as a rational premise for the necessity of prophecy. They had argued that social life can only be properly sustained through a binding law brought by a single human being – a prophet. Ibn Khaldūn maintains that this inference is not demonstrative: human life and collective organization can, as historical experience shows, continue within the framework of commands and prohibitions imposed by a ruler through political power or through group solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyya*), without any necessary need for revealed scripture.

He supports this claim by noting that, throughout history, the followers of prophets have been fewer in number than the Magians, who possess no scripture, yet they nevertheless established states and their *ʿumrān* endured. Indeed, they constitute a large portion of the world’s population. For Ibn Khaldūn, this indicates that the necessity of human association – and the claim that “man is *madani* by nature” – does not necessarily entail the existence of revealed law or a prophet in the sense asserted by the philosophers.⁴⁷

Concluding Results

1. The adoption of the Aristotelian dictum “man is *madani* by nature” within the Islamic milieu made human sociality a key point of departure for

46 Ibid.

47 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 139.

- understanding a range of disciplines and concerns – most notably the Sharīʿa (including discussions of the need for the imamate, law, and related applications), political philosophy, ethics, and ʿumrān (civilization).
2. The Aristotelian dictum – and its Platonic antecedents – provides evidence of a long, constructive intellectual dialogue between Islamic thought and Greek philosophy, one that extended into the modern period, rather than indicating an epistemic rupture or cognitive discontinuity.
 3. With regard to Ibn Khaldūn, tracing the dictum and its Platonic background back to their earliest Greek origins, and following their varied manifestations in the Arabic–Islamic corpus – as this paper has done – shows that Ibn Khaldūn received and theoretically deployed the idea within his project on human ʿumrān. He was not, however, the first originator or original inventor of either its formulation or its content; indeed, it is more likely that he drew it from existing Arabic sources within the tradition itself.

Recommendations for further research

1. Expand the comparative textual investigation as a sustained research project by compiling as many occurrences of the dictum as possible across the Islamic tradition – philosophy, *kalām*, *fiqh*, Qurʾānic exegesis, and literature – and by producing a comparative index that maps its various formulations, the contexts of its deployment, and the position of Ibn Khaldūn’s text within this broader trajectory.
2. Identify other comparable cases to the Aristotelian dictum discussed here – whether in the form of specific texts or broader philosophical notions – and subject them to a parallel historical–analytical study, following an approach similar to that adopted in the present paper.

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The Rise and Decline of Civilization: A Critical Analysis of Ibn Khaldun's Theory

Dr Mashhad Al-Allaf

The Critical Foundations of Ibn Khaldun's Conception of Civilization

Ibn Khaldun constructed his theory of the emergence and decline of civilizations upon his theory of human *ʿumran* and the science of social history. He then grounded his theory of *ʿumran* on the concept of the state, and he based the concept of the state and sovereignty (*al-mulk*) on the notion of *ʿasabiyyah* (social cohesion or group solidarity). In this framework, the ultimate aim of maximal *ʿasabiyyah* is the establishment of the state. Subsequently, the state undertakes the development of human *ʿumran*, insofar as it constitutes its purpose. Civilization, in Ibn Khaldun's view, emerges at the culmination of this process as the ultimate goal of *ʿumran*, representing the highest level of the world's civilizational development. In this way, Ibn Khaldun founded his theory of civilization upon the concept of the state, which consequently limits its philosophical depth.

Ibn Khaldun's discussion of civilization does not fall within the philosophy of civilization, but rather constitutes a descriptive historiography of civilization, viewing it as the culmination of human development and a manifestation of luxury and welfare conditions that are additional to the necessities

of civilization. For him, they are a surplus of luxury, and its “law” is that civilization increases proportionally with luxury: “*It increases variably according to the variation of affluence and according to the disparity among nations in scarcity and abundance, in an unbounded variation.*”¹ In my view, this approach deprived Ibn Khaldun’s discussion of civilization of the philosophical perspective, which requires first addressing the essence of Islamic civilization, and then the general laws and ideas that derive from this essence and manifest in all aspects of civilization. This is the difference between the history of civilization and the philosophy of civilization.

Ibn Khaldun’s theory of the rise and decline of civilization carries unintended educational consequences that require reconsideration, prompting pedagogical reflection on its application or generalization. This Khaldunian theory leads to what we call historical determinism, which dictates the inevitable end of civilization. Just as biological determinism inevitably leads humans to death, historical determinism leads civilizations to decline and disintegration.

From an educational perspective and for the purpose of rebuilding civilization, I argue that the Khaldunian theory, in its biological interpretation of the rise and fall of civilizations and in its traditional formulation, no longer helps new generations build a living and effective understanding of Arab-Islamic civilization. Instead of confining it to a circular model of rise and collapse, we need a more dynamic vision that highlights this civilization’s capacity for renewal and the production of new paths for intellectual and cultural growth and communication across time. A different perspective gives new generations the opportunity to continue and develop what occurred previously in Arab-Islamic civilization. From this standpoint, there are three fundamental reasons prompting me to move beyond the Khaldunian framework in this context:

First Reason: The biological theory of civilization leads to historical determinism² in decline and disintegration, implying an inescapable path. This

1 Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, first edition, 1993, p. 290.

2 Historical determinism is a philosophical theory or perspective that holds that the course of history is governed by fixed laws or determining factors, causing events to unfold in a necessary and predetermined manner, such that history could not have taken any course other than the one that actually occurred. In other words, history does not proceed randomly; rather, it is shaped by deterministic forces or conditions – whether social, economic, biological, or material – that render historical events the natural outcome of these factors, rather than the result of fully free human choices.

determinism denies the possibility of creative free action, which is essential for societies to reconstruct their civilization and renew their internal elements.

Second Reason: Historical determinism (not Ibn Khaldun's ideas themselves, but their consequences) leads to a pessimistic outlook unsuitable for education and for new generations. When historical determinism is understood as a strict, law-bound path in which human choice or initiative has no role, it inevitably produces pessimism, making individuals captives of the past and powerless regarding the future. Such a view closes the doors of hope and instils a sense of helplessness, which is pedagogically unsuitable and inconsistent with the needs of new generations seeking inspiration and the ability to enact change. Education, by its nature, elevates freedom, creativity, and choice, whereas the pessimism resulting from determinism stands in opposition to constructive and free action, undermining willpower and the capacity for renewal and development.

Third Reason: This biologically oriented theory entails what may be called *civilizational discontinuity*, representing the fall of civilization as a completed end, followed by the emergence of a new political entity driven by a different *'asabiyya*. In contrast, the concept of civilizational continuity becomes essential, whether within the internal continuity of a single civilization or in its dialectical interaction with other civilizations. We thus face two radically divergent visions:

- The first is Ibn Khaldun's view of civilizational discontinuity, akin to what Gaston Bachelard and Thomas Kuhn proposed regarding discontinuity in the development of scientific ideas.
- The second is a view that understands historical existence as a continuous civilizational act, emphasizing continuity and linear progress, which is the theoretical framework used in this study to understand Arab-Islamic civilization.

The Problem of Building a Philosophy of Civilization on the Concept of the State

Ibn Khaldun sees cities as the arenas of civilization and centres of human settlement and social organization. He believes that cities emerge from the authority of rulership, the power of the state, and that their appearance, prosperity, and decline are linked to the state and its authority. The duration of a civilization is tied to the lifespan of the state. As he writes:

When a city is built and completed according to the view of its builder, and in accordance with the heavenly and earthly conditions within it, the lifespan of the state becomes its own lifespan. If the state's duration is short, progress halts at its end, and civilization declines and the city is ruined. If the state lasts long and its duration is ample, constructions continue, houses expand and multiply, and the scope of markets widens, until the plan extends and distances expand, as occurred in Baghdad and similar cities.³

Ibn Khaldun further develops his theory of civilization based on the state in Book IV, Chapter 17, which is entitled: "*That civilization in cities is due to states and is solidified through the continuity and stability of the state.*" He justifies this linkage as follows:

The reason is that civilization consists of conditions that are additional to the necessities of urban life, increasing variably with luxury and the disparity among nations in scarcity and abundance. With the multiplicity of crafts, mastery of them develops, and generations acquire skill and expertise. Cities, by their size and expansion, increase solidity and permanence. All this comes from the state, which collects wealth from its subjects and spends it on its officials and men. The conditions of people expand more through prestige than money, and thus their wealth and affluence grow, the benefits of luxury increase, and crafts are perfected in all their forms. This is civilization.⁴

3 Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, p. 270.

4 Ibid., pp. 290–291.

Ibn Khaldun continues:

For this reason, we observe that cities situated in peripheral regions, even when they possess an abundance of *ʿumrān*, tend to be dominated by Bedouin conditions and remain distant from civilization in all its forms. This stands in contrast to cities located in the central regions of the lands, which constitute the heart of the state and the seat of its authority. The sole reason for this lies in their proximity to the ruler and in the diffusion of his wealth among them – like water that causes whatever lies near it and close to the soil to flourish, until it gradually gives way to dryness with increasing distance.

We have already established that the ruler and the state function as the market of the world: all commodities are found in the market and its immediate surroundings, whereas when one is distant from the market, goods are altogether absent. Furthermore, when a state endures and its rulers succeed one another in the same city, generation after generation, civilization becomes firmly entrenched among its inhabitants and grows ever more deeply rooted.

Consider this in the case of the Jews: when their rule in Syria extended for nearly fourteen hundred years, their civilization became deeply established, and they attained proficiency in the conditions and customs of livelihood, as well as refinement in their crafts – such as food, clothing, and all aspects of domestic life – so much so that these practices are still, for the most part, adopted from them to this day. Through them, and later through the Roman state that succeeded them for six hundred years, civilization and its customs became firmly rooted in Syria, reaching a peak of civilizational refinement.

Three main problems arise from building a philosophy of civilization based on the concept of the state in Ibn Khaldun's presentation:

Problem 1: Confusion between the condition of possibility and the cause of existence

Ibn Khaldun links the rise of civilization to the existence of the state, as if the state is the sole cause of civilization. Philosophically, the state is merely a condition for the possibility of social organization, not the essential source of civilization. Civilization, as the development of knowledge, skills, symbols, and values, can partially emerge outside or before the state, as seen in city civilizations or cultures where arts and sciences flourished through commercial or religious classes relatively independent of political authority. Hence, asserting that the state is the origin of civilization constitutes a reductionist fallacy, reducing a complex phenomenon to a single factor.

Problem 2: The assumption that state wealth automatically produces luxury and crafts

Ibn Khaldun assumes a direct causal relationship between state wealth and the flourishing of crafts and luxury. However, this is neither logically nor historically necessary, as state spending can lead to conspicuous consumption, administrative corruption, or suffocating centralization, which weaken rather than support creativity. Many major civilizational transformations emerged from intellectual and cultural dynamics – such as translation, philosophy, religion, and inter-city trade – rather than state surplus. Therefore, claiming that civilization *comes only from the state* ignores the autonomous rational development of crafts and knowledge through education, apprenticeship, and accumulated skill, rather than solely through state expenditure.

The same holds true for the Copts: their rule among humankind lasted for three thousand years, and thus the customs of civilization became deeply rooted in their land, Egypt. They were succeeded by the Greeks and the Romans, and thereafter by Islamic rule, which superseded all that preceded it, yet the customs of civilization remained continuously preserved.

Likewise, the customs of civilization became firmly established in Yemen due to the uninterrupted Arab rule there since the time of the Amalekites and the Tubba' kings for thousands of years, followed by the rule of Muḍar. Similarly, civilization took deep root in Iraq as a result of the continuous rule of the Nabataeans and the Persians – from the era of the Chaldeans, through the Assyrian and Khosrowian dynasties, and later the Arabs – over many thousands of years. (p. 291)

Problem 3: Marginalizing human agency and individual creativity

Ibn Khaldun reduces civilization to an economic-political structure produced by the state via wealth, luxury, and crafts, as if humans are merely passive products of state structures. Philosophically, especially from the perspective of action and self-theories, this ignores the role of innovation by individuals, scholars, craftsmen, spiritual aspirations, and aesthetic imagination, what Paul Ricoeur calls “interpretive agency” – the human capacity to create meaning through interpretation and transform the world through understanding and re-interpretation, not just through power or domination. For example, a teacher in a poor environment may initially view education only as a means to employment. Yet, by reinterpreting education as the *liberation of minds*, the teacher might innovate new teaching methods, provide free lessons, or inspire students differently, producing real social impact. This agency arises from interpretation, not authority or resources. Similarly, Habermas highlights the role of communicative and practical dynamics: human action is shaped not only by individual decisions or political power, but through interaction, discourse, shared rules, and practices.

Hence, Ibn Khaldun’s reduction of civilization to the state obscures the freedom of human action and creative energies that drive cultural and intellectual transformation, often on the margins or outside of authority, not necessarily as a result of it.

The World Ceiling: Ibn Khaldun and Limited Teleology

Ibn Khaldun holds that *‘asabiyya* is the essence of rulership and that its ultimate goal is establishing the state, which gives rise to human civilization (*‘umran*), comprising populations of nomads and urban dwellers. This civilization has a purpose, whose ultimate endpoint is culture, which Ibn Khaldun treats extensively in Book IV, Chapter 18: “*Civilization is the goal of human development and its culmination, signalling its decay.*” Here, he writes: “*Rulership and states are the purpose of ‘asabiyya, and civilization is the purpose of nomadism.*”⁵

‘Asabiyya, though beginning with kinship and lineage, expands to include social integration beyond blood ties, encompassing loyalty, belonging, and

5 Ibid., pp. 290–291.

shared experiences. Ibn Khaldun devotes Book II, Chapter 8 to this concept: “*From this branch come loyalty and alliances, as each person aligns with his kin and allies to achieve cohesion, similar to the cohesion of kinship.*”⁶

Thus, ‘*asabiyya*’ is collective social cohesion and the political capacity enabling groups to confront external challenges and achieve power and wealth. As a social and political bond, ‘*asabiyya*’ expresses shared historical experiences and drives the ascent from nomadism to civilization.⁷

The Cyclical Role of ‘Asabiyya

‘*Asabiyya*’ serves as the central mechanism explaining the cyclical movement of history. In the nomadic phase, it creates solid social cohesion under harsh living conditions, producing courage and solidarity. This enables conquest, expansion, and transition to civilization, where stable political and economic structures emerge. Yet ‘*asabiyya*’ gradually weakens as institutions stabilize and civilization prospers, initiating a new cycle of rise, stability, and decline. It is thus the driving force behind social development, explaining successive stages in the rise and fall of states and societies.

The State and Civilization: From Nomadism to Urbanism

The concept of ‘*umran*’ is one of Ibn Khaldun’s most important contributions. He defines it comprehensively as the sum of the social, economic, and political phenomena organizing human life. ‘*umran*’ encompasses all social life:

6 Ibid., p. 102.

7 ‘*Asabiyyah*’ has several important functions, such as collective defence, whereby it enables groups to protect themselves against external enemies, with social cohesion constituting an important moral and material force. It also serves as a driver of political mobilization, as ‘*asabiyyah*’ allows for the gathering of resources and efforts to establish political institutions and protect authority. In addition, it helps preserve social order through bonds of mutual loyalty, thereby strengthening social discipline and internal stability.

Regarding the emergence and prosperity of states, ‘*asabiyyah*’ is a fundamental factor in the birth, growth, and flourishing of states, as it transforms primitive societies into civilized ones. In terms of societal transformation, ‘*asabiyyah*’ can expand to include alliances and coalitions that go beyond kinship ties, enabling the expansion of the state and the formation of complex political and economic alliances.

Decline after the attainment of sovereignty (*al-mulk*): once power and wealth are achieved, ‘*asabiyyah*’ begins to weaken, paving the way for cycles of political and social decline observed by Ibn Khaldun.

interactions through work, trade, politics, ethnicity, religion, and technology – essentially modern sociology’s notion of complete social life.

Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that humans are naturally social; cooperation in subsistence, defence, and communal life is essential to the emergence of civilization. He distinguishes two main forms, nomadic and urban *‘umran*, representing successive stages in human social development.

The Science of Civilization

Ibn Khaldun does not merely describe *‘umran*; he establishes it as the foundation of a new science, the science of human civilization. This science, he argues, complements the natural sciences in studying phenomena but focuses on human and social phenomena. He seeks to go beyond traditional historical narration toward an analytical approach based on empirical observation and deriving general laws governing societal dynamics. History, unlike in Aristotle, is a science of wisdom, containing causality and explanation of events. Just as natural scientists study physical laws, the scholar of civilization studies laws governing human interaction, state formation, societal transformations, and the rise and fall of societies. In this, scholars note that Ibn Khaldun anticipated modern Western sociology, including Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim.

Nomadic civilization originates in harsh environments, producing toughness and equality, where *‘asabiyya* is reinforced as a bond for solidarity and defence. Centralized law is absent, replaced by custom and personal leadership. This stage is transitional, naturally leading toward stability, authority, and eventually urban civilization.

Urban civilization marks an advanced stage of social development. Humans move from simplicity to urbanity, establishing centres of power and organized states. This stage features abundant production from stable agriculture, developed industry, and thriving trade, providing resources and meeting population needs. Social complexity increases, with stratified classes and intricate relations among artisans, merchants, scholars, and authorities. Political order is based on law and centralized authority, contrasting with personal loyalty and tribal custom. However, luxury and indulgence, while reflecting prosperity, undermine *‘asabiyya* and sow the seeds of decay and fragmentation. Urban civilization thus presents a dual image: peak achievement in urbanity and authority, yet internally containing the seeds of its own weakness.

History of Civilization vs Philosophy of Civilization

Ibn Khaldun advanced historical writing from political-military narrative to civilizational history, focusing on social and economic structures and their role in shaping events, state-building, and subsequent urbanization. He extracted general causes and patterns from diverse historical events, summarizing them in his theory of the rise and fall of civilizations, laying the groundwork for a philosophy of history.

Despite this, Ibn Khaldun did not establish a philosophy of civilization, which seeks to understand the essence of civilization and its overarching principles explaining its emergence and decline. His work remained descriptive, focusing on events in Islamic civilization rather than general laws. A philosophy of civilization seeks generalizations and principles to explain the development of a civilization from emergence to decay, employing inductive reasoning. Dr Ahmed Mahmoud Sobhi⁸ provides examples distinguishing the history and philosophy of civilization: descriptions of democracy in Athens vs Sparta relate to philosophy, while descriptions of events and the absence of arts in Sparta relate to history. Other examples include cyclical theory, divine providence, and Marx's economic theory, illustrating the difference between predetermined historical interpretation and philosophical inquiry.⁹

The Rise and Decline: How Long Is a Civilization's Life?

For Ibn Khaldun, civilization necessarily follows from *ʿumran* (human development / urbanization): "*Civilization varies according to the degree of ʿumran; the greater the ʿumran, the more complete the civilization.*"¹⁰

He then begins to develop his theory on the rise and decline of civilizations, explaining that *ʿumran* and urban development have a tangible lifespan and a measurable duration, which he estimated using both reason and transmitted knowledge. He concluded that this duration rarely exceeds the span of three generations, and defines a generation by the average lifespan of a single individual, which he sets at forty years. As Khaldun states:

8 Subhi, Ahmad Mahmud: *On the Philosophy of Civilization*, Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1999, p. 12.

9 Ibid., p. 15.

10 Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, p. 293.

All forms of *‘umran* – from nomadism to civilization, from kingship to markets – have a tangible lifespan, just as each individual component has a measurable life. It is established both rationally and from transmitted knowledge that forty years is the peak of human strength and growth. Once a person reaches forty, natural growth halts for a moment, and thereafter begins a decline. You should know that civilization within *‘umran* follows the same pattern, for it represents a peak beyond which there is no further progression. When luxury and prosperity reach the people of *‘umran*, they are naturally drawn toward the manners of civilization and the cultivation of its customs.¹¹

The Three Generations:

Ibn Khaldun explains that *‘asabiyya* (social cohesion/solidarity) passes through three stages across the generations of a state:¹²

11 Ibid., p. 293.

12 Ibid., pp. 134–135.

Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*, pp. 134–135, states:

What is meant by the forty years is the extinction of the living generation and the emergence of another generation that has neither experienced humiliation nor known it. This indicates the consideration of forty years as the lifespan of a generation, which corresponds to the lifespan of a single individual. We have said that the lifespan of a state generally does not exceed three generations because the first generation remains characterized by the qualities of nomadic life – its roughness, harshness, and savagery – arising from austere living, bravery, aggressiveness, and shared participation in glory. Thus, the force of *‘asabiyyah* remains preserved among them; their edge is sharp, their power feared, and people are subdued by them.

The second generation undergoes a transformation due to sovereignty and luxury, moving from nomadism to sedentary life, from hardship to comfort and abundance, and from collective participation in glory to its monopolization by one ruler, while the rest become lethargic in striving for it. They move from proud dominance to submissive dependence. As a result, the force of *‘asabiyyah* is partially weakened, and signs of humility and submission appear among them. Yet much of it remains, since they have encountered the first generation, directly experienced their conditions, and witnessed their pride, striving for glory, and commitment to defence and protection. They cannot entirely abandon these qualities, even if some of them fade, and they continue to hope for a return to the former conditions of the first generation or at least imagine that these qualities still persist within them.

As for the third generation, they forget the era of nomadism and roughness as though it had never existed. They lose the taste of honour and *‘asabiyyah* because of their entrenched domination and coercive power. Luxury reaches its utmost extent among them due to their indulgence in pleasure and the softness of life, and they become dependents of the state, like women and children who require protection and defence. *‘Asabiyyah* collapses entirely; they forget defence, resistance, and the pursuit of power. They deceive people with appearances – dress, attire, horsemanship, and refined manners – masking their reality, while in truth they are often more cowardly than women upon horseback. When challengers arise, they are

- The first generation remains close to the values of nomadism and its harshness; it is characterized by courage, strength, and collective participation in glory. In them, *ʿasabiyyah* is strong, and they alone are formidable.
- The second generation moves toward civilization and luxury, so *ʿasabiyyah* is partially weakened due to comfort and the monopolization of glory. Yet the influence of the first generation remains in their disposition, and they waver between the refinement of civilization and the strength of their ancestors.
- The third generation completely forgets the era of nomadism and immerses itself in luxury and dependence on the state. *ʿAsabiyyah* is entirely weakened, leaving them incapable of defence, forcing the ruler to rely on loyal clients (*mawali*) and auxiliaries, until the state itself collapses due to the decay of *ʿasabiyyah*.

Ibn Khaldun reinforces this concept with a biological analogy and historical determinism, he argues that: the culmination of *ʿumrān* is the emergence of advanced civilization and material luxury. However, once civilization

unable to resist them, and the ruler then needs to seek support from others among people of strength, multiplying dependents and relying on retainers who can partially compensate for the weakness of the state, until God permits its extinction. The state then disappears with all that it carried.

As you see, these are three generations in which the senility and decline of the state occur. Hence the extinction of lineage takes place in the fourth generation, as previously mentioned, since glory and noble lineage extend over only four forefathers. We have provided you with a sufficient and evident natural proof for this, based on the premises we have already established. Reflect upon it, and you will not deviate from the truth if you are among those who are fair-minded.

These three generations span one hundred and twenty years, as noted earlier, and states generally do not exceed this lifespan, whether slightly less or slightly more, unless some external factor intervenes – such as the absence of challengers – whereby senility prevails but no claimant appears; had a claimant arisen, no defender would have been found. “When their term comes, they cannot delay it for a single hour, nor can they advance it” (*Qurʾān* 7:34). Thus, the lifespan of the state is analogous to the lifespan of an individual – from growth to maturity, then to decline. For this reason, it is commonly said that the lifespan of a state is one hundred years, and this is its meaning.

Consider this and adopt it as a rule by which you may verify the number of forefathers in a genealogical line when you know the elapsed years but doubt the number of generations. Count three forefathers for every hundred years. If the numbers coincide, the count is correct; if it falls short by one generation, there is an excess of one ancestor in the genealogy; if it exceeds by one, then one ancestor has been omitted. Likewise, you may infer the number of years from the number of generations when the latter is known. Reflect upon this, and you will find it generally accurate. ‘And God ordains the night and the day’ (*Qurʾān* 73:20).

attains its peak, it enters a process of decline analogous to the aging of living organisms. According to the author, the very conditions produced by prosperity and luxury can foster moral deterioration. Human flourishing depends on the ability to pursue one's interests, avoid harm, and maintain virtuous conduct, yet urban life tends to weaken individual self-sufficiency and resilience, making people increasingly dependent on others for both their needs and protection.¹³

Two Problems in Ibn Khaldun's Model:

1. **Analogy between organic and social systems:** He compares civilization to human biology, assuming a closed cycle based on growth, a peak at forty, then decline. This analogy faces a logical objection, as it assumes equivalence between two ontologically different systems: living beings with fixed physiological laws and civilization as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon.
2. **Temporal determinism and neglect of historical agency:** Civilization is assumed to follow a closed temporal cycle, ignoring human agency and the potential for societies to reinvent themselves through political reform, cultural renewal, institutional change, and intellectual and scientific resurgence. Temporal determinism limits the understanding of history as an open field of possibilities rather than a fixed organic cycle.

Stages of the State

Ibn Khaldun elaborates on five stages of the state:

1. Conquest and acquisition of power.
2. Consolidation and monopolization of authority.
3. Administration and accumulation of wealth, luxury, and construction projects.
4. Contentment and adherence to precedent.
5. Extravagance and decadence, leading to decline and eventual extinction.

¹³ Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 294–295.

On the Stages of the State:

Ibn Khaldun discusses the stages of the state at length, and the following excerpt from Chapter 17, titled “*On the stages of the state, the variation of its conditions, and the character of its people according to its stages*”, clarifies his view:

Know that the state passes through different stages and renewed conditions, and those who govern it acquire in each stage a character corresponding to the conditions of that stage, which is unlike any other stage; for character naturally follows the temperament of the prevailing circumstances. The conditions and stages of the state generally do not exceed five stages.

The First Stage is the stage of conquest, dominance, and overcoming defenders and rivals, seizing the kingdom, and wresting it from the hands of the state. In this stage, the conquerors are like their predecessors in seeking glory, collecting revenue, defending the realm, and maintaining protection; they do not possess anything beyond this because it is the requirement of the tribal solidarity [*‘asabiyyah*] that enabled their victory, which remains in its original state.

The Second Stage is the stage of tyranny over one’s people, monopolizing the throne, and restraining them from asserting influence or participating in governance. In this stage, the ruler is concerned with organizing personnel, appointing loyal servants, cultivating offices, and accumulating these to suppress members of his tribe or kin who share in the glory of power. He defends the authority, prevents them from accessing its resources, and directs them back to their positions, ensuring that obedience is exclusive to him so that his authority is established and his family is singled out to enhance his prestige. He faces resistance from his relatives and peers as the earlier rulers faced opposition in seeking authority, sometimes even more intensely, because the first rulers contended with outsiders, whereas now he contends with relatives whose collective power he cannot oppose entirely, making governance a difficult task.

The Third Stage is the stage of ease, leisure, and enjoyment of the fruits of power, toward which human nature inclines: acquiring wealth, perpetuating monuments, and seeking fame. The ruler exerts himself in taxation, regulating income and expenditures, accounting for expenses, constructing magnificent buildings, establishing great workshops, enlarging cities, erecting high structures, receiving delegations from noble families and tribes, and distributing favours among his people. He simultaneously expands his patronage over artisans and courtiers in terms of wealth and influence, satisfying his soldiers’ needs and granting allowances to each according to rank. The effects of this appear in their attire, equipment, and insignia during ceremonial occasions, to impress peaceful states and intimidate hostile ones. This stage represents

the final stage of despotism for rulers, as in all stages they are independent in judgment, consolidate their glory, and set precedents for successors.

The Fourth Stage is the stage of contentment and pacification. The ruler is content with what his predecessors built and follows the examples of past kings and warriors. He imitates their methods meticulously, believing that deviation from their precedents would endanger his rule, since they had insight into what established their glory.

The Fifth Stage is the stage of extravagance and waste. In this stage, the ruler squanders what his predecessors accumulated, indulging in pleasures, hospitality, and generosity toward his entourage, indulging in corrupt favourites and followers, and imitating grand affairs beyond his ability to manage or comprehend. He disregards the guidance and oversight of senior officials and veterans, undermining the crafts and institutions established by his predecessors. In this stage, decay and decline naturally occur within the state, and chronic corruption prevails, from which recovery is nearly impossible, ultimately leading to the state's extinction, as we shall illustrate in the conditions we will describe. God is the best inheritor.¹⁴

Definition of Civilization

Ibn Khaldun's concept of civilization is clear in the *Muqaddimah*, where he says:

Civilization, as you have learned, is the art of refinement in luxury and the acquisition of its conditions, and the concern with crafts that adorn their kinds and other arts, such as crafts prepared for kitchens, clothing, buildings, furnishings, utensils, and other household matters. And for refinement in each of these, there are many crafts that are unnecessary at the beginning and without refinement.

When refinement in these household conditions reaches its peak, it is followed by the indulgence of desires; the soul is coloured by these habits in many ways, and its state does not remain upright in either its religion or worldly life. As for its religion, the habitual patterns that are difficult to remove dominate it; as for its worldly life, the multitude of needs and expenses demanded by these habits overwhelms one's means, and earnings cannot satisfy them. Its implication is that by engaging in refinement, the expenditures of its people grow, and civilization varies according to the variation of urban development; the more urbanization, the more complete the civilization. We have already stated that highly urbanized cities are characterized by high prices in their markets and the costs of their necessities. Taxes further increase this expense because the completion of civilization occurs at the height of the state's

14 Ibid., pp. 138–139.

power, when taxes are levied due to the state's extensive expenditures, as has been mentioned.¹⁵

For Ibn Khaldun, civilization carries a sense devoid of positivity: "*Civilization is ordinary conditions beyond the necessary conditions of urbanization; this excess varies according to luxury and according to the nations in their scarcity and abundance in an unbounded variation.*"¹⁶

After discussing the development of industries, professions, arts, and crafts in cities and their entrenchment over time, he notes:

Most of this occurs in cities because of the vast urbanization and the abundance of luxury among their people; all of this comes through the state, because the state gathers the wealth of the subjects and spends it on its entourage and officials. Their conditions expand more through influence than through wealth. The income of these funds comes from the subjects and is spent on the state officials, and then in relation to the people of the city, who are the majority; thus, their wealth increases, their affluence grows, luxury practices and tastes expand, and crafts in all their arts are firmly established among them. This is civilization.¹⁷

Ibn Khaldun then addresses, in a scholarly and scientific manner, important factors influencing this process, in a passage that I consider necessary to quote in full due to its significance:

Taxes fall on sellers through increased prices; for the merchants and traders all calculate all their expenditures on their goods and merchandise, even in their personal sustenance, so taxation becomes included in the value and price of sales. The expenditures of urban residents increase and exceed moderation, leading to extravagance. They find no relief from this due to the power of habits and their obedience. All their earnings are consumed in expenses, and they fall into poverty and deprivation. The availability of goods diminishes, markets stagnate, and the condition of the city deteriorates. The cause of all this is excessive civilization and luxury. Its corruption in the city, in general, affects markets and urban development.

As for the corruption of the people themselves, individually and specifically, it comes from toil and labour in fulfilling the demands of habits, and the soul's fluctuation in various forms of evil in pursuing them. The resulting harm to the self leads to further forms of vice. Therefore, among them are abundant immorality, wickedness, frivolity, and deceit in securing sustenance by lawful and unlawful means. They devote their minds to scheming and gathering

15 Ibid., p. 293.

16 Ibid., p. 290.

17 Ibid., p. 291.

tricks, leading them to lies, gambling, fraud, theft, and perversion in oaths and sales. Because of the abundance of desires and the luxury that arises, they become aware of ways of vice, openly practise it, abandon shame even among relatives, kin, and those whom rural life would protect from such acts. They also become adept in cunning and deceit to evade oppression and anticipated punishment for these vices; eventually, it becomes habitual and a characteristic for most of them, except those whom God protects. The city's society is awash with the morally corrupt. Many offspring of the state and their children, neglected in education and oversight, adopt the same conduct, even if they belong to notable lineages and families. Those of evil are homogeneous; differentiation arises only through character, acquisition of virtues, and avoidance of vices. Whoever is imbued with the stain of vice, regardless of origin, and whose virtuous character is corrupted, benefits neither from noble lineage nor from reputable ancestry. Therefore, many descendants of prominent families, and those of states and nobility, fall into degradation, corrupted by their morals and the shades of evil they have absorbed. When this increases in a city or nation, God permits its destruction and annihilation, as in His saying: "And when We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent people, who act corruptly therein, and Our decree comes to pass; We destroy it utterly."

The reason is that their earnings cannot satisfy their needs due to the multitude of habits and the soul's demands for them, so their conditions are unstable. When the conditions of individuals deteriorate, the city's system collapses, and it is ruined. This is the meaning of what some wise people say: when a city has many orange groves, it indicates impending destruction; many of the general populace avoid planting orange trees out of superstition. The meaning is not specific to oranges but to gardens and irrigation, which are part of civilization. Oranges, lemons, cypresses, and similar plants, which have no real taste or utility, are among the aims of civilization, as gardens are planted for their form only, and only after refinement in luxury. This stage threatens the destruction and ruin of the city, as we have said. The same applies to oleanders, planted only to embellish gardens with red and white, reflecting luxury tastes.

Another corruption of civilization is indulgence in desires and excess in them due to the abundance of luxury. This leads to refinement in desires of the stomach, food, beverages, and pleasures. It follows with refinement in sexual desires through various illicit unions – adultery and sodomy – which leads to corruption of the species: either through mixed lineage, as in adultery, where offspring may be unknown, losing natural compassion for children, leading to their destruction and the breaking of lineage; or through acts like sodomy, which prevent reproduction altogether. Adultery leads to partial extinction of lineage. Hence, Malik's jurisprudence on sodomy is more precise than others, demonstrating awareness of the purposes of Shariah and consideration of public interests.¹⁸

18 Ibid., p. 294.

In a subsequent passage, he continues:

Understand and reflect that the aim of urbanization is civilization and luxury, and when it reaches its peak, it turns into corruption and decline, like the natural lifespan of animals. We say that morals acquired through civilization and luxury are themselves corruption, because a human is human by their ability to secure benefits, avoid harm, and maintain upright character in this pursuit. The urbanite cannot fulfil these needs – either due to incapacity from indulgence or elevation through upbringing in luxury and refinement; both are blameworthy. Likewise, they cannot avert harm or maintain uprightness in character. The urbanite, having lost the vigour of moral character through luxury and upbringing in comfort, becomes dependent on protective institutions. Furthermore, their religion is often corrupted by habitual patterns and the soul's disposition, except in rare cases.

And if a person becomes corrupt in his capacity, then in his morals and in his religion, his humanity itself is corrupted, and he becomes a distorted being in truth. From this perspective, those who draw close to the ruler's forces through nomadism and harshness are more useful than those who are raised on civilization and its manners. This holds true in every state.¹⁹

It seems that Ibn Khaldun portrays the decline of civilization as a necessary and inevitable outcome of a critical event in the life of the civilized: the distortion of humanity within them, transforming them into beings who twist fundamental concepts to suit their weakened state. Instead of pride in strength, toughness, and achievements – as was the case in tribal solidarity – pride among the civilized takes the form of luxury, adornment, and formalities. Ibn Khaldun diagnoses the factors underlying civilization's corruption as follows:

- Weakness of capacity in all senses,
- Then weakness of moral values,
- Then weakness of religion and spiritual values,
- Together resulting in the loss of humanity.

In Ibn Khaldun's text, civilization is conceived as the natural outcome of urban development, tied to luxury and refinement, then inevitably descending into corruption and decay once this peak is reached, like the biological cycle of a living organism. He asserts that the morals emerging from civilization are themselves a form of corruption, because the urban individual loses the capacity to fulfil needs and avoid harm, along with spiritual weakness.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 294–295.

However, civilization can also be defined as a multi-dimensional phenomenon encompassing the accumulation of knowledge, arts, and sciences, the organization of society on values-based principles, the human ability for innovation and reform, and the conscious, rational pursuit of interests. From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun's account presents a distorted view of the civilized human and civilization itself, reducing it to luxury, corruption, and inevitable decline, ignoring the vital role of human action, institutional creativity, and knowledge production, which can sustain and redirect civilization. In this sense, civilization is not merely a repetitive organic cycle but an open human project for development and renewal, implicitly requiring the cultivation of human potential, a feasible and attainable task.

Conclusion

For Ibn Khaldun, civilization (*al-hadra*) rises inevitably from *ʿumran* (the human endeavour of building and sustaining social and political order) as the pinnacle of collective human achievement. Yet within this very perfection lies its fragility: across generations, strength wanes, moral fibre erodes, and spiritual vitality diminishes, setting the stage for decline. Civilization, in his view, is both the triumph of human effort and a delicate construct, shaped as much by the rhythms of power and discipline as by the innate capacities of its people. His theory portrays history as a living cycle, where the rise and fall of societies mirror the natural course of human life itself. Ultimately, Ibn Khaldun compels us to recognize that the endurance of civilization rests not in its splendour alone, but in the conscious cultivation of virtue, wisdom, and the ethical stewardship of communal life.

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Ibn Khaldun: A Pioneer of Economic Thought and Its Relevance Today

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Introduction

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), the renowned North African Muslim scholar, is widely recognized for his pioneering contributions to history and sociology. However, his equally significant role in the development of economic thought often receives less attention. In his seminal work the *Muqaddimah (Introduction to History)*, he presented a comprehensive vision in which the economy, society, politics, and religion are deeply interwoven. His insights, remarkably ahead of their time, continue to offer valuable frameworks for understanding both historical and contemporary economic challenges.

What distinguishes Ibn Khaldun from many of his contemporaries is his empirical approach. Rather than limiting himself to moral or legalistic frameworks, he analysed real historical events to understand how societies functioned in practice. For Ibn Khaldun, economics was not merely a matter of wealth, trade, or profit, but a reflection of broader social and political dynamics. He viewed economic activity as embedded within the moral and institutional fabric of society – shaped by labour, production, resource distribution, taxation, and governance. In his analysis, societies thrive when justice

prevails, rulers govern wisely, and the population is industrious. Conversely, excessive taxation, corruption, and loss of collective motivation lead to decline and eventual collapse.

This paper explores Ibn Khaldun's core economic ideas, including his treatment of division of labour, value, production, pricing, trade, consumption, taxation, and public finance. It further examines his theory of civilizational cycles, which explains the rise and fall of dynasties through both economic and political dynamics. Notably, his analysis of taxation prefigures the concept known in modern economics as the Laffer Curve, while his views on state expenditure bear striking resemblance to the ideas of John Maynard Keynes regarding counter-cyclical fiscal policy.

Modern scholarship – through the works of Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, Jean David C. Boulakia, M. Umer Chapra, Azim Islahi, and others – has increasingly recognized Ibn Khaldun as a forerunner of modern economic analysis. Building upon these contributions, this study argues that Ibn Khaldun's socio-economic vision remains highly relevant, especially for Muslim-majority societies seeking ethical and balanced economic models. His approach, rooted in justice, moderation, and public welfare, offers enduring insights for contemporary economic thought. By situating Ibn Khaldun's ideas in dialogue with both Islamic and Western economic theories, this paper contends that he was not merely a thinker of his time but a foundational figure whose ideas speak meaningfully to the challenges of the modern world.

Although Ibn Khaldun is best known for his work in historiography and sociology, recent scholarship has emphasized the depth and originality of his economic ideas. In his *Muqaddimah*, he examined how labour, production, taxation, trade, and governance interact within the rise and fall of civilizations, offering a comprehensive socio-economic framework.

One of the earliest modern assessments of Ibn Khaldun came from Jean David C. Boulakia¹ (1971), who argued that he formulated ideas that resemble modern economic theories, including the labour theory of value, supply and demand, and the impact of state intervention. According to Boulakia, Ibn Khaldun was the first to apply empirical observation and inductive reasoning in analysing economic activity. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi (1972)² em-

1 Boulakia, "Ibn Khaldun: a fourteenth-century economist." *Journal of Political Economy* 79, no. 5 (1971), pp. 1105–1118.

2 Siddiqi, *Muslim Economic Thinking*. (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1972), p. 43.

phasized Ibn Khaldun's ethical approach and social realism, noting his focus on justice, taxation, and responsible governance. M. Umer Chapra (2000)³ built on this view, highlighting how Ibn Khaldun's thought aligns with the Islamic legal objective of public welfare (*maslahah*), and how his insights into taxation resemble the modern Laffer Curve. Azim Islahi⁴ (2006) offered a detailed reassessment, framing Ibn Khaldun as a forerunner of political economy. He examined his treatment of production, pricing, labour, and public finance, stressing how *ʿaṣabiyyah* (social cohesion) shapes economic stability and institutional resilience. Islahi also critiqued the neglect of Ibn Khaldun's economic thought in conventional histories of economic theory.

Joseph Spengler⁵ (1964) and Syed Nawab Haider Naqvi (1981) similarly recognized Ibn Khaldun's focus on the socio-political dimensions of economic life. Naqvi described him as a "social economist" whose approach integrated morality, political stability, and economic development. Together, these scholars have contributed to repositioning Ibn Khaldun as a foundational figure whose economic insights remain relevant to modern debates on development, public finance, and the moral foundations of economic systems.

Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Social Systems and Civilizational Change

Ibn Khaldun, born in 1332 in Tunis to a prominent Arab family with roots in Islamic Spain and North Africa, lived through one of the most turbulent periods in Islamic history. His career spanned various high-ranking political, judicial, and diplomatic roles across the Maghrib, al-Andalus, and Egypt.⁶ These experiences exposed him firsthand to the cyclical nature of power, political instability, and the collapse of dynasties. Disenchanted with the dangers of political life, Ibn Khaldun withdrew from public service in 1375 and began

3 Bin Osman, "Maqashid Al Shariah in Economic Development: Theoretical Review of Muhammad Umer Chapra's Thoughts." *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* (2022), pp. 583–612.

4 Islahi, Abdul Azim. *History of Islamic economic thought: Contributions of Muslim scholars to economic thought and analysis*. In *History of Islamic Economic Thought* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), pp. 77–80.

5 Spengler, "Economic Thought of Islam: Ibn Khaldūn." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6, no. 3 (1964), pp. 268–306.

6 Fischel, "Ibn Khaldun in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research (1382–1406)." *A Study in Islamic Historiography* (Berkeley, Calif., 1967), pp. 15–19.

writing his monumental *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, completing its famous introduction – the *Muqaddimah* – in 1377. This work marks a profound departure from traditional historiography, as Ibn Khaldun sought to construct a science of society (*ʿilm al-ʿumrān*) that would explain the underlying laws governing the rise, development, and decline of civilizations. In doing so, he laid the foundation for a comprehensive theory of social change, combining historical observation with sociological and economic analysis. He identified recurrent patterns in the evolution of societies and introduced a cyclical model of history, one shaped by both material factors and moral-psychological transformations. Ibn Khaldun’s analytical method was unique in its emphasis on cause-and-effect reasoning and its ambition to derive universal rules from the empirical study of human society.

At the heart of Ibn Khaldun’s theory is the concept of *ʿaṣabiyyah* – commonly translated as group solidarity or social cohesion. For Ibn Khaldun, *ʿaṣabiyyah* is the driving force behind the formation of strong states and the flourishing of civilizations. It emerges most powerfully among kinship-based groups, such as tribes and families, where mutual support is natural and binding. However, *ʿaṣabiyyah* can also extend to include clients and allies when motivated by shared interests or political goals. This cohesive social force allows for collective cooperation, the establishment of effective governance, and the consolidation of power.⁷ Yet Ibn Khaldun warned that as a dynasty progresses and accumulates wealth, the strength of its *ʿaṣabiyyah* inevitably erodes. Luxury, moral decadence, internal rivalries, and administrative corruption contribute to the weakening of social cohesion and, consequently, to political and economic decline. When the ruling class becomes disconnected from the virtues of hard work and solidarity that once sustained its rise, the state becomes vulnerable to collapse and replacement by a new group with revitalized *ʿaṣabiyyah*. Modern scholars have noted the relevance of this model to contemporary development studies.⁸ The success or failure of many states in the postcolonial era, particularly in the Global South, has often hinged less on economic resources and more on factors such as elite commitment, institutional cohesion, and cultural legitimacy – precisely the dynamics Ibn Khaldun theorized centuries earlier. His insights into the interplay between moral order, political power, and economic vitality anticipate many of the concerns of modern social and economic theory, making his work remarkably prescient and enduringly relevant.

7 Weiss, “Ibn Khaldun on Economic Transformation”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995), pp. 29–37.

8 Weiss, “Ibn Khaldun”, p. 32.

Ibn Khaldun's Observations on Economic Development

Long before the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, Ibn Khaldun had already articulated core principles of economic development in his *Muqaddimah*. Notably, he emphasized the necessity of the division of labour for increasing productivity, noting that no individual can meet all life's needs in isolation. Instead, human beings must cooperate to sustain civilization, and through such cooperation they can collectively produce much more than they could individually.⁹ He illustrated this with an agricultural example: only through the combined efforts of farmers, craftsmen, and labourers could food production be sustained, thereby linking the rise of complex economic activity directly to social cooperation – a function underpinned by *ʿaṣabiyyah* (social solidarity). For Ibn Khaldun, economic development is a cumulative and self-reinforcing process driven by the mutual stimulation of supply and demand. As demand grows – particularly for luxury goods in urban centres – so too does specialization and production, creating a cycle of economic expansion.¹⁰

Central to this dynamic is labour, which Ibn Khaldun identified as the true source of value. He explicitly stated that “profit is the value realized from human labour”,¹¹ and connected increasing productivity to advancements in education, science, and technology. Technological progress, he argued, attracts skilled individuals, who further enhance productive capacity – especially in cities where consumer sophistication and purchasing power are high.¹² However, for such development to occur sustainably, Ibn Khaldun insisted on the necessity of political stability and an efficient state structure. He advocated for a minimalist but effective government responsible for defence, diplomacy, fiscal order, and public safety, including market regulation and urban planning. Moreover, he outlined the moral and administrative qualities of a good ruler, emphasizing justice, generosity, humility, and adherence to religious and ethical principles.

Ibn Khaldun was also deeply concerned with the adverse effects of excessive state intervention in economic life. He warned against monopolistic practices

9 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History”, in *The Anthropology of Climate Change: An Historical Reader*, ed. Mark Carey (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 55–66.

10 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah”, p. 60.

11 Ibid., p. 311.

12 Ibid., p. 432.

by rulers, state-enforced low prices, and heavy taxation, arguing that these policies disincentivize production and trade, ultimately harming the economy. For instance, when the state monopolizes commerce or forces producers to sell at low prices, it erodes agricultural incentives and disrupts food security – a problem still relevant in some Arab countries today. He cautioned that trade controlled by rulers can lead to the destruction of civilization, as it stifles private initiative and undermines fiscal stability. Similarly, Ibn Khaldun recognized the importance of monetary stability and upheld the religious and institutional role of the mint. Gold and silver, in his view, were the foundation of wealth and should be protected from debasement; their value, he believed, was intrinsic and not subject to market fluctuations like other goods.¹³

Regarding taxation, Ibn Khaldun developed one of his most forward-thinking economic insights. He argued that low, just taxation encourages commerce and expands the state's revenue base, while high taxes deter trade and reduce revenue – a theory that foreshadows the modern Laffer Curve. As he put it: “At the beginning of the dynasty, taxation yields a large revenue from small assessments. At the end of the dynasty, taxation yields a small revenue from large assessments.”¹⁴ As dynasties grow wealthy, rulers often increase taxes to finance luxury and bureaucratic expansion. This burdens the population, discourages economic activity, and erodes the very base of state income. He linked the economic deterioration of the state to over-taxation, dwindling trade, famine, and eventual rebellion, and thus argued for a balance between state responsibility and economic freedom. While ensuring market fairness and protecting public welfare, the state must avoid interfering with natural market forces or suppressing the incentive structures that drive economic growth.

Ibn Khaldun provides a sophisticated account of the socioeconomic and political dynamics underlying urban growth and concentration. He observes that as populations expand and migrate toward cities, urban purchasing power increases, leading to the diversification of markets and the emergence of specialized occupations. This process enhances labour productivity and overall wealth.¹⁵ In capital cities, this development is further amplified by public expenditure, as proximity to the ruler often translates into increased access to wealth and patronage. Urban elites, benefiting from their closeness to power,

13 Ibid., p. 231.

14 Ibid., p. 82.

15 Weiss, “Ibn Khaldun”, pp. 29–37.

accumulate wealth and luxury, which in turn stimulates the growth of crafts and industries, culminating in what Ibn Khaldun describes as a “sedentary culture”. This environment, marked by concentrated consumption and refined tastes, accelerates the formation of complex urban economies.

In his analysis, Ibn Khaldun also anticipates what modern economists might recognize as a form of central place theory. He asserts that large cities serve as hubs for highly specialized crafts and services that cannot be sustained in smaller towns or rural areas due to insufficient demand. Facilities such as public baths or elaborate commercial services require a high population density and wealthy consumer base to function effectively, as without these such infrastructure deteriorates and becomes unsustainable. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun draws attention to the sanitary challenges posed by urban concentration. He notes that densely populated areas often suffer from poor air circulation, leading to the accumulation of “corrupt” and “putrefied” air, which contributes to the spread of disease and epidemics. For this reason, he argues for the necessity of open, uninhabited spaces between densely settled zones to allow airflow and promote public health, highlighting the frequency of pestilence in overcrowded urban settings.¹⁶

Ibn Khaldun links urban and demographic expansion to a broader civilizational trajectory. He suggests that population growth is not simply a function of biological factors but results from rising wealth and just governance. Benevolent leadership encourages cultural flourishing, which in turn supports population growth and economic prosperity. However, this growth has limits. After two or three generations, the vitality of a civilization begins to decline as luxury and complacency set in, ushering in stagnation and eventual decline. The late phases of dynasties are often marked by deteriorating living conditions, rising disease, famine, and the abandonment of agriculture. Heavy taxation, land appropriation, and social unrest drive peasants out of farming, reduce food supply, and raise prices, contributing to economic and political instability.¹⁷

This process of decline is closely tied to public finance. As states enter their final phases, rulers increasingly extract resources from a shrinking tax base to finance growing expenses, including the payment of mercenaries to maintain authority. Under this pressure, state expenditures on urban services and goods contract, further weakening the urban economy. In this way, Ibn Khaldun’s

16 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah”, pp. 55–66.

17 Ibid., p. 136.

cyclical model integrates the interdependence of demographic trends, urbanization, and fiscal policy with psychological, cultural, and political variables. His framework – drawn from careful observation of the historical experiences of North Africa and Muslim Spain – captures the complex and dynamic interplay of forces that determine the rise and fall of civilizations.

Ibn Khaldun's Ideas and Contributions to Modern Economic Thought

Price Theory

Ibn Khaldun presented a remarkably nuanced understanding of price theory for his time, offering insights into how supply and demand interact to determine the quantity of goods produced and their market value. Although he primarily focused on agrarian production, reflective of the economic realities of the 14th-century Maghrib, his analysis reveals a proto-modern grasp of market dynamics. In his classification, he distinguished between two categories of goods: necessities and luxuries. Necessities, such as food staples, tend to be in abundant supply because individuals prioritize securing their basic sustenance. As Ibn Khaldun notes, “nobody would neglect [to provide for] his own food or that of his establishment for a month or a year”, leading to widespread production and, consequently, lower prices due to oversupply.¹⁸ In contrast, luxury goods – nonessential items – are produced less frequently, resulting in scarcity and higher prices. The differentiation in price levels, therefore, is not set by intention or moral worth, but emerges naturally from the degree of necessity and production volume. While not as formally articulated as later comparisons such as the “water-diamond paradox” discussed by John Law and Adam Smith, Ibn Khaldun’s analysis rests on the same fundamental principle of price formation based on relative scarcity and utility.¹⁹

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun applied this logic not only to goods but also to labour. He argued that “profit is the value realized from labour”, and that the remuneration for various types of work should reflect the level of social demand for each occupation.²⁰ For example, although he considered judges and

18 Ibid., p. 267.

19 McCaffrey, “Ibn Khaldun: the forgotten father of economics.” *ISOR Journal of Business and Management* 16, no. 3 (2014): pp. 1–3.

20 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah”, pp. 55–66.

religious scholars to be honourable and socially necessary, he contended that their compensation should remain relatively low because their services cater to a specific segment of society rather than the general public. In his view, the value of labour – just like that of goods – should be determined by its relative necessity and the extent to which it serves the broader economic or social system. This integrated analysis demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun did not draw a sharp distinction between labour and commodities in terms of value determination, an approach that anticipates aspects of later theories of labour value.

