Recontextualizing Ibn Khaldun:
A Meta-Theoretical Study of Khaldunian Thought

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Abstract

Postcolonial studies and decoloniality have consistently questioned the colonial matrix of power upon which much of our modern world is established. This generated a desire to create a more pluralistic social sciences by rehabilitating non-Western knowledges previously deemed incompatible with the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model. The purpose of this theoretical thesis is to discuss the restoration of Ibn Khaldun's theory. Extensive studies have sought to explain and interpret Ibn Khaldun's work from different perspectives. What all of those studies have in common is their utilization of different approaches, all rooted in the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model. This lack of epistemic pluralism led to a crippling stagnation of the contemporary studies on Ibn Khaldun, which seem to have hit a glass ceiling. According to Syed Farid Alatas, the current leading figure of Khaldunian revivalism, a methodical restoration of his theory needs to be undertaken in order for Ibn Khaldun to be incorporated into the corpus of contemporary sociology. More studies need to focus on examining the various aspects of Khaldunian thought in order for a neo-Khaldunian sociology to emerge. The content of the *Muqaddimah* must be reinterpreted through a recontextualization of Khaldunian though within the wider landscape of Islamic erudition. I decided to move past the usual descriptive accounts of Ibn Khaldun's work and concentrate instead on an analysis of the theory he detailed in his magnum opus, his *Kitab al-'Ibar* featuring the *Muqaddimah*. By exploring the European reception of Ibn Khaldun's work, I lay bare the reading grid that emerged from the interpretation of his work within Western academia; a reading grid through which the *Muqaddimah* continues to be interpreted and understood. This thesis is a meta-theoretical study of Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization), which proceeds to a recontextualizing and a repositioning of Khaldunian thought. The studies pertaining to Ibn Khaldun tend to focus solely on two elements of his thought that he described in the *Muqaddimah,* the passage from a primitive social organization to a civilized one, and the rise and fall of dynasties. However, the other aspects of his theory, such as his understanding of leadership through the concept of *'asabiyyah,* as well as the changes inherent to the transfer of power down the generational line, are for the most part ignored. The goal of this exploration of Khaldunian thought is to transcend the usual reading grid through which the *Muqaddimah* is often read and interpreted. To do so, this thesis explores the political ideas at the heart of Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation, as well as the historical context and the intellectual tradition which fostered the emergence of Khaldunian thought.

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. May the salvation, peace, and blessings of God be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad, upon his noble family and upon his virtuous companions. May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

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Introduction

Wali al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun al-Tunisi al-Hadrami, known as Ibn Khaldun, produced in 1377 the *Muqaddimah*, a work regarded by many as the first sociological analysis ever produced. His study explored the rise and fall of states, the nature of dynastic succession, as well as the role of religion as an “extra-historical unifying cohering force” (Mirawdeli, 2015:97). Ibn Khaldun elaborated a social and political philosophy centered on the concept of change. According to him, no social order is everlasting and natural, but rather historical; hence, the “fundamental law to keep in mind about socio-political systems is that they are not static” (Kayapinar, 2008: 377). Ibn Khaldun not only reiterated the importance of change but he also offered a comprehensive analysis of its trajectory. Since every epoch and society has its own peculiarities, rules, and logic, understanding any socio-political and economic event within that context and timeframe requires knowing those precise characteristics. In his magnum opus *Kitab al-‘Ibar*, Ibn Khaldun explained the formation and decline of Maghribian and Arab states. While studying the rise and fall of north African states, he compared the social organization of pastoral nomadic groups to that of sedentary societies. He postulated that all human societies evolve from a rather primitive lifestyle toward a far more complex one. Today, Khaldunian sociology is said to be a historical sociology whose theoretical framework provides the ability to understand the dynamics that led to the rise and fall of those North African states.

While Ibn Khaldun’s work is often mentioned, it is seldom applied. His extensive work on the history of Muslim societies in North Africa, considered by many to be the genesis of sociological analysis, “has rarely been seriously considered as a basis for a modern Khaldunian sociology” (Alatas, 2014: 2).The majority of the works on Ibn Khaldun are mainly comprised of biographical studies pertaining to his life as well as general discussions about the methodological

foundations of his work. However, the application of his theory in the analysis of existing historical situations remains scarce. For the most part, Ibn Khaldun's work is relegated to the margins of modern sociology either as an example of proto-sociology or the subject of investigation. His theory of state formation is often mentioned without, however, ever being used as a tool to interpret and understand history, particularly that of the Muslim world. Very few sociologists in Western academia have gone beyond simply citing him as a pioneer or, at best, a founder of their discipline. The negligence of Ibn Khaldun at the theoretical level persists not only in the West but also in the Muslim world, where a Khaldunian tradition in sociology has never emerged (Alatas, 2020: 77).

> "There has always been little interest in developing his ideas, combining them with concepts derived from modern sociology and applying theoretical frameworks derived from his though to historical and empirical realities. While there are certainly exceptions that is, attempts to apply a Khaldunian theory or model to social reality, these are few and marginal to mainstream social science teaching and research" (Alatas, 2007: 271).

The social sciences are often seen as the product of particular conditions that occurred in a specific time and space in Western civilization. Immanuel Wallerstein described their emergence as the result of an important endeavor of the modern world; an attempt that began in the 16th century to systematically develop a "secular knowledge about reality that could be somehow validated empirically" (Wallerstein, 1996:2). The vital changes that occurred in Europe during the Renaissance in the modes of production, the political culture, and the existing socio-economic order led to the advent of what is called today modernity. This phenomenon heralded a new and peculiar view on existence and restructured not only the relationships between humans but also our broader connection with nature and religion. Religiosity particularly was deemed incompatible with the secular outlook of modernity. "Faith and the rules of religion began to take different

meanings in the very lives of people by the transformation of mentalities from a religious to a secular one" (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 409).

The Enlightenment put further emphasis on reason and science as the only mechanisms through which the truth can be revealed. The very idea of society was to be understood solely in terms of progressivism while history was said to be the outcome of its only essential subject, the rational individual (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 409). Kant stated that the maturity of humanity began with the Enlightenment when mankind decided to shed the liveries of childhood and instead embraced its own intellect. Hence, to be enlightened implied no longer being under anyone's tutelage but choosing instead to think freely and independently. Kant's definition of enlightenment is primarily individualistic. Therefore, those who remain in the grips of immaturity choose to do so of their own free will and are the only ones responsible for their plight.

> "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another" (Kant, 1784:2)

Modern Western thought generated a positivist outlook which crowned science as the only purveyor of truth, the only lenses through which one can grasp reality at a factual level. In doing so, Western thinking disregarded all other perceptions of reality and introduced Western epistemology as the only valid epistemology. The modern social sciences are heavily influenced by European philosophical traditions in their approaches and discourses. In fact, the "empirical field of investigation is selected according to European (for European read also American) criteria of relevance" (Alatas, 2007: 271). Since analyzing, interpreting, and understanding the mentalities, attitudes, and realities of various human civilizations is a core venture for the social sciences, all

aspects of reality, whether historical or social, are, therefore, organised and understood from a Western perspective.

Studying all human civilizations from that vantage point renders Western thinkers the sole architects of ideas and theories, while relegating non-Westerners and their bodies of knowledge to mere subjects of study. Once ripped from its own ontological and epistemological bases, in order to be reinterpreted and recontextualized according to a Western worldview, the knowledge produced by non-Westerners, which had "a certain duty and function" within their respective civilizations, lost both "its capability of explaining factual conditions and virtue of being scientific" (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 411). The political, economic, military, and cultural supremacy of the Western world cemented the dominance of Western epistemology, and in return, Western knowledge production legitimated and justified Western imperialism and colonialism. The notion of "us" Europeans against all "those" non-Europeans is an important element of European culture that made it a hegemonic entity both inside and outside its own borders (Said, 1979:7).

> "Modern conception of science gave birth to changes which were not only contented with the disruption of its maternal civilisation's ontological presumptions, but also its *constructive destruction* brought about inescapable authority, irresistible control, and devastating imperialism over the rest of the world. Western civilisation paved the way for the elimination and destruction of other civilisations since its modern representatives (…) created its own reference of justifiability" (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 412)

Sociology is yet another example of a field in the social sciences where the important role of non-Western social thinkers in the development of the discipline got little to no attention. Sociology officially became an academic discipline in the 19th century, at the height of Western colonialism. Therefore, the reality of colonialism "was not merely background noise to sociology, but rather the discipline came to internalize colonial ways of thinking and representing the world"

(Meghji, 2021: 15). In fact, as the first department of sociology was being established in mainland Europe, France was in the process of colonizing much of West Africa. Several sociologists also acted as colonial administrators; this was the case of Patrick Geddes, one of the first British sociologists, and "Raymond Firth who later became secretary to Britain's Colonial Social Science Research Council" (Meghji, 2021: 30). Since sociology emerged in a world shaped by colonialism and imperialism, one could argue that it was influenced by this reality from its inception. It not only adopted the logic of this colonial way of thinking but it also played a part in manufacturing and strengthening it.

> "The standpoint belonging to this colonial episteme may be labelled as the standpoint of 'Northern theory' (Connell 2006) or the Eurocentric standpoint (Alatas 2014). When people hear charges of Eurocentrism in sociology, they typically think that the criticism being developed is that the sociological canon tends to be dominated by European or Western thinkers" (Meghji, 2021: 46).

This colonial episteme inaugurated a relationship predicated on a reciprocity between power and knowledge, which cemented the idea of an inherent difference between the colonized and the colonizers (Westerners). It also bestowed upon Western epistemology a hegemony born out of the erasure of all other forms of epistemes. This extensive "epistemicide" encompassed the destruction of all other "forms of knowing and knowledge that differed from those of the supposedly superior West" (Meghji, 2021: 84). Therefore, the very foundations of sociology were erected solely on the sociological knowledge produced in the West. The works of seminal Western sociologists such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx were not only recognized as canons of the discipline, but their theories and models were also applied to non-Western societies often sharing very little in common with their European counterparts. The contributions of Non-Western social theorists, on the other hand, were vastly excluded from the annals of sociology. A compelling

example of the deliberate disregard of non-Western social thinkers within the social sciences is the treatment of Ibn Khaldun in sociology. Modern social theory still rests vastly on the ongoing overlooking of "alternative perceptions of reality" rooted in traditions other than the prevailing Western epistemology (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 412). This type of colonial knowledge production continues to inform the dominant vision of sociology.

The political, economic, social, and cultural hegemony of the Western world enables the current dominance of Western thought. According to Aijaz Ahmed, the supremacy enjoyed by Western epistemology "represents a politically disabling contentious shift of attention from the facts of current neo-colonialism" toward less controversial areas of research (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:19). The success of the European colonial project did not only reiterate the idea of European superiority, it also reaffirmed the hegemony of European ideas about the non-Western world, and particularly the Orient and Islam. Thus, the contrast between a supposed European superiority and "Oriental backwardness" became the main dichotomy upon which the entire relationship between the West and the Muslim world is predicated.

> "Nevertheless, we do also need to appreciate the existence of sociologists who were supporting colonial administrations. Go's examples of this include Durkheim and Comte, both of whom directly or indirectly buttressed French colonial rule. Despite being a critic of colonialism, for example, Comte's positivist social science was explicitly invoked by French colonial administrators in justifying their rule over 'primitive', 'fanatic' Muslims (Amster, 2013). Needless to say, the story runs much deeper than two French sociologists" (Meghji, 2021: 30).

The idea of a "master explanation of everything Islamic" guaranteed the continued survival of the Orientalist Grand Narrative when it comes to the study of Islam within Western Academia. The resilience of this narrative is not due so much to the inherent strength of Orientalist scholarship, but rather the weakness of the non-essentialist alternatives being offered (Volpi,

2010:33). While postmodern epistemologies provide interesting new avenues of research, they nonetheless do not offer a real alternative (Turner, 1994:101). The bulk of the literature pertaining to the topic of Islam tends to emphasize the politicization of the religious (or Islamism) at the expense of all the other factors that are shaping the Muslim world as a whole; hence, the persistence of the prevailing reductionist and essentialist portrayal of Muslim societies.

The present instability of the modern Muslim political realm is the subject of much interest and debate in Western academia. What often transpires from such studies is a rather Manichean view of Muslim societies as inherently despotic entities beholden to oriental despotism and opposed to the very concepts of modernity and progress (Kalmar, 2012: 1). Orientalist thought introduced the notion that a civilization based upon Islamic precepts can only inspire undemocratic governments. Western contemporary readings of Muslim societies, for the most part, approach the subject through Western concepts and methodologies, and in doing so reiterate Orientalist assumptions and arguments (Volpi, 2009:22). While the criticism of Orientalism and Eurocentrism in academia is well-known, the calls for the production of alternative discourses remain essentially unanswered. Much like in mainstream Western academia, "the prescription for autonomous social sciences is rarely put into practice even in the South" (Alatas, 2014: 9).

However, postcolonial studies and the decolonial school have always questioned the colonial order upon which the modern world is founded. The presence of movements rooted in worldviews outside of the purview of the Western weltanschauung throughout the global South reiterates much of the criticism of postcolonialism and decoloniality vis-à-vis Western epistemology. The demands for a rehabilitation of non-Western knowledges, to develop a far more pluralistic social sciences, are part and parcel of a wider desire to devise a counterhegemonic position against the continued neocolonial onslaughts in the global South, and the ever-growing

devastation of globalization. To do so, it is imperative to revive and understand these radically different conceptions of society and forgo the idea of a single powerful unifying epistemology.

> "In this context, the ecology of knowledges is basically a counter epistemology. This implies renouncing any general epistemology. Throughout the world, there are not only very diverse forms of knowledge of matter, society, life, and spirit but also many and very diverse concepts of what counts as knowledge and the criteria that may be used to validate it" (Santos, 2016: 192).

Syed Farid Alatas, the current leading figure of Khaldunian revivalism, argues that Ibn Khaldun's work represents an example "for a modern social science in the Islamic tradition" (Alatas, 2020: 77). Yet very few attempts have been made to incorporate Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation into the framework of modern sociology. Ibn Khaldun's work offers a possibility of engaging in the study of Muslim societies outside of the purview of the prevailing Western-centric understanding of societal development. Khaldunian theory represents a sociological framework indigenous to the Muslim world. In fact, at several times throughout the 17th and 18th centuries his theory was the primary tool used by Muslim scholars to study the patterns and rhythm of their own history, and it even served as a theoretical backdrop to some important political reforms in the Ottoman empire. A Khaldunian framework could provide a novel way of analyzing modern Muslim societies from a new and fresh perspective, outside of the too often essentialist portrayals of Muslims and Islam. To study the contemporary Muslim world, it is necessary to understand the traditional model, social symbols, and ideologies which have informed every aspect of community life for centuries and have been brutally impacted by the advent of colonialism. Before such an endeavour can be undertaken, however, it is vital to carry out a methodical restoration of Ibn Khaldun's theory.

Extensive studies have sought to explain and interpret Ibn Khaldun's work from different perspectives. "They addressed different topics and issues that may conveniently be placed beneath

the contemporary broad themes of politics, economics, history, education, literature, and language" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 202). What all of those studies have in common is their utilization of different approaches, be it orientalist, secularist, or positivist, all rooted in the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model. This lack of epistemic pluralism lead to a crippling stagnation of the contemporary studies on Ibn Khaldun, which "seem to have hit a glass ceiling or a point of redundant saturation (⋯)" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 202)

> "Perhaps the best example of this category of studies are those which assign some sort of secular identity to his thought, including Muhsin Mahdi (1957), Wardī (1994), and Baali and Wardī (1981). In fact, biased treatment of the thought of Ibn Khaldun might have caused the stagnancy of his thought today, which is understood in view of the fact that his thought requires rather native, original, and genuine context of interpretation" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 205).

Although Ibn Khaldun's work is often compared to those of classical and modern European thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Vico, Gumplowicz, Toynbee, and others, Khaldunian thought is not rooted in Cartesianism, Kantian philosophy, or Hegelian idealism. "These modes of critical thinking" are completely foreign to Ibn Khaldun's thought (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 206). Another trend found in the contemporary studies on Ibn Khaldun is the attempt to demonstrate that Khaldunian theory is not extraneous to Western epistemology by claiming that Khaldunian thought is a continuation of Aristotelian philosophy. In fact, some scholars like Muhsin Mahdi view Ibn Khaldun as a follower of Aristotle "who based himself on philosophy and Greek logic" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 207). This persistent trend engendered a deracination of Ibn Khaldun's thought from its original intellectual tradition.

Alatas posits "that in order for Ibn Khaldun to be taken seriously by the major disciplines in the social sciences, more meta-theoretical and theoretical work on him needs to be done" (Alatas, 2020: 77). Metatheory lends itself to the unveiling of the structures intrinsic to theories by

dissecting not only the theories themselves but also the broader intellectual and social contexts that inform their emergence. It can be said then that theories are the primary subject matter of metatheory. Metatheoretical research takes place "*after* theories have been developed and seeks to understand their assumptions, strategies, the knowledge they generate or ignore, and so forth" (Ritzer, 1988: 188). This approach has the ability to extend existing theories beyond their scope by opening up new analytical avenues. Therefore, "metatheory is a set of interlocking principles that describe what is acceptable and unacceptable for theory" (Wallis, 2010: 76). By analyzing the key elements and components at the heart of theories and anatomizing or reorganizing them, metatheoretical research can further stimulate the emergence of new insights into existing theories. Consequently, "metatheory is not about what assumptions and presuppositions sociology should have, but about the structure and implications of existing theories" (Turner, 1990: 38). Metatheoretical analysis leads to a deeper understanding of theories by outlining the origins of their foundational ideas, "providing an intellectual biography, stating presuppositions, engaging in philosophical debate, and offering ideological critique and commentary" (Turner, 1990:39)

According to Bourdieu's theory of intellectual production, "texts are defined by the interaction of an author's habitus with their positions in specific, relevant fields, and by the history of those fields (…)" (Steinmetz, 2022: 22). Therefore, in order to promote the emergence of a neo-Khaldunian sociology, more studies must undertake not only an analysis of the origins of Ibn Khaldun's concepts and ideas, but also explore the historical evolution of the fields that informed his endeavor. This thesis is a meta-theoretical study of Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization), which proceeds to a recontextualizing and a repositioning of Khaldunian thought. The studies pertaining to Ibn Khaldun tend to focus solely on two aspects of his work, the passage from a primitive social organization to a civilized one, and the rise and

fall of dynasties described in the *Muqaddimah*. However, the other aspects of his theoretical model, such as his understanding of leadership through the concept of *'asabiyyah,* as well as the changes inherent to the transfer of power down the generational line, are understudied. The goal of this exploration of Khaldunian thought is to transcend the usual reading grid through which the *Muqaddimah* is often read and interpreted, by examining the political ideas at the heart of Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation, as well as the historical context and the intellectual tradition which fostered the emergence of Khaldunian thought. In order to move forward and transcend the Western-centric readings of Ibn Khaldun, "the *Muqaddimah* should be given the right to speak for itself by virtue of its substance, rather than through inferred associations" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 207).

The *Muqaddimah* outlines how Ibn Khaldun conceptualizes human society and organisation. Understanding the origins of Khaldunian thought requires an in-depth exploration of the context that shaped Ibn Khaldun's weltanschauung. This includes the various disciplines within Islamic erudition that informed his opinion on history and politics, as well as "the many socio-political changes" he experienced throughout his life (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 208). Therefore, this thesis proceeds to a recontextualizing and a "repositioning, and *relevantizing*" of Khaldunian thought by answering three main questions (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 202). 1) What is the purpose of the *Muqaddimah*? 2) What does the *Muqaddimah* actually say about Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization)? 3) What were the intellectual influences that shaped Khaldunian thought?

> "One must, however, acknowledge the challenges associated with re- visiting the diverse intellectual contributions of Ibn Khaldun in the light of a new perspective, as the original text of his work is nonetheless still resourceful. One also needs to retain a constant awareness of the extent to which Ibn Khaldun's thought is embedded in an intricate framework of the Islamic worldview,

> personal practice, socio-historical experience, taxonomy of knowledge, and certainly not to forget about his particular technical language" (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 203).

The first chapter focuses primarily on discussing how postcolonialism effectively questioned the narrow-mindedness inherent to Western knowledge production, while demonstrating just how entrenched the colonial legacy remains within Western epistemology. It also explores the epistemic limitations of Western thinking, particularly in the study of Islam and the Muslim world. The persistence of the Orientalist Grand Narrative is yet another example of why the need for epistemic pluralism is more urgent than ever. Ibn Khaldun's theoretical model finds its basis in a tradition foreign to the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model that shaped the Western understanding of the world. As such, Khaldunian contemporary studies represent an opportunity to tap into the vast reservoir of heterogeneous knowledge previously discarded by Western epistemology, as advocated by Santos and Mignolo and the decoloniality movement.

The second chapter examines the reception of Ibn Khaldun in the West. The first Western researchers who came into contact with the *Muqaddimah* sought to uncover the intellectual origins of Ibn Khaldun. The reading grid that emerged from these studies influenced tremendously how the *Muqaddimah* is often read, interpreted, and understood. While coming up with various interpretations of his work, Western researchers attempted to fit Ibn Khaldun's epistemology and his contributions into their own intellectual traditions and methodologies (Machouche & Bensaid, 20115: 204). This initiated the deracination of Ibn Khaldun's work from its own intellectual tradition. When exploring Ibn Khaldun's reception in Western academia, one can detect three important moments. The first section of the chapter takes a closer look at the early reception of Ibn Khaldun by Western scholars which started in the late 19th century. This encompasses early

writings by Orientalists often devoted to exploring the origins of Ibn Khaldun's theory or using the findings of the *Muqaddimah* to support their own Orientalist interpretations of the history of North Africa. The second part focuses on another important moment in the reception of Ibn Khaldun, which is characterized by the emergence of other perspectives, taking on a far more critical outlook on the previous interpretations of the *Muqaddimah*. The last section discusses the most recent moment pertaining to the treatment of Ibn Khaldun in Western academia. The influence of postcolonialism and decoloniality generated the production of works exploring the *Muqaddimah* from that perspective, leading some to find in the Khaldunian theoretical framework an opportunity to decolonize sociology through the emergence of a modern neo-Khaldunian sociology.

The third chapter explores the *raison d'être* of Ibn Khaldun's work. What is the purpose of the *Muqaddimah*? In order to pinpoint and understand the true purpose of Ibn Khaldun's enterprise, this chapter delves into the unique evolution of Islamic historiography. Its first part focuses primarily on the emergence of Islamic historiography as a field of research and its subsequent professionalization within the context of Islamic scholarship. The second part discusses how the clashes between the Mu'tazila and the dialectical theologians affected the development of the field. The last part pertains to the historical context that shaped Ibn Khaldun as a scholar, as well as his views on Islamic historiography. This is particularly important since his concerns about the lack of critical perspective in the study of history served as a catalyst for the creation of his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization), which he introduced in the *Muqaddimah*. This demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun's work is not the continuation of an earlier European intellectual tradition, but rather part of an ongoing conversation within Islamic historiography pertaining to the standards of the discipline.

Since the previous chapter delved into the purpose of the *Muqaddimah*, the fourth chapter revisits its content and explores in-depth the crux of Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization). What does the *Muqaddimah* actually say? The first section of this chapter concentrates on the Khaldunian geographical configuration of the world, which played an important part in informing his weltanschauung. His perspective was shaped by the works of previous Muslim geographers such as Muhammad al-Idrisi, which divided the world into *kisbwars* or climatic zones. The geographical determinism with which Ibn Khaldun struggled in his own understanding of the world is also discussed. The second part centers on the concept of *'umran* which is central to his science of human social organization. Despite the importance of this concept, it is often translated and defined in a variety of ways, something that frequently obscures its real meaning. The aim here is to find out what Ibn Khaldun said about this concept in the *Muqaddimah*. Another important element of his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* is his theory pertaining to state formation. The last section of this chapter delves into the political ideas of Ibn Khaldun by looking closely at two of his key concepts, *'asabiyyah* and royal authority, which are central to his views on the origins of the state.

The fifth and last chapter, like the previous one, focuses on the Khaldunian theoretical framework. What were the intellectual influences that shaped Khaldunian thought? This chapter aims to recontextualize Khaldunian thought through its repositioning in the broader corpus of Islamic political thought. The first section pertains to the place of Khaldunian thought within the landscape of Islamic political thought. To uncover the source of Ibn Khaldun's political ideas, the political writings of Farabi, al-Mawardi, and Nizam al-Mulk are explored. The second part of the chapter looks more closely at the link between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldun's works. The similarities in their respective historical contexts, as well as their perspectives on societal decline

and their focus on the concept of leadership, showcase that Ibn Taymiyyah's political writings could be considered precursors of Khaldunian thought.

This thesis relies on hermeneutic analysis to undertake the research described above. While Greek philosophy served as a cradle for the emergence of Hermeneutics, it only found its footing as an approach for analyzing and interpreting sacred texts in the 17th century. The scope of its inquiry later incorporated the study of human behavior when Wilhelm Dilthey posited that comprehending human behavior is "more like interpreting texts than like gaining empirical knowledge of nature" (Olson, 1986: 160). Hermeneutics focuses on the human experience as it is lived. It uncovers details and aspects within an experience to generate meaning. One could say then that hermeneutics seek to understand through interpretation. Although its usage has since been expanded to non-sacred texts, it remains a method of textual analysis.

One that "emphasizes the sociocultural and historic influences on qualitative interpretation. It also exposes hidden meanings" (Byrne, 2001: 968). Hence, in such a context, understanding is born out of the explanatory undertaking of incorporating particular things, such as words and events into, a meaningful whole. Hermeneutic philosophy postulates that reality should not be understood as a single and objective unit but rather as a multitude of actualities shaped by the differences inherent to epochs, cultures, and individuals. It is the context that outlines how individuals not only create their world but also experience it. These multiple realities are the primary subject matter of Hermeneutics. This holistic view of reality underlines the important reciprocity existing between the seminal elements of a phenomenon and the larger context withing which it takes place. Therefore, ignoring the context in favor of its basic elements obscures what is important and significant about the phenomenon in question.

Hermeneutics has two main branches, one oriented toward interpretation and the other preoccupied with the philosophy of understanding (Tomkins & Eatough, 2007: 2). Its interpretivist approach seeks to establish a culturally and historically focused interpretation. The present thesis falls into the first branch and entails the usage of a range of interpretive strategies to draw meaning from the various texts analyzed for this research. This methodological approach proves itself particularly useful in resituating Ibn Khaldun within the confines of his native intellectual tradition. Interpreters of the *Muqaddima*h have previously relied on specific interpretive frameworks rooted in Western thought, such as the Greek philosophical tradition, to make sense of its content, further deracinating Ibn Khaldun. They also regularly claim that he does not clearly tell his readers the origins of his ideas and methods, before proceeding to fill in these supposed gaps with their own assumptions.

Textual analysis often includes content analysis, semantic analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis. In this thesis, the content analysis of the data obtained from primary sources as well as secondary sources is used to answer the research questions. Historical analysis—which consists of the investigation of the past often via documents and texts—is also used to further make sense of the data. This type of analysis plays a crucial role in uncovering the historical context or events that have shaped the writing of these texts.

> "Here, the idea of historicity does not mean that something belongs to the past. Instead, it means being part of history, that is, situated in a certain time and place, and having one's way of seeing the world influenced by such grounding in very profound ways" (Tomkins & Eatough, 2007: 2).

This research is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources encompass the English translation of Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab al-'Ibar* which contains the *Muqaddimah*, as well as the original Arabic version and the French translation of the *Muqaddimah*.

It also includes the English translations of the seminal works of key figures in the development of Islamic political thought such as al-Farabi's *On the Perfect State*, Nizam al-Mulk's *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, al-Mawardi's *The Laws of Islamic Governance*, and Ibn Taymiyyah's *The Office of Islamic Government*, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, as well as *Islamic Governance in Reconciling Between the Ruler and the Ruled*. The secondary sources encompass various works written about these primary sources to examine and study their content. In this research priority is given to English sources. The discussions taking place in the current effort to revive neo-Khaldunian sociology are mainly taking place in English. The International Conference on Ibn Khaldun's legacy, an important symposium reuniting many of the researchers working currently on Ibn Khaldun, takes place in English, while leading figures of this revivalism such as Syed Farid Alatas publish their works on Ibn Khaldun in English.

This creates, of course, an important limitation where this thesis is concerned. By focusing mostly on English sources pertaining to Ibn Khaldun, this thesis favours a certain analytical perspective while omitting others. Many of the works in English produced in the current revival of Neo-Khaldunian sociology center primarily '*asabiyyah* and '*umran* which are crucial to the study of Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation. However, it is undeniable that non-English studies on Ibn Khaldun have at times taken a different approach in their analyses. An example of this can be found in the works of Abdesselam Cheddadi, an Arab scholar of Islamic historiography who writes extensively on Ibn Khaldun in French. By centering the concept of Jah, he analyzed Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the system of power inherent to Islam. This type of analysis favours a psycho-sociological approach to the study of Khaldunian thought, especially when discussing the psychological ramifications of how *'asabiyyah* expresses itself throughout the different strata of society.

By making the choice to prioritize English sources this thesis precludes alternative views and perspectives on Khaldunian theory that could be found in non-English sources. However, the most robust attempts at reviving Khaldunian sociology are currently being produced in English. The participation of a great deal of researchers emanating from different countries, fields of research, and perspectives enriches and galvanizes discussions about Neo-Khaldunian sociology. This led to an abundance of new works being published on Ibn Khaldun. The quantity of new works proposing novel outlooks on Ibn Khaldun, the availability of such works, as well as the robustness inherent to the revivalism led by Alatas explain the choice made to prioritize English sources for this thesis.

As a Muslim woman, I am keenly aware of how Orientalism shapes not only the study of Islam/Muslims in Western academia but also the overall depictions of Islam and Muslims in the Western collective imaginary. The stereotypes that plague the existence of Muslims in the West find their origins in the ideas that eventuated from Orientalist scholarship. Islam being depicted as a despotic, sexist, and violent entity opposed to the ideas of modernity and enlightenment, central to Western civilization, made Islam the ultimate other and Muslims forever outsiders. My own lived experience as a Muslim growing up in the West was shaped by this reality. One of the recurrent criticism levelled against Islam is its supposed hindrance to women's rights. This idea of Islam being unfavorable to the emancipation of women remains pervasive in the West. As such my relationship with my faith is often perceived and understood through an Orientalist perspective which reduces the agency of practicing Muslim women to that of oppressed women submitting to their oppressive religious tradition. Hence, my interest in decolonizing sociology is the result of both my interest in furthering sociological research and my desire to find alternatives to Orientalism in the study of Islam and Muslims in Western academia. Overcoming the stranglehold

of Orientalism in the study of Islam in sociology and the social sciences is a first step in challenging the stereotypes that continue to fuel Islamophobia.

Chapter 1
Rethinking Social Theory Through Epistemic Pluralism

Introduction

The arrival of cultural studies in the 1970s provoked a major discursive turn that extricated social theory from the clutches of disciplinary hegemony. Postcolonial theory emerged in the aftermath of this cognitive shift and has quickly gained traction in Western academia. Since then, postcolonialism has spread its impact and significance in fields as varied as globalization, economics, sociology, and even ecology. Postcolonial discourse was crucial in the development of new discursive approaches better suited to address contemporary political and social transformations. The classical narratives of modernity, in which social theory relied heavily on dependency theory and center/periphery models, were unable to explain the multi-directional flow of global interactions; "a flow that was most noticeable in cultural exchanges" (Ashcroft et al., 2000: vii). In the last decades, postcolonialism has emerged as a major critical discourse in the humanities akin to theories such as poststructuralism and feminism. "As a consequence of its diverse and interdisciplinary usage, this body of thought has generated an enormous corpus of specialized writing" (Gandhi, 1998: viii). While much has been produced under its rubric, postcolonialism remains, for the most part, a nebulous term. "Unlike Marxism or deconstruction, for instance, it seems to lack an 'originary moment' or a coherent methodology" (Gandhi, 1998: viii). However, the success of postcolonial studies in reshaping traditional disciplinary configurations and modes of cultural analysis cannot be denied.

This chapter examines how postcolonialism questioned the parochialism inherent to Western knowledge production, while discussing the relationship between Western epistemology and colonialism. The first section discusses the definition of the term postcolonial and how it is

described by the luminaries of postcolonial theory. The second part looks closely at the reciprocity between the resistance against the Western colonial onslaught in the Global South and the shaping of postcolonial theory. The last part discusses the calls for the decolonization of sociology through epistemic pluralism. It examines not only the various postcolonial approaches that gained traction in sociology, but also the challenges faced historically when discussing the Muslim world within Western academia.

1.1) Delineating postcolonialism

The intellectual history of postcolonial theory is grounded in a dialectic between Marxism and poststructuralism/postmodernism. This theoretical contention shapes the academic content of postcolonial analysis, revealing itself in the various debates between "the competing claims of nationalism and internationalism, strategic essentialism and hybridity, solidarity and dispersal, the politics of structure/totality and the politics of the fragment" (Gandhi, 1998: ix). Both sides of this divide present compelling arguments in the critique of their theoretical opponents. However, neither Marxism nor poststructuralism can truly explain the meanings and the ramifications of the colonial onslaught.

Postcolonial critics must constantly work toward a position that implies a negotiation between these two modes of thought. The postcolonial project is one that entails the integration of these conflicting theoretical and political denominations. Postcolonial discourse is primarily grounded in the historical phenomenon of colonialism. As a body of theoretical and empirical literature, it is built in large parts around the concepts of *otherness* and *resistance*. While some postcolonial thinkers explore these concepts through binary models of perception, others have

opted instead to examine the colonial encounter through the possible mingling of colonizing and colonized cultures.

> "While the poststructuralist critique of Western epistemology and theorization of cultural alterity/difference is indispensable to postcolonial *theory*, materialist philosophies, such as Marxism, seem to supply the most compelling basis for postcolonial *politics*" (Gandhi, 1998: ix).

The term *postcolonial* is said to be emblematic of a form of social criticism pertaining to the unequal systems of representation through which "the historical experience of the once-colonized Third World comes to be framed in the West" (Bhabha, 1998: 63). Operating in two different registers simultaneously, it is both a historical marker alluding to the period following the end of colonization, and a term indicating the changes in the intellectual approaches influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction (Mongia, 1997: 2). The postcolonial is therefore understood as "a set of reading practices" concerned with analyzing the "cultural forms" which intercede, challenge, or reproduce the relationships of supremacy and subjugation between nations, races, and cultures (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 12).

While postcolonial criticism officially reached the Western academy through Edward Said's *Orientalism* in the late 1970s, it actually predates the period where the term *postcolonial* started gaining traction. The work of figures as diverse as the African American thinker W.E.B Du Bois, the Trinidadian C.L.R James, the Martinican revolutionary writer Frantz Fanon in Algeria, the African critics Chinua Achebe and Cheikh Anta Diop, and the Indian historiographer Ranajit Guha have all been instrumental in establishing the modes of cultural analysis identified with postcolonialism (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 5). Despite its belated arrival in the Western academy, it nonetheless had a major impact on contemporary modes of cultural analysis, bringing to the

forefront the importance and intersectionality of issues such as race, nation, empire, migration, and ethnicity in the process of cultural production.

Postcolonial criticism did not simply expand the traditional field of English literature or put the emphasis on certain areas of analysis previously overlooked; it also irrevocably modified the major modes of analysis that epitomized the period from 1945 to 1980 (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 8). Colonial discourse analysis rejects the idea of studying literature in isolation, and insists on considering instead the multiple materials, contexts, and academic fields (politics, sociology, history, etc.…) that shape and determine its production and reception. Postcolonial criticism questions notions pertaining to "the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere" by suggesting that culture can actually facilitate relationships of power as efficiently as any of the "more visible forms of oppression" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 8).

For some the hyphenated form *post-colonialism* serves primarily as a temporal marker of the process of decolonization. Others however reiterate that the postcolonial condition is not the result of the end of colonial occupation, but rather begins with the very advent of colonialism itself. The hyphenated form insinuates, according to them, a disconnect between colonialism and its ramifications. They argue that the "unbroken term '*postcolonia*l' is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences" (Gandhi, 1998:3). Other theorists have instead expressed a preference for the term *postcoloniality*, which they believe to be devoid of the academic dogma linked to the notion of postcolonialism. "In postcoloniality, every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the postcolonial is citation, reinscription, rerouting the historical" (Spivak, 1993:217). Although Spivak perceives positive aspects to postcoloniality, others remain far from convinced. Ella Shohat believes that the globalizing nature of postcoloniality erases the complexity inherent to the postcolonial condition. According to her, it "downplays multiplicities

of location and temporality (…) between post-colonial theories and contemporary anti-colonial, or anti-neocolonial struggles and discourses" (Shohat, 1992: 104).

Anne McClintock agrees with this assessment and reaffirms that the "absence of the necessary multiplicity" is indeed problematic (Childs and Williams, 1997:16). The singularity implied by the idea of an all-encompassing postcolonialism re-centers global history around the chronicles of European history, and in doing so invalidates the "decentering of history in hybridity, syncretism, multi-dimensional time, and so forth (…). Colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance" (McClintock, 1992:293). Arif Dirlik presents yet another perspective of postcoloniality that suggests a form of amnesia. According to him, this term is not applicable to the entire postcolonial period, "but only to that period after colonialism when among other things, a forgetting of its effects has begun to set in" (Dirlik, 1994:339). In this outlook, postcoloniality becomes a sort of pathology, "a disease of the times" (Childs and Williams, 1997:17). Anthony Appiah shares a similarly pessimistic view of postcoloniality. He refers to it as a "meretricious form of intellectual activity" (Childs and Williams, 1997:18). His criticism implies a willing complicity on the part of postcolonial intellectuals with the very imperialist and postcolonial structures they are meant to oppose.

> "Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa" (Appiah, 1991:348).

The idea that some types of postcolonial production may strengthen the dynamics of control and exploitation, while weakening any efforts made to resist these forces, raises an interesting question. Is postcolonial production homogenous? Some writers insist on dividing

postcolonialism into two distinct branches: one oppositional, and the other complicit. The former appears mostly in post-independence societies, while the latter is "an always present underside within colonization itself" (Mishra and Hodge, 1991:284). This model provides a necessary remedial to those critics who often perceive postcolonialism as either "(all too easily) resistant" or as an uneven phenomenon (Childs and Williams, 1997:19).

> "Postcolonialism, we have stressed, is not a homogeneous category, either across all postcolonial societies or even within a single one. Rather, it refers to a typical configuration which is always in the process of change, never consistent with itself" (Mishra and Hodge, 1991:289).

The obvious point of departure—when trying to establish who, what, and where is the postcolonial—remains those populations previously colonized by the West. Nevertheless, such a grouping might only offer us a very limited picture of the phenomenon in question. The fact that the process of decolonization is uneven, and incomplete, remains a significant issue in that: "if territories cannot be considered post-colonial (in the sense of being free from colonial control), can their inhabitants?" (Childs and Williams, 1997:12). Another level of complexity is added when one considers the conditions singular to internal colonization. While a certain territory can be deemed decolonized and referred to as postcolonial, some of the ethnic and cultural groups that inhabit it could still be living as colonized entities. "That is particularly true of the situation of First Peoples, of the condition of internal colonization, and is one of the factors which unsettles the claims of white settlers' colonies to post-colonial status" (Childs and Williams, 1997:12). The advent of the major diasporic movements, as temporal markers of the colonial and postcolonial periods, complicates even more the connection of peoples and territories to postcolonialism. The African and Asian Diasporas found in Europe and North America are examples of migratory movements created by the onslaught of Western imperialism in the Global South.

> "For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of post-colonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasants and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees" (Bhabha, 1994:5).

The arrival of these substantial populations from former colonies in the imperial metropoles created unique conditions under which these areas could now be labeled as postcolonial spaces. However, these diasporas are far from constituting what the Caribbean poet Louise Bennett referred to as instances of "colonization in reverse" (Childs and Williams, 1997:13). As Homi Bhabha states: "The Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative *internal to its national identity* (…)" (Bhabha, 1994:6). The question of identity has always been central to postcolonial thinking, from Senghor's Negritude to Spivak's complex theorizing (Childs and Williams, 1997:13). Said's insight on the colonial period in *Orientalism* introduces a new outlook on the identities of diasporic communities. He states that their histories, far from being alien to Western identities, are, in fact, an integral part of them. Western colonial incursions have irrevocably disrupted and altered the cultures and the identities of indigenous cultures. "Today it is not merely "primitive cultures" that are shattered by more powerful "civilizations": all societies (…) are being destroyed (…) by the forces that were unleashed by European imperialism and industrial capitalism" (Asad, 1992:333). Therefore, it is understandable that the issue of unsettled identities remains an important discussion at the very heart of postcolonialism.

Another important aspect of the postcolonial is its relationship with history itself, "and the ways in which it is theorized, categorized, narrated, and written about" (Childs and Williams, 1997:8). Since the West has a long history of denying the presence of any meaningful pasts in areas it colonized while simultaneously destroying the very cultures embodying these histories, a

significant aspect of postcolonial work entails the retrieval or the reassessment of indigenous histories. A typical example is the description of Haiti's slave rebellion by C.L.R. James. The telling of such history is of particular importance "in its depiction of black people making their own history, rather than being passive participants in history made by others" (Childs and Williams, 1997:8). The *Western-ness* of history in origin, location, or ideology is a topic that postcolonial critics continue to debate.

> "The significance of history for post-colonial discourse lies in the modern origins of historical study itself, and the circumstances by which "History" took upon itself the mantle of a discipline. For the emergence of history in European thought is coterminous with the rise of modern colonialism, which in its radical othering and violent annexation of the non-European world, found in history a prominent, if not *the* prominent, instrument for the control of subject peoples" (Ashcroft et al. 1995:355).

Over time, the term postcolonial has come to refer to what was previously known as *Third World* or *Commonwealth* literature. The perspectives and methods associated with postcolonial criticism are also increasingly being used to address the singular histories and predicaments of "internally colonized cultures within the nation states in the developed world" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 8). The Canadian context offers a perfect example of how complex and multifaceted the term *postcolonial* has become. There are in this case at least five distinct contexts to which the term might apply. The period of decolonization succeeding the end of World War II made "the nation-state the universally normal form of the modern state" (Chatterjee, 2013:11). Concepts inspired by the European Enlightenment, such as citizenship, civil society, the state, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, and social justice, became the basis of political modernity (Chakrabarty, 2000:4).

Canada represents in many ways a postcolonial state still dealing with profound dynamics of internal colonization. The cultural and political dependency of Canada toward Britain continues

to shape Canadian identity. For those Canadians of European ancestry, this dependent relationship has serious consequences on not only the way they perceive themselves but also how they conceptualize their *Canadianess*. Furthermore, "a parallel process of subordination has been detected in the cultural domain especially as a consequence of US domination of the continent's mass media (…)" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 10). As a result of this, it is not unusual to find many Canadians who see themselves as having succumbed to the economic and political influence of the United States. This regularly generates discussions centered on the importance of safeguarding Canada's political sovereignty vis-à-vis the US and ensuring an authentically Canadian process of cultural production. Another issue of importance is the topic of Quebec's independence, which is often framed along postcolonial frameworks and perspectives as an oppressed culture, and a nation within Canada (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 10). The treatment of minorities from immigrant communities is another matter that raises questions about Canada's claims of being a genuinely multicultural and tolerant society.

Writers such as Austin Clarke and Bharati Mukherjee often explore these questions through postcolonial lenses (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 10). The predicament of the indigenous peoples of Canada is, however, the most important and obvious Canadian context, where postcolonial criticism offers the necessary framework to establish a narrative of resistance. The relationship between indigenous communities and the Canadian government, as well as Canadian society at large, remains a difficult one, where much of the consequences of the brutal colonial legacy of the nation remain still largely unexplored. In fact, the violence endured by indigenous peoples at the hands of governmental organizations and religious institutions acting on behalf of the government is a topic that is often difficult to discuss. The terrible legacy of residential schools, the cultural

genocide, and the institutionalized racism experienced by indigenous peoples often clashes with the narrative of Canadian tolerance and multiculturalism that came to embody Canadian identity.

> "If Onkwehonwe movements are to force settler societies to transcend colonialism, we need to understand clearly who and what constitutes our enemy. The "problem" or "challenge" we face has been explained in many ways, but to move our discussion forward I will state it in a blunt and forcefully true way: the problem we face is Euroamerican arrogance, the institutional and attitudinal expressions of the prejudicial biases inherent in Europe and Euroamerican cultures" (Alfred, 2005:101)

Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that postcolonialism should not simply be understood as the latest iteration of critical analysis in social thought (Bhambra, 2007: 15). The *post*t must instead be conceived of as a pivotal moment where the prevailing theoretical understanding of the world is transcended. Postcolonial approaches aim to improve categories of analysis by establishing, as a measure of adequacy, an increased inclusivity (Bhambra, 2007: 15). By giving prominence to the voiceless, postcolonialism is attempting to address issues of inclusion and exclusion, while simultaneously elucidating the reciprocal relationship linking knowledge to politics. According to Edward Said, "each humanistic investigation must formulate the nature of that connection in the specific context of the study, the subject matter, and its historical circumstances" (Said, 1978: 15). Therefore, postcolonialism not only tackles current inequalities but also their historical roots and their modes of production (Bhabha, 1992: 440).

Although the study of colonial systems of representation and cultural production predates Said's involvement in the field, what he introduced is an analytical approach grounded in contemporary European cultural theories. Postcolonial theory has since emerged as a junction for a variety of disciplines and theories; it has also become somewhat of a battleground. "While it has enabled a complex interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its uneasy incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories—such as Marxism and poststructuralism—confounds any

uniformity of approach" (Gandhi, 1998:3). This explains the lack of consensus when it comes to what should be the appropriate content, scope, and relevance of Postcolonial studies. In essence, postcolonialism can be defined as a project devoted to the "academic task of revisiting, remembering, and crucially interrogating the colonial past" (Gandhi, 1998:4). It is meant to divulge the reciprocal and antagonistic relationship between colonizer and colonized, and in doing so unearth the concealed roots of the postcolonial condition.

> "The colonial past is not simply a reservoir of 'raw' political experiences and practices to be theorized from the detached and enlightened perspective of the present. It is also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity, characterized by a profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of colonized subjects. Thus, in its therapeutic retrieval of the colonial past, postcolonialism needs to define itself as an area of study which is willing not only to make, but also to gain, theoretical sense out of that past" (Gandhi, 1998:5)

The ongoing expansion of the term postcolonial is such that some fear the possible collapse of postcoloniality as an analytical construct. The diversity of historical contexts, geographical regions, cultural identities, and political predicaments puts a strain on its scope and relevance. Some even argue that it has been appropriated by "an essentially complicit mode of political (dis)engagement from the coercive realities of colonial history and the current neo-colonial era" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:11). There have also been some polarizing discussions as to whether the focus of postcolonial analysis should be on postcolonial culture alone, or whether it should also include the culture of the colonizer.

> "Indeed, despite abundant evidence of the successes of postcolonial criticism, it is arguable that these conflicts have attained sufficient weight and charge to raise the question of whether it is not now splintering into a series of competing, mutually incompatible or even antagonistic practices" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:11).

The earlier anti-colonial critique spearheaded the effort to challenge Western constructions of notions such as colonizer and colonized and probed the relationship connecting the center to the periphery. It also questioned the dichotomies that shaped the very concept of knowledge in fields such as literature and history. However, these texts remained, for the most part, dependent on the same structures they were attempting to dismantle. They tackled the structure of binary constructions—between master and slave, for example—without, however, "questioning the reality of the dualism itself" (Mongia, 1997:5). As much as the narrative of nationalism posed a real challenge to colonialism, it nonetheless remained beholden to the narrative of modernity as a bearer of progress, while also acknowledging the universal value of Enlightenment.

In an attempt to dismantle the grand narrative making Europe the norm, nationalism proposed the modern nation-state as the new ideal (Mongia, 1997:5). In the wake of this new narrative pertaining to nationalism, postcolonialism took a keen interest in analyzing the "difficulty of conceiving the nation even as an imagined community" (Mongia, 1997:5). Postcolonialism rejects not only the "Western *imperium* but also the nationalist project" (Appiah, 1991:353). Instead, it takes as its objective, uncovering and critiquing the relationship connecting the various systems of knowledge to existing forms of oppression. Therefore, the responsibility of postcolonial theory resembles that of Western philosophy, a reimagining of the very concepts by which knowledge is conceived.

"The development of postcolonial theory also needs to be understood in terms of new socio-historic pressures" (Mongia, 1997:5). The traditional concepts such as democracy, the citizen, and nationalism that have so far explained human history seem to have lost the ability to cope with contemporary realities. Newer social movements focusing instead on issues such as race, gender, and ethnicity have demonstrated efficiently the shortcomings of the previous

understandings of community, individual, and nations. Instabilities caused by complex changes "such as decolonization, the movements of peoples on a hitherto unmatched scale, and now distributions of global power" have shown that the old narratives of progress and reason are incapable of tackling current realities, and "the numerous fractures that attend them" (Mongia, 1997:5). Postcolonial theory attempts to provide a response to the pressures created by contemporary issues, while also offering the means to talk about them. According to Gyan Prakash, postcolonialism's ultimate project seeks to criticize "the historicism that projected the West as history" (Prakash, 1994:1475). He describes Subaltern studies as postcolonial criticism. They offer an "anti-foundationalist historiography" that reinstates the subaltern classes' capacity for action by transcending the "foundationalist structures of colonial, nationalist, and Marxist historiography" (Prakash, 1990:397). He believes that postcolonial critique exists primarily as an aftermath of colonialism.

1.2) Resistance and the shaping of postcolonial theory

The long history of resistance to colonialism is well known and documented in postcolonial studies. The extensive and often violent process of colonization never effectively pacified colonized bodies. However, theorizing this kind of resistance sparked vigorous discussions amongst those wishing to address it within the confines of postcolonial theory. Questions pertaining to subjectivity, identity, and agency created unavoidable fault-lines within the conversation concerning "the appropriate models for contemporary counter-hegemonic work" (Parry, 1994:84). For some, relying on a simple inversion of terms outlined by colonial discourse—such as colonizer/colonized—hinders greatly any attempt made to reinstate the colonized as the primary subject of its own history. Retaining colonial assumptions based on "undifferentiated

identity categories" prevents any real challenge susceptible of contesting "the conventions of that system of knowledge", and in fact creates a whole new layer of complicity (Parry, 1994:84). The project of postcolonial critique should instead seek to deconstruct and displace the Eurocentric foundations of the "discursive apparatus, which constructed the Third World not only for the west but also for the cultures so represented" (Terdiman, 1985:36).

There is no lack of evidence when it comes to instances of native dissatisfaction and dissent under colonial rule. In fact, the various forms of institutional and ideological domination generated widespread contestation. Official colonial archives have recorded instances of insurgency and organized political contestations against colonial rule. "Traces of popular disobedience can also be recuperated from unwritten symbolic and symptomatic practices in which a rejection or violation of the subject positions assigned by colonialism is registered" (Parry, 1994:85). However, these often-anarchic bouts of defiance, accompanied by a discourse of identity-assertion, "which were sometimes nurtured by dreams, omens and divination, and could take the form of theatre, violated notions of rational protest" were not always chronicled or highlighted in the anticolonial discourse (Harris, 1974:14). For the intellectual elite of the various nationalist and liberation movements these events were neither motivated by a specific political program with predetermined political outcomes, nor capable of advancing the struggle for nation-building.

"When we consider the narratives of decolonization, we encounter rhetorics in which 'nativism' in one form or another is evident" (Parry, 1994:88). For those theorizing anticolonial resistance, nativism can be misconstrued as nothing more than an essentializing discourse, or worse a type of '*reverse racism'*. According to Parry, reducing nativism to a mere castigating of inequalities grounded in a repetition of imperialism's conceptual framework overlooks its role in the development of a narrative of resistance. Nativism is imbued with a discourse predicated on

overthrowing the hierarchy, the stance, and the concepts of the colonial narrative, and also rejecting the position of subjugation reserved to the colonized. "A recent discussion of nativism condenses many of the current censures of cultural nationalism for its complicity with the terms of colonialism's discourse" (Parry, 1994:88). While it allows the decolonized to write about themselves as subjects of their own literature, nativism remains for Anthony Appiah beholden to monolithic conceptions of identity.

> "Railing against the cultural hegemony of the West, the nativist is of its party without knowing it. Indeed, the very arguments, the rhetoric of defiance, that our nationalist muster are…canonical, time tested…In their ideological inscription, the cultural nationalists remain in apposition of conteridentification…which is to continue to participate in an institutional configuration—to be subjected to cultural identities they ostensibly decry…Time and time again, cultural nationalism has followed the route of alternate genealogizing. We end up always in the same; the achievement is to have invented a different pas for it" (Appiah, 1988:164).

For those sharing Appiah's trepidations, nativist topology based on dichotomies such as periphery/center, native/foreigner, Western/tradition reiterates the idea of the colonizer as a dynamic agent of change, and the colonized as a passive observer. "Thus, while the reciprocity of the relationship is stressed, all power remains with western discourse" (Parry, 1994:88). However, Parry argues that nativism possesses the ability to generate an empowering project based on the creation of a coherent identity transcending the need to simply "locate and revive pristine pre-colonial cultures" (Irele, 1970:170). Fanon and Cabral, as authors of liberation theories— "which could today be accused of an essentialist politics"—recognized the inherent potential possessed by the creation of an insurgent, unified self, in furthering the revolutionary cause (Parry, 1994:91).

> "For as I read them, both affirmed the invention of an insurgent, unified black self, acknowledged the revolutionary energies released by valorizing the cultures denigrated by colonialism and, rather than construing the colonialist relationship in terms of negotiations with the structures of imperialism, privileged

> coercion over hegemony to project it as a struggle between implacably opposed forces (…)" (Parry, 1994:91).

According to Stuart Hall, there are two ways of conceptualizing *cultural identity*. The first one defines it in terms of a unique common culture, creating a collective "one true self", which people with a shared common history and ancestry identify with (Hall, 1990: 110). Within the confines of this definition, our cultural identities demonstrate the collective historical experiences and cultural codes that provide us the basis on which we build the frames of reference that identify us as "one people" (Hall, 1990:111). It reiterates the "stable, unchangeable and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Hall, 1990:111). This perception of cultural identity played an important role in the postcolonial struggles that have transformed our world. "It lay at the center of the vision of the poets of 'Negritude, like Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor, and of the Pan-African political project, earlier in the century" (Hall, 1990:111). It also remains an important element in nascent forms of representation amid previously marginalized peoples. Amongst postcolonial societies, the reclaiming of this cultural identity is what Fanon refers to as:

> "a passionate research (…) directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation, and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others" (Fanon, 1963:170).