Production and Social Organization

In Ibn Khaldun's economic theory, the concept of production is inseparable from human social organization. He draws upon the Aristotelian notion that man is "political by nature", emphasizing that survival and prosperity depend on cooperative living.²¹ Human beings, according to Ibn Khaldun, cannot live or work in isolation; even the most basic tasks – such as the preparation of food – require collaborative effort. One person alone cannot cultivate crops, craft tools, or prepare meals without depending on others who possess different skills. Thus, through collective labour and the interdependence of trades, societies can meet the needs of far more individuals than the number directly engaged in production.

This cooperation, however, is not merely a matter of survival; it is also the foundation of economic prosperity. Ibn Khaldun argued that specialization – dividing labour according to skill – is key to maximizing productivity. Since the human mind can only master one craft effectively, dedicating oneself to a specific trade enhances efficiency and output. He maintained that habits form part of the soul, and once a particular skill is internalized, it becomes difficult for a person to excel equally in another craft.²² Consequently, specialization enables surplus production beyond subsistence, and this surplus can then be exchanged in the marketplace for other goods, including luxuries. Ibn Khaldun's insight into the relationship between specialization, surplus, and trade reflects a sophisticated understanding of how economies grow.

When compared to other Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Khaldun's analysis is notably more advanced. Ibn Taymiyyah also acknowledged that human welfare depends on cooperation and social cohesion, asserting that

21 Ibid., p. 45.

22 Ibid., p. 318.

humans are naturally social beings who must associate for mutual benefit.²³ However, his approach was more normative and lacked economic elaboration. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun examined not only the necessity of cooperation but also its economic outcomes, explaining how organized social life underpins productivity, trade, and ultimately civilization.

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun proposed an early version of what modern economists might call a “demand-driven” model of production. He asserted that demand precedes supply: rising demand for goods lead to increased production and improved quality. Rejecting the notion that supply itself can generate demand, he wrote that individuals cannot be expected to labour without compensation and are thus unlikely to produce goods for which there is no market. The mechanism behind this dynamic, he explained, lies in the urban marketplace, where high demand for a product motivates individuals to learn the necessary craft. As more artisans emerge to meet the demand, the supply of goods increases. Conversely, if demand disappears, the craft associated with that good will decline and eventually vanish. This cyclical understanding of supply and demand highlights Ibn Khaldun’s deep engagement with the mechanisms of economic motivation and adaptive production behaviour.²⁴

The Role of Government

Ibn Khaldun viewed the state as a foundational institution necessary for economic stability and societal well-being. Central to his theory was the protection of property rights, which he believed were essential for encouraging individual economic initiative and sustaining market activity. He warned that widespread violations of property rights – whether by the ruler or others – would lead to economic paralysis, as the fear of confiscation or injustice would discourage people from pursuing wealth or engaging in trade. As he put it: “attacks on people’s property remove the incentive to acquire and gain property. When attacks on (property) are extensive and general, affecting all means of making a livelihood, business inactivity, too, becomes general.”²⁵ Thus, the protection of private property, according to Ibn Khaldun, is not only a legal matter but a key driver of economic dynamism.

23 Islahi, *Economic Concepts of Ibn Taymiyah*, Islamic Foundation.

24 McCaffrey, “Ibn Khaldun”, p. 3.

25 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history.” *The Anthropology of Climate Change: An Historical Reader* (2014), pp. 55–66.

Ibn Khaldun also demonstrated a surprisingly anticipatory understanding of the role of public expenditure in economic health, an idea that parallels modern Keynesian economics. He asserted that the ruler must manage state spending with great care, as much of the economy depends on it. When public spending contracts, he argued, business activity slows, commercial profits decline, and tax revenues – especially from land – diminish. Moreover, these losses are not isolated, as they affect the entire economic system and ultimately harm the ruler himself. “Business slumps and commercial profits decline because of the shortage of capital”, he wrote, adding that “revenues from the land tax decrease, because the land tax and taxation depend on cultural activity, commercial transactions, business prosperity, and the people’s demand for gain and profits”.²⁶ He concluded that the state itself serves as the “greatest market”, and when the ruler hoards money rather than spending it, the funds are removed from circulation, weakening both public welfare and royal income.

This cyclical understanding of state spending and its effects on economic activity is strikingly similar to John Maynard Keynes’ theory of aggregate demand and the fiscal multiplier. Keynes proposed that government spending stimulates economic activity, especially in times of downturn. Ibn Khaldun, writing centuries earlier, had already articulated the idea that public expenditure not only fuels demand but also circulates wealth within society, generating trickle-down effects across various classes. He understood that a reduction in public spending would lead to lower demand for goods and services, which in turn depresses the income of producers and landowners, even if they were not the direct targets of fiscal austerity. In both substance and structure, his economic reasoning highlights a holistic view of governance, fiscal responsibility, and macroeconomic stability.

Taxation and the Decline of States in Ibn Khaldun’s Economic Philosophy

Among the most profound and prescient elements of Ibn Khaldun’s economic thought is his theory of taxation and its implications for state stability and economic development. His insights, articulated in the *Muqaddimah*, reflect a sophisticated understanding of how taxation policies affect productivity, trade, revenue, and ultimately the survival of political regimes. Ibn Khaldun observed a dynamic relationship between the stage of a dynasty and the effectiveness of taxation: “At the beginning of a dynasty, taxation yields a large

26 Rizkiah and Chachi, “The relevance of Ibn Khaldun’s economic thought in the contemporary world.” *Turkish Journal of Islamic Economics (Tujise)* (2020).

revenue from small assessments. At the end of the dynasty, taxation yields a small revenue from large assessments.”²⁷ This foundational observation anticipates the modern concept known as the Laffer Curve, the idea that increasing tax rates beyond a certain point will lead to a decline in overall revenue due to decreasing incentives for productivity and compliance.

Ibn Khaldun’s explanation for this phenomenon was grounded not just in economic logic but also in a historical and sociological analysis of dynastic cycles. At the early stage of a state, rulers tend to be frugal, guided by religious law and minimal governance, and taxes remain low. This allows trade and production to flourish, expanding the tax base and generating sufficient public revenue. However, as the state matures and rulers grow accustomed to luxury and centralized power, they demand more revenue to support increasingly extravagant lifestyles and expanded bureaucracies. This leads to heavier taxation, which undermines economic motivation, disrupts markets, and eventually shrinks the revenue base. When production slows and people are burdened with excessive levies, they become disincentivized, migrate, or hide income, weakening the entire fiscal and political structure²⁸.

This cyclical understanding of state and tax policy was remarkably ahead of its time. Arthur Laffer, in the 20th century, formalized what became known as the Laffer Curve, arguing that there is an optimal tax rate that maximizes revenue without suppressing economic activity. Laffer credited Ibn Khaldun as one of the earliest thinkers to articulate this principle. According to Laffer, when taxation increases, it can initially boost revenue per capita, but it also reduces labour supply, capital investment, and ultimately leads to declining productivity.²⁹ This corresponds closely with Ibn Khaldun’s assertion that overly burdensome taxation leads to economic stagnation and the downfall of regimes.

Scholars such as Azim Islahi have emphasized that Ibn Khaldun’s views on taxation go beyond mere revenue optimization, and instead reflect a broader ethical and economic philosophy. Islahi highlights how Ibn Khaldun advocated for a tax system that was low, stable, and just – ensuring public cooperation and preventing economic alienation.³⁰ For Ibn Khaldun, taxation was not merely a fiscal instrument but a regulatory and moral mechanism to maintain

27 Ibn Khaldun, “The Muqaddimah”, pp. 55–66.

28 Ibid., p. 135.

29 Laffer, “The Laffer Curve: Past, Present, and Future.” *The Heritage Foundation Lecture Series* (1981), pp. 33–36.

30 Islahi, “Ibn Khaldun’s theory of taxation and its relevance.” *Turkish Journal of Islamic Economics* 2, no. 2 (2015), pp. 1–19.

economic vitality and social cohesion. Abu Bakar Jaafar and Abdul Ghafar Ismail³¹ also argue that Ibn Khaldun's model integrates moral and practical considerations, treating taxation as a means to encourage productivity rather than punish it.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun linked excessive taxation to political decadence. As dynasties age, rulers' dependency on luxury and their disconnection from the productive classes increase. To maintain their power and finance large military forces, especially mercenaries, rulers impose higher taxes, which in turn damage the economy and erode the state's legitimacy.³² The result is a vicious cycle of declining economic activity, fiscal desperation, and eventual collapse. His analysis thus represents not just a proto-Laffer model, but a fully integrated socio-economic and political theory of taxation within the lifecycle of regimes.

Ibn Khaldun's tax theory also incorporates a strong normative message: taxation must be used for the public goods of justice, infrastructure, security, and welfare, not to support the personal luxury of rulers. When taxes are seen as oppressive or unfair, they lead to social unrest, loss of productivity, and political instability. Therefore, a just and efficient taxation system is both a moral imperative and a foundation for long-term state survival.

To sum up the above discussions, Ibn Khaldun's theory of taxation offers five critical lessons: i) low taxes stimulate production, trade, and voluntary compliance; ii) excessive taxation leads to economic decline and reduced revenue; iii) taxation must be predictable, fair, and ethically grounded; iv) fiscal health is intertwined with the lifecycle of dynasties and political legitimacy; and v) tax policy should be oriented toward sustainable economic development and social welfare.³³

Long before the emergence of modern economics, Ibn Khaldun provided an empirically informed and normatively rich theory of taxation that integrates fiscal policy with political ethics, administrative cycles, and the moral responsibilities of governance. His model remains a compelling framework for understanding the intersection of economy, society, and state power, particularly

31 Jaafar and Ismail. "Tax Rate and its Determinants: An Opinion from Ibn Khaldun." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7, no. 4 (2017), pp. 881–899.

32 Nagarajan, "The Socio-Economic Theory of Ibn Khaldun." *Islamic Studies* 21(2). (1982), pp. 111–122.

33 Syafiq and Rashid, "Ibn Khaldun and Adam Smith: Comparative Studies on Economic Thought, Tax Imposition and National Wealth Relationship." Bachelor's thesis, Universiti Teknologi MARA, (2014).

for modern Muslim-majority states grappling with debt crises, poor governance, and fiscal mismanagement.

Ibn Khaldun's economic thought, as articulated primarily in the *Muqaddimah*, constitutes a foundational contribution to the intellectual history of economic theory. Long before the formal emergence of economics as a distinct discipline in the modern West, Ibn Khaldun developed a systematic framework that integrates economic behaviour with sociopolitical structures, ethical considerations, and historical processes. His insights on labour as a source of value, the role of government in economic stability, the impact of taxation on productivity, and the cyclical nature of dynastic rise and decline exhibit a remarkable level of analytical sophistication.

Recent scholarly engagements have increasingly acknowledged Ibn Khaldun's work as a precursor to several concepts in classical and modern economics. However, his unique contribution lies not only in anticipating later economic theories, but also in embedding economic analysis within a broader epistemological and civilizational context. Unlike the positivist reductionism of much of modern economics, Ibn Khaldun's approach remains deeply normative, emphasizing the interdependence of economic vitality, social cohesion (*ʿasabiyyah*), and moral governance.

Conclusion

In the end we can conclude that Ibn Khaldun should be recognized not merely as a historical curiosity or a forerunner to Western economic thinkers, but as a significant and original contributor to economic thoughts in his own right. The critical re-engagement with his work may offer valuable perspectives for contemporary debates on political economy, development and economic growth, and the ethical dimensions of economic life.

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From Cohesion to Control: The Dynamics of *ʿAṣabiyya* in Ibn Khaldūn’s Theory of Leadership, Control and Order

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Introduction

Social cohesion has long been recognized as a foundation of political community, yet few theorists analyse its political mechanics as rigorously as Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) in the *Muqaddimah*.¹ His concept of *ʿaṣabiyya*, often rendered as “group feeling”, “social solidarity”, or “cohesion”, names the binding capacity that holds groups together and enables them to acquire leadership and sovereignty.² This paper revisits *ʿaṣabiyya* with a precise interpretation: not as an ethnic or tribal marker, but as an operative cohesive system that can be transmitted, expanded, and stabilized through institutions.

From this view, Ibn Khaldūn’s cyclical account of dynastic rise and decline becomes a structured causal pathway in which cohesion generates enforceable authority and, when it weakens, governance becomes brittle and prone to fragmentation.

1 For contemporary summaries of Ibn Khaldūn’s concept of *ʿaṣabiyya* in public discourse, see Jan A. Ali, “Ibn Khaldun’s Concept of Asabiyah”, *Australian Muslim Times* (AMUST), October 28, 2019.

2 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1: pp. 264–265.

To formalize that mechanism, I redefine *‘aṣabiyya* as Operational Cohesion Capacity (OCC), a binding force that actively coordinates collective action and can be strengthened or degraded over time. The term derives from the root *‘aṣ-b*, associated with binding/tying and with *‘aṣab* as “sinews” or “nerves” that hold the body together.³ This is based on Ibn Khaldūn’s own claim that group feeling arises from blood ties “or something corresponding to it”.⁴ This qualification is analytically decisive, as it authorizes the functional equivalents of kinship, long integration, alliance discipline, shared prestige, and institutional routines, that allow cohesion to extend beyond literal lineage without collapsing into ethnic essentialism.

In parallel, the paper distinguishes *‘aṣabiyya* from its failure mode, *ta‘aṣṣub*, that is “emotional partisanship”, in which cohesion hardens into exclusion and injustice, undermining legitimacy and accelerating internal conflict based on “blind” emotions. This boundary is made explicit in prophetic teachings that condemn calls to *‘aṣabiyya* when they justify factional domination, fanaticism, or violence.⁵ Such reports reinforce the analytical distinction used here. Cohesion is politically enabling only when constrained by justice (*‘adl*) and legitimate authority (*ḥukm*), when mobilized as partisan fanaticism, it becomes a force of disorder rather than stability.

The study is motivated by both historical and contemporary concerns. Historically, Ibn Khaldūn presents *‘aṣabiyya* as the dynamic force by which smaller, disciplined groups can overcome larger but internally weakened powers, and also as the mechanism explaining dynastic decay when cohesion dissipates under luxury, rivalry, and injustice.⁶ Contemporary governance problems, sectarian polarization, ethnolinguistic fragmentation, and the uneven durability of diaspora-led institutions, raise the same structural question in different forms, such as: How does cohesion become control? And what sustains that conversion as durable order rather than coercive instability? To answer this,

3 Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 4: p. 325, s.v. “‘a-ṣ-b”; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1956), 1: pp. 604–605, s.v. “‘aṣaba”; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj et al., 40 vols. (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād wa-l-Anbā’, 1965–2001), 2: pp. 238–239, s.v. “‘aṣaba”; Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–1893), 5: pp. 1994–1995, s.v. “‘aṣaba.”

4 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 1: pp. 264–265.

5 See Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Imāra*, ḥadīth 1848a; and Sunan Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Adab*, ḥadīth no. 5121.

6 See Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 1: Chapters II & III.

the paper combines close textual and philological analysis of the *Muqaddimah* in Arabic,⁷ along with a qualitative operationalization of OCC, formalizing Ibn Khaldūn's pathway cohesion → control → order, and specifying institutional proxies (language norms, institutional memory, coalition discipline, procedural legitimacy) that make the model functional for comparative analysis and modern institutional frameworks.

Thesis and Analytical Hypothesis

This study argues that Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿaṣabiyya* is best interpreted as Operational Cohesion Capacity (OCC), a binding coordination capacity that converts collective attachment into enforceable leadership, *mulk*, and sustainable order.

The following four analytical propositions are discussed in this paper:

1. Higher OCC, *ʿaṣabiyya* understood as a binding coordination capacity which increases the likelihood that cohesion will convert into effective leadership and *mulk* (cohesion → control → order).
2. Declining OCC increases the likelihood of the erosion of legitimacy, higher coercion costs, and fragmentation under stress.
3. *Taʿaṣṣub* is the pathological transformation of cohesion into rigid exclusion; it accelerates decline by undermining legitimacy and internal discipline.
4. The stabilizing effect of OCC is strongest when reinforced by credible legitimacy and justice constraints (*ʿadl*).

Methodology & Sources

This study uses an interdisciplinary qualitative approach combining close textual analysis, philological clarification of key terms, and comparative historical application.⁸

7 See Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2023).

8 Ibrahim, Hany T., "From Cohesion to Control: The Dynamics of *ʿAṣabiyya* in Ibn Khaldūn's Theory of Leadership and Order", unpublished colloquium proposal, research dossier, and research notes prepared for presentation at the International Ibn Khaldūn Colloquium, SIF-HAMS Meeting Hall, University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, 10–11 December 2025.

1) *Philological and Textual Analysis*

I begin with a close reading of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* (Arabic and in parallel with an English translation) to extract Ibn Khaldūn's explicit causal claims regarding *ʿaṣabiyya*, leadership, and *mulk*. I then conduct a focused lexicographical check of the root ʿṣ-b and related vocabulary (*ʿaṣabiyya*, *taʿaṣṣub*) to anchor the paper's operational definition of *ʿaṣabiyya* as Operational Cohesion Capacity (OCC) within the term's semantic range. The purpose is not to replace Ibn Khaldūn's usage with dictionary meaning, but to prevent anachronistic translation and to clarify the conceptual mechanism of the term.

2) *Conceptual Reconstruction and Comparative Framing*

On that textual basis, I reconstruct/reframe Ibn Khaldūn's internal pathway cohesion → control → order and distinguish productive cohesion from its failure mode (*taʿaṣṣub*). I then place this reconstructed mechanism in dialogue with modern concepts of cohesion and state formation (e.g., collective identity, social capital) as comparative vocabulary.⁹

3) *Historical Illustrations (qualitative case use)*

To demonstrate how the mechanism operates across contexts, the paper uses brief historical illustrations: the early Islamic consolidation of authority; Abbasid-era rivalry and symbolic contestation; and post-imperial fragmentation dynamics. Modern examples (multilingual fragility, post-revolutionary coalition breakdown, and uneven diaspora institutional durability) are used illustratively to show how OCC can be diagnosed through institutional proxies (language norms, social training, coalition discipline, institutional memory, and procedural legitimacy), without reducing cases to a single metric.

4) *Normative Boundary Framing*

Finally, Islamic normative concepts (justice, public interest / *maṣlaḥa ʿāmmah*, and limits on factional fervour / *taʿaṣṣub*) are used to clarify ethical boundary conditions for applying cohesion as a governance variable. This distinction is important in light of earlier discourses that emphasized Arab

9 See Peter Turchin, *Historical Dynamics: Why States Rise and Fall* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

lineage and collective prestige, which could easily slide into exclusionary or factional claims.¹⁰ Scriptural material is treated as normative referencing for Ibn Khaldūn's sociological mechanism. This boundary condition is expressed succinctly in the Qur'ānic directive to "cooperate in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Q. 5:2). Read analytically, the verse distinguishes between *ʿaṣabiyya* that stabilizes order through justice and *taʿaṣṣub* that degenerates into harmful factionalism. This is precisely the distinction Ibn Khaldūn draws between productive *ʿaṣabiyya* and its failure model.

Heritage-Science Orientation: *ʿAṣabiyya* as an Operational Heritage Variable

This paper is not only a conceptual re-reading of Ibn Khaldūn; it treats *ʿaṣabiyya* as an applied heritage-science variable. In that spirit, *ʿaṣabiyya* is approached as intangible heritage infrastructure, a transmissible social capacity that is stabilized, or destabilized, through language standards, institutional memory, authority routines, and patterned practices that reproduce coordination across generations. This framing keeps *ʿaṣabiyya* analytically useful beyond tribalism or ethnic reduction by treating it as a variable describing the durability of shared meaning, shared discipline, and institutional alignment.

Methodologically, this orientation shifts the analysis from moralized judgment ("good/bad group feeling" and injustice/*ẓulm*) to structured questions of transmission and coordination, to understand how a community carries forward legitimizing narratives, administrative routines, educational canons, linguistic norms, and authority mechanisms. The paper also expresses the argument in a form legible to modern governance and heritage institutions, curriculum bodies, accreditation systems, language councils, and state-linked institutes of learning, where *ʿaṣabiyya* is produced and maintained through reproducible standards rather than rhetorical appeals. Within this framework, *ʿaṣabiyya* is operationalized as a diagnosable coordination capacity rather than an identity or claims of shared blood ties. Diagnosis here does not require reducing society to crude metrics, it involves specifying observable indicators that track whether cohesion is converting into control (institutional capability)

10 See Ibn Qutaybah, *Faḍl al-ʿArab* (ninth century); See also *The Excellence of the Arabs*, translated by Sarah Bowen Savant and Peter Webb, edited by James E. Montgomery and Peter Webb. New York: New York University Press, 2017.

and then into order (stable governance outcomes). Indicative proxies include the consistency of linguistic standardization in formal education and public religious discourse; continuity of juristic/administrative training pipelines; stability of elite coordination networks across institutional transitions; durability of cross-coalition alliances under stress; and whether authority is experienced as procedurally legitimate rather than merely coercive.

Finally, the heritage-science framing clarifies why language is not decorative in this paper. Linguistic norms function as a civilizational medium of transmission, they stabilize interpretive boundaries, reduce coordination costs, and sustain continuity between scholarly elites, institutions, and the wider public. This makes language preservation and standardization not merely a matter of cultural pride but a governance instrument consistent with Ibn Khaldūn's account of how cohesion becomes workable authority. In short, the paper contributes a method for translating Khaldūnian theory into contemporary institutional diagnosis and functional design.

Reinterpreting *ʿaṣabiyya* as Operational Cohesion Capacity (OCC)

This section examines what Ibn Khaldūn means by *ʿaṣabiyya* and why it is central to his account of political formation. In pre-Islamic usage it often referred to clan solidarity in a kin-organized society, but Ibn Khaldūn adopts it as a sociological mechanism: the internal cohesion that enables collective action and makes authority possible. This semantic field is reinforced by Qurʾānic usage. While the *Qurʾān* does not employ *ʿaṣabiyya* as a technical term, it repeatedly uses *ʿuṣbah* to denote a tightly bound, mutually reinforcing group.¹¹ In these passages, *ʿuṣbah* signifies collective strength produced by internal cohesion rather than mere numerical size, preserving the root sense of binding and coordinated action. The usage confirms that the language of *ʿ-ṣ-b* already carried a functional meaning of collective force and internal reinforcement prior to Ibn Khaldūn's formal sociological articulation. Because *ʿaṣabiyya* is demonstrated through effects rather than a single formal definition, translators and scholars render it as “group feeling”, “solidarity”, or “*esprit de corps*”, each capturing part of its function.

Ibn Khaldūn presents *ʿaṣabiyya* as the enabling condition of leadership and sovereignty, stating that “leadership exists through superiority, and superiority

11 *Al-Qurʾān*, 12:8, 12:14, 24:11, 28:76.

through group feeling”.¹² The implication is straightforward, a leader cannot establish durable authority as an isolated individual, because authority requires a supporting group capable of collective enforcement. Power, in this account, is fundamentally sociological, it depends on the cohesion of those who obey and defend the leader. At the same time, Ibn Khaldūn is explicit that *‘aṣabiyya* is not reducible to genealogical lineage, even if lineage often provides its earliest foundation.¹³ The clause “or something corresponding to it” is significant, it allows functional equivalents of kinship; long integration; alliance discipline; shared prestige; and shared norms, to generate comparable cohesion.

Over time, assimilation can be so thorough that “the original descent is almost forgotten”.¹⁴ Yet partial attachment is not the same as full incorporation. Ibn Khaldūn observes that “a person of a certain descent may become attached to people of another descent,... Such a person comes to be known as having the same descent as those (to whom he has attached himself) and is counted one of them.”¹⁵ Only when incorporation becomes socially real, when the bond functions like kin-based obligation, only then can the group’s cohesion extend to new members and become a stable basis of leadership. In modern terms, this describes the social mechanics of integration and nation-building. This is because cohesion is constructed through durable bonds, shared norms, and credible membership boundaries.

Functionally, *‘aṣabiyya* produces collective agency, which is the capacity to defend, resist, and to press claims in a disciplined way. Ibn Khaldūn states this in operational terms, “[l]eadership over people, therefore, must, of necessity, derive from a group feeling that is superior to each individual group feeling”.¹⁶ In scarcity and danger, *‘aṣabiyya* is not an ornament, it is a survival requirement that generates endurance; coordination; and enforcement. This also explains Ibn Khaldūn’s contrast between Bedouin (*ahl al-badū*) and sedentary (*ahl al-ḥaḍar*) life.¹⁷ Bedouins tend to preserve stronger *‘aṣabiyya* because harsh conditions sustain mutual reliance and resistance to luxury. In contrast, urban populations, who are protected by established state structures,

12 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, 1: p. 269.

13 Ibid., 1: p. 267.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 1: p. 269.

17 Ibid., 1: pp. 249–261.

tend toward comfort and individuality, which weakens older forms of solidarity.¹⁸ In Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical account, groups with stronger cohesion repeatedly overcome older, complacent orders, then lose their own cohesion as luxury and rivalry increase, until a new cohesive group replaces them.¹⁹

In sum, Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿaṣabiyya* is best read as an operative cohesion capacity, a binding force that coordinates action, sustains discipline, and enables leadership to become enforceable authority.

From Cohesion to Control: *ʿAṣabiyya* as the Basis of Political Power

In Ibn Khaldūn's account, *ʿaṣabiyya* is not merely a social sentiment, it is the mechanism by which leadership becomes enforceable authority. The *Muqaddimah* repeatedly presents a directional progression, strong *ʿaṣabiyya* leads to effective leadership (*riyāsa*) and then to sovereignty/royal authority (*mulk*). Ibn Khaldūn states this explicitly: "[t]he goal to which group feeling leads is royal authority".²⁰ He then explains why *ʿaṣabiyya* tends toward rulership:

[t]his is because,... group feeling gives protection and makes possible mutual defence, the pressing of claims, and every other kind of social activity... [and] That person must,... have superiority over the others in the matter of group feeling... Such superiority is royal authority (*mulk*)... Royal authority means superiority and the power to rule by force.²¹

Because group feeling enables protection, mutual defence, and the capacity to press claims, and because human beings require a restraining authority to prevent conflict, rulership falls to the party with superior cohesion. From this analysis, four implications follow, as outlined below.

First, cohesion is already power. A cohesive group can coordinate, defend itself, and pursue its interests effectively, while disunited groups are vulnerable to domination or marginalization. In contemporary terms, *ʿaṣabiyya* reduces coordination costs and increases the credibility of collective action.

Second, leadership is conditional on superior cohesion. A ruler's commands are effective only insofar as they are backed by a cohesive support-base

18 Ibid., 1: p. 254.

19 Ibid., 1: pp. 353–355.

20 Ibid., 1: p. 284.

21 Ibid.

capable of enforcement. This is why Ibn Khaldūn treats authority as sociological rather than merely a personal, individual talent, which is insufficient without an aligned coalition.

Third, Ibn Khaldūn distinguishes leadership (*riyāsa*) from sovereignty (*mulk*). Leadership can exist within a group through consent and customary precedence; *mulk* arises when the cohesive group extends control beyond its original base and acquires the capacity to compel obedience at scale. In his formulation, the transition to *mulk* is inseparable from the group's ability to enforce, not merely to persuade.

Finally, the consolidation of sovereignty typically requires the unification of sub-groups under a broader bond. Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes that religion can strengthen and extend cohesion by restraining internal rivalry and aligning multiple lineages under a shared purpose; however, it cannot substitute for the underlying cohesion required for effective action.²²

Understood together, these principles yield a diagnostic implication: where cohesion concentrates around a leadership nucleus and maintains discipline, the rise of authority becomes likely, but where cohesion fractures, the costs of enforcement rise, and decline becomes structurally inevitable.

Historical Dynamics: Rivalry, Fragmentation, and Renewal

Ibn Khaldūn repeatedly stresses that dynastic decline is often initiated internally, through rivalry and the erosion of the very cohesion that first enabled conquest and rule. As a dynasty consolidates power and moves deeper into sedentary luxury, competing sub-groups, clients, and allied factions increasingly contest access, rank, and prestige, and the result is a thinning of shared discipline and a rise in factional manoeuvring. In Ibn Khaldūn's framework, this is not a secondary moral defect but a structural mechanism. When cohesion fragments, the costs of enforcement rise, and the polity becomes vulnerable to challengers whose internal cohesion remains stronger. The *Qur'ān* identifies a comparable failure mode in its critique of *ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya* (Q. 48:26), a form of rigid, exclusionary pride that intensifies rivalry rather than sustaining order. Conceptually, this maps closely onto Ibn Khaldūn's account of *ta'assub*, where cohesion hardens to factional arrogance, which corrodes legitimacy and accelerates internal conflict. In both accounts, the problem is not cohesion *per se*, but its degeneration into unjustified exclusion.

22 Ibid., 1: pp. 322-327.

The dynamic cyclical life span of the rise and fall of dynasties can be observed in periods where central authority becomes dependent on competing military and administrative factions whose interests are no longer fully aligned with the original ruling coalition. Once the core cohesion that originally grounded leadership is diluted by rivalry and divided loyalty, governance becomes procedurally brittle. Authority must rely increasingly on coercion, patronage, or external balancing rather than on internal discipline and shared commitment. Ibn Khaldūn's warning is therefore methodological as much as historical, because the decisive threats to political order often arise from within, through complacency, internal injustice, and coalition fracture, before external defeat becomes evident.²³

Read historically, this helps explain episodes in which a coalition expands by integrating new members into a shared normative and institutional order, transforming attachment into durable affiliation through law, education, and common authority routines. As for modern institutional design, cohesion can be stabilized when it is reproduced through shared standards and credible legitimacy, and destabilized when it is reduced to factional privilege. Moreover, according to Ibn Khaldūn, religion can amplify and broaden *ʿaṣabiyya*. This is achieved by aligning multiple groups under a shared purpose and restraining internal rivalry, although it cannot operate in the absence of an underlying cohesion-capacity.²⁴

Case Study: The Ottoman Caliphate and Fragmentation

As a brief illustration of Ibn Khaldūn's cohesion-pathway, the late Ottoman period and its aftermath show how large polities can depend on overarching cohesion mechanisms, and how fragmentation accelerates when those mechanisms weaken.

For long periods, the Ottoman order integrated diverse populations through dynastic authority, religious-legal institutions, and shared administrative routines, while the caliphal symbolism functioned as a unifying frame for many Muslim constituencies.²⁵ By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

23 Ibid., 1: pp. 343–346.

24 Ibid., 1: pp. 320–327.

25 For discussions of Ottoman dynastic legitimacy and Quraysh lineage claims, see Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, “The Ottoman Dynasty and Quraysh”, online article, July 9, 2025, <https://www.ekrembugraekinci.com/article/?ID=1565>.

competing loyalties, regional interests, emergent nationalisms, and rival elite coalitions, all reduced the credibility of imperial cohesion as a single integrative bond. The political shocks of World War I and the subsequent reordering of territories further accelerated the dispersion of authority and emergence of new states, many of which faced recurring difficulties converting plurality into stable governance.

Read through Ibn Khaldūn's mechanism, the lesson is structural rather than nostalgic. When a polity cannot sustain a cohesion-capacity experienced as both legitimate and enforceable across its constituent groups, authority becomes increasingly costly and vulnerable to fracture. The modern implication of this aligns with the OCC framework. Resilience depends on whether cohesion is reproduced through durable standards such as, language norms, institutional memory, coalition discipline, and procedural legitimacy, rather than relying on coercion or purely symbolic unity.

***ʿAṣabiyya* in Modern Contexts: Applying OCC as a Diagnostic Lens**

This section applies Ibn Khaldūn's mechanism as a diagnostic framework rather than as a set of historical analogies. The goal is to identify where OCC is strong, where it is weak, and which institutional levers convert cohesion into control and stable order.²⁶

The following three fields – plural societies, post-revolutionary transitions, and diaspora-led political projects – illustrate how cohesion-capacity either consolidates into enforceable order or remains trapped in sub-group competition.

Multilingual and Plural Societies

In multilingual and highly plural societies, *ʿaṣabiyya* often remains concentrated within sub-groups rather than consolidating at the level of the polity. In OCC terms, the problem is not diversity itself but the absence of a shared

26 For the Khaldūnian foundations of these applications, see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), esp. Book One, chaps. II–III; see also Peter Turchin, *Historical Dynamics: Why States Rise and Fall* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), for comparative cyclical models of cohesion and political order.

public medium, language norms, a common civic canon, and standardized procedures, which are capable of stabilizing coordination across groups. When these shared mediums are weak, coalition-making becomes shallow, transactional, and brittle. The pattern is typically visible in parallel education and media spheres, limited cross-group circulation of elites, recurring identity-based veto politics, and high polarization around symbolic issues that substitute for shared institutional trust.

An OCC-oriented design response is therefore institutional rather than rhetorical. This requires establishing shared standards for the public sphere (a common public-language standard without erasing local languages), a national civic curriculum, integrative elite pipelines, procedural legitimacy experienced as fair and predictable, and equal access to state services, in order to reduce grievances that reinforce sub-group enclosure.

Post-Revolutionary Transitions

In post-revolutionary transitions, the unity sufficient to overthrow a regime often fails to become the unity sufficient to govern. In OCC terms, the common enemy supplies temporary alignment; once victory is achieved, rivalry over authority, patronage, and resource allocation fractures the coalition and raises the costs of enforcement. This breakdown is typically visible in militia or party splintering, competing claims to legitimacy, rapid turnover of rules and offices, and violence or veto tactics replacing predictable procedures.

The OCC-oriented remedy is rapid institutionalization. By generating shared rules that bind factions, a credible enforcement chain, an inclusive coalition architecture that distributes stake and responsibility, and legitimacy routines that make compliance cheaper than coercion. Where such mechanisms do not emerge, the cohesion that enabled regime change tends to dissipate into factional competition, making instability structurally likely.

Diaspora-Led Political Projects

In diaspora-led political projects, leadership often lacks ground-level binding ties and enforcement credibility. In OCC terms, affiliation is symbolic rather than costly. By creating networks of trust and obligation, these ties remain local, so directives issued from outside do not reliably mobilize disciplined compliance on the ground. This deficit typically appears as repeated

implementation failure, local powerbrokers disregarding political leadership, and legitimacy disputes framed in terms of “outsiders vs insiders”.

An OCC-oriented response is to institutionalize linkages that convert distant authority into durable coordination: accountability pipelines, reciprocal obligations, locally rooted representation, shared training and standards, and sustained presence. Exile-led movements struggle when they cannot translate external resources into locally binding cohesion-capacity.

Across these contexts, the core prediction is consistent: resilience increases when a polity reproduces OCC through language norms, institutional memory, elite pipelines, coalition discipline, and procedural legitimacy, while fragility increases when cohesion stays sub-grouped or mutates into *taʿaṣṣub*.

Design Implications: Institutional Levers for Sustaining OCC

If *ʿaṣabiyya* is interpreted as OCC, then the practical question is which institutional features reliably reproduce cohesion over time and convert it into stable governance rather than coercive volatility.

The OCC framework implies four design levers:

1. Shared Public Standards (language and a common civic medium)

Plural societies do not require cultural uniformity, but they do require a shared public medium that stabilizes coordination. A common public-language standard, consistent civic education, and interoperable administrative procedures reduce coordination costs and prevent the emergence of parallel “public spheres” that fragment legitimacy. The design aim is not the suppression of local languages or identities, but ensuring a common institutional register through which public interest, law, and accountability are negotiated.

2. Custodial Institutions and Procedural Legitimacy

OCC is more durable when key institutions are experienced as custodial and rule-bound rather than partisan instruments. This requires predictable procedures, such as visible fairness, and credible constraint mechanisms that reduce the need for constant coercion. Where authority is perceived as arbitrary or captured by a faction, cohesion weakens into compliance by fear and enforcement costs rise.

3. Integrative Elite Pipelines and Coalition Discipline

Because leadership effectiveness depends on a cohesive support base, resilient polities build integrative pipelines that circulate elites across regions and sectors (administration, education, security, economy) and establish disciplined coalition rules. Cross-cutting networks reduce zero-sum rivalry, while clear dispute-resolution procedures prevent factional competition from hardening into exclusionary polarization. In OCC terms, the goal is to create overlapping loyalties that bind sub-groups into a higher-order coordination capacity.

4. Renewal Mechanisms (institutional memory and cohesion maintenance)

OCC is not self-sustaining; it must be renewed through institutional memory, continuity of training, and periodic recalibration of inclusion boundaries. Systems that preserve administrative knowledge, maintain stable curricula, and reward long-term cooperation can regenerate cohesion across generations. Conversely, when renewal fails through patronage inflation, prestige contests, and persistent exclusion, cohesion tends to mutate into *ta'aşşub* and accelerates decline by undermining legitimacy.

Taken together, these levers translate Ibn Khaldūn's sociological mechanism into a contemporary diagnostic and design vocabulary. Durable order depends on whether *ʿaşabiyya* is reproduced through shared standards, custodial procedures, integrative pipelines, and renewal routines, rather than remaining confined to sub-groups or relying primarily on coercion.

Scope Conditions and Limits

While *ʿaşabiyya* provides a powerful lens for political formation and decline, its explanatory reach has scope conditions and limits.

1) Contextual Scope

Ibn Khaldūn derived his mechanism from societies in which *ʿaşabiyya* was often kin-based and institutions were comparatively thin. In modern centralized states, formal institutions (bureaucracy, law, fiscal capacity) can temporarily compensate for weak underlying cohesion, producing stability that is procedural rather than solidaristic. For this reason, the OCC lens is most predictive in contexts where institutional constraints are weak, contested, or collapsing

(e.g., transitional polities, revolutionary periods, and deeply divided societies). In stable plural states with robust rule-of-law systems, *ʿaṣabiyya* may be maintained through integrative procedures and shared civic norms even without a single dominant force.

a. Non-Determinism

OCC is a critical variable, not a complete causal key. Highly cohesive groups can fail under overwhelming external power, catastrophic resource shocks, or unfavourable geopolitical constraints; conversely, less cohesive orders can persist through geography, international support, or institutional substitutions. The OCC model therefore supports comparative diagnosis, more or less resilient under comparable conditions, and not deterministic prediction.

b. Normative Boundary Conditions

The mechanism is analytically value-neutral, but its political effects depend on how *ʿaṣabiyya* is constrained and directed. In Ibn Khaldūn's account, the seclusion of – and control over – the ruler, injustice (*ẓulm*), and internal rivalry accelerate decline by corroding legitimacy and raising enforcement costs.²⁷ Accordingly, *ʿaṣabiyya* pursued through rigid exclusion or persistent injustice tends to produce brittle authority and recurrent internal conflict, meaning, *taʿaṣṣub* rather than durable OCC. The scope of cohesion for governance is therefore bounded by procedural legitimacy and justice constraints (*ʿadl*) rather than by *ʿaṣabiyya* alone.

In sum, OCC is best treated as a reasonable means. OCC methods justify how collective action and enforceable authority become possible, but the durability and quality of political order depend on institutional constraints, external conditions, and legitimacy.

2) Contributions

This paper makes three contributions. First, it offers a conceptual clarification by re-reading Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿaṣabiyya* as Operational Cohesion Capacity (OCC), a binding coordination capacity that explains how collective attachment converts into enforceable leadership and sovereignty, formalized as the pathway cohesion → control → order. Second, it advances a methodological contribution by combining close *Muqaddimah*-based textual analysis with lexicographical anchoring and a qualitative operationalization of OCC through observable institutional proxies such as language norms, institutional

27 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, 1: pp. 377–378.

memory, elite training pipelines, coalition discipline, and procedural legitimacy. Third, it contributes an applied framework, a diagnostic vocabulary and set of design levers that can be used comparatively to analyse institutional fragility and resilience in modern governance settings without reducing Ibn Khaldūn's theory to ethnicity, nostalgia, or purely moralized claims.

Conclusion

Read as OCC rather than as a tribal residue, Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿaṣabiyya* remains a rigorous explanatory variable for how political order is formed, stabilized, and lost. Formal institutions, constitutions, bureaucracies, and economies do not operate independently of *ʿaṣabiyya*, but instead rely on a coordination capacity that lowers enforcement costs, sustains discipline, and ensures that authority experienced as legitimate rather than merely coercive. Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical account can be expressed as a practical diagnostic, when *ʿaṣabiyya* is reproduced through durable standards and custodial procedures, authority stabilizes into order. When *ʿaṣabiyya* weakens or mutates into *taʿaṣṣub*, rivalry rises, legitimacy erodes, and fragmentation becomes unavoidable.

The OCC framework introduced in this paper clarifies what “designing for *ʿaṣabiyya*” means in contemporary terms. This structure does not require uniformity or exclusion, but instead shared public standards (especially language policy for a common public sphere), continuity of institutional memory and training, disciplined coalition, and a procedural legitimacy that restrains coercion. Where these mechanisms are absent, plurality tends to remain subgrouped, and politics becomes a competition of rival cohesions rather than a sustainable order. Normative constraints (justice / *ʿadl* and *maṣlaḥa ʿammah* limits drawn from the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth*) should function here as boundary conditions on the OCC mechanism rather than as this paper's core claim that *ʿaṣabiyya* stabilizes politics more reliably when constrained by credible legitimacy and justice, and *ʿaṣabiyya* becomes destabilizing when reproduced through persistent injustice or unjust exclusion.

In conclusion, Ibn Khaldūn can be read not only as a historian of dynastic cycles but as a theorist of institutional resilience. Cohesion or *ʿaṣabiyya* is the enabling condition of rule, while legitimacy and custodial procedure largely determine whether that cohesion yields durable order or accelerated decline. For modern institutional analysis, the framework of OCC provides more than a diagnostic lens for identifying where coordination capacity is being

produced or failing, as it also offers a practical analytic tool for evaluating how cohesion can be stabilized, extended, or cultivated within plural polities, and why some political orders consolidate while others remain structurally vulnerable to fracture.

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Solidarity (*ʿAṣabiyyah*), Luxury (*Taraf*), and Subjugation (*al-Ummah al-Maghlūbah*): A Khaldūnian Interpretation of Nasrid Granada

*Dr Ghadi Amer*¹

Introduction: Umayyad *ʿAṣabiyyah* and the Foundation of al-Andalus

Al-Andalus endures as one of history's most compelling laboratories for the political theories of Ibn Khaldūn. Few civilizations have traced, with such architectural precision and documentary richness, the full arc that his

1 This study synthesizes and expands upon several works produced by the author between 2020 and 2024; it builds upon research from the Master's degree *Máster Universitario en Tutela de Patrimonio Histórico-Artístico: El legado de al-Ándalus* regarding Alhambra inscriptions and incorporates findings from an internship at the *Laboratorio de Arqueología y Arquitectura de la Ciudad (EEA-CSIC)*. The analysis of the mural paintings in the *Sala de Los Reyes* was conducted under the supervision of archaeologist Jesús Bermúdez of the *Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife*. Additionally, the study integrates an article presented at the International Congress of Spanish History (University of Warsaw, May 2023) and the podcast episode "The Paintings of the Hall of Kings at the Alhambra, Spain" (September 2024), produced for Multicultural Middle Ages and sponsored by the Medieval Academy of America and the University of Notre Dame (available at: <https://www.multiculturalmiddleages.com/post/the-paintings-of-the-hall-of-kings-at-alhambra-spain-amer>). This synthesis provides a nuanced Khaldūnian interpretation of the decline of the Nasrid Kingdom leading up to 1492.

al-Muqaddima identifies as universal: the consolidation of royal authority (*mulk*) through group solidarity (*‘aṣabiyyah*), its gradual erosion through sedentary luxury (*ṭaraf*), and the ultimate subjugation of the defeated, who betray their own diminishment by imitating the conqueror’s customs (*iqtidā’*). That trajectory begins not in Iberia but in the Arabian Peninsula – in the rivalry between the *Banū Hāshim* and the *Banū Umayya*, two branches of the *Quraysh* whose contest for the caliphate shaped the collective memory of the Muslim community for centuries (Fig. 1). This foundational antagonism received systematic examination from Ibn Khaldūn’s own student, the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), in his *Kitāb al-Nizā‘ wa al-Takhāṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayya wa Banī Hāshim*², which documents the grievances and claims of both parties without advocating for either.³

The *Abbasid* revolution of 747–750 CE – which culminated in the massacre of the Umayyad ruling house – forced the surviving prince ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, *Ṣaqr Quraysh*, across North Africa and into the westernmost frontier of the Islamic world. It was precisely the *‘aṣabiyyah* forged in that persecution and exile that furnished him with the political will to establish the Umayyad Emirate of Córdoba: not a new beginning, but a reaction – an Umayyad answer to Abbasid dominance, transplanted to the banks of the Guadalquivir⁴. Al-Andalus itself can thus be understood as the historical outcome of this inter-dynastic conflict: an Umayyad state established not in the heartlands of Islam, but on its western frontier, through the *‘aṣabiyyah* forged in dispossession. Seven centuries later, that same civilizational energy – transformed, refined, and finally exhausted – found its terminal expression in the Nasrid palatine city of the Alhambra. As Bernard Vincent has observed, the year 897/1492

2 al-Maqrīzī “منع بجي ملو لؤسلا محضو” (posed the question and did not answer it), instead compiling evidence of the violence inflicted upon the Prophet’s family by both Umayyads and Abbasids, leaving judgment to the reader. Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Nizā‘ wa al-Takhāṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayya wa Banī Hāshim*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu’nis, Dhakhā’ir al-‘Arab 62 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 5.

3 Luis F. Bernabé-Pons, “The Last Muslim Inhabitants of a Newly-Christianized Granada: Mudejars and Moriscos,” in *A Companion to Islamic Granada*, ed. Bárbara Boloix-Gallardo (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 231.

4 For further reading on this topic, consult: Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil fī al-Tarikh* (*The Complete History*), ed. Abi al-Fidā’ ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāḍī, 11 vols. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1987); al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (*History of the Prophets and Kings*), ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, 1960–1969); and al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Nizā‘ wa al-Takhāṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayya wa Banī Hashim* (*The Dispute and Contention Between the Umayyads and the Hashimites*), ed. Husayn Mu’nis, Dhakhā’ir al-‘Arab 62 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.).

stands as a profoundly symbolic date, and one that Ibn Khaldūn’s framework, elaborated from within Granada’s last chapter, had already made theoretically legible.⁵ It is through his concepts that we can analyse not only the rise and fall of these polities, but the complex iconographic programmes their reigns produced – programmes that found their most exquisite expression in the palaces of the last Islamic dynasty of al-Andalus.

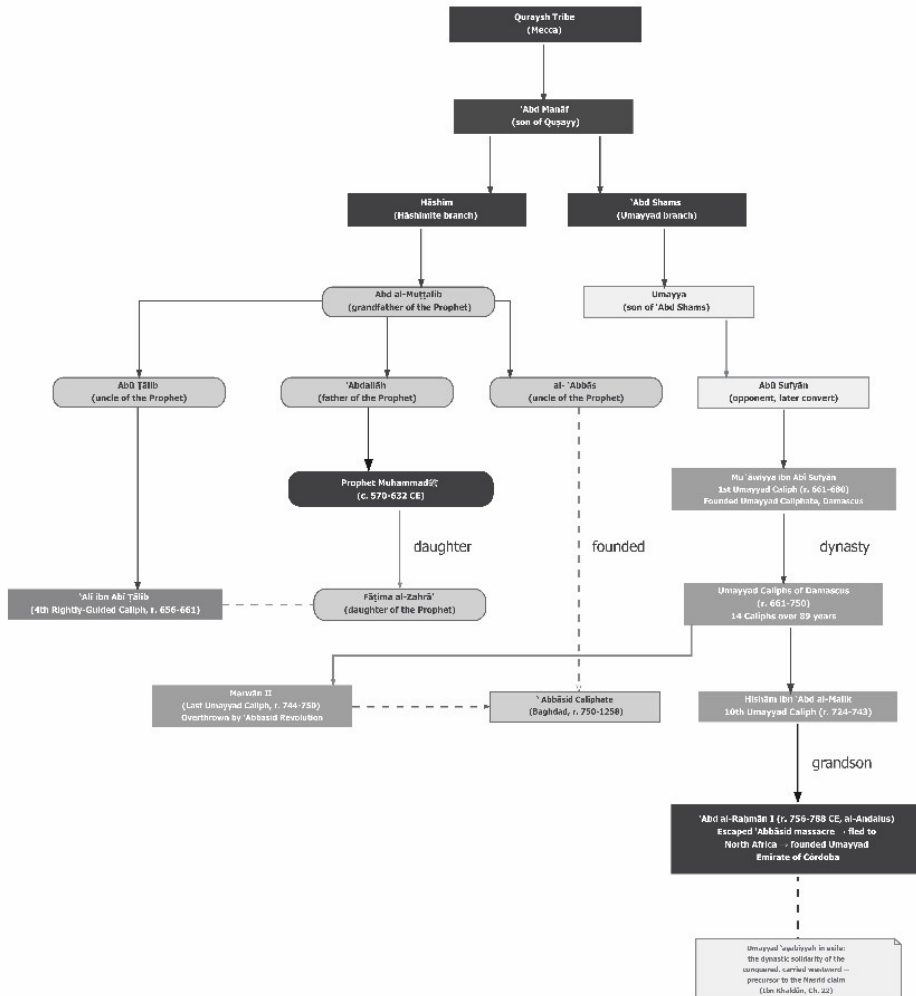


Figure 1. Genealogy of the *Quraysh*: The *Hāshimite* and *Umayyad*

5 Bernard Vincent, “1492: From Islamic to Christian Granada,” in *A Companion to Islamic Granada*, ed. Bárbara Boloix-Gallardo (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 164–184; al-Maqrizī, *Kitab al-Nizaʿ wa al-Takhāsum*, 4.

Clans and the Transition of *ʿAṣabiyyah* to al-Andalus. Digital illustration by the author.

Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and al-Andalus

Ibn Khaldūn's connection to al-Andalus was biographical, intellectual, and diplomatic. He maintained an intense correspondence with Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn Zamrak – the two most powerful figures of Muḥammad V's chancellery – letters preserved in his autobiography (*al-Taʾrīf*) that reveal mutual esteem and intellectual kinship.⁶ In late 1364 he was dispatched by Muḥammad V on a diplomatic mission to Pedro I of Castile in Seville: “*My commission was to ratify the peace-treaty between him and the kings of Muslim Spain. I took along precious gifts: silk cloths and full-blooded horses with heavy golden harness.*”⁷ This embassy placed him at the precise intersection of the forces he theorized – Christian *ʿaṣabiyyah* ascending and Nasrid *ʿaṣabiyyah* dissolving – in real time. The sultan subsequently arranged for Ibn Khaldūn's family to be brought from exile in Constantine to Almería; a letter from the sultan (written on Muḥammad V's behalf by Ibn al-Khaṭīb himself) survives, acknowledging Ibn Khaldūn's critique of court policy and recommending caution when he considered returning to Bijāya.⁸ His treatment of Iberian history in the *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* spans over 200 pages in its critical edition (vol. 7, pp. 369–580), covering Islamic al-Andalus from the conquest to the Nasrid dynasty and the Christian kingdoms from Pelayo to Enrique III.⁹ His presence at the Nasrid court, his correspondence with its people of the pen (scribes, poets, and administrators), and his diplomatic experience of the Christian frontier collectively ground his theoretical framework not in abstraction but in observed political reality.

The following table maps the core Khaldūnian concepts against their sources in *al-Muqaddima* and their Nasrid manifestations.

6 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Taʾrīf bi-Ibn Khaldun wa-rihlātihi gharban wa-sharqan*, ed. Muhammad ibn Tawit al-Tanji (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾif wa-al-Tarjama wa-al-Nashr, 1951), 224–231.

7 Ibid., 241–243.

8 Ibid., 232–236.

9 Ibn Khaldun, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar, wa-Diwan al-Mubtadaʾ wa-l-Khabar*, 14 vols. (Tunis, 2006–2013), vol. 7, 369–580.

Concept (Arabic Transliteration)	English trans	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> ¹⁰ : Reference	Nasrid Application
الأمة المغلوبة (‘ <i>Al-Ummah al-Maghlūbah</i>)	The conquered nation	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> , Ch. 24 ¹¹	The Nasrid Kingdom’s final decades exemplify this theory: after becoming tributaries to Castile, Granada suffered economic dependency and political subservience.
عصبية الغالب (‘ <i>Aṣabiyyat al-Ghālib</i>) ¹²	The conqueror’s group cohesion	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> , Ch. 17, 22 ¹³	Unlike the Nasrids, who dissolved into luxury within the Alhambra, the northern Christian kingdoms (Castile, Aragon, León) maintained their martial ‘ <i>aṣabiyyah</i> through centuries of Reconquista warfare.