I) The colonizer/colonized paradigm

According to Frantz Fanon, what characterizes the Western colonization of the Global South is the intense and continuous racialization of non-whites. The colonizers' existence and identity rests primarily on their ability to maintain a highly racialized colonial system that grants them all the profits, while stripping the non-whites of their rights and basic humanity (Rabaka,

2010:113). Albert Memmi points out that the "economic motives of colonial undertakings" explain why so many Europeans choose to relocate to the colonies (Memmi, 1967:3). The change involved in moving to a colony ensured that these settlers could make a substantial profit. In a racialized hierarchy where being white guaranteed all possible privileges, moving to a colony entailed: better jobs, higher wages, rapid social mobility, and profitable businesses. In short, the colonizer becomes aware of his status of *white settler* as he arrives in the colony and "discovers his own privilege" (Memmi, 1967:7). He becomes keenly aware that this lucrative and privileged position he occupies is in direct relation to the colonized. If his living standards are so high, it is precisely because those of the colonized are so low (Memmi, 1967:8).

> "He knows also that the most favoured colonized will never be anything but colonized people, in other words, that certain rights will forever be refused them, and that certain advantages are reserved strictly for him. In short, he knows, in his own eyes as well as those of his victim, that he is a usurper. He must adjust to both being regarded as such, and to this situation" (Memmi, 1967:9)

In order to fortify this racial hierarchy and justify the existence of the colonizer, the system must propose a certain image or status the colonized must abide by. "These images become excuses without which the presence and conduct of a colonizer (…) would seem shocking" (Memmi, 1967:79). The colonized is depicted as a being devoid of any tangible qualities that requires not only guidance but also protection from himself. "In order for the colonizer to be the complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, but he must also believe in its legitimacy" (Memmi, 1967:89). This process requires the dissemination of a fictitious and degrading portrait of the colonized until they end up not only accepting it but also living it to a certain extent. The racialization of the non-whites mentioned by Fanon is the effort made to dehumanize the colonized. Since the colonial project intertwines and intersects with racism, the narrative of white

supremacy becomes the main ideological vehicle through which the mistreatment of racialized bodies is legitimized (Rabaka, 2010:113).

The colonial realm is a compartmentalized and Manichean world, where the "colonial subject is a man penned in: apartheid is but one method of compartmentalizing the colonial world" (Fanon, 1963:15). Through its policies and academics, the colonizer implants in the mind of the colonized that all essential values are Western values, and "remain eternal despite all errors attributable to man" (Fanon, 1963:15). The colonized becomes convinced of the pertinence and accuracy of these ideas; his very thought process has now fallen prey to the same colonial incursion ravaging his land. "The white colonists attack the traditions and myths—above all, their myths—of the racially colonized while clandestinely creating and perpetuating myths of their own concerning the racially colonized" (Rabaka, 2010:121). These concocted myths and stereotypes not only become part and parcel of the colonial narrative, but they are also eventually internalized by the colonized.

This leads to the emergence of many of the problems Fanon addresses throughout his work. Disrupting and shattering indigenous cultures triggers amongst all colonized peoples an inferiority complex. They position themselves in relation to the culture and the language of their colonizers. "The more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush" (Fanon, 1952:2). The psychological, social, emotional, economic, and political impact of this mythical portrait of the racialized subject entrenches even further the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. Constantly attacking, challenging, and weakening severely any lingering inkling of autonomy or sovereignty from the pre-colonial era reiterates this binary power-dynamic between the colonialists and the colonial subjects.

> "Colonization is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a

> kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (Fanon, 1963:170).

For the colonial project to reach its desired supremacy, the indigenous population must be convinced of the benefits of colonization. This can only happen once they are completely alienated from their own indigenous culture. "The result was to hammer into the head of the indigenous population that if the colonists were to leave, they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality" (Fanon, 1963:149). The peoples of the colonies were reduced to entities with no history of their own, no art, no past, and certainly no future (Said, 1993:193). Without the presence of their colonizers, they will surely once again fall prey to their ego, their biology, and their intellectual inadequacy. The inherently destructive nature of colonial domination was quick to disrupt in remarkable ways the cultural life of the conquered. The denial of all pretentions of nationhood, the new legal, political, and social system imposed by the occupying powers, the marginalization of the indigenous population, the forced expropriations, the ban of their most sacred customs, and "the systematic enslavement of men and women, all contributed to this cultural obliteration" (Fanon, 1963:170).

II) National culture and liberation struggles

Albert Memmi has argued that despite the end of colonialism, the perverse longevity of its imprint will continue to persist. The idea that the colonial aftermath will lead to the emergence of a new society rising from the ashes of what was previously a colony remains for Memmi nothing short of a delusion. He maintains that too often one underestimates "the psychologically tenacious hold of the colonial past on the postcolonial present" (Memmi, 1968:88). The economic, cultural, and political damage caused by colonial occupation does not simply disappear with the first signs of national independence. Colonisation as Said argues, is a "fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely

unfair results" (Said, 1989:207). The status of the colonized remains affixed into a zone of dependency and periphery. They continue to be stigmatized and described as the underdeveloped, the less-developed, forever posited as the opposite of their superior Western overlords who remain in every possible way antithetical to them (Said, 1989:207).

The relationship between culture and imperialism is an integral part of the discussion pertaining to decolonization. The advent of close to a hundred new decolonized post-colonial states after 1945 is a fact those scholars, historians, activists working on the topic of postcolonialism should consider. Colonial uprisings such as the San Domingo revolution, the Abdul Kader insurrection, the Orabi Revolt, and the Boxer Rebellion are all examples of earlier uprisings against colonial rule right across the non-European world. "There had been reprisals, changes of regimes, *causes célèbres*, debates, reforms, and reappraisals. All along the empires increased in size and profit" (Said, 1993:196). However, the post-war era saw the emergence of a sustained and systematic resistance to the West as the embodiment of the Empire to be defeated. "Long simmering resentment against the white man from the Pacific to the Atlantic sprang into fully fledge independence movements" (Said, 1993:196).

The anti-colonial militancy active between the two world wars was not completely anti-West. While some believed that working with Christianity could provide a reprieve from the colonial onslaught, others saw in the process of Westernization a possible solution to colonialism. They believed that certain aspects of Western culture could provide them with the necessary ammunition to question, challenge, and eventually extricate their nations from the colonial hold. Their endeavours and viewpoints, however, received very little acknowledgement in the metropole, and "in time their resistance was transformed" (Said, 1993:196). Since colonialism was a system, it became obvious that the resistance needed to be as systematic (Sartre, 1964). A wave

of anti-colonial and anti-imperial activity and thought challenging not only colonialism but also the very foundations of Western civilization emerged as a result of this systematic approach to resistance.

> "For the first time Westerners have been required to confront themselves not simply as the Raj but as representatives of a culture and even of races accused of crimes—crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience" (Said, 1993:195).

According to Edward Said, culture can predispose a society to foreign domination, as much as it can prepare said society to abandon or amend the ideas leading to such a predisposition (Said, 1993:196). This change of mindset cannot occur, however, without a profound desire in the members of this society to resist the pressures of colonial rule. They must be willing "to take up arms, project ideas of liberation, and to imagine (…) a new national community, to take the final plunge" (Said, 1993:200). The political and economic cost of colonial occupation must be enough of a burden that the desire to overthrow this foreign domination becomes indispensable. The very idea of empire and the cost of colonial rule, as well as the justifications seeking to legitimize imperialism, must be openly challenged. Once the rebellious natives are willing to reiterate the independence and integrity of their own culture free from colonial intrusion, the necessary prerequisites for the emergence of a systematic resistance to colonialism are met. With the recovery of their native culture, the indigenous population is now ready to transcend their status of dominated subjects in the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. The opposition and resistance to imperialism are "articulated together on a largely common although disputed terrain provided by culture" (Said, 1993:200).

The mapping of the newly recovered cultural space heralds the difficult process of territorial recovery, which is at the heart of decolonization. After the primary resistance against outside intrusion comes the period of ideological resistance, when every effort is made to rebuild

a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system" (Davidson, 1978:155). By once again embracing their native culture and rejecting the values and cultural modes imposed upon them, such as speaking European languages or wearing Western clothes, the natives are actively elaborating the ideological basis for the greater unity essential to the completion of their liberation struggle (Said, 1993:210). Under colonial domination, the colonizers actively seek the systematic destruction of national culture. Colonial authorities consider the attachment of the natives to their own traditions as an obvious sign of their loyalty to the national spirit, and their refusal to submit to colonial rule. "Very quickly it becomes a culture condemned to clandestinity" (Fanon, 1963: 171). This perseverance of cultural expression amongst the colonized is for Fanon the demonstration of a lingering sense of nationhood that continues to endure despite the colonial presence (Fanon, 1963: 171).

Both Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral were in general agreement about the important role of culture in the struggle against colonialism. For Fanon, revolution is an integral part of the process of rejuvenation of both man and society after the ravages of colonial rule. "Only through revolution could a suppressed people undo the effects of colonisation" (Blackey, 1974:193). The struggle for liberation is the process through which the national integrity and pride, as well as the past and the future, are restored. Liberation requires the total destruction of the colonial system (Fanon, 1958:105). Cabral believes that the larger struggle for the liberation of the colonized is a "fundamental characteristic of the advance of history (…)" (Cabral, 1961:14). Revolution is the conduit through which not only national independence will be achieved, but the purging of foreign domination will once again allow the previously colonized to transform their lives in the direction of progress.

The national productive forces must be liberated to service the development of this national spirit. “Thus, the struggle is not only against colonialism, but against neo-colonialism as well” (Blackey, 1974:193). Cabral’s vision of the struggle for liberation encompassed a broader spectrum of what revolution should entail. He argues that revolutionaries must not simply fight for abstract ideas alone, but for the improved conditions of their peoples. The fight must not revolve merely around the idea of liberty of independence but should also address “local and pressing grievances and problems” (Blackey, 1974:194). In other words, it is by fighting for local grievances and reiterating the necessity to restore the primacy of native cultures that the leaders of the liberation struggle will gain the support of their populations.

> “We have to remember that its’ not enough to produce, to have a full stomach, to practice sound politics, and to make war. If a man, a woman, a human being does all of this without advancing as an intelligent being, as the foremost being in nature; without truly feeling every day that knowledge of the environment and of the world in general increases in one’s head; without, that is, advancing in the cultural sphere; then all that one does—producing, practising sound politics, fighting—hasn’t worked at all” (Cabral, 2016:115)

Culture is a vital part of a people’s identity in its struggle for freedom from colonialism. A national culture encompasses all the efforts made by a people to describe and justify the process through which the common identity holding them together as one people is produced. In the case of colonized nations, national culture should take centre stage in the struggle against colonialism. The greatest act of cultural manifestation undertaken by a colonized people resides in their conscious and organized struggle to restore national sovereignty. “It is not solely the success of the struggle that consequently validates and energizes culture; culture does not go into hibernation during the conflict” (Fanon, 1963:178). The struggle itself will expand the multiple directions culture can go into, and in doing so hint at new possibilities. The fight for liberation will not simply

restore the people to their previous values and structures; its primary aim is instead "a fundamental redistribution of the relations between men" that will not only achieve the demise of colonization, but also that of the colonized (Fanon, 1963:178). A struggle, which mobilizes every level of society and reaches the ideal conditions for cultural development and innovation, will no doubt herald a new form of humanity. "A nation born of the concerted effort of the people, which embodies the actual aspirations of the people and transforms the state (….)" shatters irrevocably the colonizer/colonized paradigm so central to colonial discourse and colonial rule (Fanon, 1963:179).

Cabral agrees with Fanon's assessment of the importance of culture in the struggle for freedom. The primary role of culture is to strengthen the common bond between members of the same group. It not only provides a sense of individual identity, but it is also a "purveyor of intimate information about the individual, and his group's ethos and the manifestation of its most obvious and occasionally banal characteristics" (McCulloch, 1983: 85). Cabral went so far as to affirm that it is impossible to create and execute a revolution if the people haven't managed to keep their culture thriving despite the constant organized repression of their way of life. "It is cultural resistance which at a given moment can take on new forms—political, economic, military—to fight foreign domination" (Cabral, 1972:40). According to him, in the colonial context the cultural influence of the empire is often limited to the main urban areas, and then to only a small contingent of "petty bourgeoisie and urban workers" (Blackey, 1974:207). The masses on the other hand, remain vastly untouched by the cultural influence of the colonial power. They find in their own culture a rampart to help them preserve their identity, and resist the assimilation and subjugation sought by the colonial project.

Fanon, however, warns nascent postcolonial states against falling into a pattern of imitation where they would reproduce Western and capitalistic ways of life. In fact, he states that such an

imitation would only lead them to the kind of moral and spiritual debasement being experienced by Western nations (Blackey, 1974:208). He believes that common interests should bring those engaged in the anti-colonial struggle together in order to "try to set afoot a new man" (Fanon, 1963:316). Cabral shares a similar outlook and reiterates the importance of looking beyond the struggle for liberation, and considering the economic, social, and cultural development of the people on their road to progress. He vehemently rejects the type of nativism leading to a narrow-minded nationalism, which will not serve the interests of those trying to escape the colonial hold but would instead lead to the emergence of an ethnocentrism reproducing the worst aspects of the colonial system (Blackey, 1974:208).

Fanon also highlights the importance of the colonized intellectual in assisting his society in the process of cultural recovery. He should use his knowledge to spur them into action and foster through his writings the hope of a better future. "The colonized intellectual is responsible not to his national culture, but to the nation as a whole, whose culture is, after all, but one aspect" (Fanon, 1963:168). Since one cannot divorce the fight for culture from the larger struggle for liberation, the colonized intellectual must assist in the restoration of the palpable matrix from which culture can grow. For both Fanon and Cabral, "national culture is no folklore where an abstract populism is convinced it has uncovered the popular truth" (Fanon, 1963:168). National culture, on the contrary, emerges from the collective thought process through which the people define, validate, and praise the actions by which they join forces and organize their systematic resistance to colonialism. For the liberation movements who successfully led their struggle against Western imperialism, it was necessary to establish their legitimacy through their cultural primacy. By establishing an unbroken continuity leading to the first movements/groups/individuals who stood

against the colonial intrusion of European powers, these nationalist parties were able to ascertain their legitimacy and relevance.

> "Thus, the Algerian National Liberation Front which inaugurated its insurrection against France in 1954 traced its ancestry to the Emir Abdel Kader, who fought the French occupation during the *1830s* and *1840s*. In Guinea and Mali resistance against the French is traced back generations to Samory and Hajji Omar" (Said, 1993: 197).

Decolonization is a complex process that unfolds over the course of different political contexts, different histories and geographies, different narratives, and counter-narratives. "The struggle took the form of strikes, marches, violent attack, retribution and counter-retribution" (Said, 1993:197). It also encompasses an eruption of orators and intellectuals appealing to the masses for a greater commitment and mobilization of the anti-colonial struggle. Anti-imperialist resistance emerged gradually from various sporadic—and often unsuccessful— revolts until after World War One. During the period between the two world wars, it took on a more systematic approach and became a lot "more militantly independence-minded" (Said, 1993:219).

1.3) Postcolonialism and sociology

Although sociology came late to the study of empire, it would be erroneous to think that sociologists have made no significant contributions to discussions pertaining to imperialism or colonialism. Close to half of the sociologists working in Britain, France, and their numerous colonies during the 1950s were directly involved in some kind of colonial research or another (Steinmetz, 2014:78). They played an important role in the research on development and under-development that emerged at the height of the decolonization period. They were also among the first to produce comparative historical research on colonies. For those sociologists interested particularly in historical and transnational analyses, empires represented an interesting subject that

could not be avoided or ignored. This explains the emergence of a "self-described postcolonial sociology" focusing primarily on the topic of colonialism and empire (Steinmetz, 2014:78).

Unlike anthropology, that engaged in an assessment of its participation in the Western colonial project, "sociologists' amnesia about their discipline's engagement in the colonial empires set in almost immediately at the end of the colonial era (…)" (Steinmetz, 2014:78). Any sociological analysis pertaining to colonialism focused almost exclusively on the economic aspects of imperialism and sociology's own involvement in the colonial project remained, for a long time, completely overlooked. Later, however, an impressive body of work on postcolonialism started to emerge in the discipline. Breaking away from traditional anthropological approaches, sociology focused instead on the study of colonies as historical formations (Steinmetz, 2014:77). Sociologists insisted on examining the interactions between colonizers and colonized in order to understand how this encounter transformed both parties. Some discussions in postcolonial sociology have even questioned "the applicability of Western social scientific concepts and theories to the global South" and to what degree sociology itself has been shaped by empire (Steinmetz, 2014:77).

Postcolonial theory has been gaining ground in sociology since the early 1990s. While initially postcolonialism was incorporated into existing sociological endeavors—such as the study of migration and multiculturalism—four distinct postcolonial approaches have since gained traction in sociology. The first one examines how European ethnography, racism, social ontologies, and other aspects of culture have shaped colonial empires. The different imperial strategies used to shape these colonies resulted in hybrid political formations. Sociologists study the transition from one imperial configuration to another in order to disclose the process through which the political landscape is rearranged and reorganized to fit into these newly established imperial patterns (Steinmetz, 2014:82).

> "An example of predominantly colonial strategies evolving into more imperialist approaches is the nineteenth-century British shift to an imperialism of free trade. The 1880s then saw a movement back to formal colonialism by Britain and other European powers. Another imperial pattern involves chartered companies. Such companies were created by investors for trade, exploration, and exploitation throughout the medieval and modern eras" (Steinmetz, 2014:82).

The colonial state is organized like a field. Its internal dynamics ensure the production of a constant stream of ethnographic representations and projects meant to facilitate and regulate native governance. These *idées–forces* define, according to Bourdieu, "the performative ideas that both represent and divide the social world" (Steinmetz, 2008:607). The modern colonial state becomes the sphere of production of a new kind of "*noblesse de robe*" (Bourdieu, 1996:377). This new nobility, however, finds its legitimacy in scholarly titles rather than "pedigrees of noble birth" (Steinmetz, 2008:607). The state helps to validate this new nobility by acknowledging its credentials and endorsing its claims to dominate the state.

The second approach explores the ambivalence inherent to the colonizer-colonized relationship and the forms of colonial hybridity that emanate from this rapport. In contemporary usage, the concept of colonialism refers to the conquest of a foreign territory and its native population, subsequently controlled and ruled over by members of the "conquering polity" (Steinmetz, 2014:79). The varying degrees of indirectness and informality, of said foreign rule, regulate the ramifications of the loss of sovereignty experienced by the indigenous population. An important characteristic of colonialism is the subservient position the natives are confined to. The conquered population is constituted as legally, administratively, socially, culturally, and biologically inferior to their occupiers. "All colonial states divide their subjects into different tribal or racial groups in an effort to enhance control, but at the same time the colonized are subsumed by the colonial state under a single, overarching category" (Steinmetz, 2014:80). All Western

colonies practiced this rule of difference to maintain the status quo and prevent the colonized from ever attaining the same legal rights as their rulers. While some colonies have shown a certain degree of flexibility in respect to the rule of difference, this tenet was generally more stringent during the 19th century than in previous eras.

> "Even the supposedly assimilationist French Empire placed limits on genuine assimilation. In a historical study of the training of Algerian teachers in French Algeria inspired by Bourdieu's sociology of education, Colonna (1975, pp.168-69) showed that the colonial power placed a specific limit on the path to acculturation one that defined the quality of scholarly excellence as being neither too close to the culture of origin nor too close to the culture of the West" (Steinmetz, 2014:80).

The third approach in postcolonial sociology focuses on the issue of imperial blowback, and Fanon's observation pertaining to the reciprocal relationship between Europe and the Third World. Eric de Dampierre (1968) argued for treating "the European, even metropolitan context, in counterpoint with the African context" (Steinmetz, 2014:94). This idea of cultural reciprocity between colony and metropole is a critical element in Said's study of postcolonial methodology. While historians focused mainly on the impact of imperialism on the configuration of domestic cultures and politics, postcolonial critics such as Spivak, Said, and Gilroy concentrated instead on "metropolitan high culture" (Steinmetz, 2014:94). Sociologists on the other hand, chose to examine both the backflow of colonial culture in the metropoles, as well as the aftermath of colonialism in postcolonial societies themselves.

The fourth approach in postcolonial sociology focuses primarily on the critique of Western knowledge production and its established posture vis-a vis the non-Western world. From this type of analysis, emerged a rather interesting criticism of not only Western thinking and its inadequacy to understand post-colonized non-Western cultures but also its often-antagonistic attitude toward the very existence of non-Western knowledge production. This led to calls for a more inclusive

discipline. Many sociologists have engaged in a self-critique of sociology as both a product of empire and an enabler of the colonial project while also openly calling for a decolonization of the discipline via the addition of sociological traditions rooted in knowledge stemming from non-Western cultures.

> "Related to the third and fourth strands is a literature that develops a self-critique of sociology itself as a product of empire (Bhambra 2007, Kemple & Mawani 2009, Khalaf 1979, Wallerstein 1991). Alatas (2003), Berque (1962), Bourdieu (1976), and Stavenhagen (1971) call for a decolonization of the discipline (…)" (Steinmetz, 2014:94).

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, modern Western thinking is an "abyssal thinking" in the sense that it relies heavily on the division of social reality into two opposing dominions that cannot coexist (Santos, 2007: 45). In this dichotomy, what lies on the other side of the chasm is rendered non-existent, it ceases to exist in any relevant way. "Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of exclusion considers to be its other" (Santos, 2007: 45). In other words, what characterizes this abyssal thinking is the inconceivability of the coexistence of the two sides. The colonial forays of Western powers into the global South have rendered the global North incapable of learning in "noncolonial terms" (Santos, 2016: 19).

The Western weltanschauung can only conceptualize the world through the history of the West and, in doing so, glosses over the existence of other histories. Western modernity gave rise to a paradigm in which science was granted preeminence over all other forms of knowledge. Science was said to be the purveyor of universal truth. The exclusionary essence of this knowledge and its long-standing monopoly are key features of modern Western epistemology. The line of demarcation that typifies modern Western thinking defines the knowledge it produces as scientifically grounded foundational knowledge while reducing anything created on the other side

of the aforementioned divide to mere beliefs, opinions, perceptions, but certainly not real knowledge based on ascertainable truths.

> "Since the universal validity of scientific truth is admittedly always relative, given the fact that it can only be ascertained in relation to certain kinds of objects under certain circumstances and established by certain methods, how does it relate to other possible truths which may even claim a higher status, but which cannot be established according to scientific methods, such as philosophical truth or faith as religious truth?" (Santos, 2007: 47).

The modern basis of knowledge is both "territorial and imperial" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006:206). The socio-historical context that gave rise to it was founded on specific concepts and principles. European Renaissance, both in term of ideas and as a historical period, was said to mark the beginning of modernity. A particular mapping of the world emerged in Europe; one drawn by Gerardus Mercator and Johannes Ortelius that produced "a zero point of observation and of knowledge: a perspective that denied all other perspectives" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006:206). The epistemological borders established in this framing excluded all other forms of knowledge conceived outside of the European realm. These same borders were revisited in the 18th century through the lenses of the secular knowledge which displaced the hegemony previously enjoyed by theology.

This hemispheric partition of the world regrouped territories and populations along colonial and racial classifications, placing Westerners at the very top of this hierarchy. From the Renaissance to our current epoch, modernity has been conceptualized around three main ideals: Western Christianity, European history, and whiteness. "Thus, from the Renaissance all the way down, the rhetoric of modernity could not have been sustained without its darker and constitutive side: the logic of coloniality" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006:206). The colonial zones were branded as the dominion of incoherent and unintelligible myths and beliefs that can never lead to true and

accurate knowledge. What is produced on the other side of the divide can only ever be indecipherable fantasies and strange practices. In fact, the alleged strangeness of these practices contributed to the virulent and violent narrative of Western colonialism predicated on the negation of "the very human nature of the agents of such practices" (Santos, 2007: 51).

> "On the basis of their refined conceptions of humanity and human dignity, the humanists reached the conclusion that the savages were subhuman. Do the Indians have a soul? —was the question. When Pope Paul III answered affirmatively in his bull *Sublimis Deus* of 1937, he did so by conceiving of the indigenous people's soul as an empty receptacle, an *anima nullius*, very much like the *terra nullius*" (Santos, 2007: 51).

In our current epoch, where we find ourselves confronted to realities increasingly endangering the stability of our political, economic, and social structures, and in the absence of efficient and tangible solutions to resolve these urgent issues, dangerous ideologies have found a fertile ground to grow in popularity. Global warming, unfettered capitalism, the depletion of natural resources, the increase in social inequality, and the wars and destruction caused by renewed neocolonial incursions into the global South are all contributing to the exponential growth of extreme power dynamics. However, a noticeable "exhaustion haunts the Western, Eurocentric critical tradition" which used to not only offer a critique of these types of phenomena but also sought to propose solutions (Santos, 2016: 19). This fatigue manifests itself in the increasing incapacity of this tradition to produce relevant and adequate responses to our current predicaments. In fact, it appears to be trapped in a strange stagnation where it finds itself prisoner of the limitations of its established epistemology and thus incapable of devising innovative approaches to resolve these problems.

> "If there is so much to criticize, why has it become so difficult to build convincing, widely shared, powerful, critical theories, theories that give rise to effective and profound transformative practices?" (Santos, 2016: 20).

The current paralysis of Western, Eurocentric critical theory is the byproduct of the shortcomings of its own knowledge production. Much of the diverse forms of knowledge originating from non-Western cultures were excluded from the "Cartesian epistemological and ontological model" that to this day embodies the "modern and Western understanding of the world" (Santos, 2016: 23). By ignoring or undervaluing non-Western conceptions of reality, it denied itself the possibility of accessing ideas rooted in ideological frameworks hailing from perspectives different from that of the prevailing Western model. However, throughout the non-Western world a revival of indigenous "ethical, cultural, and political imaginations" has been taking place (Santos, 2016:21). Many movements in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Muslim world have decided to use non-Western cultural and political imaginings to organize their activism, and in doing so have reiterated the existence of a plurality of knowledges.

Fanon detailed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, how knowledge production can be utilized to serve the interest of colonization. He brought to the forefront the need for assessing the legitimacy of methodology. After all, "if the epistemic conditions of social life were colonized, would not that infection reach also the grammatical level, the very grounds of knowledge?" (Gordon, 2014: 85). The realities of our existence entertain a reciprocal relationship with our ability to conceptualize knowledge. Therefore, any method produced by subjects operating within the confines of a colonized framework can only generate knowledge, reiterating a colonial conception of the world. Postcolonialism successfully challenged the parochialism inherent to Western historical narratives, and effectively showcased just how entrenched the colonial legacy remains in the Western worldview and continues to influence the West's relations with the non-Western world. Postcolonial scholarship has been instrumental in "questioning the assumptions of the dominant

discourses through which we attempt to make sense of the world we inhabit" (Bhambra, 2014: 117).

> "Postcolonial theory, according to Bhabha, is no longer (if it ever was) simply about the establishment of separatist trajectories or parallel interpretations, but should be seen instead as 'an attempt to interrupt the Western discourses of modernity through ... displacing, interrogative subaltern or post slavery narratives and the critical-theoretical perspectives they engender. The issue is more about re-inscribing 'other' cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives—both in historical terms and theoretical ones—rather than simply renaming or re-evaluating the content of these other 'inheritances" (Bhambra, 2014: 116).

The critique of coloniality and the search for decolonial alternatives have a long and illustrious legacy. W.E.B Dubois, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, Ottobah Cugoano, Amilcar Cabral, Sylvia Wynter, and many more decolonial thinkers have questioned the colonial order upon which rest the very foundations of our modern world. In fact, much of the rhetoric of modernity is firmly rooted in the logic of coloniality. Anibal Quijano argues that the very concept of Europe came into fruition through a process of differentiation aiming at separating it from other cultures. The conquest of the New World launched a new world order that reached its pinnacle with the global power currently dominating our world. What Quijano calls a *coloniality of power* not only reverberates through our global political and economic spheres but is also firmly linked to a *coloniality of knowledge* expressed as modernity/rationality.

> "This was predicated on a belief that knowledge, in a similar way to property, ought to be considered 'as a relation between one individual and something else' not as an intersubjective relation for the purpose of something. The individuated form of knowledge production has as its correlate the 'radical absence of the "other" and a denial of 'the idea of the social totality'" (Bhambra, 2014: 117).

The individual and collective identity of Europeans is predicated on the refusal to acknowledge the colonial order providing the necessary context for their project of self-realization. All the discussions pertaining to Europeans and Europe (as a continent and a political entity) usually reiterate explanations centered on endogenic factors, further denying the contributions of other cultures to the actualisation of Europe. According to Quijano, the modernity that Europeans claim as the breeding ground for their ideals and identity is so profoundly intertwined with the framework of the European colonial project that the two become inseparable. Therefore, one could say that modernity and coloniality are inextricably linked to one another (Bhambra, 2014: 118). Quijano's theoretical work pertaining to the coupling of modernity and coloniality was later expounded on by Walter Mignolo. He was particularly vocal about the need for an "epistemic decolonization" to repair the harm caused by the epistemic violence of modernity/coloniality (Bhambra, 2014: 117). Recognising modes and practices of knowledge previously denied by the dominant Cartesian epistemological and ontological model is, according to him, the first step toward the decolonization of knowledge.

> "He argues for a decolonial epistemic shift that enables the histories and thought of other places to be understood as prior to European incursions and to be used as the basis of developing connected histories of encounters through those incursions. In the process, he argues also for the epistemic delinking from 'the rhetoric of modernity' to involve rethinking 'the emancipating ideals of modernity in the perspective of coloniality" (Bhambra, 2014: 119).

In order to embark on the decolonization of knowledge postulated by Mignolo, one needs to take a certain distance from the Eurocentric tradition. This doesn't imply rejecting Western knowledge; on the contrary the aim here is to replace "the monoculture of modern science" with "the plurality of heterogenous knowledges" (Santos, 2007: 66). Returning Western epistemology

to the pluriversal, and forsaking the rhetorical narrative of modernity that upholds the claim to universality, which typifies Western thinking, could shatter the power differential sustaining the logic of coloniality. Boaventura de Sousa Santos states that decolonizing knowledge should not be interpreted as a call for discarding "North-centric critical thinking and left politics" which have greatly contributed to the ongoing liberation struggles of the global South (Santos, 2016: 42). What this effort implies is a change in how knowledge is produced. To successfully decolonize epistemology, "it is imperative to go to the South to learn from the South" and engage in what he called an "intercultural dialogue" (Santos, 2016: 42).

> "Such an epistemology in no way suggests that North-centric critical thinking and left politics must be discarded and thrown into the dustbin of history. Its past is in many respects an honorable one and has significantly contributed to the liberation of the global South. Rather, it is imperative to start an intercultural dialogue and translation among different critical knowledges and practices: South-centric and North-centric, popular and scientific, religious and secular, female and male, urban and rural, and so forth. This intercultural translation is at the roots of what I call the *ecology of knowledges"* (Santos, 2016: 42)

The important place of spirituality and religion in the global South, which is often in direct contradiction to Western thinking, is another area that desperately requires the intercultural dialogue advocated by Santos. According to the Eurocentric tradition, the process of secularisation is considered as "one of the most distinctive achievements of Western modernity" (Santos, 2016: 22). In this tradition, religion is deemed not only incompatible, but in fact antithetical, to the social emancipation born of the Enlightenment. Therefore, the secularization that swept across European societies in the 18th and 19th century ousted religion from the public sphere and restricted it to the private sphere. The Western world came to be defined as secular and liberal in opposition to non-Western societies described as traditional and still deeply beholden to their respective religious cosmologies. It would be a mistake, however, to disregard the role played by the theological

classification of 16th century Christian theology in establishing a European understanding of the world.

As European colonization began in earnest, a "colonial matrix of power" (CMP) eventuated (Mignolo, 2021:99). The stratification of the *races* proposed by this new matrix gained a particular momentum during the Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the New World. It placed European Christians at its center allowing them to benefit from the epistemic, theological, and hegemonic privileges afforded by this colonial matrix (Mignolo, 2021:112). This worldview culminated in the "philosophy of dominion" which gave Christians (for Christians read Europeans since non-European Christians were not included) the right to "subdue and to possess supreme authority or control" (Castanha, 2015:43). In 1493, the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* stating that any land not inhabited by Christian populations could be claimed by Christian rulers was published by Pope Alexander VI. For the *conquistadores* tasked with expanding the dominion of their monarchs, the fact that the native peoples of the Americas were not Christian simply reiterated that they had no claim to these lands; the New World was a *terra nullius* ripe for the taking.

> "The Spaniards rationalized that the Amerindians people they encountered were "so far from the reason common to all men, that they were not capable of governing themselves…they had no qualms in affirming that those men were beasts or almost beasts…and that, therefore, they could use them at will"" (Castanha, 2015:44).

When Western powers ventured into the Orient, Orientalism emerged and generated a certain representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western social imaginary. The Orient occupies a singular place in the "European Western experience" (Said, 1979:1). It is a place that intrigues as much as it frightens. The Orient is not only a cryptic neighbor perceived as alien to Europe, but also the location of Europe's oldest colonies, "the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, 1979:1).

In many ways, Europe defined itself in direct contrast to the Orient. Orientalist thought emerged primarily as a discourse seeking to describe this imagined Orient through a unique set of vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, and doctrine.

According to Edward Said, Orientalist thought introduced an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident (Said, 1979:2). This premise has served as a starting point for "elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind", destiny, and so on" (Said, 1979:2). By the 18th century, what is known today as Orientalism had become an intricate part of the European colonial project. By describing and teaching about the Orient, it provided ways of settling it and ruling over it. Through its expertise, it produced methods to facilitate the domination, restructuring, and overall control of the Orient (Said, 1979:3). Said suggested that in order to fully understand Orientalism's impact, one has to examine it first and foremost as a discourse which played an important part in the colonization and subsequent management of the Orient as a colonized and subjugated body. The Orient was no longer "a free object of thought or action" (Said, 1979:3), but rather an imagined entity produced politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and militarily to be managed by European culture.

> "Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character." (Said, 1979:7).

The idea of an Orient imagined as Muslim and a West imagined as Christian emerged from the cleavage between East and West introduced by Orientalist thought. Although, the

epistemological and ontological distinction between the two entities started emerging only after the late 14th century—and was later exacerbated by the colonial expansion of Europe toward the Orient—it is nevertheless undeniable that a certain proto-Orientalism existed beforehand and can be traced back to the very beginnings of Western civilization. In more ways than one, the vocabulary of Renaissance Orientalism is inherited from the proto-Orientalism of the ancient Greeks, which left an indelible impression on the European mind through the classic texts that later became indispensable in European Christian education (Kalmar, 2012:30).

The oldest roots of Orientalism can be traced back to the image of the Persian Empire common amongst ancient Greeks. The Persian invasions of Greece in 490 and 480-479 BCE were traumatic events leading to the exacerbation of long held fears and mistrust toward Persians (Kalmar, 2012:30). In the ancient Greeks imaginary, the Persian enemy became the "bearer of an alien, barbarian civilization, characterized above all by its soulless subservience to a divinized emperor" (Kalmar, 2012:30). This depiction of Persians was later extended to all the peoples of Asia, and the East was declared the land of tyranny and slavery. The idea of Asia as an entirely different entity from Greece became a staple of Greek literature and political thought. The contrast between the two was said to be the difference between a country with a responsible government under the leadership of free men and "the land of god-like despots served by an undifferentiated mass of slaves" (Kalmar, 2012:31).

While Plato was more subtle than Aristotle in his comparison between Greece and its neighbors to the East, the same kind of dichotomy was nonetheless present in his political thought. "When Plato opposed monarchy to democracy, he suggested that the Persian government was an extreme form of monarchy, just as the government of Athens was the extreme form of democracy" (Kalmar, 2012:31). Aristotle on the other hand was far less sympathetic toward the *Persian enemy.*

Although he recognized that tyranny could also be found in Greece, he nevertheless believed that "the ideal freedom of Man was far less corrupted in the Greeks than in the barbarians" (Kalmar, 2012:31). In other words, the Greeks' natural state was one of freedom, while the barbarians could never really escape the pull of slavery. The difference between Greeks and barbarians resided, according to Aristotle, in the expression of their respective characters as natural masters and natural slaves. "Aristotle thought that in a more perfect society, men's nature to be free would make tyranny impossible. In order to assert their nature, men would eventually rebel against it" (Kalmar, 2012:31). While the barbarians' natural corruption made them inclined to servitude, amongst the Greeks such tyranny would never be tolerated and would eventually be overthrown.

Aristotle posited that in the despotic states of the East, to be treated like slaves is in perfect concordance with the barbarians' natural inclinations, and their accepted traditions. "In essence, the tyrant respects their most deeply ingrained customs: the unconditional surrender of the slave to his master" (Kalmar, 2012:32). This outlook on the East in which the barbarian is naturally inferior to the Greek justified as "natural" the idea of a Greek rule over Asian peoples and lands. After all, "they, who naturally desire to be slaves, will be better governed when they get as their Master one who was meant by Nature to govern, rather than serve" (Kalmar, 2012:32).

Although one can notice certain similarities in the comparison between Greeks and barbarians in Aristotelian thought, and the comparison between Europeans and non-Europeans in modern Orientalist thought, they are nevertheless profoundly different. While this notion of "*the barbarian of the East"* endured and was later inherited by political philosophers like Machiavelli and Montesquieu, Greek Proto-Orientalism was bereft of "the fundamental quasi-geographic foundation of real Orientalism" (Kalmar, 2012:32). The perceived civilizational clash in the eyes

of the ancient Greeks was not between Europeans and barbarians, but rather between Greeks and barbarians.

> "To the Greeks, the East may have appeared as an inferior Other, but it is not very likely that the collective Self facing this other was imagined as a "West" rather than just Greece" (Kalmar, 2012:32).

In the medieval proto-Orientalism that emerged afterwards, the Europeans of the Middle Ages could only picture the Orient in eschatological terms as a mystical location and the theatre of the most wondrous biblical events (Kalmar, 2012:30). These depictions of the Orient continue to influence the very discourses that shape the relationship between East and West to this day. During the Middle Ages, the medieval Christian West did not perceive the Orient as an alien civilization as did the Ancient Greeks. In fact, one could say that their imaginative space "owed more to the Romans than to the Greeks" (Kalmar, 2012:34). Whereas the Greeks deemed the East to be the land of barbarians, the Romans considered the *Hellenistic space* created in the East by Alexander the Great's conquests, as well as Greece itself, to be their East (Kalmar, 2012:34). They regarded this *Hellenized* East—including Greece—not as an inferior entity but rather as a "kind of classic model of their own civilization" (Kalmar, 2012:34). This view of the Orient is what medieval Europe inherited.

The rise of Islam in the 7th century CE did not immediately trigger a cleavage of the world into a Christian West and a Muslim East. Although each religion was primarily associated with "a separate, loosely organized yet real network of political, economic, and military relations, and regarded the other with considerable mistrust" (Kalmar, 2012:33), the two shared nevertheless a relationship mostly based on trade, cultural exchanges, and even at times political alliances that defied religious divides. The contrast between Christianity and Islam in Renaissance Orientalism was still far from the one found within Modern Orientalist discourse. Neither religion had yet

carved for itself any specific parts of the known world as its own exclusive realm. Despite the fact that both religions competed on every level, neither had developed at that point a concrete geographic presence. “There were Christian states in Asia as there were Muslim realms in Europe (and Africa)” (Kalmar, 2012:33).

When in 634 Jerusalem fell into Muslim hands, for many Christians the very status of Christianity as the “universal religion of a universal empire” (Kalmar, 2012:36) was being challenged by the newly expanded Muslim Caliphate. While Edward Said argued that the European encounter with the Orient resulted in the depiction of Islam as the ultimate outsider in the Western world’s collective imaginary (Said, 1979:70). Ivan Kalmar posited instead that when Islam was born, “Prophet Muhammad was widely regarded not as an alien but as and “impostor”, a heretical Christian with pretensions of being a new Christ” (Kalmar, 2012:38). Hence, the advent of Islam was not interpreted as a schism between Europe and “its outsiders; but rather as a crack within a single, Christian-Muslim edifice” (Kalmar, 2012:39).

The previous status quo changed drastically when the Ottoman Empire won the battle of Kosovo and gained an important foothold in Europe by 1388 (Kalmar, 2012:40). The fall of Constantinople in 1453 exacerbated existing tensions and irrevocably altered the previous relationship between Islam and Christianity. The capture of Constantinople by Muslims marked the beginning of Europe’s creation “as a continent with a distinctive religious and cultural tradition” (Kalmar, 2012:41). To ensure the integrity of what was now seen as a purely Christian realm, the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella launched the *Reconquista* and expulsed Muslims and Jews from Spain and Portugal. The conquest of Constantinople and the *Reconquista* allocated to each religion a solid geographic presence. In the Christian West’s weltanschauung, Christianity found its abode in the West, while the Orient became irretrievably Muslim.

> "It was the absolute precondition for orientalism as the mental division of the world into East and West conceived of as civilizational opposites, with Africa and newly discovered America relegated to an imagined state of nature beyond civilization" (Kalmar, 2012:41).

Hegel, the philosopher of the late enlightenment compared the Oriental Empire of Islam to the Germanic World in his lectures on the *Philosophy of History*. It may seem at first glance that he intended to highlight the splendor of Muslim civilization in contrast to the brutish character of the Germanic World. However, what Hegel was in fact arguing was that this contrast between a seemingly civilized Muslim World and a barbarous medieval Europe "should not be misread as a permanent defect" (Kalmar, 2012:82). Muslim civilization, despite its phenomenal rise, was fundamentally based according to him on "shoddy workmanship" and would not last (Kalmar, 2012:82). In his analysis, he sought to underline the long-term process through which Europe was to develop distinct national spirits. He perceived the brutish medieval period in Europe as a simple "phase of germination" in the long process that would inevitably lead to an authentic form of true human freedom (Hegel, 1956: 355).

> "The killing, raping, and pillaging of the medieval Germans was, it turns out only the superficial manifestation of a deeper process whereby the hard-working spirit would become concrete at long last, in Hegel's nineteenth century." (Kalmar, 2012:82).

Hegel sought to create a link between the idea of *Germanness* and hard work. He posited that contrary to the unostentatious but conscientious Germans, the fickle and extravagant Orientals "took the easy path and created a brilliant empire almost instantaneously" (Kalmar, 2012:82). Therefore, as splendid as the Muslim civilization was, it still remained the product of a hasty and shoddy work destined to crumble. From a Hegelian perspective, the Orient was devoid of *Volkgeist* or specific ethnic and national spirits (Hegel, 1956: 355). To Hegel, Islam was essentially a reaction to the medieval West's progression toward a *Weltgeist* or "world spirit" (Hegel, 1956:

355). It is the intense work undertaken in Medieval Europe to form a European world, in which each nation developed a distinct national spirit, that precipitated Islam's spectacular, albeit hasty rise.

> "Different Oriental peoples had a somewhat different understanding of *Geist*, it is true, but none of them saw it differentiated into particular ethnic-national varieties" (Kalmar, 2012:82).

Until the end of the 17th century, the *Ottoman peril* represented in the European imaginary the constant danger threatening to overtake all of Christian civilization. The idea of Islam as an existential threat, a source of terror and devastation, became an important component of European lore. This perception of Islam as an enemy and a threat to the very existence of Christian Western civilization continues to shape the relationship between the West and the Muslim World. Although Orientalism sought to encompass the Orient as a whole in its scope of study, it is undeniable that a specific form of Orientalism focusing on Islam emerged by the 19th century (Said, 1979:160). Throughout the 19th century, feelings of antipathy toward Islam, as well as a growing sentiment of European superiority became pervasive in Orientalism. Islam was seen as a "degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative" of the Orient's inherent backwardness (Said, 1979:260). Said stated that despite the wave of secularization of the late 18th century, European scholars continued analyzing the Near Orient through a religious perspective often reiterating the biblical references used in previous centuries.

> "Given its special relationship to both Christianity and Judaism, Islam remained forever the Orientalist's idea (or type) of *original* cultural effrontery, aggravated naturally by the fear that Islamic civilization originally (as well as contemporaneously) continued to stand somehow opposed to the Christian West" (Said, 1979:260).

Islamic Orientalism gained in popularity between the late 19th and early 20th century. More than any other branch of Orientalism, it encompasses a rather hostile vision of Islam (Said, 1979:209). It embodies to this day a "peculiarly polemical religious attitude" (Said, 1979:260) that shapes the methodological perspective in which it remains rooted. According to Islamic Orientalists, the problems plaguing mankind are to be divided into two distinct categories called *Oriental* and *Occidental*. In such a perspective, what characterizes Islam and differentiates it from the Occident is its resistance to change. The entire Muslim civilization is said to be opposed to changes—such as the transition of men and women out of archaic institutions, modernity, and secularization—that have come to define the modern Western World (Said, 1979:263). This narrative, however, is not unusual in its rather negative outlook on Muslims. It adopts the broader description of non-Western people in colonial discourse as being "fundamentally hostile to modernity and incompatible with modernization" (Mirsepassi, 2000:2).

Islamic Orientalism remains for the most part impervious to any theoretical or historical revisions susceptible of challenging the broad assumptions it often makes about Islam and/or the Islamic civilization (Said, 1979:263). Its primary discourse incorporates the Muslim World into a modern system based on highly supremacist relations. It reinforces a "hierarchical taxonomy of civilizations, religions, and cultures" in which the Western World's religion, race, and culture are believed to possess some unique traits that produce superior features (Samman and Al-Zo'by, 2008: 3). The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Industrial, Political, and Scientific Revolutions are not only cited as evidence of the West's inherent superiority, but also as an indication of the Muslim World's intrinsic cultural and political backwardness (Samman and Al-Zo'by, 2008: 3). Political Islam particularly is often used by Islamic Orientalists to illustrate features that they deem inherent to Islam such as: Oriental despotism, aversion to modernity, and misogyny.

Within the context of contemporary Western academia, the goal of Orientalist accounts pertaining to Muslims and Islam is to provide a comprehensive and systematic picture of Muslim societies' historical evolution "in relation to a relatively unchanging Islamic theological core" (Volpi, 2010:26). Islamology endeavors to provide a reliable hermeneutic link between past and present Islamic tradition. "As Mahmood Mamdani put it succinctly, orientalist scholars assume that every culture has a tangible essence which defines it, and then explain politics as a consequence of that essence" (Volpi, 2010:26). Despite the diversity intrinsic to Islam, Orientalists seek to uncover the "one Muslim mind, always lurking in the background and shaping the evolution of Muslim societies" (Volpi, 2010:25).

The prevailing image of Islam in Western media and intellectual circles is one that reiterates the political nature of this religion. Islam is said to embody an authoritarian polity in which concepts such as freedom, democracy, and openness have very little place (Bayat, 2007:4). Political Islam, especially, is perceived as the main vehicle for this brand of politics predicated on the revival of an authentic Islamic political tradition. This sociopolitical phenomenon embodies for many Westerners what they fear most about Islam. By the early 20th century, the autonomy of Muslim societies was greatly diminished due to the consolidation of colonial power in the Muslim world. Strong central governments, answerable to foreign imperial regimes, had replaced the old political system. In this new reality, "the traditional forms of Muslim religious organization were often suppressed" (Lapidus, 1988:7). Massive economic changes, unprecedented migration to the cities, and the emergence of new social strata accompanied the collapse of the old sociopolitical system. "The new era was marked by efforts to define new modes of political action as well as new modes of Islamic religious belief" (Lapidus, 1988:7). The desire to analyze and understand

these transformations and their various impacts, led many Western social scientists to rely heavily on Orientalist narratives and their promise to offer an explanation of the Muslim mind.

While many challenges have been levelled against Orientalist narratives, the obsession with the political aspects of Islam persists, even amongst post-Orientalist scholars. Postcolonial studies, sociology, anthropology, and the political sciences still integrate Islamism in their own explanatory paradigms in order to understand the Muslim world. When addressing topics pertaining to Islam, these disciplines continue, despite their current valiant efforts, to rely on Orientalism in certain aspects of their analyses. The potency of the Orientalist position in its engagement with other social science disciplines rests on its claim to know better the particularities of the "oriental Other and the Islamic subject" (Volpi, 2010:199). To truly move beyond the Orientalist legacy so entrenched in Western academia, one would have to find viable alternatives in epistemic traditions located beyond the confines of Western epistemology.

Conclusion

Postcolonial discourse is primarily grounded in the historical phenomenon of colonialism. As a body of theoretical and empirical literature, it is built in large parts around the concepts of *otherness* and *resistance*. While some postcolonial thinkers explore these concepts through binary models of perception, others have opted instead to examine the colonial encounter through the possible mingling of colonizing and colonized cultures. Postcolonialism reiterates the important role played by the legacy of the Enlightenment and modernity in establishing the theoretical foundations of Western thought. It recognizes the continuous and enduring power of these ideas and values, and the necessity of addressing their lingering presence. "As a result, postcolonial theory offers not some 'pure' alternative but rather stresses that it is always after the empire of

reason, always after having been worked over by colonialism" (Spivak, 1990:228). The debates of the 1980s pertaining to the broader societal issue of multiculturalism explain the rise of postcolonial theory in "metropolitan academies" (Mongia, 1997:6). The struggles led by Black Studies and Women's Studies in the 1960s and 1970s leveled serious challenges against the traditional disciplines and their orthodox canons. Postcolonial theory benefits from the space created by these endeavors to establish itself as a new form of opposition. "Within this space, postcolonial theory finds a niche in the Western Academy" (Mongia, 1997:6).

Walter Mignolo posits that the weltanschauung underpinning Western epistemology is anchored in the "historical foundation of the colonial matrix of power" which came into fruition in the late 15th century as a result of the European colonial incursion into the Americas (Mignolo, 2021, 99). It shaped not only its ontological assumptions but also the Western management of knowledge. The secular classification of the races that later came to characterize 18th and 19th century Western thought finds its basic structure in the Christian theological classification that emerged from Christian theology in the 16th century. This was a period of great tumult and change where European empires often vacillated between peaceful coexistence and continuous wars of attrition, not only with their European rivals but also with foreign entities such as the Ottoman empire.

As such, discourses pertaining to racial and religious differences during the European Renaissance were often laced with fear (Mignolo, 2021:106). Europeans, due to the success of their hegemony in the 18th and 19th centuries, enjoyed the privilege of being the only authority governing and managing this classification. Their imperial endeavors were shaped by the racial and religious discourses of the Renaissance reiterating the superiority of European Christians and their entitlement to classify the world "as agents in a position of epistemic legitimacy" (Mignolo,

2021:117). As Western empires accumulated wealth through their ever-expanding colonial enterprises, political, economic, and social theories shaped by this racial and religious classification of the world surfaced as the dominant discourses of the West, further cementing the colonial matrix of power at the heart of Western hegemony.

The Orient, designated as the land of Arabs, Turks, Indians, Chinese, and various Muslim nations is also a land filled with coveted natural resources. Influenced by the fear of the ”other” and the ideas of racial and religious superiority specific to the discourses of the Renaissance, the political, economic, and epistemic dominance of England and France in the 18th and 19th centuries, further cemented the idea of Islam as a civilizational threat to the West (Mignolo, 2021:125). The growing economic needs of European societies made access to these precious resources a priority. The violent colonial onslaught suffered by the Orient, and the Muslim world by extension, led to rebellions which brought Westerners and Muslim populations at loggerheads. This only further inflamed the existing antagonistic outlook on Islam in the Western psyche. The colonial matrix of power which arose in the late 15th and early 16th centuries nurtured the burgeoning of Orientalist thought, which in many ways continues to feed and exacerbate present-day Islamophobia (Mignolo, 2021: 126). Rethinking social theory through epistemic pluralism offers the possibility of studying the Orient and the greater Muslim World outside of the purview of Orientalism and its well-known biases and limitations.

> “Epistemic decolonial *reconstitutions* cannot be pursued without the analysis of the epistemic modern/colonial *constitution* (the constitution of the cmp) and the simultaneous *destitutions* (denials, disavowals, erasures of coexisting nonmodern epistemologies) that its constitution implied. Racism (i.e., the destitution of the humanity of human beings who are unwelcome to the cmp’s builders and gatekeepers) was and is a consequence of the simultaneous work in the constitution and conservation of the cmp that still exists today, transformed on the surface but

> sustained in its logic. Racism is systemic, not conjunctural" (Mignolo, 2021: 126)

Social theory emerged in the Muslim world during the tumultuous 14th century where successive political and economic crises shook the stability of many Muslim kingdoms. It is during that epoch that the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, one of the most important contributions to historical sociology, was written. Considered by many as the "first real philosophy of history", this work provided an in-depth analysis of Arab and Muslim societies and traced the multiple stages in the "evolution of human society and civilization" (Barnes, 1948: 9). The Khaldunian framework proceeds by examining the organic model at the heart of these societies, and identifying the organic relationship between its different parts (politics, economics, social framework, religious ideology, etc.…). His theoretical model finds its basis and its inspiration in an ideological framework hailing from a different perspective than that of the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model shaping the Western understanding of the world. To successfully transcend the limitations of Orientalist narratives, it is vital, as advocated by Santos and Mignolo and the decoloniality movement, to tap into the vast reservoir of heterogeneous knowledge previously discarded by Western epistemology. Ibn Khaldun's work represents not only an opportunity to move beyond the parochialism innate to Western historical narratives when it comes to Islam and the Muslim world, but it also represents an alternative to the dominant Eurocentric theories in sociology.

Chapter 2
Ibn Khaldun and Western Academia

Introduction

The first mention pertaining to Ibn Khaldun in European sources can be traced back to the 17th century, when a biography detailing his life appeared in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*. However, it was only a century later, at the height of Western colonialism, that prominent Orientalists such as Silvestre de Sacy, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, and William MacGuckin de Slane provided the first translations of Ibn Khaldun's work in French and German (Alatas, 2014:44). These were based on extracts of his *Muqaddimah* and only offered a quick and incomplete overview of his overall body of work. More serious studies on Ibn Khaldun were undertaken in the 19th and 20th centuries, with several Western scholars recognizing the important role he played in the emergence of sociology. This chapter details how Ibn Khaldun was received in the West by looking closely at the works that played a significant role in establishing the reading grid through which the *Muqaddimah* is often read, interpreted, and understood. The majority of the works on Ibn Khaldun focus on discussing his role as the founder of sociology. However, those either utilizing Khaldunian concepts in their own analyses, or trying to interpret his work tend to be less numerous. This chapter focuses solely on the two latter groups and concentrates on scholars who either specialized on Ibn Khaldun or have written extensively about him, as well as those who provided a novel assessment of the *Muqaddimah*.

When examining Ibn Khaldun's reception in Western academia, one can detect three important moments. The first section of the chapter takes a closer look at the early reception of Ibn Khaldun by Western scholars. This encompasses early writings by Orientalists often devoted to exploring the origins of Ibn Khaldun's theory or using the findings of the *Muqaddimah* to support

their own Orientalist interpretations of the history of North Africa. The second part focuses on another important moment in the reception of Ibn Khaldun, which is characterized by the emergence of other perspectives, taking on a far more critical outlook on the previous interpretations of the *Muqaddimah*. They questioned the veracity of the Orientalist analysis that dominated the earlier works on Ibn Khaldun, as well as the prevalence of eurocentrism in research. The last section discusses the most recent moment pertaining to the treatment of Ibn Khaldun in Western academia. The influence of postcolonialism and decoloniality led to the production of works exploring the *Muqaddimah* from that perspective. Deploying the Khaldunian theoretical framework to search for an alternative, outside of the dominant Cartesian epistemological and ontological model, led some to contemplate the possibility of decolonizing sociology through the emergence of a modern neo-Khaldunian sociology.

2.1 Early reception of Ibn Khaldun

The discovery and reception of Ibn Khaldun by European scholars cannot be dissociated from the colonial experience and the rise of Orientalism. In fact, much of the initial themes and motifs associated with Ibn Khaldun originated from the French Oriental studies which "evolved together with the North-African colonisation" (Simon, 2002: 23). The creation of the French Orientalist studies can be traced back to Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, which began in 1798. This launched the *Egyptian period*, and the main discoveries of this enterprise were "recorded in the 23 volumes of the *Description de l'Egypte*, a monumental work that commands respect even today" (Simon, 2002: 25). Subsequently, this endeavour served as a blueprint to the French North African research which inaugurated the *Algerian period*. In fact, much of the 39 volumes of the

Exploration scientifique de l'Algerie edited by Pellisier de Reynaud were patterned on the 23 volumes produced by the French scientifique elite during the *Egyptian period*.

Edward Said stated that Orientalism was the product of the main currents that shaped 18th century Western thought; expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy, and classification (Said, 1979:120). By the end of the 18th century, Orientalism sought to supply the vocabulary, the concepts, and the techniques to study and examine the Orient and the oriental. What is known today as Orientalism had become an intricate part of the European colonial project. By defining what constitutes the Orient, it provided ways of inhabiting it and reigning over it. The broader waves of secularization sweeping through Europe had the merit of liberating the study of the Orient in general—and Islam in particular—from the confines of the religious Christian scrutiny previously so pervasive in the field. In contrast to earlier manifestations of Orientalism, its modern iteration found its inspiration in the secularizing elements of 18th century European culture (Said, 1979:120).

Silvestre de Sacy, Ernest Renan, and Edward William Lane became the progenitors and builders of this field. By creating a unique and specific set of vocabulary and ideas, they rooted Orientalism in a scientific and rational premise that "put into cultural circulation a form of discursive currency by whose presence the Orient henceforth would be *spoken for* (…)" (Said, 1979:122). As European colonialism encroached further into the Orient, Orientalism's popularity grew and gained in influence. The French Oriental studies established by de Sacy served not only as a blueprint to all future Orientalist institutions, striving to be scholarly and secular, but also introduced and cemented certain preconceived ideas about not only Islamic scholarship but also North Africa (Rodinson, 2003: 86). Throughout the 19th century, feelings of antipathy toward Islam, as well as a growing sentiment of European superiority, became pervasive in Orientalism.

Islam was seen as a "degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative" of the Orient's inherent backwardness (Said, 1979:260). Islamic scholarship was described as antiquated and only capable of providing insight about the past, but otherwise incapable of contributing to the study of the contemporary history of the Muslim world (Rodinson, 2003: 92). As such, the bulk of the knowledge produced by a Muslim civilization, now perceived as inferior, could only be limited and utterly foreign to the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model inherent to Western thought.

In the eyes of the markedly Eurocentric nature of French sociology, the study of North Africa was seen as an academic endeavor of lesser importance. The Maghreb was said to hold very little sociological interest on its own, and as such only worthy of interest when it came to the facilitation of the colonial project (Simon, 2002: 24). The evolution of the discipline was now irretrievably linked to the French colonial project that it sought to legitimize. It endorsed not only its aggressive colonization policy but also the virulent prejudice toward North Africans (Burke, 1980: 76). Said suggested that in order to fully understand Orientalism's impact, one has to examine it first and foremost as a discourse which played an important part in the colonization and subsequent management of the Orient as a colonized and subjugated body. The Orient was no longer "a free object of thought or action" (Said, 1979:3), but rather an imagined entity produced politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and militarily to be managed by European culture.

> "Within the French Oriental studies founded by Silvestre de Sacy there was only slight interest in the sociological knowledge of North-Africa: this expressed, on one hand, that Islamic studies had an aversion for the problem of *Zeitgeschichte* right at the beginning, and on the other hand Medieval Maghrib provided few subjects of research for those interested in the "high culture" of classical Islam" (Simon, 2002: 24).

The *Bureaux Arabes* established in 1844 were created for the sole purpose of translating works written in Arabic, in order to facilitate the military administration of the newly conquered lands. Its leader, General E. Daumas, was among the first to have opposed the non-civilized, lazy, violent, and nomadic Arab to the much more honorable, hardworking, sedentary Berber, who is generally far more accepting of female agency (Lucas & Vatin, 1975: 106). In his ethnological works, Daumas used this dichotomy to offer a scientific argument to support and legitimize the "French-Kabyle alliance against the Muslim Arabs" (Simon, 2002: 26). Among the plethora of translators working at the *Bureaux Arabes* was the founder of French Orientalism, William McGuckin de Slane (1801-1878). His translation (and commentary) of the *Muqaddimah* produced between 1863 and 1868 in three volumes played a major role in the popularization of Ibn Khaldun's work in Europe. De Slane's take on the *Muqaddimah* would remain the primary authority on Ibn Khaldun in European sociological research for the better part of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Simon, 2002: 26).

But De Slane was not the only one who found Ibn Khaldun's work to be a rare exception, worthy of appreciation among the vast catalogue of works produced by Muslim scholars. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) not only published numerous short sections of the *Muqaddimah* but also reiterated "that among Arab historical works this would deserve an appropriate appreciation" (Simon, 2002: 29). Moreover, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) called Ibn Khaldun "*ein arabischer Montesquieu*" or an *Arabian Montesquieu* in 1822 (Simon, 2002: 29). Amidst the early Orientalists, comparing Ibn Khaldun to towering figures of Western thought, such as Machiavelli and Montesquieu, became a way of showcasing his uniqueness. This tendency, which still persist in certain quarters, had the merit of not only portraying the *Muqaddimah* as a work without parallel

within Islamic scholarship, but it also divorced Ibn Khaldun from his own intellectual tradition, and celebrated him instead as a unique Oriental phenomenon imbued with a Western genius.

Further decoupling Ibn Khaldun from his natural milieu, F.E. Schulz (1799-1829) used him to criticize the poetry-centric tendency dominating Orientalism at the time, and advocated by giants of the field such as de Sacy. He believed that by neglecting the study of history and philosophy Orientalists fail to understand the true essence of nations. By reiterating the status of Ibn Khaldun as the *Arab Montesquieu*, and using the arguments found in the *Muqaddimah* to champion for an understanding of history beyond its superficial properties, Schulz further rooted Ibn Khaldun in the Western intellectual landscape (Simon, 2002: 29). The Swedish polymath Jacob Graberg de Hemso (1776-1847), saw what he deemed to be a direct link between Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun in their political theories. He speculated that the period Leo Africanus spent in Bologna teaching was probably how Ibn Khaldun's ideas came to the attention of Machiavelli (Graberg de Hemso, 1835: 402). Thus, the inheritors of Ibn Khaldun were not to be found among Muslim scholars but rather in the West. This outlook on his work was further bolstered by the disregard of the various Muslim readings of the *Muqaddimah* by the same Orientalists so interested in Ibn Khaldun.

Yet, Muslim readings of Ibn Khaldun's work existed and were readily available at the time. Long before Western scholars became aware of Ibn Khaldun, his contemporaries in the Muslim world were already studying his writing and producing a body of work inspired by Khaldunian theory. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin al-Azraq al-Andalusi (1428-1491) was one of his fervent disciples who not only produced a comprehensive synopsis of the *Muqaddimah* but also wrote about the connection between ethics and royal authority from a Khaldunian perspective (Alatas, 2007:272). Another influential historian inspired by Ibn Khaldun was the Egyptian al-Maqrizi

(1364-1442) who even went to his lectures in Cairo (Alatas, 2007:272). He described the *Muqaddimah* as a perfect example of Ibn Khaldun's ability to uncover the truth inherent to events and elucidate the state of the world in an unparalleled fashion. There were even scholars who criticized his work like the famous historian and scholar Ibn Hajar al 'Asqalani (1372-1449) and his disciple as-Sakhawi (1427-1497) who found the style of the *Muqaddimah* superficial and its content rather all over the place. For them, Ibn Khaldun had a limited knowledge of the history of the Muslim East, and thus could not properly engage in a comprehensive analysis of the region (Simon, 2002: 18).

The attention Ibn Khaldun garnered among Orientalists in the 19th century evolved in two different trends. The first trend was to be found in the philological studies which translated and commented on sections of Ibn Khaldun's work deemed interesting from the perspective of European history. Some studies, like that of C.J. Tornberg on the Franks, sought to use Ibn Khaldun in his analysis of the "early history of European nation-states" (Simon, 2002: 30). Others, such as Noel des Vergers and W.v. Tiesenhausen, used the translated parts of the *Muqaddimah* on the Aghlabids, the 'Uqaylids, and the Golden Hordes in their various studies. The other trend was to be found in the historical sociological research produced by French sociologists on North Africa during the Algerian colonization (Simon, 2002: 31).

The vast majority of these types of studies focused on rural Islam or the structure of the various tribes of North Africa and their influence in the region. Much of the research on French North Africa was shaped by the ongoing clash between the native population and the French settlers. The French colonization's focus on acquiring more land and establishing its authority over the native populations twisted the depth and the methods of the research. In the works of several Orientalists, Ibn Khaldun's central thesis on the evolution of human civilization was used to not

only legitimize the colonization but also divide the natives along Arab and Berber lines. The dichotomy between a primitive social organization (*'umran badawi)* and a civilized social organization *('umran hadari)* was used to establish a contrast between the nomadic Arabs and the urban Berbers. A narrative emerged which linked Islam to underdevelopment and promoted berberophilism or "the making of myths about the positive historical role of Berbers" (Simon, 2002: 31). This topos connecting Islam and nomadism became the dominant narrative within French historical sociology throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This approach remained quite influential until the middle of the 20th century.

L'islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord (1927) by the French geographer Émile Felix Gautier is a perfect example of this trend. In it, he posited that the period between the Arab conquest of the Maghreb and the French colonisation amounts to what he called "*les siècles obscurs*" (Gautier, 1927:30). He attributed the intellectual feats of Muslim civilization to previous empires from Persia and the Levant whose remnants served as a cradle for these discoveries, and not so much the Arabs who he referred to as barbarians heedless of history (Gautier, 1927:36). It is not surprising then that much of the history of the Maghreb was barely chronicled in those years of deep transformation. The mechanisms through which the region changed and adopted a new religion, culture, and language were of interest to only a few Levantine chroniclers (Gautier, 1927:30). For Gautier, when compared to the likes of Herodotus and Thucydides, or emblematic figures of French history such as Jean Froissart and Gregoire de Tours, it is obvious that Oriental historians were barely aware of the inner workings of history. Ibn Khaldun, however, was a unique occurrence among Arab historians who shined by his brilliance. In a region otherwise devoid of notable personalities, Ibn Khaldun's name should be cited next to those of Hannibal and Augustine of Hippo (Gautier, 1927: 53).

Gautier claimed that without Ibn Khaldun's work, the recorded history of the Maghreb throughout the Middle Ages would be nothing more than an indecipherable jumble filled with names and dates. Almost nothing would have survived of the real history of the region. The genius of Ibn Khaldun being comparable to that of the great historians of the Wests such as Sallust makes him worthy of interest unlike the other Arab historians (Gautier, 1927: 54). Leaning into the prevalent berberophilism of the time, he described the Berbers as being whites of Mediterranean descent, closer to the Europeans from a biological perspective, and as such the natural bearers of civilization. Gautier posited that much of the urban culture found in the Maghreb should be attributed to the Berbers and not the Arabs (Gautier, 1927: 29). To support his version of the history of the region, he used Ibn Khaldun's remarks on nomadism. In his explanation of the *Muqaddimah*, he put the emphasis on the connection between Islam and nomadism.

Using Ibn Khaldun's cyclical pattern in the rise and fall of dynasties, in which he mentioned the role played by nomads in the destruction of sedentary societies, Gautier labelled the nomadic Arabs destroyers of civilization. Their arrival in the Maghreb was not a catalyst for the rise of powerful North African civilizations, but rather their destruction (Gautier, 1927: 29). Ibn Khaldun's detailed description of the nomads' stern and fierce nature, as well as their talents for warfare, led Gautier to conclude that in North Africa and the rest of the Muslim world, the inception of political organisations owes much to the nomads. For him, this is what essentially distinguishes the East from the West (Gautier, 1927:86). Muslim states, since they emerged through nomadism, can only be monarchical, theocratic, and destructive in the long run of any culture. Through the relationship he established between nomadism and Islam, Gautier reduced what was a far more complex phenomenon to a mere confirmation of his Western centric understanding of the history of the Maghreb and the biases its colonization entailed. One such bias,

which rapidly became a major component of the Orientalist Grand Narrative, was that of Oriental despotism. Gautier's erroneous reading of Ibn Khaldun, and his assertions about Muslim states, relate directly to that concept.

Another example of European-led revival of Ibn Khaldun can be found in Jose Ortega y Gasset's article titled *Ibn Khaldun reveals the secrets to us: thoughts on North Africa* translated from Spanish by Cynthia Scheopner. Ortega (1883-1955) was a Spanish philosopher and essayist who, much like Gautier and earlier Orientalists, described Ibn Khaldun as an eminent exception. He described the study of African history as being particularly challenging since too often European historians, blinded by their own conceptions of history, could not discover the peculiarities of African life (Scheopner, 2022: 361). In such a landscape, Ibn Khaldun represented an anomaly. According to Ortega, the indigenous people of Africa were not thinkers. Even among their learned men, the substantial effort of the mind to analyze one's surrounding reality, and to "construct a conceptual scheme of it—the matrix in which it moves—has been very rarely accomplished in Africa" (Scheopner, 2022: 362).The exception to this rule being, of course, Ibn Khaldun. For Ortega, he represented a rare event; a native African imbued with an insightful mind akin to that of the Greeks, and from whose work much could be gleaned about African history.

> "Fortunately, there is an illustrious exception. A great African, with a mind as clear and ideas as polished as those of a Greek, is going to introduce us to that historical world where our spirit fails to find a foothold. He is Ibn Khaldun, the philosopher of African history" (Scheopner, 2022: 362).

Throughout the centuries, many historians and philosophers in Europe, such as Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Montaigne (1532-1592) held a cyclical view of history. In the modern age, both Arnold Toynbee (1884-1975) and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) adhered to a cyclical view of history in which civilizations continuously rise and fall. In fact, Toynbee posited that the cyclical

nature of history emerged as the predominant view when ancient civilizations like the Babylonians made discoveries in the field of astronomy (Bailey, 1958: 93). As they observed recurrent cosmic events (lunar month, solar year, night and day cycle), the repetitive nature of life shaped their view of history. This cyclical conceptualization is also found "in the mentality of the old Hindu civilization as well as in the rhythm of the Yin and Yang of ancient China" (Bailey, 1958: 94). The notion of world-cycles was also central to the ancient Greeks' understanding of cosmic time. This idea was later inherited by Stoics such as Marcus Aurelius who strongly believed in the uniformity of the world.

> "The idea was adopted by the Stoics and championed by Marcus Aurelius who was convinced that the world is so uniform that a man of forty has seen all that past generations saw or that future generations may see" (Bailey, 1958: 94).

The Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico elaborated in the early 1700s what he called the theory of historical returns (*ricorsi*). His cyclical understanding of history was mainly based on his anti-Cartesian view of humanity and his rejection of Man's supposed rationality. Vico dismissed the natural sciences capacity to explain human phenomena, and he set out to create a "new science which could shed light on the developments in collective life" (Bailey, 1958: 94). His investigation into the human past led him to identify three stages in the life cycles of nations. These cycles follow a single constant pattern that he dubbed the *storia eterna ideale*. According to Vico, the progression of each nation through these stages (the eras of gods, of heroes, and of men) was preordained by Divine Providence. As a devout Christian he regarded "the old Testament's story, until the end of the Flood, as an accurate narrative", and in doing so played an important role in the preservation of Christian historiography (Bailey, 1958: 94). When Europeans came into contact with Ibn Khaldun's work, they latched on primarily to the aspects of his theory

that were already familiar to them. As such, his cyclical view of history became a natural mooring point in their readings of the *Muqaddimah*.

The Polish sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909) considered Ibn Khaldun a predecessor of his own interpretation of cyclical history. He dedicated an entire chapter to the scholar where he spoke highly of his work and called him "an Arab sociologist of the fourteenth century" (Alatas, 2014: 44). Basing his views on Malthusian Law, he stated that favorable environmental and economic conditions can prove themselves conducive to population growth (Gumplowicz, 1975: 19). This proliferation eventually compels different groups to engage in recurrent conflicts, in which some groups "fall prey to more developed" ones (Gumplowicz, 1975: 19). These victorious groups then establish a state of their own where one social group emerges as the dominant one. Due to the political, economic, and social power it enjoys, the dominant group eventually succeeds in embodying the authority that fortifies the overall unity of the community.

Gumplowicz found in Ibn Khaldun's dichotomy between a primitive social organization (*'umran badawi)* and a civilized social organization *('umran hadari)* the corroboration of his own belief that continual struggle is an ineluctable part of social life. He believed, "that every political organization, and hence every developing civilization, begins at the moment when one horde permanently subjects another (…)" (Gumplowicz, 1975: 55). Unlike Ibn Khaldun, however, he put at the heart of his analysis the idea of racial struggle. In Gumplowicz's theory "the racial struggle for dominance in all its structures, whether open and brutal, or subtle and peaceful, is the dynamic principle which is the engine of history" (Soyer, 2010: 28). By labelling Ibn Khaldun, a direct predecessor of his conflict theory and utilizing the content of the *Muqaddimah* to bolster his own arguments, Gumplowicz inadvertently linked Ibn Khaldun to his Darwinist sociology.

The reception of Ibn Khaldun in the sociology of the German-speaking world occurred within a singular background, that is to say the debate around the sociological theory of the state. The Austrian Orientalist and politician, Alfred von Kremer (1828-1889) chose to examine Ibn Khaldun from a rather novel perspective. While Hammer-Purgstall called Ibn Khaldun the *Arab Montesquieu*, Kremer referred to him instead as one of "the most eminent minds of his people and his time" and proclaimed him far superior to his European counterparts, with the exception of Machiavelli and Vico (Kremer, 1879, as cited in Keim, 2022: 36). No doubt influenced by the Josephinian enlightenment to which he ascribed, he decided to make political and spiritual elements (divinity, prophetism, and state) the bedrock of his analysis.

For Kremer, historic shifts are the consequences of the triad "state-culture-civilization" (Simon, 2002: 33). His outlook on Ibn Khaldun's work was quite positive and he endeavoured to analyze the *Muqaddimah* through the framework of modern empire structure. He viewed him as a prominent figure of cultural history whose work reflected the necessity to consider the entirety of intellectual and material life (Simon, 2002: 33). By abandoning the history of dynasties so prevalent in Islamic historiography to adopt instead a more comprehensive analysis of society, Ibn Khaldun showcased his brilliance. He did not limit religion to its metaphorical and mystical facets but instead explored its political aspect as well. Unlike previous Orientalists, Kremer saw the *Muqaddimah* as an example of early analysis of the concept of nation-state within Islamic scholarship.

> "As a leading official for the Habsburg Empire he surmised that the *Nationalitatsidee* is being expressed in the *al-Muqaddima* in the fight of the Berbers against the Arabs, and this he regarded as a kind of state founding factor in Ibn Khaldun's work (1879:584)" (Simon, 2002: 33).

The German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (1864-1943) was often referred to as the "reviver of Ibn Khaldun" (Alatas, 2014:44). Both Gumplowicz and Oppenheimer saw themselves as successors of Ibn Khaldun. The latter comes into play, in relation to Oppenheimer's theory of the state, through Gumplowiz's sociological idea of the state (Keim, 2022: 44). Oppenheimer posited that the driving force of historical progress was to be found in the political apparatus. Social groups attempt to satisfy their needs, not through their own labor, but rather by subjugating and dominating others (Keim, 2022: 44). His view of history was greatly influenced by Gumplowicz's conflict theory. Oppenheimer defined the different stages of a state's development in an evolutionary model driven by class struggle.

This was an argument against the materialist law of primitive accumulation, according to which class inequalities appear internally (Keim, 2022: 44). Oppenheimer considered Ibn Khaldun to be an important figure among those who previously discussed the sociological idea of the state, such as Saint-Simon, Comte, and Gumplowicz. He mentioned him not simply as a predecessor, but also as a representative and contributor to a common theoretical approach. Both Gumplowicz and Oppenheimer used (and interpreted) Ibn Khaldun's work within the framework of a scholarly debate, which was taking place at the time, among European sociologists (Keim, 2022: 44). This only further alienated Ibn Khaldun from his own traditional milieu to make him a part of the Western Intellectual landscape as a worthy predecessor.

Ibn Khaldun's contributions to Sociology were recognized by many notable Western sociologists in the 19th century. Howard S. Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes, in their book *Social Thought from Lore to Science* dedicated to the history of sociology, credited him with being the "first to apply modern-like ideas in historical sociology" (Alatas, 2014: 46). In his methodology, they saw a direct critique of documentary history, especially his elaboration of laws relating to

society and social change. According to them, his greatest contribution as a social thinker was his treatment of historical material. “Much like Durkheim, Weber and others, he was a human mind trying to comprehend rather than catalogue the specifically social factors in man’s living and doing” (Alatas, 2014:48). They were particularly admirative of his contribution to conflict theory. Unlike many other Western scholars of that era, however, they recognized the uniqueness of Ibn Khaldun’s historical, political, cultural, and social context. They were conscious of the fact that he lived and wrote in a context quite different from that of 19th century Europe. They were able to detect those elements in his work that resonated with their own era (Alatas, 2014: 44). For the most part, however, Ibn Khaldun’s work was interpreted in a multitude of ways, linked to various European theories and approaches, and became a rare Oriental phenomenon naturalized into Western though. His exact historical place and the significance of his *Muqaddimah* became less and less evident over time.

The spread of Marxism in the West in the early 20th century impacted many fields of research. However, classical sociology continued to analyze Muslim societies from a rarely flattering perspective and often branded them as “persistently premodern” (Kurzman, 2019: 267). Karl Marx linked Muslim societies to an Asiatic mode of production incapable of producing capitalism without European interference (Kurzman, 2019: 267). Max Weber attributed the absence of a capitalist rationality among Muslims to, what he called, the warrior ethos at the heart of Muslim civilization (Kurzman, 2019: 267). It is during this period that Marxist interpretations appeared for the first time in the research of Ibn Khaldun. Charles Rappoport (1865-1941), who previously favored a neo-Kantian perspective, produced a work in which he decided to compare “the system of ideas of the *al-Muqaddima* to the historical materialism” elaborated by Marx in the Misery of Philosophy (Simon, 2002: 36). Another work emblematic of this shift at the turn of the

century is that of Stefano Colosio in which Ibn Khaldun was presented as an early promulgator of social determinism (Simon, 2002: 36). Rigorous research on Ibn Khaldun only started in earnest in the 1930s and grew throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Nonetheless, studying his work remained a rather difficult endeavor. For many sociologists, Ibn Khaldun's ideas remained of little interest since they saw them as far removed from the realities of contemporary society. Furthermore, the brand of Islamic studies that evolved throughout the 19th century within Western academia were often seen as having very little "connection with universal history, sociology, or history of philosophy" (Simon, 2002: 37). As such, those working on Ibn Khaldun often lacked the universal historical perspective to explain and investigate his work appropriately.

> "It was during the 1930s —at the time when research based on original sources began—that the place of Ibn Khaldun in Muslim historical reflexion became an important question. Until this time, he was mainly, if not exclusively, considered as a kind of predecessor and prodigy of European sciences (philosophy of history, sociology, economics, political philosophy) whose magnitude stems from founding certain forms of European way of thinking. It was from the 1930s that Ibn Khaldun started to be treated as a Muslim thinker who must be interpreted from his own age and context" (Simon, 2002: 46).

The German Orientalist Erwin I. J. Rosenthal (1904-1991) compared the Muslim and European state theories of the Middle Ages. To do so, he mostly used Ibn Khaldun's ideas about the state. Unlike many previous Orientalists, Rosenthal did not attempt to modernize Ibn Khaldun in his interpretation of the *Muqaddimah*. Instead, he examined it from the perspective of "his own age and own texts" (Simon, 2002: 45). According to him, Ibn Khaldun's theoretical accomplishments are illustrated by the subsequent ideas: 1) his comparison between nomadism and urban life; 2) the concept of *'asabiyyah* as the driving force behind all political activities; 3) the universal aspect of the principles he elaborated; 4) being the first thinker of the Middle Ages to have established a link between the various aspects of social life; 5) the clear delineation he

established between various fields such as political science, theology, and philosophy; 6) the cyclical pattern of rise and decline at the heart of all civilizations (Simon, 2002: 45). For Rosenthal, the originality of Ibn Khaldun was to be found in the new science he developed. His endeavor should be understood as a triumph of rationalism and empiricism over Islamic orthodoxy and "Platonic-Neoplatonic Muslim philosophy" (Simon, 2002: 46). For the famous Orientalist H. A. R. Gibb (1865-1971), Ibn Khaldun's greatest contribution is to be gleaned from his analysis of the political, social, and economic factors that he identified as crucial to the establishment of any state (Gibb, 1933: 25). Unlike his predecessors who solely outlined the historical process in rather "general terms", Ibn Khaldun explained in detail the core dynamics of history (Gibb, 1933: 26). Gibb disagreed with Rosenthal and Kamil Ayad's description of Ibn Khaldun's work as a victory of rationalism over orthodoxy and posited instead that Ibn Khaldun's political theory is rooted in Sunni religious law.

> "Ibn Khaldun was not only a Muslim, but as almost every page of the Muqaddima bears witness, a Muslim jurist and theologian, of the strict Maliki school. For him religion was far and away the most important thing in life…and the *Shari'a* the only true guide" (Gibb, 1962: 171).

In the second half of the 19th century, the Muslim world went through some important changes. The modernization process launched by the Ottoman Empire officially went beyond the purely military or even administrative framework and spread to the whole of society. It was notably under the sultanate of Abdul Hamid II that a secular educational and legal system appeared for the first time, drawing a strong inspiration from European models (Esposito, 1987: 42). Although these institutions existed alongside traditional religious systems, their main purpose differed. Their aim was to establish a new bureaucratic body capable of understanding the realities of the modern world (Esposito, 1987: 42). The Muslim intellectuals of the time found themselves grappling with major problems to which they were required to find solutions. One such issue was the colonial

yoke and the fatalism it engendered among Muslim populations; this became the main subject of interest of many thinkers (Safi 2003:68). It was also during this period of major reforms that a new elite emerged made up of lawyers, doctors, journalists, writers, and engineers with expertise from the West who openly challenged the traditional authority of the ulama (Esposito, 1987: 42). Most of them urged the Muslim world to effectuate a separation of the mosque and the state in order to confine religion, which they considered incompatible with the ideals of modernity, to the private sphere (Esposito, 1987: 42).

A famous proponent of this movement was the Egyptian writer Taha Hussein (1889-1973). He emphasized in his approach the need to implement not only political and social reforms, but also cultural ones. Through his countless writings, he attempted to demonstrate that historically Egyptian culture was closer to Western culture than to Eastern culture (Safi 2003:46). Pharaonic Egypt, he said, had always maintained friendly ties with ancient Greece based on the exchange of ideas, while its relationship with Persia had always been tense and even violent (Safi 2003:46). The historical link that Hussein was trying to weave between the West and Egypt aimed to prove that Western values were not foreign to Egyptian culture. He believed that the future in no way resided in the possible reappropriation of Egypt's Islamic heritage; it was therefore imperative for Egyptians to undertake a true process of westernization in order to embrace Western culture in its entirety (Safi 2003:48). In his war against traditionalism and conservatism, Hussein perceived Ibn Khaldun's work as yet another example of the very anti-modernist spirit he was battling. His dislike of Ibn Khaldun colored his evaluation of "his personality and theoretical work" (Simon, 2002: 38). He described him as an arrogant man motivated solely by personal ambition and labelled his work as lackluster at best.

> "According to him, Ibn Khaldun did not establish the science of history, he is not the founder of sociology, he is not precise and thorough in his examinations and not free from prejudices. Above all he judged the character of Ibn Khaldun very sharply (calling him opportunist, unprincipled, a man without patriotism): he found him foxy, arrogant, too ambitious careerist motivated only by his self-assertion" (Simon, 2002: 39).

2.2 Changing perspectives on Ibn Khaldun

New paradigms surfaced in the social sciences when the classical approach based on the application "of the historical-philological method adapted from classical philology", and favoring 19th century Eurocentric concepts and models, started to lose its influence and validity (Simon, 2002: 45). An important aspect of this new turn was the increasing participation of Muslim thinkers in research. They were not only well-versed in the European scientific methods but, unlike previous Europhile Arab and Muslim intellectuals such as Taha Hussein, many of them were also critical of the influence of Eurocentrism upon research. The 1950s and 1960s were marked by the political struggles of the Global South against colonialism. The Muslim world shared in this experience as many Muslim countries won their independence at that time. In that atmosphere, the relationship Muslim researchers entertained with Western thought and academia changed radically. Orientalism's instrumentalization, as a willing participant in the colonial project, rendered its inquiries and methods questionable (Simon, 2002: 53). Research from Western academia, as an implicit or explicit reiteration of Western superiority, promulgated the idea of a clash between two incompatible worldviews, in which the East represented the ultimate other. This further galvanized Muslim researchers to move away from the prevailing Eurocentric perspective in research.

> "This relativity of historical conscience clearly manifests itself in the far-reaching phenomenon according to which Muslim research radically breaks with the postulation of any linear, united history,

> and is not willing to perceive its own history from the point of view of European history. This change of paradigm took place approximately in the 1960s" (Simon, 2002: 53).

A new period emerged in the research pertaining to Ibn Khaldun in the 1950s. Arab and Muslim scholars examined his work from the perspective of the ongoing clash with Western hegemony. Many of these studies were centered around the question of the *Muqaddimah'*s interpretation. It became crucial to determine whether it should be read as a "continuation of earlier European heritage" or rather as an original product of Islamic scholarship (Simon, 2002: 57). These debates are perfectly exemplified by the works of Muhsin Mahdi and Ali al-Wardi. Muhsin Mahdi (1926-2007) the renowned Islamologist highlighted some of the key features of Ibn Khaldun's work that according to him gave the *Muqaddimah* a veneer of modernity. His interest in the relationship between social life and environment compelled him to "pay considerable attention to the investigation of the origin and development of society (…)" (Mahdi, 1964: 292). Ibn Khaldun posited that social habits are determined by the material needs and the physical and psychological desires of people. He emphasized the "conditions necessary for realizing man's ends and whose absence limits or prevents the actualization of what man desires" (Mahdi, 1964: 292).

For Mahdi, Ibn Khaldun's interest in revealing the causes of actual events by analyzing their tendencies and recurrence erroneously gave many who studied his work the impression that they were dealing with a new science. Mahdi believed that Ibn Khaldun's legacy should be instead placed amidst the great achievements of Muslim philosophy. He saw him as a disciple of Greek philosophy who followed in the footsteps of Ibn Rushd (Mahdi, 1964: 7). Therefore, his work should be read as an extension of Aristotelian philosophy and not so much as the beginning of a new science. For Mahdi, the *Muqaddimah* centered around an Aristotelian classification of science and the definition of soul and reason specific to Muslim philosophy.

> "The main characteristic of the new science is that it concentrates on the study and explanation of actual events. Whether this is possible at all, whether there can be a science of the actual and the imperfect, is of course a crucial problem, especially within the Platonic tradition of political philosophy. Ibn Khaldun thought that it was possible, and in this he was more of an Aristotelian than his Muslim predecessors" (Mahdi, 1964: 291).

Ali al-Wardi (1913-1995), the Iraqi social scientist who specialized primarily in social history, was among those who criticized Muhsin Mahdi's interpretation of Ibn Khaldun. Unlike Mahdi who considered Ibn Khaldun a philosopher and follower of Aristotle, al-Wardi believed Khaldunian logic to be an open revolt against Aristotelian logic (al-Wardi, 1950: 260). To illustrate his argument and contextualize Ibn Khaldun's work, he used the clashes between the Mu'tazila and the dialectical theologians in the 11th century. This conflict will be further discussed in the next chapter. The great debates and disagreements between the celebrated theologian and polymath al-Ghazali and his rival the philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes), shaped Islamic scholarship. While Ibn Rushd is often recognized as Aristotle's greatest Muslim admirer and fervent defender, al-Ghazali is largely known as the principal detractor of Aristotelianism among Muslim theologians (al-Wardi, 1950: 259).

> "In order to refute Al-Ghassali's work, The Destruction of Philosophy, Ibn Rushd wrote The Destruction of Destruction. The two books are now considered classics in Islam" (al-Wardi, 1950: 260).

According to al-Wardi, Ibn Khaldun was influenced by both al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd. By combining certain aspects of their conflicting thoughts, he elaborated a new logic. He not only adopted the hostility toward Aristotelian logic, emblematic of dialectical theologians, but also Ibn Rushd's "favorable attitude toward the masses" (al-Wardi, 1950: 260). By paying attention to the masses' way of life in a way that philosophers usually did not, Ibn Khaldun uncovered a new logic far "more suitable to the understanding of actual life" than the lofty, but ultimately limited, logic

of Aristotelianism (al-Wardi, 1950: 260). As such, the *Muqaddimah* was not a work inspired by Greek logic but rather an attempt to develop a new logic to replace the "old idealistic one" so widespread among Muslim philosophers and historians (al-Wardi, 1950: 261). Ibn Khaldun elaborated a logic based on temporalism, relativism, and materialism to replace the metaphysical and absolutist Aristotelian logic.

> "He saw that the Moslem historians, who wrote before him, were overwhelmingly ridden by the two-valued orientation of the old logic. Influenced by his personal admiration for the Omayyads in particular and the Arabs in general, he might have been quite indignant toward the historians' anti-Omayyad views. As a cunning, diplomat, he might have noticed the futility of the attempt to directly correct or refute their views by means of their own logic. He was then obliged to invent a new logical system through which an indirect, and more penetrating, attack could be made against their dogmatic ideas" (al-Wardi, 1950: 261).

Further agreeing with al-Wardi's perspective on Ibn Khaldun, the Moroccan philosopher Ali Oumlil highlighted the original ideas underlining Khaldunian theory. Oumlil saw the revolutionary aspect of Ibn Khaldun's work in its ability to provide a theory of history upon which Muslim historians could evaluate and examine Muslim historical writings (Simon, 2002: 62). His criticism of the traditional methods used in Muslim historiography (*Isnad and taqlid*) led him to develop a historical method predicated on a novel assessment of history. Oumlil completely rejected the idea of limiting the study of Ibn Khaldun and the analysis of his new science only to the *Muqaddimah*; "according to him the *Ta'rif* and especially the *K. al-'Ibar* are just as important (…)" (Simon, 2002: 62). Oumlil argued that the *Muqaddimah* should be read and interpreted as "a methodological introduction to the *K. al-'Ibar*" (Oumlil, 1979, as cited in Simon, 2002: 63). The central concept of his analysis, *'umran*, cannot be dissociated from Islam and particularly the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Simon, 2002: 63). Hence, Ibn Khaldun's new science ('*Ilm al-umran al-*

bashari) should be understood as a reaction to classical Islamic historiography and not at all as the continuation of an earlier European intellectual tradition.

> "The reason of this, he says, is that the *'umran* analyzed by Ibn Khaldun is inseparable from Islam, and although the dominant practice, especially after the 10-11th centuries, significantly differed from the normative regulation—based on the Koran and the prophetic tradition—of classical Islam, the latter, as a central point of reference, crucially determined the character and limits of the discourse about the given historical practice" (Simon, 2002: 63).

The discursive shift of the 1970s and the growing popularity of postmodernism provoked among the Muslim intellectuals who studied in Western universities an increasing rejection of European Orientalism. Thinkers such as Samir Amin, A. Laroui, and Edward Said became important figures of this break with Eurocentric research. Said's criticism of Orientalism particularly questioned its scientific objectivity. Many of these intellectuals "had studied in Western universities and made a career there" but wished to free themselves from the stranglehold of Eurocentrism (Simon, 2002: 65). Several works produced in the 1980s in the study of Ibn Khaldun exemplify this desire to transcend Orientalism and analyze the *Muqaddimah* from a different perspective.

Aziz al-Azmeh, a student of Ernest Gellner, decided to examine Ibn Khaldun's work from an anthropological perspective. He perceived in the struggle between the two prevailing conceptions of history—"history as a continuous evolutive process, and history as the succession in time of seedless structures"—the need to rethink the way one approaches the subject (al-Azmeh, 1982: ix). He called for the need to free modern historical research from the models and interpretations of the past, and to no longer remain beholden to the scholars of the past such as Herodotus, Thucydides, or Xenophon. Of all the scholars of the past, however, he found none more

resistant to such an endeavor than Ibn Khaldun. His status and the breadth of his work made the undertaking of such an effort exceptionally hard.

> "Ibn Khaldun has proved to be what is perhaps the great predecessor most resistant to this act of subordination. Not only is he considered the true historical source of his time; he is also taken as the unchallenged sociological and cultural interpreter of medieval North Africa and much of medieval and modern Arab-Islamic culture as well. The validity of his discourse is considered to be so universal as to confer upon his ideas the status of progenitor—or, at the very last, anticipator—of a great variety of modern ideas" (al-Azmeh, 1982: ix).

He also questioned the constitutive principle at the heart of the *Muqaddimah,* which is too often explained as being the "incompatibility between reason and belief" (al-Azmeh, 1982: x). For al-Azmeh, the *Muqaddimah* lacks any central or core articulation, and as such, does not provide an explanation of its true intent. "Had it been coherent, its principle of coherence would have been its clue" (al-Azmeh, 1982: 162). In the absence of a physical unity, the *Muqaddimah* is made up of a combination of sciences, postures, and events that nonetheless do not offer any explanation to help the reader understand its existence. According to al-Azmeh, none of the analyses focusing on the *Muqaddimah* explained the outline of its elements or the order in which they were clustered together (al-Azmeh, 1982: 162).

> "We are therefore left with only a project whose execution used elements readily available in the deep sediments of Ibn Khaldun's cultural universe but those whose mode of combination is itself just another one of those elements readily available. The exigencies of the project executed by Ibn Khaldun in Kitab al-'Ibar are internal to Ibn Khaldun's intentionality which, sadly but inevitably, is totally inaccessible to us" (al-Azmeh, 1982: 163).

Ernest Gellner (1925-1995), al-Azmeh's mentor, compared Ibn Khaldun to Emile Durkheim in his quest to understand the true origins of group solidarity. Both scholars presented sociological factors to highlight the importance of shifting collective dynamics, and to explain how

"civilizational advancement" shapes the very character of group solidarity (Malesevic, 2015: 89). However, if Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyyah* comes into fruition through the asceticism of tribal lifestyle and disintegrates with the rise of a more advanced sedentary culture, in the Durkheimian model social progress does not eradicate solidarity but simply transforms its patterns (Malesevic, 2015: 89). From Gellner's perspective, the interpretive significance of Ibn Khaldun's analysis should be confined to a precise culture and region and, as such, only applied to North African Muslim societies. He labelled Ibn Khaldun "a superb deductive sociologist" whose studies should be understood through a certain cultural prism (Malesevic, 2015: 89).

> "He was the sociologist of Islam; notably of Islam as manifested in the arid zone, an environment which encourages tribalism by favoring nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralism and which hinders centralizing political tendencies" (Gellner, 1981: 88).

From his 14th century perspective, Ibn Khaldun could not have anticipated the social intricacies of the modern, post-Enlightenment world. His nomadic solidarity, as well as his explanation of the Maghreb's cyclical political dynamics, still retains some pertinence in the study of certain parts of the region. When it comes to the more complex nature of modern group solidarity, however, Gellner found Khaldunian theory severely limited. Unlike Durkheim's organic solidarity, which takes into account complex social forms, Ibn Khaldun was only familiar with mechanical solidarity (Gellner, 1981: 88). On this matter, and despite some reluctance, Gellner sided with Durkheim's outlook on group solidarity (Malesevic, 2015: 89).

> "Durkheim's notion of organic solidarity provides at least a starting point for understanding that new-style cohesion, though as formulated by him it does not get us quite all the way" (Gellner, 1981: 92).

Fuad Baali, the American-Iraqi sociologist, following in the footsteps of Gellner, also compared Ibn Khaldun to Durkheim. Baali postulated that Ibn Khaldun "laid the foundation of

what came to be called sociology" (Baali, 1988: 107). Much like Durkheim postulated later, Ibn Khaldun hypothesized that the preservation of human society can only be accomplished through cooperation and a solid social organization. Ibn Khaldun defined society as being "a reality, *sui generis*, an idea similar to that of Durkheim" (Baali, 1988: 107). So, in that context the concept of *'asabiyyah* represents the catalyst for the development and growth of human society. Baali also compared Ibn Khaldun to Comte in their approach to polity. They both examined it from a historical point of view and established a clear difference between theocracy and sociopolitical phenomena. "They made it clear that a well-defined division of labor is inevitable for the development and growth of the state, a point which has been greatly emphasized by Durkheim" (Baali, 1988: 108). Baali disagreed with those who interpreted Ibn Khaldun's work as an example of Islamic philosophy. Instead, he called the *Muqaddimah* the work of a realistic thinker dealing with the analysis of history from the perspective of social change.

> "Ibn Khaldun then was a realistic thinker and not a philosopher. He was not satisfied with the philosophy and its logical deductions which frequently did not correspond to his actual observations of human social organization and social change. Like Vico and Comte, Ibn Khaldun's basic thesis dealt with the interpretation of history in terms of social change" (Baali, 1988: 110).

Yves Lacoste, the French geographer, stated that the exploration of Ibn Khaldun's work should not be seen as an example of "straying into medieval orientalism" (Lacoste, 1984: 2). According to him, Ibn Khaldun's thought is often reduced to a cyclical theory of state formation which centers the dichotomy between nomadic and sedentary societies (Lacoste, 1984: 92). Unlike sociologists from the 1940s and 1950s, he believed that the *Muqaddimah* could broaden our understanding of the underlying causes of contemporary problems. Ibn Khaldun described intricate social and political structures that played an important role in the development of a complex historical process whose consequences still shape the world. Lacoste postulated that Ibn Khaldun

studied a period of the history of the Maghreb punctuated by recurrent crises during which the region acquired many of its crucial features. These characteristics remained unchanged for the most part "until the eve of the colonial conquest" (Lacoste, 1984: 5).

While other thinkers of the Maghreb noticed the ongoing decadence, Ibn Khaldun was the only one , at the time, who not only analyzed the factors within the inner structure of his society prompting this stagnation, but also gave a detailed description of this process of decline. As such, his work "sheds light upon a very important stage in the history of what are now underdeveloped countries" (Lacoste, 1984: 2). The social and political structures described by Ibn Khaldun were greatly affected by the colonial domination of the 19th century; the colonial yoke in its turn led to a situation of persistent underdevelopment. For Lacoste, Ibn Khaldun's analysis and description of the Maghreb's native social and political structures allows one to understand how the region was shaped by the various instances of social change it experienced. Hence, Lacoste posits that the causes of the persistent underdevelopment plaguing the Maghreb could be better understood if one takes into account the findings of the *Muqaddimah*.

> "Provided that they are analyzed with care, the most important and original features of Ibn Khaldun's work can now be seen as a major contribution to the study of the underlying causes of underdevelopment. It must, however, be stressed that the relationship between the work of the Maghrebian historian and underdevelopment is far from straightforward. It would be not merely simplistic but quite wrong to think that in the fourteenth century Ibn Khaldun described the characteristics of an objectively underdeveloped country. He was studying medieval structures which slowed down or blocked social, political and economic development. It was only several hundred years later that those structures combined with outside influences to facilitate colonization, and colonization determined the appearance of the phenomenon of underdevelopment" (Lacoste, 1984: 2).

2.3 Ibn Khaldun and decoloniality

As the conversation pertaining to the influence of colonial episteme on both classical and contemporary sociology grew louder, the possibility of a decolonial vision of sociology gained ground, particularly among sociologists in the Global South. Decolonization challenged the very vision of sociology. The central notion of a "disinterested, objectively produced knowledge" so central to the discipline, was said to be a mere myth that only served "to obscure power relations" (Meghji, 2021: 43). The knowledge produced in such a way highlighted and legitimized the worldview of dominant social groups, while the knowledge produced by marginalized people was reduced to "alternative outsider perspectives from within the discipline" (Meghji, 2021: 44).

To overcome this predominant ideology, according to which modernity is synonymous with westernization, alternatives are needed that offer not only a different perspective on life but also diverse thought patterns susceptible of providing solutions that may help humanity face its current challenges. While fairly recent and sporadic, some attempts have been made in the 21st century to utilize Ibn Khaldun's work in this effort to elaborate an alternative to the dominant Eurocentric epistemology. Unlike the works produced in previous decades about Ibn Khaldun, they are not so much concerned with interpreting or situating the *Muqaddimah*, but rather with applying Khaldunian concepts. An example of this is the paper presented by the Mexican sociologist Raquel Sosa Elizaga and Ignacio Sosa Alvarez in the 2nd International Ibn Khaldun Symposium, in which they explored the possibility of Ibn Khaldun's work offering a way to decolonize social thought in Latin America.

According to Elizaga and Alvarez, the hegemonic retelling of history so prevalent in the West has two main characteristics. The first feature is the idea of a loss of dynamism and strength among non-Western civilizations, which proves that they belong to the past and cannot adapt to

the realities of the modern world (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 176). The second characteristic is the "self-appointed role of western civilization" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 176) as a purveyor of modernity and equality based on a Eurocentric vision with pretenses of universalism. "According to the western epic, an incredible turn of global dimensions took place when thanks to the development of the western countries, the peripheral countries were incorporated into history as peoples in rags, once called, peoples without history" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 176). However, the veritable damage occurs when the peoples of the periphery embrace this version of history as their own and start looking at their existence "through the deforming prism of the western scholars" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 176). In this saga of Western exceptionalism, those who defy this vision of modernity are seen as misguided individuals, blinded by nostalgia and the myth of a glorious past, who simply cannot appreciate the benefits offered by Western civilization.

> "This exercise in Western History, abusively denominated Universal History, has had a false comparative character: on the one hand, the Asian, Middle Eastern and African civilizations, lost in decay; and on the other hand, the western type of civilization, that, through the idea of progress, presumes to have escaped the cyclical history of birth, apogee and decay" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 177).

Modern societies in Latin America were erected on the ruins left by the brutal destruction of pre-Columbian civilizations by the Spanish conquest. Today, those same societies are being subjugated economically, culturally, and militarily by increasingly powerful financial markets. "Societies, that were brought to submission by brutal exercise of military and religious violence and who were denied any sign of identity" are now facing the possible fraying of their social cohesion, rendering impossible all forms of collective resistance (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 175). The authors posited that a thorough study of the *Muqaddimah* could be helpful in rethinking the very concept of unity. "Ibn Khaldun, while recognizing in history the actual differences among

societies, denies the existence of an exclusive, determinist, univocal point of view" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 179). He analyzes the particularities of each society based on their geography, culture, and on the attributes of their collective cohesion. For Ibn Khaldun cooperation and unity are at the heart of any society's survival. The Khaldunian analysis is one that begins at the bottom of the social hierarchy and travels upwards. Despite his in-depth scrutiny of "the behavior of the dominant sectors, he gives more significance to the horizontality of social relations, Asabiya, source and origin of the social life" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 179).

Ibn Khaldun's historical narrative centers around the concepts of solidarity, cooperation, and trust. What Ibn Khaldun referred to as *'asabiyyah* is what would be referred to as "the spirit of unity" in the present context (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 182). '*Asabiyyah* is a group identity feeling rooted not in individualism but rather in collectivism. "Asabiya operated in the decades of the sixties and seventies of the past century as the substantial element of the Movements of National Liberation, structured as solidary movements of liberation" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 182). It continues to operate in the current struggles in Latin America against the oppression of unrestrained capitalism. An example of this would be the "Bolivian communitarian assemblies, also recognized as a political authority by the recently approved Bolivian Constitution." (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 184). Ibn Khaldun's vision of life is one that finds an echo in the weltanschauung of many Latin American societies. His definition of '*asabiyyah* puts forth the need for unity in order to safeguard the sovereignty and the welfare of a nation. Such a vision of society resonates with those in Latin America currently engaged in resistance against the threat of political, economic, cultural, and military subjugation.

> "Asabiya is the foundation of the continuity of societies broken by the oppression of conquerors and groups of power imposed throughout the history of Latin America. It is a force that is communicated within societies sharing bonds beyond the borders

> imposed by States and foreign powers. It is the utopia that unites the struggles of Hidalgo, Morelos, Bolivar, Artigas, Juarez and Martí, in the nineteenth century; and of Villa, Zapata, Mariátegui, Sandino, Farabundo Martí, Cárdenas, Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende, in the twentieth century" (Elizaga and Alvarez, 2016: 183).

The economist Amer Al-Roubaie, much like Yves Lacoste before him, looked at Ibn Khaldun's work to see if he could glean from it a deeper understanding of the contemporary issues plaguing Muslim societies. According to him, Ibn Khaldun's analytical framework offers a deeper understanding of "the process of societal transformation" (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 321). This developmental process is one that is susceptible of predicting the future relations caused by the cyclical pattern at the heart of the rise and fall of civilizations. Ibn Khaldun's ideas display more than just theoretical concepts; instead, they provide a practical framework for stimulating a socio-economic development capable of generating solutions to "the challenges facing developing countries including Muslim nations" (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 321). The loss of social cohesion, due to the cultural fragmentation and the sociopolitical instability inherent to the colonial experience, contributes to the current economic stagnation, political division, foreign dominance, and social disillusionment hindering the development of those nations. "Without social organization channeling group sentiment, groups lose '*asabiyyah* or the social cohesion required to protect their interest and defend their society" (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 321).

According to Al-Roubaie, in modern times, the concept of group feeling is best characterized by two elements; 1) national unity, 2) the protection that a government grants its citizens. From that perspective, the concept of '*asabiyyah* includes the institutional obligation of the state to not only protect the public but to also preserve a sense of national unity, even if society is no longer composed of a homogeneous group. While Ibn Khaldun's definition of '*asabiyyah* centers consanguinity, '*asabiyyah* in the current context does not necessarily represent a single

social group. “Modern states are made of pluralistic ethnicities comprising a wide range of cultural, social and religious diversities” (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 326). Hence, modern social organizations instead of being based on blood relations and traditional group feeling are now focused on economic and geopolitical concerns. This means that in spite of any social, ethnic, or religious differences, safeguarding the interest of the nation necessitates the collaboration of all the groups that make up that society. For Al-Roubaie, the current situation of many Muslim societies is due to a staggering lack of ‘*asabiyyah*. The weak governance and incompetent leadership afflicting these societies are due to the failing of their respective social organizations.

> “Muslims today experience similar social ills where weak governments are incapable of providing good governance, equal opportunity, individual rights, enforcement of justice and strengthening the social organization. The weakening of the social organization and corruption of the political authority in Muslim countries not only caused the decline of their civilization but also gave non-Muslims economic, social, legal, financial and political hegemony over Muslims” (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 345).

The colonial experience damaged the basis of the brotherhood and unity promoted by the tenets of Islam. Despite Muslims not being homogeneous culturally, ethnically, or socially, the concept of Ummah (Muslim community) is one that in the Islamic weltanschauung supersedes any of these differences. Al-Roubaie states that the multitude of secular ideologies that Muslims were exposed to during the colonization of the Muslim world destroyed the basis of their original ‘*asabiyyah* through the materialism and individualism these ideologies promoted (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 344). In the post-colonial period, with their social organization and their ‘*asabiyyah* severely damaged, political power was commandeered by a small elite who uses repression to preserve its authority. The lack of participation by the majority in the decision making, and the authoritarianism constantly restricting the liberties of individuals, led to the underperformance of these societies, particularly in the economic field. The Khaldunian framework reiterates the

importance of '*asabiyyah* as an integral factor in the establishment of a strong and cohesive social organization. It not only reiterates the need for unity but also "illustrates the importance of such factors as leadership, cooperation, knowledge, skills and division of labor in the rise of civilization" (Al-Roubaie, 2009: 345).

The specialist in Islamic Thought Siraje Abdallah Ssekamanya decided to revisit the importance Ibn Khaldun granted to knowledge as a key factor in the rise, and possible fall, of civilizations. The question at the center of Ssekamanya's exploration pertains to the knowledge, skills, and values that education systems in the Muslim world should convey to the youth in order to improve the development of Muslim societies (Ssekamanya, 2009: 305). According to Ibn Khaldun, man's ability to think is a key component in the civilizing process. Civilization only becomes possible when people cultivate a certain level of intellectual abilities and improve their thinking skills in order to properly utilize their resources (Ssekamanya, 2009: 307). However, once a civilization's ability to produce knowledge is compromised, its overall productivity tends to decrease.