10 Note on editions: The *Muqaddima* is organized into chapters (*fuṣūl*), each bearing a title reflecting its specific theme. It constitutes the first book (*al-kitāb al-awwal*) of Ibn Khaldūn’s larger historical work, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar, wa-Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa-l-Ḥabar* (The Book of Lessons and the Record of Beginnings and Events). Given the variance in pagination across printed editions, this study primarily utilizes Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddima* (Amman: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyya, 2009). This edition has been cross-referenced with Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddima* (Būlāq: Dār al-Ṭibā’a al-‘Āmira, 1857), supervised by Naṣr al-Hūrīnī; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddima*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Shaddādī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 2006). Where page references are provided, they correspond to the 2009 Amman edition; however, readers may locate cited passages across other versions via the consistent chapter titles (*‘unwān al-faṣl*). Comparative reference was also made to Ibn Khaldūn, *Les Prolégomènes d’Ibn Khaldoun*, trans. William MacGuckin de Slane, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1862–1868). The Arabic quotations from *Al-Muqaddimah* are drawn from the Amman edition (2009) with English translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.

11 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 77.

12 A different application of ‘*aṣabiyyah* is as follows.: While the Nasrids experienced the erosion of their group cohesion, the Catholic kingdoms of northern Iberia exemplify ‘*aṣabiyyah* in its ascendant phase. Their shared religious identity as Catholics, reinforced by centuries of Reconquista warfare, provided an ideological foundation for group cohesion that transcended individual dynasties. Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile united the two strongest Christian kingdoms through marriage (1469), consolidating their ‘*aṣabiyyah* at the precise moment the Nasrid court fragmented. Their belief in reclaiming *al-Andalus* for Christendom functioned as a bond stronger than tribe, fulfilling Ibn Khaldūn’s principle that kingship passes to the group that preserves its cohesion while the previous rulers dissolve in luxury (see *al-Muqaddimah*, ch. 2; Amman 2009, 73–76).

13 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, chs. 17 and 22.

Concept (Arabic Transliteration)	English trans	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> ¹⁰ : Reference	Nasrid Application
الترف (<i>taraf</i>)	Luxury / opulence	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> , Ch. 11, 13, 18 ¹⁴	The Alhambra embodies Khaldūn's description of a dynasty that has transcended the necessities of life.
اقتداء (<i>iqtidāʿ</i>)	Imitation / emulation	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> , Ch. 23 ¹⁵	Nasrid imitation of Christians: figurative paintings of the Sala de los Reyes depicting chivalric scenes with Christian knights; adoption of Gothic decorative elements in Nasrid architecture.
أهل القلم (<i>Ahl- al qalam</i>)	People of the pen (scribes, poets, administrators)	<i>Al-Muqaddima</i> , Ch. 25 ¹⁶	Early stage (sword dominant): Muḥammad I Ibn al-Aḥmar (1238–1273) conquers Granada through military force; early construction focuses on the Alcazaba.

Ahl al-Qalam and the Inscriptional Programme of the Alhambra

“اعلم أن السيف والقلم كلاهما آلة لصاحب الدولة يستعين بهما على أمره، إلا أن الحاجة في أول الدولة إلى السيف ما دام أهلها في تمهيد أمرهم أشد من الحاجة إلى القلم؛ لأن القلم في تلك الحال خادم فقط منفذ للحكم السلطاني والسيف شريك في المعونة.”¹⁷

In chapter 25 of the *Muqaddima*, titled “On the disparity between the ranks of the sword and the pen in states” (*Fī at-tafāwut bayna marātib as-sayf wa al-qalam fī ad-duwal*), Ibn Khaldūn articulates the theory of dynastic development that most directly illuminates the Nasrid investment in epigraphic poetry. At the state's founding, the sword predominates; the *qalam* serves merely as executor of sultanic orders. As rule stabilizes, “the people of the *Qalam* become more influential, of higher rank, and enjoy greater wealth and honour. They sit closer to the sultan... ministers and men of the sword become

14 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, chs. 11, 13, and 18.

15 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, ch. 23, 77.

16 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, ch. 25, 130.

17 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 129.

dispensable and are kept distant from the inner circle of the sultan, fearing for their lives.”¹⁸

Three poets of the Nasrid Royal Chancellery (*Dīwān al-Inshāʿ*) embody this theory with documentary precision. Ibn al-Jayyāb (1274–1349) served as head of the Office of Redaction across six reigns and was the first to systematize the Alhambra’s inscriptional series, deploying the full vocabulary of nuptial, astral, and paradisiacal metaphors that would constitute the palace’s symbolic programme. Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–ca. 1374) was the most distinguished intellectual figure of the entire Nasrid period – simultaneously vizier, historian, philosopher, physician, and Sufi theorist – and author of the *Iḥāṭa*, the foundational history of Nasrid Granada, in which he defined the Alhambra as “a bride sweetened by rain, adorning the hill and courting the stars” Ibn Zamrak (1333–ca. 1393) is the author of all ten aulic poems of the Two Sisters Room (*sala de Dos Hermanas*) (Fig. 2), the *Mirador de Lindaraja* (Fig. 3), and the 12-verse poem of the *Fuente de Los Leones* (Fig. 4) – whose verses still speak from the Alhambra’s walls today while the military commanders of Muḥammad V’s reign are largely forgotten.¹⁹

18 Ibid., 130.

19 José Miguel Puerta Vilchez, *Leer la Alhambra: Guía visual del Monumento a través de sus inscripciones* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife / Edilux, 2010), 45–62; Emilio García Gómez, *Ibn Zamrak: El poeta de la Alhambra* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra, 1975), 30–45.

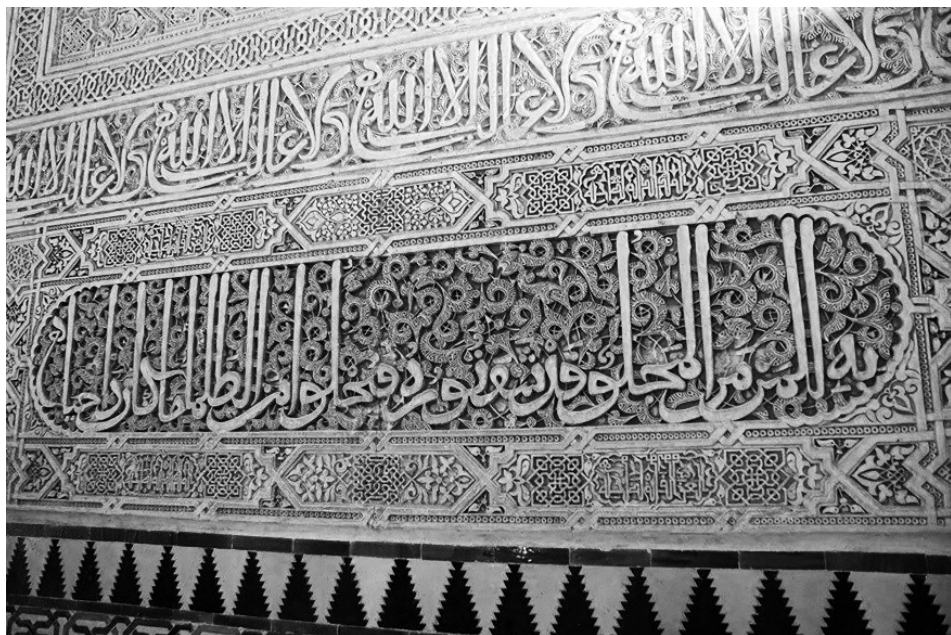


Figure 2. Poetic programme of Ibn Zamrak, *Sala de las Dos Hermanas*, Alhambra.

أَنَا الرُّوضُ قَدْ أَصْبَحْتُ بِالْحُسْنِ حَالِيَا .. تَأَمَّلْ جَمَالِي تَسْتَفِدْ شَرْحَ حَالِيَا
 وَيَا حَبِّدَا "مُحَمَّدٌ" وَهُوَ مَفْخَرِي .. وَأَشْرَفُ مَنْ قَدْ كَانَ أَوْ هُوَ آتِيَا
 بَنَى لِي مَقَامًا وَهُوَ فِي الرَّفْعِ غَابِيَةٌ .. يُقَصِّرُ عَنْهُ مَنْ عَدَا مُتَعَالِيَا
 فَكَمْ فِيهِ لِلْعَيْنَيْنِ مِنْ مُتَنَزِّهِ .. يُجَدِّدُ فِيهِ الْحُرْمَ مَا كَانَ مَمْنِيَا

Translation: "I am the garden, dressed in beauty; gaze upon my splendour and you shall know my heart. How excellent is Muḥammad, my source of pride – the most noble of those who passed and those to come. He raised for me a monument of such height that even the most ambitious fall short of its reach. How many delights are here for the eyes, where the noble spirit finds its longings renewed."

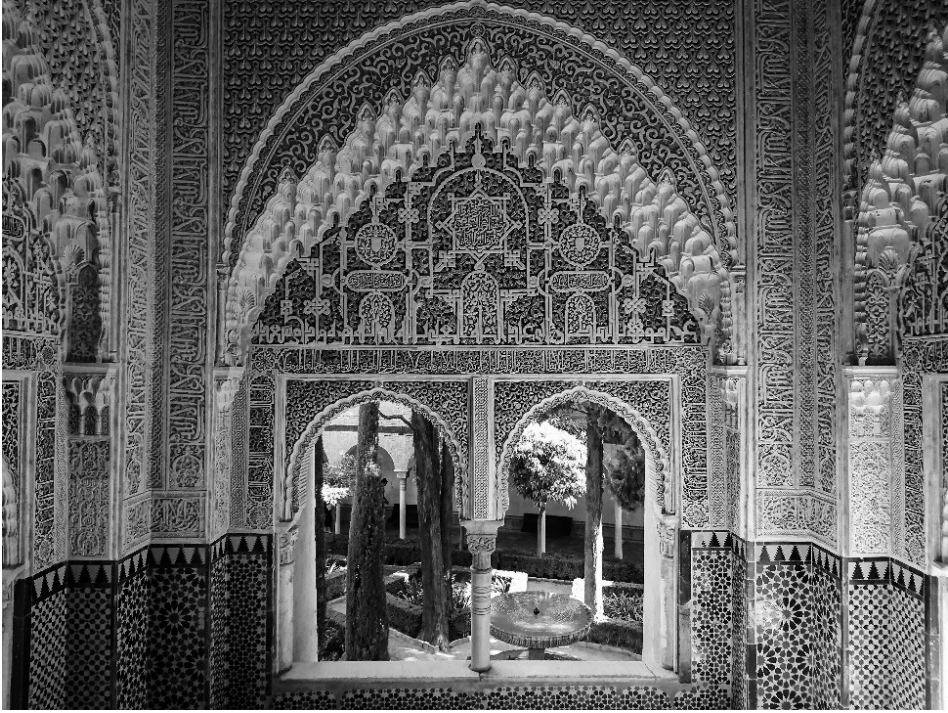


Figure 3. Detail of the poetic inscriptions by Ibn Zamrak at the *Mirador de Lindaraja*.

أَلَا مَجْرَطَانِلِلْ فُشْكَتِ دَجْلِب .. أَلْأَقِصِ نَوِيْعِلِلْ وَدَبَتِ دَجْلِ أَنْ
 أَلْأَوْنَ كِلِمْلِ أُوْرِيْحَتِمْ أَخْرَنْم .. تَلِفَحْ دَعَنْصَنْم هُوْطَاوْشِ رَحَبْ

Translation: “I am a pool that appears to the sight as a polished surface, a deep sea that reveals beauty to the observer. A sea whose shores are of elaborate workmanship, carved from marble chosen by the King as a bounty. The water flows through it like liquid pearls, pouring over a stone base crafted with precision. The water cloaks me at times like a robe, and then I strip away that grandeur. You see me and you see the pouring streams at my edges like ice that has begun to melt. When the water swells over us, we become like a sky adorned with pearls.”



Figure 4. Close-up of the poetic programme of Ibn Zamrak, *Fuente de los Leones*.
Photograph by the author, December 2020.

تَبَارَكَ مَنْ أَعْطَى الْإِمَامَ مُحَمَّدًا .. مَغَانِي زَانَتْ حُسْنَهَا الثَّمَائِلُ
أَفِي هَذَا الرُّوضِ الْبَدِيعِ عَجَائِبٌ .. لَأَوْصَافِهَا اللَّهُ الْبَدِيعُ يُطِيلُ

Translation: “Blessed is He who granted the Imam Muḥammad mansions that excel in beauty. In this wonderful garden, are there not marvels whose descriptions God, the Creator, makes eternal? Like molten silver flowing among jewels, it charms with its purity and fluidity; the running water resembles the solid ice, such that we know not which of them is truly flowing.”

The *Fachada de Comares* poem – composed by Ibn Zamrak for Muḥammad V – delivers a message calibrated to a precise historical moment: “*My position is a crown, and my door is the forehead: in me, the West envies the East. Muhammad V has entrusted me to open swiftly to the victory that knocks; for I am waiting for him to appear, just as the horizon reveals the morning. May God make his work as great as his character and his countenance are noble!*” (Fig. 5) The victory invoked is Muḥammad V’s reconquest of Algeciras from Castile in 1369 – the last great Muslim military triumph in the Iberian

Peninsula – encoding political event within the language of divine mandate and converting the gate into a triumphal arch.²⁰

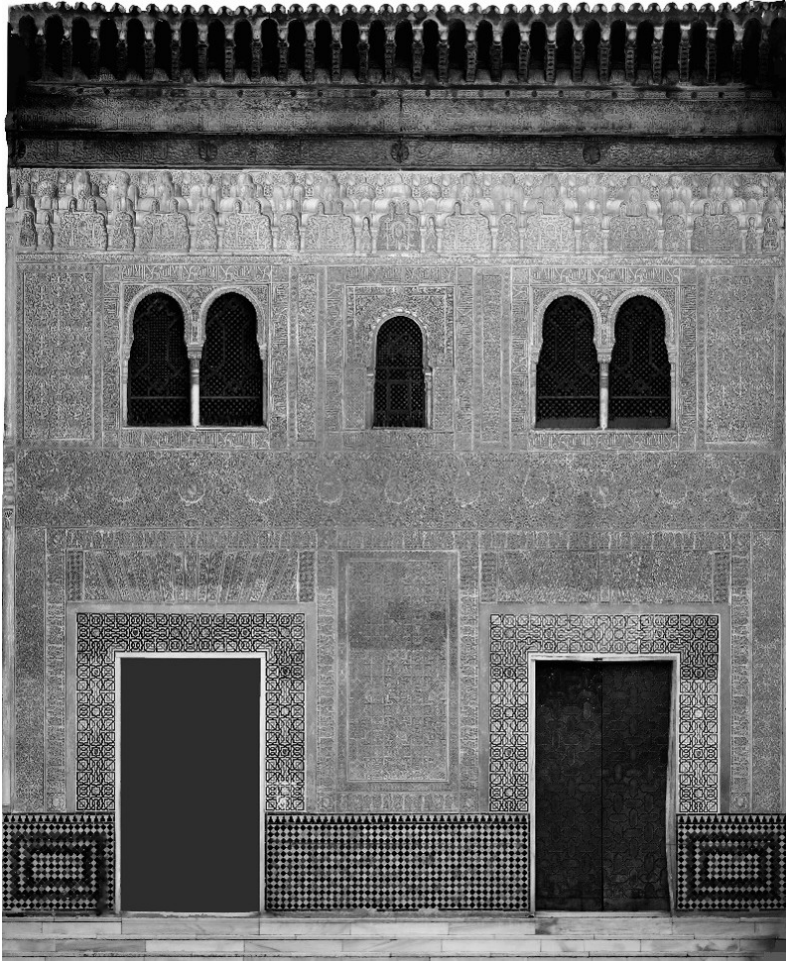


Figure 5. The poetic programme of the *Fachada de Comares* (Comares Façade), *Patio de Los Arrayanes*. The inscription celebrates Muḥammad V's military triumph at Algeciras in 1369, transforming the palace entrance into a monumental symbol of victory and divine mandate. Architectural documentation by Antonio Almagro Gorbea, courtesy of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Inv. AA-415_34). https://www.academiacolecciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-415_34

The Nasrid motto *Wa-lā ghāliba illā Allāh* (There is no conqueror but God) (Figs. 6.7), inscribed on virtually every surface of the palace – walls, ceilings,

²⁰ Ibid., 120–123.

fountains, doorways, and the margins of its poems – is simultaneously a profession of faith and, within Ibn Khaldūn’s framework, an unconscious historical prediction: the dynasty that covers its palace in a declaration of God’s exclusive sovereignty has already acknowledged, if only theologically, that its own authority is contingent and temporary.



Figure 6. The Nasrid motto *Wa-lā ghāliba illā Allāh* (There is no conqueror but God)
 Photograph by the author, December 2020.



Figure 7. The Nasrid motto *Wa-lā ghāliba illā Allāh* ('There is no conqueror but God') inscribed on a column situated at the Mexuar. Photograph by the author, December 2020.

Finally, the cosmic dimension of Nasrid epigraphy finds its most spectacular expression in the cedarwood ceiling of *Salón de Comares*, which represents the seven heavens of *Sura al-Mulk*, and in the Mirador de Lindaraja tympanum calligram, the most formally complex example of the Royal Architectural Calligram category. Similarly, the Oratorio del Partal contains *Qurʾānic* inscriptions (Quran 2:238) within the *mihrāb* that anchor the space in daily liturgical practice (Fig. 8).

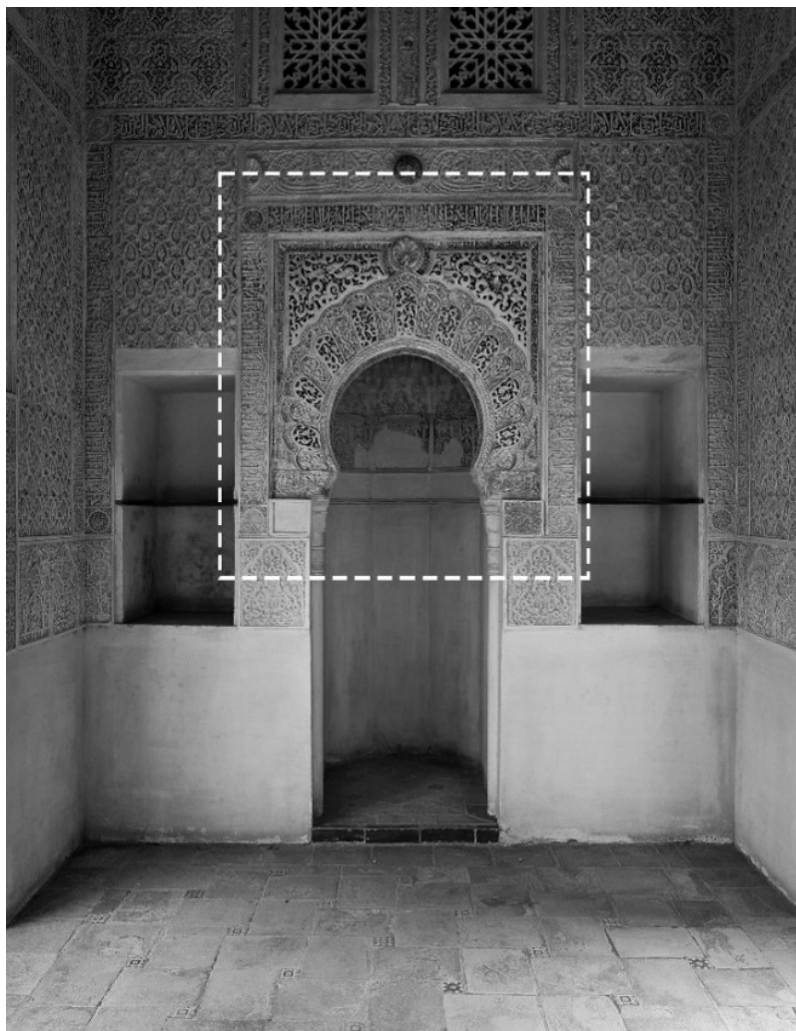


*Figure 8. The mihrāb of the Partal Oratory (Oratorio del Partal).
The inscription within the dashed square features a portion of Qur'an 2:238:*

“حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ”

(Guard strictly the prayers, especially the Middle Prayer), widely interpreted in Islamic tradition to refer specifically to the *ʿAsr* prayer. Photograph by the author, February 2022.

Arabic Epigraphy and Catholic Power: The Alcázar of Seville²¹

The Nasrid dynasty's emphasis on the power of language in their propaganda highlights a significant phenomenon within the Christian kingdoms: the presence of Arabic inscriptions in the Alcázar²² of Seville. The Alcázar constituted an integral part of the architectural enhancements undertaken within Seville during the reign of the Almohad Caliphate. Given Seville's status as the capital city at that time, the Almohad monarchs contributed significantly to the city's architectural landscape²³. Subsequent modifications were implemented during the reigns of King Alfonso XI and his successor, Pedro I of Castile, also known as Pedro the Cruel. While Muḥammad V of Granada was living in exile under his protection, this had a great influence on Pedro's decision to make modifications to the Romanesque style of architecture — a medieval style rooted in classical Roman architecture — and Pedro had grown up in Seville surrounded by Islamic culture. Thus, his decision to adopt the Mudéjar style²⁴ expressed an important aspect of his own identity that emphasized his Andalusian roots and transcended religious associations.²⁵

This exemplifies the intricate and often-tense relationship between Muslim and Christian powers in medieval Iberia. This period witnessed significant

21 For further reading: Julie Marquer, "A Methodological Approach to the Study of Arabic Inscriptions in Castilian-Aragonese Kingdoms," *Histoires* 2, no. 2 (2022): 157–169, <https://doi.org/10.3390/histoires2020012>.

22 *Alcázar* is a word derived from the Arabic رصوفا which means palace/ *palacio*, and it is still used in Spain by Spanish Orientalists and Arabists.

23 See *Atlas de architecture Almohade* Atlas of Almohad architecture <https://www.atara.es>

24 King Alfonso XI and his successor, Pedro the Cruel, both undertook extensive renovations and additions to the Seville Alcázar in the 14th century, employing the Mudéjar architectural style. This reflects the enduring presence of Islamic culture and craftsmanship within the city, particularly among its artisans. However, the reasons behind their choice of this style differed. For Alfonso, the Mudéjar style served as a symbol of Christian victory over Islamic forces. By commissioning Mudéjar architecture, he not only physically incorporated elements of the conquered Islamic culture into the Alcázar but also symbolically claimed ownership over it, mirroring his military conquest of Islamic territories. For further readings on Alfonso's policy, see: Jaume Aurell, "Alfonso XI of Castile: From Self-Knighting to Self-Crowning," in *Medieval Self-Coronations: The History and Symbolism of a Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 221–241; and Peter Linehan, "Alfonso XI: 'A King Entire,'" in *At the Edge of Reformation: Iberia before the Black Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198834199.003.0007>.

25 D. Fairchild Ruggles, "The Alcazar of Seville and Mudejar Architecture," *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004): 87–98, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25067097>.

cultural exchange, evident in the appropriation of Arabic inscriptions by Christian rulers like Pedro I for their own propaganda purposes. These inscriptions serve as concrete evidence of this cultural permeability and the need for political legitimation in a highly contested environment. The adoption of Islamic symbols of authority by a Christian monarch necessitates a critical examination of the function and meaning of such ornamentation. Epigraphy, deeply intertwined with Islam and the *Qur'ānic* message, presents a unique challenge when employed by a non-Muslim patron. While often dismissed as mere decoration, these Arabic inscriptions demonstrate a conscious political intent and a subtle connection between the courts of Seville and Granada.

Intended to enhance the monarch's prestige and legitimize his temporal power through association with spiritual authority, the inscriptions also convey the Castilian monarch's ambition to assert dominance over both his Christian and Muslim rivals. This is further evidenced by the multilingualism within the Alcázar and Pedro I's adoption of titles traditionally associated with Muslim sultans, signifying his aspirations to rule over the entire Iberian Peninsula.²⁶

An illustration of the use of Arabic epigraphy in the Castilian Alcázar can be found in the Bedroom of the Sultan, *Palacio de Pedro I* (Fig. 9):

An important observation is the use of the Divine Name *Allah*, signifying a supplication for blessings upon the king, as it is understood in Islamic thought that the use of the Divine Name indicates a prayer for goodness and blessings.

Further, regarding the use of the term *Sulṭān* instead of *Malik* (King),²⁷ the Arabist Rafael Valencia offers the following observation: *Sulṭān* refers to the one who exercises power in a practical manner, while “*Malik*” denotes the

26 Julie Marquer, “Epigrafía y poder: el uso de las inscripciones árabes en el proyecto propagandístico de Pedro I de Castilla (1350–1369),” *e-Spania* 13 (June 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21058>.

27 The use of the title *Malik* in Mudéjar inscriptions represents a significant innovation in both Islamic and Mudéjar contexts. This fact demonstrates the audacity with which Christian monarchs adopted and adapted elements of Arab culture to legitimize their power. However, it is the recurrent appearance of the term “*Sulṭān*” on the palace walls, particularly in Kufic and Naskhi scripts, that is most revealing. This deliberate choice suggests a clear intention to claim a political authority that transcended the borders of the Kingdom of Castile, extending to the entire Iberian Peninsula and, specifically, to the Kingdom of Granada. The coexistence of both titles, *Malik* and *Sulṭān*, in Mudéjar inscriptions reflects a complex dynamic of power and an ambiguous cultural identity in the context of the Reconquista.

holder of sovereignty. This distinction supports the concept of utilizing Arabic inscriptions as a component of political propaganda²⁸.



Figure 9. Epigraphic programme in the Bedroom of the Sultan (*Palacio de Pedro I*). The inscriptions feature the honorifics: “Giving Glory to Sulṭān Badr, in reference to King Don Pedro I, may Allah strengthen him”, and “Giving Glory to Sultan Badr, may Allah protect him”, alongside the formulaic “The kingship belongs to Allah, Greatness is for Allah”. The choice of Badr reflects a significant linguistic and orthographic adaptation by the scribe to Arabicize the name Pedro while maintaining its recognizable consonants.

Another example cited on the façade of the same Royal *Alcázar* of Seville, is the usage of the Nasrid motto:

‘Wa-lā gālība illā Allāh’ (“And there is no conqueror except Allah (God)”).

Additionally, the following wishes are also cited in the same location:

‘Al-yūmn wal-salamāh, Wa al-īzzah wa al-karamah’ (“Prosperity, and safety, and honor, and dignity”). *‘Al-sa’ad al-da’īm’* (“Everlasting happiness”). *‘Al-ni’mah al-šamilah’* (“The all-encompassing blessing”).

28 Rafael Valencia, “Las inscripciones árabes en el arte mudéjar,” in *Mudéjar. El legado andalusí en la cultura española*, ed. Gonzalo Borrás Gualis (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2010), 297.

The Alcázar of Seville serves as a primary exemplar of how Arabic epigraphy functioned as a fundamental instrument for the construction and legitimization of political sovereignty in medieval Iberia. An analysis of Mudéjar inscriptions reveals that Christian monarchs strategically appropriated Islamic visual and linguistic codes to consolidate their authority. Specifically, the adoption of titles such as *Malik* and *Sulṭān* reflects a deliberate programme of cultural syncretism, projecting an image of power that transcended contemporary religious and sectarian boundaries. The palace façade functioned as a potent political communiqué from Pedro I of Castile to neighbouring Nasrid rulers. Ultimately, this architectural programme represents a significant assertion of Castilian royal authority, grounding it in divine mandate; this is most vividly evidenced by the juxtaposition of the Gothic script positioned above the Nasrid motto, *wa-lā gālība illā Allāh* (“There is no victor but God”) (Fig. 10):



Figure 10. Façade of the *Palacio de Pedro I*, Alcázar of Seville. The architectural programme demonstrates the strategic appropriation of Islamic visual codes by Christian monarchs to consolidate authority. Notably, the Gothic script – detailing that the “The very high and very noble and very powerful and very conquering Don Pedro, by the grace of God king of Castile and Leon, ordered to be made these fortresses and these palaces and these gates which were made in the year one thousand and four hundred and two”²⁹ – is positioned directly above the Nasrid motto, *Wa-lā gālība illā Allāh* (“There is no conqueror but God”).

29 Marquer, “Epigrafía y poder,” *e-Spania* 13 (2012): 12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21058>.

More political messages in the Alcázar appeared on the door of the Hall of Ambassadors, also known as the *Hall of the Half Orange*:³⁰

“Our lord, the magnificent sultan, the noble Don Pedro, King of Castile and León – may God perpetuate his happiness and prolong his life – ordered the crafting of these doors, intended for this hall topped with a splendid dome, from a noble batch of prized cypress wood.”

“Our lord extended satisfaction, and in our fortunate city, halls and Alcázars were built since his arrival in the territory of Seville.”³¹

The Gate of Justice (*Puerta de la Justicia*): Inscription, Sovereignty, and the Transfer of Power

La Puerta de La Justicia, constructed under Yūsuf I in 749/1348, carries the most politically charged epigraphic programme in the entire Alhambra. The hand of *Fāṭima* (*khamsa*) carved in the keystone is flanked by a key – symbolizing access to divine protection (Fig. 11).

The outer part of the gate, in an inscription on a cornice at the top of the tympanum, carries Arabic inscriptions and the prayer of Yūsuf I (Fig. 12), reading:

He ordered the construction of this gate, called *Bab al-Shari’a* [Gate of the *Shari’a*/Law], may Allah make the law of Islam fortunate through it and transform it into a cause of permanent glory throughout the ages! Our lord, the Prince of the Muslims, the just and valiant Sultan, Abū l-Hayyay Yūsuf, son of our lord, the revered and valiant Sulṭān, Abū al-Walid ben Nasr (Ismail I). May Allah reward their virtuous deeds in Islam and accept their strenuous exploits in the cause of Allah. This was concluded in the month of the noble birth [Rabi’ al-Awwal] of the year 749 [AH]. May Allah transform it into a protective device and consign it among the eternal works of piety!³²

30 As Peter Burke demonstrates in *Cultural Hybridity*, cultural adaptation must be analysed as a double movement of decontextualization and recontextualization. Some terms present in the inscriptions that have a specific meaning in Islam thus acquire another significance, or rather another connotation, in the Alcázar of Seville. Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 93.

31 Marquer, “Epigrafía y poder,” *e-Spania* 13 (2012): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21058>.

32 Juan Antonio Vilar Sánchez, “La Bab al-Shari’a. Puerta Principal de la Alhambra,” Academia.edu, accessed April 15, 2026, https://www.academia.edu/39799678/LA_BAB_AL_SHARIA_PUERTA_PRINCIPAL_DE_LA_ALHAMBRA



Figure 11. La Puerta de La Justicia. Architectural documentation by Antonio Almagro Gorbea, courtesy of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Inv. AA-415_34). https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-401_16

أَمَرَ بِنَاءِ هَذَا الْبَابِ الْمُسَمَّى بِابِ الشَّرِيعَةِ أَشْعَدَ اللَّهُ بِهِ شَرِيعَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ وَجَعَلَهُ ذَرِيعَةً لِلْعِزِّ الدَّائِمِ عَلَى مَرِّ الْأَعْوَامِ! سَيِّدُنَا
 أَمِيرُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، السُّلْطَانُ الْعَادِلُ الْمُجَاهِدُ، أَبُو الْحَجَّاجِ يُوسُفُ، ابْنُ سَيِّدِنَا السُّلْطَانِ الْمُعْظَمِ الْمُجَاهِدِ، أَبِي الْوَلِيدِ بْنِ تَصْرٍ
 (إِسْمَاعِيلَ الْأَوَّلِ). جَزَى اللَّهُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ أَعْمَالَهُ الصَّالِحَةَ وَتَقَبَّلَ جِهَادَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ حُسْنًا. وَتَمَّ ذَلِكَ فِي شَهْرِ الْمَوْلِدِ الْمُعْظَمِ
 مِنْ سَنَةِ تِسْعٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ وَسَبْعِمِائَةٍ (749). جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ وَقَايَةً وَسَجَلَهُ فِي الْبَاقِيَّاتِ الصَّالِحَاتِ!



Figure 12. The Arabic inscription of *Puerta de La Justicia*.

The gateway's Arabic dedication identifies the sultan as guardian of justice and divine order; the formula *Wa-lā ghāliba illā Allāh* is inscribed above as both dynastic motto and theological assertion – sovereignty belongs to God alone, and the sultan exercises it as divine delegate.³³

Inside the gate, we find a Latin inscription praising the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile: The most high, Catholic and powerful persons, Sir Ferdinand and Lady Isabella, our King and Queen, conquered by force of arms this kingdom and city of Granada, which, after being laid siege to for a long time, was surrendered by the Moorish king Muley Hassan at the same time as the Alhambra and other fortifications on the second day of January of the year one thousand and CCCXCII. On the same day Their Highnesses placed Sir Yñigo López Mendoça, Count of Tendilla, their vassal, in the Alhambra as governor and commander. On their departure they left him in the said Alhambra, with five hundred knights and thousand foot soldiers and they ordered that the Moors remain in their houses with their lackeys too. This Count ordered by Royal Decree the construction of this water cistern.

ملوك الكاثوليك العظام والأقوياء «دون فيرناندو» و«دونيا إيسابيلا» ملكتنا وملكتنا، غزوا بقوة السلاح هذه المملكة ومدينة غرناطة، وذلك بعد أخذ معاليها بنفسهم بعد حصارها لوقت طويل سلمهم إياها الملك المسلم مولاي الحسن بحمراثا وقلاع أخرى في الثاني من يناير لعام ألف وتسعمائة واثنان وتسعون. وفي نفس هذا اليوم سُلِمَ فيها رعاياها بواسطة العمدة والنقيب إلى دون «إنيجو لوبيث دي مندوثا»، كونت مدينة تينديا ليكونوا رعاياه، ورحل إليها رعاياه في خمسمائة فارس وألف راجل، وأمر المسلمين بالبقاء في منازلهم في المدينة كما كانوا من قبل. وقد قام هذا الكونت بحفر هذا الجب بناء على طلب رعاياه

Puerta de la Justicia is the threshold at which Ibn Khaldūn's chapter 22 was enacted in real time. When Ferdinand and Isabella placed their Castilian heraldic devices above those Arabic words after January 2, 1492, they

33 *Puerta Vélchez, Leer la Alhambra*, 85–90.

were not simply asserting Christian triumph over Islam; they were enacting, with precise though unwitting clarity, the Khaldūnian logic of civilizational succession: the group whose *ʿaṣabiyyah* had endured assumed the royal authority of the group whose *ʿaṣabiyyah* had dissolved. The Arabic inscription *Wa-lā ghāliba illā Allāh* survived beneath the Catholic Monarchs' devices because its meaning was no longer politically legible to those who now commanded the gate – a cultural achievement repurposed, drained of political content, preserved as ornament. Ibn Khaldūn's *al-ummah al-maghlūbah* predicts exactly this outcome: the monuments of conquered nations are preserved by the conqueror as spectacle, stripped of the *ʿaṣabiyyah* that gave them meaning.

The Mawlid of 764/1362, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and the Pen's Fatal Ascendancy

The most concentrated demonstration of the pen's triumph – and its structural fragility – is the Mawlid celebration of 764/1362 at the newly renovated Mexuar (*Sala de la Mexuar*) of the Alhambra. When Muḥammad V recovered his throne after three years of exile in Pedro I's Seville, his first public act was to stage a spectacular celebration of the Prophet's Birthday (*Mawlid al-Nabī*) within the newly completed Mexuar complex, which his craftsmen had worked for nine months to rebuild. Ibn al-Khaṭīb documented this event in the text translated and studied by García Gómez and confirmed architecturally by López López and Orihuela Uzal: guests entered through the newly constructed arcaded patio, ascended to the throne room with its four marble columns and muqarnas dome, and heard panegyric recitations, music, and proclamations of dynastic legitimacy.³⁴

The celebration – marked by the same features Boloix-Gallardo identifies in the earlier Mawlid traditions of al-Andalus: communal feasting, Sufi ritual, and the display of the sovereign's generosity – constituted, in Khaldūnian terms, *ṭaraf* performing what military force could no longer guarantee.³⁵

34 Emilio García Gómez, *Foco de antigua luz sobre la Alhambra* (Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 1988), 68–71; Ángel López López and Antonio Orihuela Uzal, “Una nueva interpretación del Mexuar de la Alhambra,” *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 26 (1990): 121–127.

35 Bárbara Boloix Gallardo, “Las primeras celebraciones del Mawlid en al-Andalus y el norte de África,” *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam* 65 (2016): 88–96.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb's central role in the 1362 Mawlid – as its literary architect, chief panegyrist, and the vizier who coordinated its diplomatic significance – places the event squarely within chapter 25's prediction. The same vizier who inscribed the palace walls with verse asserting divine mandate, who wrote on the sultan's behalf to Ibn Khaldūn himself, was the most powerful man in the Nasrid state after the sultan. Yet the pen-man's vulnerability is also built into the theory. Ibn al-Khaṭīb fled Granada in 773/1371, denounced to the Sultan by his own disciple Ibn Zamrak. He was then murdered in his prison cell in Fez in 776/1374 – strangled, according to some sources, before his body could be brought to trial. His disciple, Ibn Zamrak, who betrayed him, occupied his position and continued to inscribe the Alhambra's walls with verse celebrating the same sultan whose favor had been turned against his master.³⁶ The career arc of Ibn al-Khaṭīb – from master of the 1362 Mawlid at the apex of the pen's power to a prisoner murdered in Fez – is itself a Khaldūnian text: “when the people of the pen multiply in a state and their influence grows, this signals the luxury and stabilization of royal authority – and the marginalization of the sword.”³⁷ The sword's marginalization cannot be permanent; it reasserts itself through the very men of the pen it has temporarily elevated.

Taraf: Luxury as Deterrence, Luxury as Poison

«إذا تحكمت طبيعة الملك من الانفراد بالمجد وحصول الترف والدعة أقبلت الدولة على الهرم»³⁸

Chapter 13 of the *Muqaddima* identifies *ṭaraf* – the cultural habituation to ease and refinement that corrodes *ʿaṣabiyya* – as the defining symptom of dynastic over-ripeness. The tension between luxury as political instrument and luxury as civilizational poison had deep roots in Islamic political thought. When the Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb arrived in Syria and encountered Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān accompanied by magnificent retinues morning and evening, he questioned him. Muʿāwiya's response articulated a theory of power that would resonate across centuries: “We are in a land where the spies of the enemy are many. It is necessary that we display the might of the Sultan (ʿizz al-sulṭān) by which we deter them.” ʿUmar offered no objection to this. Al-Ṭabarī's version³⁹ specifies the strategic context: Muʿāwiya wished for the

36 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Taʿrīf*, 247–249; Puerta Vilchez, *Leer la Alhambra*, 58.

37 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, ch. 25.

38 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 88.

39 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, vol. 5, 2715.

Byzantine frontier observers “to see the might (‘izz) of Islam” Luxury, in Mu‘āwiya’s logic, was not an indulgence but a deterrence: a calculated political message directed at a watching enemy.⁴⁰

The structural parallel with 14th-century Granada is striking. Just as Mu‘āwiya deployed court spectacle as a calculated message directed at Byzantine frontier observers, Muḥammad V faced an analogous predicament: the Catholic kingdoms of Castile and Aragon occupied precisely the role of the watching, hostile power. The Alhambra’s splendour was, in this reading, a deliberate political message – an assertion that Granada endured, that its sultan commanded resources and refinement worthy of a sovereign state. Yet where Mu‘āwiya governed a nascent state on the threshold of world dominion, Muḥammad V ruled from a position of profound structural weakness: reduced to a tributary paying annual *parias* to Castile, his legitimacy so contested that he had required Christian military support to recover his own throne.⁴¹ This is precisely the condition Ibn Khaldūn identifies as the terminal phase of a dynasty’s civilizational arc: the logic of magnificent deterrence deployed from a position of irreversible decline.

The material conditions enabling this level of splendour were rooted in the Nasrid emirate’s extraordinary commercial vitality. Raw silk from the Alpujarras, refined cane sugar from the coastal *vegas*, and dried fruits dominated by the Genoese merchant network – treaties from 1279 to 1479 made Genoese bankers direct financial intermediaries for the crown. By the reign of Muḥammad V, the ports of Málaga and Almería had become convergence points for Genoese, Venetian, and Florentine merchants; Venetian galleys were still being intercepted supplying besieged Nasrid ports in 1484–1485.⁴² This commercial wealth financed the Alhambra’s construction – and Ibn Khaldūn’s framework identifies precisely this commercial integration as the

40 Mu‘āwiya’s anecdote is cited in Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, ch. 17. A fuller version of the anecdote, specifying that Mu‘āwiya’s aim was for the Byzantine enemies to “see the might (‘izz) of Islam,” is preserved in al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, vol. 5, 331; trans. from Arabic. A parallel version is preserved in Abu Bakr ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-Dunya, *Kitab Hilmi Mu‘āwiya*, ed. Ibrahim Salih (Damascus: Dar al-Sha‘m, 2002), 20; trans. from Arabic. The political message of Mu‘āwiya’s luxury to his Roman enemies finds a structural parallel in Muhammad V’s deployment of the Alhambra’s splendour as a political message to the Catholic monarchs and their Reconquista campaigns.

41 Adela Fábregas García, *Un mercado en formación: el emirato nazarí de Granada en el sistema comercial genovés (siglos XIII–XV)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2006), 87–112.

42 Ibid., 142–165.

harbinger of *ṭaraf*: the dynasty that exports silk and imports Mudéjar painters has already crossed the threshold from martial *ʿaṣabiyyah* to sedentary refinement.

ʿAṣabiyyat al-Ghālib: The Solidarity of the Conqueror

أن الملك إذا ذهب عن بعض الشعوب من أمة فلا بد من عودته إلى شعب آخر منها ما دامت لهم العصبية.⁴³

In chapter 22, Ibn Khaldūn extends the logic of *ʿaṣabiyyah* into its most far-reaching proposition: “*If kingship departs from some clans of a nation, it must return to another clan of that same nation, as long as they retain their Solidarity.*”⁴⁴ Applied to al-Andalus, this identifies the Catholic kingdoms not as an external force arriving from outside the civilizational continuum, but as the group that had maintained its *ʿaṣabiyyah* across centuries of warfare – given permanent institutional form through the military orders of Alcántara, Calatrava, and Santiago, binding warriors to the enterprise of reconquest across generations and giving the Reconquista ideology institutional durability across dynastic quarrels.

The Nasrid emirate survived for 260 years through diplomatic manoeuvre and Castilian internal weakness rather than through any renewal of its own *ʿaṣabiyyah*. The Battle of Río Salado (1340) severed Granada’s primary external support by expelling the Marinids, while the marriage of Fernando and Isabella (1469) resolved the cross-dynastic rivalry that Nasrid diplomacy had exploited for two centuries. The three-way civil conflict of the 1480s among Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī, his son Muḥammad XII (Boabdil), and his brother Muḥammad XIII (al-Zaghāl) exemplifies Ibn Khaldūn’s account of ruling-group solidarity dissolving through the monopolization of glory and the corrosive effects of *ṭaraf*. Boabdil opened secret negotiations with the Catholic monarchs to secure the best possible personal outcome, unbeknownst to his own court. The dynasty’s *ʿaṣabiyyah* had collapsed so thoroughly that it could sustain itself only through the borrowed cohesion of its conqueror.⁴⁵

43 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 76.

44 Ibid., 76.

45 Francisco García Fitz and João Gouveia Monteiro, eds., *War in the Iberian Peninsula, 700–1600* (London: Routledge, 2018), 210–245.

Iqtidā' and Figurative Painting of Alhambra as Khaldūnian Text

« إن المغلوب مولع أبداً بالاعتداء بالغالب في شعاره وزيه ونحلته وسائر أحواله وعوائده... كما هو في الأندلس لهذا العهد مع أمة الجلالقة، فإنك تجدهم يتشبهون بهم في ملبسهم وشاراتهم والكثير من عوائدهم وأحوالهم، حتى في رسم التماثيل في الجدران والمصانع والبيوت، حتى لقد يستشعر من ذلك الناظر بعين الحكمة أنه من علامات الاستيلاء والأمر فيه. »

*“The defeated is perpetually inclined to imitate the conqueror in his emblem, his attire, his sect, and all his circumstances and customs... As is the case in al-Andalus in this era with the nations of Galicia (the Christians), for you find them imitating them in their clothing, their emblems, and many of their customs and circumstances, even in the depiction of figures on walls, in buildings, and in houses. Indeed, one who observes this with the eye of wisdom perceives that it is among the signs of subjugation – and the matter rests with God.”*⁴⁶

The Alhambra preserves two exceptional examples of figurative mural painting. The earliest is in the upper chamber of the Casitas del Partal, where a tempera mural on gypsum ground – dated to circa 1319 during the reign of Ismā‘īl I – depicts a narrative cycle of chivalric exercises, military triumph, and courtly celebration across three horizontal registers (Fig.13). Walid Akef posits that this work was executed by artists of a local Nasrid school – possibly manuscript illuminators working in a pan-Mediterranean visual idiom shared with Mamluk and Aragonese courts – interpreting the iconographic programme as a memorialization of the Nasrid victory at the Battle of the Vega (1319).⁴⁷

46 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 77.

47 Walid Akef, “Architecture of Triumph, Jihad, and Mediterranean Dialogue in the Alhambra: The House of Paintings and Its Mural, Part I,” *Muqarnas* 40 (2023): 69–102; Walid Akef, “Architecture of Triumph, Jihad, and Mediterranean Dialogue in the Alhambra: An Analytical Study of the House of Paintings and Its Mural, Part II,” *Muqarnas* 41 (2025): 1–75.



Figure 13. Mural painting House of paintings (*Casitas del Partal*).

Photograph by the author, February 2022

The Khaldūnian case is made most fully by the three vaulted leather-covered alcoves of the *Sala de Los Reyes* (Hall of the Kings) within the Palace of the Lions, executed during Muḥammad V's second reign (763–93/1362–91). The commission of this programme cannot be understood without two biographical factors. The first is the influence of Muḥammad V's mother, Butayna (*Dhāt al-Yamīn*) – a Christian slave whose cultural identity remained a living presence at court, shaping the sultan's ease with Christian aesthetic modes. As Boloix-Gallardo's research establishes, Butayna participated actively in court decisions and Nasrid diplomacy, meaning that Muḥammad V grew into sovereignty within a court where Islamic and Christian aesthetic sensibilities were more permeable than dynastic convention might suggest.⁴⁸ The second is the three years (1359–62) spent in exile at the court of Pedro I, where Nasrid scientists, poets, and senior courtiers lived alongside Castilian nobles; Mudéjar artisans trained in the Nasrid tradition worked in Sevillian workshops and returned to Granada carrying Castilian aesthetic fashions – as confirmed by Pavón-Maldonado's

48 Bárbara Boloix Gallardo, *Las sultanas de la Alhambra: Las grandes desconocidas del reino nazarí de Granada (siglos XIII–XV)* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, 2013), 112–134.

documentation that Pedro's Mudéjar artists were lent to Muḥammad V at the sultan's own request.⁴⁹ In Khaldūnian terms, the sultan's formation was itself a form of *iqtidāʿ*: not the unwitting imitation of the structurally defeated, but the consciously cultivated openness of a ruler whose identity had been shaped, from the beginning, by the conqueror's culture as much as by his own.

The central vault of the *Sala de los Reyes* depicts ten opulently dressed figures seated on cushions against a solid gold ground – identified by Gallego y Burín as a dynastic portrait of the ten Nasrid kings from Muḥammad I to Muḥammad V, executed after the restoration of 1362 to assert dynastic continuity at the very moment when both had been most acutely contested (Fig.14). The two lateral vaults present hunting scenes and chivalric encounters between Muslim and Christian protagonists – but their iconographic sources, traced by Dodds to French 14th-century ivory caskets depicting Arthurian and Tristan episodes circulating in the courts of Castile and Aragon, are unambiguously Western (Figs.15-16). The technique – animal skin prepared with gesso, egg-yolk-based pigments, gold-leaf grounds – demands extraordinary expense and specialised artisanal knowledge, whose costliness makes the paintings a direct embodiment of *ṭaraf* in Khaldūnian terms.⁵⁰



Figure 14. Mural painting, Hall of the Kings (*Sala de Los Reyes*),
Photograph by the author, February 2022

49 Pavón-Maldonado, Basilio. *Arte toledano: islámico y mudéjar*. Madrid, 1973: 249–266

50 DJerrilynn D. Dodds, “The Paintings in the Sala de Justicia of the Alhambra: Iconography and Iconology,” *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (1979): 186–197.



*Figure 15. Mural painting, Hall of the Kings (Sala de Los Reyes),
Photograph by the author, February 2022*



*Figure 16. Mural painting, Hall of the Kings (Sala de Los Reyes),
Photograph by the author, February 2022*

he paintings operate simultaneously on three Khaldūnian registers. As *iqtidāʿ*: the deployment of French chivalric iconography in the innermost sanctuary of the premier Islamic palace of the West is the most literal possible enactment of Ibn Khaldūn's principle – “*even in the depiction of figures on walls, in buildings, and in houses*” As *ṭaraf*: the private character of the paintings, accessible only to the sultan and his closest companions in the most secluded alcoves of the most private palace, is precisely the “*immersion in bliss*” Ibn Khaldūn identifies as luxury no longer serving public propaganda but operating as private sensory refinement – the stage at which dynastic vitality has been irreversibly undermined. And as contested legitimacy: the two lateral scenes in which the Arab unambiguously dominates the Christian – the erect hunter, the victorious jousting – are not a refutation of *iqtidāʿ* but its confirmation. Ibn Khaldūn frames imitation as a structural condition that produces self-consciousness and compensatory assertion alongside the imitation itself. Both the chivalric borrowings and the triumphalist reversals belong to the same psychological stage; the *Sala de los Reyes* holds them in the same vaulted space because Muḥammad V's reign held them in the same political reality.⁵¹

Conclusion: The Splendour and the Ruin

This study began with a chain: from the assassination of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān in Medina, to the flight of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I across North Africa, to the establishment of an Umayyad emirate on the Guadalquivir, to the last Nasrid sultan handing the keys of the Alhambra to Ferdinand and Isabella in January 1492. Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddima* provides the theoretical structure that links these moments as stages in a single intelligible process: the *ʿaṣabiyyah* forged in persecution produces the dynasty, the dynasty produces luxury, luxury dissolves the *ʿaṣabiyyah*, and the dynasty becomes the conquered nation it once overthrew.

The biographical dimension is not ornamental. Ibn Khaldūn was personally present at the specific moment the theory describes. His correspondence with Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn Zamrak placed him in intimate contact with the architects of the pen's supreme ascendancy. His diplomatic mission to Pedro I brought him face to face with both sides of the *ʿaṣabiyyat al-ghālib* dynamic: the conquering Christian kingdoms whose group cohesion had never faltered,

51 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, ch. 23; Dodds, “The Paintings in the Sala de Justicia,” 193–197.

and the Nasrid sultan whose legitimacy was so contested that he required Christian military support to recover his own throne. Gómez-Moreno's suggestion – that Ibn Khaldūn's remark about Andalusian Muslims imitating Christians “*even in the depiction of figures on walls*” may refer to paintings he saw during his stay in Granada – transforms the theoretical passage from sociological observation into the earliest surviving art-critical commentary on the *Sala de los Reyes*.⁵²

The Nasrid motto – *Wa lā ghāliba illā Allāh*, “and there is no conqueror except God” – is repeated on virtually every surface of the Alhambra. Ibn Khaldūn, who knew this palace and the men who inscribed its walls, would have recognized in this motto not merely a profession of faith but a historical prediction. The Alhambra was built to proclaim this truth; it was also, without intending it, built to embody it. That it still stands – stripped of the dynasty that made it, re-inscribed with Christian symbols where the Arabic motto once ran alone, repurposed precisely as Ibn Khaldūn's theory of *al-ummah al-maghlūbah* predicts the monuments of conquered nations will be repurposed – is the most powerful evidence this study can offer for the framework it has advanced.

52 Manuel Gómez-Moreno, “Pinturas de Moros en el Partal (Alhambra),” in *Textos de Gómez-Moreno sobre la Alhambra Musulmana* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, 1916), 162.

Appendix

Appendix I. The kings discussed by Ibn Khaldūn ⁵³

Christian Rulers	<i>Kitāb al-'Ibar (al-Muqaddimah)</i>
Felayo	d. 133/750-1
Faḫla	d. 135/752-3
Alfonso I	d. 142/759-60
Fruela	d. 152/769-70
Aurelio	d. 158/774-5
Silon	d. 168/784-5
Maurecat	d. 175/791-2
Alfonso II	d. 227/841-2
Ordoño I	-
Alfonso III	-
Garcia I	-
Ramiro II	d. 339/950-1
Ordoño III	-
Fernán González	-
Vermudo II	-
Sancho III	d. 406/1015-16
Alfonso VI	d. 501/1107-8
Sancho	-
Alfonso VIII	-
Fernando III	-
Alfonso X	d. 683/1284
Sancho IV	d. 693/1294
Ferdinand IV	d. 712/1312
Alfonso XI	d. 751/1350
Pedro the Cruel	d. 772/1370-1
Enrique II	d. 781/1379
Enrique III	1390–1406 (reigning when Ibn Khaldūn was writing)

⁵³ Justin Stearns, "Two Passages in Ibn al-Khatib's Account of the Kings of Christian Iberia," *Al-Qanṭara* 25 (2004): 180–181.

*Appendix II. Some of the notable sultans who ruled the Alhambra*⁵⁴

<i>Muḥammad I Ibn al-Ahmar</i>	1238-1273
<i>Muḥammad II (Muḥammad II al-Faqih)</i>	1273-1302
<i>Muḥammad III (Muḥammad III al-Makhlu)</i>	1302-1309
<i>Nasr (Nasr ibn Muḥammad)</i>	(1309-1314)
<i>Isma'il I (Isma'il I al-Muzaffar)</i>	(1314-1325)
<i>Muḥammad IV (Muḥammad IV al-Ghalib)</i>	(1325-1333)
<i>Yusuf I (Yusuf I al-Mustaghni)</i>	(1333-1354)
<i>Muḥammad V (Muḥammad V al-Ghani bi'llah)</i>	(1354-1359) (1362-1391)
<i>Muḥammad VII (Muḥammad VII al-Mustain)</i>	1392-1408
<i>Muḥammad XII (Boabdil/ El Rey chico)</i>	1482-1492

Appendix III. Ibn Khaldūn's Al-Muqaddimah: Core Concepts and Their Nasrid Application

Concept (Arabic / Transliteration)	English trans.	Al-Muqaddima Reference	Nasrid Application
الأمة المغلوبة (<i>Al-Ummah al-Maghlūbah</i>)	The Con- quered Nation	When a nation is subjugated, its people become instruments of the conqueror. Hopes dimin- ish, procreation weakens, and decline acceler- ates.	After 1492, the Alhambra's Ara- bic inscriptions were emptied of authority – reduced to ornament under Christian governance. Mosques were consecrated as churches; the Nasrid court be- came, in Khaldūn's terms, " <i>tools for others</i> " (<i>ālah li-siwāhum</i>). The surrender of the Alhambra keys by <i>Boabdīl</i> literalises the concept: <i>a nation once sovereign now serves another's imperial image.</i>

54 Francisco Bueno García, *The Kings of the Alhambra: Between History and Legend*, originally published as *Los Reyes de la Alhambra* (Granada: Ediciones Miguel Sánchez, 2004).

Concept (Arabic / Transliteration)	English trans.	Al-Muqaddima Reference	Nasrid Application
عصية الغالب (<i>ʿAṣabiyyat al-Ghālib</i>) ⁵⁵	The Con- queror's Group Co- hesion	Group cohesion (<i>ʿaṣabiyyah</i>) is the engine of royal authority. When it erodes within a dynasty, kingship passes to whichever group preserves it. ⁵⁶	The Alhambra's construction arc mirrors <i>ʿaṣabiyyah</i> 's rise and fall. Early Nasrid buildings – the <i>Alcazaba</i> fortress, the <i>Torre de la Vela</i> – express martial cohesion. Later palatial additions (Court of the Lions, Hall of the Two Sisters) signal its dissipation into luxury. By the 1480s, civil war between <i>Abū ʿI-Ḥasan ʿalī</i> and <i>Boabdīl</i> had fractured Nasrid <i>ʿaṣabiyyah</i> entirely, while Ferdinand and Isabella consolidated theirs through dynastic union – the structural precondition, in Khaldūn's model, for the 1492 transfer of kingship.

55 A different application of *ʿaṣabiyyah*: While the Nasrids experienced the erosion of their group cohesion, the Catholic kingdoms of northern Iberia exemplify *ʿaṣabiyyah* in its ascendant phase. Their shared religious identity as Catholics, reinforced by centuries of Reconquista warfare, provided an ideological foundation for group cohesion that transcended individual dynasties. Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile united the two strongest Christian kingdoms through marriage (1469), consolidating their *ʿaṣabiyyah* at the precise moment the Nasrid court fragmented. Their belief in reclaiming *al-Andalus* for Christendom functioned as a bond stronger than tribe fulfilling Ibn Khaldūn's principle that kingship passes to the group that preserves its cohesion while the previous rulers dissolve in luxury (see *al-Muqaddimah*, ch. 22; Amman 2009, 73–76).

56 Ibid., 73–76.

Concept (Arabic / Transliteration)	English trans.	Al-Muqaddima Reference	Nasrid Application
الترف (<i>taraf</i>)	Luxury / opulence	Luxury is both the natural fruit of royal author- ity and its slow poison. Succes- sive generations raised in palatial comfort lose martial instinct; the dynasty ap- proaches senility. Ch. 11, 12, 13	The Nasrid building programme under Muḥammad V (1362–1391) is the material biography of <i>taraf</i>. The Court of the Lions, the <i>Comares</i> façade, and the Hall of the Two Sisters were conceived not for defence but for prestige – Ibn Zamrak’s inscribed poems proclaiming “<i>I am a garden adorned with beauty</i>” enact Khaldūn’s observation that luxury dynasties “make refined buildings.”⁵⁷ The <i>Sala de Los Reyes</i> takes this further: gold-leaf murals, possibly executed by Italian masters, deployed in the most private chambers for private delight – the precise “immersion in bliss” that, for Khaldūn, signals terminal decline. Later Nasrids, born into the Alhambra’s opulence, produced poets and administrators rather than soldiers, fulfilling his prediction that “the character of ruggedness is transformed.”

57 Ibn Zamrak’s poetry is inscribed across the Court of the Lions and the Hall of the Two Sisters; for a critical edition and translation, see Emilio García Gómez, *Ibn Zamrak, el poeta de la Alhambra* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Escuela de Estudios Árabes, 1943).

Concept (Arabic / Transliteration)	English trans.	Al-Muqaddima Reference	Nasrid Application
اقتداء (<i>iqtidāʾ</i>)	Imitation / emulation	The defeated is perpetually inclined to imitate the conqueror in his emblem, his attire, his sect, and all his circumstances and customs... As is the case in <i>al-Andalus</i> in this era with the nations of Galicia (the Christians), for you find them imitating them in their clothing, their emblems, and many of their customs and circumstances, even in the depiction of figures on walls, in buildings, and in houses. Indeed, one who observes this with the eye of wisdom perceives that it is among the signs of subjugation – and the matter rests with God.”	The <i>Sala de Los Reyes</i> ceiling paintings – chivalric Christian scenes rendered inside an Islamic palace – are Khaldūn’s theory made visible. A Nasrid dynasty secure enough to commission figurative art, yet politically dependent enough to adopt a Christian pictorial vocabulary, occupies the ambiguous cultural position Khaldūn describes. The reverse dynamic is equally telling: Pedro I of Castile’s Alcázar in Seville (c. 1364) incorporates the Nasrid motto <i>Wā lā ghāliba illā Allāh</i> and Arabic praise-inscriptions for “Sultān Badr” Conqueror and conquered mirror one another – a bi-directional <i>iqtidāʾ</i> that Khaldūn’s framework anticipates but does not fully resolve.

Concept (Arabic / Transliteration)	English trans.	Al-Muqaddima Reference	Nasrid Application
أهل القلم (‘Ahl al-Qalam)	People of the pen (scribes, poets, administra- tors)	The disparity between the ranks of the sword and the pen in states (<i>Fī at-tafāwut bayna marātib as-sayf wa al-qalam fī ad-duwal</i>) In early dynasties the sword dominates; as the state matures, the pen rises. When scribes and poets eclipse warriors, military decline follows. ⁵⁸ Ch. 35	The Alhambra’s epigraphic programme maps Khaldūn’s trajectory onto stone. Early inscriptions are <i>Qur’ānic</i> and juridical – the pen serves the sword. Under Yūsuf I and Muḥammad V, the Royal Chancellery (<i>Dīwān al-Inshā</i>) produces three poet-ministers: Ibn al-Jayyāb, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and Ibn Zamrak. Their verses cover the vaults of the Court of the Lions and the Hall of the Two Sisters – the pen now inscribed into architecture itself. Yet this literary apogee coincides with military contraction. The assassination of Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1375) and the dynastic civil war of 1482–1492 are products of a court where eloquence had displaced martial capacity. Khaldūn’s warning that “the pen in that situation is merely a servant” inverts: by the late Nasrid period, the pen had become master, and there was no sword left to defend the palace whose walls it adorned.

58 Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddima*, 129.

The Rise and Fall of al-Andalus: A Khaldūnian Cartography

These four maps trace the full civilizational arc of Islamic Iberia as theorized by Ibn Khaldūn – from the Umayyad *ʿaṣabiyyah* forged in exile (Map 1), through the fragmentation and precocious luxury of the *ṭawāʾif* period (Map 2), to the mature Nasrid emirate where the pen supplants the sword and *iqtidāʾ* (imitation of the conqueror) appears on palace walls (Map 3), and finally to the terminal stage of *al-ummah al-maghlūbah* (the conquered nation), encircled and awaiting the transfer of royal authority to the Christian north (Map 4). Together, they visualize the revolution – not of rebellion, but of dynastic destiny – that Ibn Khaldūn observed from within the Alhambra itself.



Map 1. The Emirate and Caliphal Period (711–1031).

Digital illustration by the author, based on Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).



Map 2. The Taifa Kingdoms (1065).

Digital illustration by the author, based on Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).



Map 3. The Almohad Dominion (1212)

Digital illustration by the author, based on Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).



Map 4. The Nasrid Dominion (before 1492)

Digital illustration by the author, based on Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).

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The Formulation of Taxes in the Thought of Ibn Khaldun

Dr Mona Mahmoud Idelbi

Introduction

Ibn Khaldun is the usual name given to Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, an Arab historian, philosopher and social thinker, who was born in Tunisia in 1332 AD (732 AH) and died in Cairo in 1406 AD (808 AH). He is considered one of the most important thinkers in Islamic and world history and the founder of sociology, and one of his most prominent achievements is the introduction to his multi-volume work *Al-Abar*, which is known as the *Muqaddima*. In this he developed his theories about urbanism (society), the state and its rise and fall, *ʿaṣabiyya* (group solidarity) and its role in the establishment of states, the economy and taxation, and it is still taught at universities around the world today. Since his ideas seem to have been so far ahead of his time in many fields, Ibn Khaldun is often portrayed as a modern man rather than a man of the Middle Ages.¹

In the field of taxation, he presented deep and important ideas that were later adopted by financial jurists and thinkers, including Arthur Laffer, the

¹ Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography*, (Princeton University Press, Feb 27, 2018), p. 11.

American economist who revived Ibn Khaldun's idea that increasing taxes may lead to a decrease in revenues due to the decline in economic activity. Indeed, Laffer himself acknowledged this influence, and stated in more than one interview that "Ibn Khaldun preceded all of us to the curve of the inverse relationship between the tax rate and tax revenues".² Joseph Schumpeter, the Austrian economist, along with Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and Adam Smith (Najvi, 1981)³ were also influenced by Islamic economists, whether in terms of Islamic public finance, or economic and tax justice.

An exploration of this topic demonstrates the maturity of Arab thought, and its superiority in the creation of economic theories and the establishment of important financial policies, which have long served as a guide for Western thought. It is thus of interest to examine the thought of Ibn Khaldun in terms of developing a tax system that would be in accordance with the requirements of sustainable development.

The research problem examined in this paper concerns the issue that many tax systems, especially in developing countries, have not achieved their goals and may sometimes even hinder investment, productive sectors, and sustainable development.

We will thus study the tax system and its requirements, based on the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, to identify the reasons for the failure of tax systems, especially in developing countries, in order to better support sustainable economic and social development.

Ibn Khaldun dealt with the taxation system and showed its impact on the economy and urbanism, and thus developed what is considered one of the most important economic theories in history. One of his opinions in the field of taxation is "whenever the state is at the beginning, the tax collection will be

2 Abd alkarem Gandoor, *The principle of taxation kills: between Ibn Khaldun and Laffer*, conference on economic Contributions of Ibn Khaldun, Madrid, 3-5 November 2006.

3 Adam Smith was a Scottish economist and philosopher (1723–1790), the author of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, and is considered the founding father of classical economics. Although there are no documents confirming that Smith directly read Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*, there are some indications of this, including:

1. The *Muqaddima* was translated into Turkish and French in the 17th and 18th centuries, and Smith was familiar with French thought (e.g. that of the physiocrats).
2. Some scholars believe that Ibn Khaldun's ideas reached Europe through Andalusia, and the Arab and Islamic universities that the Orientalists came into contact with.
3. Thinkers such as Abd al-Rahman Badawi and Muhammad Abd al-Jabri have suggested that there was an "indirect cognitive transition" between Ibn Khaldun and Smith.

less, the wealth is plentiful, and the revenues are plentiful”. He also pointed out that injustice is a harbinger of the ruin of the state. In this paper we will examine the following issues in this context:

- The relationship between taxes and increasing public expenditure.
- The impact of taxation on labour and production.

The relationship between taxes and increasing public expenditure

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) pointed out that increasing state intervention⁴ would have serious consequences for the economy, and in his view it was necessary to engage in as little intervention as possible, because any increase in public expenditures would lead to an increase in taxes.

The emergence of states is a complex and multidimensional subject, which can be traced through long historical stages of the development of human societies, from simple tribal groupings to modern political entities.

In primitive societies and tribes – before 3000 BC – life was governed by family or tribal ties, and there was no “state” in a political sense, only a leader or sheikh who ruled through councils based on custom and tradition, and the economy was based on hunting, grazing, and primitive agriculture.

The emergence of the first states around 3000 BC began with the rise of sedentary agriculture and the first cities, especially in the Mesopotamian Valley, i.e. in Ancient Iraq, the Nile Valley and the emergence of the Pharaonic Egypt, the Harappa civilization in the Indus Valley in Pakistan, and in Ancient China. Perhaps the most important features of these states were the existence of a central authority, i.e. a king or pharaoh, an army to protect the land, a written law, such as the Code of Hammurabi, a tax system, and an administrative apparatus.

From 1000 BC to 500 AD states expanded into empires such as Persia, Greece, Rome, and China, armies and courts were organized, and the concept of “sovereignty” arose over large territories. Later, in the Middle Ages, the feudal state prevailed, with nobles and kings dominating, although central authority remained weak.

4 Sateh Al-Hosari, *Studies in the Introduction of Ibn Khaldun*, (Hindawi Foundation, UK, 2017), p. 317.

In the Islamic world, powerful states such as the Abbasid state, the Umayyads, the Fatimids, and the Almoravids emerged. The emergence of the modern state took place between the 16th and 18th centuries, when the idea of the nation-state began to take shape after the Peace of Westphalia⁵ in 1648, with recognized borders, independent sovereignty, and a standing army, as well as a tax system, regular army, and bureaucracy.

Finally, the contemporary state emerged from the 19th century to the present, after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, when the state developed to become more involved in the economy and society, more responsible for education, health, and infrastructure, and based on the existence of constitutions and laws.

Therefore, if we want to talk about the role of the state, we must not that this role has evolved over time according the economic and political changes in the world, which in turn have affected the volume of public spending.

The age of economic neutrality (guardian state)

The guardian state emerged intellectually and historically with the rise of classical liberalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries based on individual liberty and the free market, and its application actually began in the nineteenth century. It began with prominence in Britain, then extended to the United States and the industrialized nations, Especially under the Industrial Revolution, among the economic scientists who supported the neutral state:

John Locke (1632–1704)⁶

Locke was a 17th-century English philosopher, one of the first of the Liberal Enlightenment, and presented some of the founding ideas for the concept of state neutrality, especially regarding individual freedom and the limits of power.

5 After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the Thirty Years' War in Europe was over, and the concept of the state changed radically, as it moved from being linked to religious and imperial authority to the concept of the modern nation-state with the existence of the principle of sovereignty, clear geographical boundaries, and the secularization of international relations, based on the balance of power.

Derek Croxton, *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, (ISBN, 2013), 978-1-137.

Also : <https://www.boundless.com/world-history/textbooks/boundless-world-history-textbook/>

6 John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 96.

One of his key ideas about the neutrality of the state was that it should be a servant and not a master, and that political power is created by a social contract between individuals and the state, with the main goal of this contract being the protection of the natural rights of individuals, as embodied in life, liberty, and property. Therefore, the state may not impose restrictions on these rights, but must remain neutral as long as individuals do not attack each other, and there is no harm to public order.

In his view, the government must abide by the law, rule only with the authorization of the people, and any government that exceeds its limits, or interferes in matters that do not concern it, loses legitimacy.

Locke stressed the sanctity of private property, linking freedom and property, and therefore believed that the state had no right to intervene in the market or to confiscate property without a legitimate cause.

Adam Smith (1723–1790)⁷

Smith was a Scottish philosopher and economist, the founder of classical economics, and one of the most prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment. He is best known for his book *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, which laid the foundations for modern economics with several important ideas:

- *The idea of the invisible hand*: Smith argues that individuals, when they pursue their own self-interest, unintentionally contribute to the public interest, as if an “invisible hand” regulates the market.
- *The idea of division of labour*: The greater the specialization and division of tasks, the more productive the economy will be.
- *Reducing the role of the state*: Smith believed that the role of the state should be limited to ensuring security and justice, and establishing infrastructure.
- *The value of labour*: Smith saw labour as the source of economic value, and as the measure of real wealth.
- *The protection of private property*: Smith favoured the establishment of an economic system based on respect for property and freedom of trade between countries, and thus opposed tariff barriers and restrictions which

⁷ Among his ideas is that wages are determined according to the law of supply and demand in the labour market, that prices are affected by the cost of production, supply and demand, that the role of money is only expressed in being a means of exchange, not wealth in itself, and that money facilitates trade and does not increase wealth in itself.
Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, The Glasgow Edition, (Oxford University Press, 1976)

he believed harmed the economy, with free trade benefiting all parties involved.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)⁸

Although John Stuart Mill, another British economist, was greatly influenced by the ideas of Adam Smith and classical theory, and supported the free market, he also called for the intervention of the state in compulsory education, the organization of labour and the improvement of its conditions, and the support of the poor. In his opinion economic freedom should not mean anarchy, or social neglect, but should be accompanied by justice.

Mill criticized the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, and advocated progressive taxation, support for cooperative property, and the sharing economy as an alternative to rigid capitalism.

We can summarize the basic principles of classical economic theory, as advocated by Smith and Mill, as follows:

- The market automatically regulates itself by the invisible hand, and there is no need for state intervention, so if there is unemployment wages will automatically fall, companies will employ more people, and unemployment will thus decrease.
- Supply creates its own demand, also known as Say's Law, i.e. what is produced will always be sold, because the act of producing a product or service creates income for the workers and suppliers involved, thus enabling them to buy other goods and services.
- The role of the state should be very limited, concerned only with the provision of security, law enforcement, and the defence of the country. In contrast, government intervention corrupts the market, and therefore the state should not provide any social services, such as health, education or welfare. The freedom of the individual should be paramount, and the state should not interfere in a person's affairs except to protect the rights of others. Private property is sacred, so taxes should be low, and since the state does not provide many services there is no need to collect high taxes.
- Prices and wages are flexible, so the market is always moving towards equilibrium, with unemployment being a temporary rather than structural problem.

⁸ Elizabeth Rapaport, Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*, Hackett Publishing, 1978, chapter 3.

Under a neutral state, or what is also known as a “night-watchman state”, the amount of public expenditure as a share of GDP is very low compared to that in modern or interventionist countries, ranging between 5% to 10%, thus reflecting minimal state interference.⁹

The age of economic and social intervention (the intervening state)

The theory of state neutrality declined significantly over time, and especially after the Great Depression that started in 1929, when unemployment remained high for several years despite lower prices and wages, with the “equilibrium” promised by classical theory failing to materialize, as people stopped spending, which led to a decrease in demand, so factories closed and unemployment increased, further reducing demand, and so on.

It was at this point that John Maynard Keynes noted “the market does not always regulate itself, it sometimes needs help from the state”,¹⁰ and thus the age of the interventionist state began. Marx had preceded Keynes in such thinking by about 65 years, when writing during the rise of the first capitalists and the Industrial Revolution. Marx called for state intervention, but unlike Keynes he was not a reformist and instead a revolutionary, and we will discuss the ideas of each of these thinkers below.

1.2.1. Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Marx was a German philosopher, sociologist, economist, and political thinker, perhaps the most important in socialist and communist thought, and as such one of the most influential thinkers in modern history, as his ideas laid the foundations for many political, economic, and social movements around the world.

Marx believed that history is a constant struggle between social classes, where the class that owns the means of production is in conflict with the working class, and vice versa. He thus rejected private ownership of the means of production, because he believed that capitalism was an unjust economic system that always led to the exploitation of the working class and periodic economic crises. As such, Marx advocated a revolution aimed at abolishing the

9 Tanzi, Vito, and Ludger Schuknecht: *Public Spending in the 20th Century: A Global Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 16–18.

10 Tanzi, *The Role of the State and the Quality of the Public Sector*, IMF Working Paper, No. 36, March 2000, p. 6.

capitalist system and building a classless, communist society in which the means of production were collective property.

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946)

Keynes was a British economist, and his ideas revolutionized the way governments understood their economic role in society. Before 1929, Keynes was a relatively traditional economist, but with the Great Depression (1929–1936) he began to notice that classical theory did not explain reality very well, and failed to provide any solutions to the collapse of markets and mass unemployment. In 1936 he published *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, in which he called for the state to take an active role in the economy in order to stimulate demand, and showed that unemployment could persist if the government did not intervene in this way.

Several countries, including America and Britain, implemented Keynesian policies in the 1930s and 1940s, and after World War II Keynesianism became the primary economic reference in the West until the 1970s.

Keynes did not advocate the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, and did not deny the importance of the market or private property, but did argue that the market may suffer from special failures in times of recession, when the state must intervene to stimulate the economy.

Keynes thus differs from Marx in wanting to reform capitalism rather than abolish it, and also from Smith in believing that the invisible hand of the market would not be sufficient to ensure stability in all circumstances. His theory of state intervention in directing markets and economic activities was successfully applied in a number of major capitalist countries.

In the United States, for example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt applied it to deal with the repercussions of the Great Depression, a policy known as the New Deal.¹¹ This included plans to increase public spending on infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, the establishment of unemployment insurance companies, a reduction in tax rates for people with limited incomes and their increase for the wealthy, as well as an increase in pensions for public sector workers.

The balanced role of the state in economic activity in Japan, Taiwan and other East Asian countries was also one of the reasons for the economic miracle that

11 Tanzi, “The Role of the State and the Quality of the Public Sector”, IMF Working Paper, No. 36, March 2000, pp. 6–8

the region witnessed between the 1960s and 1990s. The same is also true for the more recently industrialized countries in Asia, such as China and Vietnam.

Keynes's ideas regarding the active role of the state in economic life continued to form the theoretical basis of the economic policies pursued by many countries, during the two decades following World War II and into the early 1970s. This trend was reinforced by economists belonging to the neoclassical school, who also called for the extension of the role of the state to include the social dimension, in what is known as the social-welfare state. Such ideas were proposed in order to correct the perceived failures of market mechanisms, and to ensure a more just and equitable distribution of income.

In summary, the concept of the guardian state is a relatively old one, and today almost all governments are involved in their economies to varying degrees, because the market alone does not solve all problems, such as unemployment, poverty and other crises.¹² This can be seen in the following policies:

1. Fiscal policies, including those on taxes and spending.
2. Monetary policies to control inflation and stimulate investment.
3. Social support, through health insurance, unemployment benefits, and commodity subsidies.
4. Market regulation through antitrust measures, consumer protection, and environmental protection.

Returning to Ibn Khaldun, we find that he called for all of this centuries before anyone in the West, and thus is rightly seen as one of the first individuals to think economically, well before the emergence of economics as a science. His

12 Notable examples of state intervention today include:

1. The Gulf States, which support sectors such as education, health, and energy.
2. European nations, which have advanced social welfare systems.
3. America, since although it is market-oriented, the state intervenes strongly in times of crisis (such as in 2008 and during the COVID-19 pandemic).
4. China is a clear model of a country that directly manages its economy, as the government decided in 1992 to implement a comprehensive reform programme and work to accelerate the pace of economic reform by integrating the socialist economy with the market economy. There are a few economically liberal countries or regions – such as Singapore or Hong Kong – that have minimal state intervention, but they are not really neutral states, and instead rather cleverly regulate their markets.

See: Ahmed Khaled Omar Mohamed Saeed, "The Evolution of the Role of the State in the Economy in the Modern Era: A Comparative Study", *Journal of Legal and Economic Sciences*, Menoufia University, (Vol. 59, No. 2, May 2024), 451-530.

See: Leaven, Luck, and Fabian Valencia, "Systemic Banking Crises: A New Database", (IMF Working Paper 08/ 224 (Washington: International M2008).

ideas can be compared to those of both Smith and Keynes, although closer to those of the latter.

Ibn Khaldun called for the state to intervene in the economy, as the state, in his opinion, was necessary to regulate human life and limit the baser drives and behaviours, and thus ensure stability. He also called for the prevention of economic injustice, and stressed that an unjust state destroys economic activity, while state spending is necessary to stimulate development, the same as Keynes did centuries later. Ibn Khaldun was not a capitalist like Smith, nor a socialist like Marx, but instead he was closer to Keynes based on his understanding of the relationship between the state and the economy, as well as between spending and growth.

If we want to define the general characteristics of public expenditure in interventionist countries, they can be summarized as follows:

1. Public spending is a high percentage of GDP:¹³ in some of the interventionist countries, public spending can reach more than 60% of GDP.¹⁴
2. Diversity of spending: there is a social spending (pensions, subsidies, insurances), and investment spending (roads, factories, technology support).
3. Growth elasticity: public spending rises in times of economic and financial crises to support stability (as both the United States and European nations have done during global crises).
4. Dependence on tax revenues: these expenditures are often financed through a progressive tax system that aims to achieve social justice.

Finally, it must be noted that most modern countries adopt interventionist policies through using taxes, subsidies, the provision of public services, provision of social insurance, and similar measures.

Some countries tend toward relative neutrality, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, where they rely on market freedom, and there is relatively limited intervention. There are also some Western liberal countries that leave most of the economic activity to the private sector, but with minimal social services.

The impact of taxation on labour and production

There is no doubt that taxes and the tax policy of any country affect the work of individuals and their production in one way or another. Some may think

13 Total government spending, shown as a share of GDP for 2023. It includes interest paid on government debt. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/historical-gov-spending-gdp>, 17/8/2025, 7AM.

14 O ECD, Government at a Glance 2025, chapter 15, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0efd0bcd-en>.

that increasing taxes will inevitably lead to an increase in tax revenues, or that reducing taxes will lead to an increase in production, but this depends on several factors:

- The impact of taxation on labour.
- The impact of taxation on production.
- Impact of taxes on the state.

The impact of taxes on labour

The impact of taxes on labour can be viewed from two main aspects: supply, represented by the decision of individuals to work or increase their working hours; and demand, represented by the decision of employers to employ labour.

Effect of taxes on the desire to work (individuals)

At low and medium tax rates, there is no significant effect on the desire to work, especially if individuals feel that taxes bring them public services (i.e. education, health, infrastructure). However, an increase in taxes may cause people to work less.

The negative impact of tax increases

A higher rate of income taxes may make individuals feel that the extra effort they make will not be reflected in their net income, reducing the incentive to work longer hours or to improve efficiency, because the bulk of the extra income goes to the state. It may also push some individuals to look for ways to evade taxes or work in the informal (black) economy.

The positive impact of increasing taxes

Sometimes increasing taxes will increase the willingness to work, as individuals may be forced to work more in order to make up for the lack of income available to them after taxation. This is sometimes called the income effect, where an individual tries to maintain their standard of living an increase in taxes. Therefore, we are faced with two effects:

1. Substitution effect: which makes leisure time more attractive than overtime (because the return from work has decreased).

2. Income effect: which pushes a person to work more to compensate for the loss of income with higher taxes.

The result depends on which of the two effects is strongest in the individual or society. Arthur Laffer¹⁵ (1940), a prominent American economist, who is best known for inventing the Laffer Curve in 1974, first proposed the idea of the curve during the presidency of Gerald Ford in a meeting with officials in the administration, including Dick Cheney (then deputy White House administrator) and Donald Rumsfeld, but it was not widely adopted. During the Reagan era (1981–1989), the idea became the basis of the economic policy known as “Reaganomics”, where tax rates were significantly reduced based on the logic of the Laffer Curve in order to stimulate work, production and investment. The curve illustrates the relationship between the tax rate and the state’s revenues, where the fundamental idea is that at a tax rate of 0%, the state gets no revenue, and at tax rate of 100% people will stop working and producing – because all income will be taken as tax – so the state’s revenue will also be zero. There is thus an optimal tax rate between 0% and 100% that achieves the highest possible tax revenue without eliminating the desire to work and invest.

But these ideas were not entirely new, as Ibn Khaldun discussed them¹⁶ in the *Muqaddima* in the 14th century, where he emphasized that excessive taxes reduce urbanization and the resources of the state:

Know that the collection of the first state is a few and many volumes, and then it continues to increase until it reaches its end, and if it increases by its own strength, the total decreases to increase the revenues, and it is often presented in countries that they take kindness in their collection at the beginning... Then, if the desire to collect is great and the need for it is greater, they increase the number of jobs and distributions, and the total decreases for that.

He also says the following: “Know that a lot of collections lead to people shrinking from pensions, and their contraction leads to a decrease in profits, so the Sultan’s tax is reduced. If his age is reduced, his collection will be less, and this may lead to the destruction of the state.” Essentially, all that Laffer did was mathematically and formally reformulate these ideas from Ibn Khaldun within the framework of supply-side economics and disseminate them in American politics.

15 He served as an economic advisor to President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and is considered one of the founders of what is known as supply-side economics, which focuses on stimulating production and investment rather than focusing solely on the demand side.

16 Bou Lakia, Jean David C., “Ibn Khaldun: A Fourteenth-Century Economist”, *The Journal of Political Economy*, (Vol. 79, No. 5 Sep.–Oct. 1971), pp. 1105–1118.

Impact of taxes on demand for labour

The effect of taxes on the demand for labour is related to a number of factors, as outlined in the following sections.

Taxation increases the cost of labour

Taxes on salaries or social insurance raise the overall cost of labour and may reduce the willingness of companies to hire more workers.

Taxation affects investment

High taxes can reduce companies' profits, reducing their ability to expand and create new jobs.

Stimulating or discouraging employment in the formal sector

High taxes may push some individuals and companies to move to the informal economy,¹⁷ working without official registration or taxes. This comes with many disadvantages, such as the lack of social protection and rights for workers,¹⁸ more work in dangerous conditions for low wages and financial instability, and low state revenues,¹⁹ in addition to hindering planning and structural development²⁰ due to the difficulty of estimating the size of the economy. It also puts the informal sector into unfair competition with the formal sector, due to its lower costs in the absence of taxes and regulatory obligations.

Redistribution of income

In some cases, tax revenues are used to finance social services, as education, healthcare, and vocational training, which increases the productivity of workers in the long run.

17 <https://www.amf.org.ae/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/presentation-on-the-statistics-of-the-informal-sector-in-the-arab-countries.pdf>

18 Franziska Ohnsorge and Shu Yu, "The Long Shadow of Informality: Challenges and Policies." <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/informal-economy>

19 https://jcia.journals.ekb.eg/article_212756.html.

20 Bedyar Amina, "The Informal Economy and its Effects on the Dimensions of Sustainable Development, An Analytical Study with Reference to the Experience of Algeria", *Future Journal for In-Depth Economic Studies*, (Vol. 2, No. 3, 2025), pp. 103-122.

Moderate taxes may not have a significant negative impact, especially if they are offset by good government services, while excessively high taxes can reduce the incentive for work and production and negatively affect job creation.

The impact of taxes on production and investment

Ibn Khaldun considered taxes to be an essential means of saving money and financing the state, but if they exceeded a certain amount then they cause people to exit production and the economy, and he encouraged justice in collecting taxes and not putting pressure on the poor, because this weakens the economy and reduces *ʿaṣabiyya*, or group solidarity, and he also called for wealth to be distributed in a way that achieves the public interest, in accordance with Islamic law.

Ibn Khaldun believed that trade, industry and agriculture are the basis of the state's strength, and that its prosperity is linked to what is produced in society and not only to the imposition of taxes, criticizing tyranny and financial corruption because these lead to the deterioration of the public economy and the dissolution of the state, and he stressed the importance of economic justice and the protection of public and private money in accordance with the aims of Sharia Law,²¹ achieving a balance between the interests of the state and society, and that public financing (taxes and *zakat*, or mandatory charity) should be fair and promote social stability. He thus thought the state should prohibit everything that harms society or causes the corruption of money, such as usury, fraud, or monopoly.

In brief, Ibn Khaldun combined an Islamic understanding of values and justice with a scientific observation of human behaviour and the state.

He preceded modern economists in his observations on the relationship between taxation, economic activity,²² and state justice. His ideas are largely identical to those of many economists in the 20th and 21st centuries, even though his tools were the observation of historical reality, not mathematical models.

21 Mahmoud Irsheed, *The Contributions of the Scholar Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun to Islamic Economic Thought through the Introduction*, (Ibn Khaldun Conference: The Sign of East and West, 8/11/2012).

22 "The Philosophy of State Tax Collection in Ibn Khaldun, Religions and Civilizations", December 24, 2023. <https://religions-civilizations.info/>

We will notice that there are clear differences between Western and Arab countries regarding their tax systems, whether in terms of individuals' trust in the government, the efficiency of tax administration, tax evasion rates, and the responses of individuals to taxes, and we can clarify these differences according to the following table.

Item	Western Countries	Arab States
Trust in the Government	Relatively high due to transparency and services	Low, often due to corruption or poor services
Efficient Tax Administration	Electronic systems, strict control, trained staff	Bureaucratic procedures, sometimes ineffective collection
Tax Evasion	Low in Scandinavia / Medium in America	High in most countries, especially those with informal economies
Equilibrium Points on the Laffer Curve	Can be accurately attained or approached through analysis and experimentation	Often unclear or scientifically unappreciated
Type of Tax System	Ascending and fair (income tax, corporate, luxury taxes)	Imbalanced or rentier in some countries (dependence on oil or customs duties)
People's Response to Taxes	Acceptable when there is justice and clear services	High resistance due to weak payout or poor services
Tax Reduction Measures	Strategic cuts to stimulate investment	Mostly political or circumstantial
Hands-on Experience	Successful examples of tax cuts while increasing revenue	Rare or scientifically unstudied cases

The table indicates that the same policy and ideas, if applied in two different environments, will inevitably lead to different results, so the proper implementation of any policy requires the appropriate environment and a culture that accepts and helps reform.

If taxes are too low, the government does not collect enough revenues, but economic activity is high (companies and individuals working freely).

If taxes rise gradually, revenues increase until they reach a certain point, and if taxes increase after this optimal point, revenues start to fall, because people stop working, evade or evade taxes. The Laffer Curve should thus be referred to in tax policies, as it is an important tool for countries to achieve a balance between stimulating the economy and increasing revenues, based on the following factors.

1. Tax cuts to stimulate the economy:

When a country notices that high taxes reduce investment and employment, it lowers tax rates to increase economic activity, as the United States did under Reagan (1980) when the government cut taxes from 70% to about 28%, which led to higher economic growth, and tax revenues increased due to the broadening tax base.

2. Raising taxes in cases of deficit on the condition that the optimal point on the Laffer Curve is not exceeded

In times of emergency (such as wars or other crises), governments raise taxes temporarily, but they are careful not to exceed the point that discourages economic activity, as Germany did when it gradually raised taxes while maintaining a good investment climate, taking advantage of Laffer Curve studies to determine the acceptable limit of the increase.

3. Comprehensive reform of the tax system

Instead of just raising or decreasing tax rates, some countries are reforming their entire tax systems to achieve greater efficiency.

4. Monitoring the behaviour of taxpayers

Governments will notice when people start evading taxes or reducing economic activity due to high taxes, and this helps them to know where the optimal point of the Laffer Curve is, which varies from one country to another according to the work culture, income levels, efficiency of management, and rate of tax evasion. This necessitates the use of economic studies and observation of the behaviour of individuals. Below, we will review some practical examples of the effects of excessive and moderate taxation.

There are many historical examples that confirm the failure of excessive taxation, which reinforces what Ibn Khaldun warned about and is supported by

the Laffer Curve, which is that excessive collection leads to the contraction of the economy, the flight of taxpayers and the decline in government revenues, as seen when the government in France before the French Revolution in 1789 imposed²³ many taxes on the peasants and the poor, while exempting the aristocrats from paying them, and the result was an increase in popular discontent, a decline in agricultural production, and a social explosion that led to the revolution, reinforcing the idea that unjust and excessive taxes weaken the state and destabilize society.

Much the same is true under the Ottoman Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries,²⁴ where the state resorted to heavy taxes to cover military and bureaucratic expenses, and used a system of “tax farming” in which wealthy individuals were allowed to collect taxes on behalf of the state, in exchange for advancing a fixed sum to the treasury. This practice exhausted the peasants, and led to the flight of the population from agricultural lands, and a decrease in revenues despite the increase in taxes, which reinforced Ibn Khaldun’s idea that excessive collection leads to the “ruin of the city”. A similar thing happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin, when high taxes were imposed on farmers, which led to a great famine, especially in Ukraine, and millions died of hunger as a result of the decline in agricultural production over several years.²⁵

Argentina’s 2001 policy to finance the deficit²⁶ should also be noted here, where the government imposed high taxes on exports and services, which led to capital flight and the smuggling of funds out of the country. The economy then collapsed, and the state went bankrupt, as tax revenues fell by 8.7% for 2001, and the fiscal deficit reached \$1.2 billion.

In contrast, there are countries that have imposed fair taxes, with systems have taken into account social justice, economic incentives, and spending efficiency, and such policies have led to economic success. This can be seen,

23 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, (Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 22–30.

24 Hamad Harb, *The Ottomans in History and Civilization*, (Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus, 1st edition, 1989), pp. 104.
– Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, (Phoenix Press, 2000), pp. 103–128.

25 Stephen G. Wheatcroft – *The Soviet Economy 1928–1953*, (Routledge, 1992), chapter 5.

26 International Monetary Fund, Argentina – Letter of Intent, Memorandum of Economic Policies, Technical Memorandum of Understanding, Buenos Aires, August 30, 2001.

for example, in Sweden, which has a policy of fair and transparent taxation, with a progressive tax system that is used to fund free education, universal healthcare, and support for children and families, which has led to high trust in the government, a stable economy, high growth, and low tax evasion rates, all of which confirms that transparency and fairness in the use of taxes builds trust and increases commitment and voluntary compliance.

Germany has also been efficient in tax collection and fair in the distribution of the resulting funds, imposing relatively moderate but efficiently administered taxes, and using a system of tax exemptions and incentives to foster productive and innovative industries, creating a strong economy, financial stability, and a budget surplus in some years. Canada has also achieved social justice through a tax system that finances public healthcare, support for the poor, and free education, and thus citizens pay their tax voluntarily, and tax compliance is high because of trust in the system's justice and efficiency.

Finally, it can be seen that when some states in America reduced real estate taxes to stimulate the construction market after the 2008 financial crisis, this increased the demand for property, real estate investment rose and tax receipts increased – despite the lower tax rate – as predicted by Arthur Laffer, and centuries before him by Ibn Khaldun.

The impact of taxes on the urbanization of states

Ibn Khaldun also noted the relationship between the timing of an increase in taxes on the one hand, and the effects of such an increase on urbanism, morality and civilization on the other.

He believed that excessive taxation harms the population and the process of urbanization, and that this would reduce the amount of taxes collected, thus weakening the army and the state. In contrast, when a city is thriving, construction is strong and employment is high, the amount of taxes collected would rise.

Ibn Khaldun also noted that a sense of injustice in tax collection and society in general can ruin the city and weaken the state, showing his early awareness of the relationship between financial, economic and social injustice.

As he put it:

Know that, the aggression against people's money is going with their hopes of collecting and acquiring it, because they see then that its purpose and destiny

is to plunder it out of their hands, and if their hopes of multiplying it are cut off, their hands will stop striving for it, and the gains will be abandoned altogether, and the construction will be ruined.

He also said:

Injustice is a harbinger of the ruin of urbanism, and if people's money is looted or taxes are imposed on them unjustly, their hopes of acquisition are cut off, and their hands are tied to work, so that the construction is corrupted, and the state's resources are cut off from collection, and its authority is weakened until it disappears.

Ibn Khaldun linked the general morals of society, the rulers and the tax system, so that if there is no justice for the ruler and the ruled, then the amount of construction will fall, and the amount of tax collected will fall, which itself is a sign of moral corruption. This was also a call from Ibn Khaldun to achieve justice and rationalize public spending, and thus eliminate useless expenditures, which are a form of waste that burdens the treasury and the people by imposing unnecessary taxes on them.

He also stated that when setting tax systems it is necessary to pay attention to the prevalence of laziness and greed among the population, which in turn will lead to a lack of work and production, and consequently a lack of taxes being collected, as high tax receipts by the treasury are linked to the existence of ambition and a desire to work among the people.

Ibn Khaldun believed that taxes are an indicator of the kind of civilization that exists within a country, as their moderation leads to a prosperous civilization, and their unthoughtful increase leads to deterioration, as tax pressure leads to the collapse of urbanization, the fall of civilization and the demise of states.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Ibn Khaldun's thoughts regarding tax policies and taxation mechanisms, and the consequences of these on all aspects of life, and have shown that many modern theories have relied on his ideas, whether knowingly or not. Based on all this, the following results and recommendations are presented.

The Results

1. Ibn Khaldun recognized the need for state intervention in the economy, as he believed that the state is needed to regulate human life and stop the animalistic tendencies of the population in order to ensure stability. He also called for justice and the prevention of economic injustice, stressing that an unjust state destroys economic activity, and stated that government spending is necessary to stimulate development. These ideas predate those of Keynes, who only developed them after Adam Smith's ideas were shown to have failed in the wake of the Great Depression.
2. Ibn Khaldun stressed that excessive taxation harms the process of urbanization and the welfare of the people, and reduces the resources available to the treasury, which may even lead to the destruction of the state.
3. Ibn Khaldun considered taxation to be an essential method of saving money and financing the state, but if taxes exceeded a certain level then this would reduce investment. He also encouraged justice in collecting taxes, and not putting pressure on the poor, because this will weaken the economy, and called for wealth to be distributed in such a way that would benefit the public, in accordance with Islamic law.
4. Ibn Khaldun believed that trade, industry and agriculture are the basis of the state's strength, and that a state's prosperity was linked to the productive capacity of society, and not only to the imposition of taxes. He criticized tyranny and financial corruption because these harmed the economy and thus the state, and stressed the importance of economic justice and the protection of public and private funds in accordance with the principles of Sharia Law. He thus called for a balance between the interests of the state and society, and that public financing – as raised through taxes and *zakat* – should be fair, as well as promote social stability. He thus thought the state should prohibit everything that harms society or causes the corruption of money, such as usury, fraud, or monopoly.
5. Ibn Khaldun linked the tax system with the level of civilization in a state, as well as morality in society, and corruption between rulers and the ruled.

Recommendations

1. It is necessary to focus on improving the ethics within society and eliminate corruption, by creating effective bodies that prevent negative manipulation of the public, as well as using the media to spread positive ideas and enhance morality, and to ensure that the amount of taxes raised is sufficient to start the development process.
2. It is necessary to pay attention to the issue of rationalizing public spending, and reduce taxes, in according to raising the level of development.
3. It is necessary to raise the work ethic in society, and make use of religious and societal role models to encourage individuals to work harder, while the government needs to provide job opportunities for young people, and subsidies to small producers in order to help develop small and medium-sized firms. Such measures would help develop a more stable society based on a fair and stimulating tax system.
4. It is necessary to encourage urbanism and the real estate sector, because Ibn Khaldun stressed that the prosperity of cities is a prerequisite for increasing tax revenues, and this is achieved through the provision of infrastructure and tax incentives for this vital and important part of the economy and society.

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Reading the *Muqaddima*: The Paradox of the Sixth Prolegomenon and Orientalism

Dr Rüdiger Lohker

Ibn Khaldun is an interesting case for the European history of ideas and beyond. A historian from the Islamic West, and highly acclaimed in the European West as a kind of precursor or one of the founding fathers¹ of the scientific discipline of sociology, his monumental history of the Berbers was mostly ignored. The “rediscovery” of Ibn Khaldun in 19th century Europe made (and makes) him an important figure in both *European* history and in the Arab world as an important author read in the West. As such, reading him as a sociologist *avant la lettre* makes him part of the history of science, an undisputed evolutionary process that saw its culmination in European science.

Although Ibn Khaldun, so we are told, is well-known today, his fame is based mainly on his *Muqaddimah*, and not on the other volumes of his history.² However, a European reading of the *Muqaddimah* means a partial reading, since parts of it are left out, and in particular those parts which break the evolutionary narrative on Ibn Khaldun. This claim is based mainly on the selectivity of the usual European reading of Ibn Khaldun, which shows a triple

1 Cf. Lara Ahmed Al-Hadeed, “The Methodology and Subject Matter in Sociology of the Founding Fathers of Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte: A Comparative Study.” *Open Science Journal* 5 (2020): 1–12 for this widespread framing.

2 One of the most interesting conceptual readings focussing on Ibn Khaldun as a historian is Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990).

ignorance: 1) ignoring him being a historian, 2) ignoring that he was a scholar of the Maliki school of Islamic law, and 3) ignoring the complexity of Islam. An *Islamic* scholar like Ibn Khaldun can only be accepted in the West when he fits into European narratives, like the Arabo-Islamic mathematicians, astronomers, philosophers, or artists who were integrated into the overarching European narratives based on Orientalist preconceptions of Europeans being at the peak of scientific development.³

But Ibn Khaldun's analytical instruments were well honed in the Islamic culture of his time, including in the occult disciplines dealing with supernatural phenomena, and he presented these phenomena in the same way as the other, more quotidian ones. As is noted in an article on his work and the occult: "In fact, this part of Ibn Khaldun's writings is not well examined."⁴ We may assume that this is not a simple omission due to a lack of interest, but instead one motivated by the epistemological bias held by Orientalists and other writers adhering to this worldview.

Such approaches to the work of Ibn Khaldun, deeply influenced by European conceptualizations of it, are analysed by Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī. In *al-Asabiyya wa'l-dawla* he confirms that Arab researchers followed the same line of thought and ignored the supernatural aspects of the *Muqaddimah*.⁵ He quotes Sāti' al-Husri and others as claiming that the sixth prolegomenon is a digression from the other more "scientific" parts of the *Muqaddimah* dedicated to the study of societies. To such authors there seems to be two personalities, two Ibn Khalduns: the rational Ibn Khaldun and the irrational one.⁶

3 An interesting assessment of the Eurocentric and Orientalist reading of Ibn Khaldun is to be found in Róbert Simon, *Ibn Khaldūn: History as Science and the Patrimonial Empire* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2002) for a focus on Orientalists cf. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981). Alatas sets Orientalist and Eurocentric readings against disciplinary ones, without acknowledging the Orientalist framing influencing the latter (Syed Farid Alatas, "Reading Ibn Khaldun in the Formative Period of Sociology," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 302-311, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12377>).

4 Mushegh Asatrian, "Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult," *Iran and the Caucasus* 7 (2003): 73-123, 74.

5 For contemporary Moroccan readings of Ibn Khaldun cf. Francesca Forte, "Ibn Khaldūn in Contemporary Moroccan Thought," in *Contemporary Moroccan Thought: On Philosophy, Theology, Society, and Culture*, ed. by Mohammed Hashas (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2025): 308-328.

6 Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Fikr Ibn Khaldūn: al-'Asabiyya wa'l-dawla* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 6th Edition, 1994), 114.

Al-Jābirī shows that even in this “irrational” prolegomenon Ibn Khaldun applies a very rational method to analyse phenomena like soothsaying and magic. As he puts it: “We are convinced that the studies that analyse these questions in the *Muqaddimah* are not digressive studies, but an inseparable part of the Khaldunian civilizational pyramid.”⁷ Ibn Khaldun’s framework here is built on the thesis that a human being is not only a material body but also has a soul.⁸ “The sixth prolegomenon,” al-Jābirī stresses, “studies the possibility of the influence of the spiritual factors on individuals and societal groups.”⁹

The approach of al-Jābirī allows for an integration of so-called irrational aspects in the analysis of society in a Khaldunian way. We will return to this approach later. Now we have to turn to Orientalist approaches that form the backbone of the worldview al-Jābirī criticizes.

European Reception of Ibn Khaldun

Leaving aside the “discovery” of Ibn Khaldun¹⁰ in the 19th century by Auguste Comte, we will now turn to an overview of the early European reception of this author to situate our arguments.¹¹ Interestingly, this reception has been almost forgotten by the wider academic public due to the peripheral status of Oriental studies in European academic fields, especially if the subject at hand was (or is) not seen as “useful” for furthering colonial interests. If we refer to the less colonialist aspects of European Orientalism, we may follow Keim who talks about the importance of Ottoman translations and comments on the *Muqaddimah* that were at least partly accepted by early European commentators and translators.¹² The

7 al-Jābirī, *Fikr Ibn Khaldūn*, 115.

8 al-Jābirī, *Fikr Ibn Khaldūn*, 117.

9 al-Jābirī, *Fikr Ibn Khaldūn*, 117.

10 Which reminds us of other discoveries in Islamic medicine and other fields. The European mindset accepts only findings by Europeans, even if there are precursors of non-European origin.

11 We are leaving out the Ottoman reception of Ibn Khaldun (cf. below), which is still to be thoroughly researched.

12 See Wiebke Keim’s “Ibn Khaldun in early German-language sociological theory: A Historical Case of South-North Reception”, in *Revue d’Histoire des Sciences Humaine* 41 (2022): 31–61, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rhsh.7467>. Syed Farid Alatas also mentioned this tradition, as seen in *Applying Ibn Khaldūn: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London/New York: Routledge, 2014). For a more recent assessment, see Marinos Sariyannis’s

main entry points for Ibn Khaldun in European academic discourse were Paris and Vienna.

Paris established a framework for the reading of Ibn Khaldun that was dominated by French colonial interests during the colonization of the Maghreb. The renowned French Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy (d. 1838) acquainted European readers with Ibn Khaldun after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. The French Ministry of War commissioned a translation of the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* in order to better understand the Arab-Berber dynamics.¹³ Étienne Quatremère (d. 1857) was to translate the *Muqaddimah* after finishing his edition in 1857, but passed away before completing this task. William Mac Guckin de Slane (d. 1878), who was both a scholar and a military official, completed his translation. French engagement with the *Muqaddimah* and the history of Ibn Khaldun was thus deeply embedded in the process of colonial expansion.

In a slightly different way, several writers working in Vienna contributed to the knowledge of Ibn Khaldun. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (d. 1856), an Austrian diplomat, Orientalist, and translator, first introduced Sylvestre de Sacy to the *Muqaddimah* in 1822, which the latter was rather unfamiliar with at that time.¹⁴ Hammer-Purgstall was inspired by the methodology of Ibn Khaldun in his study of the history of the Ottoman Empire, and in 1812 called him "an Arab Montesquieu" due to his theory of climates.¹⁵ In 1879

"Ottoman Ibn Khaldunism Revisited: The Pre-Tanzimat Reception of the Muqaddima, from Kinalizade to Şanizade", in *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire (Halcyon Days in Crete IX)*, edited by Marinos Saryiannis (Heraklion/Athens: Crete University Press, 2019), 251–286. Understanding the reception of Ibn Khaldun in his time is essential, Cheddadi says, for a true understanding of early modern Islam and its role in modern times ("Quelles perspective pour les études khaldûniennes?" in Abdessalam Cheddadi, *Actualité d'Ibn Khaldûn: Conférences et entretiens* (Témara: Maison des Arts, des Sciences et des Lettres, 2006), 149–160, 160).