A reduction in labour productivity eventually leads to a decline in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. For Ssekamanya, Muslim societies must start to focus on becoming proficient in science and technology in order to improve their economic performance. "Societies with the most innovative scientists and engineers are economically better off than those without them" (Ssekamanya, 2009: 315). Since these fields are crucial to the flourishing of modern nations, Muslim countries must invest heavily in education. They must allow all their citizens, and not just the elite, to have access to the best possible education. Knowledge production was what allowed Muslim civilization to reach the height of sophistication. The current lack of it, however, is the single greatest factor in the underdevelopment that plagues Muslim nations.

> "Good skills and values can only exist where there is a good education and training systems. Ibn Khaldun referred to what happened to the Muslim realms in the East as well as in Andalusia as a good example of what happened when people become really committed to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. For many centuries, Muslims were the experts in professions like agriculture, architecture, textiles, medicine, book production, and even nursing. Success begets more success. As Muslims mastered some of the simple crafts, Ibn Khaldun said, their intelligence increased and they went on to master even more difficult skills. Among the crafts he believed to increase people's overall intelligence are literacy and numeracy. This is an important point for Muslim nations as they struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)" (Ssekamanya, 2009: 312).

The Palestinian scholar Magid Shihade analyzed the link between education and decolonization. In the case of Palestine, he contends that the education dispensed by academic institutions duplicates what is offered in Western academic institutions. This is often the case in most of the Global South, where the disciplines and fields of studies are akin to what exists in the West. "Moreover, each academic field/discipline offers the same content that is offered in Western academic institutions—the same "theorists," "theories," questions asked, and methods of research" (Shihade, 2017: 83). He argues that sociology is a discipline that relies primarily on the theories and methods of research from Europe and the United States and excludes all other forms of social thought from non-Western sources. "Even though Ibn Khaldun is considered by many Western scholars as the "father of sociology," sociology in Palestine does not include the study of his work" (Shihade, 2017: 83).

When his work is brought up, it is usually analyzed from an Orientalist perspective; this is unfortunately often the case with Arab knowledge in general. Muhammad Ali Khalidi refers to this phenomenon as "oriental Orientalism", a process through which Arab scholars read and interpret Arab knowledge through the prism of Western scholarship (Khalidi, 2006: 29). This leaves little space for academic endeavors independent from the legacy of Orientalist scholarship.

In order to include Ibn Khaldun in the current sociological landscape, the tendency to have "self-Orientalism as a starting point" must be overcome (Shihade, 2017: 83). However, given the importance that academics from the Global South give to Western thought, and the fact that they base much of their work on Western epistemology, Shihade doubts that this intellectual overreliance on the West will cease anytime soon.

In Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, Ibn Khaldun is rarely taken as a serious reference or a legitimate source of epistemology, and very few demands are made for the inclusion of Arabic knowledge in the curriculum. "Both faculty members and students seem to be content with German, French, Italian, British, and American social theories" (Shihade, 2017: 84). In continuously centering Western texts and knowledge in their academic institutions, these education systems help to maintain Western hegemony and to perpetuate a sense of inferiority in their societies. They play "into the Western colonial mythology that there was/is no useful knowledge outside the West", and in doing so reiterate that their local and regional knowledge have little to no value (Shihade, 2017: 85). Furthermore, since many Arab academics are educated either in the West or in westernized education systems, there is propensity among them to view Western values and knowledge as inherently more meaningful and useful. Shihade links this to a form of mimicry that Ibn Khaldun, and other authors from the Global South, described as an inevitable consequence of conquest, in which the conquered people find themselves imitating every aspect of the conqueror's culture.

> "It is only mimicry, using Ibn Khaldun's and Fanon's concept that can explain this state of affairs. Although Ibn Khaldun was speaking of how the dominated within the same social organization follow the dominant groups' ideas, tastes, and so forth, Fanon (1963) spoke of dominated groups in the Global South prior to decolonization and of the state of elites after decolonization who mimic and follow ideas and tastes that are dominant in and by the Global North" (Shihade, 2017: 87).

Instead of creating independent spaces for "reflection, analysis, and critical thought", these westernized education systems reinforce the colonial hegemony by further entrenching the system of knowledge that has been fundamental in establishing Western dominance and the subservience of non-Western societies. In the case of Palestine, Shihade posits that the supremacy of Western knowledge played an important role in the ongoing colonization of Palestine, "in which Israel presented itself as a Western front against the East, as a civilization against barbarism, and it was established and continue to sustain its settler-colonial project through the support of the West." (Shihade, 2017: 88). As thinkers such as Mignolo and Fanon have already highlighted, the knowledge one produces is inevitably shaped by one's experiences.

According to Shihade, in the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun states that the experiences individuals acquire through their physical senses play an important role in shaping the knowledge they produce. Therefore, it "makes more sense for Palestinians to learn from those who were/are subjects of Western racism, hegemony, colonialism, and settler colonialism" (Shihade, 2017: 90). To foster the emergence of a future free from the legacy of colonialism, more decolonial perspectives must be adopted in knowledge production, particularly in the social sciences. Learning from the work of Ibn Khaldun, and other thinkers from the Global South, would be more useful to Palestinians in their fight against colonization than the works of authors whose ideas upheld the notion of Western superiority.

> "And finally, it makes more sense for Palestinian students to learn about other Indigenous peoples' histories and study Indigenous scholars' work. Zionists and Israelis have been active in learning from and sharing knowledge about tools of domination that were/are in place in parts of the world where settler-colonial structures are in place. It will be as useful for Palestinians to learn from native and Indigenous peoples on the history of settler colonialism as they experienced or continue to experience it" (Shihade, 2017: 90).

Of all the efforts made to place Ibn Khaldun's legacy at the heart of the ongoing effort to decolonize sociology, none is more significant than the work of the Malaysian sociologist Syed Farid Alatas. According to him, the impact of the dominance of European categories and concepts is such that most interest in Ibn Khaldun's work is prone to be historical. Very few studies developed his ideas over time; for the most part, he remained the subject of biographies presenting an outline of his thought (Alatas, 2014:8). Alatas states that in order to elaborate a general Khaldunian historical sociology, a methodical restoration of his theory must be undertaken. "The reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's theory itself is deemed necessary as existing discussions on his thought, though extensive, varied and valuable, tend to treat his theoretical and empirical work separately" (Alatas, 2006: 398).

A historical theoretical framework reconciles the ascertained facts of history and the methods by which these facts are gathered and constructed into a narrative about the past. Hence, theoretical history can be said to encompass two major targets: "(1) the study of the pattern and the rhythm of history, and (2) the study of driving forces in history" (Alatas: 2014: 147). Khaldunian sociology is a historical sociology which attempts to study the pattern and rhythm of history. It can be applied to a wide range of societies where social bonds based on kinship played an important role in the formation of their states. Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework provides the ability to understand the dynamics leading not only to the rise of these states but also their potential decline, while keeping in mind the distinctive characteristics of each society.

According to Alatas, when applying Ibn Khaldun, it is imperative to undertake a theoretical application of his work, which either uncovers new data or proposes a new perspective that leads to "a new way of organizing the data such that it yields an alternative construction of a social phenomenon" (Alatas, 2014: 148). Usually, a Khaldunian application seeks to go beyond the mere

retelling of facts by explaining them instead along a specific theoretical model. In order to test the rigour of the Khaldunian model and its relevance, it is important to focus on historical events unexplored by Ibn Khaldun in his *Kitab al-'Ibar*, to ascertain whether his model has the capacity to uncover the underlying causes of any state's decline, no matter the geopolitical, or cultural particularities at play. Alatas argues that meta-theoretical and theoretical works on Ibn Khaldun are needed in order to cement his legitimacy in the contemporary landscape of the social sciences.

> "The problem is that of the marginalization of Ibn Khaldun in the contemporary social sciences. Although there has been a phenomenal amount of scholarship on Ibn Khaldun's work in the various social sciences and area studies, what is lacking are works that apply Ibn Khaldun to historical-empirical cases. This is what is meant by marginalization, that is, the neglect of his works as a source of applied theory. Ibn Khaldun may be widely cited, but he is rarely theoretically reconstructed and made relevant to the modern social2. An indication of the marginal status of Ibn Khaldun is that he almost never appears alongside the founding scholars of the social sciences such as Mosca, Pareto, Marx, Weber, Durkheim and others in textbooks or university courses" (Alatas, 2020: 85).

For Alatas, what Khaldunian sociology requires is a comprehensive reworking of Ibn Khaldun's theory and concepts in order to enhance its compatibility with modern social sciences. He deplores the rarity of such efforts, which would require going beyond the mere comparison of Ibn Khaldun's work to those of modern sociologists (Alatas, 2014: 9). In his book, *Applying Ibn Khaldun. The Recovery of a lost tradition in sociology*, he "marries Khaldunian theory to a modes of production approach, with reference to the case of the rise and decline of the Safavid dynasty in pre-modern Iran" (Alatas, 2014: 112). Alatas also used The Safavid case to couple the Khaldunian theoretical framework with world-system theory.

> "According to this approach the historical development of the Safavid state can be viewed in terms of the notion of a core/periphery hierarchy. The originality that the Khaldunian approach brings to this is the focus on the unit of analysis that

> encompasses the set of social relations that are central to the rise of the Safavid state, that is nomadic and sedentary society. This transcends the usual association of civilizations and settled peoples organized around states and fixed boundaries. Another approach that links the Khaldunian model and the world-system approach is taken by Turchin and Hall who discuss the fall of four Chinggissid dynasties in terms of Ibn Khaldun's theory" (Alatas, 2006: 407).

Conclusion

The reception of Ibn Khaldun within Western academia in the 19th century set the tone for the reading of his work and the interpretation of his theory and concepts. Since orientalists were those who first translated and interpreted the *Muqaddimah*, it is no surprise that much of their orientalist perspective on Arabs and Muslims, and their participation in the colonial enterprise, had an undeniable impact on the overall reception of Ibn Khaldun in the West. The originality of his work was labelled an oddity in the context of Islamic scholarship, an exception worthy of appreciation. Among the early orientalists studying the *Muqaddimah*, comparing Ibn Khaldun to popular Western scholars such as Machiavelli and Montesquieu became a way of showcasing his unmatched uniqueness among the plethora of otherwise second-rate scholars produced by Muslim civilization. This approach had the merit of not only portraying the *Muqaddimah* as a work without parallel in Islamic scholarship, but it also removed Ibn Khaldun from his own intellectual tradition and celebrated him instead as a *unique Oriental phenomenon displaying the essence of a Western genius*. His insistence on the use of reasonable thinking in the study of history has even led some in the West to doubt his religiosity and his attachment to tradition. Some even attributed "a more secularizing purport" to his work, describing it as an inherently profane project, and portraying Ibn Khaldun as an intellectual or reformer belonging to that "rare category of *genus irritabile vatum* thinkers" (Chaouch, 2008: 281).

> "Other modern preoccupations are found in the *Prolegomena*. First the tendency and will to explain particular facts by general 'natural' causes. Thanks to this—can we say—'profane' determinism, history is emancipated from the yoke of traditionalism, traditionism, and from literature" (Lahbabi, 1968, as cited in Chaouch, 2008).

Throughout the first half of the 20th century several works on Ibn Khaldun were produced. While Orientalism was no longer the only perspective informing these studies, the portrayal of Ibn Khaldun's work as either having more in common with Western thought and/or finding its roots in Greek philosophy continued to permeate much of the discussions pertaining to the content of the *Muqaddimah*. It is only when more Muslim researchers joined the conversation on Ibn Khaldun that new viewpoints and interpretations started to emerge. The question of the real origins of Ibn Khaldun's theory remained a focal point. While some like Muhsin Mahdi described Ibn Khaldun as a disciple of Greek philosophy and his work as a mere extension of Aristotelian philosophy, others, like Ali al-Wardi, saw his work as a reaction against Aristotelian logic. Far from being a continuation of Aristotle's legacy, Ibn Khaldun developed a new logic to replace the one adopted by the Muslim philosophers and historians of his epoch. Ali Oumlil, agreeing with al-Wardi's perspective, reiterated that the *Muqaddimah* should be seen as an original work that provided a theory of history to evaluate historical writings. Ibn Khaldun created a new science (*'Ilm al-umran al-bashari*) as a reaction against the standards of Islamic historiography; therefore, his work should not be seen as the continuation of an earlier European philosophical tradition.

In the last decades of the 20th century, new perspectives on Ibn Khaldun emerged, moving further away from the traditional orientalist outlook on the *Muqaddimah*. Yves Lacoste in his analysis, tried linking Khaldunian concepts to an important topic within contemporary sociology, the underdevelopment of the Maghreb. While others like Ernest Gellner continued to compare Ibn

Khaldun to Western scholars like Durkheim in an attempt to showcase the modern flair of the *Muqaddimah*. For the most part, however, and despite the mounting criticism against Orientalism, the reading grid established by previous orientalist interpretations of the *Muqaddimah* continue to persist. It is only when decolonial approaches and methods started to gain traction, amid the calls for decolonizing sociology, that a novel outlook on Ibn Khaldun's work appeared. In order to find alternatives to Western epistemology and its hegemony over the social sciences, some looked to Ibn Khaldun. Going beyond simply discussing his status as founder of sociology or offering an outline of his thought, these studies sought to apply the Khaldunian theoretical framework. Syed Farid Alatas is the most prominent figure in sociology to have worked consistently toward a reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's theory, so as to extract from it a modern iteration, a neo-Khaldunian sociology. However, such efforts remain for the moment sparse.

Ibn Khaldun's status within contemporary sociology remains ambiguous. On one hand, of all the Muslim scholars produced by Islamic scholarship, he is probably the most admired by Western thinkers. His name and legacy elicit so much admiration that he's been made an honorary member of the Western intellectual milieu. On the other hand, this same process has distorted the true essence and intention of his work. Those in the West who interpreted the content of the *Muqaddimah* focused primarily on the aspects that were most familiar to them, at the detriment of all the rest. This selective reading of Ibn Khaldun reduced the *Muqaddimah* to a masterpiece without clear purpose, a repository of concepts that too easily lend themselves to all sorts of analyses, no matter how tenuous their link might be to the subject-matter[1]. This alone renders difficult any attempt to undertake the kind of methodical restoration of Khaldunian theory

[1]Morteza Hashemi (2019) Bedouins of Silicon Valley: a neo-Khaldunian approach to sociology of technology.

suggested by Alatas, without first returning Ibn Khaldun to his native intellectual milieu and recontextualizing his work from that perspective.

Chapter 3
Islamic Historiography and the Birth of the *Muqaddimah*

Introduction

Our relationship with the past can be, at times, ambiguous and fraught with difficult questions. A nation's roots, distinctiveness, and the impetus behind its existence are frequently found in stories, tales, and folklores reaffirming a mythical origin which operates as the bedrock of its ideological and spiritual foundation. Its very legitimacy is often built on ancestral recollections, traditions, and emblems of cultural heritage. This renders tangible a common past that is not only accessible but also lends itself to "being rediscovered and reinterpreted" (Smith, 1999: 9). One could even argue that our identity, be it individual or communal, is directly linked to the shared creation of meaningful episodes that illustrate a distinctive mythos. In such a context, our recollections of the past are not simply chronicling prior happenings, they belong instead to a comprehensive strategy that allows us to grasp our present by knowing our past. These accounts shape the collective consciousness of a people and their relationship to their own past. History, therefore, plays an intrinsic role in giving meaning to the passage of time by instituting an official sequence of events through which some episodes are deemed more pivotal than others.

Narratives claiming to recount events from the past often belong to categories that are shaped by specific historical and political contexts. These classifications form a continuum upon which historians impose their own perspectives and interpretations of facts. However, our current understanding of history as an ensemble of non-fictitious narratives that are distinct from literature, "even an autonomous branch of learning", is fairly new and far more limiting than the tradition from which it first arose (Robinson, 2003: 5). Our conception of what qualifies as history would no doubt perplex most pre-modern historians. "The English word *history* comes via Latin from the

Greek *historia*, and generally meant 'inquiry'; it earlier described a variety of genres, including geography, folklore and ethnography, in addition to what we would commonly understand to be history" (Robinson, 2003: 6).

The German historian Friedrich Meinecke declared that historicism was "one of the greatest intellectual revolutions experienced by Western thought" (Meinecke, 1965:1). He argued that it replaced the ahistorical view so prevalent from the antiquities throughout the Middle Ages with "a new historical way of thinking (…) in the middle of the eighteenth century" (Beiser, 2011:1). Where previously human nature, morality, and reason were seen as absolute and universal, historicism considered them instead to be relative and peculiar. "Hence, it was impossible to generalize values and beliefs beyond one's own age, as if they somehow held for humanity or reason in general" (Beiser, 2011:1). Historicism sought to determine how historical factors and contexts shaped values, beliefs, and actions. According to Ernst Troeltsch, historicism implies the "fundamental historicization of all our thinking about man, his culture, and his values" (Troeltsch, 1922: 102).

> "Roughly, to historicize our thinking means to recognize that everything in the human world—culture, values, institutions, practices, rationality—is made by history, so that nothing has an eternal form, permanent essence or constant identity which transcends historical change. The historicist holds, therefore, that the essence, identity or nature of everything in the human world is made by history, so that it is entirely the product of the practical historical processes that brought it into being. In other words, among things human, there is no distinction between a permanent substance and changing accidents, because even their substance is the product of history" (Beiser, 2011: 2).

The desire to understand and explain the evolution of human society can be traced back to the ancient civilizations, who often perceived their own genesis as "unique and divine" in origin (Barnes, 1948: 6). The Homeric epics, the Osiris Myth, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and countless other

tales were often constructed as creation myths explaining the foundations of their respective societies. The Greek Sophists of the 5th century B.C were amongst the first in the West to ponder rationally on the origins of society, and thus contributed to the emergence of a Greek historiography attempting to look at the "development of society in an objective manner" through the study of its history (Barnes, 1948:6). The Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, with his philosophical poem *De rerum natura,* contributed tremendously to the elaboration of a realistic theory of the history of society. He focused on proving that the transformative and developmental nature of society was an inherent characteristic and not the result of any involvement by divine forces.

> "He held that material culture had passed through the sequence of Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. He traced the origin of life, man, society, and the state, indicating the various stages of cultural and social evolution with astonishing accuracy. His remarkable *De rerum natura* was one of the most notable contributions to historical sociology down to the modern period" (Barnes, 1948: 8).

Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Roman stoic philosopher, further explored Plato's notion of the felicity of primitive life and argued that the existence of early man was one free from avarice, sin, and crime. It was a golden age that abruptly came to an end with the advent of private property, making the emergence of the state and civil society inevitable. "One of the most important results of the exposition of this doctrine by Seneca was its adaptation by the Christian Fathers to serve as the accepted Patristic view of the course of social evolution" (Barnes, 1948:8). They correlated Seneca's Golden Age to the concept of the *fall* found in Christianity. Much like the appearance of private property marks the end of man's idyllic life in Seneca's work, for the Christian Fathers the fall of man from Eden leads to the end of innocence and the beginning of misery, confusion, and

chaos. This perspective of society and history continued to persist throughout Medieval Europe (Barnes, 1948: 9).

For Muslims of the classical period, history, although not always as valued as other disciplines, was nevertheless deemed beneficial and, over time, generated quite a lot of interest. In fact, reflections pertaining to "the nature, purpose, and method of history in Islamic thought date back to the very beginning of Islam" (Mahdi, 1964: 133). Islamic historiography evolved in tandem with the practice of gathering historical information for religious purposes. As a discipline, its standards find their roots in the established practices of Islamic jurisprudence, and its focus resides primarily in ascertaining the truthfulness of reported historical facts, often closely linked to religious happenings. Ibn Khaldun saw in the traditional methods of the discipline a lack of critical perspective, particularly in the study of historical phenomena. Through his new science *'ilm al- 'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization), he sought to not only address what he perceived as shortcomings in traditional Islamic historiography but also provide a novel outlook on the study of history.

Before revisiting the content of the *Muqaddimah* and further analyzing Khaldunian thought, one must first explore what motivated Ibn Khaldun to undertake such an endeavor. What was the purpose of the *Muqaddimah*? In order to pinpoint its *raison d'être*, and understand the true purpose of Ibn Khaldun's undertaking, one must look closely at the unique evolution of Islamic historiography. The first part of this chapter focuses primarily on the emergence of Islamic historiography in the Arabian peninsula, and how the collection and transmission of accounts pertaining to events from the past engendered the professionalization of history within the context of Islamic scholarship. The second part discusses the evolution of Islamic historical thought and how the clashes between the Mu'tazila and the dialectical theologians affected its development.

The last part pertains to the historical context that shaped Ibn Khaldun as a scholar, as well as his views on Islamic historiography. His concerns about the lack of critical perspective in the study of history served as a catalyst for the musings that eventually led to the elaboration of the new science, he introduced in his *Muqaddimah*.

3.1) Birth of a tradition

Pastoralist societies tend to produce little to no writing, choosing instead oral tradition as the primary medium for knowledge transmission. Amongst Arabs of the pre-Islamic period, poetry especially was held in high regard as "orality's highest register" (Robinson, 2003: 8). Poetry provided means through which various cultural dealings could take place, from swearing an oath to offering praises or attributing blame. For the Arab tribes of the Hijaz, orality rather than the written word represented a reliable, inexpensive, and convenient way of preserving and accessing knowledge. Storytellers, oracles, sages, and tribal advocates were those tasked with "circulating news, predicting the future, passing on wisdom and practical advice" (Robinson, 2003: 9).

The fluidity and malleability of oral history befitted the singular way in which these pastoral societies viewed their identity and conceived their sense of community. "Unlike history books that have to be banned, destroyed or otherwise suppressed, oral history is as dynamic as a society wants it to be" (Robinson, 2003: 10). As a tribe's alliances and circumstances changed over time, so did its lineage and bonds of kinship. While relations with allies were praised and woven into tales often pointing to a common past, enemies (at times being former allies) were simply excluded from the collective memory. Pre-Islamic Arabs understood the importance of history, however, their interpretation of its "shape and significance" (Robinson, 2003:10) differed greatly from how Muslim historians later understood and conceptualized history.

The Islamic conquest of the 7th century led to the establishment of a unified empire encompassing the Near East and the Mediterranean. This remarkable social and cultural change created an environment that fostered an unprecedent cultural production that established Arabic as the official *lingua franca* of the early Abbasid empire. In the 8th century, important technological developments occurred, rendering possible the production of inexpensive paper, which in turn facilitated an unparalleled surge in commercial book publications. The production of books and the expansion of the Muslim social order to incorporate non-Arab ethnic groups triggered a historic, epistemological, and technological transformation in the 9th century.

> "Scholars who formerly had relied on the aural acquisition of knowledge via lectures now could study from a growing library of books and disseminate their research and ideas to a wider reading public" (Webb, 2012: 16).

The translation movement began when Arabic-speaking scholars of the early 8th century started to translate and reflect on the writing of previous civilizations. The translated versions of books from Greco-Roman, Sassanid Persian, Indian and other pre-Islamic cultures became readily available to an increasingly voracious readership. The Muslim scholars of the late 8th and 9th centuries found themselves grappling with a variety of topics ranging from the integration of assorted intellectual traditions of the Near East within Islamic thought, to theorizing about the suitability of books as a medium for knowledge transmission, and the absorption of multiple ethnicities into their social order (Webb, 2012: 18). These changes eventually led by the 10th century to the bibliophilia and cultural effervescence that came to characterize medieval Muslim civilization. In fact, the thriving trade of books in the capital of the caliphate made Baghdad one of the most literate cities in the world.

> The "*suq al-warraqin* (book dealers' market) lay in the eastern—and more prosperous—side of the city, and at one point it boasted something like 100 bookshops. It was there that books were

> bought, sold and traded, where commissions for new books were taken, and, some 900 years before the printing press became widespread, where books were painstakingly or carelessly copied out by scribes, both on order and on speculation" (Robinson, 2003: 4).

Two notable figures of classical Islamic bibliophilia, Yaqut al-Hamawi (d.1229) and Khalid b. Aybak al-Safadi (d.1363), produced immense biographical works focusing not only on the learned men and women of the Islamic world but also the political and cultural figures of their time. They both made mention of Ibn al-Nadim, a well-known Muslim bibliographer and biographer who lived in 10th century Baghdad. He remains known to this day for producing a compendium titled *Al-Fihrist* (meaning Index) in which he catalogued over a thousand books and more than one hundred authors (Robinson, 2003: 7). His meticulous work focused primarily on medieval Arabic-Islamic literature and offered not only a wide-ranging assessment of Arabic books but also lengthy biographical and bibliographical information on their authors.

> "What distinguishes Ibn al-Nadim from his contemporaries is that he recorded his vast knowledge in a book, leaving what would turn out to be our best source for Islamic learning in the early middle-ages" (Robinson, 2003:4).

Bibliographical works were how many Muslim historians of that period began their careers as chroniclers. In the flourishing scholarly environment of their epoch, medieval Muslim historians were seen as partaking in a "kind of narrative practice" rather than belonging to an independent discipline (Robinson, 2003: 6). More often than not, they were employed as tutors, teachers, or writers. Unlike their modern peers, they enjoyed far less influence and emulated instead "the cultural and academic patterns" set forth by the jurists who wielded "enormous social authority" (Robinson, 2003:6). Ironically, it was from the ranks of these same jurists that most Muslim historians hailed from during the 9th and 10th centuries.

Historiography as a discipline did not reach the same level of prestige as other disciplines within the context of medieval Islamic scholarship. It was nonetheless produced in vast quantities and generated an insatiable appetite for historical accounts. The *Fihrist* alone provided a list of over one hundred "*akhbaris*, genealogists, and those concerned with events" (Robinson, 2003:5). It is said that the historian al-Waqidi (d.823) upon his death left close to six hundred chests filled with books (Robinson, 2003:7). A library in Cairo during the late 10th century contained "hundreds of thousands of books, including multiple copies of what had by then become standard histories" (Robinson, 2003:7). Nowhere else in the world was such a bibliomania taking place. In the midst of such a milieu what separated the works of Muslim historians—referred to as *akhbari* (one interested in events of the past) or *mu'arrikh* (chronologer)—from other writers was their propensity to "arrange accounts of events past (*akhbar*) in one or more distinctive ways that unlike those of other purveyors of written narrative were explicitly or implicitly chronological" (Robinson, 2003:6).

While the growth of Islamic historiography was closely linked to the rise of Islam and the expansion of its political, religious, and cultural landscape, the first seeds that have fuelled the emergence of Islamic historical thought were in fact found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and practices of the Prophet Pbuh[2]). These reflections, centered on the relation of the divine to human history, reiterated the rather "finite and transitory character of man's life on earth" (Mahdi, 1964: 133). Practical uses were made of history by providing reminders, encouragements, instructions, and examples. Muslims were commanded to reflect on the fickleness of earthly existence and the futility of worldly desires that can often mislead the believers from the path of

[2] Peace be upon him

righteousness. The rise and fall of nations were also used to illustrate not only the judgement of God but also His wrath and mercy.

> "But the (mighty) Blast overtook them before morning, And We turned their city upside down and rained on them a shower of clay stones. There truly is a sign in this for those who can learn. It is still there on the highway. There truly is a sign in this for those who believe" (Surat al-Hijr: Verses 73-76).

The collection and transmission of accounts pertaining to specific events from the past eventually prompted the professionalization of history within the context of Islamic scholarship. Reports were first transmitted orally—as was usually the case in the pastoralist and semi-pastoralist Arab societies of the Hijaz—but as the written word grew in popularity, formal records painstakingly compiled and transcribed were progressively introduced. The burgeoning bureaucracy of the rising Umayyad Caliphate during the 7th and 8th centuries facilitated the emergence of a culture of documentation focused on state functions, such as the collection of taxes and the financing of public infrastructure. "Since a great deal of this documentation carried dates, the emerging bureaucracy had the two-fold effect of encouraging literacy and chronological consciousness amongst its Arab elite" (Robinson, 2003:21). Unlike their Greek and Roman counterparts, early Muslim historians were mostly concerned with ensuring the veracity and accuracy of historical information. Influenced by the methodology of the jurists, they worried less about the style and elegance of their writing and concentrated instead on devising ways of ascertaining the truthfulness of the reports being transmitted as factual historical information (Robinson, 2003:16). To do so, they utilized both the sciences of biography (*'ilm al-rijal*) and authority-criticism (*al jarh wa at-ta'dil*) (Mahdi, 1964: 134).

The first collectors of historical reports were those interested in gathering information related to the sayings and actions of the Prophet (Pbuh) since it "could function as legal precedent"

in a variety of issues ranging from prayers, fasting, marriage, commerce, warfare, taxes, and other aspects of Muslim life (Robinson: 2003: 16). Muhammad al-Bukhari was one such collector who spent much of his life travelling extensively and recording information pertaining to the Prophet (Pbuh). His work is today regarded as only second to the Qur'an in authenticity as the most authoritative collection of *hadith* in Sunni Islam. The terms *hadith* and *khabar* are closely linked to the idea of telling, describing, or relating a story. Although both of these terms are at times used almost as synonyms, they in fact represent two different forms of narrative (Robinson, 2003: 15). A *hadith* in Islamic terminology is used only when referring to words and actions attributed to the Prophet (Pbuh). A *khabar* (pl. *akhbar*), however, is employed when alluding to any other kind of historical account and lacks the specificity and the religious connotation of the *hadith*. Their structure is also very similar, with one notable difference in their *Isnad*.

Every *hadith* or *khabar* begins with a list of the various narrators on whose authority this account is being reported. It usually starts with "the book's compiler, descends through generations of transmitters, and usually ends with a witness" (Robinson, 2003: 16). The collectors of *hadiths* sought to gather their reports from the best possible sources. Honesty and accuracy were the main criteria through which a narrator's reliability was judged (Mahdi, 1964: 134). Any deficiencies attributed to their lack of trustworthiness or their inability to maintain accurateness when narrating events would impact the level of authenticity attributed to the *hadith* in question. Using this method of authority-criticism, the people of *hadith* prefaced each of their reports with a list of the chain of narrators involved in their transmission. This chain of narration is referred to as *isnad*. In the case of a *khabar,* "the *isnad* may be just as complete, but not necessarily so, since it may include only the name of one of the transmitters, omitting the witness and/or any intervening informants" (Robinson, 2003:16).

Those preoccupied with the collecting and transmitting of *akhbar* were usually interested in a far greater variety of subjects and materials containing stories, aphorisms, and poetry. Their aim was not so much to produce work intended for legal or religious usage, but rather for entertainment, amusement, and general education. One such collector of *khabar* was al-Zubayr b. Bakkar who amassed 429 reports, with a fair amount of it being works of poetry (Robinson, 2003: 17). Another compelling difference between *hadiths* and *akhbar* resides in the lack of a distinctively chronological or thematical pattern in the latter. This is probably due to the fact that, unlike a *hadith* collection, a book of *khabar* was not going to be utilized in Islamic jurisprudence. But this didn't exclude completely the possibility of chronological order within *khabar* collections (Robinson, 2003:17). Those *akhbaris* (*khabar* collectors) who sought to establish a clear chronology in their reports of past events were often referred to as *mu'arrikhun* or chronographers assigning dates to events.

Hadith collectors, for their part, went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of their chains of transmission. In the advent of a single *hadith* being transmitted through various chains, they would record all the existing variants and the narrators attached to each. They would abstain from adding their own opinions and perspectives to the reports and would also refrain from adding any commentary made by others about their reports. The method favored by *hadith* collectors was limited to the usage of *isnad* (the criticism of the chain of transmission) while their interest in the *matn* (content of the report) was secondary to the former. "This conception of the subject matter of history defined, in turn, the limits of its method" (Mahdi, 1964: 13).

Islamic historiography finally surfaced as a tradition with its own distinct classifications around the late 8th and early 9th centuries. By then, the discipline had spawned three unique ways of presenting historical narratives: biography, prosopography, and chronography. This typology

would persist well into the classical period and would come to define Islamic historiography. Unlike *hadith* compilations that were highly organized and possessed a clearly defined method and substance, *akhbar* compilations lacked the necessary framework to structure their narrative. The first attempts at historiographic works appeared in the forms of monographs produced mainly for political and, at times, religious reasons. Stories focusing on figures such as Musaylima[3], al-Husayn[4], or pivotal battles that shaped Islam signaled the growing importance of literature and history in politics (Robinson, 2003:25). While all monographs were not written by historians, the problem of chronology and organization within *akhbar* compilations remained at the forefront of many historians' preoccupations.

The birth of the Abbasid caliphate coincided with the exponential growth of the Iraqi economy. The Abbasids came to power through a revolution that destroyed the Umayyad dynasty when they defeated their last caliph in 750 (Robinson, 2003:26). Contrary to the much smaller, less lavish, and far more homogeneous court of their predecessors, the Abbasids' opulent court had far greater cultural horizons and fostered a milieu favorable to the development of erudition and the arts. Still faced with a persistent rejection of their authority from certain quarters, the Abbasids were eager to create a new social order that would legitimize and consolidate their power. Through their generous patronage of learned men, and historians in particular, they sought to validate their rule and justify the violent revolution that brought them to power (Donner, 1998: 280). While Islamic historiography first emerged under the Umayyad, it is ultimately the Abbasids that promoted its blossoming. In this new and prosperous society, anyone with talent and ambition could find a way of rising from humble backgrounds to greatness and learned men could easily find generous benefactors.

[3] A preacher who claimed prophethood.
[4] Prophet Muhammad's grandson.

> "Here, in a city thronging with newcomers from nearly every conceivable background, learning and the arts could offer those with ambition and talent the opportunity to escape the humblest social background (such as manumitted slaves taken during conquest, and former peasants) or, for those who already possessed the appropriate skills (priests, Byzantine and Sasanian bureaucrats), to apply them in this new world. It was in this milieu that poets such as Bashshar b. Burd (d. 784) and historians such as Ibn Ishaq, both grandson of conquest-era captives, could find their fame and fortune" (Robinson, 2003: 27).

The substantial sponsorship of historians by the ruling Abbasids generated the exponential growth of historiography, with its foundational genres finally emerging. As *hadith* erudition grew and engendered various categories of *hadiths*, the same phenomenon occurred amidst the *akhbar* and produced "distinct works of *sira* and *maghazi*" (Robinson, 2003: 29). The *akhbar* became far more specialized than in the past, leading to the proliferation of Prophetic biographies focusing on the life of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). It is during this period that the tradition of prophetic biography, commonly known as *sira* (the way of proceeding) was established. The first accounts pertaining to the Prophet's life concentrated on the military campaigns that he led and were called *maghazi*.

The increasing interest in the details of his life, however, required a diversification of the biographical works dedicated to the Prophet (Pbuh). Amongst those engaging in the compilation of accounts related to his life was al-Zuhri (d.742) who pulled from various authorities to engage in the "large and complicated historiographic enterprise of constructing a biography of the Prophet (…)" (Robinson, 2003:25). Al-Waqidi, who is often described as a learned man in several fields, also produced various works ranging from chronicles of Islamic conquests to the *sira* of the Prophet (Pbuh). But Prophetic biographies were not the only ones being produced. Other important figures, such as scholars, often had biographical works dedicated to them. Most of these works tended to center on a single subject and outlined not so much what made the individual in question

unique but engaged instead in "a biographical process of creating an ideal character out of the historical data of a man's life (…)" (Robinson, 2003:63). The external (outward form, language, events and actions) rather than the internal was what Muslim historians of the classic period favored. While the term *sira* was used primarily in reference to standalone biographies, *tarjama* indicated "a compilation of capsule biographies" or a biographical notice (Robinson, 2003:61).

Another form of historical narrative that became widespread during the same period was that of *tabaqat* works. The word *tabaqat* refers in Arabic to layers or levels. These types of books encompassed a compilation of biographical material organized along a chronological order and "according to a more or less flexible measure of what constitutes a generation (…)" (Robinson, 2003: 30). Whereas a biography is about a unique individual, prosopography involves the biographical details that outline an individual's affiliation to a group. "Biographies accentuate the individual; prosopographies make individuals members" (Robinson, 2003:66). These types of accounts usually focused on elite groups such as scholars, notables, and towering figures of Islamic history who enjoyed a great deal of power and influence within society.

Tabaqat literature became particularly popular amongst *hadith* specialists (*muhaddith)* who often used the information contained in these compilations to assess the value of various chains of transmission (*isnad*). The science of biography known as '*ilm al-rijal* was crucial in the endeavor to classify and evaluate the validity of an *isnad*. The enormous amount of information found in these *tabaqat* works, often going back an entire generation, offered vital information that could be used to evaluate the trustworthiness of *hadith* transmitters. The *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir* by Ibn Sa'd is a perfect example of this type of work. His compendium contains over four thousand entries on several men and women of the *Sahaba* (the companions of the Prophet) and the *Tabi'in* (the following generation).

While his book is often cited as an excellent example of *tabaqat* literature, Ibn Sa'd was by no means the first to have undertaken this type of work. "A century earlier, Wasil b. 'Ata (d. 748) seems to have written one, as did several early ninth-century authorities, including Al-Haytham b. 'adi (d. 822), who is also noteworthy as the first to write an annalistic work of history" (Robinson, 2003: 30). Eventually, *tabaqat* works split into a multitude of subgenres; some concentrating mostly on famous poets and singers and others on jurists and scholars from various traditional areas of erudition. Finally, around the 10th century alphabetically arranged dictionaries or *mu'jam* started making their appearance. However, one must keep in mind that *tabaqat* works were also, at times, referred to as biographical dictionaries. Both *mu'jam* and *tabaqat* works reflect the infatuation with inventories and data collection that came to characterize medieval Islamic literature.

When it comes to Islamic historiography, modern historians tend to put a lot more emphasis on chronography at the detriment of the Prophetic biographies and other prosopographical works that enjoy far greater cultural import amongst Muslims (Robinson, 2003:75). At the height of Oriental philology in the 19th century, a translation movement began that gave Western historians and Orientalists access to several fundamental works in Islamic chronology such as al-Waqidi's *Kitab al-Maghazi*, al-Mas'udi's *Muruj al-dhahab*, and al-Tabari's *Tarikh*. Islamic chronology is usually divided into two subgenres: annalistic history (*ta'rikh 'ala al-sinin*) and caliphal history (*ta'rikh al-khulafa*). Whereas the first one was structured by headings and arranged along Hijra years (following the Islamic calendar), the latter was organized instead along caliphal reigns; beginning with the rise of a caliph to power and concluding with his death. Caliphal history emerged first and was fairly prolific during the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, but it never reached the overwhelming popularity of annalistic history. Besides caliphs, *ta'rikh 'ala al-sinin* also looked

into the histories of viziers, secretaries, and even dynasties. *Kitab al-'Uyun wa'l-hada'iq* represents a rarity in Islamic chronology where a book encompasses a content organized along a hybrid approach "where annalistic dating is interleaved within regnal chapters" (Robinson, 2003: 75).

3.2) Islamic historical thought

The vast diversity of narratives and genres observed within Islamic historiography by the 10th century was the result of an increasing sophistication of scholarship in general and a growing interest in historical accounts. Both theologians and philosophers were especially unsure of the empirical character of history and questioned the conventions upon which historical literature relied. They were doubtful of this discipline's ability to be a science that could produce sound theoretical knowledge leading to useful and practical actions. Their comments on the nature, purpose, and method of the sciences influenced professional historians and, in more ways than one, guided the development of their research. These attacks prompted historians to be more vigorous in the defense of their postulates. To do so, they started adding short introductions to their works, outlining the religious, scientific, and tangible usages of their discipline as well as their methodology.

While often short, these introductions nonetheless served in their structure and their content as a model to the historical literature that came into fruition in the 14th and 15th centuries. The conventions that were established by the Muslim scholars of the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries left an indelible mark on their respective disciplines (Anjum, 2012: 138). The great intellectual impulse that took place in the period that came to be known as the *Muslim golden age* not only informed but also shaped Muslim scholarship for centuries to come. "Consequently, Islamic historical

thought developed parallel to Islamic philosophy, and to the reaction of Islamic religious thought to philosophy as expressed in Islamic dialectical theology" (Mahdi, 1964: 137).

Theology and philosophy in the early Muslim societies were two disciplines that evolved autonomously from one another; each one concentrating on vastly different areas of scholarship. Where theology was mainly based on the study of scripture, philosophy known as *falsafa* was massively influenced by previous philosophical traditions. The rare areas where the two intersected were in subjects like cosmology, cosmogony, epistemology, ethics, and eschatology (Shihadeh, 2015: 412). Theology possessed a wide range of outlooks, from the most rationalists for whom faith was rooted in reason, to the more traditionalists who posited that faith was independent of reason and depended instead on revelation. Theologians, for the most part, viewed philosophy as heresy based solely on the beliefs of ancient pagans and its proponents as misguided souls choosing falsehood over the truth of revelation. Philosophers were perceived as adherents of a belief system foreign to Islam and steeped in the creed of Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle (Shihadeh, 2015: 413).

In the early 11th century, the relationship between the two entities shifted drastically. The famous polymath Ibn Sina (Avicenna), elaborated a philosophical system in which he broached topics such as prophecy, revelation, and the afterlife that were usually the purview of theology. He even went insofar as utilizing Islamic concepts and the Sufi doctrine of salvation. "By the end of the 11th century, there were rumblings that philosophy was spreading and beginning to pose a real threat to orthodoxy" (Shihadeh, 2015: 416). The retort to Ibn Sina's brazen encroachment on theology came in the late 11th century via the famous theologian and jurist al-Ghazali. Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was born in present-day Iran during the reign of the Abbasid dynasty. As a theologian and jurisconsult, he excelled in various fields such as

philosophy, tasawwuf[5], theology, logic, jurisprudence, and Islamic political thought. In his book The Incoherence of the Philosophers (*Tahafut al-Falasifa*), he not only criticized philosophers such as Ibn Sina and al-Farabi but also refuted the philosophical doctrine promoted by the Avicennian school of Islamic philosophy.

Al-Ghazali purported that reason could lead to the truth only through the use of "arguments that are demonstrative and reach a level where their conclusions are beyond doubt" (Abdulkadir, 2011:7). To ground theology in a more rationally tenable foundation, he introduced the philosophical notion of demonstration (*burhan*), which eventually played an important role in the epistemology of the dialectical theologians. While strongly opposing philosophy and its adherents, Al-Ghazali nonetheless advocated for a better engagement with this discipline amongst traditional theologians. Fakr al-Din al-Razi, by the end of the 12th century, created "the definitive synthesis of philosophical theology, which determined the broad outlines of the later neo-Ash'arite tradition" (Shihadeh, 2015: 416).

Influenced by Aristotle and following his nomenclature, Muslim philosophers categorized the various disciplines of the sciences into three groups: the theoretical sciences, the practical sciences, and the productive sciences. The first group encompassed the disciplines that sought to produce illustrative and conclusive rational knowledge. In this grouping, they included fields such as physics, mathematics, and metaphysics that usually proceed from the specific to the general or vice versa and function through deductive reasoning "on the plane of the universals" (Mahdi, 1964: 138). In the practical sciences, they added disciplines such as ethics, politics, and economics. They described these types of sciences as being intrinsically linked to the realm of moral virtue and seeking to generate discussions about the beneficial attainment of a good life.

[5] Tasawwuf refers to Sufism or Mystics in Islam

Much like Aristotle, they believed that the path to good life involves the acquisition of intellectual virtues through contemplation and learning. Therefore, the practical sciences must always be concerned with the improvement of man's character virtues and the development of the appropriate state of character through habituation and training. The third grouping focused mainly on things of a transitory nature. They defined the subject-matter of the productive sciences as being prone to rapid change and, in the end, constantly gravitating toward "the perfection of things made, e.g., a house or a poem"; their aim being the creation of things through the usage of human rationality and theoretical knowledge (Mahdi, 1964: 139). To Muslim philosophers, both the practical and the productive sciences lacked the accuracy of the theoretical sciences.

In Aristotle's theory of science, episteme's main purpose was depicted as the realization of universal truths that can be applied everywhere and at all times. This meant that science only occurs in the advent of a collective verdict trying to explain the nature and causes of things (Mahdi, 1964: 139). Since history as a discipline was primarily concerned with events in specific times and places and the gathering and organizing of information, the very nature of its subject-matter placed it outside of the scope of what was considered a science from an Aristotelian perspective. Thus, Muslim philosophers saw it as being closer to the arts than the sciences. Contrary to the Mu'tazilites who vehemently criticized the core conventions of traditional Muslim historical thought, the philosophers had a far less critical attitude toward historical research. They recognized that the study of past events through the writings of those who compile such information could prove itself useful to rulers who could learn from these past experiences.

> "In so doing, they reaffirmed the importance of history as an instrument of prudence and as a material part of the practical sciences. These hints, however, are not elaborated anywhere in their writings" (Mahdi, 1964: 140).

In the aftermath of the translation movement, which made classical Hellenistic literature available to Muslims, a school of thought advocating for the adoption of an epistemology and ontology based on rationalist theology emerged in the study of Islamic doctrine (Khan, 2017: 60). The Mu'tazila was founded by Wasil bin 'Ata in Iraq during the 9th century. They adhered to a doctrine that upheld the primacy of human reason and free will over predestination; they also argued that the concept of good and evil can only be understood through the lenses of human reason. Their radical departure from traditional theology earned them the name of al-Mu'tazila (the withdrawers, secessionists) and the movement grew quickly, gaining many new followers (Sharif, 1963: 200).

Mu'tazilites were united by a deep conviction that it was necessary to offer a consistent and coherent account of Islamic beliefs that could be understood through rational thinking. "They believed that the word of Allah requires interpretation, and that man must apply reasoned thinking to this task" (Khan, 2017: 60). They maintained that the truth could only be obtained through a method involving a combination of human reason, revelation, and spiritual intuitiveness. One of the greatest areas of contention between the Mu'tazilites and traditional theologians was the one pertaining to the nature of the Qur'an. According to their doctrine, the Qur'an derived from the word of God and therefore was created and not eternal, as believed by the adherents of traditional theology. When in 827, the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun crowned the Mu'tazila as the official theology of the empire, he sanctioned their views about the creation of the Qur'an. "This was no mere theological hair-splitting"; if the Qur'an was indeed created, it could be altered to legitimize the policies of the ruling caliph (Campanini, 2012: 45). By endorsing Mu'tazilite theology and its doctrine pertaining to the Qur'an being created, al-Ma'mun attempted to increase his control over

society by making himself the main source of political and religious authority, essentially usurping a function reserved for the ulema and monopolizing all power.

The caliph, with the support of a Mu'tazilite judge from Baghdad named Ibn Abi Du'ad, created an inquisitorial court (*Mihna*) which targeted traditional theologians and jurists. Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence and an ardent dissenter, became one of the many victims of this Mu'tazila led witch-hunt. The clash between the Mu'tazilites and the traditional theologians is often interpreted, rather naively, by some as a battle between the defenders of free thought and the "obscurantism of orthodoxy" (Campanini, 2012: 45). However, the advent of the *Mihna* demonstrated that the Mu'tazilites, far from being mavericks and erudite radicals struggling against the stranglehold of tradition and conservatism, became part and parcel of the ideological and spiritual substructure of the Abbasid regime. They used their newfound power to silence any dissention vis-à-vis their doctrine. "In reality, the Mu'tazilites were rigid theologians, quite intolerant enough, once in power, to have no hesitation in persecuting their more dangerous opponents" (Campanini, 2012: 45).

In their rejection of the prevailing traditional and religious attitude in Muslim society, they attacked all forms of conservative thought and instead promoted the rational examination of all aspects of life. They questioned the conventions upon which was based the traditional historical thought to which historians such as al-Tabari adhered. They were particularly opposed to the sources utilized and the method applied in Islamic historical scholarship. According to them, relying solely on chains of transmission (*isnad*) to ascertain the veracity of a historical account was simply not enough to prove its claim to truth (Mahdi, 1964: 137). They endorsed instead the idea of founding one's belief on reason and not merely on authority. They exhorted historians to only accept what is rational and exclude what is not.

Islamic historiography rests on the assumption that the Prophet (Pbuh) and the earlier generations of Islam embody an unquestionable provenance of knowledge and that their example offers the best possible course of action. This foundational premise not only shaped the principles and method of Islamic historiography but is also a core principle in Islam. "In attacking traditional historiography, the Mu'tazilites were attacking some of the most fundamental beliefs of the community" (Mahdi, 1964: 140). In a way, this movement influenced and shaped the ideological landscape of Islamic scholarship. For the philosophers, the Mu'tazilites were their precursors since they not only pondered on the works of Greek philosophers but also attempted to contextualize them for the Muslim setting. For the dialectical theologians, on the other hand, it became necessary in their defense of traditional theology against the attacks of the Mu'tazilites to incorporate the rational sciences into their methodology.

> "The attitude of the philosophers and the dialectical theologians to history is a clear example of their basic point of view concerning the major issue on which they opposed each other, i.e., the relation of reason to the accepted views of the Muslim community regarding the nature of Islamic revelation and of the tradition of the community" (Mahdi, 1964:138).

Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari was a theologian who became a leading figure of Islamic historiography and a fierce defender of Islamic orthodoxy in the early 10th century. Tabari came of age amidst the tempestuous debates opposing traditional theology to the Mu'tazila in the 9th century. He studied under many scholars of *hadith* who were fervently opposed to the Mu'tazilites and trained in the traditional-theological school. As a historian, he endeavored to historicize the Qur'an by focusing on the historical aspects of the Qur'anic narrative. The many accounts in the Qur'an pertaining to the struggles of the Prophets of God against the forces of evil and unbelief, often exemplified by the transgressions and oppression of tyrannical despots, were central to the

vision of history that Tabari sought to establish (Shoshan, 2004: 86). His seminal *Tarikh*[6], started with the Creation, encompassed prophetic sagas, chronicled the empires of the antiquity, ensued with the history of the Sassanid and Arab tribes, and ended with Islamic history up to his own time (Duri and Conrad, 1983: 71). He was amongst the first Muslim historians to conceptualize the study of history as a focal point to anchor the Muslim community in its own Islamic history.

A recurrent problem within the traditional method of historical research, to which Tabari adhered, was the problem of sources (Mahdi, 1964: 136). The value of historical accounts hinged on the strength of their *isnad*. In order for an account to be considered reliable, the narrator should be situated closely to the event in question. "Thus, early historical writings and accounts preserved nowhere else have survived to modern times by virtue of the method al-Tabari used in compiling his history" (Duri and Conrad, 1983: 70). However, at times, events could not be traced back to their origins through a reliable chain of transmission involving the Prophet (Pbuh) and/or his companions and their pious predecessors. In other cases, the reliability of the accounts may have been severely damaged by several factors such as lapses in memory or personal proclivities and preferences, making the certainty of the accounts' truthfulness an impossibility to ascertain (Duri and Conrad, 1983: 70).

Tabari's answer to this problem was to confine himself to the accounts reported by historians whose reputation as trustworthy compilers was widely accepted, and the integrity of their work recognized by all. In his chronicles, he avoided adding his own personal opinions or showing any preference toward some accounts over others. He displayed total impartiality toward the sources cited, concentrating instead on compiling the different accounts pertaining to events or

[6] *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of the prophets and Kings) also known as *Tarikh al-Tabari* is a historical chronicle written by Tabari and a classic of Islamic historiography.

subjects. This explains the exceptionally large number of sources present in his work (Duri and Conrad, 1983: 70). Another solution devised by Tabari involved the usage of sources originating from the Old and New Testaments, as well as Jewish, Christian, and Persian chronicles. Called *Isra'iliyyat*, these sources were mainly used to provide information about earlier prophets and pre-Islamic history.

Their trustworthiness, however, was accepted to varying degrees by the scholars of *hadith*, since none of "these sources could claim divine origin; nor could the Muslim historian apply his technique of authority-criticism to authors about whom he knew little or nothing at all" (Mahdi, 1964: 136). Tabari sought to produce a corpus encompassing all Arabic historical accounts as did previously many *hadith* scholars. He succeeded in creating a historical chronicle that became an authoritative source often mentioned by other historians. With Tabari's *Tarikh*, we witness the epitome of the development of Islamic historical writing (Duri and Conrad, 1983: 71). His overall vision of history differed from the one promoted by the Mu'tazilites. He believed that neither human reason nor rational argumentation played any part in this discipline and that the reliance on trustworthy and verified sources was indispensable to the acquisition of historical information.

> "The reader should know that with respect to all I have mentioned and made it a condition to set down in this book of ours, I rely upon traditions and reports which I have transmitted and which I attribute to their transmitters. I rely only very exceptionally upon what is learned through rational arguments and produced by internal thought process. For no knowledge of the history of men of the past and of recent men and events is attainable by those who were not able to observe them and did not live in their time, except through information and transmission provided by informants and transmitters. This knowledge cannot be brought out by reason or produced by internal thought processes" (Tabari and Rosenthal, 1989: 170).

The expansion of the Muslim empire, the proliferation of the translated Greek works particularly in the areas of geography and philosophy, and the exponential growth of trade and

travel sparked amongst Muslims an interest in the traditions and lifestyles of other societies. This further stimulated the development of Islamic historical thought and research. Historians like Mas'udi, who were interested in the comparative study of cultures and societies, mostly embraced the ideas of the Mu'tazila. Others, such as Miskawayhi and Biruni were either philosophers or natural scientists who dabbled in historical research. While their respective backgrounds informed their various interests in history, they were nonetheless instrumental in the rise of a trend of historiography that "questioned many of the sources upon which traditional historiography relied, especially in relation to pre-Islamic history" (Mahdi, 1964: 143). Mas'udi, played an important role in changing the landscape of Islamic historical research by favoring cultural history at the detriment of the prevailing political chronology. He explored the relationship between the natural environment and the shaping of human history, and "the analogy between the cycles of plant and animal life, and human institutions" (Mahdi, 1964: 143).

As a staunch Aristotelian, history was for Miskawayhi a mere companion to politics, a discipline in service of larger political goals. He described it as more of an art than a science susceptible nonetheless of providing to rulers an important repository of wisdom. His historical work focused mainly on discussing the "rational use of secular history for ethical and political purposes" (Mahdi, 1964: 143). Biruni, despite being a polymath, dabbled in historical research as well. He was especially interested in the social, religious, and scientific ideas that helped shape the Indian civilization. His historical works were laced with his vast philosophic knowledge and his great mastery of the natural sciences. Sa'id al-Andalusi, a Muslim philosopher and astronomer from Spain, elaborated a typology that divided nations into two categories: civilized and barbarous. In his *Classes of Nations*, he investigated the history, scholarship, characteristics, and social life of multiple nations. Sa'id believed that what separated these two categories of nations was their

level of achievement in the sciences. He equated the emergence and development of these disciplines to a manifestation "of the rational soul, a decisive moment in human history" (Mahdi, 1964: 144). In his typology, nations sans sciences or with very little of it were categorized as barbarous.

Ibn Hayyan, another Andalusian Muslim who was also a prolific political historian, focused on elucidating the causes of the decline and subsequent fall of Muslim Spain. In a bid to uncover the factors that played a role in the decay of Muslim power in Andalusia, he examined closely the prevailing mentality amongst the rulers but also the public. Ibn Hazm was a religious scholar who sought to engage in a critique of the Bible through a rationalist analysis "employing the criteria of internal consistency and the inherent possibility of the events reported in it" (Mahdi, 1964: 144). The works of all these historians departed from the traditional Islamic historiography represented by Tabari, which understood history as a discipline devoted to the gathering and cataloging of accurate information. The trend championed by the likes of Biruni, Mas'udi, and Miskawayhi advocated instead for the inclusion of a more investigative approach to Islamic historiography through a rationalist methodology informed by philosophy.

> "It is true that many important historians departed from it and attempted to follow the lead of the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers in searching for the nature of man and society. But their works served more as correctives to the traditional trend than totally new ventures in the field and must be understood in relation to the traditional school which remained, throughout Islamic history, the main tradition of historical scholarship" (Mahdi, 1964: 142).

Amidst the clashes between the Mu'tazila and traditional theology, a group rose seeking to prove that the assumptions of traditional religious methodology were indeed rationally sustainable (Abdulkadir, 2011: 4). These theologians' aim was to defend the traditional beliefs of Islam against internal and external attacks while also eradicating from Islamic scholarship all the non-Islamic

elements that over time crept into it. They elaborated the theological speculation that came to be known as *ilm al-Kalam*. Unlike the more orthodox elements of traditional theology, they insisted on the need to harmonize reason and revelation (Abdulkadir, 2011: 5). The theologians who adhered to this philosophical method were called dialectical theologians (*mutakallimun*). Amongst them was al-Ash'arite who later founded a philosophico-religious school of thought named Ash'arism after him (Abdulkadir, 2011: 5).

In their defense of traditional theology, dialectical theologians elaborated an epistemology postulating that all things come into being as the result of perpetual creation by God in every moment of their reality. According to the Aristotelian principle of causality, everything is in a constant state of flux, therefore every change must have a cause. In order to have knowledge of a certain thing, we must know its cause, how it has come to be, and how it goes from its potentiality to its certainty. Muslim philosophers adhered to this perspective and believed that science should always produce positive and explicatory knowledge of essences and causes; "with certainty and explanation as inexorably related, and neither of them alone constituting science" (Mahdi, 1964: 141). Therefore, they defined science as the source of all explanatory knowledge, providing at all times the cause of all things. The dialectical theologians, on the other hand, rejected completely Aristotle's understanding of causation and, in doing, so the very perspective defended by the philosophers. Instead, they believed that all explanations were only probable at best and denied the certitude of any elucidation.

> "Consequently, the only certainty they recognized was the certainty of primary or immediate knowledge which did not involve reasoning of the explanatory type, and they considered all knowledge involving explanation as secondary and less certain" (Mahdi, 1964: 142).

History was considered by the dialectical theologians as essential (*daruri*), and they saw it as the byproduct of sense perception. Faithful to the traditional methodology of Islamic historiography, they considered the criteria set by the scholars of *hadith* to be the only proper method to determine the veracity of a historical report (Mahdi, 1964: 142). The reliability of the *isnad* should be irreproachable and, in keeping with their understanding of history as the result of sense perception, the original narrator must have had a first-hand sensory familiarity of the events in question. All knowledge acquired through reasoning from history without the input of sense perception was, in their view, only plausible and lacked certainty.

> "Thus, through the arbitrary selection of certain philosophic principles regarding the nature of existence and of human knowledge, dialectical theology arrived at conclusions that reaffirmed and defended the traditional conception of the nature and method of history. With the support of dialectical theology, this conception of history continued, with minor changes, to dominate Islamic historical literature down to Ibn Khaldun's time" (Mahdi, 1964: 142).

3.3) Ibn Khaldun and Islamic historiography

Abu Zaid 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun Wali ad-Din al-Tunisi al-Hadrami was born in Tunis in 1332 to an aristocratic family. The Banu Khaldun settled in Seville in the 8th century and soon rose to prominence. However, in 1248 when the city fell to the hands of Ferdinand III of Castile, the family fled to Ceuta, before moving to Tunis shortly after and joining an "Andalusian expatriate patriciate which was engaged in the higher affairs of state" (Al-Azmeh, 1982: 1). As a member of a prominent aristocratic family, he followed the standard rigorous and educational program prevalent amongst the intellectual elite of the Muslim world, "which included Arabic, the Koran, Tradition, poetry, and law" (Al-Azmeh, 1982: 4). While he mostly received a private education, his move to the city of Fez allowed him to access a far more public education

in the court of Abu Inan Faris who had gathered, under his patronage, the most distinguished scholars of the Maghrib at the time. "In Fez Ibn Khaldun was taught logic, usul al-fiqh, theology, philosophy (…)" (Al-Azmeh, 1982: 4). In 1347, the Black Death entered Tunis, provoking an unprecedented carnage as the death toll climbed. Amongst the contagion's victims were Ibn Khaldun's parents and many of his teachers.

His entry into public life came when he was offered the position of seal bearer. However, due to his personal ambitions and his desire to occupy a higher position and acquire greater authority and power, he found himself embroiled in political intrigues and conspiracies; a situation that eventually led to his two-year prison sentence. "When Ibn Khaldun regained his freedom, he resumed his political activity" and a year later he was nominated to the position of secretary of state as well as that of judge (Baali, 1988: 2). In 1362, the ruler of Granada Muhammad V invited Ibn Khaldun to join his court, due to the kindness the scholar showed him and his prime minister Ibn al-Khatib during their stay in Fez. Upon joining the Sultan's court, "he was sent as an ambassador to the court of Pedro the Cruel of Castile to ratify a peace treaty" between Castile and Granada (Baali, 1988: 2). While on this mission, the king of Castile and Leon offered Ibn Khaldun a place in his court, going as far as proposing to return to him the former Sevillian assets of his family; an offer the latter refused. "In Granada, however, Ibn al-Khatib was displeased with Ibn Khaldun's increasing power in the court" (Baali, 1988: 2). To avoid the growing tensions provoked by this situation, he decided to return to North Africa, where he became the prime minister of the Hafsid sultan of Bougie. Soon after, however, Ibn Khaldun decided to abandon politics completely and found sanctuary amongst the Banu Arif tribe. "It was there he composed his famous *Muqaddimah*, his *Prolegomena to History*" (Baali, 1988: 2).

> "The tranquility which Ibn Khaldun enjoyed in his old home did not last long. Some of these friends intrigued against him. In

> addition, the sultan ordered the thinker to accompany him in fighting some insurgents. Ibn Khaldun began to resent these dangerous missions and decided to go on a pilgrimage" (Baali, 1988:2).

In 1382, He left Tunis with the intention of journeying to Mecca for the pilgrimage (*hajj*). His journey took him to Cairo, where he was offered a teaching position and soon "students crowded his "mosque-circle and were enchanted by his eloquent explanations of social phenomena" (Baali, 1988: 3). He was also appointed judge and became known for his honesty and integrity in his deliberations. However, tragedy struck in 1384 when his family, traveling from Tunis, died in a shipwreck near Alexandria. A bereaved Ibn Khaldun soon resigned from his position and turned to teaching instead, accepting a position as professor of jurisprudence at Zahriyyah College. In 1389, he accepted a second appointment as judge and was named the Grand *qadi* of the Maliki school of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

"In 1400, the Tatar army under the leadership of Timur (Tamerland) invaded Syria" (Baali, 1988: 3). The Mamluk sultan of Egypt mobilized his army and decided to intercept the invaders. Amongst those asked to accompany the Sultan on his expedition was Ibn Khaldun. However, upon their arrival, the sultan received news of an impending coup to dethrone him and chose to return to Egypt as quickly as possible, "leaving Ibn Khaldun in the besieged Damascus to recommend negotiations with the Tatar leader" (Baali, 1988: 3). The scholar was able to organize several meetings with Timur, encounters described in great detail in his autobiography. During these meetings, the two men discussed political affairs. Timur was particularly intrigued by the scholar's land of origin and asked him to write a treatise detailing the lands of the Maghreb; a request, Ibn Khaldun obliged. Upon his return to Egypt, he wrote an extensive report detailing the history of the Tatars and his observations pertaining to Timur as a leader, and then sent a copy of it to the

Sultan of Tunis (Baali, 1988: 3). Ibn Khaldun, after leading a life filled with adventure, political intrigues, and scholarly endeavors, died in 1406 in Cairo.

Ibn Khaldun lived in a time of great tumult when the Arab Muslim world entered a period of political disintegration and cultural decay. In the 14th century, only the kingdom of Granada remained of the once flourishing Muslim civilization in Spain. As the Christian Reconquista gained momentum and the collapse of the Almohad dynasty led to the emergence of several weakened Muslim kingdoms easily defeated and annexed, the cultural and intellectual Muslim elites of Andalusia moved to Granada or North Africa. Tunis, Fez, Tlemcen became known for their large communities of Andalusian expatriates. During that time, North Africa was divided into three main kingdoms: the Marinids, the Ziyanids, and the Hafsids who ruled respectively over Morocco, Western Algeria, and Tunisia and Tripolitania.

In these kingdoms of the Maghreb, the power of the sultans rested primarily on the profits from the trade between Western Sudan (a region stretching from the Sahara Desert to the Guinea coast knowns as *Bilad al-Sudan* or Land of the Blacks), the East, and Europe. However, in the mid 13th century, the Mamluks of Egypt started pushing southward in an attempt to expand their territory to the upper-Nile Valley, which was the realm of the Christian kingdom of Nubia. “In 1316, the Christian kingdom of Nubia fell to the Egyptian armies and the road to the south was opened up” (Lacoste, 1984: 80). This meant that the inhabitants of Upper Egypt had now access to the Savannah region extending from the Nile to the Atlantic coast. They had direct access to the Kingdoms of Western Sudan and their gold trade and no longer had to rely on the merchants and caravans from the Maghreb to supply them; hence, the Maghreb "gradually lost control of the gold routes” (Lacoste, 1984: 80).

These changes caused the decline of several cities that previously were indispensable legs in the long journey undertaken by the caravans in the trans-Saharan trade. In the Maghreb, an increasing political precarity led to previously centralized kingdoms falling prey to repeated revolutions, coups, and secessions. In an attempt to shore up their power and authority, the monarchs started relying heavily on the support of the Berber militarized tribes. The kingdoms of the Maghreb were grappling with an unprecedented political upheaval (Lacoste, 1984: 80). Cities like Sijilmassa, that once served as an important desert-port, were now being passed by the caravans. The tribes of the Western Sahara that previously relied on the trans-Saharan trade turned to looting and raiding instead, further exacerbating the prevailing chaos.

> "Consequently, they were all but powerless before the destructive raids of the nomadic tribes that forced them out of the interior and restricted their rule to the narrow coastal strip which was continuously threatened by the nomads as well as the by the fleets of the maritime Christian states of the north" (Mahdi, 1964: 22).

Elsewhere in the Muslim world, the situation was just as dire. Despite the Tughluq dynasty's valiant efforts to keep India unified, they could not prevent its eventual breakdown into a multitude of kingdoms. Delhi, Deccan, Bengal, and Kashmir flourished as souverain states. This decentralization, however, meant that none of them could withstand the Mongol invasions. "Thus, when Tamerlane led his ravaging armies through northern India in 1398-99, that region was left in complete anarchy" (Mahdi, 1964: 19). The Mongols were able to take control of the Muslim world's eastern flank, from India to the Euphrates river, and ruled it entirely. India particularly suffered under Mongol rule due, not only to the violence unleashed by the invasion, but also the lack of an efficient administration or intellectual life in the post-invasion period. The prosperous cities of Transoxania and Northern Persia, that once rivalled Baghdad and Damascus in prosperity and beauty, suffered tremendously from the repeated invasions of the Seljuks and the Mongols. Iraq also succumbed to these successive invasions. The cities that survived the continuous

upheaval were often tethering on the brink. The "internal revolts by the dispossessed and unemployed mobs" added to the pressure of the foreign incursions and rendered the situation untenable (Mahdi, 1964: 19).

On the other hand, the Ottomans, amidst the prevailing chaos, succeeded in expanding their realm by conquering Asia Minor and the Balkans, due to their strong and well-structured army. Their war of attrition with Byzantium was finally coming to its conclusion as their Byzantine enemy found itself severely weakened by recurrent internal conflicts. The sprawling territory of the Byzantine empire now "hardly extended beyond the walls of Constantinople" (Mahdi, 1964: 20). Another area spared from the ongoing political disintegration and cultural decay was Egypt. The Turkish Mamluks who rule over the land were able to successfully withstand the Mongol incursions and preserved their sovereignty. Under their leadership, Egypt maintained its political and cultural institutions. In the latter part of the 14th century, however, the country entered a period of anarchy and economic decline due to the civil war that threatened to tear Egypt apart. Luckily, in 1382, a new Mamluk dynasty took the power and restored peace and order; "and in some measure, the economic and cultural prosperity of the country was revived for more than a century to come" (Mahdi, 1964: 20).

Greatly alarmed by the ongoing upheaval around him, Ibn Khaldun sought to understand and explain the "patterns of human action in history" capable of altering the world so fundamentally (Çaksu, 2017: 41). Inspired by the works of previous Muslim historians, he wanted to chronicle the transformations taking place in his own period by detailing these "newly emerging conditions" (Dale, 2015: 1). For him, the importance of history as a discipline worthy of study was undeniable. Its capacity to provide information on the fluctuating conditions of human society, and in doing so, produce a greater understanding of human affairs, made it an indispensable discipline.

Both ordinary people and the learned men could engage with historical chronicles; the former often finding a source of entertainment in it and the latter acquiring precious knowledge from it (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 5). Muslim historians throughout the centuries strove to compile meticulously many collections of historical accounts. Ibn Khaldun applauded these efforts by the leading experts of the discipline (*fuhul*), whom he distinguished from the amateurs (*mutaffilun*), and mediocre imitators (*muqallidun*) whom he held responsible for the declining prestige of historiography (Mahdi, 1964: 147). He referred to these leaders as authorities who have accumulated and written down the history of nations in great detail. He mentioned al-Tabari, al-Waqidi, al-Asadi, and al-Mas'udi as examples of those who have set an excellent standard for future historians.

Ibn Khaldun identified two types of mindsets amongst students of history. The difference between these two groups resides, according to him, in the method they employ in their works. One group excels in the study of history and favors critical inquiry (*nazar*) rather than simply contenting themselves with copying information (*naqid*). The other group, instead, tends to adopt an uncritical approach (*balid*) based on the compilation of information with very little concern for their origins or causes (Mahdi, 1964: 147). He was especially critical of those who, despite lacking the proper training and expertise, dabbled in the production of historical works. He lamented the growth of popular historiography, which made history the purview of the common people rather than that of the scholars. Consequently, historiography became marred with erroneous accounts and fallacies delivering a severe blow to the discipline's legitimacy.

> "But then, persons who had no right to occupy themselves with history introduced into those books untrue gossip which they had thought up or freely invented, as well as false, discredited reports which they had made up or embellished" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 5).

Ibn Khaldun's criticism was directed specifically at popular historiography, which had gained in popularity. An example of this type of historical work is the chronicle of the Egyptian historian Ibn al-Dawadari. Despite being a historian, he decided to forgo the scholarly approach to history for a more "colloquial style" and a humorous narrative tone (Khalidi, 1994: 188). Instead of producing annals focusing on the lives of other learned men, the lessons of history he offered were the outcome of his own lived experience in the company of kings and soldiers. By embedding himself in their various military campaigns or partaking in their friendly conversations, he witnessed touching human moments filled with simplicity. The historical descriptions given by Ibn al-Dawadari offered a different vision of history, one free from the rigid scholarly considerations of traditional historical work. In later centuries, what used to be the purview of scholars and historians alone became far more inclusive. Barbers, farmers, and even state officials started producing their own historical chronicles (Khalidi, 1994: 188).

> "It is primarily the portraiture of Ibn al-Dawadari, innocently capturing 'the king without his clothes', which arrays the age in a new light. Of all his portraits, that of the dreaded Mongol conqueror Hulagu is perhaps the most startling. We see him with his wife, smacking each other in jest as he catches her eyeing a group of handsome of prisoners. This *tableau* of a domestic scene so unlike the terrifying images of the man in other historians, or else the story of Baybars lost and fleeing across the desert and coming to a wondrous 'green city', transport the reader to a different plane of reality unfiltered by intellectual prejudice or high ethical purpose" (Khalidi, 1994: 189).

Ibn Khaldun exhorted historians to practice the type of mental discipline leading to an investigation of the essential modes of society. He determined that history, when practiced in such a fashion, should be categorized as one of the various disciplines of the sciences. In the classical Islamic tradition, the concept of *mantiq* relates to the method that stipulates the guidelines through which the difference between right and wrong can be clearly established. "The ability to make this

distinction rests on the skills with which definitions (*hudud*) that provide the essence *(mahiyat)* of things are arrived at and arguments that lead to judgement or apperception (*tasdiqat*) are made" (Alatas, 2014: 26). While we perceive the world through our five senses (*al-hawas al-khamsa*), we are also capable of discovering through our sensorial experiences abstract universal principles (*kulliyat*). "Knowledge is either conception (*tasawwur*)—that is the perception of the essence of things—or it is apperception (*tasdiq*)" (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:91). Contrary to conception which does not require applying judgement, apperception does. It is through judgement that the correlation between the concept and the object is established in apperception. So, one could say that the objective of apperception is acquiring knowledge about the realities of things and events (*haqa'iq al-ashya*).

Ibn Khaldun's main concern was what he perceived as a lack of critical perspective in the study of history. He worried that this oversight would allow mistakes and weak suppositions to permeate historical records and taint the veracity of recorded information. In the tradition that Ibn Khaldun belonged to, knowledge was obtained by uncovering the essence (*dhat*) and accidents (*a'rad*) of all events. Differentiating the true essence of a phenomenon from its "accidental properties" was the only way to know something (Alatas, 2014:27). A historian must then distinguish what is vital from what is incidental to events by embarking in a "process of abstraction until the highest universal is reached" (Alatas, 2014:27). To ensure that this process takes place correctly, the field of logic emerged. The aim of such a discipline was to establish a "process of analogical reasoning (qiyas)" (Alatas, 2014:27). For Ibn Khaldun, the shortcomings inherent to the prevailing method in Islamic historiography could only be addressed efficiently through a comprehensive exploration of society's nature and structure.

He affirmed, following the example of previous historians like Tabari, that the writing of historical works is one that requires the compilation of countless sources and the mastery of various forms of knowledge (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 11). From a Khaldunian perspective, historians must have an excellent speculative mind to help them discern the truth from the lies. To do so, one must acquire a sound knowledge of "the fundamental facts of politics, the nature of civilization, or the conditions governing human social organization" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 11). They must possess a comprehensive knowledge of the differences amongst nations, locations, periods and eras, as well as ways of life, customs, sects, and all other aspects of society. This is how they can evaluate the veracity of ancient historical materials, compare them to contemporary sources, and reduce the risk of deviation from the truth.

> "He must know the causes of the similarities in certain cases and of the differences in others. He must be aware of the differing origins and beginnings of dynasties and religious groups, as well as the reasons and incentives that brought them into being and the circumstances and history of the persons who supported them" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 24).

He posited that history became over time a discipline where its surface occurrences were hardly distinguished from "its inner meaning" (Alatas, 2014: 14). Historians relied increasingly on the works of earlier scholars without doing their due diligence and investigating the origins of the events in question and trying to discern the truth from false reports. They were instead preoccupied primarily with the preservation of historical information as it had been recorded by prior generations. Authority-criticism was an integral part of the methodology of Islamic historiography since the very beginning. In fact, the place awarded to this methodological tool within the discipline was a point of contention between the two opposing visions of history found amongst Muslim historians.

Ibn Khaldun delineated a clear difference between history pertaining to religious information and history pertaining to "information about factual happenings" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 38). Where the former is predominantly concerned with legal prescriptions and injunctions in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence and law, the latter focuses instead on actual events. Much like al-Tabari, he believed in the importance of authority-criticism as a methodological tool in the study of history. He reiterated that the only way to determine the veracity and accuracy of historical accounts pertaining to religious prescriptions was through a detailed examination of their chains of transmission. Ascertaining the truthfulness of such facts required in his view a thorough "criticism of the reporters who transmitted these prescriptions" (Mahdi, 1964: 155).

On the other hand, information about historical events is either true or false. As such, one must first establish the possibility of the event in question and whether it could have taken place before proceeding to authority-criticism. Ibn Khaldun urged historians to collect external evidence to determine whether historical reports corelate with existing circumstances, engaging in the process in a more investigative approach. By stating that history as a discipline involved not only an examination of the origins and causes of things but also authority-criticism, Ibn Khaldun negotiated for himself a middle ground between the *isnad*-driven approach favored by al-Tabari and the investigative approach through a rationalist methodology championed by the likes of Mas'udi.

> "If this is so, the normative method for distinguishing right from wrong in historical information on the grounds of inherent possibility or absurdity is to investigate human social organization, which is identical with civilization. We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental and cannot be counted on; and the things that cannot possibly attach themselves to it. If we do that, we shall have a normative method for distinguishing right from wrong and truth from falsehood in historical information by means of a logical

> demonstration that admits of no doubt" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 38).

From his perspective, history required an auxiliary science dealing exclusively with the nature of historical events (Mahdi, 1964: 155). Ibn Khaldun proposed an autonomous science with "human social organization and society" as its main object and tasked with establishing the veracity of historical events and determining their probability (Alatas, 2014: 21). This new science was to become a prerequisite for the study of history. He saw them as complementary since his science of human society endeavors to uncover the inner meaning of history. He distinguished the outer forms of history that he called *zahir* from its inner meaning, which he referred to as *batin*. The outer forms refer to facts and reports, while the inner meaning alludes instead to accounts of cause and effect. He was very much aware that his science of human society was unique in both its scope and objective. While it bore a passing resemblance to rhetoric, politics, and other existing fields, it nonetheless brought forth a singular contribution and a distinctive approach to the study of history.

> "Such is the purpose of this first book of our work. (The subject) is in a way an independent science. (This science) has its own peculiar object—that is, human civilization and social organization. It also has its own peculiar problems, that is, explaining the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization, one after the other, Thus, the situation is the same with the science as it is with any other science, whether it be a conventional or an intellectual one, It should be known that the discussion of this topic is something new, extraordinary, and highly useful. Penetrating research has shown the way to it." (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 38).

In 1378, he completed a historical study on Arabs and Berbers that he titled *Kitab al-'Ibar.* This book contained his famous *Muqaddimah*, a prolegomenon in which he introduced what he believed to be a new science. He called it '*ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization) or '*ilm al-ijtima al-insani* (science of human society). "The basis of Ibn Khaldun's

new science of society was his critique of the state of historiography among the historians of the Arab East and West up to his time" (Alatas, 2014: 13). He viewed as indispensable the in-depth examination of the probability and possibility of events through an investigation of human society. While authority-criticism remained important in his eyes, he nonetheless insisted on the need for further inquiry when studying historical events.

By disregarding the changes brought on by time that affect the conditions and customs of nations, historians neglected in their reported historical information the importance of interpreting the transformations occurring over the generations and shaping the world (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 6). Since historical events are the byproduct of their underlying causes, the new science proposed by Ibn Khaldun was one that sought to explain the roots of the events ascertained by history. The main goal of his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization) was to explore the "true causes of the essential modes of human association" (Mahdi, 1964: 169). While other disciplines appeared adjacent to history, their interest in the study of society was often too narrow and only incidental to their main purpose. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun insisted on the need for a new field of study with a greater analytical perspective, whose principal objective would be to make the study of society an independent science free from the stranglehold of historiography.

In his *Muqaddimah*, clarifications are offered on the principles of this new science by comparing it to other disciplines, sharing some similarities with his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (Mahdi, 1964: 168). Politics is one such science where historical information about society is widely used, but only when it pertains to the administrative aspects of said society. The purpose of politics, according to Ibn Khaldun, is to address the ethical and moral requirements necessary for the preservation of the species, and not the study of the many components of society and how they intersect. The science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is yet another discipline that makes use of

historical information, but whose interest in society is solely predicated on matters pertaining strictly to the law and how it "should be applied in concrete instances" (Mahdi, 1964:168). The jurisconsult (*faqih*) studies the origin and structure of society in order to understand the emergence of judicial institutions and to explain the purpose of the law. The study of society is not his primary concern, he is not focused on the fundamental elements of society, he is instead attempting to showcase the affinity between the essence of society and the stipulations of the law.

> "This purpose in turn defined the method of the legal sciences, and it was primarily that of authority-criticism through which they could determine whether a certain command was in fact laid down" (Mahdi, 1964:168).

Ibn Khaldun's interest in the rise and decline of states and dynasties was fuelled by his desire to understand the generalized anomie and disorder that societies in the Maghreb were experiencing at that time. His reflection on the topic was as much an intellectual endeavour to find an explanation to this phenomenon as it was a deep desire to make sense of his own world. He quickly realized that he needed to first understand the nature of certain key elements such as the connection between the state and society, the nature of human organization, and the role of group solidarity and feeling in the evolution of human society, before proceeding to that kind of analysis. To comprehend the nature of human organization, he looked closely at features such as urban institutions, economic life, organizational ability of the state, and existing solidarity/group feelings as possible triggers for social change (Mahdi, 1957:235).

> "Ibn Khaldun conceived of this new science of human society as consisting a number of sub-areas as follows: (1) society ('umran) in general and its divisions; (2) Bedouin society (al-'umran al-badawi), tribal societies (qaba'il), and primitive peoples (al-wahshiyyah); (3) the state (al-dawlah), royal (mulk) and caliphate (khilafah) authority; (4) sedentary society (al-'umran al-hadari), cities; and (5) the crafts, way of making a living occupations. These areas can be seen to cover what in modern terms would encompass human or social ecology, rural sociology, political

> sociology, urban sociology, and the sociology of work" (Alatas, 2014:21).

Conclusion

While Ibn Khaldun is often rightfully described as a luminary of sociology, the persistent image of him as a uniquely enlightened thinker amidst a plethora of obscurantist scholars creates a false impression of his real place within the wider landscape of Islamic scholarship. In fact, he was the product of traditional Islamic erudition, as his education followed the conventional model encompassing both religious instruction and *worldly knowledge* in the form of traditional sciences, a well-established modus operandi amongst Muslim scholars. Islamic historiography was a buoyant milieu noted for its centuries-long intellectual accretion. Its relationship with adjacent disciplines such as theology and philosophy sparked within the study of history intense debates pertaining to its content and methodology. This effervescence of ideas and discussions as to the role of history, not only within the setting of Islamic scholarship but also in the broader context of Muslim society, led not only to the emergence of two opposing visions but also inspired much of Ibn Khaldun's reflections on Islamic historiography.

While it would be tempting to frame the debates between the Mu'tazila and traditional theologians along the lines of a narrative creating a Manichaean dichotomy between rationality and science on one side and tradition and religion on the other, enlightenment and freedom versus darkness and dogmatism, the truth is in reality far more nuanced (Chaouch, 2008: 280). Ibn Khaldun, like many of his contemporaries, was influenced and shaped by the conventions of Islamic historiography established in previous centuries. He remained firmly grounded in the traditional approach to historical writing of his predecessors and paid homage to it, while seeking to transcend what he saw as shortcomings in their method. In the development of his new method

for writing history, Ibn Khaldun saw no antagonism between the use of rigorous reasonable thinking in the uncovering of natural things, and the dependence on traditional or religious texts. The amalgamation "between the rational and the scriptural" was de rigueur in Islamic scholarship. In fact, classical scholars writing about the rational sciences, be it astronomy, medicine, or mathematics, often peppered their works with Qur'anic verses and closed their chapters with "expressions consigning absolute knowledge to the divine being" (Chaouch, 2008: 282). Ibn Khaldun proceeded in a similar fashion and therefore resolutely embodied the image of the classical Muslim scholar. He went to great lengths in his *Kitab al-'Ibar* to define his position clearly in the wider landscape of Islamic scholarship, his native intellectual milieu.

Two conspicuous issues in Ibn Khaldun's epistemology are man's inability to construct causal chains past a certain point, and "whether there is a necessity between what is said to be a cause and its alleged effect" (Çaksu, 2007: 55). No doubt influenced by al-Ghazali in his understanding of the relationship between the cause and the outcome, Ibn Khaldun attested that such a correlation could be formed by unknown pressures lying beyond the realm of the "ordinary form of influence, and that the divine power would seem to tie the two together, as it does with all created things" (Ibn Khaldun, 1981: 716). Since, according to him, the ability to build orderly causal chains is the defining trait of humans, the problem of strict reliance on perception cannot be ignored in his conception of causality. In the progression of causes proposed by Ibn Khaldun, there comes a moment where such a succession "transcends the realm of human perception and existence" and becomes imperceptible (Çaksu, 2007: 54). For Ibn Khaldun, moving beyond the sphere of sense perception, as did the philosophers who relied exclusively on speculation, could only generate confusion and perplexity in the human intellect.

The fact that humans become aware of the impact of causes through conventional experiences means it is the only way "we can attest to the existence of an apparent causal relationship" (Çaksu, 2007: 55). Considering that anything outside of said experiences escapes our perception, it is only logical that certain influences shaping causes would remain unknown to us. But this inability must not be interpreted as a negation of the importance of human intellect. Intellectual insight remains for Ibn Khaldun the correct scale through which to evaluate, analyze, and understand causes and their effects. He nevertheless went to great lengths in cautioning against speculating on matters pertaining to theology such as the oneness of God, divine attributes, the world of the unseen (supernatural), and "anything else beyond the level of the intellect, since there is a limit at which the intellect must stop" (Çaksu, 2007: 55). His take on the limitations of the human intellect reiterates his distance from the methodology advocated by Muslim philosophers, who perceived no such deficiencies, and his closeness to the classical Islamic tradition.

He furthermore agreed with the opinion of traditional theologians when it came to the heretical nature of philosophy. He believed that this discipline contains "things that are contrary to the religious laws and their obvious meaning" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 405). The only benefit he saw in philosophy was its ability to help the mind hone the necessary skills to engage in brilliant and accurate debating. "This is because the orderly process and the solid and exact method of reasoning are as the philosophers have prescribed them in their science of logic" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 405). In all other matters, however, especially those related to religion, Ibn Khaldun saw philosophy as being detrimental and its effects pernicious. He went as far as to discourage Muslims from engaging in the study of *falsifa* (philosophy), reiterating its destructive influence on the untrained mind.

> "Whoever studies it should do only after he is saturated with the religious law and has studied the interpretation of the Qur'an and

> jurisprudence. No one who has no knowledge of the Muslim religious sciences should apply himself to it. Without that knowledge, he can hardly remain safe from its pernicious aspects" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 405).

He distanced himself from the philosophers, many of whom were followers of Aristotle, and instead adopted the opinion of the traditional and dialectic theologians when it came to the limitations of human reason. In Ibn Khaldun's epistemology, speculative intelligence allows humans to engage in generalizations, leading to true knowledge, and eventually a perception of existence (*tasawwur- al-wujud*). "It is therefore the method of demonstration (*burhan*) that occupies the most important place in Ibn Khaldun's theory of society" (Alatas, 2014:26). Muslim Philosophers, on the other hand, believed that human perception could reveal all of the varied and complex aspects of existence (*existentia*). This approach reduced all facets of existence to "the first intellect in their progress toward the Necessary One (the Deity)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 401). They established a standard based on intellectual speculation and gave pre-eminence to intellect over everything else. Ibn Khaldun, however, remained within the confines of classical Islamic tradition, where demonstration is deemed to be the most reliable method to uncover new knowledge.

Ibn Khaldun brought an alternative perspective to history through a universal understanding of its concepts and methodology. In his writing, he placed it firmly within the scope of an interpretation, offering a global vantage point of events and changes, along a systematic representation of time and place (Ahmad, 2006: 44). While remaining firmly grounded in the traditional approach to historical writing of his predecessors, he nonetheless sought to transcend what he saw as shortcomings in their method. He exhorted historians to abandon the writing of narratives focusing solely on "transient political and military events" (Dale, 2015: 2). He advocated instead for a transformation of history into an integral part of the sciences, such as

physics, mathematics, and astronomy. History, according to him, should become both a subject and a method, entailing a radical new approach to historical research.

Hence, far from being a work without clear aim, or the fruit of a random moment of genius, the *Muqaddimah* was, in fact, part of an ongoing conversation within Islamic historiography pertaining to the standards of the discipline. While Ibn Khaldun's brilliance is undeniable, it would be erroneous to describe his work as a unique endeavour without precedent. In fact, he clearly inherited his methodology from the dialectical theologians and applied it to historiography. Even Ibn Khaldun's reflections in the *Muqaddimah,* on the nature of human society, the importance of the state, and the concept of leadership, were far from being unique. Many scholars had previously tackled these themes, which were a staple of Islamic political thought. This is further explored in chapter 5. Ibn Khaldun's methodology, as well as his own reflections on historiography, not only demonstrate the influence of previous Muslim scholars on him but also reiterate that the *Muqaddimah* is an original work produced by Islamic erudition, and not the continuation of an earlier European intellectual tradition as suggested by some in the West.

Chapter 4
Revisiting the *Muqaddimah*

Introduction

Ibn Khaldun's *'Ilm al-'umran al-bashari* was defined by its originator as an attempt to explain the various elements of mankind's social organization and how they shape human civilization (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 42). In order to demonstrate the necessity for human society, he not only enquired into its genesis but also identified the stages through which mankind transitioned before reaching civilization; "the only type of association through which man can successfully satisfy his needs and desires" (Mahdi, 1964: 187). Civilization in the Khaldunian perspective is the byproduct of humans coming together to live in community and settling various cities, villages, and hamlets, both for the purpose of companionship and to satisfy the need for cooperation, in order to assuage their human needs. These settlements can take on many forms and sizes; they can be sedentary and located in heavily populated and fortified cities or they can be nomadic—like in the case of the desert dwelling Bedouins—and generally found in remote regions, mountains, or in the peripheries of deserts. "In all these different conditions, there are things that affect civilization essentially in as far as it is social organization" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 43).

A unique characteristic of Ibn Khaldun's new science, which further distinguishes it from adjacent disciplines, is its usage of reason in elucidating the specific conditions in the physical world that trigger the dynamics susceptible of provoking social change. For him, society was the product of a reciprocal relationship between the multiple spheres of human activity which are "inseparable and linked with one another; a change in one sphere or aspect affects others in one way or another" (Sunar and Yasliçimen, 2008: 424).The primary goal of his '*Ilm al-umran al-*

bashari was to study the social organization at the heart of all human society and the economic, political, moral, and cultural phenomena unique to it (Chabane, 2008: 334). The originality of Khaldunian theory resides in how it delineates *'umran* as a process. "Ibn Khaldun compresses this process in an engine of history which has an antecedent point (the state of being Bedouin) and a succeeding point (the state of being a town dweller)" (Amri, 2008: 357). In this approach, human society is intricately linked to the natural environment in which it emerges. The topography of the land, its climate, flora, soil, humidity, and seasons influence not only the development of society but also the actions undertaken by man, at times even setting limits on what he can accomplish. It also defines the physical qualities of man (his color, temperament, personality, etc.…) and "conditions his ability to control nature" and to establish institutions (Mahdi, 1964: 191). Thus, civilization in the Khaldunian perspective, can only appear in certain geographical regions where the existing natural environment allows it, while it suppresses it in other areas.

The vast majority of the works and discussions on Ibn Khaldun tend to focus primarily on the cyclical pattern of rise and fall depicted in the *Muqaddimah*. It often takes center stage in almost every analysis pertaining to Ibn Khaldun's work and, in the process, reiterates a narrow reading and interpretation of his political ideas. But what does the *Muqaddimah* actually say? Since the previous chapter delved into the purpose of the *Muqaddimah*, this one revisits its content and explores in-depth the crux of Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization). The first section of this chapter focuses on the Khaldunian geographical configuration of the world, which played an important part in informing his weltanschauung. His perspective was greatly inspired by the works of previous Muslim geographers such as Muhammad al-Idrisi, which divided the world into *kisbwars* or climatic zones. The geographical determinism with which Ibn Khaldun struggled in his own understanding of the world is also discussed. The

second part examines the concept of *'umran* which is central to his science of human social organization. Despite the importance of this concept, it is often translated and defined in a variety of ways, something that frequently obscures its real meaning. The aim here is to find out what Ibn Khaldun actually says about this concept in the *Muqaddimah*. Another important element of his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* is his theory pertaining to state formation. To understand Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation, it is imperative to revisit the two key concepts at the heart of his theory: *'asabiyyah* and royal authority. The last section of this chapter delves more into the political ideas of Ibn Khaldun by looking closely at these two concepts and re-examining Ibn Khaldun's explanation of the origins of the state.

4.1) Geography and the Khaldunian realm

The earliest Muslim descriptions of the world's geographical configuration, developed in the 9th century during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun, were heavily influenced by translated Greek works such as the *Almagest* and the *Cosmographia* of Claudius Ptolemaeus (Brauer, 1992:75). The building blocks of Muslim geography were built upon the knowledge produced and accumulated by the geographers of the Graeco-Roman world. As such, their theories, assumptions, and overall perspectives were inherited, and to a certain degree adopted, by the scholars of medieval Muslim civilization. Muslim geography can be divided into two major categories: mathematical geography and descriptive geography. The latter focused primarily on the study of landscape features, data pertaining to towns and settlements, the history and politics of regions, as well as ethnographic information. "Most commonly, all this was accompanied by a wealth of data of interest to merchants, such as what merchandise was sought or available, roads and ports, and conditions of life in the principal centers" (Brauer, 1992:76).

This type of information was further supplemented by reports and tales of the *'aja'ib* (wonders); narratives expounding on wondrous places and sights. Muslim descriptive geography, by its subject-matter and scope, can be largely considered human geography. Mathematical geography, on the other hand, was mainly concerned with the making of calendars, the measurement of time, and the establishing of the exact coordinates of a given place in the world (Brauer, 1992: 75). While geography as a discipline never really belonged to any of the significant categories of the academic realm of the medieval Muslim world, descriptive geography was closely linked to history since they both, at times, shared a similar subject-matter but also "contributed mutually to the explanations of the phenomena they observed in terms of a causality (…)" (Brauer, 1992:76).

Many of the prominent scholars of the ancient world believed that the physical features, temperaments, and cultures of humans were determined by the natural conditions in which they lived. They attempted to elaborate explanations pertaining to the unique characteristics of different humans by examining said conditions closely (Fekadu, 2014: 133). These studies focusing on the interaction between man and nature led to the development of various schools of thoughts in geography. Geographical determinism emerged amongst the Greek and Roman philosophers; it was centered on a theory ascertaining that human activity is determined by geographical conditions and the physical environment in which it was set. Xenophon and Thucydides attributed Athens' hegemony to its geographical position and its natural conditions, which according to them gave Athenian civilization the unique characteristics leading to its supremacy[7].Strabo the Greek geographer and philosopher believed that human civilization evolved along a process involving a movement from the mountains down to the lowlands and coastal areas.

[7] https://geographyandyou.com/major-thinkers-geographical-determinism/

According to him, "mountain life represented the first stage of civilization and the coasts meant the next phase"[8]. Even Aristotle believed that the differences between Europeans and Asians resided in the climatic contrast between the two regions. While the cold and harsh climates of Europe produced hardy and courageous peoples, the environmental conditions of Asia created instead nations bereft of courage. This essentialist view became the basis upon which rested the idea of Asia as an entirely different entity from Greece; a notion that became a staple of Greek literature and political thought. The distinction between the two was said to be the difference between a country with a responsible government under the leadership of free men and a land ruled by deified despots (Kalmar, 2012:31).

The translated works of the Greek philosophers inspired the medieval Muslim geographers to divide "the inhabited world into seven *kisbwars* or climatic zones"[9]. Much like the Greek and Romans scholars before them, they attempted to explain the diversity of cultural and physical features found throughout the world. Ibn Khaldun, in his own work, adopted a similar approach when postulating about human civilization and the vast expanses it occupied in the world. In his personal geographical configuration of the world, the equator divides the earth into two parts and stretches from West to East. The only cultivable and habitable parts, however, are all located in the Northern Hemisphere, leaving the entire Southern Hemisphere empty. Anything past the sixty-four degrees latitude is also considered devoid of human presence (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 50). These areas are left uninhabitable due to the cold and frost in the case of the northern regions and the scorching heat in the southern ones. Basing his geographical configuration on the one devised by the Muslim geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi in his *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq* (*Tabula Rogeriana*), he divided the cultivated areas of the world into seven inhabited zones.

[8] https://prezi.com/p/oaaukje09a6a/the-geographical-determinism-in-ibn-khaldun/
[9] https://geographyandyou.com/major-thinkers-geographical-determinism/

> "The borders of the seven zones are imaginary. They extend from east to west. In latitudinal extension they are identical in longitudinal extension different. The first zone is longer than the second. The same applies to the second zone, and so on. The seventh zone is the shortest. This is required by the circular shape that resulted from the withdrawal of the water from the sphere of the earth" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 50).

Ibn Khaldun divided these seven zones into three temperate regions and four intemperate ones: two in the north and two in the south. In the first zone, he situated Abyssinia, the country of Berbera, the land of the Zanj, and that of the Sudanese. In the second zone, he positioned Egypt, Yemen, the Hijaz, and Jeddah. The third zone encompasses the cities of Balkh, Khurasan, Tashkent, Samarkand, and other parts of central Asia, while the fifth zone incorporates Armenia and Anatolia. In the sixth and seventh zones, he located parts of Europe, the land of the Slavs, and the territories of some Turkish tribes. According to this Khaldunian geographical configuration, the fourth zone is the most temperate of all the regions and the cradle of civilization; it includes the Mediterranean region as well as Iraq and Syria. It is in the three mild zones of the world (third, fourth, and fifth) that the sciences, the crafts, and architecture experience an exponential growth. The inhabitants of these zones are described by Ibn Khaldun as being "more temperate in their bodies, color, character qualities, and general conditions" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 58). Their dwellings are usually made of stone and well-built. They excel in the crafts and are known to manufacture great tools and implements, and they also make use of natural minerals such as gold and silver in their business ventures.

> "Such are the inhabitants of the Maghrib, of Syria, the two 'Iraqs, Western India, and China, as well as Spain; also, the European Christians nearby, the Galicians, and all those who live together with these peoples or near them in the three temperate zones. The 'Iraq and Syria are directly in the middle and therefore are the most temperate of all these countries" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 58).

These nations enjoy all the trappings of civilization, including cities, sciences, elaborate crafts, political leadership, royal authority, and religious laws. The vast majority of the civilizations that scholars have studied in order to collect historical information are mostly located in these temperate zones. Amongst these societies, Ibn Khaldun mentions the Arabs, Byzantines, Persians, Israelites, Greeks, Indians, and the Chinese (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 61). While the temperate zones are highly cultivated, not all of their inhabitants enjoy a comfortable life. Some areas have a very poor soil with very little vegetation and are instead scattered with rocks. The dwellers of these locations have very little wealth and struggle to meet their bare necessities. “Instances of such people are the inhabitants of the Hijaz and the Yemen, or the Veiled Sinhajah who live in the desert of the Maghrib on the fringes of the sandy wastes (…)” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 65). It is also the case of the nomadic Arabs who meander the deserts of Arabia.

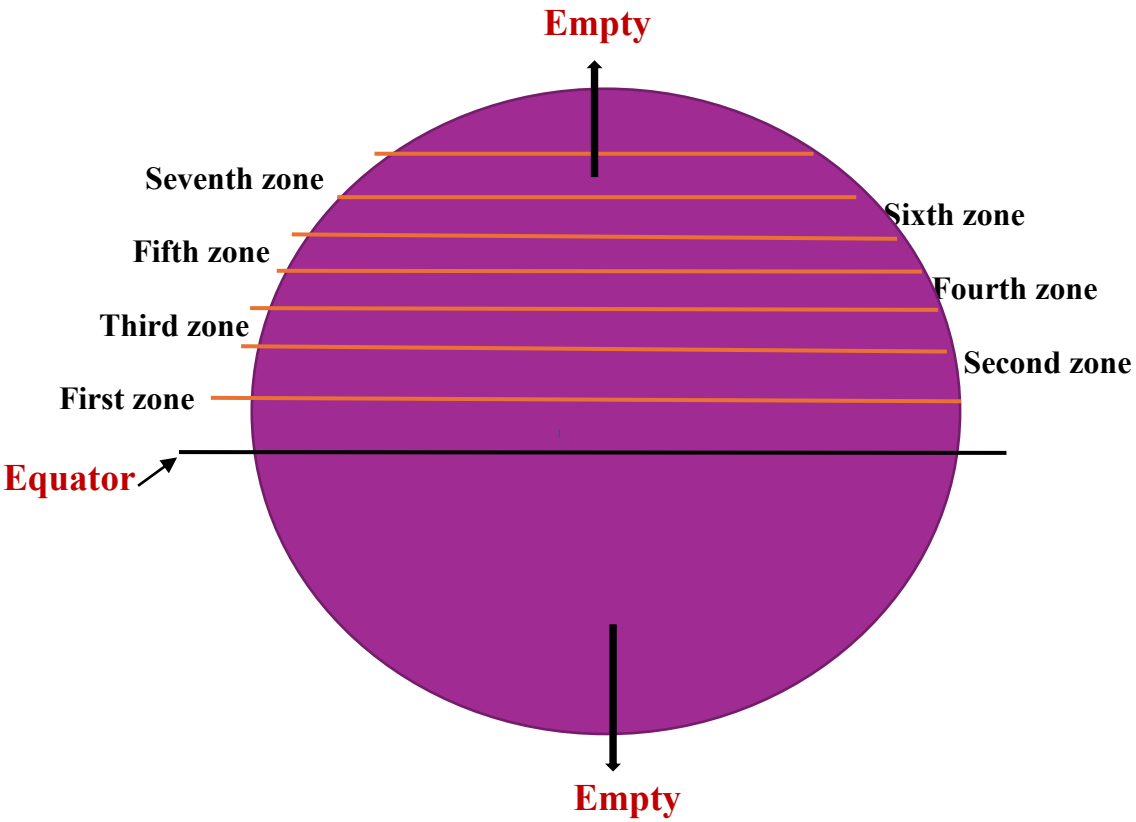


Figure 1: Khaldunian configuration of the seven zones (kisbwars)

The regions that enjoy abundance tend to be rich in civilization, as well as the comfort and wealth it brings. From a Khaldunian perspective, the overabundance of food and particularly a diet rich in heavy and fatty products provokes negative effects on the physical, intellectual, and spiritual character of individuals (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 65). The bodies and minds of the inhabitants of these areas are greatly affected by the excess foods they consume, widening and fattening their figures and corrupting their minds (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 65). Their ability to think becomes dull over time; *stupidity* and *carelessness* overtake their behaviors. This is the case of the inhabitant of the great cities of the Maghrib, including the Berbers. The people of Spain, on the other hand, whose diet lacks the seasonings, wheat, and butter so prevalent in Maghrebi cuisine, possess a better physical shape and are endowed with a unique sharpness of mind; features that they share with the populations of the rural regions of the Maghrib "who lead a frugal life such as the Masmudah Berbers and the inhabitants of as-Sus and Ghumarah" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 66).

The populations living in great precarity tend to be physically healthier and better in character due to the absence of the surplus of nourishment enjoyed by the more affluent inhabitants of the fourth zone. The residents of deserts and other remote and less plentiful areas, who are used to a harsh and difficult existence, tend to lead a lifestyle absent from the pleasures experienced by their counterparts in the more affluent locations. Ibn Khaldun describes them as being far more religious and spiritually minded than the populations who dwell in cities. Hunger and precarity are an antidote to the corrupting nature of overabundance and comfort on the body and the intellect.

> "Their complexions are clearer, their bodies cleaner, their figures more perfect, their character less intemperate, and their minds keener as far as knowledge and perception are concerned. This is attested by experience in all these groups. There is a great difference in this respect between the Arabs and Berbers (on the one hand), and the Veiled (Berbers) and the inhabitants of the hills

> (on the other). This fact is known to those who have investigated the matter" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 65).

In stark contrast to the temperate regions, the first, second, sixth, and seventh zones are, for the most part, bereft of civilization. Ibn Khaldun describes these areas as generally "unadvanced regarding material culture and intellectual shape of the inhabitants" (Pisev, 2019: 4). Their architecture, foodstuffs, clothing, and overall refinement attest to the fundamental differences between the middle zones and these far-flung regions. He argues that their remoteness is the main reason for their lack of refinement and culture. These inhabitants tend to be far from temperate in their character. He describes both the Sudanese and the Slavs, living respectively in the southern zones (first and second) and northern zones (sixth and seventh), as *wild* and closer to the state of "*dumb animals*" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:59).

For Ibn Khaldun, the adoption of a religious law is particularly crucial to the advancement and sophistication of culture. While he declared the dwellers of these zones to be uncultured, he is quick to mention that those living in close proximity to the temperate areas and who have adopted a religious law are the exception to the overall lack of civilization so prevalent in these zones. He mentions the Abyssinians and the "Berbers" of the country of Berbera, who are the neighbors of the Yemenites, as well as the Mali, the Gawgaw, and the Takrur as an example of such nations in the south. In the north, he cites the European Christians as well as the Slavs and Turkish nations who have embraced Christianity. It is obvious that by religious law, Ibn Khaldun is referring principally to those emanating from monotheistic religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and not so much other belief systems. This bias led him to not only ignore and minimize the impact of non-monotheistic religions, but to overlook the cultural complexity of the many other nations living in these zones.

> "All the other inhabitants of the intemperate zones in the south and in the north are ignorant of all religion. (Religious) scholarship is lacking among them. All their conditions are remote from those of human beings and close to those of wild animals" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:59).

The excessive heat found in the southern regions past the equator generates a dryness in the air that renders impossible "the power of generation" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:56). As all moisture evaporates, the possibility of generation is obliterated in all the minerals, plants, and animals in this part of the world. The cold, unlike the heat, is not imbued with a destructive nature. It is only when it reaches an excessive point and causes desiccation that it gains the same devastating effect as extreme heat. This explains why, in the Khaldunian geographical configuration, the sixth and seventh zones are more populated than the first and second ones that are located closer to the equator. Past the seventh zone, however, the excessive cold renders any region beyond the sixty-four degrees latitude uninhabitable (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:55).

Ibn Khaldun's interest in world geography was primarily motivated by his deep desire to uncover and explain the factors that influence the development of human society. He was, of course, a man of his time despite his desire to transcend the shortcomings inherent to the historiography of his epoch. His understanding of the world's geographical configuration was based on the information on world geography provided by the works of previous historians and geographers. His conception of the world, along a complex system of climatic zones, was a widely accepted idea amongst the scholars of medieval Muslim civilization. This configuration attributed to geography a colossal influence over the shaping of human society and culture. The known world encompassed at that time Afro-Eurasia, the landmass containing the African, European, and Asian continents. The proximity between these three entities rendered travel and trade possible. Many of the world's major trading routes zigzagged through Afro-Eurasia, facilitating cultural and political

contacts between the many nations located in these areas. "It would seem therefore, that in the medieval Muslim world the actual acquisition of geographical knowledge was incidental to travel for other purposes (…)" (Brauer, 1992: 84).

Travel played a central role in the medieval Muslim commercial world and was an important aspect of the lives of urban merchants. Voyage for commercial purposes motivated many men to visit the very edges of the Muslim world and beyond. The travels of Sinbad the Sailor, a highly imaginative tale from the perspective of a mariner visiting strange and magical realms, is an example of how popular travel accounts, from the most realistic to the more creative, were in Medieval Muslim society (Brauer, 1992:82). Most of the historical and geographical information collected by Greek, Roman, and later Muslim scholars related mainly to nations familiar to them, either through proximity or extensive trading contacts. With the exception of the few works produced by some intrepid travelers who ventured far from the beaten paths and into remote areas, most of the widely read historical works in scholarly circles concerned the nations located in the Mediterranean region or near trading routes.

> "It should be noted, however, that with one or two striking exceptions, (e.g. the descriptions of the Russian steppes, or perhaps of northern Europe) such travel, while enriching the literary value of a text, took the traveler to regions well within the orbit of Dar al-Islam[10], and within the ken of routine travel by Muslim merchants and pilgrims" (Brauer, 1992: 81).

This informed Ibn Khaldun's own geographical configuration of the world. His inhabited zones correspond to the widely explored areas within Afro-Eurasia, while the uninhabited parts are the locations either yet unexplored by Muslim travelers or with very little information available about them. These vast expanses unknown to geographers and historians were often the subject of

[10] Dar al-Islam (*the abode of Islam*) designates the territories governed according to Islamic law.

a great deal of fantasies, ranging from the most fantastical of tales to the absolutely uninformed. Many works belonging to the broader literature of Muslim geography encompassed for a long time various "myths and wondrous tales"; stories pertaining amongst other things to the *Qubba 'Arin* (the hypothetical center of the world), the presence of a "*terra incognita*" located on the southern edge of the Indian ocean, the rumored visit of Alexander to the Atlantic Isles, and the strange characteristics of the so-called Islands of the monkeys (Brauer, 1992: 84). It was not particularly unusual for travel accounts to contain exaggerated or false accounts about "*the savage and uncivilized ways*" of peoples who often appeared too strange and foreign to the authors of these works.