- 13 Cyrille Aillet, "Violence et pacification, genèse et mort de l'État. Deux relectures contemporaines d'Ibn Khaldûn." *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 139 (2016): 251–257, <https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.8962>.
- 14 Walter Höflechner, *Joseph von Hammer-(Purgstall) 1774–1856: Ein Überblick* (Graz: ADE-VA, 2021), 19.
- 15 For this comparison cf. Warren E. Gates, "The Spread of Ibn Khaldûn's Ideas on Climate and Culture." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1967, Vol. 28 (1967): 415–422 and Aytekin Demircioglu, "A Comparison of the Views of Ibn Khaldun and Montesquieu in Terms of the Effect of Climatic Conditions on Human Life." *The Anthropologist* 17 (2014): 725–733, <https://doi.org/10.31901/24566802.2014/17.03.04>.

Alfred von Kremer (d. 1889) published a long commentary on and summary of the *Muqaddimah*, referring to both the French translation by de Slane and the Arabic original. As for the sixth *muqaddima* that we are primarily interested in here, he stated that Ibn Khaldun pushed aside the “question of religion”,¹⁶ simply ignoring the complications that could have occurred with any consideration of his view on the supernatural, and thus tainted his more “useful” analysis. The Austrian early sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (d. 1909) built his highly original theory of state and race based on a reading of Ibn Khaldun as a theoretician of imperial power in the Maghreb of his time, in contrast to the French colonialist approach.¹⁷ However, due to his theoretical focus, Gumplowicz was not interested in the supernatural aspects of the *Muqaddimah*, and his approach was later taken up by Franz Oppenheimer (d. 1943).¹⁸

One of the first Europeans who defined Ibn Khaldun as a sociologist was Guglielmo Ferrero (d. 1942),¹⁹ who also referred to the work of Gumplowicz.²⁰ However, the sixth prolegomenon was of no interest to him. In a similar vein, the French founder of colonial sociology, René Maunier (d. 1951), focused on Ibn Khaldun as a sociologist *avant la lettre*, ignoring the supernatural aspects of his work.²¹ The modern Turkish writer, İsmail Hakkı İzmirli (d. 1946), sees

16 Alfred von Kremer, *Ibn Chaldun und seine Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Reiche* (Vienna: Karl Gerold's Sohn in Komm., 1879), 31.

17 Wiebke Keim, “Verflochtene Soziologien und imperial geprägte Geschichten – von Ibn Khaldun über Ludwig Gumplowicz bis Franz Oppenheimer,” in *Globale Soziologie: Vergessene Theorien, verflochtene Geschichten*, edited by Fabio Santos and Clara Ruvitoso (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2024): 47–81, 65. Marta Bucholc, in “Ludwik Gumplowicz (1897–1898), Ibn Khaldun: An Arab Sociologist of the 14th Century” (*Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 330–332, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12378>), writes out of a secularist sentiment when she refers to Ibn Khaldun's religious language as “pious ‘arabesques’” (Marta Bucholc, Ludwik Gumplowicz, 321).

18 Wiebke Keim, *Verflochtene Soziologien*, 66–69 and Wiebke Keim, “Franz Oppenheimer (1926), Die soziologische Staatsidee. (Die Eroberung) [The Sociological Idea of the State (The Conquest)].” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 341–248, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12384>.

19 An Italian historian, sociologist, journalist, and novelist.

20 Masturah Alatas, “Guglielmo Ferrero (1896), Ibn Kaldoun: an Arab Sociologist of the Fourteenth Century.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 312–319, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12376>.

21 Stéphane Dufoux, “René Maunier (1915), Les idées sociologiques d'un philosophe arabe/The sociological ideas of an Arab philosopher in the 14th century.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 333–340, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12381>.

Ibn Khaldun's references to Sufism, true dreams, spirits, etc., as "deviations" or "useless issues".²²

Muqaddimah – the Sixth Prolegomenon

The main source of irritation for these writers is the sixth *muqaddimah*,²³ and thus some further remarks on the context of this text may be pertinent for understanding the problem we are discussing here.²⁴ The third prefatory chapter, or prolegomenon, discusses the influence of the different climate zones, the influence of the air on the colour of the skin of human beings, and on other aspects of their condition. The fourth prolegomenon discusses the influence of the climate (air) on human character, and the fifth considers the differences in the abundance and scarcity of food, which affects the people living in a particular region. The sixth prolegomenon discusses the various types of beings that exist and their relation to supernatural perception.

The sixth chapter begins with a discussion of the signs of inspired human beings, with special reference to the Prophet Muhammad. It follows an excursus on prophetology in general, the human way of thinking and reflections on other beings, the human soul, soothsaying, dream visions (including dream words), diverse types of divination, kinds of supernatural perceptions, gazing into mirrors, augury, clairvoyance, the supernatural knowledge of the Sufis and saints (*awliya'*), geomancy, and the *za'irajah*.²⁵

The sixth prolegomenon covers several aspects of the supernatural, going beyond the theological and philosophical discussions so dear to European

22 Nurullah Ardiç, "İsmail Hakkı İzmirli (1932), Philosophical Currents in Islam: Ibn Khaldun (732--808)." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35 (2022): 349–359, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12383>, both quotations. Nurullah Ardiç, İsmail Hakkı, 353.

23 I have to thank Peter Enz(-Harlass) for reminding me that the sixth prolegomenon is worth reading (cf. below).

24 In this section are referring to the headings of the prefatory discussions in Franz Rosenthal (transl.), *Ibn Khaldūn. The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958).

25 A kind of letter magic using a type of logical machine used for divinatory purposes that can be connected to the thought of Ramón Llull, a Catalanian thinker (cf. Slobodan Dan Paich, "Intangible Cargo / Elusive Itineraries. Traveling Intellectuals, Experts, Advisers and Artist at Byzantine, Ottoman and Renaissance Courts," in *People and Goods on the Move. Merchants, Networks and Communication Routes in the Medieval and early Modern Mediterranean*, edited by Özlem Çaykent and Luca Zavagno (Fisciano; ICSR Mediterranean Knowledge, 2016): 111–142, 129–130).

academic discourse on Islam. Moreover, the sociological and historical topics that concern so much of the *Muqaddimah* are almost ignored in this *muqaddima*, which, nevertheless, is an important part of the overall structure of the whole work.

The Sixth Prolegomenon and Orientalist Worldviews

Following al-Jābirī's remarks, we may now turn to modern Europeanized²⁶ authors who have discussed the *Muqaddimah*. These authors are deeply influenced by the Western traditions mentioned earlier, which also influenced modern Arabic discourse.

Allen Fromherz's²⁷ study talks about Ibn Khaldun's "obsession [...] with numerology, astrology, magic, and a whole cornucopia of seemingly strange and fantastic 'ologies'" that may irritate "modern readers".²⁸ Fromherz at least acknowledges the lack of research on these topics, but using a term like "obsession" hints at his firm roots in Orientalist discourses and an "enlightened", biased approach to his subject.

Robert Irwin²⁹ gives plenty of space to Sufis and occult literature, but his terminology is revealing. Talking about occult literature he says: "The literature of medieval Islamic occultism with which Ibn Khaldun was familiar constituted a disordered library, largely composed of forgeries, secretive coded texts, gibberish, ascriptions to imaginary ancestral authors, and with it all a great deal of attendant tedium."³⁰ Again, we meet a biased approach mixing Orientalist and somehow enlightened worldviews. Consequently, Irwin continues talking about pseudosciences, the scope of the *Muqaddima* becoming "baggier" including, among other things, "dreams, mystical experiences, the occult", which "are not strictly relevant for the understanding

26 Including some non-European authors.

27 Allen James Fromherz is an American historian specializing in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

28 Allen James Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun, Life and Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

29 Robert Graham Irwin was an Arabist, historian, and novelist. Among his works is one on the Alhambra.

30 Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 121.

of historical processes”.³¹ It is tempting to say Irwin is criticizing Ibn Khaldun for not being a professional historian in the 20th century. Nevertheless, Irwin tried to find reasonable arguments for Ibn Khaldun’s interest in the occult and magic: “But I believe that the chief reason Ibn Khaldun was so obsessed with sorcery was because it overlapped with divination and the power to know the future.”³²

Yves Lacoste³³ presents Ibn Khaldun as a scientist and says that “this is the source of his greatness.”³⁴ He talks about Ibn Khaldun’s “faith in rationalism”,³⁵ but also notes passages of the *Muqaddimah* that are “marked by mystical obscurantism”.³⁶ Generally speaking, Lacoste regards Ibn Khaldun as – at least partially – a religious scholar, “championing religious reaction”.³⁷ Lacoste constructs a dichotomy between rationalism and obscurantism, and thus dismisses the sixth prolegomenon (and other parts of the *Muqaddimah*) as irrelevant, asking: “How are we to explain the existence of such two different intellectual attitudes in the same book?”³⁸ Again, we note an attitude similar to that of other authors, as Ibn Khaldun’s mysticism and obscurantism are seen as a paradox similar to his status as one of the founding fathers of European ideas, and at the same time an Islamic scholar. This attitude is part of the general binary *West vs non-West*.

Although Lacoste acknowledges that Ibn Khaldun was not a modern thinker and criticizes those trying to modernize him, he is still steeped in the French rationalist belief. As such, Lacoste cannot accept Ibn Khaldun as a pious Muslim. He does not subscribe to the Orientalist critique of Ibn Khaldun’s spiritual views, but cannot overcome his own rationalist position.

Hamilton A.R. Gibb,³⁹ to bring an older voice into the conversation, states frankly that religion was an essential part of Ibn Khaldun’s worldview,

31 All quotations Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 118.

32 Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 128.

33 Yves Lacoste has been a French geographer born in Morocco.

34 Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World* (London: Verso, 1984). 183.

35 Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 182.

36 Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 181.

37 Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 182.

38 Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 183.

39 Hamilton Alexander Roskeen Gibb (d. 1971 CE) Islamicist, Arabist, and Historian.

although Gibb mentions neither Sufism nor occultism in this context.⁴⁰ His text is representative of those scholars who think that speaking about Islam is essential to understanding Muslims, a well-known Orientalist approach.

In a simplified manner, Ibn Khaldun and his *Muqaddimah* are often compared to modern authors and theories, as seen, for example, in an article by Christian Fuchs that attempts to identify elements of political economy in the text and compare Ibn Khaldun to Karl Marx.⁴¹ However, both religion and any supernatural elements in the *Muqaddimah* are ignored in this work, and Ibn Khaldun turns out to be little more than an exotic reference for a European author.⁴²

A younger Austrian scholar, Peter Enz, proposed a new reading of the *Muqaddimah*, and especially the sixth prolegomenon.⁴³ He rightly criticizes Western authors who are shocked by the sudden turn to the occult of this much-lauded critical rationalist. While giving a fair description and analysis of the sixth prolegomenon, as well as possible interpretations of the role of this *muqaddima*, Enz attempts to frame it in different ways. In particular, he explains the sixth *muqaddima* as an attempt by Ibn Khaldun to present his new science under the cover of the then dominant worldview, thus immunizing his new theory against critique by religious scholars. Enz thus tries to reconcile Ibn Khaldun's rationalist thinking with his religiously inspired thought, and does not accept the possibility that Ibn Khaldun himself did not see any contradiction between the two.

All translations of the *Muqaddimah*, abridged or not, include the sixth prolegomenon,⁴⁴ and thus the authors mentioned above who dismiss it can

40 H.A.R. Gibb, "The Islamic Background of Ibn Khaldūn's Political Theory." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7 (1933): 23-31.

41 In a very Eurocentric way the author is not aware that the *Ibn* in Ibn Khaldun is not a first name, and thus refers to "Khaldun", contemptuously ignoring the Arabic system of naming and forcing it into a European pattern.

42 Christian Fuchs, "Ibn Khaldūn and the Political Economy of Communication in the Age of Digital Capitalism." *Critical Sociology* 50 (2024): 707-725, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205231206488>. Christian Fuchs is a scholar of media studies.

43 Peter Enz, *Der Keim der Revolte: Militante Solidarität und religiöse Mission bei Ibn Khaldun* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2012).

44 For English language translation Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldūn* is a standard reference, for German translations cf. Annemarie Schimmel, trans., *Ibn Chaldun: Ausgewählte Abschnitte aus der muqaddima* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1951) and Alma Giese, trans., *Ibn Khaldun. Die Muqaddimah: Betrachtungen zur Weltgeschichte* (München: C. H. Beck, 2011). Other translations in French, Turkish, etc. are not considered.

be seen as engaging in an act of discursive closure,⁴⁵ excluding non-Western worldviews. It is the discursive privilege given to Western rationality that produces this closure and constructs a “frozen identity”, a Eurocentric framing that is needed to make as homogeneous a worldview as possible.

There are many other authors who simply ignore the occult topics Ibn Khaldun presents in the sixth prolegomenon, focusing instead on the sociological, philosophical, political or even theological aspects of the *Muqaddimah*, without touching on the “problematic” ones. These approaches are not all to be considered as Orientalist, especially when applied by non-European authors. Nevertheless, the production of a non-Eurocentric analysis of the *Muqaddimah* is a task that is still to be accomplished. As Alatas states:

One of the most conspicuous features of Orientalism, a persistent feature that has survived for centuries, is the neglect of the theoretical authority of so-called Oriental thinkers. Although the critique of Orientalism and related problems such as Eurocentrism in the social sciences and humanities has been around since at least the latter part of the nineteenth century, the serious consideration of the thought of seminal non-Western thinkers as sources of theories and concepts that are applicable to historical and empirical data is largely absent. The task of studying alternatives to Orientalist constructions is the logical result of the critique of Orientalism but has, with a few exceptions, not been undertaken.⁴⁶

If we turn to non-Orientalist approaches to the sixth prolegomenon, we may find more appropriate ones. Abdesselam Cheddadi writes:

We see from this that the problem posed by Ibn Khaldun in his study of the modes of access to the supernatural has at its stake the place of religion in society, religion being defined as the institution responsible for governing these modes of access. Therefore, the place of religion appears to be primordial, supernatural conditions at least as important as natural conditions. This does not apply to any single religion, but to all religions in general.⁴⁷

45 For more on this concept see Lars Th. Christensen, Mette Morsing and Ole Thyssen, “Discursive Closure and Discursive Openings in Sustainability” (*Management Communication Quarterly* 29 (2015): 135–144, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914563574>) or Renee G. Heath and Jennifer L. Borda, “Reclaiming Civility: Towards Discursive Opening in Dialogue and Deliberation” (*Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 17 (2021): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.976>).

46 Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldūn: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London/New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

47 Abdesselam Cheddadi, *The World Until 1400 According to Ibn Khaldun: A Global History of Humanity* (New York/London: Routledge, 2025), 62.

It may thus be possible to place supernatural conditions on the same level as natural conditions.

Conclusion

A non-Orientalist, non-Western presentation of Ibn Khaldun and his *Muqaddimah* that includes the sixth prolegomenon remains to be written for Western readers. The text's references to religion and attempts to understand supernatural phenomena are to be understood as part of the epistemological world of an early modern author working in North Africa, and a new approach is needed to overcome the limitations of the purely secularist, Eurocentric epistemology that still dominates global research. It is essential that any study of the *Muqaddimah* accepts the simple fact that this work of Ibn Khaldun "was not rejected or fought against", which "is proof that it was, in the eyes of the society it was born in, not faulty or shocking".⁴⁸

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48 Abdesselam Cheddadi, *Ibn Khaldūn: L'homme et le théoricien de la civilisation* (Paris: Gallimard: 2006), 499.

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Ibn Khaldun's Theory of 'Asabiyyah and Social Capital: A Theoretical Re-Reading

Dr Fatima A.D. Algharbawi

Introduction

Over the past three decades, social capital has emerged as one of the most influential analytical frameworks in sociological theory, public policy, and development studies.¹ Through the works of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam, the concept of social capital has been widely employed to explain social cohesion, institutional trust, collective action, and political stability.² Despite its analytical versatility, the theoretical genealogy of social capital remains narrowly framed within Western intellectual traditions, often excluding non-Western and pre-modern sociological thought from its conceptual foundations.³

This limitation reflects a broader epistemic tendency within sociology to privilege Eurocentric narratives of theoretical innovation, while relegating

1 Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

2 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–258; James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95–S120.

3 Ben Fine, *Social Capital Versus Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

alternative intellectual traditions to descriptive or historical status.⁴ Classical Islamic social thought has rarely been integrated into contemporary theoretical debates as a source of analytical insight. As a result, foundational concepts developed by thinkers such as Ibn Khaldun are frequently treated as culturally specific or historically bounded rather than sophisticated sociological frameworks capable of dialogue with modern theory.⁵

Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah*, introduced in *Al-Muqaddimah*, represents one of the most significant yet undertheorized contributions to the sociology of social cohesion.⁶ Commonly translated as "group feeling" or "tribal solidarity", *'asabiyyah* has often been narrowly interpreted as a pre-modern form of kin-based cohesion incompatible with modern institutions and civic life. Such readings obscure the analytical depth of Ibn Khaldun's framework and reinforce the false opposition between *'asabiyyah* and modern notions of social capital.⁷

This chapter challenges these reductive interpretations by proposing a theoretical re-reading of *'asabiyyah* as an integrated and dynamic mechanism of social cohesion that anticipates – and in key respects extends – contemporary social capital theory. Rather than treating *'asabiyyah* as a historically obsolete concept, this chapter positions it as an early formulation of social capital that embeds trust, norms, collective identity, and power within a unified moral and historical framework.⁸

The core argument here is that *'asabiyyah* and social capital are not competing or mutually exclusive concepts, but analytically convergent frameworks addressing similar social mechanisms under different epistemological and historical conditions. While mainstream social capital theory often emphasizes networks and norms as functional resources, Khaldun situates social cohesion within a broader moral economy, linking solidarity to power, legitimacy, and state formation.⁹

4 Syed Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006).

5 Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2014).

6 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

7 Ibid., 45–47.

8 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 241–258; Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 112–115.

9 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 289–329.

Methodology

This chapter provides a conceptual and theoretical contribution. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) case is employed for illustrative purposes and is not intended to support generalized empirical claims.

A purely theoretical and interpretive approach is adopted here, which does not aim to measure social capital empirically or test hypotheses through surveys or field data. Instead, it advances sociological theory by reconstructing core concepts and examining their analytical value in a specific sociohistorical context. Classical texts are treated as sources of conceptual models, whereas contemporary cases are employed to demonstrate theoretical relevance rather than empirical generalizability.

Data Sources and Materials

This analysis draws on two primary bodies of materials. First, Ibn Khaldun's *Al-Muqaddimah* is examined using the standard English translation by Franz Rosenthal, with conceptual reference to the original Arabic terminology where analytically necessary.¹⁰ Second, the chapter makes key contributions to social capital theory and its critiques, particularly the works of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam, as well as critical interventions addressing the limitations of social capital theory.¹¹

Analytical Strategy

The analysis was conducted in four interconnected steps. First, a close textual and conceptual reading of *Al-Muqaddimah* reconstructs 'asabiyyah as a sociological mechanism rather than as a descriptive historical term, focusing on its sources, sustaining mechanisms, outcomes, and temporal dynamics.¹²

10 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 112.

11 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–258; James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95–S120; Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

12 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 91–105.

Second, the reconstructed Khaldunian framework is placed in systematic dialogue with social capital theory through conceptual mapping, comparing core components, levels of analysis, power relations, and temporal assumptions. Putnam's distinction between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital is employed heuristically to explore analytic compatibility rather than conceptual equivalence.¹³

Third, findings from the comparative analysis are consolidated through theoretical synthesis, producing an integrative model of *'asabiyyah* that highlights its moral grounding, power sensitivity, and micro–macro dynamics.¹⁴

Fourth, the UAE is introduced as a contextualized theoretical case to illustrate how tribal *'asabiyyah* can be institutionally reframed into modern configurations of social capital without claims of empirical generalizability.¹⁵

Rigour and Scope

In this theoretical study, rigour is ensured through conceptual validity, analytical transparency, and engagement with multiple strands of social capital theory and critique. This chapter does not claim empirical measurements or causal generalization. Its contribution is conceptual and aims to refine the sociological understanding of social cohesion by integrating Khaldunian theory into contemporary debates.

Scope and Limitations

This study is explicitly non-empirical and does not claim to quantify social capital or measure *'asabiyyah* using indicators. Instead, it seeks to refine the sociological understanding of cohesion by integrating classical Khaldunian theory into contemporary debates. Future research may build on this framework through qualitative interviews, ethnography, surveys, or mixed methods to test and operationalize the proposed model.

13 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 22–24.

14 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

15 Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

Research Questions

This chapter is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can Khaldun's concept of '*asabiyyah*' be theoretically reconstructed as a coherent sociological mechanism rather than a historically or culturally bounded notion?
2. In what ways does '*asabiyyah*' conceptually converge with, extend, or challenge contemporary formulations of social capital, particularly those developed by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam?
3. How does Khaldun's theorization of '*asabiyyah*' address key limitations in social capital theory regarding moral foundations, power relations, and historical dynamics of social cohesion?
4. How can the dynamics of '*asabiyyah*' be analytically mapped onto bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, as illustrated through a contextualized theoretical case study of the UAE?

Ibn Khaldun's Concept of '*asabiyyah*': A Dynamic Sociological Framework

Khaldun's concept of '*asabiyyah*' constitutes the cornerstone of his sociological theory of social order, political power, and historical transformation.¹⁶ Rather than presenting social cohesion as a secondary or derivative phenomenon, Ibn Khaldun places '*asabiyyah*' at the heart of collective life, treating it as the primary mechanism through which societies organize themselves, mobilize action, and sustain authority.¹⁷ This centrality distinguishes his approach from many modern sociological frameworks that indirectly address cohesion through institutions, norms and networks.¹⁸

Fundamentally, '*asabiyyah*' refers to the intensity of social bonds that unite individuals into a collective capable of coordinated action. These bonds are characterized by trust, mutual obligation, loyalty, and readiness for collective

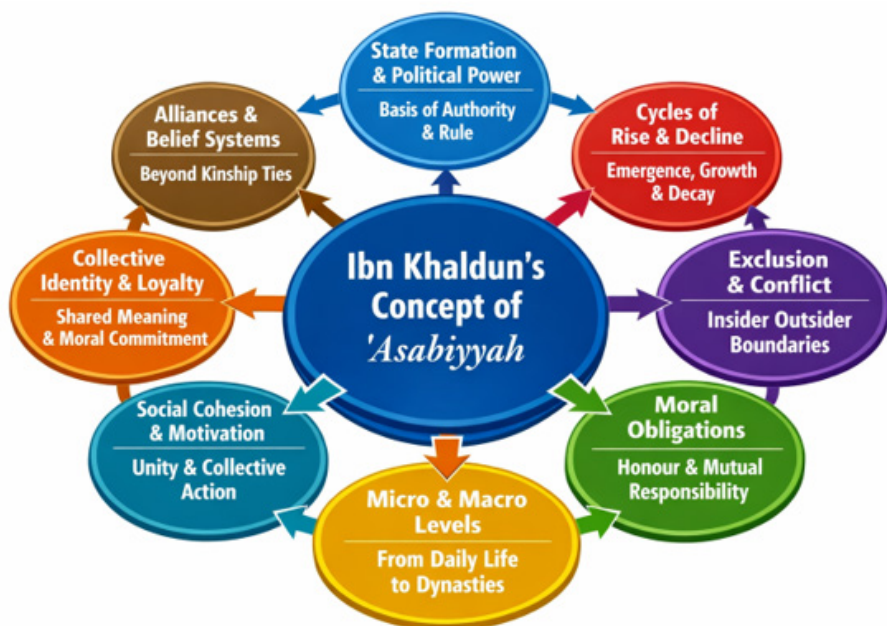
16 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 97; Syed Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006).

17 Fuad Baali, *Society, State and Urbanism: Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

18 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19–21.

defence.¹⁹ Khaldun emphasizes that human beings are inherently dependent on cooperation and that survival, security, and prosperity are unattainable without strong forms of social solidarity.²⁰ *‘Asabiyyah*, therefore, emerges as a necessary condition for both social stability and political organization.

Crucially, Khaldun rejected biological determinism in his conceptualization of *‘asabiyyah*. While kinship ties often provide the most immediate and emotionally powerful basis for solidarity, he repeatedly stressed that social cohesion can also be produced through alliances, shared residences, common belief systems, and political loyalty.²¹ What matters is not blood relations *per se*, but the internalization of collective identity and moral commitment.²² Thus, *‘asabiyyah* is socially constructed, historically contingent and open to transformation.



19 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 108–112.

20 Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

21 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 123–130; Allen J. Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

22 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

Positioning *'Asabiyyah* Within Social Capital Theory

Social capital has become a central analytical framework for contemporary sociology, political science, and developmental studies. Since the late 20th century, social capital has been widely mobilized to explain how social relations facilitate cooperation, enhance trust, and enable collective action. Despite the significant differences among major theorists, social capital is generally understood as a resource embedded in social relationships that can be mobilized to achieve individual or collective goals.²³ However, the theoretical genealogy of social capital remains strikingly narrow and almost exclusively rooted in Western intellectual traditions and modern social contexts.²⁴

This section argues that Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah* offers a foundational, yet overlooked, theoretical framework that can substantially enrich social capital theory.²⁵ Rather than treating *'asabiyyah* as a historical curiosity or culturally specific notion tied to tribal societies, this chapter positions it as an integrated, morally grounded, and dynamic theory of social cohesion that anticipates and extends contemporary formulations of social capital.²⁶ By placing *'asabiyyah* in direct dialogue with the works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, this section demonstrates that Khaldun provides not only a precursor to social capital theory but also a distinct and analytically robust conceptualization of the social mechanisms underlying collective life.²⁷

Social Capital: Conceptual Diversity and Theoretical Limitations

Social capital has become a central concept in contemporary sociology, political science, and development studies and is widely employed to explain cooperation, trust, and collective action.²⁸ Despite its popularity, this concept

23 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 112.

24 Sami Khalaf, "Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf: Camel Racing in the United Arab Emirates", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 3 (2000): 354–382.

25 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

26 Steven Levitsky and Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Why No Backsliding? The European Union's Impact on Democracy and Governance before and after Accession", *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 457–485.

27 Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

28 Ismail Mansour, *Tribe and State in the Gulf: Dynamics of Social and Political Change* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

has never achieved theoretical unity. Bourdieu conceptualized social capital as a form of power embedded in durable networks and implicated it in the reproduction of inequality, while Coleman emphasized its functional role in facilitating action through norms, obligations, and trust. Putnam later popularized the concept by framing social capital as a collective good rooted in civic engagement and generalized trust.²⁹

Despite these differences, the dominant formulation of social capital has several limitations. First, social capital is frequently treated as a neutral or normative good, which obscures its exclusionary and hierarchical dimensions. Second, it is often conceptualized as a set of discrete components – networks, norms, and trust – rather than an integrated social mechanism. Third, much of the literature under-theorizes power and historical change, presenting bonding, bridging, and linking social capital as static categories rather than as dynamic processes embedded in political and social transformation.³⁰

These limitations have prompted growing criticism of social capital theory for its moral thinness, depoliticized orientation, and limited historical depth. Within this theoretical gap, Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah* is analytically significant.³¹

'Asabiyyah as an Integrated Theory of Social Capital

Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah* offers a fundamentally integrated account of social cohesion that addresses several limitations of the contemporary social capital theory. Rather than treating trust, norms, and networks as analytically separable resources, *'asabiyyah* embeds these elements within a single moral and relational mechanism grounded in a collective identity, obligation, and shared destiny. Social cohesion in this framework is not a functional asset that individuals strategically mobilize, but a constitutive force that shapes collective capacity, authority, and historical trajectories.³²

29 Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

30 Pippa Norris, ed., *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

31 Jenny Onyx and Paul Bullen, "Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities", *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 36, no. 1 (2000): 23–42.

32 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

This integrated logic contrasts with dominant formulations of social capital, particularly those that fragment cohesion into discrete components or typologies. Although Putnam's distinction among bonding, bridging, and linking social capital has been influential, it often remains descriptive and static, offering limited insight into how these forms emerge, interact, and transform over time. In contrast, Khaldun conceptualizes cohesion as a generative process through which solidarity intensifies, expands, and becomes institutionalized. Thus, bonding, bridging, and linking are not parallel types of capital but relational expressions of *'asabiyyah* operating at different stages of social and political development.³³

A defining feature of *'asabiyyah* is its explicit moral grounding. Trust is not merely an expectation of reciprocity but a moral commitment rooted in honor, loyalty, and mutual responsibility. Collective action is sustained not because cooperation is efficient, but because it is perceived as ethically binding. This moral economy enables *'asabiyyah* to explain the forms of collective endurance, sacrifice, and authority that remain difficult to capture within instrumental or rational-choice models of social capital.³⁴

At the same time, Khaldun's framework is explicitly power-sensitive. Social cohesion is inseparable from domination, exclusion, and conflict because strong internal solidarity inevitably produces boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Rather than treating these outcomes as pathological deviations, *'asabiyyah* situates them within the normal dynamics of social organization and political formation, offering a more realistic and historically grounded account of social capital and its ambivalence.³⁵

Bonding Social Capital and the Core of 'Asabiyyah

At the foundational level, *'asabiyyah* closely corresponds to what contemporary theory describes as bonding social capital: dense, inward-looking forms of cohesion characterized by strong trust, shared identity, and moral obligation. While kinship often provides the most immediate basis for such cohesion, Khaldun explicitly states that blood relations are neither necessary nor sufficient for the emergence of *'asabiyyah*. Solidarity may

33 Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 1–24.

34 Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*.

35 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

arise from alliances, shared beliefs, prolonged coexistence, or collective struggle.³⁶

Moral intensity distinguishes *‘asabiyyah* from the conventional accounts of bonding social capital. Bonding ties are not merely affective or instrumental; they entail obligations of loyalty, protection, and collective sacrifice. This moral depth enables groups to endure hardship and mobilize effectively, but also sharpens the boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Khaldun treats this exclusionary dimension not as a normative failure but as an inherent feature of strong cohesion, thereby offering a more analytically realistic account of bonding social capital and its ambivalent consequences.³⁷

Bridging Social Capital: Expansion, Alliance, and Transformation

As groups endowed with strong *‘asabiyyah* expand beyond their initial boundaries, cohesion is reconfigured through alliances, incorporation, and negotiated inclusion – processes that are analogous to bridging social capital. Unlike contemporary accounts that often portray bridging as voluntary and egalitarian, Khaldun conceptualizes it as a politically charged transformation shaped by asymmetrical power relations.³⁸

Bridging in this framework does not dissolve the moral core of *‘asabiyyah*; rather, it extends and redefines it. Weaker groups may be absorbed, values renegotiated, and collective identities reformulated to preserve the dominance of a cohesive core. This perspective challenges normative depictions of bridging social capital by foregrounding its potential role in domination as well as cooperation and by embedding intergroup relations within broader dynamics of power and expansion.³⁹

36 Philip C. Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008).

37 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

38 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

39 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

Linking Social Capital and the Institutionalization of 'Asabiyyah

The most significant contribution of 'asabiyyah to social capital theory lies in its account of linking social capital. While contemporary formulations describe linking social capital as vertical connections between groups and institutions, Khaldun situates this process within the theory of state formation. Institutions do not merely connect to social cohesion, they also emerge from it.⁴⁰

In Khaldun's framework, political authority represents an institutionalized expression of collective solidarity. Legitimacy is derived from the moral authority of the cohesive group rather than abstract legal rationality. However, as authority becomes bureaucratized and routinized, the moral foundations of 'asabiyyah weaken. Loyalty increasingly depends on coercion or material incentives that mark the onset of political decline. This dynamic offers a critical correction to policy-oriented approaches that emphasize institutional trust while neglecting the social bonds that originally produced legitimacy.⁴¹

'Asabiyyah and the Moral Economy of Social Capital

One of the most significant theoretical contributions of 'asabiyyah is its articulation of the moral economy of social cohesion. Unlike the dominant formulations of social capital that oscillate between instrumental and normative interpretations, Khaldun integrates morality directly into the mechanism of collective action. Trust, loyalty, and obligation are not auxiliary cultural values but constitutive forces that generate collective capacity, authority, and endurance.⁴²

This moral grounding enables 'asabiyyah to explain forms of collective behaviour that remain difficult to capture within rational-choice or efficiency-oriented models of social capital, including sacrifice, long-term commitment, and resistance. At the same time, Ibn Khaldun avoids idealizing cohesion by explicitly recognizing its ambivalence: while strong solidarity produces inclusion and protection, it also leads to exclusion, hierarchy, and domination.⁴³

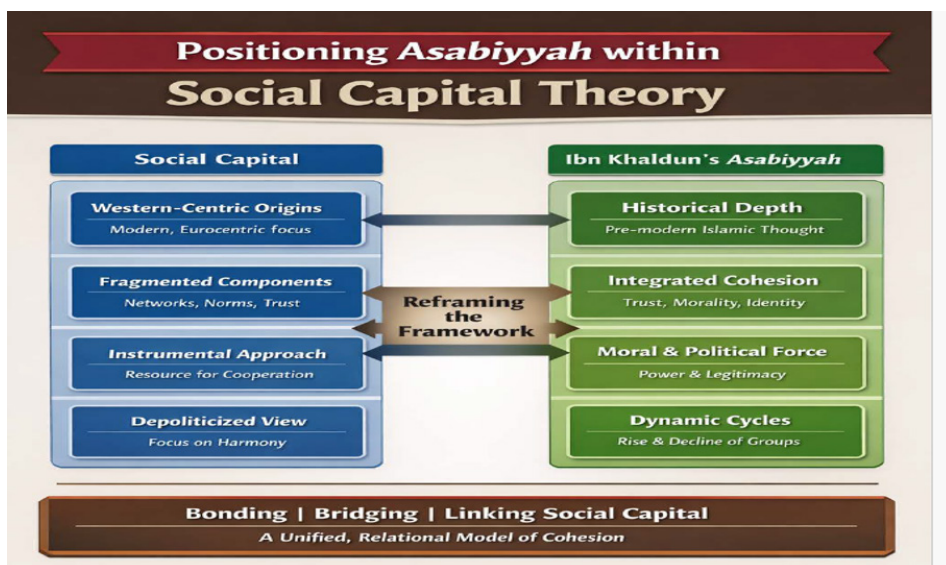
40 Michael Woolcock, "Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework", *Theory and Society* 27, no. 2 (1998): 151–208.

41 Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan, "Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy", *World Bank Research Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000): 225–249.

42 Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III, "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On", *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74–88.

43 Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 52–55.

By positioning morality, power, and temporality at the core of social cohesion, Khaldun's framework extends contemporary social capital theory beyond descriptive typologies and normative idealizations, offering a historically grounded and analytically robust sociology of collective life.⁴⁴



Theoretical Contribution: What Ibn Khaldun Adds to Social Capital Theory

The integration of Ibn Khaldun's concept of 'asabiyyah into contemporary social capital theory constitutes a substantive theoretical contribution rather than an exercise in intellectual recovery. By offering a morally grounded, power-sensitive, and historically dynamic framework of social cohesion, 'asabiyyah addresses several long-standing limitations of social capital scholarship and reorients it toward a more comprehensive sociology of collective life.⁴⁵

This section outlines the main theoretical contributions of Khaldun's framework across five interrelated dimensions: conceptual integration, moral

44 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 123–130; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 1–24.

45 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*; Syed Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006).

foundations, power and domination, temporality and historical dynamics, and micro–macro integration.

Conceptual Integration and Moral Foundations of Social Cohesion

Conceptual fragmentation is one of the most persistent challenges in social capital theory. Despite decades of development, social capital remains an umbrella term encompassing networks, norms, trust, and civic engagement, often operationalized as discrete variables rather than theorized as a unified social mechanism.⁴⁶

Khaldun's concept of '*asabiyyah*' directly addresses this limitation by offering an integrated framework in which trust, norms, identity, and collective action are mutually constitutive. Social cohesion is not a resource that individuals strategically mobilize but a relational condition in which actors are embedded through moral obligation and shared identity. Collective action is possible not because networks are efficient but because social bonds are ethically binding.⁴⁷

This moral grounding distinguishes '*asabiyyah*' from instrumental or functional accounts of social capital. Trust, loyalty, and mutual responsibility are not auxiliary facilitators of cooperation but constitutive elements of collective power. By embedding morality within the mechanism of social cohesion, Ibn Khaldun provides analytical tools for understanding sacrifice, endurance, and long-term commitment – phenomena that remain difficult to explain through rational-choice or cost–benefit models.⁴⁸

Power, Domination, and the Political Nature of Social Capital

The central contribution of '*asabiyyah*' lies in its explicit engagement with power and domination. Unlike the dominant strands of social capital theory

46 Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 1–24; Ben Fine, *Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

47 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 97–115; Fuad Baali, *Society, State and Urbanism: Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

48 Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–258.

that portray cohesion as a benign or universally beneficial resource, Khaldun places power at the centre of social solidarity. *‘Asabiyyah* is a force through which groups acquire dominance, establish authority, and maintain control.⁴⁹

In this framework, political authority emerges directly from collective solidarity, rather than from abstract legal rationality. While strong cohesion enables cooperation and stability, it also leads to exclusion, hierarchy, and conflict. By recognizing this ambivalence, Khaldun avoids the normative romanticism that characterizes much of the social capital literature and offers a more politically grounded understanding of legitimacy and decline.⁵⁰

Temporality and Historical Dynamics of Social Cohesion

Khaldun’s framework offers a processual and historical model of social cohesion that is largely absent from contemporary social capital theory. Rather than treating bonding, bridging, and linking as static or coexisting, *‘asabiyyah* conceptualizes cohesion as a cyclical process that emerges, intensifies, institutionalizes, and eventually erodes.⁵¹

This temporal sensitivity allows for a more nuanced understanding of social change, suggesting that declines in trust or civic engagement reflect deeper transformations in the moral and political foundations of social life than individual disengagement alone.⁵²

‘Asabiyyah and the Micro–Macro Integration Problem

Khaldun’s concept of *‘asabiyyah* provides a coherent solution to the micro–macro integration problem by conceptualizing social cohesion as a relational mechanism operating simultaneously across levels. At the micro level, it is expressed through everyday practices of trust and loyalty, whereas at the

49 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 123–130; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

50 Alejandro Portes, “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 1–24; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

51 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 289–305; Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

52 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 88–92.

macro level, it manifests as political authority and institutional order. These levels are mutually constitutive rather than analytically separate.⁵³

Epistemological Implications and Summary of Contributions

In addition to its substantive theoretical contributions, 'asabiyyah has important epistemological implications for social capital theory. This challenges the assumption that sociological theory is inherently Western and modern by demonstrating that sophisticated analyses of social cohesion, power, and historical change existed long before contemporary sociology.⁵⁴

Khaldun's framework offers an integrated, morally grounded, power-sensitive, and historically dynamic theory of social cohesion. Rather than serving as an alternative to the social capital theory, 'asabiyyah provides a foundational perspective capable of deepening and transforming the contemporary understanding of social capital and collective life.⁵⁵

'Asabiyyah and Social Capital in the UAE: A Contextualized Theoretical Illustration

Why the Emirati Case Matters

The UAE offers a distinctive theoretical context for examining the transformation of tribal 'asabiyyah into modern configurations of social capital. Rather than treating tribal solidarity as an obstacle to modernization, the Emirati experience illustrates how indigenous forms of cohesion can be strategically reframed and embedded within state institutions, national identity, and development trajectories.⁵⁶

53 James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95–S120; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984); Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 90–100.

54 Syed Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006); Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

55 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

56 Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

This case is employed as a contextualized theoretical illustration rather than an empirical test of causality. Its analytical value lies in demonstrating the contemporary relevance of Ibn Khaldun's framework for understanding how traditional moral economies of cohesion can be rescaled within a modern nation-state.⁵⁷

From Tribal to National 'Asabiyyah

Prior to the formation of the UAE, Bedouin society was organized around strong tribal structures that ensured survival, protection, and moral regulation. Tribal *'asabiyyah* functioned as an intensive form of bonding social capital, characterized by trust, collective responsibility, and moral authority.⁵⁸

With the establishment of the UAE, tribal solidarities were not dismantled but rescaled and integrated into a broader national framework, where loyalty was redirected toward the federation and traditional leadership incorporated into formal governance.⁵⁹

In Khaldunian terms, this transformation reflects the expansion of *'asabiyyah* from localized solidarity to a national moral community, combining bonding and linking social capital. Political authority derived legitimacy not only from legal structures but also from continuity with indigenous solidarities and moral expectations.⁶⁰

Institutionalizing 'Asabiyyah and Linking Social Capital

A defining feature of the Emirati case is the institutionalization of social cohesion through culturally grounded governance mechanisms. Practices such as the *majlis* connect citizens to authority through relational and moral forms of legitimacy rather than purely bureaucratic procedures.⁶¹

57 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

58 Ibid.

59 Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 45–60; Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Tribal States to United Arab Emirates* (Dubai: Motivate Publishing, 2005), 270–290.

60 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 289–305; Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2014), 88–92.

61 Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

Authority is sustained through proximity, consultation, and reciprocal obligation, reinforcing trust and collective solidarity. This reflects Ibn Khaldun's insight that political legitimacy derives from social bonds and weakens when detached from its moral foundations.⁶²

Bridging Social Capital, Diversity, and Moral Economy

The UAE's demographic diversity poses a challenge to traditional cohesion, yet the Emirati model demonstrates how strong internal bonds can coexist with regulated forms of bridging social capital. This managed inclusion supports economic cooperation while preserving the core of citizen solidarity.⁶³

Welfare provision reinforces this configuration as an extension of the moral economy rather than a purely contractual system. Public support is viewed as reciprocal obligation between leadership and society, strengthening legitimacy and social cohesion in Khaldunian terms.⁶⁴

Managing the Ambivalence of 'Asabiyyah

Despite its integrative potential, tribal 'asabiyyah entails risks such as exclusion, favouritism, and inequality. Ibn Khaldun recognized this ambivalence, noting that strong solidarity can produce domination and conflict alongside cooperation.⁶⁵

The Emirati case reflects efforts to manage these risks by embedding traditional solidarities within legal and institutional frameworks that emphasize national identity and governance. This balance harnesses the integrative potential of 'asabiyyah while limiting its exclusionary effects.⁶⁶

62 Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates* (Dubai: Motivate Publishing, 2005); Philip Carl Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008).

63 Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

64 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 101–108.

65 Abdullah, A., "The Majlis: An Aspect of Traditional Arab Social Organization", *Anthropology of the Middle East* 3, no. 1 (1978): 1–18.

66 Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

The Emirati Case as a Theoretical Model

The Emirati experience offers a model for rethinking the relationship between tradition and modernity in social capital theory. It shows that *'asabiyyah*, when strategically reframed and institutionally embedded, can support cohesion, legitimacy, and stability.⁶⁷

This case reinforces that social capital is contextual, morally grounded, and historically contingent, requiring attention to indigenous moral economies rather than universalized policy models.⁶⁸

Conclusion and Theoretical Implications

This chapter reconceptualizes Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyyah* within contemporary social capital theory, demonstrating its analytical relevance through the UAE case. It argues that *'asabiyyah* constitutes an integrated and dynamic theory of social cohesion that extends modern formulations of social capital.⁶⁹

By placing *'asabiyyah* in dialogue with Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, the analysis highlights key limitations in social capital theory, including fragmentation and limited attention to power and history. In contrast, Khaldun's framework offers an integrated and morally grounded model of social cohesion.⁷⁰

The chapter argues that bonding, bridging, and linking social capital are not static categories but relational expressions of a single cohesive force. Drawing on Ibn Khaldun's cyclical concept of *'asabiyyah*, it introduces a processual perspective that adds temporal depth to social capital theory.⁷¹

The Emirati case demonstrates the contemporary relevance of *'asabiyyah*, showing how it has been reframed and institutionally embedded within a

67 Adam Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

68 Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*; Sami Khalaf, "Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 3 (2000): 354–382.

69 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*; Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

70 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986); James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95–S120; Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

71 Woolcock, "Social Capital and Economic Development", 151–208; Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 289–305.

modern state. Rather than declining, indigenous solidarity is rescaled to support identity, legitimacy, and stability, challenging linear modernization narratives.⁷²

The analysis reaffirms Khaldun's view of the ambivalence of social cohesion: while strong solidarity fosters trust and capacity, it can also produce exclusion and domination. The Emirati case underscores the role of institutional and moral regulation in managing this dynamic, challenging purely policy-driven approaches to building social capital.⁷³

The study calls for a shift toward integrated, process-oriented models of social cohesion, recentres morality as a constitutive element of collective life, and emphasizes temporality as a dynamic process of emergence, transformation, and renewal.⁷⁴

More broadly, this chapter contributes to decolonizing sociological theory by positioning Ibn Khaldun as a substantive theorist of social capital. It highlights 'asabiyyah as a living framework that expands the sociological canon and offers valuable insights for contemporary social challenges.⁷⁵

Although theoretical, this study opens avenues for future research. Comparative and empirical studies can examine how 'asabiyyah is transformed and operationalized across contexts, particularly in shaping trust, legitimacy, and collective action.⁷⁶

Revisiting Ibn Khaldun is not an exercise in nostalgia but a step toward a more inclusive and analytically robust sociology. By integrating morality, power, and historical dynamics, 'asabiyyah offers key insights for rethinking social capital and understanding collective life.⁷⁷

72 Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005); Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates* (Dubai: Motivate Publishing, 2005).

73 Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 1–24; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

74 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984); Syed Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006).

75 Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

76 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Woolcock and Narayan, "Social Capital", *World Bank Research Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000): 225–249.

77 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*.

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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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Bedouin and Urban Civilization in the Thought of Ibn Khaldun: Polarity or Complementarity

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Introduction

Muslim scholars, through their writings, have contributed a rich intellectual and scientific legacy worthy of study and analysis. Among the most prominent of these scholars is Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, the father of sociology and a pioneer in the philosophy of history. However, he is not known as an “urban planner” in the technical sense of the word, but rather as a thinker who viewed human civilization within a broader framework linked to the state and its dynamics. This is what we will attempt to highlight in this paper.

‘Umrān, “urbanism” or civilization,¹ does not simply refer to buildings or cities; for Ibn Khaldun, it is human society in all its social, political, and economic components. He built upon this foundation a comprehensive theory of the rise and fall of civilizations, rightfully establishing himself as a pioneer in sociology and urbanism. Ibn Khaldun defines the urbanism of the world as human society and all that arises from it, including governance, states, their hierarchies, and the various stages of human life. According to Ibn Khaldun:

1 The nearest translations.

“Human social organization is something necessary. The philosophers expressed this fact by saying: ‘Man is “political” by nature.’ That is, he cannot do without the social organization for which the philosophers use the technical term ‘town’ (polis).”²

Ibn Khaldun agrees that humans are “political by nature,” but he interprets this politically grounded nature as a necessity for survival and historical development, not as an abstract philosophical virtue. Society, for him, is the engine of history, not merely its setting.

As he puts it: “Civilization. This means that human beings have to dwell in common and settle together in cities and hamlets for the comforts of companionship and for the satisfaction of human needs, because of the natural disposition of human beings toward co-operation to be able to make a living.”³

Ibn Khaldun defines *ʿumrān* (human settlement or civilization) as the necessity of people living together, driven by sociability, companionship, and the need to satisfy basic material requirements through cooperation. He emphasizes that cooperation is not accidental but rooted in human nature, since individuals cannot secure their livelihood in isolation.

Civilization, therefore, is not an artificial construct but the outcome of an innate human disposition toward cooperation. Settlement becomes the spatial expression of this social necessity, giving rise to organized communities where economic, social, and cultural life can develop. This conception places cooperation at the very foundation of urban life and frames civilization as both a social and material process.

The Foundations of Urbanism in Ibn Khaldun’s Thought

Expanded Definition of Urbanism – ʿUmrān

For Ibn Khaldun, *ʿumrān* cannot be reduced to “urbanism” in the modern, technical sense of city planning or morphological analysis. Rather, it designates the comprehensive condition of human social existence, encompassing the ways in which people inhabit space, organize collective life, produce

2 Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 102.

3 Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 99.

wealth, exercise political authority, and transmit cultural norms across generations. *Umrān* is thus both a social fact and a spatial reality, inseparable from the historical dynamics that shape human societies.

At its foundation, *ʿumrān* expresses the necessity of collective life. Human beings, by their very nature, are unable to survive or secure their livelihood in isolation. This biological and social limitation gives rise to cooperation, which in turn generates the division of labour, economic exchange, and the emergence of political authority. Settlement – whether temporary or permanent – becomes the spatial manifestation of this cooperative necessity. In this sense, urbanism is not an optional or secondary phenomenon, but a structural condition of human existence.

Crucially, Ibn Khaldun's concept of *ʿumrān* encompasses all forms of human settlement, from nomadic encampments and tribal territories to villages, towns, and fully developed cities. Nomadic and sedentary modes of life are not opposed categories but interconnected expressions of the same civilizational process. Each form of *ʿumrān* corresponds to specific spatial constraints, economic strategies, and degrees of social cohesion (*ʿaṣabiyya*), which together shape patterns of settlement and governance.

Urbanism, understood through *ʿumrān*, therefore functions as a theoretical lens for analysing social organization, political power, and civilization itself. It integrates social relations, modes of production, systems of authority, and cultural practices within a single framework. Space is never neutral in this perspective: it is actively structured to ensure survival, security, and continuity, while simultaneously reflecting the internal strength or fragility of social bonds.

Finally, *ʿumrān* is not a fixed stage of development nor a linear progression toward urban complexity. It is a dynamic and cyclical process, constantly evolving in response to spatial conditions, economic transformations, and the rise or decline of social cohesion. Urban growth, prosperity, and eventual decay are all embedded within this broader logic of *ʿumrān*, making Ibn Khaldun's concept a powerful tool for understanding both historical and contemporary forms of urban and territorial organization.

The Two Stages of Civilization

According to Ibn Khaldun, human civilization develops through two fundamental stages that correspond to different levels of material satisfaction and

social organization. The first is Bedouin civilization *‘umrān badawī*, which is primarily concerned with securing the necessities of life. The second is urban civilization, *‘umrān ḥaḍari*, which emerges once these necessities have been fulfilled and is characterized by comfort, refinement, and luxury.

Ibn Khaldun summarizes this progression as follows: “Bedouins, thus, are the basis of, and prior to, cities and sedentary people. Man seeks first the bare necessities. Only after he has obtained the bare necessities does he get to comforts and luxuries. The toughness of desert life precedes the softness of sedentary life.”⁴

Bedouin civilization is marked by simplicity, strong tribal solidarity (*‘aṣabiyya*), and courage – qualities that enable survival under harsh conditions. Urban civilization, by contrast, develops in more stable and prosperous environments and is associated with luxury and ease. While these conditions allow for artistic and economic advancement, they also tend to weaken tribal solidarity, eventually contributing to political decline and the decay of the state.

Despite this dynamic, Ibn Khaldun recognizes the civilizational primacy of the urban condition. He notes that urban life represents the goal toward which Bedouins naturally aspire, once they have accumulated sufficient resources to sustain a life of comfort:

Therefore, urbanization is found to be the goal to which the Bedouin aspires. Through his own efforts, he achieves what he proposes to achieve in this respect. When he has obtained enough to be ready for the conditions and customs of luxury, he enters upon a life of ease and submits himself to the yoke of the city. This is the case with all Bedouin tribes. Sedentary people, on the other hand, have no desire for desert conditions, unless they are motivated by some urgent necessity or they cannot keep up with their fellow city dwellers.⁵

It is important to clarify that Ibn Khaldun is not making a value judgment in the modern moral sense. He does not claim that urban populations are inherently better, wiser, or more virtuous than Bedouins. Rather, his notion of “superiority” is functional and civilizational, referring to the level of material organization, political complexity, and crafts development achieved by urban society, rather than to any absolute or ethical hierarchy.

4 Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 166.

5 Ibid.

Modern Interpretations and the Question of Polarity

Through analyses of Ibn Khaldun's work, some scholars – such as Behrens-Abouseif, Alatas, Shaddadi, Al-Jaberi, and Cory – have carefully engaged with the concept of polarity between Bedouin and urban civilization. However, a close reading of Ibn Khaldun shows that the relationship between these two forms of society is not fundamentally oppositional, but rather chronological and evolutionary. According to his cyclical theory of history and the state, societies emerge, develop, and eventually decline. Within this framework, the progression from Bedouin life to urban civilization is a natural historical sequence. Therefore, the rigid dichotomy often attributed to Ibn Khaldun is misleading. This is because the notion of dichotomy is derived from European thought, where it traditionally rests on the opposition between rural and urban life.

From this perspective, the transition from nomadic to urban society is not a rupture but a necessary historical progression. The apparent dichotomy between desert and city, nomad and sedentary, often highlighted by some interpreters, reflects more the influence of European conceptual frameworks than Ibn Khaldun's own thought.