> "In addition, there were the *'aja'ib*, the marvels, and strange tales, so dear to the heart of raconteurs like al-Mas'udi and part of the material used to spice-up more prosaic accounts for the interests of readers with the tastes of the *'adab* culture" (Brauer, 1992: 84).

This is where Ibn Khaldun's sincere desire to overcome the limitations of Islamic historiography becomes apparent. His understanding of world geography and of its effects on the broader circumstances governing social organization was still to a certain degree beholden to that of previous historians. He subscribed to the idea that geography shapes much of human culture, and in doing so, adhered to the prevailing geographical determinism of his predecessors. Much like Mas'udi and many other scholars, he was convinced that climate dictates the character, temperaments, and even the intelligence of peoples. Where Ibn Khaldun broke ranks with his predecessors, however, was in his attempt to find a logical explanation to this phenomenon, rejecting in the process some widely accepted essentialist ideas that he deemed nonsensical, illogical, and without a shred of evidence to support them.

In his perspective, the differences of temperament observed amongst different nations are the result of the impact of climate upon the *animal spirit of man*. Emotions such as joy and

cheerfulness are caused by the "expansion and diffusion of the animal spirit" while sadness is the result of its shrinking (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 63). Heat, he explains, is known for expanding and thinning the air. When heat permeates the body, the spirit expands and one experiences indescribable joy and happiness. This explains why those living in the heat dominated first and second zones display a merrier and excitable disposition. Here, Ibn Khaldun is directly addressing the comments of Mas'udi, who in his attempt to understand what he perceived as an excess of levity amongst the black inhabitants of the first and second zones, stated "that the reason is a weakness of their brains which results in a weakness of their intellect", a hypothesis that Ibn Khaldun rejects as being "an inconclusive and unproven statement" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 63).

For him, all the inhabitants of the south and those of coastal regions, being exposed to heat, experience far greater joy and light-heartedness than the populations of cold and hilly countries. The Egyptians, he states, "are dominated by joyfulness, levity, and disregard for the future" in comparison to the melancholier people of Fez and its cold hills who are constantly preoccupied by what is to come (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 63). The Arabian Peninsula located in the first and second zones is aided, according to him, by the humidity emanating from the sea surrounding it from three sides. This reduces the dryness which then produces heat. The humidity in the air causes a certain cooling effect on the Arabian Peninsula, which makes the region "to some degree temperate" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 59).

It is important to highlight that Ibn Khaldun's position on the phenotypic diversity amongst humans is not based on biological presuppositions. On the contrary, he attributes these variations in human complexion to variables in the broader human condition and not biology. Geographical, environmental, and climatic factors are what influence the cultural and religious sophistication of human societies (Pisev, 2019:5). The physical characteristics of individuals, on the other hand, he

deems fluid and prone to alteration when the conditions change. He states that when inhabitants of the first and second zones relocate to the temperate zones or to the cold zones, the complexion of their descendants gradually becomes white, while those of the inhabitants of the sixth and seventh zones would progressively turn black if they were to settle in the temperate zones or the much hotter ones to the south (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 60).

In order to explain the differences between nations, the genealogists of the time stated that all of humanity owed its parentage to the three sons of Noah. They proclaimed all the inhabitants of the north to be descendants of Japhet, those of the temperate zones to be the progeny of Shem, and the black inhabitants of the South, those of Ham. This hypothesis originated from the *Isra'iliyyat*, stories from the Old and New Testaments that were used by some in Qur'anic commentaries and historical works. The genealogists, in their argument concerning the ancestry of human nations, referred to a story mentioned in the Torah pertaining to the second son of Noah. Ham was said to have been cursed by his father for a shameful act he had perpetrated against the latter. Inspired by this story, the genealogists interpreted the blackness of African populations as the very embodiment of the curse, even going so far as to legitimize their enslavement on that basis (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 59).

Further rejecting the prevailing essentialist view on human phenotypes, Ibn Khaldun rebuffs the hypothesis so dear to the genealogists (Pisev, 2019:5). He mentions in the third prefatory discussion of his *Muqaddimah* that the blackness of the populations of the first and second zones was often emphasized due to the unfamiliarity with their phenotypes amidst those whose works became fundamental to the field of history and who established its main conventions. They focalized on the blackness of their skin because they had reservations about the color. Being white themselves, "whiteness was something usual and common to them, and they did not see

anything sufficiently remarkable in it to cause them to use it as specific term" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 59). According to Ibn Khaldun, the belief of the genealogists that the differences between nations could only be explained by a difference in their parentage is what led them into error. "Distinctions between races or nations are in some cases due to a different descent, as in the case of the Arabs, the Israelites, and the Persians" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 61). At other times, the differences are due to the impact of geographical location; to illustrate this, he mentioned the differences between the Zanj, the Abyssinians, and the Slavs. In other cases, the variances observed are caused by customs and other unique characteristics. Those who attributed blackness to the curse mentioned in the Torah are, according to him, making baseless assumptions, since such a link is not even cited in the Qur'an. Thus, their ignorance of the true impact of climate upon all living things is why they came to such a facetious conclusion.

In the two first zones, the black skin so prevalent amongst the inhabitants "is the result of the composition of the air in which they live, and which comes about under the influence of the greatly increased heat in the south" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 59). Since people in these regions experience very harsh summers, their complexion became darker. A similar phenomenon is observed in the north, where the excessive cold of the sixth and the seventh zone caused their skin to turn white. "Further consequences of the excessive cold are blue eyes, freckled skin, and blond hair" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 60). He adamantly rejected the correlation between race and genealogy that was established and endorsed by the genealogists whom Ibn Khaldun accused of not having "knowledge of the true nature of things" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 61).

> "But to generalize and say that the inhabitants of a specific geographical location in the south or in the north are the descendants of such-and-such a well-known person because they have a common colour, trait, or physical mark which that forefather had, is one those errors caused by disregard, both of the true nature of created beings and of geographical facts. (There also

> is disregard of the fact that the physical circumstances and environment) are subject to changes that affect later generations" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 61).

4.2) The structure of '*Umran*

The driving force behind Ibn Khaldun's inquiry centers around the concept of '*umran*. "It is the keystone of the *Muqaddimah* and it completely structures its architecture" (Chabane, 2008: 332). The concept of *'umran* itself can be, at times, difficult to define, leading to quite a few different understandings of what Ibn Khaldun was alluding to exactly when he made it the focus of his new science. This polysemous concept tries to capture the essence of ever-changing and progressing social phenomena, which explains the confusion surrounding its correct definition. While much can get lost in translation, it is also very true that any translated work is often imbued with the presuppositions, biases, disciplinary perspectives, and ideologies of the author(s) involved in their translation.

Many of the commentators who translated the *Muqaddimah* defined '*umran* in a variety of ways. De Slane, Rosenthal, and Monteil employed 'civilization' as the English term for *'umran*. However, this generates some perplexity since it confuses the term with another significant concept in Ibn Khaldun's work "which is that of *hadara* which itself is translated by civilization" (Chabane, 2008:332). Muhsin Mahdi, the celebrated Islamologist, opted to use the term 'culture' as the English equivalent of '*umran*, while N. Nassar translated it instead as 'sociology'. Djamel Chabane proposed yet another perspective when he suggested 'urbanism' as a possible translation for '*umran*, offering a novel approach to the study of Ibn Khaldun's magnum opus in the process. This attests not only to the complexity of the concept itself, and the affluence of its subject-matter, but also how it can easily lead to a misinterpretation of Ibn Khaldun's work.

The necessity for human society rises, according to Ibn Khaldun, from man's desire to fulfil his physical needs. This drive to ensure one's own survival is what emboldens him to seek out the assistance of others. Consequently, society comes into existence as the result of the natural cooperation that occurs when people come together in a settlement, be it a city or a village (Yahaya, 2017: 20). Soon, the authority of a ruler, who enjoys influence amidst the other members, becomes necessary in order to ensure the fulfillment of the necessities of life within this society of cooperation. The adoption of a religious law is just as crucial as royal authority since it promotes good conduct throughout society, and in doing so, preserves its prosperity and security. A process begins within which society transits through certain stages, leading eventually to the emergence of civilization and its culture of refinement. Parallel to the burgeoning of such a culture occurs another process that leads to the growth and expansion of human life: rapid urbanization. The underpinnings of history find their roots in the happenings within human society, much in the same way *'umran* finds its origins in the cooperation that takes place between humans (Yahaya, 2017: 20). It is through the study of human association that Ibn Khaldun attempted to identify the conditions crucial to human existence. The cooperation between individuals is the engine behind the emergence of human society. This allowed him to distinguish the accidental conditions from the essential conditions that are vital to the occurrence of *'umran* or social organization.

> "It should be known that differences of condition among people are the result of the different way in which they make their living. Social organization enables them to co-operate toward that end and to start with the simple necessities of life, before they get to conveniences and luxuries" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91).

In his study of the development of human society, Ibn Khaldun establishes a clear distinction between what he calls a primitive social organization *('umran badawi*) and a civilized social organization *('umran hadari*). He posits that the differences observed between these two

came from inherent differences in people's conditions and the various ways in which they live. This in turn "colours the other aspects of a community, and distinguishes it from civilization" (Mahdi, 1964: 194). Primitive social organizations are found amongst populations living primarily through agriculture (cultivating vegetables and grains) or practicing animal husbandry with herds of sheep, cattle, and goats. Farming requires that one remains stationary, which is why it is often the primary source of livelihood of the inhabitants of small communities living in villages and hamlets. Amongst such people, one finds most of the Berbers and the non-Bedouin populations (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 92).

Animal husbandry, on the other hand, requires vast pastures where the herds can find enough subsistence and water. The practitioners of this lifestyle are "called 'sheepmen', that is, men who live on sheep and cattle" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 92). They roam vast expanses but do not venture too far into wastelands such as the deserts where their animals are not likely to find good pasture. Amongst them, Ibn Khaldun mentioned the Berbers, the Turks, the Turkomans, and the Slavs. The only ones who venture deep into the deserts are those who specialize in camel raising. The particular needs of their livestock compel them to seek out further into the sandy wastes the shrubs and salty water essential to the good health of their camels. The remoteness of the lands they roam and the solitude it engenders makes these camel nomads "the most savage human beings that exist" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 93). Amongst these peoples, Ibn Khaldun includes the Bedouins, the nomadic Berbers, the Zanatah, the Kurds, the Turkomans, and the Turks. However, of all these groups, the Bedouins, who are the only ones to live entirely on camels, are the most entrenched in desert life. They venture far deeper into the desert than the other groups whose livestock include sheep and cattle as well as camels. Ibn Khaldun states that when compared

to sedentary people, the camel nomads appear closer to "wild, untamable animals and dumb beasts of prey" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 93).

Bedouins are a *savage nation* whose character and nature are marred by the unrestrained *brutality* and *ferocity* of their *wanderlust-filled* existence. Their penchant for unfettered liberty at the detriment of authority, and their reticence toward the subservience demanded by leadership explain why their "natural disposition is the negation and antithesis of civilization" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 118). Their perpetual wandering in search of fertile pastures is incompatible with the rootage required to generate the bedrocks of sedentary society. Their lifestyle predicated on the fulfilment of bare necessities is, in many ways, anathema to the very basis of civilization. While buildings are central to sedentary life and the rapid urbanization that characterizes it, to the Bedouins these structures hold no particular import and are simply seen as a source of stones to support their cooking-pots and wood to use as tent poles (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 118).

Their *wildness* is further demonstrated by their proclivity for plunder and disorder. They are known to attack localities, raiding and ransacking them before returning to their hideouts in the desert. Ibn Khaldun mentions that topography plays an important role in the Bedouins' choice of target. Their pattern indicates a clear preference for cities and towns situated on flat land over those strongholds located on inaccessible and difficult terrains like mountains. Flat lands are in general easier to overrun and gain control over. When cities and towns built upon this type of environment possess no militia to ensure their protection or are ruled by a decaying and weakened dynasty, they easily fall prey to the repeated raids of the Bedouins (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 118).

When Bedouins attain superiority and royal authority over a nation, they now hold ample control to plunder without any political power to oppose them, putting the key components of civilization under pressure. Their rule is one characterized by the wholesale misappropriation of

that nation's possessions; "they make it the goal of their rule to profit (from their position) by taking away the property of the members of that nation" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 121). Fines on property and increased taxes are used as means of punishing crimes, placing profit and monetary gains at the heart of their societal management. Their indifference toward the need for laws to legislate society and provide an effective deterrent against misdeeds, exploitation, and oppression creates a state of anarchy in which the very existence of *'umran* becomes an impossibility. Their disregard also extends to labour, which is the real basis of profit and market economy: the backbone of sedentary life. Artisans, tradesmen, and other labourers often fall victim to the intimidation of Bedouins who resort to force instead of paying them for their work. "When labour is not appreciated and is done for nothing, the hope for profit vanishes, and no (productive) work is done" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 119). Craftsmen and professional workers soon leave these cities, where the value of their work is being ignored and disparaged, triggering a rapid dispersal of sedentary populations and the inevitable decay of civilization.

> "A nation dominated by the Bedouins is in a state no different from anarchy, where everybody is set against the others. Such a civilization cannot last and goes quickly to ruin, as would be the case in a state of anarchy as we have mentioned before" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 121).

Both those who live through agriculture and animal husbandry possess a basic social organization *('umran badawi*) that only fulfils their bare necessities; they are otherwise in the inability to achieve anything beyond those needs. These are mostly small self-sufficient communities relying on the simplest of foodstuffs for their sustenance. They fashion their handmade clothes from animal skins and "shelter themselves in caves, tents, or simple huts" (Mahdi, 1964: 194). Their lifestyle is one bereft of cities, market economy, literacy, or crafts. However, as the conditions of these people improve and they acquire more wealth, their

collaboration starts extending to things "beyond the bare necessities" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91). They begin to establish towns and cities which become far more elaborate as their talents for architecture improve; they build better houses, castles, and ramparts to enhance their safety. They become sedentary people and use the crafts or commerce to make a living, leading to the rise of a more complex social organization *('umran hadari*). They consume more and produce more. The crafts experience an extensive growth and become far more intricate; their architecture, culinary skills, and fashions change over time. A culture of refinement emerges involving finer cuisines, assorted clothes, including "silk and brocade", and other expensive materials (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91). "They earn more and live more conformably than Bedouins because they live on a level beyond the level of bare necessity, and their way of making a living corresponds to their wealth" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 92).

Ibn Khaldun posits, that in the various stages through which human society transits, the harshness of desert life heralds the comfort of sedentary life. Therefore, urbanisation is the ultimate goal to which Bedouins aspire. Their rudimentary lifestyle revolves primarily around the fulfilment of their bare necessities. It is a difficult life that leaves very little space for personal indulgences and luxuries. The basic needs of life supersede the superfluities of conveniences and luxuries. Thus, Bedouin life is the very basis upon which sedentary life is built. When Bedouins acquire the means to lead easier and more comfortable lives, they leave their desert life to settle in the cities and enjoy the conditions of luxury so prevalent in the towns of sedentary people.

> "Evidence for the fact that Bedouins are the basis of, and prior to, sedentary people is furnished by investigating the inhabitant of any given city. We shall find that most its inhabitant originated among Bedouins dwelling in the country and villages of the vicinity. Such Bedouins became wealthy, settled in the city, and adopted a life of ease and luxury, such as exists in the sedentary environment" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 93).

In many aspects, Ibn Khaldun sees the Bedouins as a people endowed with a far nobler character than sedentary folks. He states that their soul retained its first natural state of creation and was, for the most part, far removed from the evil habits man acquires through city life. The precarious state of their existence restricts their habits and customs to the assuaging of the basic necessities of life. Sedentary people, on the other hand, enjoy far greater comfort and ease; a life free from precarity gives them the ability to dedicate time and resources to the fulfilment of their wants and desires. This emphasis on pleasures and luxuries draws them away from good conduct and their souls gradually acquire "all kinds of blameworthy and evil qualities" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 94).

As their shortcomings increase and their conduct worsens, they relinquish all sense of restraint, and the usage of foul language and other improprieties become common place. Ibn Khaldun proclaims sedentary life to be the last stage of civilization upon which it begins to decay (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 94). Sedentary life does not only change the habits and behaviours of people, it also introduces laziness into their lives due to the ease and well-being they enjoy. Their natural vigilance decreases as they become much more comfortable in their lives. The practice of carrying weapons as a custom is rapidly abandoned since sedentary people prefer to delegate the responsibility for their protection to the ruler and the militias tasked with guarding them and preserving their safety. Therefore, successive generations are raised in this carefree spirit behind the walls of their fortified cities.

Bedouins, on the contrary, live in remote areas absent from the protection of any militia. They are responsible for their own safety and do not assign it to anyone else. Without any walled cities in which to seek refuge in the event of an attack, Bedouins carry weapons at all times, ready to defend themselves. "They go alone into the desert, guided by their fortitude, putting their trust

in themselves. Fortitude has become a character quality of theirs, and courage their nature" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 95). Sedentary life requires the rule of a leader to manage the affairs of the people. He does so through an ensemble of laws that are enforced through his authority. Ibn Khaldun believes that the emergence of laws in sedentary life had the capacity to destroy the fortitude of people and their ability to resist. When the domination of the ruler rests on a set of repressive and restrictive laws that are enforced through means of punishment, the resilience of the people is greatly damaged. When his authority is one imposed by brute force and intimidation, it deprives those living under such an oppressive regime of their power of resistance, replacing it instead with the unresponsiveness that characterises the condition of the oppressed.

> "When laws are (intended to serve the purposes of) education and instruction and are applied from childhood on, they have to some degree the same effect, because people then grow up in fear and docility and consequently do not rely on their fortitude" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 96).

According to Ibn Khaldun, both the law and education have a similar effect on the soul of sedentary people. In fact, he claims that sedentary life has a way of eroding the natural resistance and fortitude of individuals as they become accustomed to the restrictive nature of the laws that legislate their lives. Everything in their sedentary existence reiterates this authority. They are further deprived of their strength and resilience by the education they undertake as they seek training in the crafts, the sciences, as well as religious instruction (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 96). While they become well-versed in matters of worldly and religious knowledge, they lose the ability to defend themselves properly in the case of an attack. The natural resilience and courage that one finds amongst the Arab Bedouins, still living in remoteness and wondering the desert, is completely lacking amongst sedentary populations. This is further illustrated by Ibn Khaldun when he mentions how students, whose primary preoccupation is to study and learn from scholars, tend

to put all their efforts, time, and resources into acquiring knowledge but lose the talent for self-defence in the process (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 96).

He believes however, that when the laws are not imposed by means of punishment, and the authority of the ruler is one that is gentle and fair, the people are "guided by the courage or cowardice that they possess in themselves" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 95). As an example of this, he cites the case of the Sahaba, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), who, while observing the laws of Islam, did not experience a lessening of their courage and resilience. They received these religious edicts orally from the Prophet (Pbuh) and decided to act upon them due to their deep held belief in the truth of these commands and articles of faith. Their obedience and submission to these laws were not the result of practical instruction or education, but rather the product of their own volition. "Their fortitude remained unabated, and it was not corroded by education or authority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 96). With time, however, as more people turned to sedentary life, the sway of religion decreased, and people began to rely far more on the restraining power of laws. In the process, religious law became something one could acquire through education and a craft one could practice.

> "Clearly, then, governmental and education laws destroy fortitude, because their restraining influence is something that comes from outside. The religious laws, on the other hand, do not destroy fortitude, because their restraining influence is something inherent. Therefore, governmental and educational laws influence sedentary people, in that they weaken their souls and diminish their stamina, because they have to suffer them both as children and as adults. The Bedouins, on the other hand, are not in the same position, because they live far away from the laws of government instruction, and education." (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 96).

But the authority of a ruler, despite its capacity to generate oppression, is not always seen as detrimental to the lives of individuals from a Khaldunian perspective. In fact, he repeatedly states that man requires a restraining power, that "by necessity he must be dominated by someone

else" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 95). This becomes crucial in the context of sedentary life, where hostility and belligerence can only be managed through the authority and control of a government. The latter possesses the necessary power and resources to dissuade people from oppressing each other or infringing upon each other's rights. The ruler is also responsible for safeguarding the city from external attacks, be it through the erecting of fortifications, the creation of paid militias, or by mobilizing the inhabitants to defend their city.

Amongst the Bedouins, however, "the restraining influence comes from their *shaykhs* and leaders" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 97). Since Bedouins are the most rooted in desert life, they are, according to Ibn Khaldun, living in a state of savagery, which renders difficult the subordination required for the emergence of royal authority. Being used to very little control, they rebuff the influence someone else could exercise over them. Instead, every Bedouin zealously vies to be the leader. "There is scarcely one among them who would cede his power to another, even to his father, his brother, or the eldest member of his family" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 119). Being prideful, ambitious, and ruled by diverging personal aspirations makes the Bedouins a nation at the antipodes of royal authority. However, since members of the same tribe share a common descent, one finds amongst them a powerful group feeling or *'asabiyyah* that generates in their midst not only affection for one another but also solidarity and mutual help.

> "Compassion and affection for one's blood relations and relatives exist in human nature as something God put into the hearts of men" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 98).

'Asabiyyah provides the ability not only to defend oneself when attacked, but also the fortitude to resist subjugation and press one's rights when necessary. It has the advantage of facilitating mutual assistance and support amongst the members of the tribe while serving as a deterrent to the violence others could wish to inflict upon them. This results from of a natural

impulse in man, which is crucial in the creation of close-knit communities willing to protect one another at all costs. Their tribal leaders owe their influence solely to the '*asabiyyah* existing within the tribe. They must, however, show themselves gentle in their rule and avoid alienating their tribesmen or otherwise risk losing their compliance. The respect and reverence the leaders enjoy, allow them to exercise authority over the other members of the tribe. Their reliance on one another for the fulfilment of their bare necessities and protection creates a closeness that is further strengthened by the common descent they share. Since they must ensure the defence of their own settlements, lacking the fortifications of cities, every tribe relies on its young men to form a tribal militia tasked with protecting them from their enemies. Blood ties offer a powerful motivation to ensure that no harm comes to their blood relatives. This strengthens their determination and makes them much more committed to their fight, since the affection they have for their family and tribe surpasses all else.

> "This is because leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only though group feeling. Leadership over people therefore, must, of necessity, derive from a group feeling that is superior to each individual group feeling. Each individual group feeling that becomes aware of the superiority of the group feeling of the leader is ready to obey and follow him" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 101).

However, prophethood or sainthood amidst Bedouin tribes has the capacity to generate a restraining influence that could lead to the development of royal authority. Their natural state, which is free from the distorted habits man acquires in sedentary life, makes them prone to heed the commands of God when a prophet or a saint in their midst proclaims religious truth (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 120). The advent of a common religion reinforces their existing '*asabiyyah* while offering a restraining influence on the very qualities (haughtiness, jealousy, envy, rudeness, and pride) that hindered their ability to unite and willingly subordinate themselves to leadership.

This profound change triggers in them the desire to focus all their strength in service of their newfound religious devotion and to make its truth triumph; in the process, "they become fully united and acquire superiority and royal authority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 120).

While the Bedouins are, by their natural essence, as far removed from royal authority as possible, religion offers them the means to reach it. Ibn Khaldun uses as an example the advent of Islam in the Arab Peninsula where religion provided a spiritual bond between disparate Arab tribes and gave them a common cause for which to fight (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 126). Islam served as a unifying force and created a strong social cohesion amongst the Arab tribes joining the nascent Muslim nation. This unification allowed the pre-urban tribes to establish royal authority and commence sedentary life. The strength of their Bedouin *'asabiyyah* and the puissance of their religious mission allowed them to expand their territory and conquer previously settled groups (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91).

Ibn Khaldun proclaims desert life to be a generator of bravery and fortitude. Groups living in the remoteness of the desert exhibit a savageness that often assists them in imposing their superiority upon others. This ability, however, is lost when people settle in town and cities, start enjoying abundance, and become accustomed to a life of luxury. They become far less courageous as their former wildness is replaced with refinement. By their nature, human beings require within every social organization a restraining influence capable of keeping the peace and mediating when disputes arise. Such a person must be someone whose authority is supported and legitimized by '*asabiyyah*, otherwise he will be unable to exert power effectively. Royal authority differs from mere leadership. Such an authority, unlike leadership, which only means being a chief who is obeyed, entails having the capability to impose one's rule. Thus, royal authority entails having "superiority and the power to rule by force" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 108). Achieving leadership

amongst one's own group is the first step that leads to the attainment of dominance and the use of power; this can only be realised with the support of a strong '*asabiyyah.* Thus, for Ibn Khaldun, royal superiority is an end to which '*asabiyyah* leads.

Even in the context of a single group in which competing '*asabiyyah*'s operate, one far stronger than all the others will eventually impose itself and absorb all its rivals into a single greater '*asabiyyah*. This is crucial in order to avoid any splintering within the group that could lead to further discord and strife. Once such an '*asabiyyah* emerges, it will by its very nature seek to grow and expand, attempting to bring others into its fold. If the '*asabiyyahs* it encounters in its propagation are of equal strength and capable of staving off its challenge, then each group will remain confined to their own territory and maintain control over it (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 108). However, when one group is overtaken by another, their '*asabiyyah* merges with that of the victorious group, which only strengthens and exacerbates the desire of the winners for more power and supremacy.

This process goes on until the power of that particular '*asabiyyah* develops an authority and influence rivaling that of the ruling dynasty. "This is because such a nation is better able to achieve superiority and full control, and to subdue other groups" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 114). Ibn Khaldun stipulates that the Bedouins, Zanatah, Turkomans, Kurds, and the veiled Sinhajah who have no land of their own but roam around looking for lush pastures, lead an austere lifestyle, and possess a strong '*asabiyyah* are better positioned than most to overtake other nations and claim authority over them. These groups swarm across vast swaths of land and impose their superiority over distant nations (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 114). '*Asabiyyah* can then be said to generate the necessary strength for self-defence, promote resistance towards oppression, and inspire the courage to exhort ones' claims.

Once a tribe achieves a measure of superiority through its '*asabiyyah* and overtakes another group gaining control over them, their wealth and prosperity must now be shared with the tribe. Sometimes, however, instead of claiming royal authority for itself, and consolidating its power, the tribe chooses to submit to the ruling dynasty in exchange for receiving a share of the dynasty's affluence. The tribe contents itself with the newfound prosperity of its members; their previous austere and precarious life is replaced with one of abundance and ease "in the shadow of the ruling dynasty" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 109). They adopt the habits and customs of sedentary people. This leads to an erosion of their '*asabiyyah* and their natural fortitude. Their previous toughness, inspired by desert life, disappears a little more with each passing generation until it is completely destroyed. Luxury and their immersion in a life of ease and comfort shatters the strength of their '*asabiyyah*. "When group feeling is destroyed, the tribe is no longer able to protect itself, let alone press any claims" and will undoubtably be absorbed into other nations (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 109).

Meekness is another factor that could be a deterrent to the claiming of royal authority predicated on a powerful '*asabiyyah*. When a tribe becomes accustomed to submissiveness, its members lose the ability to defend themselves. "Those who are too weak to defend themselves are all the weaker when it comes to withstanding their enemies and pressing their claims" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 110). Another example of the detrimental influence of meekness on the path to royal authority can be found in the acceptance of imposts and taxes by a tribe. Ibn Khaldun declared taxation to be an oppression tolerated only by those too feeble to resist and fight against it. Only a tribe whose '*asabiyyah* has been greatly diminished and who is now rendered defenceless can accept the imposition of such a coercion. "When one sees a tribe humiliated by the payment

of imposts, one cannot hope that it will ever achieve royal authority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 111).

When the dynasty in power loses its influence and "grows senile", no longer reaping the benefits of the support and assistance of those who once shared in its '*asabiyyah*, the group enjoying a growing ascendancy eventually takes over, divesting the existing dynasty of its power before finally claiming royal authority for itself (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 108). This is the process through which a new rule is established. However, at times, a new group with a far greater '*asabiyyah* emerges while the dynasty has not yet decayed. This often coincides with a decrease in its influence, forcing the ruling dynasty to try and placate the various '*asabiyyahs* in an attempt to control the situation. It becomes necessary for the dynasty to include much more significantly in its various projects, the groups endowed with a powerful enough '*asabiyyah* to compete with theirs; thus, making them officially their clients. A lesser royal authority arises that co-exists with that of the main ruling dynasty without however completely overtaking it; this was the case of the Turks in their relationship with the Abbasids.

> "It is thus evident that royal authority is the goal of groups feeling. When it attains that goal, the tribe (representing that particular group feeling) obtains royal authority, either by seizing actual control or by giving assistance (to the ruling dynasty) according to the circumstances prevailing. If the group feeling encounters obstacles on its way to the goal, it stops where it is, until God decides its fate" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 109).

Amongst the unique characteristics of man, one finds his natural disposition for logical reasoning and his desire to establish royal authority due to its immense social implications. Political and royal authority, as well as divine laws not only promote virtuousness but also guarantee the upholding of man's best interests (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 112). Due to the significance and impact of royal authority on the very fabric of human society, Ibn Khaldun

declared good qualities as an indispensable prerequisite for the founding of political and royal authority. Only someone who has the advantage of being supported by a powerful '*asabiyyah* while being endowed with praiseworthy qualities can be deemed ready to assume royal authority.

The absence of admirable and exemplary qualities, on the other hand, would represent a major flaw in any individual invested with the burden of authority. Amongst these qualities Ibn Khaldun lists the desire for decency and integrity, generosity, forgiveness of mistakes, tolerance, fairness, humility and care toward the poor and the weak, patience, faithful application of obligations, responsiveness to the grievances of petitioners, implementation of the law (religion), dedication to divine worship, hospitality toward guests, respect for religious scholars, elders, and teachers, as well as acknowledgement of the truth and those who proclaim it (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 112). He also mentions that vices such as fraud, deviousness, deceit, and the evading of obligations are shortcoming to be avoided in the fulfillment of royal authority.

According to Ibn Khaldun, when vices and blameworthy actions become widespread in a nation, it is usually a sign that presages an imminent loss of royal authority. Tribes possessing a powerful '*asabiyyah* are eager to promote behaviours and customs that encourage virtuousness amongst their members. Respect and fairness are central to the idea of righteousness tribes aspire to. As such, it is deemed crucial to treat everybody fairly and justly according to their station in society. Scholars and pious individuals are respected as a source of knowledge and guidance in matters of religious law. They are also admired for their role in encouraging virtue through their exemplary conduct. Merchants are appreciated for the benefits of their profession, which is seen as useful and valuable. "Strangers are respected out of generosity and in order to encourage them to undertake certain kinds (of activity)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 113). When those imbued with a potent '*asabiyyah* abide by these principles, they exhibit the undeniable sign of their readiness

to assume political leadership. Hence, the first element to wither in a tribe invested with royal authority, "when God wants to deprive its members of their royal and governmental authority, is respect for such people" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 113). When the desire for virtuousness ceases and corruption and depravity are no longer being avoided, one can anticipate the inevitable erosion of royal authority and eventually its disappearance.

In some cases, however, the loss of political authority does not lead to its complete evaporation. When a tribe first acquires royal authority and imposes its rule over other nations, a group within the tribe is chosen to assume the throne. Over the years, they indulge in all the abundance and luxury of their life of ease and use their companions to further the interests of their dynasty. But as decay sets in, their original prowess fades away, and their strength is sapped by their continual submergence in luxury. "They reach their limit, the limit that is set by the nature of human urbanization and political superiority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 115). But not everybody in the tribe experiences the same woes. Those who were not single out to become the rulers and remained far away from the government, avoid the crippling senility experienced by the ruling dynasty. Their strength remains intact and their '*asabiyyah* strong. They find themselves in a privileged position and can now vie for the royal authority "from which they had been kept until now by a superior power within their own group (…)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 115). Once their superiority is recognized, they seize the power for themselves. Then the cycle starts all over again as the once powerful group finds itself slowly eroding from the inside out by the same life of ease, luxury, and abundance that destroyed their predecessors; all the while watching a new group rise from within the tribe seeking to topple their decaying dynasty. For Ibn Khaldun, luxury ultimately weakens royal authority and leads to its fall.

> "Royal authority thus continues in a particular nation until the force its group feeling is broken and gone, or until all its groups

> have ceased to exist. That is how God proceeds with regards to life in this world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 115).

Vanquished nations that come under the control of another tend to imitate the unique attributes of the victor. It is not unusual to see them adopt and assimilate the customs of those who now claim royal authority over them. Ibn Khaldun posits that this phenomenon is due to the perception of superiority and excellence projected by the victor. "The reason for this is that the soul always see perfection in the person who is superior to it and to whom it is subservient" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 116). Impressed by the success of the victor, that they attribute to his brilliance and prowess, the vanquished mistakenly ascribe their own subservience not to the defeat they've incurred at his hands, but rather his supposed superiority. When this belief becomes entrenched in their hearts and minds, they become convinced that the victor must possess superior customs and manners which provide him the supremacy he enjoys.

Ignoring the immense role played by '*asabiyyah* and the fortitude it generates in the conqueror's success, they conform to his lifestyle and embrace his beliefs. Therefore, the vanquished assimilate themselves to the victor in all aspects (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 116). The hope, vitality, and vigor that was once theirs quickly give way to apathy as they lose control over their affairs and instead become dependent upon their new masters. This new condition engenders tremendous hopelessness and shatters their natural '*asabiyyah*; the defeat not only erodes their strength, rendering them incapable of defending themselves but also makes their enslavement and oppression possible. Such a nation will, under the impact of defeat, witness its civilization decline as all the activities (business, crafts, etc..) that once sustained it dwindle until they eventually disappear.

> "With their strength dwindling under the impact of defeat, people become unable to defend themselves. They become the victims of anyone who tries to dominate them, and a prey to anyone who has

> the appetite. It makes no difference whether they have already reached the limit of their royal authority or not" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 117).

'Umran hadari is superior to *'umran badawi* which only provides the bare necessities of life. This often renders Bedouins dependent on the urban populations who enjoy a far more affluent lifestyle. Neither agriculture nor animal husbandry stimulate the development of the crafts in their midst. As a result of this, their existence, in many ways, is closely linked to that of the sedentary populations with whom they trade. Their mostly small and self-sufficient communities rely heavily on harvested grains and assorted animal products such as milk, wool, and hides that they sell to urban populations in exchange for money, since they do not coin their own currency. Due to the uneven nature of this relationship mainly predicated on the dominance of the urbanites, Bedouins "need the cities for their necessities of life" while city dwellers need them for "conveniences and luxuries" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 122). As long as the Bedouin tribes remain in the desert and do not seek to gain royal authority or control over the cities, they will continue to be dominated.

When the ruler or the political leadership in the city demands their obedience and asks them to labour in favour of the city's interests, they have no other choice but to submit. The ruler often resorts to the promise of profit and monetary gain as a way of persuading the Bedouin tribes to obey him and gaining their collaboration. The money is then used by the Bedouins to acquire supplies and provisions from the city, and in doing so they further empower and enrich the city dwellers and their civilization (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 122). At other times however, when the Bedouins' collaboration is not so forthcoming, the ruler can incite discord amongst them by allying himself with one group at the detriment of the others. In doing so, the ruler takes advantage of the Bedouin's fear of impending instability and insecurity that could make their precarious lifestyle even more difficult. Each Bedouin tribe occupies a certain territory that they protect fervently from

others. To be usurped of one's land means that one finds himself forced to roam into districts that are already inhabited by other tribes, which can easily lead to deadly conflicts and further destitution. Through his choice of allies, the ruler is signaling to the rest of the Bedouins that they shall be excluded from the favours granted to his allies if they persist in their recalcitrance. Since each Bedouin tribe is eager to avoid the decline prompted by the uncertainty and precarity that such a situation could provoke, they find themselves forced to obey to the authority of the city and its ruler.

> "(These Bedouins) often cannot leave particular districts (and go) to other regions, because all of them are (already) inhabited by (other) Bedouins who usurped them and kept others out of them. They have, therefore, no hope of survival except by being obedient to the city. Thus, they are of necessity dominated by the urban populations" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 122).

Ibn Khaldun's fundamental interest in both the *Muqaddimah* and the *Kitab al-'Ibar* focused on providing an explanation for the formation and decline of Maghrebian and Arab states (Alatas, 2014: 22). In his study of the rise and fall of north African states, Ibn Khaldun compared the *'umran* or social organization of pastoral nomadic societies to that of sedentary societies. He theorized that the differences observed between the two can be attributed to inherent differences in their *'asabiyyah*. "Ibn Khaldun's thesis was that groups with strong '*asabiyyah* could establish political rule over those with weak '*asabiyyah*" (Alatas, 2014:22). He saw the progression from *'umran badawi* to *'umran hadari* as a natural process where the advent of a sedentary lifestyle is, in fact, the desired outcome of Bedouin life. He postulated that all human societies evolve from a rather primitive lifestyle toward a far more complex one, entailing grand cities, sophisticated cultures, and an opulent lifestyle.

4.3) ‘Asabiyyah and royal authority

According to Ibn Khaldun, the concept of *‘asabiyyah* plays an essential role in the development and establishment of any political system. *‘Asabiyyah* refers to the social bond that provides stability and strength to social groupings; it is not only born of consanguineal relations, but is also social, psychological, physical, and political. The superior *‘asabiyyah* enjoyed by nomadic Bedouins gave them a stronger social cohesion than the sedentary groups living in urban areas where they’ve established their dynasties. This strong social cohesion gave them both “the aggressive and defensive strength” necessary to eventually take over sedentary groups with a weakened *‘asabiyyah* (Mirawdeli, 2015:84). A diminished social bond leaves settled groups at the mercy of nomadic/pre-urban Bedouin tribes. These tribes often rely on the cities of the settled groups to acquire the basic necessities of life. This scarcity resulting from their precarious lifestyle promotes cooperation and mutual reliance amongst the members of the tribe, which creates a stronger and more vigorous ‘*asabiyyah*.

Ibn Khaldun states that royal authority and the dynastic power it produces can only be obtained through *‘asabiyyah*. The natural reluctance of people vis-à-vis any form of ruling power requires a source of superiority that forces them to submit to its will. The emergence of a dynastic power is, at first, interpreted as something strange and peculiar that elicits rejection and apprehension. However, once royal authority is established, and over time passed on through various generations and dynasties, the initial hesitancy and averseness are forgotten; submission toward royal authority becomes a firmly held belief amongst the populace. “People will fight with them on their behalf, as they would fight for the articles of faith” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 124). The advent of royal authority, however, is determined by the demographic characteristics of the lands upon which a dynasty wishes to establish its realm. Ibn Khaldun postulates that the presence

of various tribes and groups in any given territory can be a deterrent to the founding of an efficacious royal authority. Due to the existence of competing opinions, desires, and *'asabiyyahs*, there is no shortage of opposition and rebellion susceptible of hampering the efforts to consolidate the authority and influence of a dynasty upon the land and its people.

> "Each group feeling exercises its own authority and superiority over the people and family adhering to it. Not every group feeling has royal authority. Royal authority, I reality, belongs only to those who dominate subjects, collect taxes, send out (military) expeditions, protect the frontier regions, and have no one over them who is stronger than they. This is generally accepted as the real meaning of royal authority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 152).

To illustrate this reality, Ibn Khaldun compares the Muslim conquest of Ifriqiyah[11] and the Maghrib to that of Egypt and Syria. The population of the former is primarily composed of Berber tribes prone to rebellion and mischief. "The first (Muslim) victory over them and the European Christians (in the Maghrib) was of no avail" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 131). In the case of the Berber tribes particularly, their strong *'asabiyyah* as well as their obstinate and rebellious nature made them prone to revolt. They persisted in their resistance, rising up time and time again, rebelling and seceding from the Muslim empire. When finally, Islam became a widely accepted religion amongst them, they often embraced unorthodox religious opinions and, for the most part, remained quite unmanageable. Therefore, it took the Arabs a long time to firmly establish their rule over Ifriqiyah and the Maghrib.

In Syria, however, where the population is mainly composed of town and city dwellers, once the Muslim army conquered the land, they were unable to muster the same kind of opposition the Muslims faced in the Maghrib. Unlike the Berber tribes still beholden to a strong *'asabiyyah*, these settled populations were easier to submit as they were not only accustomed to royal authority

[11] Ifriqiyah was a term used during medieval times to designate an area including modern-day eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

but were also deprived of any power they previously possessed once the Muslim armies defeated their militias. The same can be said of Egypt, where there were very few tribal groups and dissidence was rarely observed amongst the Egyptian population. The land being ruled by a Turkish dynasty, the sultans succeeded each other, but the power remained staunchly in the hands of the dynasty. Royal authority was not only firmly established in Egypt but was also rarely, if ever, challenged. Ibn Khaldun speculates that the preference for tranquility and harmony over resistance and recalcitrance observed amongst the inhabitants of Syria and Egypt is the natural result of the fulfilment of royal authority.

> "When people have acquired royal authority, they no longer do the tiresome chores they had been used to undertake while still in search of it" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 133).

Once royal authority is achieved, people seek to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Finding enjoyment in their new condition entails adopting customs focused on the production of luxuries. The development of the crafts owes much to this desire as people focus their efforts on the elaboration of new fashions and culinary traditions, sprawling gardens, extravagant dwellings, impressive castle, and much more. They become accustomed to this life of comfort and luxury and "pass it on to later generations" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 133). Every subsequent generation attempts to outshine the previous ones in these matters. The bigger the realm of a dynasty, the greater the amount of luxuries enjoyed by its people, which renders them less prone to rebelliousness and lot more docile. It can be said then that lands inhabited by tribal groups with various competing *'asabiyyahs* often represent a challenge for the establishment of royal authority and dynastic power.

> "On the other hand, it is easy to establish a dynasty in lands that are free from group feelings. Government there will be a tranquil affair, because rebellions are few, and the dynasty there does not

> need much group feeling. This is the case in contemporary Egypt and Syria" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 131).

If at first a ruler requires the help and support of his own people to claim power, this relationship changes drastically later on. In the early days of the dynasty, he remains close to his people, whose loyalty and obedience he can always count on. They fight for him, help him gain royal authority, and strive to put down any rebellions against his authority. In return, he appoints them to various administrative positions, shares with them the important affairs of the state, and welcomes their participation in the government. However, in the later stages of the dynasty, when obedience to the government becomes an almost sacrosanct principle that cannot be defied, doubted, violated, or questioned, the ruler does not require *'asabiyyah* as much to maintain his power. He, increasingly, becomes independent of his own people, and begins to perceive them as a possible threat to his authority due to their common descent, which gives them an equally valid claim to royal authority.

In order to retain his influence over the government, he begins to rely on the help from other tribal groups who have become clients of the dynasty, or followers "who grew up in the shadow and power of group feeling" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 124). To prevent his people from ever seizing power by toppling him, he reduces their involvement in state affairs and replaces them with other supporters, "not of his own kin" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 146). The ruler must at all costs gain the support and loyalty of his new allies; without any *'asabiyyah* to ensure their trustworthiness and elicit their devotion, he must use the promise of financial rewards and lucrative allyship to persuade them. He appoints them to all the important administrative positions that he previously stripped from his kin. He handpicks his new followers for all the advantages offered by royal authority and bestows upon them royal titles, properties, and other rewards he denies to his kinfolk. Eventually, they become his *wazirs* (ministers), generals, and tax collectors.

> "The feeling of the people of the dynasty become diseased as a result of the contempt in which they a held and the hostility of the ruler. They hate him and await the opportunity of a change in his fortune. The great danger inherent in this situation reverts upon the dynasty. There can be no hope it will recover from that illness. The (mistakes of the) pas grow stronger with each successive generation and lead eventually to loss of the (dynasty's) identity" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 147).

Ibn Khaldun mentions the case of the Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties, who followed a similar pattern. By the time al-Mu'tasim and his son al-Wathiq came to power, the Arab *'asabiyyah* that first led to the birth of the Abbasid dynasty had all but disappeared. During their respective reigns, it became increasingly necessary for both of them to rely on the help of the Persians, Turkish, Daylam, and Seljuks in order to maintain their control over the government. As the influence of their non-Arab clients grew over the realm, their authority shrank considerably, no longer extending beyond the vicinities of Baghdad (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 124). More and more, the Abbasid caliphs came under the influence of their non-Arab allies. The Daylam were the first to gain control of Baghdad and its surroundings, officially seizing control over the very heartland of the Abbasid dynasty. The Seljuks were next to grab the power after the fall of the Daylam, and like them, took control of the reigning Abbasid caliphs, effectively ruling through them. Finally, the Tatars, in their onslaught, overran what remained of the Abbasids, killing their last caliph and effectively wiping out the remaining vestiges of their dynasty (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 124).

In the case of the Umayyads in Spain, once their original Arab *'asabiyyah* decayed and fell apart, they followed in the footsteps of the Abbasids and, like them, attempted to use other groups as clients to preserve their power. They called upon the Zanatah and other Berber Tribes of North Africa to replenish their ranks. As the Umayyad power in Spain further weakened, these tribes gained an increasingly larger share of the royal authority; eventually grabbing entire sections of the country for themselves and founding their own states. A plethora of smaller independent

Muslim principalities (known as *taifas*) emerged, dividing up the once sprawling Umayyad territory. Over time, their own *'asabiyyah* started to weaken and crumble as they started enjoying "the pleasures of the body, and the joys of the soul" awarded by royal authority (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 122). When the *taifas* came under the attack of Alfonso VI, king of León and Castile, they were unable to resist his assaults and persistent encroachment on their territories. Much like their Umayyad predecessors, they called upon the Almoravid Berber tribe of North Africa to help them withstand these attacks. The Almoravid, unlike them, were still animated by their Lamtunah Berber *'asabiyyah* and were able to not only defeat Castile but also annexed the *taifa* principalities of Iberia, founding in the process their own dynasty.

> "They obliterated all traces of (the small princes) who were unable to defend themselves because they had no (longer any) group feeling…." (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 125).

Ibn Khaldun suggests a reciprocal relationship between a group's *'asabiyyah*, its numerical strength, and the scale of its dynastic expansion. He posits that the initial number of adherents to a common *'asabiyyah* plays an important role in the overall size of the realm they'll manage to acquire. Groups endowed with large numbers of individuals have the advantage of spreading over vast swaths of land. Such groups tend to establish a wider royal authority encompassing many regions and provinces. This was the case of the Arabs who founded the first Muslim dynasty. When the Arab tribes of Arabia united under the banner of Islam, they became a tremendous power that neither the Persians nor the Byzantines, the greatest dynasties of that time, could resist. They proceeded to expand their realm into the East, the Maghrib, and Spain; officially gaining a foothold in all the seven climatic zones of Ibn Khaldun's geographical configuration.

The overall reach of a dynasty is incumbent on the number of individuals at its disposal who can seize territories on its behalf. It is only when a dynasty can call upon a large quantity of

individuals willing to fight for its interests that it can properly establish its authority and influence over a sizable realm. Once its members have spread over these regions, they are tasked with not only protecting these new acquisitions from the ambitions of their rivals but also reiterating the authority of the dynasty through the enforcement of its laws. Expansion only remains possible as long as its members are not "exhausted when distributed over border regions and territories" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:128). As long as the dynasty can ensure the military protection of each region of its expanding realm, it maintains its capacity for further expansion. However, when it can no longer provide military protection to the various holdings in its increasingly larger territory, the dynasty has reached its limit and can no longer go any further. Ibn Khaldun gives as an example of this phenomenon the expansion of the Arabs at the dawn of Islam. The unified Arab tribes formed a very large coalition that rapidly overran their neighbours in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt before annexing India, Abyssinia, Ifriqiyah, the Maghrib, and Spain. The Muslim empire only reached its farthest expansion once its members were exhausted and could no longer undertake any further conquests.

> "Thus, the expansion and power of a dynasty correspond to the numerical strength of those who obtain superiority and the beginning of the rule. The length of its duration also depends upon it. The life of anything that comes into being depends upon the strength of its temper. The temper of dynasties is based upon group feeling. If the group felling is strong, the (dynasty) temper likewise is strong, and its life of long duration. Group feeling, in turn, depends on numerical strength" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 130).

Larger dynasties have the advantage of lasting longer than smaller ones, as they are able to better endure the consequences of decay once it sets in. The collapse of any dynasty starts usually in the outlying regions, since it is always stronger at its center than it is at its peripheries. A dynasty occupying a vast territory will collapse in several stages, where each region will fall in its own

time, before the center is ever affected. “Each defection that occurs necessarily requires a certain time”, which overall extends the duration of the collapse in progress (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:130). This occurrence could be observed in the case of the Abbasids and Umayyads whose rule only crumbled after the 10th century. As a dynasty grows weaker, it will first lose the regions located in its farthest frontiers, leaving the center for the most part intact.

When Syria, then belonging to the Byzantine empire, fell in the hands of the Muslims, the Byzantine dynasty continued to survive despite this loss. Since its center, and the heart of its power and influence, was located in Constantinople, their rule continued with little disruption, notwithstanding the peripheral loss it had experienced (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:129). However, when The Muslims conquered al-Mada’in (Ctesiphon), which was the seat of power of the ruling Persian dynasty, the entire empire crumbled in the aftermath of such a loss. Once its center was compromised, retaining control over the remote and far-flung provinces was of no benefit to Yazdjard who became the last Sasanian king.

> “The situation of later dynasties was the same. Each dynasty depended on the numerical strength of its supporters. When its numbers were exhausted through expansion, no further conquest or extension of power was possible. This how God proceeds with His creatures” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:129).

Ibn Khaldun gives to religion a particularly important role in the establishment of larger dynasties. He suggests that the founding of this type of royal authority often finds its origin in religion. According to him, religious proclamations have the advantage of promoting co-operation and mutual support while discouraging jealousy and envy amongst those belonging to a shared *‘asabiyyah*. Religion provides them with a common goal and purpose for which to strive, and their outlook becomes one focused on unity and the achievement of the groups’ objectives. This newfound resolve gives them an advantage over other dynasties lacking in religious colouring.

Even when they possess larger armies, dynasties can be overrun by smaller groups imbued with a religious mission and a unique ethos of unity and cohesion. “They are overpowered by them and quickly wiped out, as a result of the luxury and humbleness existing among them, as we have mentioned before” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:126).

This is illustrated by the events surrounding the very early Muslim conquests. Despite outnumbering the Muslim armies at al-Qadisiyah and Yarmuk, neither the Persian troops nor those of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius could withstand the Muslim assaults that ended in their defeat and the annexation of their territories. So, it can be said that religion provides a dynasty, particularly during its emergence, another power to rely on in addition to its foundational *‘asabiyyah* (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:126). One should not, however, lose sight of the role of *‘asabiyyah* in the advent of a religious proclamation. Much like royal authority requires *‘asabiyyah* to establish itself, so does religion. The foundations of dynasties are built on the group feeling of tribes and families; similarly, any prophet imbued with a religious mission requires the support and protection of tribes and groups (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:127). Such was the case of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) who benefited from the protection of his tribe, the Banu Hashim, to shield him from the threat of physical violence in the early years of his religious mission. The same is also true for those engaged in religious reforms. When such individuals call for change and the proscription of sinful behaviours, they risk provoking the wrath of the authorities, who often interpret their exhortations as disruptive and a possible source of dissention. Without a strong and well-established *‘asabiyyah* upon which to rely on for support and protection, they risk being persecuted and killed (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:127).

> “The role of religious ideology, then, lies in its significance as necessary “additional power” that supports the struggle of a powerful asabiyyah, the Quraysh in the case of Islam, to overpower those groups that are equal or superior to it in

> strength(…) Furthermore, according to Ibn Khaldun, religious ideology can materialize only if it conforms with and responds to the material conditions and needs of the life of the society it addresses. Islam was successful not only because Muhammad belonged to a dominating "house" with a powerful asabiyya (…) but also because his teachings were congruent with the desert vision and material reality of the Arabs" (Mirawdeli, 2015:97).

States, in the Khaldunian theory of state formation, are established through the achievement of royal authority and the subjugation of dynasties by a group bonded together through not only an *'asabiyyah*, based on consanguineal relations but also the power of religious coloring. Therefore, the first stage of dynastic power is desert life (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:138). Once royal authority is attained, sedentary life and the many enjoyments it allows become a possibility. Sedentary culture is primarily predicated on the production of conveniences and luxuries. With a large number of individuals living in close proximity in cities and towns, the production of goods increases, and a large quantity of surplus labor becomes available for the manufacturing of luxuries. "Sedentary culture is merely a diversification of luxury and a refined knowledge of the crafts employed for its diverse aspects and ways" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 138).

After conquering the Persians and the Byzantines, the Arabs who previously had no sedentary culture started to develop one of their own. The skilled craftsmen found amongst these newly subjugated populations were now at the disposal of their conquerors, who not only employed them but also learned from their vast repository of knowledge (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:139). As their realm increased in size and more dynasties fell to their onslaught, the Arabs' life became far more complex and diversified. The previous austerity of their desert life gave way to the abundance of sedentary life. Like so many others before them, the refinement in their clothing, commodities, architecture, music, furnishings, and their weaponry indicated their

passage from a primitive desert life to a genuinely sedentary culture (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 139).

The larger a dynasty is, the more significant and impactful will be its sedentary culture. Dynasties not only inherit power from their predecessors, but they also acquire certain cultural elements from one another. The Arab Umayyads and Abbasids acquired the sedentary culture of the Persians after the Islamic conquest of Persia. The sedentary culture of the Umayyads that flourished in Spain was in large parts appropriated by the Almohad and Zanatah kings of the Maghrib. The lavish culture of the Abbasids, on the other hand, was inherited by the Daylam, the Seljuks, the Turkish sultans of Egypt, and the Tartars in Iraq. "All the elements of sedentary culture are, thus, proportionate to the greater or smaller extent of royal authority" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 140). Ibn Khaldun establishes a relationship between royal authority and sedentary culture, but also a correlation between the latter and luxury. According to him, sedentary culture allows for the emergence of luxury. Luxury itself is the natural by-product of "wealth and prosperity; and wealth and prosperity are the consequences of royal authority and related to the extent of territorial possessions which the people of a particular dynasty have gained" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 140).

He also asserts that the development of all these superfluities eventually becomes the very catalyst that triggers the degeneration of the dynasty and leads to the decline of its power and strength. The increasing wealth and power provided by royal authority erodes the roughness and the simple devotion and allegiance that rendered the original group so successful in their quest. By its very nature, royal authority has a tendency to accumulate luxury and claim all eminence for itself. In the early days of their pursuit, when the realization of royal authority was still a common purpose, all the members of the group contributed to this effort. They all aspired "to gain the upper hand over others and to defend their own possessions (…)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 133). They

were willing to put their lives on the line and considered death met in the quest of such a righteous goal, honorable and praiseworthy (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 134). However, once royal authority is established, the glory awarded by this position finds itself firmly in the hands of an individual, at the detriment of the other members of the group. He is now in a position to hoard all power and profit while excluding others from it. This drastic change in the group's dynamic causes despondency amongst the people who lose their initial ambitiousness, audacity, and bravery, embracing instead meekness and servitude as they are further precluded from royal authority.

The following generation grows up in this new dynamic and becomes further reliant on the government. Where before all efforts were dictated by *'asabiyyah* and ensuring the group's survival and success superseded all other objectives, the ruler must now allocate payments for military service and support in order to guarantee the protection of the realm. The people increasingly grow accustomed to luxuries and soon their expenses exceed their incomes (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 134). When they are asked to contribute to expenditures such as those incurred by the state during wartime, they are unable to do so, and the ruler must now rely on penalties such as the confiscation of assets to replenish the coffers of the state. As the situation of the people becomes unsound, due to the insufficiency of their incomes and their soaring expenses, the ruler has no other choice but to offer them financial assistance by increasing their allowances.

> "The amount of tax revenue, however, is a fixed one. It neither increases nor decreases. When it is increased by new customs duties, the amount to the collected as a result of the increase has fixed limits (and cannot be increased again). And when the tax revenues must go to pay for recently increased allowances that had to be increased for everybody in view of new luxuries and great expenditure, the militia decreases in number from what it had been before the increase in allowances" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 134).

As the militia decreases and their ability to protect the realm in its entirety is severely hindered, the dynasty weakens. Vassal states and tribes, who were previously under its control,

find in this new situation an opportunity to free themselves from the dynasty's yoke. The newer generations no longer having the same desire for expansion and lacking the roughness and rapaciousness of their ancestors are less likely to press their claims over others, which only further emboldens rebellion against the dynasty (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 135). Ibn Khaldun attributes the psychological dimension of this generational shift in leadership to a profound change in the character of the people. They unlearn the customs of desert life that they inherited from previous generations and steadily forget the old virtues.

The very qualities that led them to the attainment of royal authority give way to traits pointing instead toward retrogression (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 135). There is no longer any difference between the descendants of the tribes and those of regular city dwellers. The remnants of their earlier desert life can only be found in the fighting skills they've managed to retain and the emblems they carry. Their previously robust military defence is, by now, all but exhausted and no longer elicits fear amongst their enemies. In the meantime, the people continue to adopt all manners of newer forms of lavishness and sedentary culture. The dynasty starts to show "symptoms of dissolution and disintegration. It becomes affected by the chronic diseases of senility and finally dies" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 135).

According to Ibn Khaldun, the lifespan of dynasties is in some respect comparable to that of individuals. He claims that typically a dynasty never lasts beyond the lifecycle of three generations. When referring to the concept of generation, he declares the duration of a single generation to be similar to that of the average person; "namely, forty years, the time required for growth to be completed and maturity reached" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 136). Much like in the case of humans, dynasties grow before passing into a period of stagnation and finally into decline. To understand the link between sedentary life and dynastic decay, Ibn Khaldun identifies five

distinct stages, each one with its own essential characteristics, through which dynasties transit from growth to maturity, and ultimately decay (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 141). He postulates that all human societies are caught in this cyclical process from *badawa* (desert life) to *hadara* (civilization); a progression from humble and simple beginnings to opulent cultures and lifestyle, followed by erosion and decline.

The *first stage* is the period of establishment, where *'asabiyyah* is primarily based on familial ties and religious kinship. Life at this stage is one of great precarity and the survival of the group matters most (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 141). The people are brave, voracious, and greatly feared by those they seek to submit to their control and influence. They are imbued with the toughness and savagery of desert life; qualities that make them successful at defeating all resistance and seizing royal authority from other dynasties. The ruler at this stage is a chieftain who endeavors to perfect his character by displaying admirable qualities showcasing his capacity to collect taxes, defend the interest of the group by providing military protection, and "administrating God's law" (Dale, 2015: 187).

> "He doesn't claim anything exclusively for himself to the exclusion of (his people), because (such an attitude) is dictated by group feeling, (and it was group feeling) that gave superiority (to the dynasty), and (group feeling) still continues to exist as before" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 141).

In the *second stage*, the ruler succeeds in monopolizing royal authority and acquires absolute power. This hegemony by the ruler coincides with the erosion of the group's initial *'asabiyyah* that began on the basis of familial group solidarity. Preoccupied with losing out to the aspirations of those with whom he shares a common descent and whose claim to royal authority is as valid as his own, he focuses on gaining new clients and followers in order to thwart the ambitions of his own people vis-à-vis royal authority. The ruler can now build a proper state with

features such as a complex administrative bureaucracy, a paid army, and advisors to counsel him. The transformation from desert life to sedentary culture continues; the people are no longer struggling with a life of privation and instead experience one of luxury and abundance.

A shift occurs from superiority to meekness and submission. “Thus, the vigor of group feeling is broken to some extent” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 137). Having lived in the shadow of the first generation and having witnessed their quest for the achievement of royal authority, the second generation has had a firsthand experience of not only the conditions of their predecessors but also their bravery and prowess. So, despite becoming used to obedience and submissiveness, some of the old virtues still persist in them. When the ruler gains absolute power and starts excluding his people from the royal authority, he enjoys due to their voluntary submission to his dominance, he sows the seeds of discord and weakens the very *‘asabiyyah* to which he owes his authority (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 95).

The *third stage* is characterized by the abundance of luxury and the increasing importance of leisure as a defining aspect of sedentary life. It is one of tranquility where the rewards of royal authority are enjoyed. The desert life and hardiness of the first generation are forgotten. *‘Asabiyyah* has disappeared completely by then, and the people grow needy for the support of the dynasty. “People forget to protect and defend themselves and to press their claims” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 137). The only vestiges of their long gone *‘asabiyyah* can still be seen on their emblems, attires, and their fighting skills. However, unlike their ancestors, they lack the necessary bravery and resilience. In fact, they are more cowardly than anything else and are unable to repel their enemies when attacked. The ruler has no other choice but to recruit others to ensure the protection of the dynasty. These are often clients and followers whose involvement in state affairs is precipitated by the general weakness afflicting the dynasty. These people are often hired as

militiamen to replenish the ranks of the military and shore up the dynasty against the growing ambitions of its rivals. The ruler spends exorbitant amounts on public works and on the beautification of his cities (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142).

Large buildings and monuments are erected, immense construction projects are undertaken, and cities are rendered more expansive. The ruler displays his largess through the bounty he bestows upon his people and the expensive gifts he donates to the ambassadors of foreign nations as well as visiting tribal notables. "In addition, he supports the demands of his followers and retinue with money and positions" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142). He prescribes a generous monthly allowance for his soldiers, and soon the fruits of his kindness can be seen in their liveries, equipment, and armors. The state enjoys economic prosperity, and high culture is developed through the crafts, fine arts, and the sciences. Cultural pursuits gain avid supporters amongst the ruling class and the upper strata of society. Leisure and self-indulgence become important aspects of life.

> "This stage is the last during which the ruler is in complete authority. Throughout this and the previous stages, the rulers are independent in their opinions. They build up their strength and show the way for those after them" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142).

In the *fourth stage*, the gratification and serenity of the previous stage remain. The ruler, appreciative of what his predecessors have built, endeavors to maintain it. Convinced that the customs and conventions of his ancestors are the basis of his power, he upholds their traditions and thoroughly duplicates their ways to avoid departing from them. Peace and tranquility reign as the ruler "lives in peace with all his royal peers" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142). In the *fifth stage*, luxury and comfort are now defining features of society. Life is centered around the search for contentment and satiation. Complacency, corruption, and decadence take hold in the once morally upright group. "Monarchs now found it increasingly necessary to increase taxes to support their

extravagant lives and were initially able to do so because their cowed subjects did not resist" (Dale, 2015:192). The ruler uses his authority to satisfy his personal needs. He wastes and squanders the wealth accumulated by his ancestors on indulgences and entertainments as well as large donations to his inner circle. He relies increasingly on his followers by entrusting them with important government positions for which they often lack the qualification and the experience; this only furthers the dysfunction of the state. "The ruler seeks to destroy the great clients of his people and followers of his predecessors" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142).

In response to his hostility, his people plot against him and deny him their support. His wastefulness cripples the state funds and he soon finds himself incapable of giving to his soldiers their monthly allowance. Angered and exasperated by the ruler's incompetence, his most experienced militias leave his service in droves. The nobility, superior *'asabiyyah*, and other praiseworthy personal traits that previously characterized rulers entirely dissipate (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142). At this point, the state is starting to decline and to disintegrate. The vital forces of solidarity and religion that once provided the group with the means to their unity and success are now all but destroyed. In desperation, the ruler resorts yet again to raising the taxes to guarantee support for his rule and maintain the luxuries acquired. As the income of the state declines, it ultimately becomes impossible for him to maintain his authority.

> "Thus, he ruins the foundations his ancestors had laid and tears down what they had built up. In this stage, the dynasty is seized by senility and the chronic disease from which it can hardly ever rid itself, for which it can find no cure, and, eventually, it is destroyed" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 142).

Amongst the matters pertaining to governance, criticized by Ibn Khaldun, is the tyrannical behaviour and excessive severity displayed by certain rulers which he deemed detrimental to royal authority. The mutually beneficial relationship between a ruler and his subjects is one predicated

on good rulership. He rules over them and tends to their affairs and they in return give him their obedience and loyalty; "if such rulership and its concomitants are of good quality, the purpose of government is most perfectly achieved" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 153). Authority is best manifested by a rulership, which is beneficial to the subjects and serves their interests, but if it proves itself harmful and unfair, then it can sow the seeds of destruction that will weaken and eventually destroy royal authority. Mildness on the part of the ruler is an important component of good governance. When a ruler shows himself compassionate and kind toward his subjects and at all times seeks to defend them and protect their lives and properties, the relationship they entertain with him is one that reaffirms his excellent stewardship.

However, when he relies on force and the threat of punishment to subdue his subjects, they become fearful of his ire and resort to deception, dishonesty, and subterfuge to protect themselves from him. As a result, "their mind and character become corrupted" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 153). Therefore, Ibn Khaldun concludes that an overly forceful grip from the leader, relying on brutality and fear, can precipitate the destruction of '*asabiyyah* and trigger the decay of a dynasty. In the same vein, he also criticizes rulers who impose upon their subjects responsibilities exceeding their capabilities. These can undoubtedly become a burden upon them, often leading to their ruination; taxation is one such task that can easily overwhelm the subjects. In the early stages of a dynasty, taxation tends to generate a rather large revenue from relatively minor duties. This trend, however, is reversed toward the later periods of the dynasty's lifespan when taxation starts to yield a much smaller revenue from increasingly larger imposts.

Ibn Khaldun determines that the foundations of any given dynasty are usually established upon two distinct categories of ordained political norms. Since royal authority infers superiority and the usage of force, it is necessary for the establishment of good governance to "have reference

to ordained political norms, which are accepted by the mass and to whose laws it submits" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 154). Any dynasty lacking a rule based on such norms can never institute fully its supremacy and confirm its reign. When these norms are the product of the deliberations by the foremost personalities and thinkers of the dynasty, the outcome is a political organisation rooted on an intellectual basis. However, when the norms are divinely ordained and established through religious laws, "the result will be a political (institution) with a religious basis, which will be useful for life in both this and the other world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 154).

In the case of a dynasty following the laws of Islam, the only taxes imposed are those specified within Sharia and that have fixed limits which cannot be surpassed, such as *zakat* (charity tax), *kharaj* (land tax), and *jizya* (per capita yearly taxation). When a dynasty is relying on *'asabiyyah* instead, the primary desert attitude that generates said group feeling obliges the respect of other people's property and sparks an aversion to the very idea of misappropriating them for oneself. Kindness, reverence, and humility are expected from the ruler when dealing with his subjects. In these circumstances, the individual taxes and duties which together comprise the overall tax revenues of the dynasty remain quite low. According to Ibn Khaldun, lower taxes energize the entrepreneurial endeavours of the subjects. As cultural enterprises flourish and grow exponentially, the tax revenues increase as well.

> "When tax assessments and imposts upon the subjects are low. When tax assessment and imposts upon the subjects are low, the latter have the energy and desire to do things. Cultural enterprises grow and increase, because the low taxes bring satisfaction. When cultural enterprises grow, the number of individual imposts and assessments mounts. In consequence, the tax revenue, which is the sum total of (the individual assessments), increases" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 230).

As much as a ruler must avoid disproportionate harshness toward his subjects, he must also be cautious of being too cunning. Shrewdness often exacerbates the tyrannical behaviour of rulers,

which leads inevitably to bad rulership. The advent of royal authority and sedentary culture provokes a societal sophistication best observed in the changing character of the people, including that of the ruler himself. As they acquire "qualities of character related to cleverness", their mores and wants change overtime to become more complex (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 230). Prosperity becomes their latest condition, and the tyranny of luxury takes hold as they indulge in its pleasures. This new reality prompts a rise in the individual taxes and duties levied against taxpayers and intended to increase the overall tax revenue of the dynasty.

At first, the increase is incremental and follows closely the growth of luxury-oriented sedentary life and its massive spending. However, heavy taxation eventually becomes the norm, with subjects frequently struggling with this obligation and individual imposts soon grow "beyond the limits of equity" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 231). The downside of increased assessments is the slowing down of cultural enterprises by the subjects. Indeed, while their expenditures and taxes escalate, their general income and gains remain the same, with very little profit being generated. This further discourages them from embarking on any more cultural activity. At first, this decline of the aforementioned entrepreneurial spirit incites a lowering of individual assessments in a vain attempt to stimulate cultural activity anew. However, this inevitably leads to an increase of the imposts levied against individuals, this time to compensate for the previous reduction. There comes a point where finally individual taxes and duties reach their limits and increasing them again becomes pointless.

A new condition emerges in which taxation is at an all-time high, profit remains marginal, and the cost of engaging in cultural enterprise becomes too prohibitive for most subjects. The destruction of the incentive and drive for cultural activity presages, according to Ibn Khaldun, the impending destruction of civilization. As the financial precarity grows ever more dire, finding

ways of increasing the dynasty's revenues become a priority. Covering his mounting expenditures while also dealing with the essential needs of the dynasty places the ruler in a perilous position that steers him toward an increasingly more tyrannical behaviour. He resorts to all sorts of schemes to create new sources of revenue, going as far as devising new categories of taxes. He increases the limits of those already levied on commerce while imposing "taxes of a certain amount on prices realized in the markets and on the various (imported) goods at the city gates" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 232). In the Abbasid and Ubaydid-Fatimid dynasties, taxes were even imposed on pilgrims going to Mecca for the annual Islamic pilgrimage. A similar phenomenon also took place in the *taifa* principalities of Iberia.

> "If one understands this, he will realize that the strongest incentive for cultural activity is to lower as much as possible the amounts of individual imposts levied upon persons capable of undertaking cultural enterprises. In this manner, such persons will be psychologically disposed to undertake them, because they can be confident of making a profit from them" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 231).

Infringements upon the subjects' property rights is another problem that appears as the situation of the dynasty further deteriorates. These attacks interfere with their ability to make a livelihood and discourage them from attempting to purchase more properties. The subjects become apprehensive about engaging in gainful activities. When people lose the incentive to engage in business ventures, civilization begins to weaken. As people scatter in search of better opportunities, cities experience a sharp decline in population, which eventually leads to their downfall. As more of its settlements become empty, the dynasty experiences the disintegration of its realm and the collapse of its authority. "Civilization and its well-being as well as business prosperity depend on productivity and people's efforts in all directions in their own interest and profit" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 238). Larger cities have the capacity to better withstand the

eroding effects of injustice. Being densely populated and enjoying the affluence generated by its various sectors of business, the gradual losses caused by acts of injustice remain concealed for quite some time. In fact, a new dynasty could establish itself before the situation becomes irreversible and successfully restore the city to health, although such a scenario seldom occurs. "The proven fact is that civilization inevitably suffers losses through injustice and hostile acts, as we have mentioned, and it is the dynasty that suffers consequently" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 240).

To further illustrate how injustice destroys civilization, Ibn Khaldun refers to a story reported by the Muslim historian al-Mas'udi about the Persian king Bahram b. Bahram. Frustrated by the injustice of the King toward his subjects and his utter indifference toward the consequences of his actions, the chief religious notable of the Persians, called a *Mobedhan*, used "a parable which he placed in the mouth of an owl" to bring the issue to the attention of the king (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 238). Hearing the owl's cry, the king asked the Mobedhan for an explanation. The latter replied that a male owl seeking marriage approached a female owl. As a condition to her consent, she asked him as a gift twenty ruined villages upon which she could hoot. He accepted her condition and assured her that if the reign of King Bahram should continue, he will soon have a thousand ruined villages to offer her as tribute. The king, after hearing such a distressing story, was stirred out of his apathy and moved to action.

For Ibn Khaldun, this example demonstrates that the type of injustice susceptible of provoking the decay and ultimate destruction of a dynasty is often committed at the hands of those who enjoy the protection that only power and authority can award. When the ruler is no longer constrained by the restraining power he finds in himself, he becomes a source of endless injustice, corroding the very fabric of society. Once royal authority is firmly established, the ruler obtains complete power over his people and "disposes alone of the whole income from taxes, or the greater

part of it" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 235). As his authority expands, his personal wealth grows as well. In his quest for more capital, he might even engage in commerce. Ibn Khaldun deplores the involvement of rulers in commercial activity and calls it a grave error. Unlike the subjects who only dispose of a limited amount of wealth, monarchs enjoy the immeasurable affluence and financial resources awarded by their position, rendering impossible any fair competition between them and their subjects. "Now, when the ruler, who has so much more money than they, competes with them, scarcely a single one of them will any longer be able to obtain the things he wants (…)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 233). Additionally, he can appropriate their assets and merchandises through financial pressure, compelling them to sell at the lowest possible price, or by force.

The involvement of the ruler in commercial activity generates serious financial difficulties that in the long run usurp all profits from the subjects and deprives them of incentives, resulting ultimately in the ruination of the dynasty's fiscal structure. But the ruler is not the only one to amass a substantial personal wealth in the middle period of the dynasty before dysfunction takes hold of the realm. Those who form the sovereign's entourage and retinue benefit greatly from this relationship and enrich themselves via the various important positions that he grants them, engaging in a massive acquisition of wealth to fill their personal treasuries. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that our understanding of injustice should not be limited to acts involving the seizure of money and other properties. Coercing people into forced labour and refusing to offer them any compensation, denying them their rights, pressing baseless claims against them, and imposing upon them taxes that are not stipulated by the religious law are all instances of injustice that those with power and authority can inflict upon those bereft of such privileges. In Islam, unfairness and prejudice are seen as possible vectors for the destruction of civilization which could ultimately endanger the very survival of the human species.

> "This is what Muhammad actually had in mind when he forbade injustice. He meant the resulting destruction and ruin of civilization which ultimately permits the eradication of the human species. This is what the religious law quite generally and wisely aims at in emphasizing five things as necessary: the preservation of (1) religion, (2) the soul (life), (3) the intellect, (4) progeny, and (5) property" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 240).

Religious laws usher royal authority in a direction where everything comes under the supervision of religion. When the pronouncements of royal authority are decreed by force or by the privileges of superiority, religious law and its political wisdom consider such proclamations as tyrannical and unjust. Ibn Khaldun went even further by stating that in matters of royal authority, anything dictated by political decisions lacking the guidance of religious law should be regarded as "reprehensible, because it is vision lacking the divine light" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 155). Therefore, in the case of a royal authority informed by the principles and teachings of a religious law, all the affairs of the dynasty are administered under the values promoted by said religion. The exercise of natural royal authority involves causing the people to act according to their own drive and aspirations. Political royal authority, on the other hand, relies on intellectual insight to regulate the actions of the masses. "(To exercise) the caliphate means to cause the masses to act as required by religious insight into their interests in the other world as well as in this world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 155).

In Islam, worldly affairs and conditions have a direct influence on the affairs of the hereafter. The actions and decisions taken in this world should be evaluated at all times in relation to their repercussions in the next world, where one's life choices determine one's ultimate condition. Therefore, the caliphate represents a substitute for prophetic leadership insofar as its fundamental purpose is to "protect the religion and to exercise leadership of the world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 155). *'Asabiyyah* in pre-Islamic times encouraged taking pride in one's

ancestry, a sentiment that generated arrogance and superiority. In the context of Islam, this is considered nothing short of vanity, an unwarranted superiority of no benefit for the hereafter; hence the verse in the Qur'an stating: "Neither your blood relatives nor your children will be of use to you (on the Day of Resurrection)" (Surat al-Mumtahanah: Verse 3).

Royal authority derived from this type of *'asabiyyah* leads too often to the enjoyment of indulgences and an endless quest for selfish goals obtained through worthless means (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 155). In fact, the Prophet (Pbuh) criticized royal authority for its capacity to lead those imbued with it astray from the path of God. However, when *'asabiyyah* is used to achieve the realization of divine commands, it becomes desirable. Prophet Muhammad's (Pbuh) censure of royal authority was not meant to discourage nations from establishing this institution but rather to reiterate that when it originates from an *'asabiyyah* rooted in anything other than the principles of religion, it leads to a treacherous path far from justice and truth. For Ibn Khaldun, when royal authority is predicated on achieving superiority through the establishment of the truth, while tending to the public interest and inspiring people to embrace the faith, it leads to the advent of a rule dedicated to a sociopolitical and economic management of society as ordained by religious law (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 161). Through the history of the Muslim Ummah, he illustrates the efficiency of *'asabiyyah* when it acquires a religious coloring.

> "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you" (Surat al-Hujurat: Verse 13).

The early Muslims were imbued with an *'asabiyyah* that prompted them to remain within a path which promoted the establishment of the caliphate. Al-khilafa (caliphate) designates the form of government that emerged in the Muslim world after the death of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) in 632 and lasted until the early part of the 12th century. The first four rulers (Abu-Bakr,

Umar, Uthman, and Ali) who reigned on the nascent Muslim nation after his death came to be known as the rightly guided caliphs in Muslim historiography (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 257). Their era is particularly admired in Islamic theology as a period of extraordinary expansion during which the tradition of electing caliphs was maintained and the need for a unified community (Muslim Ummah) was reiterated politically and socially. By the end of the year 661, Muslims ruled over Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Persia, and parts of North Africa. It is during this period that the foundation for all future Muslim empires was established (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 257). The Qur'an and the Sunnah (in the case of Sunni Islam) became the basis upon which was built not only the political legitimacy of Muslim rulers but also the socioeconomic management of Muslim societies.

When the first major schism took place in Islam, it led to the fall of the Rashidun caliphate[12] and ushered in the rise of the Umayyad dynasty. The first *Fitnah*[13], as it came to be known, was a period of internal turmoil that began with the assassination of Uthman, the third rightly guided caliph of the Rashidun caliphate in the year 656. A drastic change in the condition of the Muslim Ummah occurred during the tenure of Uthman ibn Affan. Previously, wealth and luxury had very little value in the eyes of the Muslim masses. "The Caliph was almost the poorest of all, no value was attached to worldly comforts neither by the ruler nor the ruled" (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 418). However, the successful expansion of the Muslim empire generated immense riches and people steadily became accustomed to the luxuries awarded by prosperity. The vigor and military prowess for which the Arabs were known and the ascetic lifestyle so prevalent in their midst decreased as opulent lifestyles became the new standard.

[12] The Rashidun caliphate encompasses the rule of the four caliphs who came into power after the death of the Prophet (Pbuh). Known as the rightly guided caliphs they include Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali.
[13] Arabic term meaning affliction/trial.

During the reign of the two first caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar, the bulk of the Muslim nation was composed of men and women who had been in the company of the Prophet (Pbuh). Following his example, the *Sahaba*[14] had forsaken all notion of racial and ancestral superiority and embraced instead an *'asabiyyah* based on Islamic brotherhood. As Islam gained more ground and additional Arab tribes embraced it, many new entrants joined the Muslim Ummah. Fighters from various tribes such as the Banu Wa'il, the Banu Abdul-Qais, the Banu Rabi'ah, and the Banu Tamim played a crucial role in the military victories that led to the annexation of Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Palestine (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 418). The influx of new converts outnumbered eventually the companions of the Prophet (Pbuh). As the reins of power and influence started to shift away from their commanding force, old rivalries and feuds of the pre-Islamic period resurfaced.

The Quraish tribe, from which hailed the Prophet (Pbuh) and many of his companions, encompassed two major branches: the Banu Umayyah and the Banu Hashim. The rivalry between these two compelled the other members of the Quraish to take sides and affiliate themselves with the Banu Umayyah or the Banu Hashim. At the dawn of Islam, the Banu Umayyah had surpassed the Banu Hashim in many aspects. As a consequence of their strained relationship, the Banu Umayyah did not support the prophethood of Muhammad (Pbuh) who was a member of the Banu Hashim. Islam eventually quelled these long-standing ancestral hostilities by promoting a new *'asabiyyah* based on religious belonging rather than tribal ancestry, and in doing so eradicated all traces of racial and tribal divisions amidst the early Muslims. But during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan, many of these old conflicts were rekindled (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 421).

Uthman was known for his politeness and his gentleness; he was not one for extreme manifestations of power and strength and adopted instead a kinder and softer approach to the

[14] Term used when referring to the first generation of Muslims composed primarily of those who lived during the time of the Prophet and were his disciples and followers.

administration of the Muslim empire. Under his leadership, the cities of Herat, Balkh, Kabul, and various other territories were annexed, expanding the Muslim realm from Tripoli to Armenia. He ordered the construction of roads, established educational institutions, and supported the development of trade and agriculture. Unfortunately, as the prosperity of the empire increased, so did the personal ambitions of certain individuals, further exacerbating rivalries and feuds. The ascension of Uthman to the role of caliph reawakened the Banu Umayyah's desire for supremacy, since one of their own was now in power. The polite and gentle nature of the caliph and his "softness toward relatives played a significant role in encouraging Banu Umayyah to cross all limits" (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 421). The caliph found himself trapped between two competing *'asabiyyah*s, one predicated on Islamic brotherhood and another one stemming from tribal belonging and harkening back to the days of pre-Islamic Arabia, where divisions and hostilities along tribal lines were the norm. The Banu Umayyah grew in influence and strength during his reign, and their dominance soon became undeniable.

> "Besides these new developments, which took place due to the weak caliphate, new entrants to the fold of Islam, the erosion of power and influence of the *Muhajirin*, *Ansar* and the Quraish, mass indulgence in the life of luxuries were some of the factors that proved advantageous to Banu Umayyah. Marwan Bin Al-Hakam as the main scribe of the Caliph, benefited their cause immensely. When the governorship of a number of provinces came to their possession, and they were able to wield power and influence throughout, they set off to restore their position prior to Islam" (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 421).

The assassination of Uthman ibn Affan in 656 led to the appointment of Ali ibn Abi Talib, who became the fourth and last caliph of the Rashidun caliphate. By the time he assumed the leadership of the empire, the original Islamic atmosphere fostered by the Prophet (Pbuh) was compromised by the increasing luxury and opulence enjoyed by the people as well as the rising tensions along racial and tribal lines. The tenure of Ali had the misfortune of coinciding with a

serious depletion in the ranks of the Sahaba, many of whom had either died or moved away from Madinah to settle down elsewhere, which only further aggravated the stranglehold of the Banu Umayyah. Having Ali, a member of the Banu Hashim and a cousin of the Prophet (Pbuh), as the caliph represented in the eyes of the Banu Umayyah a hindrance to the restoration of their "lost power and leadership" (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 501). This situation culminated in the conflict that opposed Ali to Mu'awiyah who later became the founder of the Umayyad dynasty.

Ibn Khaldun maintains that royal authority involves the appropriation of all glory by one person. "When trouble arose between 'Ali and Mu'awiyah as a necessary consequence of group feeling, they were guided in (their dissensions) by the truth and by independent judgment" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 163). Their disagreement was not rooted in a desire to acquire more wealth or power, but rather a deep yearning to deal truthfully with the ramifications of Uthman's assassination, with both men differing in their chosen solutions. This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the Banu Umayyah banded around their kinsman Mu'awiyah, finding in him a champion to not only avenge the slain caliph, but oppose Ali's claim to the caliphate as well. According to Ibn Khaldun, this put Mu'awiyah in a position where he couldn't "deny (the natural requirement of royal authority) to himself and his people. (Royal authority) was a natural thing that group feeling, by its very nature, brought in its train" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 164). By refusing to give his oath of allegiance to Ali as the rightful caliph, Mu'awiyah set out to establish his own domain.

> "The emissary gave Mu'awiyah's letter to Ali. When the envelope was opened, it contained no letter. Ali looked towards the emissary angrily. The emissary shuddered from within and said, "I am an emissary and safety of life is my right." Ali said: "Yes, you are safe." The emissary then said, "Nobody will pledge support to you. I have seen sixty thousand souls weeping over the bloodstained shirt of Uthman bin Affan. They have also put the shirt on the grand mosque of Damascus to provoke the people."

> Ali said, "They want to take the revenge of Uthman on me even though I stood absolved from Uthman's blood. May Allah deal with the murderers of Uthman." Saying this, he returned the emissary to Mu'awiyah" (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 501).

By the year 658, Yemen, the Hijaz, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were firmly in Mu'awiyah's grasp, while Ali's caliphate was mostly limited to Iraq and Iran. The existence of these two competing forces for the caliphate and the mounting hostilities between their adherents created a profound cleavage within the Muslim Ummah that persists to this day. While Mu'awiyah enjoyed greater strength and popularity than Ali, he lacked the status, respect, and admiration the latter enjoyed due to his closeness to the Prophet (Pbuh) and the pivotal role he played in the establishment of Islam. The stalemate between the two sides culminated with the assassination of Ali ibn Abi Talib in the year 661, leading to the birth of the Umayyad dynasty. Breaking away with the tradition of electing caliphs established through the Rashidun caliphate, the Umayyads instituted instead a royal authority passed on through dynastic succession. By appointing his son Yazid as his successor, Mu'awiyah ensured that the power would remain firmly in the hands of his kin. Ibn Khaldun asserts that any attempt on Mu'awiyah's part to follow in the footsteps of the Rashidun and allow the election of a caliph, be it an outsider to the ranks of the Banu Umayyah, would have caused a dangerous rift between him and his tribesmen. "Had Mu'awiyah appointed anyone else his successor, the Umayyads would have been against him" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 164).

The Umayyad dynasty ruled the Muslim empire between 661-750 expanded what was primarily an Arab-Muslim empire into Spain, Central Asia, and India (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 19). They successfully established an effective administration across a vast territory inhabited by multiple ethnic groups with a multitude of cultures and languages. It was during their reign that the postal department, official seals and archives, the registry department, and the first Muslim

naval force were established. Up until the rise of the Umayyad dynasty, Roman coins served as the official currency in Syria, Arabia, and Egypt, and Iranian coins in Iraq. “In Arabia, there was neither a strong government nor were there Arabic coins” (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 170). Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the fifth caliph of the dynasty, introduced the dinar, an Islamic gold currency to replace Roman and Iranian coins; he “proclaimed that from that time forth only Arabic coins would be accepted in payment of taxes. By this method, the Arabic dinar and dirham became circulated in all the countries” (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 171). The Umayyads proceeded to an amalgamation of the entire Muslim world, giving it a powerful center and an official bureaucracy.

> “For instance, the caliphate of Banu Umayyah extended the conquests of the rightly guided Caliph’s to the far corner of the world. They conquered China in the East and up to the Atlantic Ocean in the West, the entire civilized world of their time was under their control. It was during their empire that Islam reached the distant islands of the oceans, the sands of the African continent and the plains of India. Islamic rule had spread everywhere in the world having on center and one capital” (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 252).

It was important for the early Umayyads that the character of their state should be a reflection of Islam’s influence; their rulership was to remain faithful to the precepts of Islamic law. The later Umayyads, however, embraced wholeheartedly the nature of royal authority and focused exclusively on worldly motivations, abandoning the example of the early Muslims. “They forgot the deliberate planning and the reliance upon the truth that had guided the activities of their predecessors” (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 165). The tribal bigotry that first resurfaced during the tenure of Uthman ibn Affan became widespread and played a major role in the Banu Umayyah’s strategy to further exclude the Banu Hashim from power. This prejudice and discrimination backfired on them as the many other Arab tribes rendered destitute by the Banu Umayyah were easily persuaded by the Abbasids’ virulent propaganda against their dynasty.

Finally, in 750, the Abbasid dynasty overthrew the Umayyads and ruled the Muslim world until 1258 (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 329). The hostility of the Banu Abbas persisted well into the founding of their dynasty. They pursued their anti Umayyah propaganda and bribed poets to produce odes inciting revenge against their former rivals (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 275). Even after the death of the last Umayyah caliph, the Abbasids sustained their targeted campaign against the Banu Umayyah, leading to the capture and killing of many of their tribesmen. Much like their predecessors, the Abbasids continued to expand the Muslim realm and the city of Baghdad became the political capital of their caliphate. Their reign established Islam as a universal and multiethnic religion; a legacy that resonates with Muslims to this day. While the Abbasids endeavored to efface the legacy of the Umayyads, they adopted nonetheless their practice of hereditary succession (Najeebabadi et al. 2000: 503). The history of the Umayyads and the Abbasids illustrate the lengthy mutation of the caliphate into royal authority.

The appearance of royal authority brings in its wake royal habits such as elaborate protocols that are adopted by dynasties. As luxury takes hold amidst the people and power is further consolidated in the hands of the dynasty, lavish court etiquettes emerge that further distance the ruler from his people. At the height of the Abbasids' reign, "royal qualities reached their proper perfection in it" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 243). While both dynasties preserved certain aspects of the caliphate, its characteristic traits for the most part disappeared. The restraining influence of Islam dissipated only to be replaced by that of group feeling. The caliphate first came into existence as the product of a religious *'asabiyyah* rooted in the precepts of Islam. However, when it weakened and the Muslim brotherhood it promoted waned, tribal *'asabiyyah* gained in strength, bringing into existence royal authority.

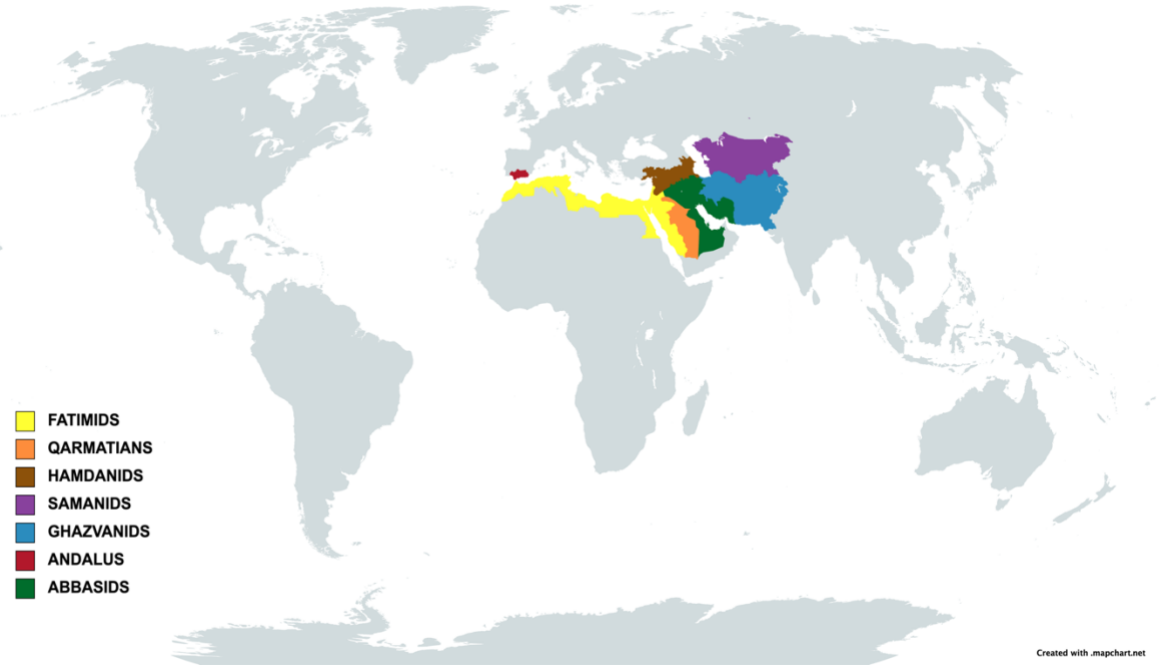
> "Then, the characteristic traits of the caliphate disappeared, and only its name remained. The form of government came to be royal

> authority pure and simple. Superiority attained the limits of its nature and was employed for particular (worthless) purposes, such as the use of force and the arbitrary gratification of desires and for pleasure" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 166).

As royal authority eventuates and reaches unprecedented prosperity and luxury, the first sign of a dynasty's creeping senility can be observed in the splintering that takes place internally. When the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown in 750 by their principal rivals, the Abbasids, a member of the Umayyad ruling family of Syria, who survived the slaughter of his relatives during the Abbasid revolt, escaped to Spain where he revived his dynasty's legacy far from the reach of the Abbasids. This Umayyad enclave that Abd al-Rahman I established in Cordoba continued to rule most of Iberia for over three centuries. This first splinter between an expansive Abbasid realm and a rapidly shrinking Umayyad dominion remained, for some time, the official configuration of the Muslim world. However, as the Abbasid dynasty approached its own decline, several major fissures occurred within their realm, precipitating their decay. Revolts from elements within their own territory as well as onslaughts from several of their rivals caused the further fragmentation of what was once their sprawling empire.

After partaking in the revolt against the Abbasids in Mecca, Idris Ibn Abdallah escaped to Egypt before finally reaching the Maghreb. In 788, with the help of the Awraba Berbers who choose him as their imam and leader, he established the Idrisid dynasty in present-day Morocco. By seizing power in a large section of the Maghreb that eluded the rule of the Abbasid dynasty, Idris not only defied their political legitimacy but also their power. As the Abbasid dominion continued to shrink, more of their once sprawling territory fell into the hands of their rivals. The Aghlabids, an Arab dynasty established in 800, ruled Ifriqiya and Southern Italy on behalf of the Abbasids. In 909, they were overthrown by the revolt of the Kutama Berbers who ushered in the rule of the Fatimids.

The Kutama, unlike the Aghlabids, converted to Isma'ili Shi'ism toward the end of the 9th century. The movement of the Shia Fatimids first emerged in Kabylia where the Kutama became the bulwark of the early Fatimid armies. After coming to power in Ifriqiya and consolidating their rule, the Fatimids launched an attack against the Ikhshidid dynasty ruling over Egypt on behalf of the Abbasids before finally conquering it in 969. At its height, the Fatimid caliphate ruled over a large territory spanning from North Africa, parts of Sicily, the Levant, the Red Sea of Africa, the Red Sea Coastal plains of the Arabian Peninsula, the Hejaz, and Yemen. The Qarmatians, for their part, took advantage of the Zanj rebellion that rocked the Abbasid caliphate from 869 to 883. The turmoil of the revolt weakened the Abbasid power and created a vacuum that allowed the Qarmatians to seize much of eastern Arabia.



Map 1: Fragmentation of the Abbasid empire

According to Ibn Khaldun, the paths of both the Umayyads and the Abbasids reflect how the road to senility, that eventually leads to the destruction of a ruling dynasty and the emergence of a new one, occurs in two ways. "(One way is) for provincial governors to gain control over remote regions when (the dynasty) loses its influence there" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 252). This was the case of the Umayyad dynasty established in Spain by Abd al-Rahman I, where the dynasty's realm was divided among competing provincial governors, each one eager to establish their own dynasties and *Taifas*. The second possibility is illustrated by the decline and eventual collapse of the Abbasid caliphate where rebels from neighboring nations fought against them.

Ibn Khaldun describes this process as being fueled by the receding of the ruling dynasty's power "from the remote regions of the realm" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 252). Often imbued with a stronger *'asabiyyah* than the decaying one of the ruling dynasty, these rival groups find the necessary leadership to organize them into a cohesive force and give them a cause for which to fight. Feeling themselves superior to the ruling dynasty, afflicted by senility, they seek to gain control over it. As the power of the Abbasids receded from the peripheries of their realm, new dynasties like the Fatimids and the Qarmatians were able to emerge and establish their own rule.

Ibn Khaldun elaborated a theoretical framework that he extracted from the history of North Africa and the Middle East as he studied very closely the dynamics responsible for the rise and decline of several states in these regions. He undertook a historical investigation to elucidate "the rise and decline of dynasties in terms of the interaction and cyclical conflict between two types of society or social organization: pastoral nomadic and sedentary society" (Alatas, 2014: 29). According to him, the very conditions that spur the emergence of sedentary society and render possible royal authority, also provoke the weakening of its *'asabiyyah* which leads to the erosion of all forms of affinity and eventually the decline of the state. In his theoretical scheme, nomadic

and sedentary societies are not merely two entities that coexist and cooperate with one another; the former happens to be a precursor for the latter.

> "It has thus become clear that the existence of Bedouins is prior to, and the basis of, the existence of towns and cities. Likewise, the existence of towns and cities results from luxury customs pertaining to luxury and ease, which are posterior to the customs that go with the necessities of life" (Alatas, 2014: 29).

For Ibn Khaldun, the establishment of human civilization requires the creation of political leadership. "(People) in any social organization must have someone who exercises a restraining influence and rules them and to whom recourse may be had" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 256). Political leadership, in the Khaldunian theory of state formation, is of two types. One is based upon revealed religious laws where both the leader and the subjects are motivated by their beliefs. "The first (type of rule) is useful for this world and the other world, because the lawgiver knows the ultimate interest of the people and is concerned with the salvation of man in the other world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 257). The second type relies on rational politics. People are compelled to submit to the ruler due to the recompense they expect from him. Ibn Khaldun divided rational politics into two distinct categories. In the realm's management, the first category concerns itself with both the general interest and the ruler's interest. The second category, however, is concerned primarily with the ruler's interest at the detriment of the common good. In this optic, even the use of violence becomes a possible recourse to maintain the ruler's authority and advantages. Ibn Khaldun posited in the *Muqaddimah* that rulers practice, for the most part, this type of rational politics.

> "This is the type of politics practiced by all ruler, whether they are Muslims or unbelievers. Muslim rulers, however, practice this type of politics in accordance with the requirements of the Muslim religious law, as much as they are able to. Therefore, the political norms here are a mixture of religious laws and ethical rules, norms that are natural in social organization together with a certain

> necessary concern for strength and group feeling" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 257).

Conclusion

In Ibn Khaldun's science of human social organization, the defining character of human civilization is illustrated by man's vital need for sustenance and safety. "God created and fashioned man in a form that can live and subsist only with the help of food" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:45). Therefore, human society in its earliest stage can be said to be a "community of necessity" (Mahdi, 1964: 188). It is a desideratum without which the very existence of man becomes an impossibility. What mankind seeks to achieve through association and collaboration is the preservation of life itself. In order to ensure a steady procurement of nourishment, man seeks the cooperation of his fellow humans to not only guarantee his own survival, but to increase the amount of available resources, thus improving his own condition. In a similar manner, every individual also requires the assistance of other humans for protection. Since aggressiveness is natural in living beings, God gave man the ability to think and to fashion weapons for the sole purpose of protecting oneself against the hostility of others (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:46). Through mutual support and collaboration, man ensures that his basic needs for nourishment and protection are fulfilled. Social organization is what renders possible this cooperation between humans, without which civilization could never emerge.

> "Consequently, social organization is necessary to the human species. Without it, the existence of human beings would be incomplete. God's desire to settle the world with human beings and to leave them as His representatives on earth would not materialize. This is the meaning of civilization, the object under discussion" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005:46).

Through the rise and fall of dynasties (empires) that he depicted in the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun developed an "organic theory of empire" (Abdul Qadir, 1941: 124). He illustrated the different phases a dynasty goes through during its lifespan. He detailed five stages, beginning with its birth and ending with its decline. The last stage describes how a dynasty enters a period of decline that he refers to as senility, before eventually succumbing to decay and collapsing. Overtime, this cyclical pattern came to embody Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation. This is no doubt due to the interpretations of Orientalist scholars, who were the first Westerners to come into contact with the *Muqaddimah*. Being already familiar with this cyclical view of history, this aspect of Ibn Khaldun's theory caught their attention. However, one could argue that the crux of his theory is not to be found in this pattern, which is the mere depiction of a complex process, but rather in his exploration of leadership.

According to Ibn Khaldun, it is by looking closely at the changes affecting the foundational '*asabiyyah* at the root of a dynasty's success that one can uncover the reasons behind the decline of its state. In the *Muqaddimah,* he details the political, social, and economic conditions that precipitate this decline and how they affect the dynasty in question. When a previously nomadic tribe conquers settled populations, they tend to absorb and adopt the sedentary culture of the vanquished. They not only inherit the power of the ruling dynasty they've toppled, but they also appropriate certain cultural elements from them. This cultural transmission is crucial in the eventual settlement of the conquering tribe. Ibn Khaldun suggests that sedentary culture emerges as wealth and prosperity become widespread and a taste for luxury emerges amongst the people. These superfluities ultimately trigger the degeneration of the tribe's original power and strength. As this process of assimilation continues and they take on more of the characteristics of their defeated enemies, the very features that led to the success of the tribe begin to atrophy.

This progressive withering of the tribe's defining traits slowly weakens the '*asabiyyah* at the root of their success. The sense of attachment and interdependence that characterized the original tribe is replaced by the disconnect and detachment of the newly prosperous and now socially and ethnically (through intermarriage) mixed society. Ibn Khaldun postulates that this "atomized urban social isolation" replaces the previous communal structure of the tribe, leading inevitably to the enfeeblement of their social cohesion and political strength (Dale, 2015: 189). The manifestation of their strong '*asabiyyah* through their military skills, endurance, and resourcefulness deteriorates with each passing generation, since they no longer live the arduous and dangerous life of warriors (Dale, 2015: 190).

He argues that the newfound sedentary life of the formerly nomadic tribe causes them to experience a moral and physical decline that drains them of their physical prowess, their mental capacity, and their religious sentiment. The advent of royal authority provokes the transition of the chieftain from a tribal leader to a reigning monarch. This transformation of the basis for leadership forces the ruler to trade the '*asabiyyah* at the heart of his legitimacy for royal wealth and power. If, in the early days of a dynasty, the support and loyalty of his people are crucial to a ruler, in the latter stages of the dynasty's lifespan, that relationship changes drastically. Initially, the ruler counted on the help of his kin to not only gain royal authority but to also squash any rebellions against his newly established influence. In return, he honored his kin's allegiance and fidelity by appointing them to important administrative positions and allowing them to participate in the affairs of the state. Later on, however, where the ruler previously honored the '*asabiyyah* of his tribe, he now distances himself from his kin as he seeks to assume all the liveries and entitlements of kingship. This evolution elicits the deterioration of the tribe as a socially close-knit and militarily vigorous community.

> "While the chieftain had originally functioned as a natural leader, legitimized by descent in a noble house, but claiming no special privileges beyond his traditional lineage status, he now began to reserve all the glory of conquest for himself and gradually adopted the authoritarian traits of pre-Islamic empires" (Dale, 2015:191).

The acquiring of royal authority coupled with the pervasive self-indulgence and luxurious lifestyle erodes and fragments what sustained the tribe all along. The occurrence of royal authority serves as a catalyst to the establishment of a bureaucratic state and an authoritarian rule. While this state rules successfully for some time, eventually cracks start to appear in the system. In order to support his extravagant lifestyle and the lavishness that have become a defining aspect of life, the ruler starts to increase taxes. This heralds a new era where the rights of the subjects take a backseat to the privileges and the needs of the ruler. Since neither the properties nor the rights of the subjects are safe, corruption and decadence become pervasive, and the dynasty descends "into a kind of political senile dementia" (Dale, 2015: 192). The ruler steadily isolates himself from his kin, now his subjects, and secludes himself in his palace, sinking in his decadence, while delegating the administration of the kingdom to often unqualified individuals within his entourage or amongst his closest allies.

The founder of the dynasty, and those who came immediately after him, being keenly aware of all the efforts and hard work it took to establish their dynasty, understood how to maintain those gains. Further down the generational line, however, this deep and intimate knowledge of statesmanship is lost. The rulers produced at that point by the dynasty tend to rely primarily on tradition to inform their statecraft. All that remains of their earlier tribal life and the ways of their ancestors can be found in the emblems they carry. These rulers are taught through historical accounts and records how they should rule. This lack of palpable experience in the crafting of a state makes subsequent generations of rulers far less capable than those who ruled closer to the

time of the initial conquest. Unlike their predecessors, who understood the importance of '*asabiyyah* in the establishment of their dynasty, these rulers consider themselves superior to their subjects and see them more as their inferiors than their kin, creating in the process the very resentment that sparks the revolt of their subjects.

Ibn Khaldun's model includes important aspects that continue to be overlooked. He theorized that certain changes that occur throughout a dynasty's lifespan cause the waning of its original military prowess, physical and mental robustness, austerity, discipline, and religiosity. These transformations ultimately culminate in an inexorable loss of '*asabiyyah*. Hence, in the Khaldunian model, the explanation for the erosion of the original '*asabiyyah*, observed in the latter stages of a dynasty's lifespan, can be found in the link between the structural factors that shape the dynasty and the psychological dimensions of the generational shift in leadership that it undergoes. By placing the concept of leadership at the heart of his model, Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation aligns itself with the conceptualization of the state prevalent in Islamic political thought. Far from being a new perspective on the state or a novel outlook on leadership, it is in fact a reiteration of the traditional social and political norms established by Islamic political thought. Hence, to understand what is innovative about Khaldunian thought, it is imperative to recontextualize it by returning it to its native intellectual tradition.

Chapter 5
Recontextualizing Khaldunian Thought

Introduction

This chapter, like the previous one, focuses on the Khaldunian theoretical framework. As detailed in the chapter pertaining to Ibn Khaldun's reception in Western academia, the existing reading grid through which the *Muqaddimah* continues to be read and interpreted is one that alienates Ibn Khaldun from his own intellectual tradition. Labelled a unique Oriental phenomenon, his work was said to be unlike anything produced by Islamic erudition before or since. The reading of the *Muqaddimah*, without taking into account the historical and intellectual context that informed its writing, only cemented the persistent misconceptions about Ibn Khaldun's work. Over time, the defining contribution of Ibn Khaldun to sociology was said to be his cyclical pattern pertaining to the rise and fall of empires. Yet, his theoretical model revolves around a set of political ideas that happen to be the crux of his theory of state formation. He theorized that the transfer of power down the generational line throughout a dynasty's lifespan causes the waning of its royal authority. These transformations trigger the ultimate loss of its foundational '*asabiyyah*. In the Khaldunian model, the explanation for this loss is found in the link between the structural factors that shape the dynasty and the repercussions of the generational shift in leadership that it experiences.

However, the prevailing reading grid of the *Muqaddimah* in Western academia centers the cyclical nature of Ibn Khaldun's view of history, which was an already well-established perspective in the West, and misses out on the central point of his theory of state formation. While Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization) was meant to be an adjacent science to Islamic historiography, and was inspired by his criticism of the discipline,

his theory of state formation finds its roots in Islamic political thought. Unfortunately, this aspect of his work is often understudied by contemporary Khaldunian studies, which concentrate instead on the historical aspect of his analysis. Yet, when one attempts to examine closely his theory of state formation, one discovers quickly that Ibn Khaldun puts the concept of leadership at the heart of his model. In fact, his theory aligns itself with the conceptualization of the state found in Islamic political thought. Far from being a novel outlook on the state, it is in fact a reiteration of the traditional perspective on politics in Islam. His outlook on society, his understanding of the role of the state and the importance of the ruler, as well as his explanation of leadership, all were greatly informed by the political writings of previous Muslim scholars. Far from being a unique Oriental phenomenon, he was the inheritor of the scholars who came before him and whose legacies formed the basis of his thought. So, what were the intellectual influences that shaped Khaldunian thought?

The stagnation of contemporary Khaldunian studies is mostly due to the lack of new perspectives in the analysis of his work. By continuing to apply the usual reading grid, these studies miss out on what was truly innovative about his work. The aim of this chapter is to recontextualize Khaldunian thought through its repositioning in the broader context of Islamic political thought and attempting to glean from this process the innovative nature of Ibn Khaldun's work. The first part of this chapter pertains to the place of Khaldunian thought within that corpus, since Ibn Khaldun's political ideas find their source in the writings of previous scholars such as al-Farabi, al-Mawardi, and Nizam al-Mulk whose contributions shaped Islamic political thought. The second part looks more closely at the link between Ibn Taymiyya and Khaldunian thought. The preponderant reading of Ibn Khaldun's work is one predicated on ignoring (or denying by omission), previous works that could be considered precursors of Khaldunian thought. In fact, both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun experienced periods of extreme political instability; this inspired

them to analyze the causes behind these crises. Both scholars focused on the concept of leadership in their respective approaches, and both illustrated the path toward decline through a cyclical process. Once recontextualized within the context of Islamic erudition, it becomes obvious that Ibn Khaldun's work is neither the continuation of some earlier European philosophical tradition, nor some rare intellectual undertaking without parallel within Islamic erudition.

5.1) Ibn Khaldun and Islamic political thought

Islam emerged in the early 7th century in the Arabian peninsula, a land "dominated by tribal dissensions" and fratricidal wars (Al-Mubarakfawri, 1999: 51). Fierce battles pitted the powerful tribes of the Hejaz against each other in their attempts to take control of Mecca, the region's main commercial artery. In pre-Islamic Arabia, social life, as well as all political and economic activities were subject to a set of archaic laws which highlighted tribal belonging more than any other concept. While the rich nobles of the region monopolized all the power and enjoyed all the privileges that came with their status, ordinary people had very little recourse to protect their rights (Al-Mubarakfawri, 1999: 52). It is in this context of perpetual upheaval and constant instability that Prophet Mohamed (Pbuh) proclaimed in 610 the fundamental precepts of Islam (Al-Mubarakfawri, 1999: 97).