Ibn Khaldun, by contrast, presents a dynamic and interdependent view: the Bedouin provide the generative energy for civilization, and the city represents its temporal fruition and eventual transformation. Recognizing this subtlety allows for a more accurate understanding of Ibn Khaldun's theory, moving beyond simplistic binaries and appreciating the cyclical and interconnected nature of social development.

Polarity and Hierarchy

Behrens-Abouseif emphasizes the notion of polarity in Ibn Khaldun's thought:

In Ibn Khaldun's work, the city-province polarity is clearly articulated. For him, urbanization is a voluntary act (*qarār*) of man, guided by the need for protection and well-being offered by a sedentary lifestyle. The status of the Bedouin (*badāwa*) represents the primitive stage in relation to civilization. Bedouin society is the first rung in the cultural hierarchy, while urban society is superior to all other social forms.⁶

6 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "La conception de la ville dans la pensée arabe du Moyen Âge", *Mégapoles méditerranéennes. Géographie urbaine rétrospective* (2000): 37, author's translation, https://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0223-5099_2000_act_261_1_62462000.

The concept of polarity here reflects the dynamic interplay between two forms of society – nomadic and urban – where tension, adaptation, and interaction are essential for social evolution. However, Behrens' reading introduces an additional layer of hierarchy, suggesting that these forms are not merely different but occupy distinct positions within a developmental continuum. In this framework, Bedouin society functions as the foundational stage of social organization, providing the raw cohesion and resilience (*ʿaṣabiyya*) necessary for the birth of civilization. Urban society, by contrast, emerges as the higher stage of cultural, institutional, and economic complexity, representing the culmination of social refinement and political sophistication.

This hierarchical understanding aligns closely with Ibn Khaldun's broader conception of *ʿumrān*, or social development, in which the progression from desert life to sedentary urbanity is both natural and necessary. The Bedouin, through their strong social solidarity and adaptive capacities, generate the initial energy that fuels the formation of cities and states. Urban societies, with their institutions, markets, and varied crafts production, build upon this foundation, achieving stability and refinement but also becoming susceptible to decline as cohesion wanes.

By framing the polarity of Bedouin and urban life within a hierarchical developmental model, Behrens highlights a key feature of Ibn Khaldun's thought: social evolution is cyclical and interdependent rather than simply oppositional. The apparent superiority, as seen above (§II.2), of urban society is therefore not a judgment in isolation, but the recognition of a stage in the historical and civilizational trajectory that begins with the Bedouin. This interpretation challenges readings that impose a rigid European-style dichotomy between rural and urban life, revealing instead a sophisticated framework in which social forms are stages within a hierarchical historical process.

Cycle

Farid Al-Attas employs the concept of cyclical interaction between pre-urban Bedouins and settled urban tribes:

In other words, it was the conquest of the dynasty by pre-urban Bedouins that effectively, albeit temporarily, abolished what is objectionable, that is, the excesses of urban life. In Ibn Khaldun's world there was the cyclical change that rescued society from these excesses.

The reform is cyclical. A tribe conquers a dynasty, founds a new one and rules until it is overthrown by a reform-minded leader who has the support of tribes eager to cash in on the city. The luxury of city life is the chief cause of the rise of impiety.⁷

This passage exemplifies Ibn Khaldun's conception of history as a repeating cycle, where the vitality of Bedouin society periodically rejuvenates urban civilization – only for decline to recur. According to Ibn Khaldun, urban civilization, upon reaching a certain degree of prosperity, tends to generate moral decay: excessive luxury, erosion of discipline, weakening of social solidarity (*'asabiyya*), and laxity in religious observance. When a dynasty becomes overly urbanized, it loses the vigour that once enabled effective governance. Urban luxury thus represents not merely a social phenomenon but a political and religious hazard. Excessive comfort fosters impiety and undermines the ethical foundations of authority, rendering the dynasty susceptible to overthrow by austerity-driven tribal forces.

The conquest of such a dynasty by pre-urban Bedouins temporarily eliminates these “objectionable” excesses. Bedouins, accustomed to hardship and simplicity, embody stronger moral discipline and collective cohesion (*'asabiyya*). Their victory functions as a corrective mechanism, restoring moral and social balance.

However, this correction is provisional rather than permanent. Once the conquering tribe settles in the city and establishes a new dynasty, it gradually assimilates urban habits. Over time, the familiar patterns reemerge: comfort transforms into luxury, discipline diminishes, and moral decline reasserts itself. Reform in Ibn Khaldun's framework is thus cyclical rather than linear or progressive, with civilizations repeatedly rising, declining, and being renewed through the conquest of disciplined tribal forces.

Another author, Stephen Cory, adopts the notion of “cycle” between the two forms of urbanization. He explains Ibn Khaldun's conception as a cyclical process:

As he considered the impact of these vastly different ways of life upon the history of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun observed that *'umrān badawī* seemed to repeatedly serve as the source for the rise of *'umrān hadarī* and that the

7 Syed Farid Al-Attas, “Current Muslim Reform Projects and Their Destiny: A Critical Analysis from Ibn Khaldun's Perspective”, *From Past to Future – Ibn Khaldun* (2006): 325.

achievement of powerful citted states ultimately led to the decline and fall of the groups that had established these states.⁸

This excerpt captures a central tenet of Ibn Khaldun's theory of civilization (*ʿumrān*): nomadic society acts as the catalyst for the development of urban social structures. By framing his observation within the historical context of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun anchors his analysis in empirical reality rather than abstract speculation.

The claim that *ʿumrān badawi* “repeatedly serves as the source” of *ʿumrān ḥaḍari* emphasizes the foundational role of nomadic groups in the emergence of political power. Bedouin communities, forged through mobility and adversity, possess strong *ʿasabiyya*, enabling them to unite, conquer, and establish dynasties. In this sense, nomadic life serves as the generative force behind urban civilization, providing the social cohesion and moral discipline that sedentary societies tend to lose over time.

At the same time, this reveals a structural paradox: the success of urban civilization accelerates the decline of its founders. Once Bedouin groups create prosperous city-states, they become immersed in the comforts and institutional complexities of sedentary life – luxury, dependency, and social stratification. These conditions erode *ʿasabiyya*, undermining political stability and ultimately precipitating collapse. Urban civilization, therefore, represents both the pinnacle of social achievement and the onset of decline.

Importantly, Ibn Khaldun presents this cycle not as a moral judgment but as a historical principle governing the rise and fall of states. The passage from *badawi* to *ḥaḍari* is neither accidental nor preventable; it is an inherent dynamic of civilization. Civilization, in his view, does not follow a linear trajectory but unfolds through recurring cycles of growth, consolidation, and decay.

Tension and Complementarity of Poles

Abdelsalam Shaddadi emphasizes the complementarity between nomadic and urban forms of civilization. He notes that: “Ibn Khaldun sees civilization as a single reality in which two poles can be distinguished: urban and nomadic.

8 Stephen Cory, “Breaking the Khaldunian Cycle? The Rise of Sharifianism as the Basis for Political Legitimacy in Early Modern Morocco”, History Faculty Publications 83 (2008): https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clhist_facpub/83.

According to him, both have a natural and necessary character.”⁹ Shaddadi adds: “Both Bedouin and urban societies are essential, and together they form a unique system of civilization in which they occupy positions that are both conflicting and complementary.”¹⁰

By describing civilization as a single reality with two poles – urban and nomadic – Ibn Khaldun rejects the notion that these forms of life are entirely separate or opposed. Instead, they represent conflicting and complementary expressions of the same human social reality (*ʿumrān*).

The nomadic, or Bedouin, pole embodies the earliest and most fundamental form of social organization. It arises from necessity, emphasizing survival, self-sufficiency, strong group solidarity (*ʿasabiyya*), and a simple moral framework shaped by harsh conditions. In contrast, the urban pole represents a more advanced stage, characterized by a settled life, the division of labour, political institutions, crafts, scientific development, and material prosperity.

Describing both forms as “natural and necessary” conveys a dual insight. First, nomadic life is natural because human societies originate from basic needs and challenging situations. Second, urban life is equally natural because, once security is established, humans naturally pursue comfort, refinement, and social complexity. Neither form is accidental or abnormal; each emerges logically from the processes of social development.

Consequently, Ibn Khaldun perceives nomadism and urbanity not only as opposing worlds but as complementary and interdependent stages within a continuous historical process, each influencing, sustaining, and transforming into the other.

In Ibn Khaldūn’s theory, the relationship between Bedouin and urban societies is simultaneously conflictual and complementary because each embodies opposing values while fulfilling indispensable functions within a single civilizational system. Civilization thus unfolds within a field of unresolved tension between Bedouin vigour and urban refinement, a tension that is neither accidental nor pathological but constitutive. Rather than signalling a rupture between nomadism and urbanity, this dynamic tension ensures both continuity and transformation, binding conflict and complementarity into a single historical movement.

9 Abdessalem Shaddadi, *Ibn Khaldūn Al-Insan wa Mounadher al-Hadhara*, trans. Hanen Kassab Hassen (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 2016), 371, author’s translation.

10 Ibid.

Transition

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri emphasizes that the shift from nomadism to urbanization does not follow a linear trajectory but unfolds as a historical cycle. Ibn Khaldun did not frame his analysis around a simple dichotomy of nomadism versus urban civilization; instead, he used it as a lens to understand the dynamics of urban development and the state.

Al-Jabri challenges the notion of an inherent conflict between Bedouin and urban civilizations:

Similarly, regarding the conflict between Bedouin and urban life, Ibn Khaldun did not take this issue as a subject of research and study. In fact, we doubt that he even paid deep attention to this “conflict”. He viewed Bedouin civilization not as the antithesis of urban civilization, but as its origin and foundation. For him, the issue was one of progression on the ladder of civilization and urbanity, not a conflict between two modes of life. Yes, he speaks of the transition from nomadism to civilization, but for him, this transition is not the result of social conflict, but rather something that “happens naturally”.¹¹

In this view, Ibn Khaldun did not perceive Bedouin and urban civilizations as opposing forces, but as successive stages within a single civilizational process, where nomadism provides the foundation, urbanity represents the culmination, and transition is a natural historical movement rather than a social struggle.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun’s focus is not on emphasizing a dichotomy between nomadism and urban civilizations but on using it to construct a transition from one stage to another. His originality lies in establishing an urban and social conception distinct from Western frameworks, one grounded in the logic of historical cycles rather than binary opposition. This underscores the importance of interpreting his thought within its original conceptual context and within the broader framework of Islamic urban theory, rather than through the lens of external intellectual projections.

The Historical Cycle of Civilization in Ibn Khaldun

In Ibn Khaldun’s theory, civilizational change is driven by the interaction between two fundamental ways of life: nomadic and sedentary. These are not isolated stages but interdependent forces whose relationship structures

11 Mohamed A. Al-Jaberi, *Fikr Ibn Khaldun: Al-'Assabiyya wa al-Dawla*. (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1992-1994), 120, author’s translation.

the movement of civilization. The tension between them plays a constructive role, since it generates transformation rather than simple rupture or disorder.

Nomadic groups possess strong social cohesion, simplicity of needs, and a capacity for collective action. These qualities allow them to establish political authority and lay the foundations of states and cities. Sedentary life, in turn, makes possible economic growth, and institutional stability. Yet as urban society becomes more prosperous, it also tends to weaken the very bonds of solidarity that once sustained it, leading to moral laxity and political fragility.

Historical development thus follows a cyclical pattern. Periods of urban expansion and flourishing are eventually followed by decline, not as an accident but as a structural outcome of urban life itself. This decline opens space for new nomadic groups to assume power and begin a new phase of conquest and construction. Civilization, therefore, advances through recurring cycles in which renewal emerges from the margins, ensuring continuity through change.

Rise and Decline of Dynasties

Ibn Khaldun includes Bedouin and urban civilization, as generations, in the stages of state development:

The first generation retains the desert qualities, desert toughness, and desert savagery. (Its members are used to) privation and to sharing their glory (with each other); they are brave and rapacious. Therefore, the strength of group feeling continues to be preserved among them. They are sharp and greatly feared. People submit to them.

Under the influence of royal authority and a life of ease, the second generation changes from the desert attitude to sedentary culture, from privation to luxury and plenty, from a state in which everybody shared in the glory to one in which one man claims all the glory for himself while the others are too lazy to strive for glory, and from proud superiority to humble subservience. Thus, the vigour of group feeling is broken to some extent. People become used to lowliness and obedience.

The third generation, then, has (completely) forgotten the period of desert life and toughness, as if it had never existed. They have lost (the taste for) the sweetness of fame and for group feeling, because they are dominated by force. Luxury reaches its peak among them, because they are so much given to a life of prosperity and ease. They become dependent on the dynasty and are like women and children who need to be defended. Group feeling disappears completely. People forget to protect and defend themselves and to press their claims.

The ruler, then, has need of other, brave people to support him. He takes many clients and followers. They help the dynasty to some degree, until God permits it to be destroyed, and it goes with everything it stands for.¹²

Ibn Khaldun integrates both Bedouin (first generation) and urban (second generation) civilization into a single process of state formation, structured around successive generations. In the first generation, rulers retain desert virtues – hardship, courage, austerity, and strong group feeling (*ʿasabiyya*). Accustomed to privation and collective glory, they inspire fear and obedience, ensuring the cohesion and strength of the emerging state.

The second generation marks a transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary existence. Ease, luxury, and royal authority weaken shared responsibility and diminish collective solidarity, as power and prestige become concentrated in the ruler while others lapse into passivity and submission. Group feeling is not entirely lost, but it is significantly reduced.

By the third generation, which is an extension of the sedentary generation, the memory of desert life has vanished. Luxury reaches its height, dependence on authority increases, and *ʿasabiyya* disappears altogether. The ruling group becomes incapable of self-defence, forcing the ruler to rely on external supporters to sustain power – an arrangement that only delays the inevitable collapse of the dynasty.

This generational sequence illustrates Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory of history and the state: societies are born, grow, flourish, and decline. The passage from nomadism to urban civilization is therefore not a rigid opposition but a necessary historical transition within a recurring cycle, negating any fixed polarity between Bedouin and urban civilizations.

Cyclical Mechanism and Interdependence

Ibn Khaldun conceives nomadic and urban life not as opposing realms, as in the European rural–urban dichotomy, but as complementary stages within a single cycle of human development. Nomadic life constitutes the foundational condition of existence, while urban civilization emerges as its extension, marked by prosperity and refinement, before entering a phase of decline and collapse.

Social development, in Ibn Khaldun's view, unfolds as a recurring process governed by the interdependence of nomadic and urban modes of life. This

12 Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 227–229.

cycle structures not only the growth and decay of cities but also the formation, consolidation, and dissolution of political power.

Far from competing civilizations, nomadic and urban societies represent successive stages of a single historical process. Nomadic groups generate the moral energy and social cohesion necessary for political genesis, whereas urban life provides the institutional, economic, and powerful framework in which civilization attains its highest expression. Each is historically inconceivable without the other.

Through this cyclical model, Ibn Khaldun offers a dynamic theory of history in which tension, transformation, and renewal are intrinsic to civilization itself. By integrating political authority, social cohesion, moral discipline, crafts, and spatial organization into a unified context, his thought remains highly relevant for understanding long-term patterns of urban development, state formation, and societal change.

Implications and Originality of Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Ibn Khaldun's theory of civilization offers a deeply original framework for understanding the dynamics of human societies. Its significance lies in its ability to transcend simplistic oppositions such as rural versus urban, nomadic versus sedentary, or tradition versus modernity. Rather than relying on static or binary distinctions, Ibn Khaldun advances a dynamic model in which conflict, complementarity, transition, and cyclical transformation constitute the driving forces of civilizational development.

The rejection of rigid dichotomies stands at the heart of Ibn Khaldun's originality. By conceptualizing civilization as a processual and cyclical phenomenon, he breaks decisively with linear, moralizing, or ahistorical interpretations of social change. Nomadism and urbanity are not antagonistic states but successive and interdependent ones: each gives rise to the other, each fulfils a necessary function, and together they ensure the continuity of civilization.

Central to this framework is the principle of complementarity between nomadic and urban societies. Although Bedouin and urban ways of life differ in their values and modes of existence – mobility versus settlement, austerity versus luxury, collective discipline versus individual comfort – these contrasts are not destructive. On the contrary, they generate the tensions through which societies renew themselves.

This conception stands in sharp contrast to many Western models that tend to interpret rural and urban societies in hierarchical or oppositional terms. For Ibn Khaldun, conflict does not signal decline or disorder; rather, it operates as a fundamental mechanism of historical continuity, regeneration, and civilizational renewal.

Conclusion

In Ibn Khaldun's thought, Bedouin and urban civilizations are not opposing or mutually exclusive stages of social development, but interdependent poles within a single and continuous civilizational process. Bedouin society, defined by simplicity, mobility, and strong social cohesion (*ʿasabiyya*), constitutes the foundational source of political authority and social renewal. Urban civilization, by contrast, represents the culmination of this process, characterized by institutional complexity, economic specialization, crafts refinement, and material prosperity.

This polarity, however, is inseparable from complementarity. The very conditions that enable urban civilization to flourish – stability, luxury, and administrative sophistication – also generate the structural vulnerabilities that lead to its decline, as social cohesion and moral discipline gradually erode. Conversely, while Bedouin groups lack the material and immaterial achievements of urban life, they possess the collective solidarity necessary to regenerate political order. Civilization, therefore, does not advance linearly, nor does it decline irreversibly; rather, it is continuously reshaped through cyclical interaction.

Such a reading challenges interpretations that reduce Ibn Khaldun's framework to rigid dichotomies. Modern scholars – interpreting polarity and hierarchy (Behrens-Abouseif), cycles (Farid Al-Attas), tension and complementarity (Abdelsalam Shaddadi), transition (Mohammed Abed al-Jabri and Stephen Cory) – have employed diverse conceptual lenses to read the Khaldunian theory.

Nomadic (*badawi*) and urban (*ḥaḍari*) forms of life are not contradictory realms, but successive and interdependent stages within the same civilizational system.

The originality of Ibn Khaldun's contribution lies in the cyclical logic of his theory. Civilizations emerge through Bedouin vigour, consolidate through urban prosperity, and decline as luxury undermines social solidarity – only to be renewed by new nomadic forces. Decline is not accidental but structurally

embedded within the success of urban civilization itself. The Bedouin conquest thus functions as a temporary moral and political correction rather than a permanent resolution.

By integrating nomadic and urban life into the stages of state formation, Ibn Khaldun transcends the static rural–urban dichotomy characteristic of European thought. Conflict and complementarity coexist within his model, sustaining historical continuity and transformation. Nomadic and urban societies form a single civilizational continuum, each indispensable to the other’s historical role.

Ultimately, Ibn Khaldun articulates a sophisticated social and urban theory grounded in historical cycles rather than binary oppositions. To grasp the depth of his thought, it is therefore necessary to read him within his own conceptual universe, attentive to his terminology, historical context, and epistemological assumptions, rather than through retrospective European frameworks. His work offers a profound understanding of civilization as an interconnected system shaped by the interplay of austerity and luxury, mobility and settlement, simplicity and refinement. This perspective remains particularly fruitful for historical, sociological, urban, and architectural studies, as it invites us to view the city not as a fixed entity, but as a dynamic process shaped by internal tensions and recurring cycles of transformation.

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Intellectual Education in Ibn Khaldun: A Psychological-Educational Approach

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Introduction

Intellectual education in human thought represents one of the major pillars for constructing consciousness, guiding action, and safeguarding the psychological and social integrity of the individual. It is not merely a process of imparting knowledge or accumulating information, but rather a continuous process that contributes to the formation of a reflective, critical, and creative mind, instilling in the individual the capacity for discernment, reasoning, and inference, thus enabling them to understand, question, and innovate.

Since ancient times, education has been closely associated with the concept of reason. Plato, for instance, asserted that the refinement of the soul could only occur through the cultivation of thought and its guidance toward truth and goodness.¹ Aristotle maintained that education aims to develop the highest

1 Plato, *La République*, text edited and translated by G. Leroux, Gallimard, (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade: 1993), 412–423.

faculties in humans, namely the capacity for reasoning and reflection.² Over time, this idea was incorporated into Islamic thought, where thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali viewed education as a means to cultivate both the mind and the soul. Ibn Khaldun, however, went beyond this abstract philosophical framework to construct a comprehensive empirical, psychological, and social vision of education and reason.

In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun presents a distinctive conception of knowledge and education, one that is not based on rote transmission or repetition but on the formation of faculties. For him, a faculty is the product of practice, exercise, and gradual development, as he states: “Know that acquiring faculties through mere memorization and recitation is of little benefit; they are acquired through instruction, gradual progression, and frequent practice.”³

Although this statement appears in the context of education, it reflects a profound understanding of cognitive development, presenting learning as a constructive process in which the learner actively participates—a notion that resonates with Piaget’s theory of the gradual development of cognitive faculties.⁴

Ibn Khaldun was acutely aware, within a dynamic cultural and social context, that the educational process can bear fruit only if it aligns with the laws of human psychology. Education, for him, is not the mere accumulation of information but the preparation of both mind and soul to receive knowledge with awareness and balance. He thus issued a strong warning against the use of coercion in education: “Whoever is raised with oppression and compulsion among learners will be subdued by coercion, and the soul will become constrained in its freedom...”⁵

This quote clearly reveals Ibn Khaldun’s early educational-psychological insight, positioning him among the first thinkers to recognize the link between educational violence and psychological disorder—a connection that modern clinical psychology only elucidated in the 20th (Freud, 1930; Rogers, 1961). He realized that coercion generates fear and withdrawal, and that true learning occurs in an atmosphere of trust, freedom, and moderation, principles

2 Aristotle, *Éthique à Nicomaque*, translated by J. Tricot, (Paris: Vrin. 1984).

عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن خلدون الحضرمي، المقدمة ، الجزء الأول ، بيروت (لبنان، دار إحياء التراث العربي). ٦٥٣

3

4 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

that correspond to what educational psychology today refers to as intrinsic motivation for learning.

While Ibn Khaldun linked education and reason, he did not separate this connection from the social and cultural dimensions of human civilization. Society, for him, is the context in which reason develops and interacts; knowledge flourishes only to the extent that civilization itself prospers: "The mind increases through numerous experiences, interactions, and social contacts."⁶

This connection between knowledge and social interaction recalls Vygotsky's 20th-century perspective, which considered learning essentially a socio-cultural process that occurs not in isolation but through interaction with others.⁷

Accordingly, intellectual education in Ibn Khaldun's thought is based on the integration of mind, soul, and society, each constituting a dimension of human development. This conception anticipates what modern theories now call the integrated psycho-educational approach. Recognizing this dimension today holds significant scientific value, as contemporary educational systems, despite their advancement, still suffer from the dominance of rote learning and the lack of critical thinking among learners. Here lies the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's thought, which advocates for an education that exercises the mind rather than filling memory, fostering critical reasoning and the ability to understand and infer rather than mechanical memorization.

The significance of this study lies in its aim to revisit Ibn Khaldun's educational thought in light of modern psychological and educational analysis, uncovering the epistemological and psychological values embedded in his conception of intellectual education. The study goes beyond mere historical comparison, seeking to analyze the underlying psycho-educational foundations of Ibn Khaldun's project and to illustrate what it can offer contemporary educational thought in terms of conceptual and methodological tools for curriculum development and the promotion of critical and creative thinking.

Methodologically, this study relies on an analytical-comparative approach, based on the examination of texts from the *Muqaddimah* and the extrapolation of their educational and psychological concepts, linking them to modern approaches in educational psychology and the philosophy of education, such

7 Vygotsky, L.S. *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (Harvard University Press, 1978) 79–91.

as Piaget's theories of cognitive development, Vygotsky's social interaction theory, and Rogers' humanistic learning model centered on self-actualization. It also draws upon several Arabic and Western academic studies that have approached Ibn Khaldun's thought from the perspective of educational psychology (Badawi,⁸ Mahmoud,⁹ Ashour,¹⁰ and Rosenthal¹¹).

The article is structured as follows:

- First Section: Defining the theoretical framework of intellectual education in Ibn Khaldun's thought, including its concept and underlying intellectual and psychological foundations.
- Second Section: Analyzing the psycho-educational approach through the concepts of gradual development, the formation of faculties, and the impact of educational violence on mental and psychological growth.
- Third Section: Highlighting the contemporary relevance of Ibn Khaldun's conception in modern educational thought, with a discussion of its potential application in designing curricula that foster critical and creative thinking.

This study aims to restore attention to the cognitive and psychological dimensions of Arab-Islamic educational heritage, demonstrating that Ibn Khaldun was not merely a historian with a social vision, but also a pioneer in educational and psychological thought, anticipating centuries in advance insights that modern educational theories have only recently articulated.

Research problem

Intellectual education has been a central concern for philosophers and thinkers throughout history, due to its direct impact on the development of the mind and the cultivation of higher cognitive capacities in individuals, as well as its psychological and social dimensions, which influence personality growth and behavior. From this perspective, Arab-Islamic thought has shown interest in the concept of intellectual education. However, this vision was not systematically developed until the works of a few scholars, most notably Ibn

8 بدوي، عبد الرحمن. الفكر التربوي عند ابن خلدون، (القاهرة، مصر، دار المعارف. ١٩٩١).

9 محمود، زكي نجيب الفلسفة والتعليم عند العرب، (القاهرة: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، مصر، ١٩٨١).

10 عاشور، بن الطاهر النفس والتربية في الفكر العربي الإسلامي، (تونس: دار الثقافة، ١٩٩١).

11 Rosenthal, M. *Education and Culture: Comparative perspectives on teaching and learning*. (Routledge, 2003).

Khaldun, who presented a comprehensive educational perspective linking the mind, soul, and society in a manner that surpassed most of his contemporaries. Many studies have recognized Ibn Khaldun not merely as a historian or social thinker, but also as a pioneer in early educational thought, particularly regarding the cultivation of intellectual faculties, the gradual process of learning, and the analysis of how social environment and psychological states affect knowledge acquisition. Nevertheless, studies addressing this aspect remain relatively limited compared to research on the historical and social dimensions of his thought.

In this context, some studies, such as those by Zaki Naguib Mahmoud¹² have focused on Ibn Khaldun's general educational dimension, asserting that the concept of faculties forms the foundational element for developing the mind and promoting effective learning. According to this view, genuine learning occurs through the exercise of the mind, gradual progression, and practical application, rather than mere memorization and rote teaching—principles closely aligned with modern constructivist learning theories emphasized by Piaget.¹³ Similarly, Abdul Rahman Badawi¹⁴ highlighted the importance of faculties as an advanced educational and psychological tool, nurturing learners' cognitive abilities and linking gradual instruction with mental development, thus clearly demonstrating Ibn Khaldun's recognition of the organic relationship between education and the formation of an independent intellect.

On the psychological and social level, studies such as those by Abdel Salam Al-Masadi¹⁵ have examined the psychological dimensions of intellectual education in Ibn Khaldun, noting his awareness of the negative effects of coercion and oppression on learners' mental health. He observed that genuine learning can only take place in a balanced educational environment that encourages free thinking and provides psychological support—principles consistent with contemporary educational psychology, which emphasizes intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being as essential conditions for effective learning. These studies also highlighted the relationship between cognitive growth and social interaction, as Ibn Khaldun maintained that the mind develops

12 محمود، زكي نجيب الفلسفة والتعليم عند العرب، (القاهرة: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، مصر، ١٨٩١).

13 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

14 بدوي، عبد الرحمن. الفكر التربوي عند ابن خلدون، (القاهرة، مصر، دار المعارف، ٣٩٩١)

15 المسدي، عبد السلام، علم النفس التربوي في التراث العربي، (تونس: دار تونس، ٤٠٠٢).

through experience, social interaction, and exposure to others—paralleling Vygotsky's theory of learning as a socio-cultural process.¹⁶

Modern comparative studies, such as those by Rosenthal¹⁷ or Hassan and Abed,¹⁸ have demonstrated that Ibn Khaldun's principles of gradual learning and the cultivation of faculties closely resemble contemporary constructivist learning approaches, and that his thought anticipated many Western thinkers in emphasizing the development of critical and creative thinking. However, these studies remain insufficient in terms of a comprehensive psycho-educational analysis; they often do not examine in depth the relationships among intellectual education, mental health, motivation, reasoning ability, and social interaction. Moreover, most focus on the philosophical or social dimensions without giving the analytical texts from the *Muqaddimah* a central role in explaining how Ibn Khaldun formulated an integrated vision of intellectual education.

From this arises the main research problem that this study seeks to address: the need to revisit Ibn Khaldun's concept of intellectual education from a comprehensive psycho-educational perspective, clarifying how his thought links the mind, soul, and society; how the educational principles he adopted manifest in the cultivation of faculties, the gradual process of learning, the preservation of mental health, and the encouragement of critical and creative thinking; and how this approach can provide a framework for the development of contemporary educational practices.

Accordingly, the central research question of this study can be formulated as follows:

- To what extent does intellectual education in Ibn Khaldun's thought represent an integrated psycho-educational approach that links cognitive development, mental health, and the social environment?

From this central question, a set of sub-questions emerges, which will structure the main axes of the study:

- What is meant by intellectual education in Ibn Khaldun's thought, and what are the intellectual foundations upon which it is based?

16 Vygotsky, L.S. *Mind in Society*, 79.

17 Rosenthal, M. *Education and Culture: Comparative perspectives on teaching and learning*. (Routledge, 2003).

18 Hassan, R. & Abed, S. *Foundations of Educational Psychology in Historical Contexts*. (Springer, 2017).

- How are the psychological dimensions manifested in his educational conception, in terms of gradual progression, the cultivation of faculties, and the impact of coercion on child education?
- To what extent can Ibn Khaldun's thought be considered a precursor to a modern educational approach that integrates the cognitive, psychological, and social dimensions of the learner?
- What is the value of Ibn Khaldun's conception in developing contemporary educational practices and fostering critical and creative thinking among learners?

I. First Section: Intellectual Education in Ibn Khaldun

1. *The Concept of Intellectual Education in Ibn Khaldun*

For Ibn Khaldun, intellectual education constitutes the cornerstone of the educational process. It represents a gradual development of the learner's cognitive abilities, encompassing deep understanding, analysis, inference, and critical thinking. Ibn Khaldun emphasized that the faculties of the mind cannot be cultivated through memorization and rote instruction alone; rather, they require a progressive educational process and repeated practice. As he puts it: "Know that acquiring faculties through mere memorization and recitation is of little benefit; they are acquired through instruction, gradual progression, and frequent practice."¹⁹

This clearly demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun understands cognitive processes as the foundation of learning, recognizing that the development of thought does not occur randomly but necessitates continuous and systematic training. This perspective closely aligns with contemporary educational psychology, particularly Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which describes the progression from direct sensory knowledge to the capacity for abstract and analytical thinking.²⁰ In this sense, intellectual education functions as a process of activating cognitive abilities, in line with modern educational objectives that emphasize the cultivation of critical and creative thinking.

In addition to the cognitive dimension, Ibn Khaldun attaches great importance to the social aspect of intellectual growth. He observes that the mind develops

20 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

and flourishes through experience, social interaction, and participation in collective life: “The mind increases through numerous experiences, interactions, and social contacts.”²¹

This reflects his early awareness that learning is a socio-cultural phenomenon, whereby the mind cannot fully develop in isolation from its social environment. It also validates Vygotsky’s theory of socio-cultural learning, which asserts that interaction with others and social experiences are essential conditions for the development of cognition and reasoning.²²

Ibn Khaldun also addresses the psychological dimensions of intellectual education, emphasizing moderation and gentleness in upbringing and warning against excessive coercion or harshness, due to their negative impact on learners’ mental health and motivation. As he notes: “Whoever is raised with oppression and compulsion among learners will be subdued by coercion, and the soul will become constrained in its freedom...”²³

This analysis demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun understands the relationship between psychological well-being and intellectual achievement, recognizing that effective learning requires a supportive and balanced educational environment. This aligns with contemporary psychological research linking intrinsic motivation, positive affect, and academic performance.²⁴

From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun’s concept of intellectual education can be considered an integrated model that combines cognitive, psychological, and social dimensions. It provides a framework for understanding how to cultivate a balanced mind capable of critical thinking and systematic analysis, thereby rendering this concept highly valuable for modern educational approaches and educational psychology.

2. *The Development of Intellectual Faculties and Gradual Learning in Ibn Khaldun*

Ibn Khaldun asserts that the development of the mind requires the cultivation of intellectual faculties in a gradual and sequential manner. The learner should

ابن خلدون ، المقدمة، ٠٠٤. 21

22 Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, 1978. 79–91

ابن خلدون، المقدمة، ٧٥٣. 23

24 Rogers, C., *On Becoming a Person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

not be limited to memorizing knowledge but must actively practise and apply it until it transforms into independent capacities that enable understanding, analysis, and critical evaluation. He emphasizes that intellectual faculties do not emerge all at once but develop progressively, requiring continuous practice and logical repetition of educational experiences, which allow learners to convert theoretical knowledge into practical mental skills applicable in diverse life situations. As he writes: “The learner needs gradual instruction and repeated practice until the faculties are consolidated in the mind and become part of their intellectual capacities.”²⁵

This emphasis on gradual learning reflects Ibn Khaldun’s profound understanding of human cognition. He believes that effective education begins with simple knowledge and progresses to more complex concepts, a principle resembling Piaget’s²⁶ stages of cognitive development. However, Ibn Khaldun links this gradual progression not only to intellectual growth but also to the cultivation of intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. Continuous practice within a supportive and encouraging environment allows learners to develop confidence and the ability to face intellectual challenges, thereby enhancing their analytical and inferential capacities.

Ibn Khaldun also highlights that education and progression cannot occur in isolation from social reality and the experience of life. He maintains that the mind develops through interaction with the environment, practical experiences, and careful observation of surrounding phenomena: “The learner acquires mental strength from real-life experiences, observation, and comparison, not from mere memorization of words.”²⁷

This perspective aligns with modern educational psychology principles, which emphasize that effective learning requires integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Such integration enhances inferential reasoning, systematic problem-solving, and the development of critical and creative thinking skills.

From a psycho-educational perspective, the cultivation of faculties and gradual learning can be understood as an internal organization of cognitive abilities, wherein knowledge is transformed from external information

25 ابن خلدون، المقدمة، ١٥٣.

26 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

27 ابن خلدون، المقدمة، ١٠٤.

into coherent and interconnected mental skills that enable learners to navigate new situations effectively. Ibn Khaldun underscores the importance of systematic repetition and practice as a fundamental factor in consolidating faculties, asserting that the mind only gains strength through continuous exercise. This insight is consistent with contemporary educational psychology research, which confirms that active and sustained learning produces the best outcomes in the development of higher cognitive abilities (Rogers,²⁸ Gardner).²⁹

In summary, an analysis of Ibn Khaldun's texts indicates that the cultivation of intellectual faculties and the principle of gradual learning constitute not merely an instructional strategy but a comprehensive psycho-educational framework. This framework integrates knowledge, cognitive skills, motivation, and psychological well-being, making Ibn Khaldun's thought highly relevant to modern approaches in educational psychology, particularly those emphasizing constructivist learning, critical thinking, and socially and culturally mediated experiential learning.

3. *Psychological Balance, Supportive Environment, and the Faculties of Creativity in Ibn Khaldun*

Ibn Khaldun stresses that intellectual growth cannot occur in a coercive or harsh environment; it requires psychological balance and a supportive educational setting. He observes that excessive severity or the use of force in education undermines motivation, causes emotional tension, and impedes critical and inferential thinking, highlighting his early awareness of the relationship between mental health and cognitive achievement: "Whoever is raised with oppression and compulsion among learners will be subdued by coercion, and the soul will become constrained in its freedom."³⁰

This analysis reflects Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the importance of psychological moderation and mental comfort for learners. A sense of safety and support enhances self-confidence and strengthens the capacity for mental simulation and systematic reasoning, which are fundamental to effective learning at every stage of intellectual development. From the perspective of modern

28 Rogers, C., *On Becoming a Person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

29 Gardner, H., *Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. (Basic Books, 1993).

educational psychology, researchers similarly link intrinsic motivation, mental health, and academic achievement (Rogers,³¹ Deci & Ryan).³²

One of Ibn Khaldun's notable contributions to the concept of intellectual education is the cultivation of the faculty of creativity. He considers that the mind requires not only the acquisition of traditional knowledge but also the capacity for imagination, innovation, and thinking beyond conventional frameworks – a capacity he implicitly identifies as the “creative faculty”. He encourages learners to compare, connect knowledge, and draw independent inferences: “The mind develops through research, comparison, and reflection, strengthening the faculty of thought and enhancing the ability to innovate.”³³

This emphasis on creativity demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun's educational vision extended beyond teaching existing knowledge; he seeks to stimulate learners' ability to generate new and innovative ideas. This represents a crucial psycho-educational dimension, linking self-confidence, mental exercise, and an enriched environment to the emergence of creative thinking. A supportive environment, whether provided by the teacher or the broader social context, is essential for the growth of creative faculties, allowing learners to experiment, make mistakes, and draw conclusions—thereby fostering integrated cognitive abilities.

Moreover, this approach reflects an advanced understanding of the interconnections among the psychological, cognitive, and social dimensions. Ibn Khaldun maintains that creativity does not flourish in isolation from real-life and social contexts, but requires continuous interaction with practical experiences, dialogue, and careful observation of phenomena. He thus emphasizes that intellectual education is not merely theoretical instruction but an integrated process that develops the mind, soul, and social awareness, making creativity a vital component for critical thinking, innovative problem-solving, and the ability to confront future challenges.

In summary, psychological balance, a supportive environment, and the cultivation of creativity represent an integrated psycho-educational framework in Ibn Khaldun's thought. These elements interact with the development of intellectual faculties and gradual learning to form a balanced mind capable

31 Rogers, C., *On Becoming a Person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

32 Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R.M, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. (Plenum, 1985).

of analysis, inference, and innovative thinking. This conception provides a solid foundation comparable to modern educational psychology principles, constructivist learning theories, and models for developing creative thinking, highlighting Ibn Khaldun's pioneering insights in this field.

4. *Intellectual Faculties, Critical Thinking, and Systematic Inference in Ibn Khaldun*

Ibn Khaldun views intellectual education as an active, gradual, and integrated process aimed at developing the higher faculties of the mind – namely, cognitive faculties – which include the capacity for analysis, inference, and systematic comparison of knowledge and information. He emphasizes that these cognitive faculties are not acquired through mere memorization or rote learning, but through structured mental practice that cultivates critical thinking. As he states: “The mind develops through research, comparison, and reflection, strengthening the faculty of thought and enhancing the ability to innovate.”

This can be interpreted as a clear call to train the mind in careful observation, comparison of ideas, and methodical reasoning. It closely aligns with modern educational psychology, which views critical thinking as a higher-order cognitive skill that requires systematic practice. Accordingly, Ibn Khaldun does not limit himself to defining cognitive objectives; he also proposes practical strategies to develop intellectual faculties through gradual learning, continuous motivation, and a supportive environment – factors essential for the growth of critical thinking.³⁴

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun connects cognitive faculties with the faculty of creativity, arguing that the development of innovative capacity is achieved through comparison, analysis, and self-directed inference. In other words, critical thinking and systematic reasoning are primary pathways for nurturing creativity. As he notes: “What the mind learns through practice, comparison, and investigation is not merely retained, but transformed into the capacity for innovation and independent thinking.”³⁵

This integration of cognitive faculties, critical thinking, and systematic inference establishes an integrated psycho-educational framework that links cognitive abilities, intrinsic motivation, and learners' psychological well-being.

34 Ennis, R. H. *Critical Thinking and Subject Specificity: Clarification and needed research*. (Educational Researcher, 1985), 14(3), 4–10.

A supportive environment, psychological balance, and the encouragement of inquiry and exploration all reinforce inferential and analytical skills, thereby fostering creativity and problem-solving capacities.

Analysis of the texts further reveals that this process extends beyond individual cognitive development to include the social and interactive dimensions of learning. The mind also gains strength through collaborative practice, dialogue, and careful observation of social and cultural phenomena. From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun's conception of intellectual faculties, critical thinking, and systematic inference anticipates modern constructivist approaches to learning, which regard learning as an active, gradual, and interactive process aimed at developing an analytical and creative mind, as emphasized by Bruner³⁶ and Piaget.³⁷

II. The Psycho-Educational Approach in Ibn Khaldun's Thought

1. *The Role of Environment and Motivation in Cognitive Development*

Ibn Khaldun stresses that human cognitive development cannot occur in isolation from the surrounding environment, whether social or cultural. Individuals constantly interact with their surroundings, and real-life and social experiences contribute to the development of higher intellectual faculties such as understanding, analysis, comparison, and systematic inference. He asserts that learners should not passively receive information but require a supportive educational environment that provides psychological safety, continuous encouragement, and intellectual freedom. A sense of security and self-confidence enhances learners' ability to tackle intellectual challenges and engage in critical thinking. As he writes: "The mind increases through numerous experiences, interactions, and social contacts, and is strengthened by encouragement and guidance."³⁸

This insight reflects an early understanding of the relationship between social environment and intrinsic motivation in learning, aligning closely with modern educational psychology theories. For instance, it parallels Deci and

36 Bruner, J. *Toward a Theory of Instruction*. (Harvard University Press, 1966).

37 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Coltman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن خلدون الحضرمي، المقدمة، الجزء الأول، بيروت (لبنان، دار إحياء التراث العربي)، ٢٠٠٤.

Ryan's³⁹ Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that supporting learners'⁴⁰ basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and social belonging—enhances cognitive achievement and strengthens intellectual faculties. Similarly, contemporary research indicates that fostering active engagement and sustained interaction with educational tasks improves cognitive performance and promotes critical thinking.

Additionally, Ibn Khaldun's perspective can be related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as he recognized that fulfilling learners' fundamental needs for psychological safety, belonging, and self-esteem is essential for stimulating cognitive growth and effective learning.⁴¹ In this view, learning becomes an active and interactive process, not merely the passive consumption of information. Learners verify knowledge, test hypotheses, and draw conclusions independently, thereby enhancing higher intellectual faculties and encouraging independent and creative thought.

From this standpoint, Ibn Khaldun's approach represents an advanced psycho-educational perspective for his era, linking cognitive development, psychological well-being, and intrinsic motivation. It provides a solid foundation for modern educational practices based on active learning, social interaction, and the stimulation of higher intellectual faculties. His emphasis on supportive environments and intrinsic motivation demonstrates early attention to the psychological and cognitive conditions required for effective learning, making his conception of intellectual education highly applicable to contemporary schools and curricula aimed at fostering critical and creative thinking.

2. *The Importance of Gradual Progression and Practice in Developing Intellectual Faculties*

Ibn Khaldun stresses that cultivating higher intellectual faculties requires systematic progression in education and the continuous practice of cognitive skills. He asserts that moving directly to complex concepts without sufficient foundational knowledge leads to weak comprehension and understanding.

39 Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R.M, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. (Plenum, 1985).

40 Zimmerman, B.J. "Self-Efficacy: An essential motive to learn." *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 2000, 25(1), 82–91.

41 Maslow, A.H. (1943). "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*, 1943, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.

Careful observation, comparison, and systematic inference are essential tools for building critical thinking. Gradual learning allows students to understand the relationships among concepts and to acquire analytical, comparative, and inferential skills in a structured and thorough manner. As he writes: “The mind develops through research, comparison, and reflection, strengthening the faculty of thought and enhancing the ability to innovate.”⁴²

From a psycho-educational perspective, this approach aligns with constructivist learning theories (Bruner,⁴³ Piaget),⁴⁴ which hold that effective learning occurs when learners gradually build knowledge and connect new information to prior experiences. Progressive instruction supports incremental cognitive development and enables learners to solve complex problems independently, fostering balanced growth of higher intellectual faculties.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun links gradual progression and practice with emotional regulation and intrinsic motivation, noting that stepwise learning reduces stress and psychological pressure, strengthens self-confidence,⁴⁵ and promotes active engagement in learning.⁴⁶ This corresponds to concepts in self-determination theory and can also be connected to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, where fulfilling learners’ basic needs – such as psychological safety and social belonging – is essential for achieving cognitive growth and effective learning.

Thus, gradual progression and practical application are not merely teaching techniques; they constitute a mechanism for building robust intellectual faculties, enhancing critical thinking, and developing creativity. Learners become capable of generating new ideas and drawing independent conclusions while maintaining emotional balance and intrinsic motivation. Consequently, progression and practice form the twin pillars of any modern educational methodology aiming to cultivate a critical, creative, and psychologically balanced mind, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Ibn Khaldun’s conception of intellectual education.

43 Bruner, J. *Toward a Theory of Instruction*. (Harvard University Press, 1966).

44 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Coltman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

45 Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R.M, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. (Plenum, 1985).

46 Zimmerman, B.J. “Self-Efficacy: An essential motive to learn.” *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 2000, 25(1), 82–91.

3. *Psychological Balance and Its Impact on Critical Thinking and Creativity*

Ibn Khaldun considers psychological balance and emotional regulation as fundamental to developing learners' critical thinking and creative capacity. He observed that excessive rigour, rote memorization, or coercive teaching weakens intellectual faculties, impedes the growth of higher capacities, and hinders analytical, inferential, and systematic reasoning. As he notes: "Severity in education weakens the faculty of the mind and kills the spirit of innovation in the soul."⁴⁷

According to this perspective, psychological balance does not merely mean reducing strictness; it encompasses creating an educational environment that encourages free thinking and continuous practice of cognitive skills. Learners in a balanced environment can confidently confront intellectual challenges, process information critically, and draw independent conclusions. Here, intrinsic motivation plays a key role, nurtured by psychological safety, active engagement, and gradual success experiences, as emphasized by Deci and Ryan (1985) and Zimmerman (2000) in their studies on self-determination and self-regulated learning.

Ibn Khaldun also asserts that learners' psychological equilibrium is directly linked to cognitive development. Minds cultivated in a stable and balanced environment are capable of deep analysis, critical thinking, and comparison of ideas, leading to enhanced creativity—the ability to generate novel solutions and ideas independently. This perspective was highly advanced for his time, linking mental health, emotional regulation, and intrinsic motivation to independent and creative thinking, forming the core of his vision for intellectual education.

This conception can also be related to Csikszentmihalyi's⁴⁸ Flow Theory, which posits that creativity emerges when there is a balance between challenge and individual capability, accompanied by full engagement in the task. The psychological balance emphasized by Ibn Khaldun provides learners with similar conditions: full focus, continuous motivation, a sense of competence, and active engagement in learning. Thus, psychological balance becomes a central factor in nurturing creativity and critical thinking, enabling learners to generate innovative solutions and systematically infer results.

48 Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. (Harper Collins, 1996).

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun highlights the social dimension of psychological balance. Psychologically balanced learners are able to interact effectively with others, participate in group discussions, and engage in constructive critique, thereby enhancing both their social and cognitive capacities simultaneously. Psychological balance, therefore, is not merely an individual principle but an integrated educational foundation linking mental health, cognitive development, emotional equilibrium, and intrinsic motivation, while fostering critical thinking and creativity. This renders Ibn Khaldun's insights highly relevant to contemporary educational practices.

4. *Systematic Inference and Critical Thinking as a Basis for Psycho-Educational Development*

Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that human psychological and educational development relies on systematic inference and critical thinking, considering rote memorization alone insufficient for the true enhancement of intellectual capacities. He argues that the mind strengthens and flourishes through careful observation, continuous comparison, and practical experience, encouraging learners to engage in self-directed inference and methodical analysis of knowledge. As he states:

The mind increases through research, observation, and reflection, and becomes wiser and more understanding through the practice of inference and attentiveness.⁴⁹

From a psycho-educational perspective, this represents a clear orientation toward active learning based on self-inference, aligning closely with modern constructivist learning theories (Piaget⁵⁰; Bruner⁵¹), which posit that deep understanding emerges from the learner's interaction with knowledge rather than passive memorization. Systematic inference cultivates higher cognitive faculties such as analysis, evaluation, and relational reasoning, thereby promoting comprehensive cognitive and psychological growth.

Ibn Khaldun further connects systematic inference and critical thinking with emotional balance and intrinsic motivation. Learners who engage in organized inference within a psychologically safe environment are better able to

50 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

51 Bruner, J., *Toward a theory of instruction* (Harvard University Press, 1966).

tackle intellectual challenges confidently and effectively. This perspective aligns with self-determination theory⁵² and models of self-regulated learning⁵³, where active engagement in drawing conclusions and analyzing information strengthens both critical thinking and creative faculties.

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun views systematic inference not merely as an individual cognitive exercise but also as a social and interactive process. Learners can compare their inferences, exchange ideas, and discuss results rationally, fostering psycho-educational development through enhanced self-confidence, constructive critique, and openness to new perspectives. Systematic inference and critical thinking thus form a solid foundation for cultivating an independent, analytical, and creative mind capable of positive engagement with its social and cognitive environment, reflecting the depth and modern relevance of Ibn Khaldun's educational vision.

III. The Relevance of Ibn Khaldun's Educational Vision in Contemporary Contexts

1. *Epistemological Value with Psycho-Educational Dimensions for Children and Adolescents*

The relevance of Ibn Khaldun's vision in contemporary education emerges from its epistemological significance. He presents an integrated model of human knowledge that emphasizes the interactions among the learner, knowledge, and social context. Rather than delivering static facts, he links practical experience, careful observation, systematic comparison, and critical inference, empowering learners to analyze information, draw conclusions, and construct knowledge independently. As he writes:

The mind develops through research, comparison, and reflection, strengthening the faculty of thought and enhancing the ability to innovate.⁵⁴

This approach gains additional significance when viewed through the lens of child and adolescent clinical psychology. Ibn Khaldun recognizes that cognitive

52 Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R.M, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. (Plenum, 1985).

53 Zimmerman, B.J. "Self-Efficacy: An essential motive to learn." *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 2000, 25(1), 82–91.

development cannot occur in isolation from the learner's emotional and psychological balance. Children and adolescents require environments that provide psychological safety, social support, and continuous motivation, as the absence of these factors may result in low motivation, emotional dysregulation, or learning difficulties—consistent with modern clinical psychology findings.⁵⁵

Ibn Khaldun also links systematic inference and critical thinking to psychological and social adaptability. Learners who practise critical thinking and methodical analysis in supportive environments become better equipped to interact socially, solve problems, and cope with stress, making this an essential element in contemporary psycho-educational support programmes for adolescents.

This approach reflects principles of constructivist and active learning, where knowledge is built through the learner's interaction with information and their social-cultural environment (Bruner,⁵⁶ Piaget⁵⁷). Emphasis on comparison, analysis, and systematic inference enhances cognitive faculties such as critical thinking, inferential reasoning, and creativity, while accounting for children's and adolescents' psychological needs and emotional balance.

In short, this epistemological-psychological-educational perspective forms the foundation for the contemporary relevance of Ibn Khaldun's vision, offering a scientific basis for understanding how to cultivate a critical and creative mind while respecting the psychological and social development of children and adolescents. This makes his thought highly applicable to modern curricula, psychological support programmes, and initiatives for developing higher intellectual faculties in young learners, ensuring the integration of cognitive growth, emotional balance, and intrinsic motivation.

2. *Educational Value with Psycho-Educational Dimensions for Children and Adolescents*

The educational value of Ibn Khaldun's vision is evident in its practical framework for developing modern teaching practices focused on nurturing critical and creative thinking, while addressing the psychological and emotional development of children and adolescents. He did not merely establish

55 Ginsburg, G.S. & Schlossberg, M.C. "Family-based treatment of childhood anxiety disorders." *International Review of Psychiatry*, 2002 14(2), 143–154.

56 Bruner, J., *Toward a theory of instruction* (Harvard University Press, 1966).

57 Piaget, J. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, Translated by Derek Colman. (New York: Orion Press, 1970).

theoretical foundations for intellectual education, he also specified the mechanisms and educational processes necessary to achieve these goals, including gradual progression in learning, structured practice, psychological moderation, and a supportive environment. As he states:

The learner requires gradual progression, practice, and comparison to strengthen their mind and become capable of innovation.⁵⁸

From a psycho-educational standpoint, this approach emphasizes that a balanced learning environment and psychological moderation are essential for promoting cognitive development and intrinsic motivation in children and adolescents. Learners in supportive environments are more capable of exploration, active participation, and critical thinking, whereas rigid or stressful environments may cause emotional tension, reduced cognitive engagement, and weakened creativity—consistent with findings in child and adolescent clinical psychology regarding the importance of psychological safety, self-esteem, and emotional support for effective learning.⁵⁹

Ibn Khaldun's vision also emphasizes the gradual development of cognitive skills, noting that faculties such as analysis, inference, and systematic reasoning require structured practice and incremental challenges to enhance self-confidence and critical thinking. From a psycho-educational perspective, this aligns with constructivist and problem-based learning theories, which highlight that students learn most effectively when actively engaged in problem-solving, comparing information, and independently deriving conclusions.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the Khaldunian framework underscores the integration of social and cognitive environments, where interactions with peers and teachers play a central role in developing higher intellectual faculties and supporting psychological balance. Psychological considerations, such as emotional regulation, coping with stress, and self-directed engagement, are integral to the educational process, rendering Ibn Khaldun's thought a multidimensional, practical educational model.

In summary, this psycho-educational value bridges theory and practice in contemporary education, offering concrete strategies to enhance critical and

59 Ginsburg, G.S. & Schlossberg, M.C. "Family-based treatment of childhood anxiety disorders." *International Review of Psychiatry*, 2002 14(2), 143–154.

60 Vygotsky, L.S. *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (Harvard University Press, 1978) 79–91.

creative thinking, develop intellectual faculties, and maintain psychological well-being and intrinsic motivation in children and adolescents. This makes Ibn Khaldun's approach a living reference for curriculum development and innovative teaching methods, emphasizing active learning, self-directed engagement, and social–cognitive interaction as foundations for integrated psychological and cognitive growth.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun's intellectual education represents a comprehensive vision that integrates the mind, soul, and society, forming a pioneering model in Islamic educational thought. It anticipated the modern understanding of the relationships among cognitive development, psychological well-being, and intrinsic motivation by centuries. Analysis reveals that Ibn Khaldun does not treat education as simply a process of knowledge transfer, but instead develops a methodological framework for building intellectual faculties through gradual learning and continuous practice, while emphasizing interaction with real and social environments. This enables learners to develop deep understanding, critical analysis, systematic inference, and creativity.

His work also highlights the organic relationship between psychological moderation and intrinsic motivation, showing that coercion and severity weaken intellectual faculties and impede critical thinking, whereas supportive environments and self-confidence foster balanced growth of cognitive and emotional capacities, transforming learning into an effective and stimulating intellectual activity.

Ibn Khaldun further recognizes the social dimension of education, noting that the mind grows and develops through shared experiences, dialogue, and careful observation of surrounding phenomena – anticipating modern social–cultural and constructivist learning theories. He links cognitive faculties, critical thinking, and creativity, emphasizing that innovative capacities develop through structured practice, freedom in inquiry, and environmental interaction. His vision thus presents an integrated psycho-educational framework applicable to contemporary education.

Consequently, Ibn Khaldun's contribution to intellectual education extends beyond knowledge transmission or historical interest; it offers an advanced educational, psychological, and social framework, affirming that true education builds critical and creative minds while respecting learners' psychological and social harmony. His thought remains highly relevant for developing modern teaching

methods, enhancing critical and creative thinking, and fostering balanced cognitive, emotional, and social growth in children and adolescents.

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Ministry of Tolerance in the UAE: A Practical Application of Ibn Khaldun's Vision in Managing Diversity and Social Integration

Dr Noura Nsair Alkarbi

Introduction

The topic of tolerance and peaceful coexistence has become one of the most important subjects attracting significant attention from research institutions and academics worldwide, particularly those studying societies in the Middle East. Scholars aim to understand Middle Eastern societies realistically in order to promote certain values and a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and to address the problems resulting from the failure of some governments and states to manage religious diversity wisely and objectively.

Many studies and research works indicate the importance of tolerance and coexistence with wisdom and realism, in addition to the necessity of spreading a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the diverse groups within any society. When achieved, this has positive effects on all other aspects of life in the state, particularly in terms of economic development, tourism, the growth of institutions in their various economic, administrative, social, and even political forms (Menao and Chase,

2006; Markus and Fawzi, 2013; Massara, 2013; Labadi, 2016; Marbeai, 2015; Abdel Aziz, 2018).¹

Consequently, the topic of tolerance and peaceful coexistence has received increasing attention from international organizations, specialists, and researchers in different countries around the world, making it one of the most studied and analysed subjects globally.

Therefore, the researcher found it necessary to present the experience of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which stands out as a unique global institution dedicated to promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This study also aims to encourage other researchers to continue scientific research on tolerance and coexistence in the UAE. Given that this ministry has not yet received adequate study and analysis to evaluate and review its activities and future services, it is considered appropriate and necessary to examine the ministry to assess and evaluate its performance and its important role at both local and global levels.

This study presents the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence as a case study for a governmental tool in managing religious diversity in the country, with the results summarized in terms of four main aspects: the ministry's vision, mission, strategy, and activities.

1 See, for example:

- Menao, Martha, and Antonia Chase, eds. *Imagining Coexistence: Renewing Humanity after Ethnic Conflict*. First edition. Amman, Jordan: Al-Ahliyya Publishing and Distribution, 2006.
- Markus, Samir, and Samah Fawzi. *Managing Religious Pluralism: Copts in Egypt as a Case Study*. First edition. Cairo and Alexandria: Alexandria Library, 2013.
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Ibn Khaldun's Thought and the Construction of Societies: The UAE as a Model

Historical evidence indicates that most societies develop various mechanisms as a means of containing or regulating conflict so that it does not lead to the collapse of society. These mechanisms vary in efficiency and nature and are referred to as “social control” methods. Under these methods falls a system of values and norms that deepens belonging, loyalty, tolerance, and respect for the larger society, giving priority to the larger social entity over smaller social units, while ensuring that individuals’ tensions and conflicts do not exceed limits that threaten the society’s cohesion or deny them membership.²

The application of Ibn Khaldun’s thought to the UAE serves as a contemporary model for social integration. According to Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah*, stable societies progress from narrow tribal solidarity to a broader bond founded on shared values and public interest. This is clearly reflected in the UAE experience. The country has succeeded in establishing modern social integration, not solely based on tribal loyalty but on a unifying national identity, rule of law, social justice, and equal opportunity. These elements align with Ibn Khaldun’s vision that tribal solidarity must be refined through religion and values to achieve urban stability. Furthermore, the UAE’s balance of authority, development, and social welfare reflects Ibn Khaldun’s notion that justice and sound economic management are essential for societal cohesion, whereas injustice or resource misdistribution leads to social fragmentation.

Accordingly, the UAE model represents a contemporary embodiment of Ibn Khaldun’s thought in constructing social integration within the modern state context. Fundamentally, the UAE transitioned from fragmentation to unity according to its Constitution: “as a sincere and genuine desire of its rulers and people to form a union between them, in order to provide a better life, stability, and a higher international status.”³ Consequently, policy planning in the UAE takes this characteristic into account, relying on many factors, including each emirate’s awareness and sense that their membership in the federal society is the best available option, with no alternative outside the larger community. Continued union prevents internal disputes and achieves

2 Bu Basha, Nabawiya Helmi. *Al-Bi’a al-Ijtima’iya wa al-Siyasiya wa Atharaha fi Qiyam Dawlat al-Imarat al-Arabiya al-Muttahida*. Abu Dhabi: Ministry of Presidential Affairs, 2002, 78.

3 The Provisional Constitution of the United Arab Emirates. 2 December 1971, Preamble, para. 2.

integration among the emirates, while allowing each to maintain local authority, thus reflecting a political system based on loyalty, respect, and belonging to a unified polity.

The UAE has also established a legislative and legal framework that enables the application and renewal of values of tolerance and peace, rejecting extremism and violence, while protecting society from fanaticism and radicalization. This is particularly important in a country hosting hundreds of thousands of residents from diverse nationalities, ethnicities, and religions.⁴

International indicators confirm this approach. In the 2019 World Justice Project report, the UAE ranked first regionally in integrity and the absence of corruption, being the most transparent and least corrupt country in the region, and 17th globally, surpassing France, the United States, Poland, Spain, China, and Greece.⁵ In the 2018 Transparency International report, the UAE led Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa for transparency and integrity, scoring 70 points on the Corruption Perceptions Index.⁶ According to the annual Edelman Trust Barometer, the UAE ranked second globally in 2019 and first globally in 2020 for public trust in government.⁷ This trust extends across all UAE residents, including government, business, NGOs, and media sectors, reflecting strong cohesion between the government and citizens.⁸

Dr Nabawiya noted that state policies enhanced citizen trust through free basic services in education, health, water, and electricity for nominal fees, distributing housing freely, and providing subsidized essential goods. These policies contributed to internal stability. Dr Naji added that rulers in the UAE rulers have maintained direct relationships with citizens via open councils, listening to demands, and participating in social occasions – representing a form of direct democracy. Moreover, the Emirati language does not employ

4 Asaid, Mohamed Touhil, and Youssef Mohamed Sherab. *Emirati Society: Authenticity and Modernity*. 9th ed. Abu Dhabi: Al Falah Publishing and Distribution, 2019, 124.

5 World Justice Project. *Rule of Law Index 2019*. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2019>. Accessed October 12, 2025.

6 Transparency International. *Corruption Perceptions Index 2018*. https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/regional-analysis-MENA_AR. Accessed October 12, 2025.

7 Edelman. *Trust Barometer: Global Report*. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-01/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_LIVE.pdf. Accessed October 12, 2025.

8 Ibid.

honorifics for sheikhs, and instead they are addressed by name directly, reflecting humility.⁹

Based on previous reports on judicial integrity and public trust, the UAE's internal stability derives not from control or authoritarianism but from wise leadership. This view aligns with Miller's study, "The Political Survival of Traditional Leadership", which found that people accept leaders who do not rely on coercion, as satisfaction, consensus, and direct relationships facilitate cooperation rather than strict bureaucratic commands.¹⁰

According to data presented in a 2018 report by Global Media Insight,¹¹ The UAE is characterized by a highly diverse population, with approximately 200 nationalities residing in the country. According to Global Media Insight (2018), expatriates and migrants constitute 88.52% of the population, while Emirati citizens account for 11.48%. The largest expatriate groups originate from South Asia, particularly India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, representing 59.48% of the total population. Other communities include Egyptians (4.23%) and various other nationalities (17.94%). This demographic diversity has contributed significantly to the multicultural nature of Emirati society and highlights the importance of policies that promote coexistence and social cohesion.

This approach is rooted in Article 45 of the UAE Constitution, which ensures justice and equality.¹²

The UAE, as previously noted, is home to many nationalities with diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Consequently, it has become essential to promote a culture of coexistence and tolerance, as well as to prevent and criminalize hatred and fanaticism. The implementation of this strategy began in 2015, when the Federal Law (Decree No. 2 of 2015) on Combating Discrimination and Hatred was issued, ensuring protection for everyone in the UAE. This law constitutes a legal foundation for an environment of tolerance, coexistence, and acceptance of others.¹³

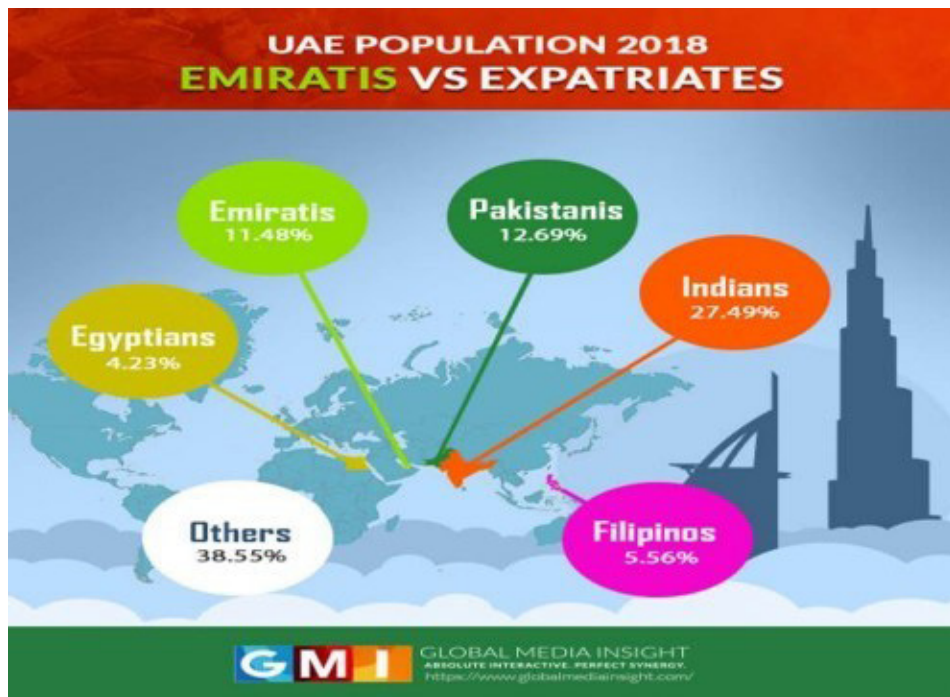
9 Bu Basha, Nabawiya Helmi. *Al-Bi'a al-Ijtima'iya wa al-Siyasiya wa Atharaha fi Qiyam Dawlat al-Imarat al-Arabiya al-Muttahida*, 189.

10 Miller, Norman N. "The Political Survival of Traditional Leadership." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1968): 183.

11 Global Media Insight. "UAE Population Statistics 2018." https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/uae-population-statistics/#expat_population. Accessed December 9, 2019.

12 Bu Basha, Nabawiya Helmi. 2002, *ibid.*, 78.

13 Al-Blooshi, Salwa Ismail Mohammed. *Criminal Confrontation of Blasphemy in UAE Law*. Master's thesis, United Arab Emirates University, 2019.



The Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence in the United Arab Emirates as a Practical Model for Implementing Ibn Khaldun's Insights on Managing Diversity and Building Social Integration

In addition, the state established a new ministry called the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence in 2016, which became the first initiative of its kind globally, according to the International Institute for Tolerance.¹⁴ The ministry was tasked with launching the National Tolerance Programme and establishing centres to combat terrorism and extremism, which were entrusted with promoting and consolidating virtuous social values based on tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and the rejection of racial discrimination. Moreover, the ministry works to achieve family cohesion and social solidarity for all residents of the country, not only Emirati citizens.

The Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence coordinates with other ministries, state institutions, and civil society organizations to achieve these objectives and promote fraternal values within the country. Emirati society is deeply

14 International Institute for Tolerance. "Partners and Sponsors Page." <https://www.worldtolerancesummit.com/ar-AE/Partners-and-Sponsors/In-Cooperation-With/Details>. Accessed August 20, 2025.

rooted in values of tolerance, respect, and acceptance of others, derived from the Islamic religion and Arab cultural heritage. Consequently, the ministry has prepared programmes and activities necessary to disseminate the value of tolerance and establish suitable frameworks for achieving a national tolerance programme that reinforces this, supported by the UAE Constitution and its laws, as will be elaborated later.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence seeks to cooperate with countries worldwide and with international organizations concerned with promoting a culture of tolerance across the globe. This cooperation takes multiple forms, such as participating in international conferences inside and outside the UAE, engaging with influential global figures in this field, and strengthening the role of resident communities in the country in building beneficial international relations. The aim is to spread knowledge about different cultures and civilizations, build successful alliances within each country and globally, and open effective communication channels between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is achieved through reciprocal visits, public diplomacy efforts, and the contributions of writers, intellectuals, universities, and the media, both local and international. Everyone inside and outside the UAE has a role in consolidating the value of tolerance. According to statements from the minister and internal ministry documents, the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence seeks to involve all stakeholders in this project, as achieving tolerance is the responsibility of the entire society, encompassing families, religious leaders, businesspeople, schools, universities, the media, and notably cultural and literary figures, as well as all community institutions. This tolerance must, of course, be accepting of all religious, ethnic, and cultural differences.

Due to the importance of this ministry and its role in achieving its assigned objectives, as well as its influence in managing religious diversity in the country, this chapter is dedicated to analysing all the goals, vision, strategy, and activities undertaken by the ministry. Our analysis relies on the content and objectives of the ministry's strategy.

Vision

The UAE is a unique model where civilizations converge to promote peace and coexistence among all peoples of the world: "The homeland is a trust, and tolerance is a message." The Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence has based its work on this vision to carry out its tasks and implement its strategy,

which is derived not only from the Constitution and local laws, but also from international laws promoted by many global organizations and bodies.¹⁵

Therefore, the ministry focuses on fostering mutual respect and peaceful co-existence among all residents of the country, building bridges of understanding, dialogue, and communication, rejecting violence, discrimination, and hatred, encouraging interfaith dialogue, and highlighting the true image of Islam through distinctive local, regional, and global initiatives and projects. Importantly, this vision is not limited to Emirati citizens but extends to everyone living and working in the UAE, especially given that the UAE hosts millions of people from diverse nationalities, cultures, and religions.

Mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, dialogue, and a culture that rejects violence, discrimination, and hatred should prevail among all residents. Through the values of moderation, dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and the rejection of violence, the people of the UAE can achieve development and progress across all fields, especially as development is increasingly viewed not only as being *for* the people but also *by* the people. Policies that encourage the integration and participation of citizens with diverse cultural identities ensure cohesion, harmony, civil society vitality, and peace.¹⁶

The UAE's vision of tolerance stems from fundamental principles established by divine religions and civil laws, extending across diverse fields, including social, cultural, educational, and economic domains., which gives it strong credibility and makes it relatively easy to implement. The vision not only aims to promote and enhance tolerance among UAE citizens, but also extends to all residents in the country. Moreover, this vision reaches beyond the UAE's borders to people and communities in other countries and cultures. The UAE thus sees tolerance as a human value and culture endorsed by all religions and international laws. The state's vision of tolerance is not only because it is a positive and constructive value, but also because it contributes to advancing societal development in a rapidly evolving world and in the context of accelerating globalization. Consequently, the UAE must play its role locally, regionally, and globally.

15 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government. "Strategy." <https://www.tolerance.gov.ae/ar/strategy.aspx>. Accessed August 20, 2025.

16 Fakia, S. *Sustainable Development and Human Rights*. Master's thesis, Ferhat Abbas University, 2010.

Mission

According to the laws enacted by the state and approved by the Cabinet, the responsibilities and powers of the Minister of Tolerance Office are as follows:¹⁷

1. Formulate strategic plans to promote tolerance and coexistence across the UAE and follow up on their implementation with the relevant authorities.
2. Raise awareness about the UAE as an ideal environment that embraces diverse nationalities and religions.
3. Organize initiatives, events, and activities locally, regionally, and internationally.
4. Represent the state in regional and international forums that promote the value of tolerance.

These tasks are supervised and implemented by the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence, and the powers are concentrated in the related minister's office.

The ministry has based its strategy and vision on several core values representing an integrated culture in the areas of diversity and pluralism, dialogue and coexistence, human rights, interaction and communication, innovation and initiative, peace and security, happiness and positivity, goodness and giving, and national belonging.¹⁸

Promoting and consolidating these values represents a major objective and pioneering global strategy. Many international organizations and associations have advocated these values, but no country has established a dedicated ministry for such a noble purpose. Achieving these goals requires exceptional effort and substantial financial resources, which is why the UAE has allocated administrative, technical, and scientific staff to this ministry to implement its activities and achieve the assigned goals.

Discussing tolerance as a mere aspiration is insufficient, and thus the UAE has moved from words to action. Tolerance must be instilled in all residents, and all state institutions must play a role in this process, not just the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence. The Minister of Tolerance stated in *Al-Arab London Newspaper* (15 December, 2018)¹⁹ that:

17 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government. *Partnerships and Programs Department Publications*. Abu Dhabi, 2020.

18 Ministry of Tolerance. (2020), *ibid*.

19 *Al-Arab London Newspaper*. "Strategic Plan to Promote Tolerance and Coexistence in the UAE." November 16, 2025. <https://alarab.co.uk/>. Accessed August 1, 2025.

Education plays a vital role in developing tolerance and coexistence values among members of society. Educational programmes must ensure that every student understands and respects different cultures, civilizations, and religions. Schools must be active institutions preventing students from being attracted to violence, terrorism, or antisocial behaviour. Cooperation is not limited to local institutions; the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence also seeks cooperation with countries worldwide and international organizations promoting tolerance on this planet.

This cooperation takes various forms, including relations and global conferences inside and outside the UAE, engaging with influential global figures, enhancing the role of resident communities in building beneficial international relations, and promoting cultural knowledge. The ministry works with everyone, inside and outside the country, to build effective communication channels between Muslims and non-Muslims through mutual visits, public diplomacy, writers, intellectuals, universities, and local and international media. Everyone has a role in embedding the values of tolerance. The minister has emphasized that achieving tolerance is the responsibility of the entire society: families, religious leaders, businessmen, schools, universities, media, intellectuals, and all cultural and social institutions. Tolerance should encompass all religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. Today, the UAE is a global model for peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions and beliefs. Tolerance here means respecting others and accepting diversity in cultures and nationalities.²⁰

According to a review of the official website of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence and some of its publications, some of the initiatives and activities undertaken by the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence to implement and translate its objectives and strategy are as follows:

Initiative 1: The National Tolerance Programme

The UAE adopts national initiatives, visions, and programmes that contribute to spreading a culture of coexistence and peace, and establishing bridges for international cooperation, communication, and dialogue, by building a system of Emirati ethical values to benefit future generations.²¹ This initiative also includes the National Festival for Tolerance and Human Fraternity, which is an annual festival that was launched in 2018 and is celebrated over

20 *Al-Arab London Newspaper*, ibid.

21 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government. *Emirates: The Nation of Tolerance*. Introductory Booklet.

an entire week, involving all sectors of society (government ministries, local governments, the private sector, semi-governmental entities, and public benefit associations). The festival aims to consolidate the culture of tolerance and good citizenship, integrating all societal groups through a package of events, activities, workshops, courses, lectures, and seminars. The festival also includes sports competitions and artistic events, serving as two important tools for promoting the values of tolerance among the majority of society.

Initiative 2: Government as a Host of Tolerance

This initiative seeks to spread the values of tolerance, moderation, acceptance of others, and rejection of racism and extremism, through enacting legislation, establishing national indicators, and developing operational mechanisms in government institutions, encouraging them to align and enhance their policies and service systems toward creating institutions distinguished by tolerance, respect for coexistence, and pluralism.

This initiative targets employees of ministries, departments, and institutions to increase awareness and promote the culture of tolerance in their work practices, through participation in a range of activities suited to their roles. These activities are designed to be engaging and beneficial without imposing additional workload, enhancing their professional and life skills. The programme aims to ensure institutions exemplify tolerance, respect coexistence and diversity, and enhance the capacity for innovation brought by diversity. The initiative operates on four main levels:

1. Employee level.
2. Ministry level.
3. Promotion of tolerance in the ministry's field of work in society.
4. Coordination and joint action among all ministries to make the UAE government an exemplary model for spreading the values of tolerance and coexistence globally.

Initiative 3: Strengthening the Role of the Family in Building Society

This initiative aims to activate the family's role and social upbringing to reinforce tolerance in a generation capable of coexistence and building bridges of love and peace, as well as establishing a tolerant and understanding society that accepts others and respects cultural diversity. It is a national joint initiative that leverages digital transformation and develops diverse interactive programmes – sporting, educational, artistic, and others – and launches media

strategies to deliver the message of tolerance to the widest possible audience inside and outside the UAE.²²

Initiative 4: Promoting Tolerance among Youth and Preventing Extremism

This initiative aims to activate the role of youth in humanitarian fields, focusing on their role in promoting tolerance and coexistence, protecting them from deviation or extremist ideologies, and empowering them to contribute to building a brighter future. The Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence trained large groups of influential young people through a three-day workshop, after which they were named “Knights of Tolerance”. Many other initiatives and training courses targeting youth are also implemented.²³

Initiative 5: Enriching Scientific and Cultural Content

This initiative seeks to provide rich cultural and knowledge content encompassing concepts, principles, and information that promote tolerance, coexistence, respect for cultural diversity, and acceptance of other perspectives. This is achieved through various media platforms – the press, radio, television, digital platforms, and social media – alongside encouraging creators to produce works that reinforce the values of higher tolerance.

Initiative 6: Contributing to International Tolerance Efforts

The initiative highlights the UAE’s role in enhancing global competitiveness and positioning the country as an exemplary model of tolerance and coexistence for world peace and mutual respect. It invests in tolerance to enhance communication among people and foster human convergence through regional and global initiatives promoting tolerance and coexistence with regional and international partners. One prominent contribution was the Document on Human Fraternity, which on February 4, 2019, was signed by the Grand Imam Dr Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and His Holiness Pope Francis, Pope of the Catholic Church, in Abu Dhabi. A supreme committee was formed to ensure that the document’s provisions are implemented in practice rather than remaining on paper.²⁴

22 Al-Ain News. “The Role of the Family in Promoting Tolerance.” March 18, 2019. <https://al-ain.com/article/nahyan-bin-mubarak-family-tolerance>. Accessed December 12, 2025.

23 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government. *Knights of Tolerance: Introductory Publications*. 2020.

24 Human Fraternity Higher Committee. “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.” <https://www.forhumanfraternity.org/document-on-human-fraternity/>. Accessed 1 June 2026.

The ministry also established an International Institute for Tolerance to lay the foundations for greater tolerance at both national and international levels. Founded by a decision of the UAE Vice President, the institute encourages initiative and excellence in promoting tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and the true image of Islam as a religion of peace. The institute organizes international conferences and partners with cultural institutions worldwide to disseminate the values of harmony and tolerance across generations. The institute is linked to the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Tolerance Award, a globally recognized award that actively promotes tolerance worldwide.²⁵

Initiative 7: Year of Tolerance 2019

The President of the UAE declared 2019 the “Year of Tolerance”, aiming to institutionalize tolerance sustainably through legislation and policies that deepen values and dialogue, and increase openness to different cultures, particularly among the younger generation. The initiative emphasizes the UAE’s role as a bridge of communication between global peoples and cultures, in an open environment based on respect, rejecting extremism, and accepting others. A supreme committee chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, with the Minister of Tolerance as deputy, was formed to ensure coordinated efforts between government and private sector to build a tolerant society that values human communication.²⁶ The initiative identifies key objectives, including embedding tolerance, communication, and coexistence within society and showcasing the UAE model of tolerance to the world. A national survey identified four aspects of tolerance as a shared cultural language in the UAE: peace, humanity, coexistence, and respect.

Initiative 8: Zayed Tolerance Enclaves²⁷

This initiative aims to embody the legacy of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE, across all Emirates by establishing Zayed Tolerance Enclaves in key locations. The enclaves provide the public with a museum showcasing the founder’s legacy as a man of tolerance, coexistence, and peace, alongside the pioneering role of his wife in positive global

25 Al-Bayan Newspaper. “Ministry of Tolerance for All.” November 16, 2017. <https://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/interviews-dialogues/2017-11-16-1.3102293>. Accessed July 20, 2025.

26 Official Year of Tolerance Website. *The Year of Tolerance*. 2019. <https://www.theyearoftolerance.ae/ar>. Accessed August 15, 2025.

27 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government. “UAE Tolerance Initiatives.” <https://www.tolerance.gov.ae/ar/uae-tolerance-initiatives.aspx>. Accessed August 5, 2025.

change. The enclaves host diverse educational, social, and recreational activities for all societal groups, reflecting the value of tolerance.

Initiative 9: Celebrating Tolerance in Public Schools

In partnership with the Ministry of Education, this project fosters brotherhood between public and private schools. Both sides implement joint tolerance initiatives involving students, teachers, administrators, and parents, through practical activities, joint clubs, sports competitions, volunteer programmes, and the creative use of modern technology to facilitate intercultural learning and peaceful coexistence.

Initiative 10: Utilizing Technology to Promote Tolerance

In collaboration with Apple Inc., the ministry has implemented specialized programmes and courses leveraging technology and smart applications to address challenges and opportunities related to tolerance.

Initiative 11: Contribution to International Tolerance Efforts²⁸

This initiative aims to enhance the UAE's global competitiveness and status as a model of tolerance and coexistence, utilizing tolerance to strengthen international communication and human convergence.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the experience of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence in the United Arab Emirates represents a practical application of the insights of Ibn Khaldun in managing social diversity and building social integration. The Ministry has succeeded in translating Khaldunian theoretical principles into concrete policies and initiatives that strengthen national belonging, promote mutual respect, and foster peaceful coexistence among the various components of Emirati society, characterized by cultural and religious plurality.

The findings further confirm that the UAE has adopted a comprehensive approach that links the legal framework, community initiatives, education, media, and international partnerships to promote tolerance, in line with Ibn Khaldun's vision that social stability is founded on balancing strong collective

28 Ministry of Tolerance, UAE Government, <https://www.tolerance.gov.ae/ar/uae-tolerance-initiatives.aspx>, accessed August 1, 2025.

loyalty with openness to the Other. This experience also demonstrates that building a cohesive and diverse society requires concerted efforts by the state, society, and individuals to ensure the transmission of ethical and social values across all institutions and social groups.

In conclusion, the experience of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence constitutes a practical global model that can be drawn upon in building inclusive, stable, and peaceful societies. It illustrates how well-structured national initiatives can bridge theory and practice, offering a model to be emulated in managing cultural and religious diversity at both the local and international levels.

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The Reception of Ibn Khaldun's Work in Journals in BiH

Sead Karišik

Ibn Khaldun – Life and Work

Ibn Khaldun was a 14th-century Muslim scholar, historian and philosopher.¹ He was born on 27 May 1332 in Tunis (1 Ramadan 732 AH)² and died in 1406³ in Cairo. He is considered one of the founders of sociology, the philosophy of history and the social sciences. He is best known for his work the *Muqaddimah*, which is the introduction to his major historical work.⁴ In that work he analyses society and its laws; the rise and fall of civilizations; the role of the economy, politics and religion; and the concept of *'aṣabiyyah* (social solidarity). Ibn Khaldun believed that history should be studied critically, rather than merely recounting events. His ideas were far ahead of his time and

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- 1 Mustafa Busuludžić, “Opće prilike u muslimanskom svijetu u dobu Ibn Halduna” (General Conditions in the Muslim World in the Time of Ibn Khaldun), *El-Hidaje*, Year 1, no. 4–5, Sarajevo, 1936–1937, p. 67.
 - 2 Enes Karić, *Ibn Haldun, uvod u čitanje Al-Muqaddime (Ibn Khaldun, an introduction to reading Al-Muqaddimah)*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2008, p. 7.
 - 3 Nerkez Smailagić, *Leksikon islama (Encyclopaedia of Islam)*, Kupola, Sarajevo, 2021, p. 347.
 - 4 Enes Karić, *Ibn Haldun, uvod u čitanje Al-Muqaddime (Ibn Khaldun, An Introduction to Reading the Al-Muqaddimah)*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2008, pp. 63–78.

had a great influence on modern Western thought, and especially on the history of social thought. His contribution to modern social sciences is reflected in methodological, theoretical, and interdisciplinary innovations that were far ahead of his time. First and foremost, however, Ibn Khaldun is considered a forerunner of sociology as a scientific discipline. In the *Muqaddimah*, he views society as a complex system that operates according to certain laws. He does not interpret social phenomena exclusively through a religious or moral lens, but analyses them empirically and rationally. In doing so, he lays the foundations for the scientific study of society. His critical approach to history is of particular significance in this context. Ibn Khaldun defines history as a science that must deal with the causes and effects of social processes. He insists on verifying sources, critiquing transmitted traditions, and rejecting exaggerations and the mythologization of the past. This approach is largely in line with contemporary historiographical and sociological methods. The central concept of his social theory is that of *‘aṣabiyyah*, or social cohesion and solidarity. Ibn Khaldun explains that a state’s political power and stability depend on the strength of a social group’s internal cohesion. When the *‘aṣabiyyah* weakens, moral and political decay ensues. This concept can be linked in contemporary social sciences to theories of social capital, collective identity, and social integration.⁵

Ibn Khaldun also developed a cyclical theory of the rise and fall of civilizations. According to this, states go through phases of emergence, strengthening, stagnation and decline. This process is conditioned by internal social factors, such as luxury, the loss of discipline and the weakening of social solidarity. Such an approach represents an early form of structural and systemic analysis of social change.

His contribution to economic thought is also significant. Ibn Khaldun analysed the role of labour, taxation, production and government spending in the development of society. He believed that excessive taxation weakens economic activity and leads to the decline of the state, an idea that also appears in modern economic theories.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of his work, as he linked sociology, political science, economics, anthropology and historiography into a single analytical framework. For this very reason, he is

5 Mehmed Begović, “Ibn Haldunovo shvatanje o razvoju društva” (Ibn Khaldun’s Understanding of the Development of Society), *Glas*, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, CCCXIX, Belgrade, 1980, pp. 9–29.

often referred to in contemporary academic literature as a forerunner of the modern social sciences and an author whose ideas are still relevant today for understanding social processes.⁶

Ibn Khaldun's Work in Journals in BiH

This chapter considers the reception of Ibn Khaldun's work in journals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus how authors in the domestic press read, interpreted, and used his ideas. In BiH, there are a small number of domestic authors who have systematically engaged with Ibn Khaldun, largely based on foreign secondary literature, and he is mentioned more often than he is analysed in detail. Such responses usually appear in a few recognisable forms. The first is the informational-encyclopaedic reception, where Ibn Khaldun is presented through short biographical accounts and general summaries of the *Muqaddimah*. Such texts emphasize his scholarship, breadth of knowledge, and significance in the Islamic intellectual tradition. The second kind of response is the academic and disciplinary reception. In this, Ibn Khaldun is introduced as an author important for sociology, political science, history and economics. Articles in this vein often highlight concepts such as the aforementioned *'aṣabiyyah* (social cohesion), the cycle of dynastic rise and fall, and the relationship between the city and the nomadic world. Here, Ibn Khaldun is read as a theoretical resource for explaining social dynamics and political power. The third response is the cultural-identity reception. In this type of text, Ibn Khaldun is used as a symbol of "classical" Islamic scholarship and as an argument that the Islamic tradition has a strong rational and historiographical potential. Such texts appear more frequently in journals with a broader cultural or religious profile. The fourth kind of response is the comparative reception, where Ibn Khaldun is compared with various European classics. He is most often compared with Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Weber, and Tocqueville, as well as Marx with regard to his views on social change. The aim is to show the similarity of the problems they address or to emphasize Ibn Khaldun's "priority" in relation to modern social theory.

An important factor in the reception of Ibn Khaldun in BiH is the question of translation and citation practice. In academic journals, Ibn Khaldun is often cited indirectly, via secondary literature, which influences which ideas are

6 For more details of Ibn Khaldun's ideas, see: Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, translated by Teufik Muftić, El-Kalem, Sarajevo 2007.

highlighted and whose interpretations are rendered. When reception relies on short quotations or popular accounts, Ibn Khaldun can be reduced to a few well-known theses. When based on a more detailed reading of the *Muqaddimah*, interpretations are more complex and cautious. It is also significant to consider the context of the times in which the texts are produced. In periods of social crisis or political change, Ibn Khaldun's ideas on the state, legitimacy, and social cohesion become particularly appealing. His work is then used not only as a historical reference but also as a framework for understanding contemporary problems. An examination of the reception of Ibn Khaldun's work in journals in BiH shows how a classical author travels through different discourses. He appears as a scholar of the Islamic tradition, as a proto-sociologist, as a theorist of the state, and as a symbol of intellectual continuity. An analysis of the journal articles reveals which dimensions of his work are emphasized, which are neglected, and how domestic academic and cultural discourses are shaped through him.

Categories of Journals Dealing with the Study of Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Academic Journals

This category includes academic and professional journals from the fields of the social sciences and humanities, and most often feature theoretical and analytical receptions of Ibn Khaldun. Such analyses examine his methodology of historical research and his critical attitude towards traditional historiography. A particular focus is placed on the *Muqaddimah* as a theoretical text, rather than merely a historical introduction. Such articles represent the most developed example of the scholarly reception of Ibn Khaldun in the domestic periodical press.

Cultural Journals

These journals have a broader cultural and intellectual profile, and Ibn Khaldun often appears in them as part of discussions on tradition, identity and civilization. For example, Hasan Sušić wrote about Ibn Khaldun's economic thought in *Pregled*⁷ and Đuro Benić in *Ekonomski pregled*.⁸ In this context,

7 Hasan Sušić, "Ibn Haldunove ekonomske ideje" (Ibn Khaldun's Economic Ideas), *Pregled*, Sarajevo, 1974.

8 Đuro Benić, "Ekonomske misli u Mukaddimi" (Economic Thoughts in the *Muqaddima*), *Ekonomski pregled*, 67 (5), Zagreb, 2016, pp. 462–488.

Ibn Khaldun is presented as a forerunner of modern economic thought. The reception is selective and thematic, but it shows an attempt to connect classical Islamic thought with contemporary economic theories.

Religious Journals

In these journals, Ibn Khaldun is most often presented as an Islamic scholar and thinker, with the emphasis on his belonging to the Islamic intellectual tradition. In the journal *Preporod*, work on Ibn Khaldun appears within the context of texts on the Islamic intellectual tradition. Authors most often present him as a great Muslim scholar and historian. The emphasis is on his contribution to Islamic civilization, while the theoretical aspects of his ideas are often simplified. The texts are mostly popular-essayistic and educational in character, without detailed theoretical analysis. In the journals *Novi Muallim*, *Glasnik Islamske zajednice u BiH* and *Islamska misao*, we do not find standalone texts dedicated to Ibn Khaldun. Instead, his work and thought appear in a fragmented manner, within broader discussions of Islamic intellectual history, civilization and social change.

Daily Political Journals and Magazines

Ibn Khaldun appears only occasionally in these publications, with his ideas used to comment on contemporary social and political phenomena, most often in relation to the crisis of the state, the breakdown of social solidarity, and the cycles of the rise and fall of power. Here, his ideas are used illustratively, without direct reference to primary sources. The reception is usually instrumental in nature and focused on contemporary issues.

Texts have been published on the portal *islam.ba* that address Ibn Khaldun's thought in the context of social cohesion (*‘aṣabiyyah*), the Islamic philosophy of history, and the relationship between Islam and contemporary society.⁹

The authors are often unnamed or signed with their initials. The reception is normative and affirmative, with the aim of popularizing Islamic scholarship. Ibn Khaldun is rarely analysed critically and is more often used as an authority.

9 Akbar Ahmed, "Ibn Haldun i društvena kohezija" (Khaldun and Social Cohesion), from the book *Islam pod opsadom* (Islam Under Siege), translated by Mirnes Kovač, Sarajevo, 2004. See also: <https://www.islam.ba teme/kultura/ibn-haldun-i-drustvena-kohezija-1-dio>, (accessed 5 May, 2026). Cf.: <https://www.islam.ba teme/kultura/ibn-haldun-i-drustvena-kohezija-2-dio>, (accessed 5 May, 2026).

Ibn Khaldun is present in all of these kind of journals, but unevenly. The most profound and methodologically developed reception is found in academic journals, but it is quantitatively limited. In religious and cultural journals, an affirmative and identity-based interpretation dominates. In the daily political discourse, Ibn Khaldun is used as a symbolic author to interpret contemporary crises.

The reception of Ibn Khaldun's work in BiH is fragmentary and thematically limited. There is a lack of continuity in the systematic academic study of his work. The first major deficiency is the small number of scholarly papers. Most texts on Ibn Khaldun are published in popular or religious journals, and serious theoretical analysis rarely appears in indexed academic publications. The second problem is the selective reading of the *Muqaddimah*. Authors most often focus on the concept of *ʿaṣabiyyah* and the cycle of state rise and fall. The economic, epistemological and methodological aspects of the work remain poorly addressed. The third deficiency is reliance on secondary literature. In many texts, Ibn Khaldun is cited indirectly, without direct engagement with the primary source. This leads to the simplification and repetition of general ideas. The fourth problem is the normative and affirmative interpretation. In religious and cultural journals, Ibn Khaldun is rarely critically examined. He is often used as proof of the greatness of the Islamic tradition, rather than as an author open to analysis. The fifth shortcoming is the weak interdisciplinary integration. Ibn Khaldun is rarely connected to contemporary sociological and political science theories in an analytical way, and comparisons with modern authors generally remain superficial. Finally, in the daily political discourse, Ibn Khaldun is used instrumentally. His ideas serve to illustrate contemporary crises, without a contextual reading. Such use contributes to the popularity of the name, but not to an understanding of the work.

The Most Significant Authors Who Study Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Among the earliest Bosnian authors to write about Ibn Khaldun and the *Muqaddimah* is Šaćir Sikirić, whose contributions to the journal *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*,¹⁰ are focused on the philological and historiographical interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's work. His reception belongs to the Orientalist tradition and precedes later theoretical interpretations.¹¹

10 Šaćir Sikirić, "Ibn Haldunova Prolegomena" (Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena), *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, no. 5. Sarajevo, 1955.

11 Ibid. 233–250.

Another early Bosnian account of Ibn Khaldun is found in the *Gajretov kalendar*, where Ćamil Avdić presented him as a great Muslim scholar and historian.¹² This reception has a popular-educational character and reflects the cultural and educational mission of the Bosnian periodicals of the time.

Fehim Bajrektarević is also notable as a Bosnian author who wrote about Ibn Khaldun, and one whose Orientalist and cultural-historical texts present him as one of the most significant Muslim historians and the author of the *Muqaddimah*. His reception is philological and descriptive in character and precedes later theoretical interpretations.

Bajrektarević is important because:

- he belongs to the earliest generation of educated Orientalists in BiH,
- he introduces Ibn Khaldun into the academic and cultural discourse before systematic theoretical analyses,
- and he represents the transition between the popular-educational (Avdić) and academic reception (Sikirić, Sušić).¹³

Nerkez Smailagić, in the *Leksikon islama (Encyclopaedia of Islam)*, writes about and considers Ibn Khaldun's opinion. In that entry, Smailagić presents him as a classical Muslim historian and thinker, with a special emphasis on the *Muqaddimah* as a methodologically innovative work. Emphasis is placed on Ibn Khaldun's criticism of sources, his rational understanding of history, and his place in the Islamic intellectual tradition. The text is concise, informative, and encyclopaedically balanced, without deeper theoretical or comparative analysis.¹⁴ Smailagić's reception has a referential and systematizing character. Its importance lies not in interpretative originality, but in the fact that it canonizes Ibn Khaldun as an indispensable figure of Islamic thought in the domestic scientific and educational context. The *Leksikon islama* thus represents the final point of a particular type of reception, in which Ibn Khaldun moves from the realm of essays and studies into the common body of knowledge.

12 Ćamil Avdić, "Ibn Haldun o državi" (Ibn Khaldun on the State), *Gajretov kalendar*, Sarajevo, 1938.

13 Fehim Bajrektarević, "Ibn Chaldun, Ausgewahlte Abschnitte aus der Muqaddima" (Ibn Khaldun, Selected Sections from the *Muqaddima*), *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, Sarajevo, 1955.

14 Nerkez Smailagić, *Leksikon islama (Encyclopaedia of Islam)*, Kupola, Sarajevo, 2021, pp. 347–351.

A special place among Bosnian-Herzegovinian authors in this context is held by Hasan Sušić, who, in the journals *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* and *Pregled*, provided theoretically relevant interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's political thought.¹⁵ Although Ibn Khaldun is not always the sole subject of his works, Sušić's texts represent the most consistent academic attempt at a conceptual analysis in the domestic periodical press. He interprets Ibn Khaldun primarily as a theorist of the state and political power, rather than merely as a historian.¹⁶ For Ibn Khaldun, the state is a historically conditioned and transient form that arises from concrete social relations, particularly from strong group solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyyah*).¹⁷ Power is understood as a dynamic process that depends on real social cohesion, rather than exclusively on legal or moral norms, and is subject to degeneration and loss of legitimacy. History, in Sušić's reading, represents a rational and causal framework for understanding politics, as it enables the recognition of regularities in the development of the state and authority. In this way, Sušić highlights Ibn Khaldun's realism and theoretical consistency, and makes one of the most significant domestic contributions to the reception of his political thought.¹⁸

In his texts, books and essays on the Islamic intellectual tradition, Enes Karić mentions Ibn Khaldun as one of the most significant Muslim thinkers on history and society. Karić does not approach Ibn Khaldun as the subject of narrow theoretical analysis, but rather situates him within the broader civilizational and epistemological context of Islam, emphasizing his originality, rational approach to history, and critical attitude towards traditional historiography. He particularly emphasizes Ibn Khaldun's ability to conceive of history as a lawful and meaningful process, thereby viewing him as the pinnacle of classical Islamic scholarship, as well as an author relevant to contemporary understanding of society. Karić's writing on Ibn Khaldun is primarily interpretative and affirmative in character, aiming to demonstrate the intellectual depth of the Islamic tradition, rather than to systematically reconstruct his

15 Hasan Sušić, "Metodološke pretpostavke historije u djelu Ibn Halduna" (Methodological Premises of History in the Work of Ibn Khaldun), *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, no. XVIII–XIX, Sarajevo, 1968–1969.

16 Hasan Sušić, "Odnos historije i nauke o društvu i Ibn Haldunovoj Prolegomeni" (The Relationship between History and Social Science and Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena), *Sociology*, no. 2, vol. XII, Belgrade, 1970.

17 Hasan Sušić, "Ibn Haldunovo shvatanje zakonitosti društvenog razvitka" (Ibn Khaldun's Understanding of the Laws of Social Development), *Pregled*, Sarajevo, 1975.

18 Hasan Sušić, "Dva koncepta političke filozofije" (Two Concepts of Political Philosophy), *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, no. XXIV, Sarajevo, 1976.

political or sociological theory. The work *Ibn Khaldun – An Introduction to Reading al-Muqaddimah* represents Enes Karić's most comprehensive and direct contribution to the reception of Ibn Khaldun in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this book, Karić does not offer a strict, systematic reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's theory, but rather a hermeneutical and interpretative guide to the *Muqaddima*, intended for the contemporary reader. In this, Ibn Khaldun is presented as a thinker who combines religious knowledge, rational analysis and the experience of history, and the *Muqaddima* as a work that transcends the genre boundaries between historiography, philosophy and social theory. Karić highlights the epistemological originality of Ibn Khaldun, his critical approach to sources and his rational understanding of historical laws, thereby placing him at the forefront of the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. The book is primarily introductory, educational and affirmative in character, but it is precisely for this reason that it represents a key reference for understanding Ibn Khaldun in the contemporary Bosnian context.¹⁹

An analysis of the reception of Ibn Khaldun's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows a gradual transition from popular, educational and affirmative portrayals to philological, theoretical and encyclopaedic forms of interpretation. He rarely appears in the domestic periodicals and literature as the subject of continuous academic research, but instead occupies an important place as a symbol of the intellectual depth of the Islamic tradition. From early cultural portrayals, through Orientalist and political-philosophical readings, to encyclopaedic systematization, his reception remains fragmentary, yet multi-layered. This confirms that in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context, Ibn Khaldun functions more as a referential and canonical figure than as an author around whom a stable research tradition is formed.

A special and exceptionally significant contribution to the reception of Ibn Khaldun in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the complete translation of the *Muqaddima* prepared by Teufik Muftić. This represents the first systematic and comprehensive approach to this key work in the Bosnian language, thereby making the *Muqaddima* immediately available to the domestic academic and wider reading public. This shifts the reception of Ibn Khaldun from secondary accounts and interpretations to a direct engagement with the primary source, a crucial step for serious scholarly study. Muftić's contribution is not only translational but also cultural and scholarly, as it enables Ibn Khaldun to be

19 Enes Karić, *Ibn Khaldun, uvod u čitanje Al-Muqaddime* (Ibn Khaldun, an introduction to reading Al-Muqaddimah), El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2008.

read in his full conceptual complexity, beyond abbreviated quotations and mediated interpretations. In this sense, this translation marks a turning point in the Bosnian reception of this important thinker.²⁰

Conclusion

The reception of Ibn Khaldun in Bosnia and Herzegovina develops gradually and through various discursive frameworks. The earliest form of reception is found in the cultural and educational periodicals, where Ćamil Avdić, in *Gajretov kalendar*, presents Ibn Khaldun in a popular-educational manner, emphasizing his scholarship and civilizational significance. The next step is taken by Fehim Bajrektarević, who introduces Ibn Khaldun into the Orientalist and cultural-historical discourse, treating him as an important representative of Islamic historiography. In Šaćir Sikirić's treatment, the reception takes on a philological and historiographical character, focusing on the *Muqaddima* and the methodology of historical writing. The most developed theoretical interpretation is offered by Hasan Sušić, who reads Ibn Khaldun as a theorist of the state, power, and history within the framework of political philosophy. Enes Karić continues the reception in a hermeneutic manner, offering an introduction and an interpretative framework for the contemporary reader's reading of the *Muqaddimah*. Finally, the entry by Nerkez Smailagić in the *Leksikon islama* marks a phase of the canonization of Ibn Khaldun as a universally accepted figure of the Islamic intellectual tradition. The greatest contribution is the complete translation of the *Muqaddimah* into Bosnian by Teufik Muftić, which has enabled direct access to Ibn Khaldun's thought for the Bosnian academic and wider reading public.

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20 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, translated by Teufik Muftić, El-Kalem, Sarajevo 2007.

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Khaldunian Applications in Applied Sociology: A Contemporary Reading in Light of the Emirati Experience

Dr Shaikha Nasir Alkarbi

Beyond Heritage – Toward Analytical Reactivation

Applied sociology is distinguished by its commitment to translating theoretical insights into diagnostic and policy-relevant tools. Yet in many contemporary Arab contexts, the relationship between sociological theory and applied practice remains structurally imbalanced. Modernization paradigms, institutional frameworks, and development theories are often adopted with limited interrogation of their epistemological assumptions or cultural grounding. This situation has generated an intellectual dependency that, while methodologically productive, sometimes leaves analytical blind spots when examining societies undergoing rapid but culturally embedded transformation.

The re-engagement with Ibn Khaldun must therefore move beyond symbolic celebration. The *Muqaddimah* does not merely anticipate sociology, but instead offers a systematic analysis of social organization, power, economic production, and collective cohesion. Ibn Khaldun's insistence that human beings are "social by nature" and that organized cooperation is a structural

necessity establishes a foundational sociological proposition regarding the interdependence of survival, authority, and economic order.¹

What distinguishes the Khaldunian approach is its relational architecture. *‘Umran* does not refer to material civilization alone, but to the structured configuration of political authority, economic life, normative order, and solidarity. *‘Asabiyyah* functions not as a tribal artefact but as the generative energy of collective organization. The durability of states, in turn, depends upon the equilibrium among cohesion, institutional capacity, and moral legitimacy. These are not historical curiosities, but are structural variables.

This chapter advances the argument that Ibn Khaldun’s conceptual system can be re-specified as an operational framework for applied sociology. The goal is neither to romanticize the past nor to claim theoretical originality for classical thought, but to test whether Khaldunian propositions retain explanatory capacity when examined through the lens of contemporary institutional and developmental analysis.

The Emirati experience provides a particularly instructive case. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has undergone rapid modernization, institutional consolidation, and economic diversification while simultaneously investing in national identity, social cohesion, and long-term strategic governance. The question is not whether the UAE reproduces Khaldunian cycles, but whether Khaldunian categories illuminate structural dimensions of its development trajectory.

Methodological Orientation and Conceptual Strategy

This chapter adopts a descriptive–analytical and comparative methodology. The first stage reconstructs core Khaldunian propositions from the *Muqaddimah* using the authoritative English translation by Franz Rosenthal.² The second stage places these propositions in dialogue with modern institutional sociology and social capital theory.³ The third stage applies the re-specified framework to selected structural features of the Emirati experience,

1 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, three vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1:89–96.

2 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:89–96.

3 Syed Farid Alatas, “Ibn Khaldūn and Contemporary Sociology”, *International Sociology* 21, no. 6 (2006): 785–789, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906067790>.

drawing on academic analyses of state formation and development in the Gulf.⁴

The analytical strategy is explicitly operational. Rather than treating Khaldunian categories as metaphors, the chapter translates them into measurable dimensions: institutional coherence, social cohesion, normative legitimacy, and long-term governance capacity. In doing so, it aligns with the methodological commitments of applied sociology, which seeks to connect theoretical architecture with practical diagnostics.

Crucially, this re-specification avoids two common pitfalls: first, deterministic readings of cyclical decline; second, anachronistic literalism. Concepts are reinterpreted structurally rather than historically. This allows them to be evaluated alongside contemporary theories of institutional stability and collective trust without collapsing conceptual distinctions.

Reinterpreting *‘umran*: From Civilizational Order to Developmental Architecture

The concept of *‘umran* occupies the structural centre of Ibn Khaldun’s sociological edifice. While frequently translated as “civilization”, this rendering is insufficient if detached from its analytical depth. In the *Muqaddimah*, *‘umran* denotes the total configuration of organized human life, its economic interdependence, political authority, moral regulation, and institutional order. Ibn Khaldun writes that human society emerges from necessity, for “man cannot live except through cooperation”, and this cooperation generates the structures of governance, production, and law.⁵

What is remarkable in this formulation is its systemic orientation. Ibn Khaldun does not isolate economic activity from political authority nor treat governance as independent from moral cohesion. Rather, he insists upon their interdependence. Prosperity arises when taxation is moderate, justice prevails, and production is incentivized; decline occurs when fiscal excess, injustice, and corruption erode productive motivation.⁶ In this sense, *‘umran* is not a static civilization but a dynamic equilibrium.

4 Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3–12.

5 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:89–92.

6 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:103–105.

From the standpoint of applied sociology, this equilibrium may be analytically conceptualized as a multidimensional developmental architecture in which institutional coherence, economic vitality, normative legitimacy, and social integration operate as interdependent dimensions rather than isolated variables. Institutional coherence reflects the reliability and procedural integrity of governing structures, while economic vitality denotes the productive capacity sustained by predictable regulatory frameworks. Normative legitimacy captures the alignment between authority and shared moral order, and social integration ensures the cohesion necessary to prevent fragmentation. Taken together, these dimensions form a relational system in which the stability of one component depends on the reinforcement of the others, thereby illustrating the structural complexity of *‘umran* as a dynamic and interconnected developmental framework.

These dimensions resonate with contemporary institutional theory. Douglass North defines institutions as “the rules of the game in a society”, shaping incentives and constraining uncertainty.⁷ Ibn Khaldun’s emphasis on justice and fiscal moderation anticipates this insight: when institutional rules undermine fairness, economic and social order deteriorate.

Similarly, Amartya Sen’s conception of development as an expansion of substantive freedoms offers a modern parallel to Ibn Khaldun’s broader view of prosperity. Development cannot be reduced to wealth accumulation; it must include security, justice, and collective capability.⁸ In Khaldunian language, a flourishing *‘umran* presupposes institutional stability and moral legitimacy.

Thus, *‘umran* can be re-specified for applied sociology as a multidimensional developmental matrix. Rather than measuring growth exclusively through GDP or infrastructural expansion, a Khaldunian diagnostic would evaluate whether economic growth is accompanied by institutional coherence and social integration. Rapid modernization without these reinforcing conditions risks structural imbalance.

In this sense, the contemporary Emirati experience offers an empirically grounded illustration of *‘umran* as a developmental architecture rather than a purely historical construct. The UAE has pursued a model of long-term strategic planning – articulated in national visions and federal strategies – that integrates economic diversification, institutional capacity-building, and

7 North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, 3–12.

8 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 36–41.

social cohesion into a unified governance framework. This integration reflects a structural alignment between economic policy and political authority, whereby diversification initiatives are embedded within stable regulatory institutions and forward-looking state planning. Moreover, the emphasis on institutional stability and effective governance has contributed to maintaining a high degree of policy continuity, which, in Khaldunian terms, reinforces the equilibrium necessary for sustaining ‘*umran*. Rather than treating development as isolated economic growth, the Emirati model demonstrates how coordinated interaction between governance, economy, and social cohesion can produce a resilient and adaptive form of civilizational organization consistent with the structural logic outlined by Ibn Khaldun.⁹

Moreover, the operationalization of ‘*umran* within contemporary applied sociology can be further illuminated through its alignment with sustainable development frameworks and governance indicators, particularly in the context of the UAE. National strategic initiatives such as the UAE Centennial 2071 and long-term federal planning agendas reflect a deliberate effort to institutionalize development as a multidimensional and intergenerational process, integrating economic diversification, human capital development, and social cohesion within a coherent governance structure. From a Khaldunian perspective, this corresponds to the preservation of equilibrium between material prosperity and institutional legitimacy, where sustainable development is not merely an economic objective but a structural condition of enduring ‘*umran*. Furthermore, the UAE’s consistent performance across global governance and competitiveness indicators – particularly in terms of institutional effectiveness, regulatory quality, and government efficiency – illustrates how contemporary states may translate cohesion and administrative capacity into measurable developmental outcomes. In this sense, ‘*umran* may be analytically reinterpreted as a framework through which governance quality, long-term planning, and social integration converge to sustain developmental resilience over time.¹⁰

9 Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 45–72; Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 332–340.

10 UAE Government, *UAE Centennial 2071* (Abu Dhabi: Government of the United Arab Emirates, 2017), <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/uae-centennial-2071>; World Bank, *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023), <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>; World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report 2020* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2020), 583–587.

This reinterpretation does not impose anachronism, and instead extracts structural logic. Ibn Khaldun's argument that injustice leads to economic contraction – because people lose incentive to produce – reveals a proto-institutional economic theory grounded in moral sociology.¹¹ Such a perspective aligns with contemporary findings in development economics, where corruption and institutional fragility correlate with stagnation.

Therefore, the operational value of *'umran* lies in its integrative quality. It provides a relational model in which governance, economy, and cohesion are analytically inseparable. Applied sociology benefits from this integration because policy interventions rarely operate within isolated domains.

Institutional Vitality and the Avoidance of Structural Decay

Ibn Khaldun's analysis extends beyond formation toward sustainability. He observes that states weaken not merely through external conquest but through internal moral and fiscal decay. Excessive luxury among elites, oppressive taxation, and administrative corruption undermine productive activity and erode social trust.¹² Decline, in his framework, is a cumulative process of institutional fatigue.

Modern political sociology echoes this concern. Samuel Huntington argues that political order depends on the institutionalization of authority, and that rapid social mobilization without institutional capacity generates instability.¹³ When placed alongside Ibn Khaldun, the parallels are striking. Both theorists emphasize the mismatch between expansion and institutional consolidation as a driver of disorder.

Applied sociologically, this implies that development must be institutionally sequenced. Rapid economic expansion requires proportional strengthening of administrative systems, legal frameworks, and civic trust. Without these, modernization may generate inequality and fragmentation rather than cohesion.

Ibn Khaldun's cyclical language has sometimes been misread as deterministic. Yet his analysis can be reinterpreted as a warning against structural

11 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:103–105.

12 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:125–127.

13 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 1–30.

imbalance. Cycles reflect recurring patterns of institutional overreach and moral decline – not metaphysical fate. If institutions maintain justice and fiscal balance, decline is neither inevitable nor immediate.

This reinterpretation is essential when applying Khaldunian logic to contemporary states. The concept of structural decay becomes an evaluative tool: Are governance systems adaptive? Are fiscal policies sustainable? Does legitimacy remain intact? These questions transform Ibn Khaldun from a historian of empires into a diagnostic resource for institutional sustainability.

Re-Specifying *‘Asabiyyah*: From Kinship Solidarity to Institutionalized Social Cohesion

Among Ibn Khaldun’s most discussed concepts, *‘asabiyyah* has often been narrowly interpreted as tribal solidarity. Such a reduction, however, overlooks its structural role within the Khaldunian system. In the *Muqaddimah*, *‘asabiyyah* is presented as the generative force that enables collective action, political authority, and social endurance. Ibn Khaldun explicitly links leadership and dominion to the strength of group cohesion, arguing that sovereignty cannot be sustained without a unifying bond capable of mobilizing cooperation and sacrifice.¹⁴

Crucially, *‘asabiyyah* in Ibn Khaldun is not reducible to lineage; rather, it is the binding energy of collective identification. While tribal structures provided the empirical context for his analysis, the underlying sociological principle concerns solidarity as a precondition for organized power.¹⁵ Authority emerges where cohesion enables coordinated action; it dissolves when solidarity weakens.

Modern sociology offers parallel conceptualizations under the rubric of social capital. Robert Putnam’s analysis of civic engagement in *Bowling Alone* demonstrates that trust, networks, and shared norms enhance institutional performance and democratic resilience.¹⁶ While Putnam’s work is grounded in contemporary empirical research, the structural proposition echoes Ibn Khaldun’s insight: collective trust is not ornamental, it is constitutive of political stability.

14 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:263–266.

15 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:271–273.

16 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 18–22.

However, a careful distinction is required. Putnam emphasizes associational density and civic participation, whereas Ibn Khaldun foregrounds the capacity for collective mobilization and the formation of authority. The former measures everyday civic trust; the latter explains macro-political cohesion. Re-specifying *'asabiyyah* for applied sociology therefore requires integrating both dimensions: cohesion as participatory trust and cohesion as mobilizable solidarity.

This distinction becomes analytically productive in modern state contexts. In contemporary societies, cohesion may be produced not through kinship but through national identity narratives, inclusive governance, equitable economic policy, and shared developmental goals. Under these conditions, *'asabiyyah* becomes institutionalized rather than genealogical. It is embedded in education systems, legal equality, symbolic leadership, and participatory structures.

Ibn Khaldun himself anticipates the fragility of cohesion. He observes that luxury and administrative centralization may erode solidarity by weakening collective discipline and fostering dependency.¹⁷ Once elites distance themselves from the broader social body, cohesion decays. In contemporary terms, this phenomenon corresponds to declining institutional trust and widening social fragmentation.

These indicators may be analytically understood as interrelated dimensions of institutionalized cohesion rather than discrete empirical variables. Trust in governing institutions reflects the perceived legitimacy of authority, while patterns of civic participation signal the extent to which individuals are embedded within collective frameworks of action. National identity, in turn, functions as a symbolic and integrative mechanism that sustains continuity across diverse social groups. When examined together, these dimensions reveal that *'asabiyyah*, in its contemporary re-specification, operates as a multilayered structure in which affective bonds, institutional trust, and participatory engagement converge to produce durable social cohesion. This interpretation aligns with modern sociological approaches that conceptualize social capital as a composite of trust, norms, and networks, all of which enhance institutional performance and collective resilience.¹⁸ Rather than asking whether tribal bonds exist, applied sociology instead asks whether a society possesses sufficient cohesion to sustain institutional vitality.

17 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:125–127.

18 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 18–22; Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 26–28.

Importantly, this reinterpretation avoids romanticizing solidarity. Cohesion must remain normatively bounded. Excessive or exclusionary forms of group solidarity can undermine pluralism and produce domination. Ibn Khaldun's own historical examples illustrate that cohesion tied exclusively to narrow groups may generate expansion but eventually produce internal conflict.¹⁹ Thus, the applied challenge lies in cultivating inclusive cohesion that reinforces legitimacy without suppressing diversity.

Cohesion, Modernization, and Institutional Trust

The relationship between modernization and cohesion has long occupied sociological debate. Anthony Giddens argues that modernity intensifies reflexivity, disembedding social relations from local contexts and increasing dependence on abstract systems.²⁰ In such environments, trust shifts from face-to-face solidarity to confidence in institutional mechanisms.

When read alongside Ibn Khaldun, this shift reveals an intriguing continuity. *'Asabiyyah* in pre-modern settings was anchored in immediate social bonds; in modern states, cohesion is mediated by institutional trust. Yet the structural necessity remains constant: collective stability depends on shared confidence in the systems that regulate power and distribution.

Applied sociology must therefore evaluate whether modernization strengthens or weakens cohesion. Rapid economic diversification, technological transformation, and globalization may generate new opportunities while simultaneously straining traditional bonds. The question becomes whether institutional frameworks successfully translate modernization into integrative rather than fragmenting processes.

Ibn Khaldun's cyclical reflections underscore that cohesion deteriorates when rulers prioritize luxury and distance themselves from the collective.²¹ Modern sociological research parallels this insight: declining public trust correlates with perceived inequality, corruption, and lack of transparency. Institutional legitimacy remains inseparable from social solidarity.

19 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:300–302.

20 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 21–38.

21 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:125–127.

Thus, re-specifying *‘asabiyyah* as institutionalized cohesion provides applied sociology with a dual diagnostic lens: trust and mobilization. A society may exhibit high economic growth yet suffer from low institutional trust; conversely, strong cohesion may buffer periods of economic stress.

This conceptual clarification prepares the ground for the next analytical step: examining whether the Emirati developmental model exhibits structural features consistent with a re-specified Khaldunian framework.

The Emirati Experience: Institutional Consolidation and Cohesion in a Rapidly Transforming State

The UAE offers a particularly instructive contemporary case through which Khaldunian concepts may be analytically re-examined within a modern state context. Since its formation in 1971, the UAE has undergone rapid economic transformation, institutional consolidation, and global integration, while simultaneously maintaining a high degree of political stability and social cohesion. Rather than interpreting this trajectory solely through rentier-state theory, a Khaldunian reading invites a structural analysis of how cohesion, governance, and development interact to sustain institutional vitality.

From the perspective of *‘umran*, the Emirati model reflects a deliberate effort to construct a balanced developmental architecture in which economic growth, political authority, and social integration operate in coordination rather than isolation. The federal system itself (combining centralized strategic direction with emirate-level autonomy) represents a negotiated form of institutional coherence that mitigates fragmentation while preserving local identity. This configuration corresponds to Ibn Khaldun’s emphasis on the necessity of cohesion as a precondition for durable governance, where authority must be supported by a unifying social structure rather than imposed through coercion alone.²²

Economic diversification policies further illustrate this structural alignment. While hydrocarbon wealth initially provided the material basis for state formation, the UAE has actively pursued a post-oil development strategy centred on knowledge economies, infrastructure, and global connectivity. Such a transition may be interpreted in Khaldunian terms as an effort to sustain

22 Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates* (London: Longman, 1982), 335–348.

‘*umran* beyond its initial material foundations by reinforcing institutional and productive capacity. As Ibn Khaldun observed, economic vitality must be preserved through moderation, productivity, and the avoidance of extractive excess; otherwise, the foundations of prosperity erode.²³ Contemporary analyses of Gulf economies similarly indicate that long-term stability depends on the ability to institutionalize diversification and reduce dependency on finite resources.²⁴

Equally significant is the role of social cohesion and national identity formation in the Emirati context. State-led initiatives promoting tolerance, national belonging, and civic identity have contributed to the construction of what may be described as institutionalized ‘*asabiyyah* – a form of cohesion embedded not in kinship structures but in shared civic frameworks and collective narratives. In this sense, cohesion becomes a product of governance, education, and symbolic leadership rather than lineage. Ibn Khaldun’s insight that authority requires a binding force capable of mobilizing collective action remains relevant, but its contemporary manifestation is mediated through institutional mechanisms rather than tribal affiliation.²⁵

At the same time, the Emirati experience highlights the importance of leadership and long-term strategic governance in maintaining structural equilibrium. Multi-decade planning frameworks, including national visions and federal strategies, reflect a forward-looking approach to development that seeks to balance economic expansion with institutional stability and social integration. From a Khaldunian perspective, such planning may be interpreted as an effort to prevent the internal imbalances – fiscal excess, administrative decay, and declining cohesion – that historically contributed to state decline.²⁶

However, a critical applied sociological analysis must also acknowledge structural tensions. Rentier-state theory suggests that distributive wealth may reduce pressures for political participation, potentially affecting long-term civic engagement and institutional accountability.²⁷ A Khaldunian frame-

23 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, three vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 2:103–105.

24 Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 45–52.

25 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 18–22.

26 Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East*, 332–340.

27 Hazem Beblawi, “The Rentier State in the Arab World”, in *The Rentier State*, ed. Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 49–62.

work would interpret such dynamics as potential risks to cohesion if solidarity becomes transactional rather than normative. The sustainability of the Emirati model thus depends on the continued alignment between governance capacity, economic diversification, and inclusive social cohesion.

In sum, the Emirati case does not replicate Khaldunian historical cycles, but it provides a contemporary context in which Khaldunian categories – re-specified and operationalized – can illuminate the structural conditions of institutional resilience. The interaction between cohesive governance, strategic planning, and diversified development reflects a form of equilibrium that resonates with the underlying logic of *‘umran*, demonstrating its continued analytical relevance for applied sociology.

Leadership, Legitimacy, and Long-Term Governance

A distinctive feature of the Emirati experience is long-term strategic planning, exemplified in multi-decade development visions and federal strategies. Political sociology emphasizes that stable governance depends not only on institutionalization but also on elite consensus and forward planning.²⁸ Ibn Khaldun similarly attributes state durability to leadership capable of balancing authority with justice and fiscal prudence.²⁹

In this context, leadership becomes a mediating variable between cohesion and institutional vitality. The Emirati model has often been described as consensus-oriented at the elite level, reducing internal fragmentation within ruling structures.³⁰ From a Khaldunian standpoint, such consensus sustains collective direction and prevents the competitive fissures that historically weakened dynasties.

Moreover, crisis management capacity offers an empirical test of cohesion. Contemporary research on state resilience suggests that societies exhibiting high trust and coordinated governance respond more effectively to external shocks.³¹ Ibn Khaldun’s emphasis on mobilizable solidarity finds a modern parallel here: cohesion must translate into coordinated action under pressure.

28 Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 1–30.

29 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:263–266.

30 Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 335–348.

31 Fukuyama, *Trust*, 26–45.

However, structural sustainability requires constant recalibration. Rapid demographic change, globalization, and technological transformation introduce new variables absent in Ibn Khaldun's historical environment. The challenge for applied sociology is not to assert equivalence but to assess whether Khaldunian categories illuminate adaptive capacity.

Structural Balance and the Question of Sustainability

Ibn Khaldun's cyclical model has frequently been interpreted as deterministic, yet its structural core concerns imbalance rather than inevitability. States decline when fiscal extraction exceeds productive capacity, when luxury erodes discipline, and when cohesion weakens.³² The contemporary analogue would involve institutional complacency, widening inequality, or the erosion of public trust.

Scholars of Gulf development warn that post-rentier transitions require sustained institutional reform to prevent stagnation.³³ As such, the Khaldunian lens functions as an evaluative heuristic: Does modernization strengthen institutional coherence and cohesion simultaneously?

In the Emirati case, diversification policies, federal integration, and identity construction suggest deliberate attempts to maintain equilibrium. Yet applied sociology must remain analytically neutral. Structural sustainability cannot be presumed, and instead must be continually assessed.

Here the relevance of Ibn Khaldun lies not in predicting decline but in identifying warning indicators: fiscal imbalance, elite fragmentation, and erosion of solidarity. When these variables remain controlled, the cyclical pattern becomes mitigated rather than fatalistic.

Critical Reflections: Limits and Objections to Khaldunian Operationalization

This raises a fundamental methodological question, which is whether Khaldunian categories retain analytical autonomy when transposed into contemporary contexts, or whether they function primarily as interpretive metaphors

32 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:125–127.

33 Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats*, 17–28.

shaped by retrospective reading. The challenge, therefore, lies not in affirming the relevance of Ibn Khaldun, but in determining the conditions under which his conceptual framework can be operationalized without distortion. As several scholars have noted, the uncritical adaptation of classical concepts risks collapsing historical specificity into generalized abstraction, thereby weakening their explanatory power. A rigorous engagement requires distinguishing between the empirical conditions of Ibn Khaldun's time and the structural logic of his analysis, ensuring that conceptual translation is guided by methodological discipline rather than intellectual nostalgia.³⁴

Any attempt to reactivate Ibn Khaldun within contemporary applied sociology must confront serious methodological objections. The first concerns historical contextualization. Critics argue that Ibn Khaldun's framework emerged within a 14th-century Maghribi political environment structured by tribal confederations, dynastic competition, and agrarian economies. To transpose his concepts into a 21st-century globalized state system risks anachronism.³⁵

This objection cannot be dismissed lightly. Sociological concepts are historically embedded. However, the methodological response lies in distinguishing between empirical referents and structural logic. While Ibn Khaldun analysed tribal formations, the underlying sociological principle of cohesion as a precondition for political authority transcends its historical instantiation. The analytical task is not replication but abstraction.

A second objection concerns cyclical determinism. Ibn Khaldun's model of dynastic rise and decline has often been interpreted as fatalistic. Ernest Gellner suggested that Ibn Khaldun's theory was constrained by its pre-modern horizon and lacked a conception of structural modernization capable of breaking cyclical patterns.³⁶ If decline is structurally inevitable, operationalization becomes futile.

Yet such determinism may stem from a misreading. Ibn Khaldun does not posit metaphysical inevitability, and instead he identifies recurring patterns of

34 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun in Modern Scholarship* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981), 14–22; Syed Farid Alatas, "Ibn Khaldūn and Contemporary Sociology", *International Sociology* 21, no. 6 (2006): 782–795, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906067790>.

35 Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun in Modern Scholarship*, 14–22.

36 Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 87–95.

imbalance – luxury, fiscal excess, and weakened cohesion.³⁷ These are contingent variables. In modern institutional contexts, adaptive reform mechanisms may mitigate cyclical decay. Thus, applied sociology treats Khaldunian cycles as risk indicators rather than fixed destiny.

A third objection concerns the concept of *'asabiyyah* itself. Some contemporary scholars warn that translating cohesion into modern policy discourse may unintentionally legitimize exclusionary nationalism or suppress pluralism.³⁸ Cohesion, when interpreted narrowly, can undermine diversity and participatory inclusion.

This critique is analytically productive. It compels a normative clarification: re-specified *'asabiyyah* must be inclusive, civic, and institutionalized rather than genealogical or exclusionary. Applied sociology must ensure that solidarity reinforces legitimacy without erasing heterogeneity.

Finally, epistemological caution is required. Postcolonial theorists argue that reviving classical thinkers risks romanticizing heritage in reaction to Western theoretical dominance.³⁹ The present chapter avoids this by situating Ibn Khaldun in dialogue – not opposition – with modern institutional and social capital theory. The objective is neither rejection nor substitution, but conceptual enrichment.

Khaldunian operationalization is thus neither a nostalgic revival nor theoretical displacement. It is an exercise in analytical pluralism. Its value lies in expanding the interpretive repertoire of applied sociology in Arab contexts while maintaining methodological rigour.

Contribution to the Renewal of Arab Applied Sociology

Unlike much of the existing literature that approaches Ibn Khaldun as a proto-sociologist or a historical precursor to modern social theory, this chapter advances a different analytical strategy by operationalizing Khaldunian concepts within the framework of applied sociology. Rather than treating *'umran* and *'asabiyyah* as descriptive or symbolic categories, the study re-specifies them

37 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 2:125–130.

38 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13–20.

39 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 1–17.

as analytical tools capable of engaging with contemporary institutional theory, governance analysis, and development frameworks. In doing so, it contributes to the field in three distinct ways: first, by demonstrating that classical Arab–Islamic intellectual heritage can be translated into empirically relevant sociological constructs; second, by situating Khaldunian theory within a comparative dialogue with global sociological paradigms such as institutionalism and social capital theory; and third, by applying this re-specified framework to a contemporary case, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical abstraction and policy-oriented analysis. This approach moves beyond interpretive admiration toward methodological integration, offering a model for renewing applied sociology in Arab contexts through conceptually grounded and analytically rigorous engagement.⁴⁰

The broader significance of this chapter lies in its attempt to reposition Arab intellectual heritage within contemporary sociological production. Applied sociology in the Arab world often relies heavily on imported frameworks, sometimes with limited adaptation to local historical structures.

Reactivating Ibn Khaldun contributes to renewal in three ways. First, it provides an endogenous conceptual vocabulary capable of articulating institutional coherence, social cohesion, and sustainability without cultural dissonance. Second, it demonstrates that classical thought can meet modern methodological standards when subjected to operational re-specification. Third, it encourages epistemological confidence: theoretical engagement need not oscillate between imitation and rejection.

Importantly, this renewal is not civilizational exceptionalism. Ibn Khaldun's framework is not uniquely "Arab" in explanatory capacity; it is structurally sociological. Its relational logic parallels institutional and cohesion theories globally. The distinction lies in intellectual continuity.

By translating *'umran* into developmental architecture and *'asabiyyah* into institutionalized cohesion, applied sociology gains a dual advantage: conceptual rootedness and analytical comparability. Such an integration enhances policy relevance while preserving theoretical rigour.

40 Syed Farid Alatas, "A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology for the South", *Current Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2006): 397–411, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392106063192>. ; North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, 3–12.

Toward a Structurally Grounded Applied Sociology

This chapter has argued that Ibn Khaldun's sociological architecture remains analytically viable when carefully re-specified for contemporary application. Rather than treating him as a precursor to sociology, it has approached the *Muqaddimah* as a relational theory of institutional vitality, cohesion, and sustainability.

Through conceptual translation and comparative dialogue, *'umran* was re-framed as a multidimensional developmental matrix, while *'asabiyyah* was interpreted as institutionalized social cohesion. The Emirati experience served as a contemporary case through which these categories could be analytically tested.

The findings do not claim direct equivalence between medieval dynasties and modern federations. Instead, they demonstrate that Khaldunian categories illuminate structural dimensions of institutional balance and cohesion within rapidly transforming societies.

Ultimately, the chapter affirms that engaging with Ibn Khaldun is not a return to the past but an expansion of applied sociology's conceptual horizon. When heritage is subjected to methodological discipline rather than symbolic appropriation, it becomes analytically generative.

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Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿAṣabiyyah* and Gender Relations in a Nomadic Society: The Case of SADR

Dr Anja Zalta

Contextual Background

This contribution aims, at least in part, to examine how religious and ideological attitudes towards gender in society are shaped and transformed by social changes. As an example, we will consider the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and its inhabitants, particularly Sahrawi women, who contribute to new understandings of gender relations in extremely challenging social situations caused by refugees and migration. Our thesis, developed in this article, is that the consolidation of group solidarity (**ʿaṣabiyyah**) in a turbulent or wartime situation required the activation of women in the public sphere, which transgresses traditional patriarchal gender relations defined by both the existing society and religious regulations in determining gender roles.

A key concept underpinning our research on the impact of social changes on gender interpretations is *ʿaṣabiyyah*, meaning solidarity or connection, as introduced by Ibn Khaldūn in his analysis of the nomadic societies of North Africa. In our case, we will relate the concept of *ʿaṣabiyyah* to the understanding of nomadic societies in the context of migrations resulting from the war

between the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and Morocco, and the formation of what Martin and Carboni (2022) call “immovable nomadism” – the settlement of Sahrawis in refugee camps, which are modelled on nomadic camps and are the result of a series of socio-cultural changes.

The SADR, better known as Western Sahara, was founded in 1976. From 1884 to 1975, its territory was a Spanish colony, and on 14 November 1975, the Declaration of Principles on Western Sahara (the “Madrid Agreement”) was signed in Madrid between Spain, Morocco and Mauritania, transferring Spain’s powers and responsibilities over the territory to a temporary tripartite administration (Zunes and Mundy, 2010). The SADR was established by the national liberation movement Polisario (an acronym for the Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro, or Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamr and Rio de Oro). The Polisario Front was founded on 10 May 1973 in Zouerate, Mauritania, with the goal of gaining independence from Spanish colonial rule. On 26 February 1976, Spain handed over the administration of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania. After the fighting, in 1979, Mauritania also withdrew from the territory. Morocco was thus left with sole administration of Western Sahara and surrounded the territory with a wall, a move that was also intended to contain the Polisario Front. As a result of this ongoing conflict, a large part of the Sahrawi population lives in exile, mostly in refugee camps near Tindouf in Algerian territory, where the Polisario Front is also based.

Today, the SADR represents a unique example of a moderate Islamic democracy that has avoided the ethnic conflicts of its tribal past and promotes the empowerment of women. To strengthen our thesis, it is important to note that at the very beginning of the conflicts mentioned above, while men were at war, women organized daily life in the refugee camps and established infrastructure: they built houses, schools and medical centres, cared for refugees from the larger cities of Western Sahara, and organized shelters, care and protection for refugees, who were mostly women and children.

Although we do not have precise statistical data on the number of women involved in public life before the war and the emergence of the Polisario Front, we can identify key shifts that support our thesis from the testimonies of those who co-created the new conditions in Sahrawi society. Fatma Mehdi Hassam is one such individual. She is Chair of the Women and Gender Cluster and Vice President of the African Union’s Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), and has lived in the Saharawi refugee camps since 1975. This

means she knows the situation before, during, and after the war. She was also our first interlocutor when we began researching this topic.

Hassam has described the Saharawi women's struggle as follows:

The nature of war and exile forced our husbands, fathers, and brothers to fight on the frontlines in Western Sahara, while we, the Saharawi women who remained in the camps, built the ministries, schools, parliament, hospitals, and local councils, which can now be visited on Algerian soil. Building the Saharawi Republic has meant much more than establishing institutions that represent us; building the republic has been about creating and imagining a new model of society in which all women and men are free and have equal opportunities. By preserving the traditional values, we hold dear and transforming those we wish to change, we are gradually and carefully offering a model of society that works for our region. There are many things that need to change, given the autocratic governance, the limited rights of women, and the religious fundamentalists who thrive in the countries surrounding us. (Hassam, 2017, 140).

Methodology

This contribution was developed in several stages. The initial engagement with the topic was a visit to the Sahrawi refugee camp Awsarda near Tindouf, Algeria, at the end of February 2019, where we participated in the 8th Congress of the National Union of Sahrawi Women (NUSW). During this period, we conducted field research and interviews with representatives of various Sahrawi organizations.

The excerpts from the interviews presented in this article were authorized and obtained with the consent of the informants during the field research in Tindouf. For the purposes of this analysis, certain excerpts serve only to further emphasize the initial research theses or to provide additional support for the answers to the research questions.

The analysis used, among others, the responses of (A) the secretary of the regional office of Sahrawi students in Saida, Algeria (age 24); (B, C, D, E) four female master's students and activists (aged 27, 25, 24, and 28), and a member of the youth organization UJSARIO, department of international relations (age 26) (F).

The questions were divided into three sections: the role of Sahrawi women (individual perception), the influence of Islamic tradition and the Polisario

Front on the role of Sahrawi women, and the role Sahrawi women play in democratizing society and building peace. In the following years, particularly between December 2024 and November 2025, existing sources and literature were reviewed and supplemented in greater detail for the purposes of this article, and more recent research addressing the Sahrawi theme was examined, especially regarding the impact of social changes on the religious and ideological factors characterizing the issue of gender.

By supplementing the theoretical framework, the collected field material was re-examined to connect it with Ibn Khaldūn's concept of common solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyyah*) in nomadic societies and its associated dynamics.

The article also employed the so-called hermeneutic sociology of knowledge, which considers the historical and social context in which knowledge is produced and interpreted. This approach is important for understanding the concept of *ʿaṣabiyyah* as presented by Ibn Khaldūn. The article will also explain why it is important to highlight his concept for a more detailed analysis of Sahrawi society.

Conceptual Framework

Ibn Khaldūn (732–808 AH/1332–1406 AD), a historian, economist, and proto-sociologist, who was born in Tunis and died in Cairo, is known primarily in academic circles in the Middle East, and to some extent in North Africa, mainly in relation to the recognition and promotion of Muslim academic heritage. However, references to him often reveal a lack of understanding of his critical theory and thought. According to Spicard, Ibn Khaldūn set out the principles of a new approach to history, calling it *ʿilm al-ʿumrān al-bashari* (“the science of human organization”) or *ʿilm al-ijtima al-insani* (“the science of human society”). With this, according to Spickard, Ibn Khaldūn separated his analysis from ordinary historiography and added an inner meaning (*batin*) and a subtle explanation of the causes and origins of existing things (Spickard 2017).

Ibn Khaldūn's name is virtually absent from the European sociological canon, and it is difficult to find mention of him even in surveys of sociological thought in the Global North. According to Alatas, this is because the sociological canon was consolidated after the Second World War, at which point the understanding of what constitutes classical sociology was established (Alatas 2014, 153).

Because Ibn Khaldūn's concepts and analyses were developed in a specific historical period and geographical context, applying them today presents a challenge, but one that is probably no greater than applying Max Weber's ideal-type concepts to the analysis of religious systems and organizations without recognizing their culture-bound nature. Therefore, when considering the religious and ideological influences on gender relations in Sahrawi society, we will use Ibn Khaldūn's concepts, formulated centuries ago in the same geographical area of North Africa, as a result of his analysis of the influence of religion (Islam) on society as an integral force and creator of group identity that transcends tribal connections by blood or kinship.

Ibn Khaldūn's most famous work is called the *Muqaddimah*, or *Introduction to History*, which is part of his study *Kitab al-Ibar Diwan al-Mubtada wa-l-Khabar fi Ayyam al-Arab wa-l-'Ajam wa-l-Barbar* (*Book of Examples and Collection of Historical Origins of the Arabs and Berbers*), and contains ideas that can help us understand certain religious dynamics today (Ibn Khaldūn 2004). One of the key concepts in Ibn Khaldūn's work is 'aṣabiyyah. This derives from the Arabic root 'asab (to connect) and, according to Baali, it refers to connecting an individual to a group (*asabatun*, *usbatun*, or *isbatum*) (Baali 1995, 140). The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* describes 'aṣabiyyah as the "spirit of kinship" (Gabrieli 1986, 681). However, since the term 'aṣabiyyah is difficult to translate precisely, many authors, such as Baali (1988) and Ab Halim (2014, 3), recommend retaining it in Arabic. Nevertheless, it has been translated using various phrases, including "group connection", "group solidarity", "group feeling", "group loyalty", and even "collective consciousness" (Baali 1988, pp. 43–44). Thus, Ibn Khaldūn presents a theory of social solidarity – a theory of how and when a group is held together. According to Ibn Khaldūn, 'aṣabiyyah is not rooted in kinship, clan, or tribe, but develops among individuals who continually face problems, so that strong emotional bonds are established and realized through joint collective action (Malešević, 2021). Spicard, referring to Ibn Khaldūn's thought, calls this an edge-focused theory – groups are formed and their strength ('aṣabiyyah) is created through conflicts with outsiders caused by social changes (economic instability, migration, wars, etc.).

According to Ibn Khaldūn's theory, nomadic societies possess strong 'aṣabiyyah because their circumstances require them to remain connected. In this context, Sahrawi society can be understood as nomadic due to challenging social conditions, ranging from war to forced migration. As Martín and Carboni explain in more detail, Sahrawi nomadism, as a comprehensive

socio-cultural set of gestures and movements – from the preparation of tea to the arrangement of tents – was shaped by the ideology introduced by the Polisario Front. This movement sought to break with the institutions of the past, typical of Bedouin societies, where “the segmentation of the social structure was accompanied by a classification system, in which artisans and slaves occupied an inferior position”. This entailed the rejection of tribal status and slavery, both of which were abolished with the aim of building a society in which all people are equal (Martín and Carboni 2022, 83–84). The result of these changes is also reflected in the way the refugee camp was organized, described as “*fīrgān* situated between the square forms of a *maḥṣar* (in response to the war situation) and the circular shape of the *anawāl* (signalling radical equality between members)” (Martín and Carboni 2022, 78–79). However, we cannot conclude from the organization of the refugee camp alone that gender equality has been achieved among members of Sahrawi society. Therefore, our aim will be to examine the ideological and religious foundations for achieving gender equality and what this means in practice.

‘Aṣabiyyah and the role of women

At the outset, we noted the thesis that among the Sahrawis, difficult social conditions – such as war, displacement, and economic hardship – have led religion and ideology to strengthen *‘aṣabiyyah* and place women in public roles. The role of Sahrawi women is crucial in the liberation struggle, as they have played a central part in educational, political, and social life, with Polisario ideology being decisive in this regard. In the early Polisario discourses analysed by Allan, and in their vision of society, there was a strong influence from the socialist and revolutionary ideas of the time, including those from Vietnamese, Palestinian, and other African revolutionary movements (Allan 2010). For the Polisario, the aim of the revolution is to lead people from oppression, slavery, and colonialism to liberation and democracy, which includes eradicating tribalism and promoting gender equality, especially in comparison with neighbouring countries, particularly Morocco and Algeria (Allan 2010).

Based on field material obtained through interviews with Sahrawis, most respondents confirmed that women’s participation in political life is a mechanism for democratic change in society. Such a society is founded on the interests and needs of its citizens, with Sahrawi women participating in all political, cultural, social and educational activities, and leading organizations

such as the Union of Sahrawi Women (UNMS), which maintains bilateral contacts with most women's organizations worldwide. They are active members of the Pan African Women's Organization, the General Union of African Women, and the Women's International Democratic Federation, and participate in many meetings, debates, congresses and international conferences, always carrying the message of peace, solidarity and the friendship of the Sahrawi people.

According to the respondents, Sahrawi women are the most significant representatives of their people's aspirations for independence, so it is important to continue supporting their participation at all political levels to build peace:

They have experience, a message and methods; they have demonstrated the values of solidarity, peace, equality, social protection and the ability to manage and make decisions according to the needs of their cities. (B)

It is a woman who represents Sahrawis at international forums, holds the positions of ambassador, minister, representative, even in the army, and with her sisters around the world, she fights for feminism and will continue her journey as a woman and as a Sahrawi warrior until she reaches the goal of liberating Western Sahara... (C)

It is also worth highlighting the following answer, which clearly outlines the traditional role of Sahrawi women in the pre-revolutionary period:

The Sahrawi woman is the mistress and owner of the house. Although she can work if she wishes, it is essential that the man supports the family. However, when the man travels to provide a better life for his family, or when he goes to war, the woman becomes both father and mother. (F) (Zalta and Ben Jomaa, 2019)

Data collected by Ciesielkiewicz and Garrido Guijarro emphasizes that, in the SADR, women hold 75% of jobs in education, 85% in public administration, and 75% in health. They actively participate in politics and manage libraries, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, as well as schools for children with special needs (Ciesielkiewicz and Óscar 2017). According to data provided by Fatma Mehdi Hassam, Sahrawi women hold 85% of the republic's administrative positions, 75% of positions in education, and 90% in health services. There are three female ministers in the government, one female provincial governor, four women in the leadership of the Polisario Front, and 25% of parliamentarians are women. They also founded the Unija Nacional de Mujeres Sahrawis (National Union of Sahrawi Women – UNMS), which represents all Sahrawi women and plays a key role in supporting the

population in refugee camps, focusing on building peace, establishing gender equality, and promoting the social, political, and economic empowerment of women and girls (Mehdi Hassam, 2017, 140–141).

To understand the particularities of Sahrawi women and their situation, the traditional construction of gender roles in Western Sahara must also be considered (Amadiume 1987; Amadiume 1997). According to Sudarkasa, ancient Africans established some degree of gendered division of labour, but gender roles were seen as complementary rather than hierarchical. Thus, clearing grass and bushes, traditionally male roles, was valued equally with planting, traditionally a female role. Women in ancient African societies before the advent of Islam or Christianity were active in managing villages and towns, belonged to trade and craft guilds, participated in the construction and maintenance of roads, buildings, wells, and streams, and helped to resolve conflicts (Sudarkasa 1982, 279–288; Sudarkasa 1986, pp. 91–103). According to them, indigenous African religions did not limit women's roles, as they were expected to be active in both the private and public spheres, as evidenced by the fact that women held positions of power and authority (Njoh 2006). Therefore, when the Polisario Front began implementing social reforms in the refugee camps, it relied on an already existing tradition.

According to Lippert, the participation of Sahrawi women in society and their high social status are linked to the history of the Sahrawi people and their nomadic lifestyle, in which women were respected and contributed to social equality (Lippert 1992, 636–651). Allan identifies three key periods in Sahrawi history: the romantic pre-colonial period, which demonstrates how women were “always” strong (the Golden Age of the Sahrawis); the Spanish colonial period, which forced Sahrawi women into a subordinate position and caused regression among the population (a time of crisis); and the modern period, beginning with the resistance movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when women began to recover their “historical” and “truly Sahrawi” emancipated position (the time of reconstruction). According to her, regression and sexism are linked to colonialism, while gender equality is a natural and historical feature of Sahrawi society, with deep roots in a distant and idyllic golden age (Allan 2010, 198).

As Lippert emphasized, women played a decisive role in traditional Sahrawi life, including in the nomadic camps. Her findings indicate that in traditional Sahrawi society, women could inherit property and live independently of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. The traditional nomadic Sahrawi woman

ruled the tent, played an important role in raising children, did not wear a veil, and enjoyed considerable personal freedom. Open tents allowed easy contact between men and women. Due to the frequent absence of men because of fighting or trading, women were responsible for the nomadic camps, making, repairing, and moving tents, milking goats and camels, and participating in major tribal decisions, including those related to Qur'anic schooling for both men and women (Lippert 1992, 637–638).

The historical and cultural influences of the nomadic tradition cannot be denied. Traditionally, desert nomadic communities are matrilineal and matrilocal, granting women a degree of independence at home and in the public sphere that is uncommon in other Muslim societies of North Africa and the Middle East. Notably, both the ideological foundation of the Polisario and Islam play key roles in strengthening the position of women in Sahrawi society. Sahrawis understand Islam as a religion that calls for respect for women, and Sahrawi women use their example to challenge stereotypical representations of women in Arab and Islamic countries, partly because of the way they understand and practice their religion. Sahrawis follow the Sunni Maliki school of *fiqh*, which they interpret as a moderate form of Islam. They believe its tolerance promotes solidarity, strengthens unity, rejects violence and hatred, and opposes arbitrariness and oppression. This allows Sahrawi women to freely analyse, develop, and express their needs and interests without having to follow existing models, even though the legal framework of the republic is Sharia. Some points of emphasis regarding their interpretations of Islam and its context: *“For Sahrawi Muslims, the most important thing is equality. They believe that there is no difference between woman and man or between white and black; differences exist only in personal integrity and morality...”* (B)

Sahrawi religiosity has certain features that *“make it unique in the Arab world”*. These include:

legal, social, and political equality between men and women. They may pray together or separately. The only distinction is that a woman may lead other women in prayer, but not men. (B)

A Sahrawi woman is open-minded, yet religious and respectful of the rules of the Qur'an. There is no difference in the practice of Islam for men and women. (F)

The Sahrawi woman holds an important place in Muslim society, enjoys exceptional privileges, can move freely, has freedom of expression, can separate without stigma, and does not need to fear of the consequences... (B)

Sahrawi women view Islam as a means of emancipation, as “*Islam appeared to enlighten individuals’ lives and ensure women’s rights*” (A) (Zalta and Ben Jomaa, 2019).

Discussion

Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes the strong connection between political hegemony and religion. According to him, religion consolidates *‘aṣabiyyah* and at the same time helps to consolidate political hegemony.

Islam, which, according to the SADR constitution, forms the basis of Sahrawi Law and social values, is considered by Sahrawis to be compatible with the Polisario’s socialist ideology. The way Sahrawis practice Islam is, in their view, integral to the creation of the constitution, as they could not respect the constitution without adhering to Islamic tradition. The SADR Constitution of 2015 states that “the Sahrawi people are an Arab, African and Muslim people” (Chapter 2, Article 6) and that “Islam shall be the State religion and a main source of law” (Chapter 1, Article 2). Particular attention is given to Article 7, which states that “the family is the foundation of society; it shall be based on religious, ethical and national values and on the historical heritage” (Chapter 2, Article 7), indirectly suggesting that the rights and freedoms of women are constitutionally guaranteed, provided they do not conflict with national and Islamic values. This is also why many caution against an idealized perception of the emancipation of Saharan women and their political involvement (Allan 2010, 2014; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010; Giordano 2024; Strzelecka 2023).

Let us consider a few important points here. Lucrezia Giordano highlights, among other things, the pronatalist policies of the Polisario. While men were mainly engaged in military activities, women were assigned a reproductive role. Initially, women participated in the construction and management of refugee camps during exile, and were then reportedly encouraged to have as many children as possible. The expectation that Saharan families increase their numbers, she argues, aligns with Yuval-Davis’s concept of “people as power”, which links the nation’s future to ongoing growth that relies primarily on women’s reproductive capacities. Those unable to complete the mandatory military training found an alternative means of participation by “giving more children to the cause”, challenging the perception of passive victimhood within the patriarchal system and engaging in revolutionary struggle with their bodies (Giordano 2024, 12).

The gender dynamics in refugee camps reportedly began to intensify after 1991, when the fighting ended and men returned home (Mundy 2007: 276; Wilson 2012; Allan 2019). According to Strzelecka, women were expected to resume their traditional roles in the family, that is, to be housewives rather than politicians, so Sahrawi leaders had to clearly articulate their feminist interests and positions on the importance of gender equality and the protection of women's rights both in refugee camps and beyond (Strzelecka 2023, 123–124). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2010) highlights another issue, which is that older women continue to dominate the economic, political and social spheres in the refugee camps, even though younger women are highly educated, with many having studied abroad, where they gained experience and became familiar with critical feminist perspectives on gender relations. These innovations were then demanded within their own community, as Strzelecka (2023, 133) also notes. Ultimately, understanding these emerging gender dynamics in Sahrawi society is crucial and undoubtedly warrants broader and more in-depth consideration.

To confirm our thesis, we emphasize once again that the central problem faced by Sahrawi women – and which consequently alters their gender roles – is war and migration, or the associated refugee experience. Consider some of the responses:

The occupation by Morocco is the reason for the unique situation of women living in refugee camps and in the occupied territories. The Moroccan occupying power views the traditional role of Sahrawi women as a deviation. (C)

The greatest effort for Sahrawi women is to maintain a balance between femininity and helping men adapt to refugee life.” (B)

Sahrawi women “fight for their territory, suffer under difficult conditions, know how to survive in the desert, overcome death and disease, establish schools, hospitals and institutions, and are mothers, teachers, police officers, and paramedics. (D) (Zalta and Ben Jomaa 2019)

Conclusions

As Kaufman and Williams note, war and other conflict situations force women to move beyond their traditional roles or assume new ones, whether they wish to or not. Women were often pushed from the private into the public sphere. For many, this was liberating and life-changing. The political and social opposition that can arise during war or conflict emboldens women to consider political action not only during, but also after, conflict (Kaufman and Williams, 2010, 6). Among Sahrawi women, many hold public positions because, during times of

war when men are at the front, there is a shortage of personnel. Religion and ideology adapt to these circumstances through their interpretations. Sahrawi women have long participated in resistance movements against foreign invaders, beginning with the resistance against Spanish rule. According to Lippert, the involvement of Sahrawi women in the liberation struggle most likely led to their social and political rights (Lippert 1992, 644). Paradoxically, as staunch advocates of peace, Sahrawi women understand that war is the reason for their empowerment and that it allows them to engage in activities different from those traditionally attributed to them by society.

We can confirm our thesis that challenging social conditions in Sahrawi society – such as war, displacement, and economic crisis – reinforce group solidarity through religious and ideological foundations. These foundations are reinforced by the SADR constitution, which connects Islam, as the basis of Sahrawi legislation and social values, with the ideological foundation of the Polisario. It can be argued that *ʿaṣabiyyah* takes a concrete form through the SADR constitution.

Thus, Sahrawi women, who have been guaranteed all their rights since the founding of the Polisario Front, can occupy all important positions in political organizations and the Sahrawi government. Even if, after the establishment of normalization or the end of conflict, patriarchy demands a partial return to its original state, women resist this because of their previous experiences with different employment opportunities during the war and refugee crisis, as well as exposure to global currents, which in various ways strengthen the role of women in the public sphere, both in religion and politics (ideology), which adapt to the social situation out of necessity to consolidate group affiliation (*ʿaṣabiyyah*).

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Summary

Reading Ibn Khaldun: His Heritage, Applications, and Significance for Modern Science is an interdisciplinary edited volume that reassesses the intellectual heritage of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) and demonstrates the enduring significance of his thought for contemporary scholarship. Emerging from the International Ibn Khaldun Colloquium held in Sharjah on 10–11 December 2025 and jointly organized by the Sharjah International Foundation for the History of Arab and Muslim Sciences (SIFHAMS), University of Sharjah, and the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, the volume brings together scholars from diverse academic disciplines and geographical backgrounds. Its central contribution lies in presenting Ibn Khaldūn not merely as a major figure in Islamic intellectual history, but as a thinker whose conceptual framework continues to offer valuable perspectives for understanding modern societies and their challenges.

The volume explores Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual legacy through a wide range of themes, including civilization, social cohesion, political authority, economics, taxation, education, epistemology, social capital, cultural transformation, gender relations, and governance. Particular attention is given to foundational Khaldūnian concepts such as *ʿumrān* (civilization) and *ʿaṣabiyyah* (social cohesion), demonstrating their applicability beyond their original historical context. Several contributions establish productive connections between Ibn Khaldūn and contemporary social-scientific theories, while others critically reassess established interpretations of the Muqaddimah and situate his thought within broader Greek, Islamic, European, and international intellectual traditions.

An important strength of the volume is the combination of theoretical analysis with historical and contemporary case studies. Ibn Khaldūn's ideas are applied to such diverse contexts as Nasrid Granada, Bosnia and Herzegovina, American social thought, Sahrawi society, and the contemporary United Arab Emirates. The chapters dealing with economic thought, fiscal policy, leadership, education, social integration, and sustainable governance further illustrate how Khaldūnian insights can contribute meaningfully to current academic debates. This comparative and interdisciplinary approach expands the study of Ibn Khaldūn beyond conventional intellectual history and positions his work within wider discussions concerning global social theory and the development of the human and social sciences.

Collectively, the volume makes a significant scholarly contribution by demonstrating that the *Muqaddimah* remains a living intellectual resource rather than solely a classical historical text. By bringing Khaldūnian thought into dialogue with contemporary questions of governance, economic development, social cohesion, education, cultural change, diversity, and gender, the book underscores the continuing relevance and universality of Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual achievement. It therefore contributes both to the study of Islamic intellectual and scientific heritage and to broader efforts to reconsider the historical foundations of modern social thought from a more inclusive and globally oriented perspective.

Povzetek

Knjiga *Reading Ibn Khaldun: His Heritage, Applications, and Significance for Modern Science* je interdisciplinarna zbirka prispevkov, ki na novo ovrednoti intelektualno dediščino Ibn Halduna (1332–1406) in prikazuje trajni pomen njegove misli za sodobno znanost. Delo, ki je nastalo na podlagi mednarodnega kolokvija o Ibn Haldunu (potekal je 10. in 11. decembra 2025 v Šardži v organizaciji Mednarodne fundacije za zgodovino arabskih in muslimanskih znanosti iz Šardže – SIFHAMS, Univerze v Šardži in Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani), združuje raziskovalce z različnih akademskih področij in iz različnih geografskih okolij. Njegov osrednji prispevek je predstavitev Ibn Halduna ne le kot pomembne osebnosti v zgodovini islamske misli, temveč kot misleca, čigar konceptualni okvir še naprej ponuja dragocena izhodišča za razumevanje sodobnih družb in izzivov, s katerimi se te soočajo.

Knjiga raziskuje Ibn Haldunovo intelektualno zapuščino skozi širok nabor tem, vključno z vprašanji družbene kohezije, politične oblasti, ekonomije, izobraževanjem, epistemološkimi izzivi, družbenim kapitalom, kulturnimi preobrazbami, odnosi med spoloma in upravljanjem. Posebna pozornost je namenjena temeljnemu Haldunovim konceptom, kot sta *‘umrān* (civilizacija) in *‘aṣabiyyah* (družbena kohezija), pri čemer je prikazana njihova uporabnost tudi zunaj prvotnega zgodovinskega konteksta. Nekateri prispevki vzpostavljajo plodne povezave med Ibn Haldunom in sodobnimi družboslovnimi teorijami, drugi pa kritično prevrednotijo uveljavljene interpretacije dela *Muqaddimah* ter njegovo misel umeščajo v širše grške, islamske, evropske in mednarodne intelektualne tradicije.

Pomembna odlika te knjige je preplet teoretične analize z zgodovinskimi in sodobnimi študijami primerov. Zamisli Ibn Halduna so uporabljene v tako raznolikih kontekstih, kot so nasridska Granada, Bosna in Hercegovina, ameriška družbena misel, družba Sahravijcev in sodobni Združeni arabski emirati. Poglavja, ki obravnavajo ekonomsko misel, fiskalno politiko, vodenje, izobraževanje, družbeno integracijo in trajnostno upravljanje, dodatno ponazarjajo, kako lahko Haldunova spoznanja pomembno prispevajo k aktualnim akademskim razpravam. Takšen primerjalni in interdisciplinarni pristop presega okvire konvencionalne intelektualne zgodovine ter umešča Haldunovo delo v širše razprave o globalni družbeni teoriji in razvoju humanističnih ter družboslovnih ved.

Knjiga kot celota predstavlja pomemben znanstveni prispevek, saj dokazuje, da **Muqaddimah** ostaja živ intelektualni vir in ne zgolj klasično zgodovinsko besedilo. S tem ko prispevki v knjigi Haldunovo misel postavljajo v dialog s sodobnimi vprašanji upravljanja, gospodarskega razvoja, družbene kohezije, izobraževanja, kulturnih sprememb, raznolikosti in spola, poudarjajo trajno aktualnost in univerzalnost Haldunovih intelektualnih dosežkov. To pa prispeva tako k proučevanju islamske intelektualne in znanstvene dediščine kot k širšim prizadevanjem za ponovno ovrednotenje zgodovinskih temeljev sodobne družbene misli z bolj vključujočega in globalno usmerjenega vidika.

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