The emergence of Islam in this region was not only experienced as the advent of a new religion but also as the birth of a new nation. In the year 1 of the Hijrah[15], the construction of a new Muslim society was undertaken, with Medina as its capital and main political center. This nation imposed itself politically and economically in the region, openly asserting its sovereignty vis-à-vis Mecca. By signing peace treaties, establishing commercial agreements, and sending

[15] The Muslim Calendar

ambassadors to neighboring kingdoms, Medina acquired, beyond its religious symbolism, a real political role. From that moment on, the Prophet (Pbuh) was no longer solely the bearer of a divine message, he was also the political leader of this nascent Muslim nation. A few months after his arrival in Medina, he established the very first constitution of the Muslim world. Contrary to the concepts of tribal belonging and clan loyalty which had hitherto governed life in the Hejaz, it was now the idea of submission to God and social cohesion that formed the pillars of the Medinan constitution (Moten, 1996: 21). When the Prophet (Pbuh) died in 632, the political system that he inaugurated came to be seen as the ideal polity in Islam, it offered a "normative standard" for assessing the condition of the Ummah, and especially that of its institutions (Moten, 1996: 43).

> "That was a remarkable period, a sublime summit, an exceptional generation of people, a bright beacon. It was, as we have stated, decreed and willed by Allah SWT, so that this unique image might be materialized in the situations of real life and recourse might later be had to it, in order to repeat it within the limitations of human capacity" (Qutb, n.d: 65)

As such, in classical Islamic theology, Islam is a comprehensive way of life that rejects the separation of the world into "social and profane or into religious and secular" (Moten, 1996: 37). Instead, religion and polity are amalgamated into "an undifferentiated social and political unity" (Moten, 1996: 37). While the Qur'an focuses mostly on religion and ethics, it nonetheless contains inferences centering the concept of ummah. The unity of the people in Islam is one built upon the submission to God. "This was to be the fundamental relationship between God and humans" which then became the "fundamental social norm" at the heart of the Muslim weltanschauung (Black, 2011: 14). In this holistic approach to life, religion and politics became closely intertwined.

> "Islam, the government and the people are like the tent, the pole, the ropes and the pegs. The tent is Islam; the pole is the

> government; the ropes and pegs are the people. None will do without the others" (Ibn Qutaybah, 1976: 184).

During the intellectual and cultural effervescence that took place between the 8th century and 13th century in the Muslim world, various political writings were produced. "This was probably because strategic political choices were now being made, and an influential audience was available" (Black, 2011: 82). Sunni political thought originated from the consolidation of the *Kalam* tradition to defend "traditionalist orthodoxy" from the rise of the Mu'tazila and the Shiite dynasties (Anjum, 2012: 108). Sunni theologians were galvanized to safeguard Sunny Orthodoxy from these threats and "to provide a theoretical basis for the Sunni caliphate" (Anjum, 2012: 108). From this proliferation of writings pertaining to politics emerged Islamic political thought, a political theory built upon the doctrine of *deputyship*.

The basic assumption of this theory is that in Islam, the state is established by a divine covenant and is based on the Sharia. The ruler, in this case, is a mere deputy who exercises the authority delegated to him by God. Hence, whatever authority he wields is not inherently his own. His power and authority derive from God and are restrained by the limits set by Him through the Qur'an and the Sunnah. While Sunnis believe that the ruler should be elected, Shiites declare instead that this position should be occupied by a member of the household of the Prophet (Pbuh). Despite these differences, however, both branches of Islam agree on the divinely mandated nature of the state.

> "Remember when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive ˹human˺ authority on earth." They asked Allah, "Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" Allah responded, "I know what you do not know." (Surat Al-Baqarah: Verse 30)

Almost the entire corpus of Islamic political thought was centered around the "common belief that from its very inception the state was not in conflict with religion; rather religion in Islam is essential for the state and the state is essential for religion" (Faksh, 1983: 62). The existence of the state is understood as an expression of the will of God. Therefore, all political thinking on the nature of the state finds its basis in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. "Contrary to the Western conception of state, there is no secular theory of state in Islam" (Faksh, 1983: 62). The Sunni jurists of the golden period of Islam articulated a concept of the state based not only on verses from the Qur'an dealing with wide-ranging political and organisational matters, but also on the Sunnah of the Prophet (Pbuh). Qur'anic advices to nurture and maintain divine values by *enjoining the good and forbidding* were used by jurists to elaborate their doctrine of *deputyship* (Moten, 1996: 21).

The existence of a stable state is central to the idea of politics in Islam. The Qur'an vehemently denounces anarchy and chaos, and the Sunnah reiterates the need to maintain a well-organized society where authority prevails (Moten, 1996: 21). An organised and functioning society requires an *imam* (leader) and a community ready to heed his commands and obey. Hence, fulfilling the will of God by implementing a divinely mandated polity (state) becomes both a communal and an individual responsibility. "Power is sought in Islam, then, not for its own sake nor for personal or collective aggrandisement" but rather as a mean to achieve the greater purpose of serving God (Moten, 1996: 21). The religious norms and ethics of Islam were used to establish the rules of political comportment.

> "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution" (Surat An-Nisa: Verse 49).

Much of Ibn Khaldun's concepts and the overall perspective of his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari* (science of human social organization) are rooted in Islamic political thought. In fact, his

outlook on the importance of society and the function of the state, as well as the requirements he deems necessary for leadership, and the relationship between politics and religion are all aligned with the fundamental social and political norms established by the luminaries of Islamic political thought. While in Western writings Ibn Khaldun is often presented as a unique genius and the *Muqaddimah* as a work without precedent in Islamic erudition, it is important to reiterate that many of the concepts at the heart of his theory of state formation were a staple of Islamic political thought long before Ibn Khaldun. He did not deviate from the traditional outlook on the state and remained a proponent of the "ideal theory of the *Khilafah* (caliphate)" (Kumar, 2017: 1052). He adhered to the opinion that the caliphate's existence is not only one dictated by need (political, social, and economic) but also a canonical requisite that Muslims are obligated to establish.

> "(To exercise) the caliphate means to cause the masses to act as required by religious insight into their interests in the other world as well as in this world. (Worldly interests) have bearing upon (the interests in the other word), since according to Muhammad all worldly conditions are to be considered in their relation to their value for the other world. Thus, (the caliphate) in reality is a substitute for Muhammad inasmuch as it serves, like him, to protect the religion and to exercise leadership of the world" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 155).

When talking about the relationship between religion and politics in the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun agrees with the established view in Islamic political thought. In the Khaldunian model, religion is assigned a vital role in the establishment of larger dynasties. It reinforces the idea of a reciprocal relationship between religion and the state, which is central to the theory of deputyship. Ibn Khaldun suggests that religion and politics, working in unison, can establish the ideal state and create the foundation from which royal authority will eventuate. Establishing a state is both a social and religious need according to Ibn Khaldun. The restraining power of the state is essential in

imposing rules and regulations to manage society and keep disorder and chaos at bay. This in turn, permits the emergence of a social organization dedicated to the fulfilment of God's will.

> "Consequently, social organization is necessary to the human species. Without it, the existence of human beings would be incomplete. God's desire to settle the world with human beings and to leave them as His representatives on earth would not materialize" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 46).

Religious proclamations possess the inherent ability to promote cooperation and mutual support while minimizing the impact of negative feelings and selfish needs amongst those sharing a common *'asabiyyah*. Religion provides yet another layer to this original *'asabiyyah* by offering a noble goal and purpose for which to strive. Religious coloring allows the initial *'asabiyyah* to transcend consanguinity alone and become instead one steeped in something far larger and more inclusive than a common ancestry. Khaldunian thought highlights the importance of religious *'asabiyyah* in state formation. This type of *'asabiyyah* is accompanied by a broader outlook on life; one conducive to the emergence of a goal predicated on unity and a certain level of self-effacement to ensure the achievement of the group's objectives. This newfound resolve gives the group an advantage over other dynasties lacking in religious coloring. Even when the latter possess larger armies, they can still be overrun by smaller groups imbued with a religious mission and a unique ethos of unity and cohesion.

> "As we have mentioned before, the reason for this is that religious coloring does away with mutual jealousy and envy among people who share in a group feeling, and causes concentration upon the truth. When people come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object one of common accord. They are willing to die for (their objectives)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 126).

One of the pioneers of Islamic political thought was the 9th century philosopher Abu al-Hassan Ibn Muhammad Ibn Habib al-Farabi (870-950). Born in Turkistan, "he studied *Fiqh*

(jurisprudence), music, religious sciences, logic and philosophy in Bukhara and Baghdad" (Kumar, 2017: 1051). He also played an important role in preserving and transmitting the knowledge of ancient Greece. He wrote numerous works on philosophy and politics, which had an undeniable influence on the scholars that came after him. When it comes to Islamic political thought, his most famous books are *On The Perfect State* (*al-Madina al-Fadila*) and *Civil Polity* (*al-Siyasah al-Madaniyah*). These books garnered a lot of attention in Western academia as the first philosophical works on Muslim political thought (Rahman, 2021: 242).

Farabi believed that philosophy should be an ally to politics. He considered philosophy to be the source of real knowledge and saw politics as a toll for amending actions and leading people toward happiness and contentment. Therefore, for Farabi it was essential that philosophy and politics act in unison to fulfill their appointed roles (Rahman, 2021: 242). In his book *On The Perfect State*, Farabi specifies his views on the importance of society, the qualities a ruler must possess, and the characteristics of a perfect state. He ponders on the significance of society and declares it to be the only way humans can attain an ideal life. Humans rely on cooperation to acquire many of the things that are crucial to their survival. Hence, this relationship predicated on mutual aid renders possible human existence in the best conditions.

> "In order to preserve himself and to attain his highest perfections every human being is by his very nature in need of many things which he cannot provide for himself; he is indeed in need of people who each supply him and some particular need of his. Everybody finds himself in the same relation to everybody in this respect. Therefore, man cannot attain the perfection, for the sake of which his inborn nature has been given to him, unless many (societies of) people who co-operate come together who each supply everybody else with some particular need of his (…)" (Farabi & Walzer, 1985: 229).

One can find Ibn Khaldun among those who were influenced by the works of Farabi. His own understanding of the importance of society showcases Farabi's impact on him. Much like the

philosopher, he saw society as a crucial element in the survival of mankind. In his *'ilm al-'umran al-bashari*, the emergence of human society is the result of man's inherent need for the assistance of his fellow humans in securing his own survival. This natural cooperation occurs in a variety of settlements, ranging from nomadic encampments to villages and cities. The primitive social organization *('umran badawi*) that marks the first step toward civilization emerges usually amongst human populations living through agriculture or animal husbandry. As such, they are extremely dependent on this society of cooperation to ensure their survival (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91). Hence, much like Farabi, Ibn Khaldun describes society as the only way humans can ensure their subsistence.

> "Their social organization and co-operation for the needs of life and civilization, such as food, shelter, and warmth, do not take them beyond the bare subsistence level, because of their inability (to provide) for anything beyond those (things)" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 91).

A concept central to the doctrine of deputyship is leadership. Islamic political thought envisages leadership through the idea of worthiness. In a divinely mandated polity, the position of ruler is based upon a divine covenant and regulated by the Sharia. As such, not everyone can be entrusted with the power and authority that comes with this position. Many works in Islamic political thought have reiterated this idea of worthiness by proposing specific qualities an individual must possess to be considered suitable for leadership. Farabi compares the importance of the leader in the state to that of the heart in the human body. "The heart is the ruling organ which is not ruled by any other organ of the body (…) It may be compared to the steward in a household" (Farabi & Walzer, 1985: 175). According to him, a ruler should possess key qualities to help him achieve his goal of establishing the perfect state. Most importantly, the ruler must be imbued with a natural predisposition to rule. This entails having "the attitude and habit of will for being a ruler"

(Farabi and Walzer, 1985: 239). He also lists other important qualities an individual should display in order to be worthy of ruling.

> "(1) he will be a philosopher (2) he will know and remember the laws and customs (3) he will excel in deducting a new law by an analogy (4) he will be good at deliberating and be powerful in his deduction to meet new situation (5) he will be good at guiding the people by his speech to fulfill the laws (6) he should be of tough physique to shoulder the task of war, mastering the serving as well as the ruling military art" (Farabi & Walzer, 1985: 251-253).

Another key figure in the development of Islamic political thought was the theologian and prominent lawyer of the Shafi'i School, Abu al-Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Habib al-Mawardi (974-1058). His greatest contribution to the corpus of Islamic political thought came in the form of a manuscript on the nature of governance called The Laws of Islamic Governance (*Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyyah*). His epoch was marked by the political transition from a Shiite dynasty to a Sunni one. This event brought to the forefront the question of leadership. The fall of the Shiite Buwayhids to the Sunni Seljuks "brought into question the type of leadership appropriate for the Ummah (Muslim communities)" (Rahman, 2021: 244). Al-Mawardi's book encompasses "a theoretical basis for the delimitation of the different spheres of authority" within the state (Rosenthal, 1958: 29). Although only a small section of the book is dedicated to discussing political thought, he nonetheless tackles the topic of leadership. Al-Mawardi ascribes to the idea that the state's primary role is religious in essence; as such, this institution is tasked with defending and protecting the religion. "Imamate[16] is prescribed to succeed prophethood as a means of protecting the deen[17] and of managing the affairs of this world" (al-Mawardi & Yate, 2023: 10).

[16] Leadership
[17] Deen means religion in Arabic.

Much like Farabi, he believes that the position of ruler is one that requires worthiness. He establishes a list of seven qualities that any individual aspiring to rule should possess in order to prove himself worthy of such a position of authority. Unlike Farabi, however, he adds to his list that only those hailing from the Quraysh (the tribe to which the Prophet (Pbuh) belonged) can be considered potential candidates for this position. Al-Ghazali is another key figure of Islamic pollical thought who agreed with al-Mawardi's perspective on the state. As an advocate of the concept of caliphate, he argued that without this institution, disorder and strife would prevail. "Regarding the qualifications of the Caliph, Al-Ghazali's is the same as that of al-Mawardi, but he adds that he must be an Abbasid" (Kumar, 2017: 1054). As such, the political though of al-Ghazali is not much different from that of al-Mawardi.

> "There are seven conditions regarding those suited to the Imamate: 1) Justice together with all its conditions; 2) Knowledge which equips them for ijtihad in unforeseen matters and for arriving at relevant judgments; 3) Good health in their faculties of hearing, sight and speed such that they may arrive at a sound assessment of whatever they perceive; 4) Sound in limb, free of any deficiency which might prevent them from normal movement; 5) A judgement capable of organizing the people and managing the offices of administration; 6) Courage and bravery enabling them to defend the territory of Islam and to mount jihad against the enemy; 7) Of the family of the Quraysh, because of the text (of a prophetic hadith) on the matter and by virtue of consensus" (al-Mawardi & Yate, 2023: 12).

Abu Ali al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Ishaq al-Tusi (1018-1092) known as Nizam al-Mulk was an important Seljuk vizier during the reign of Sultan Alp Arslan. "Tusi was the driving force behind the Seljuk regime at the height of its power" and he played an important role in shaping Seljuk policies (Kumar, 2017: 1053). As a significant contributor to Islamic political though, he wrote The Book of Government or Rules for Kings (*Siyasatnama*) which is an important work pertaining to governance. "As a practical politician and decision-maker in high level in the state, Nizam al-

Mulk had an outstanding experience in statecraft" (Rahman, 2021: 248). In The book of Government, concerning the appointment of the ruler, he states that God chooses a candidate suited for ruling and "adorns him with princely skills, and entrusts him with the affairs of the world and the comfort of the subjects" (Kumar, 2017: 1053). The essential role of the ruler is to avert chaos and maintain peace and justice. While he agrees with the idea of worthiness as a requisite for leadership, his vision of the ruler is closer to the Shiite doctrine of *Imamah*, in which the head of state is divinely chosen, than that of the Sunnis predicated on election.

> "In every age and time God (be He exalted) chooses one member of the human race and having endowed him with goodly and kingly virtues, entrusts him with the interests of the world and the well-being of His servants; He charges that person to close the doors of corruption, confusion, and discord, and He imparts to him such dignity and majesty in the eyes and hearts of men, that under his just rule they may live their lives in constant security and ever wish for his reign to continue "(Nizam al-Mulk & Darke, 2002: 9)

Ibn Khaldun's own concept of leadership resembles greatly that of the scholars discussed above. He posits that royal authority comes naturally to human beings, since it is essential for the establishment of the social organization that renders possible their survival and the fulfilment of God's will. Due to the importance and influence of royal authority on human society, Ibn Khaldun declares certain virtues indispensable for ruling. Much like Farabi, al-Mawardi, and Nizam al-Mulk, he states that the ruler must be imbued with a natural predisposition for ruling that presents itself in the form of praiseworthy qualities. Amongst these, Ibn Khaldun lists the desire for decency and integrity, generosity, forgiveness of mistakes, tolerance, fairness, humility and care toward the poor and the weak, patience, faithful application of obligations, responsiveness to the complaints of petitioners, respect for religious law, dedication to divine worship, hospitality toward guests, respect for religious scholars, elders, and teachers, as well as the acknowledgement of the truth and those who proclaim it (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 112). Anyone lacking these

qualities should not be entrusted with the power and authority inherent to this position. The presence of vices such as fraud, deviousness, deceit, and the eluding of obligations represents a hindrance to the fulfillment of royal authority (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 112).

The idea of worthiness implied in the Khaldunian conception of leadership reiterates the theory of deputyship, which is central to Islamic political thought. The position of ruler, in a divinely mandated polity, is not a position that can be given to just anyone. Instead, only those imbued with the necessary virtues to fulfil this deputyship should be allowed to ascend to such a level of authority. This idea, which is central to Ibn Khaldun's understanding of leadership, is not a novel perspective of his making or one predicated upon Aristotelian philosophical arguments. On the contrary, it is a reiteration of the traditional viewpoint on the link between leadership and worthiness in classical Islamic theology. His theory of state formation is in fact a continuation of the previous studies concerning the state within the corpus of Islamic political thought. He justifies the importance of the state by not only evoking its social significance, but also by reiterating its religious nature. In doing so, Ibn Khaldun joins the long list of Muslim scholars who pondered on the relationship between religion and politics within Muslim society.

> "Furthermore, political and royal authority are God's guarantee to mankind and serve as a representation of God among men with respect His laws. Now, divine laws affecting men are all for their good and envisage their interests. This is attested by the religious law" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 112).

5.2) Ibn Taymiyyah: a predecessor of Khaldunian thought

Amongst the forerunners of Islamic political thought, the scholar that has the most in common with Ibn Khaldun is Ibn Taymiyyah. Taqi ud Din Ahmad Ibn Abd al Halim Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) was born in the city of Harran in northern Syria. He was a renowned

theologian, muhaddith[18], and jurist who wrote extensively on various aspects of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah authored several books "that have become seminal references" in Islamic political thought (Kumar, 2017: 1054). His writings in this field include: The Office of Islamic Government (*Wazifat al-Hukuma al Islamiyya*), Ordering Good and Prohibiting Evil (*Al-Amr bi-l-Ma'ruf wa-l-Nahy 'an al-Munkar*), and Islamic Governance in Reconciling Between the Ruler and the Ruled (*Al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyya fi Islah al-Ra'i wal Ra'iyya*).

Although Ibn Khaldun came into the world four years after Ibn Taymiyyah's passing, both men experienced periods of great tumult where the existing social order fell prey to turmoil and chaos. Their respective historical contexts inspired both scholars to address through their works the anomie they were witnessing. While Ibn Khaldun lived at a time when the Maghreb entered a period of political disintegration and cultural decay, Ibn Taymiyyah "lived in one of the most tumultuous periods of premodern Islamic history" (Anjum, 2012: 173). His political thought was significantly shaped by his firsthand experience of the Mongol invasions of the Levant.

> "Even in Damascus where Ibn Taymiyya's family took up residence, the Mongol threat continued to be felt for many years, and indeed, on four separate occasions, they launched direct attacks against the city. On at least three of these occasions, he played a direct personal role by not only being involved as a soldier, but also using the full force of his charisma to help rally the local population as well as the scared and fleeing rulers and ulama to defend the city against the invaders" (Khalidi, 1994: 174).

The terrifying onslaught of Crusaders from the West and Mongols from the Northeast shook Muslim societies to their core, creating a havoc that shattered their weltanschauung. The Islamic classical age and its great intellectual impulse fell victim to the political and social upheavals of the 12th and 13th centuries (Anjum, 2012: 174). The terror-filled sack of Baghdad by

[18] A *muhaddith* is an expert in the study and interpretation of hadiths.

the Mongols, the killing of al-Musta'sim the last caliph of the Abbasid dynasty by these invaders, and their relentless advance and "annexation of the entire eastern half of the Islamic world" were traumatic events that to this day continue to haunt the Muslim collective memory (Anjum, 2012: 174). Wars, internal strife, famines, plagues, and a profound economic crisis replaced the previous prosperity and opulence. For many Muslims the world as they knew it was coming to an end. This sparked an intense soul-searching as to why these calamities were befalling the Muslim world in such a distressing combination. Some interpreted these events as signs of divine displeasure, while others blamed the political and religious authorities for their failure to protect and guide the ummah[19]. "This led to new emphases in Muslim thought ranging from ultraconservative and apocalyptic to self-critical" (Anjum, 2012: 173).

In their attempts to examine and understand this new reality Muslim scholars often sought parallels in other equally turbulent periods of Islamic history. The tumultuous social and political context of early-Islamic history, where the nascent ummah fought for its survival, represented for some a precedent that could prove useful in a comparative study of past and present Muslim polities. For others, however, these events were seen as unprecedented and unlike anything previously experienced by Muslims. Both Yaqut al-Hamawi and Ibn al-Athir expressed a similar view by describing the Mongol onslaught as the greatest catastrophe encountered by Muslims (Khalidi, 1994: 185). There was a sense amongst many Muslims that the present paled in comparison to the past; that the current conditions of the Ummah couldn't compare to the glories of early-Islamic history. The historical works of al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taghri, and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani attest to this pessimistic outlook on the present and nostalgia and longing for the past (Anjum 2012: 174).

[19] The Muslim community

> "In either case, this 'then-and-now' motif was a fertile soured of historiographical speculation, re-exciting memories, demanding comparisons, relativizing moral and political values and instituting a quest for patterns of private or public conduct by which the community could be morally and politically re-armed to face the dangers of the hour" (Khalidi, 1994: 184).

The extreme social and political instability led to the emergence of scholars who sought to find concrete solutions to the ongoing chaos. Amongst them was the great reformer and theologian Ibn Taymiyyah. Unlike other scholars whose diagnoses of these events were apocalyptic, he opted for a more condemnatory approach. He subscribed to the prevailing perspective in Islamic political thought describing the establishment of the state as a religious obligation. The Muslim ummah must appoint a leader to lead it and manage its affairs in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The purpose of political authority is to bring the whole of humanity under the sovereignty of God (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 500).

Therefore, in a divinely mandated polity leadership acquires a religious component. In The Office of Islamic Government, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies two main purposes of the state: *amanah* (trust) and *adalah* (Justice). "The scholars have said that the first verse was revealed concerning the Leaders of Affairs, requiring them to deliver their trusts to their owners, and that if they judge between people: to arbitrate with justice" (Ibn Taymiyya et al., 2022: 165). For Ibn Taymiyyah, politics and religion are inherently interrelated. In such a dynamic, political power and state authority become important pillars of religion, while establishing the state becomes a religious duty that falls upon all Muslims.

> "Political authority (imarah) must, therefore, be taken as a religious matter and sought as a means to secure God's pleasure and favor. Seeking God's pleasure through it by pursuing His will and complying with the injunctions of His Messenger in its exercise is one of the most meritorious acts" (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 504).

The ruler is entrusted with the wellbeing of society by administering and managing the affairs of his subjects. This is why the concept of *amanah* is central to Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of leadership. The ruler is not only answerable to God for his actions, but he is also accountable to his subjects. For Ibn Taymiyyah, to "administer the affairs of society is one of the greatest duties of religion; without performing that duty we cannot secure the good of this life or the good of the next" (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 507). Once appointed to this position of authority, the ruler is expected to shepherd society and ensure its wellbeing by following the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and defending the realm against enemy attacks and incursions. He must embody the core principles of Islam in every aspect of his rule. Any failings on his part in fulfilling his responsibilities and exemplifying a righteous rule can have a devastating impact on society.

> "Every Muslim should work for this end as much as he can. If he is appointed to a position of authority and uses his powers to serve God, to establish His religion, and promote the well-being of the Muslims as much as he can by performing sincerely the duties which are enjoined upon him and by refraining from the things which are forbidden, he will not be questioned for what he could not do" (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 507).

One of the responsibilities that befalls the ruler is to appoint viziers, governors, and administrators to manage the finances, the public administration, and the defense of the realm. In doing so, he must choose the best possible candidates to fulfil these responsibilities. He must refrain from making these choices based on favoritism, and putting individuals lacking the necessary qualities and knowledge in these key positions (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 502). For Ibn Taymiyyah, all of these positions of authority encompass a religious component since they are an integral part of the state. Therefore, the same expectations of *amanah* (trust) and *adalah* (Justice) apply to all these positions. "All of these positions of authority are in principle positions of Islamic law, and are religious positions", those who occupy them should exhibit the highest

levels of virtue and morality, and fulfil their responsibilities with *amanah* and *adalah* (Ibn Taymiyya et al., 2022: 50). According to Ibn Taymiyyah, two types of people are imbued with authority: the rulers (*umara*) and the scholars (*ulama*). Rulers must consult with scholars to determine what is religiously required of them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. So, it is incumbent upon the ulama to always give their sincere opinions to the rulers and remain honest in their advice and recommendations.

> "People who have authority (ulu al-amr) are of two kinds: rulers (umara) and scholars (ulama). "If they are right, the masses will also be right. Both should obey God and His Messenger and adhere strictly to His Book in all that they say and do. In the new issues that come up, they must consult the Qur'ān and Sunnah and try to find out what they are required to do" (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 509).

The similarity between Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun resides in the fact that they both looked at the factors within the inner structure of their respective societies to uncover the possible sources of these crises. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the devastating incursions of enemies into the Muslim realm were due to the weakness of Muslims. He criticized all segments of society, focusing on its intellectual, social, and political structures. He was particularly critical of the scholars (*ulama*) whom he lambasted for their failure to ensure the guidance of the Ummah, and maintain their integrity in their relations with the ruler (Anjum, 2012: 177). He specified that the obvious weakness of Muslims vis-à-vis their enemies was the byproduct of a growing decay of Muslim society that originated from failures in leadership; both political and religious.

> "Carrying out the punishments prescribed by Allah on whoever transgresses the bounds of the shari'a is a part of prohibiting wrong. It is obligatory upon those in authority (Uluu-ulamr) i.e. the scholars from each group or nation, and their amirs, and their elders, to stand over the general population enjoining good and prohibiting wrong, thus ordering them with all that which Allah and His Prophet have enjoined" (Ibn Taymiyya & Ibn Morgan, no date: 6)

Both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun centered on the concept of leadership in their understanding of the state. Both subscribed to the doctrine of deputyship in which the state is established by a divine covenant, and the ruler is only a deputy who exercises the authority delegated to him by God. Therefore, his power and authority are not his own, but rather derive from God and are restrained by the limits set by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This outlook on the state and the role of the ruler is central to Islamic political thought and both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun inherited much of it from the existing corpus of Islamic political thought. What was novel in both of their approaches, however, was that they centered leadership as a catalyst for political instability and chaos in their analyses. While previous scholars had reiterated in their writings that Muslims should avoid disarray and chaos and instead always prioritize order and stability, they had no firsthand experience of the kind of upheavals that shook the Muslim world during the 13th and 14th centuries. Figures like Ghazali, Farabi, al-Mawardi, and Nizam al-Mulk had lived during the golden age of Islam where much of the political power was concentrated in the hands of the Abbasid dynasty. As such, their analyses were not centered on the topic of societal decline as were those of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun.

For Ibn Taymiyyah, leadership is required in order to unite society under a single banner. Through his leadership, the ruler ensures that the two main responsibilities of the state, *amanah* and *adalah*, are being fulfilled. By instituting Sharia as the basis for the rule of law, arbitrating fairly between his subjects, and punishing crimes, he enjoins what is good and beneficial to society and prohibits what is detrimental and damaging to it (Ibn Taymiyya & Ibn Morgan, no date: 6). Through his power, authority, and comportment he exhorts his subjects to center religion in all aspects of life. The failure of the ruler to fulfill his core responsibilities, *amanah* and *adalah*,

weakens his leadership. Therefore, the resulting ripple effect compromises the ability of the entire state structure to perform its various obligations.

Ibn Taymiyyah extends that same criticism toward the scholars whose responsibility it is to advise the ruler and guide society through their knowledge and wisdom (Ibn Taymiyya et al., 2022: 50). But, when they forgo these responsibilities and begin seeking wordily success, pursuing the favors of the ruler, and compromise their independence vis-à-vis the political institution, moral decay overtakes society. For Ibn Taymiyyah, the incompetence of those imbued with authority, and entrusted with the management of society is to blame for the gradual deterioration and subsequent enfeeblement of society (Ibn Taymiyya et al., 2022: 50). A strong leadership at the head of the state not only maintains internal cohesion but it also protects the realm against external threats. The lack of proper leadership displayed by Muslim rulers rendered the Muslim realm militarily weak and incapable of repelling foreign attacks, while the lack of guidance and sincere advice from the scholars invited the spiritual and intellectual decline that further weakened the fabric of Muslim society.

The Taymiyyan model, in more ways than one, is a precursor of Khaldunian thought. While the role of the ruler and the importance of the state are staple components of Islamic political thought, Ibn Taymiyyah went beyond simply restating them and instead looked closely at the interplay between leadership and societal decline. As a theologian, the aspects of leadership he focused on were its religious features. When the ruler forgoes his responsibilities pertaining to *amanah* and *adalah*, and the scholars abandon their obligation concerning the guidance of the ruler and his subjects, the political and spiritual deterioration of society ensues. Ibn Khaldun embarked on a similar analysis of leadership, but opted instead for a historical and sociological approach rather than theological.

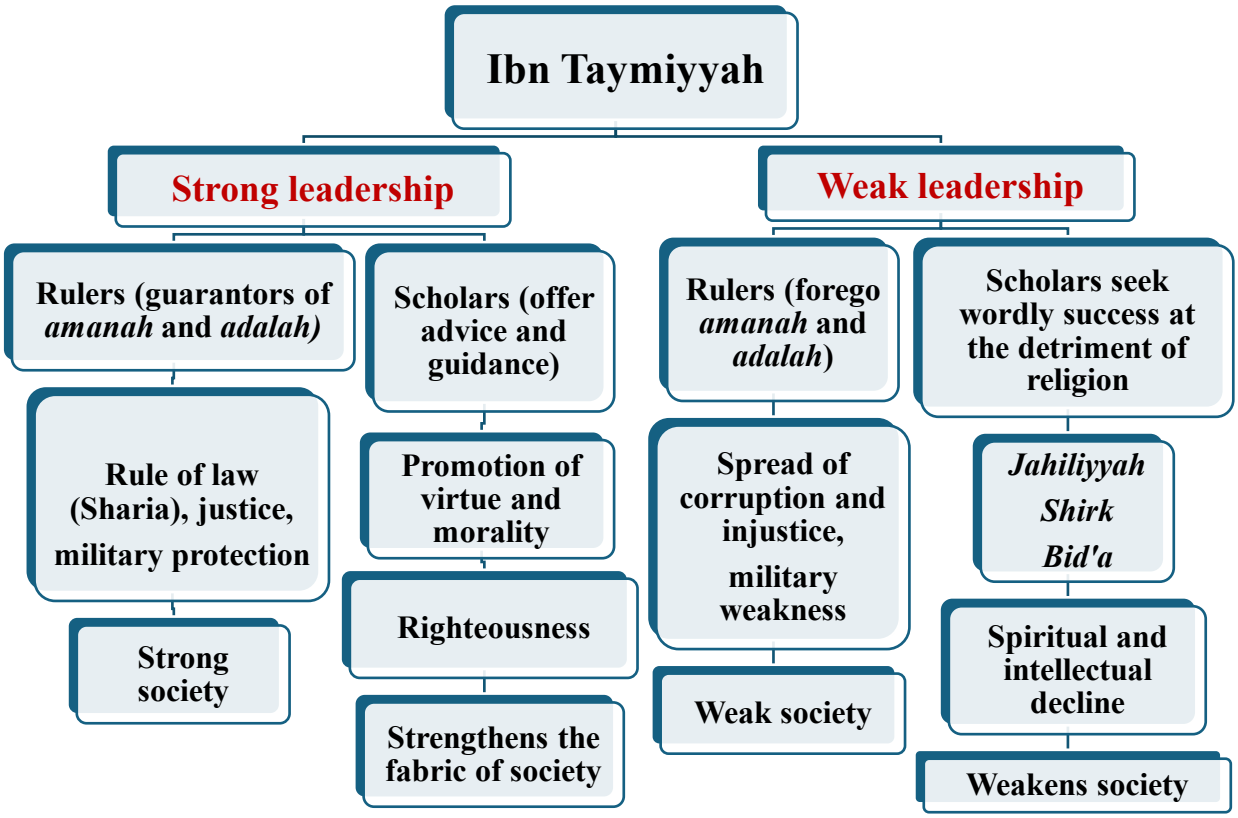


Figure 2: The Taymiyyan model

His analysis extended beyond the realm of the rulers and the scholars and instead encompassed society as a whole. Traditionally, Islamic political writings concentrated on those in positions of authority. Ibn Khaldun's interest in the rest of society is what Ali al-Wardi referred to as a "favorable attitude toward the masses" (al-Wardi, 1950: 260). In his theoretical model pertaining to state formation, Ibn Khaldun declared *'asabiyyah* to be the most important element in leadership. For a leading figure to emerge, there must be a common descent that generates within a group the desire to submit to one individual, make him their leader, and support him in all aspects. Hence, *'Asabiyyah* provides the necessary consensus upon which depends the advent of royal authority. This emphasis on the concept of *'asabiyyah* is where lies the innovative nature of Khaldunian thought. Ibn Khaldun transcended the usual boundaries of political writings in Islamic

erudition to explore the role of the masses in the eventuation of royal authority. He was the first scholar who highlighted the importance of the social in Islamic political thought rather than simply focusing on the political institution.

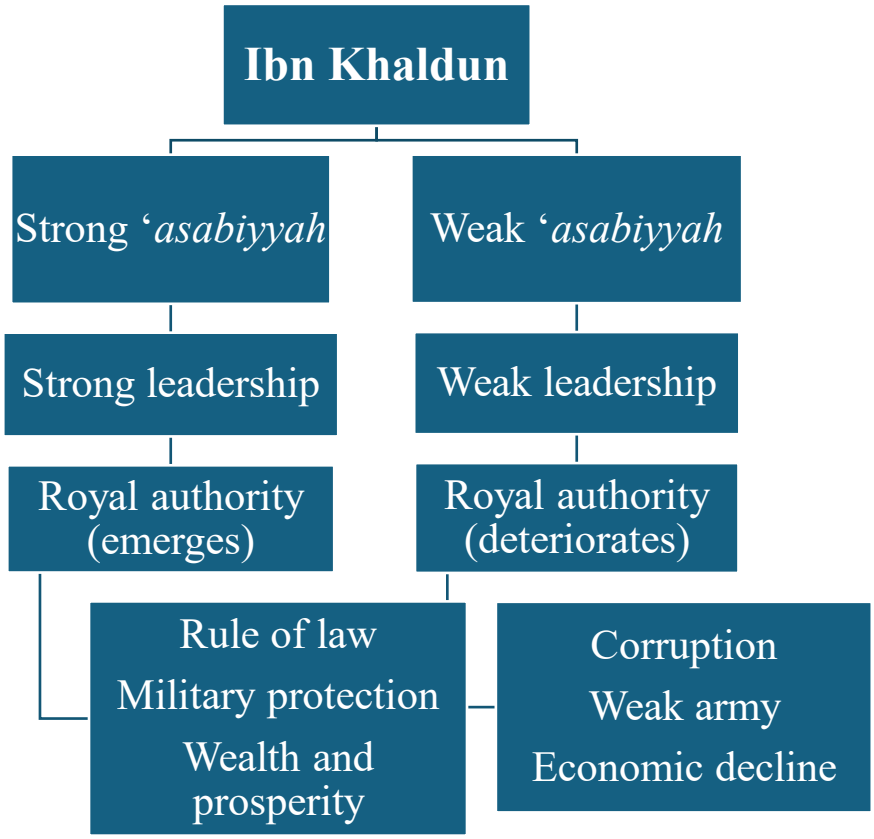


Figure 3: The Khaldunian model

Once royal authority is officially established, cities and towns begin to emerge. The necessary financial resources become available to ensure the protection of these new settlements and trade routes. “With the growth and extension of towns and cities, order, tranquility, and luxury begin to prevail, trade flourishes, and prosperity and welfare increase” (Çaksu, 2007: 75). Sedentary culture leads to the emergence of civilization. Private property, education, scholarship, the arts, the military, law and order, and commerce grow exponentially in this new culture. As sedentary life becomes centered primarily around luxury and ostentation, the strong *‘asabiyyah*

that allowed the consolidation of royal authority starts to erode and weaken. Corruption and decadence take hold and behaviors anathema to the well-being of the group become the norm. The sense of duty and responsibility that once ensured the survival of the group and the flourishing of a prosperous society start to dissipate.

Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation is focused on the generational shift experienced by dynasties and how this impacts their ability to rule efficiently (their leadership). The worthiness implied in the Khaldunian conception of leadership places the ruler at the heart of the mechanism through which a dynasty, and by extension its empire, either rises or falls. In the Khaldunian model, the ruler becomes the source and the emblem of the '*asabiyyah* that sustains the dynasty. The leadership of a worthy ruler, imbued with the required qualities, uplifts society and ensures its success and growth; an unworthy ruler, lacking the necessary qualities for good and efficient leadership, on the contrary precipitates the deterioration of society.

A defining feature of sedentary life in the Khaldunian model is the advent of luxury. Royal authority bestows upon the ruler the capacity to enjoy all the privileges of power and to indulge in far more luxury and lavishness than almost everyone else, succumbing in the process to the corrupting effects of these superfluities. As the power of the ruler increases, so does his wealth and his taste for extravagance and luxury. As power is transferred down the generational line, the corrupting effects of the wealth and privileges enjoyed by the ruler increase. The later generations of the dynasty lose steadily the very qualities that allowed their ancestors to rise to power. Where previously the ruler needed to prove himself worthy of the position he occupied through his qualities and accomplishments, he now acquires his authority through inheritance. He no longer needs to prove himself worthy by showcasing virtuous qualities and talents for warfare and politics. Instead, he obtains his power by virtue of his birth alone, even if he lacks the skills and

qualities necessary for leadership. Another aspect that makes the Taymiyyan model a precursor of Khaldunian thought is Ibn Taymiyyah's illustration of societal decline through a cyclical process.

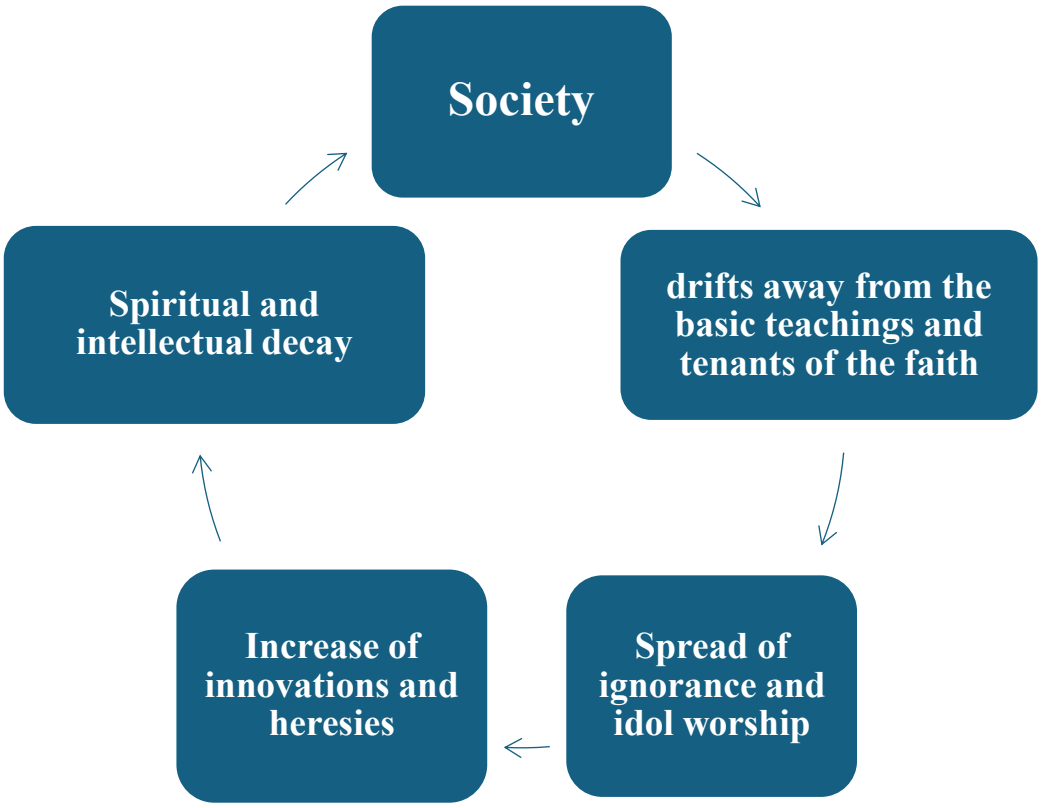


Figure 4: The Taymiyyan process of societal decline

Ibn Taymiyyah described his time as one filled with heresy and innovations (*bid'a*). In his view, every religious community goes through a process by which they slowly drift away from the basic teachings and tenants of their faith. In their desperate attempts to compensate for this inexorable loss of faith, they resort to "innovations, heresies, and polytheism" (Khalidi, 1994: 187). In the case of Muslims, Ibn Taymiyyah believed that the failures of the ulama in guiding the ummah had led to the advent of a new *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance) expressed by a growing idol-worship that had overtaken the community (Ibn Taymiyyah & Ansari, 2000: 534). This not only affected the power and efficiency of the state, but it also caused the overall social and spiritual decadence that made Muslim society incapable of withstanding the assaults by the Crusaders and Mongols.

"His adopted motto for reform was trans-historical: the present community will not be rectified except by that which rectified it when it first began" (Khalidi, 1994: 187). What he advocated for was a return to the sources, a reformation that would cleanse Islam of all *shirk* (idolatry) and *bid'a* (innovations). For Ibn Taymiyyah, the only way to remedy to the spiritual and intellectual decay of the ummah was through a reform of theology, which would then lead to a reform of politics (Anjum, 2012: 177).

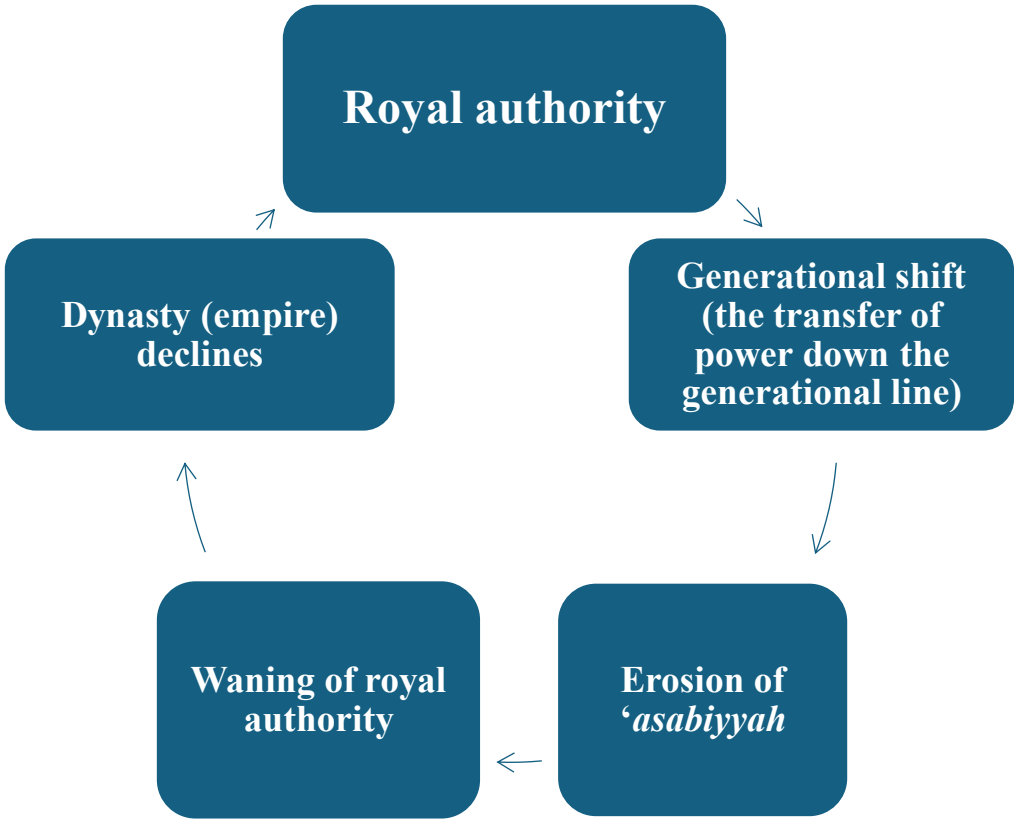


Figure 5: The Khaldunian cyclical pattern of rise and fall

Ibn Taymiyyah's cyclical view of societal decline was itself not without a precursor. In fact, one could argue that his view on the matter was informed by the cyclical view of history present in the Qur'an. Muslims are exhorted, in the Qur'an, to study and learn from the history of previous nations in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes that led to their demise. The verse

"Go about the earth, then, and observe what was the end of those who rejected the Messengers, calling them liars" is not only a warning pertaining to disobeying God, it is also a statement asserting that human history tends to repeat itself (Surat Al-Nahl: Verse 36). Ibn Khaldun follows in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyyah and conceptualizes the decline of dynasties through a similarly cyclical process. In the Khaldunian model, the transfer of power down the generational line is the process through which Ibn Khaldun envisages the path that leads to the decline of dynasties. In his model, the strength of a dynasty is directly linked to that of the ruling monarch.

Ibn Khaldun's lengthy description of the praiseworthy characteristics of nomadic tribes puts at the heart of his understanding of leadership the idea of worthiness. In a context where life is ruled by danger and precarity, qualities such as courage, honesty, loyalty, and discipline can enhance the tribe's capacity to ensure its survival. These qualities must not only be present in the tribe's leader (chief), he must also be the best possible embodiment of these virtues. His example then exhorts the other members of the tribe to adopt these same qualities and express them through their own behavior. This in turn, uplifts the entire tribe and improves its overall condition. In this dynamic, to ascend to the position of leadership one must be worthy of assuming such a responsibility in the first place.

As much as '*asabiyyah* renders possible the establishment of a dynasty and the emergence of royal authority, the link between these two concepts in the Khaldunian model is an interesting relationship to take into account when delineating the path to decline. While the advent of royal authority cannot occur without a strong enough '*asabiyyah* to establish it, royal authority inevitably plays a role in the erosion of said '*asabiyyah*. The emergence of royal authority leads to the rise of a state, which in turn allows for the growth of cities, towns, commerce, and culture. The latter, particularly, triggers the appearance of refinement, luxury, and ostentation. These

characteristics of sedentary culture are the very elements which cause the dwindling of the foundational '*asabiyyah* of the dynasty. The steady loss of the praiseworthy qualities displayed by the earlier rulers is particularly acute amongst the latter generations of the dynasty, since they have access to much more wealth than the rest of their predecessors, and can indulge in far more luxury and extravagance. Therefore, royal authority is both the result of a successful '*asabiyyah* and the impetus behind its waning as leadership is transferred down the generational line.

Conclusion

The current condition of contemporary Khaldunian studies reflects the lack of fresh and innovative perspectives in the analysis of Ibn Khaldun's work. The usual reading grid of the *Muqaddimah* often reiterates the cyclical nature of Ibn Khaldun's view of history at the detriment of the far more original aspects of his work. The cyclicality of history was already a well-established perspective within Western thought, which explains why the first Europeans who interpreted the *Muqaddimah* found a natural mooring point in this aspect of Ibn Khaldun's analysis. In doing so, however, much of the commentary on his work focused on the cyclical pattern of rise and fall of empires, labelling it Ibn Khaldun's main contribution to sociology. The continued lack of focus on the other aspects of his analysis further paralyzes the growth of contemporary Khaldunian studies.

The political ideas at the heart of his theory of state formation find their roots in the rich corpus of Islamic political thought. Too often, the studies on the *Muqaddimah* do not explore its link to the works of previous scholars. However, when one maps out Ibn Khaldun's political ideas, it becomes clear that he was influenced by the contributions of renowned scholars such as Farabi,

al-Mawardi, and Nizam al-Mulk. His opinion on the relationship between politics and religion, the importance of society and the function of the state, as well as the requirements necessary for leadership are all in agreement with the fundamental social and political norms found in the classics of Islamic political thought. Ibn Khaldun's reception in the West cemented the idea of his work being unique and without precedent within the landscape of Islamic erudition, which only further convinced those who believed the *Muqaddimah* to be the continuation of some earlier European philosophical tradition. This only further deracinated the *Muqaddimah* from its native intellectual tradition. Yet, by repositioning Khaldunian thought within the broader context of Islamic erudition, it becomes evident that the core concepts of Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation, as well as his overall outlook on the state, are in fact rooted in the corpus of Islamic political thought.

Furthermore, unlike the accepted reading grid where the innovative nature of Khaldunian thought is said to be the cyclical pattern of rise and fall, the recontextualization undertaken in this chapter reveals that its originality resides instead in the extension of its analysis beyond the realm of political and religious institutions. The cyclical view of history was not a Khaldunian innovation; in fact, such a view of history was already present in the Qur'an, where countless examples of nations rising and falling are used to illustrate humanity's tendency to repeat history. Ibn Khaldun was not the first scholar to have delineated the path toward societal decline through a cyclical process. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah had already elaborated a similarly cyclical pattern through which every religious community slowly drifts away from the basic teachings and tenants of its religion. This loss of faith triggers the appearance of ignorance and idol-worship which cause the spiritual and intellectual decay of society. The ensuing decline then instigates the overall weakening of society in all aspects.

Traditionally, Islamic political writings concentrated primarily on those in positions of authority. Ibn Khaldun, however, ventured beyond the customary boundaries of Islamic political writings to investigate the role of the rest of society in the emergence of royal authority. He was the first scholar who highlighted the importance of the social rather than simply focusing on the political institution. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun asserts this by offering clarifications on the principles of his new science by comparing it to other disciplines. For him, politics is only ever interested in information about society when it pertains to its administrative aspects (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 38). Since the purpose of politics is to address the ethical and moral requirements vital for the protection and perpetuation of the species, it has no interest in the other components of society and how they interconnect. For Ibn Khaldun *'Ilm al-'umran al-bashari* is meant to address that gap by investigating the human social organization and attempting to explain the "conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization" (Ibn Khaldun et al. 2005: 39).

Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation focuses on the changes that affect the foundational '*asabiyyah* at the root of a dynasty's success. It delineates the path to decline through the changes affecting the leadership of the dynasty in question. A strong '*asabiyyah* creates the support needed for a strong leadership to emerge; an individual imbued with the necessary qualities is then entrusted with the power and authority to lead the group. The chosen leader then mobilizes the existing '*asabiyyah* to help him establish royal authority. The advent of royal authority serves as a catalyst for the appearance of conditions that are auspicious to the emergence of a culture of refinement. This new reality, where society now experiences prosperity, is one where the ruler enjoys increasingly more power and more wealth, and the foundational '*asabiyyah* that rendered possible the rise of the dynasty starts to erode. As power is transferred down the generational line and the rulers accumulate more wealth, their praiseworthy qualities start to dissipate. The decaying

of the dynasty's leadership as well as the eroding of its foundational '*asabiyyah* trigger its decline. This process of rise and fall is only the byproduct of the changes that affect the dynasty's leadership and its foundational '*asabiyyah*. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's greatest contribution is not so much the pattern of rise and fall of empires that he illustrated through his model, but rather his explanation of the interplay between leadership and '*asabiyyah*, the relationship between the social and the political.

Conclusion

In sociological theory, the actuality of social things is the byproduct of the labour undertaken to construct and maintain them. The historicity of social things implies that what exists today may not exist in the future (Hirschman & Reed, 2014: 260). When examining the advent of "social kinds, entities, or objects", it becomes evident that their formation is historical in essence. One can then posit that this formation process offers "explanatory, causal claims" (Hirschman & Reed, 2014: 260). Complex historical processes, such as state formation, revolutions, and the emergence of social movements, are often dependent on more than one factor. That complexity can be "attributed to the instability of social and political behaviours as well as the changing nature of social and political institutions" (Do Vale, 2015:62). The social sciences often face notable difficulties in developing theories that can effectively predict and explain social and political events. "A possible problem with the lack of durable theories in social and political sciences is that these theories have tried to be predictive, resting on the assumption that we live in a stable world of institutions and behaviour" (Do Vale, 2015:62). However, by dissecting these complex social processes and looking at them from a historical perspective, it is possible to uncover their prevailing causes and understand their ever-shifting nature.

Causality plays a central role in Ibn Khaldun's approach for ontological and historical reasons. Both his approach to philosophical history and his dialectical model are inspired by the Islamic notions of cause and effect. According to him, the universe possesses a "rational structure" susceptible of being understood through causation (Çaksu, 2007: 53). However, despite this firm and orderly foundation resting on a series of "nexuses between causes and things caused", the universe remains far from constant; instead, it experiences endless transformations (Çaksu, 2007: 53). He believed that the inner meaning of history could only be disclosed through a process of

speculation looking closely at the underlying causes of specific events. This process is "an attempt to get at the truth, subtle explanation of the causes and origins of existing things, and deep knowledge of the how and why of events" (Ibn Khaldun, 1981: 6). It explains his keen interest in the quintessential features of human social organization, describing "why things are the way they are" (Çaksu, 2007: 54). The concepts of chance and luck are non-existent in Ibn Khaldun's theoretical model, since both rely on the prevalence of hidden causes. For him, everything in existence has a specific cause that can be investigated and understood (Ibn Khaldun, 1981: 6). The idea of causality is vital to Ibn Khaldun's epistemology. Understanding how things come into existence requires an in-depth knowledge of all their underlying causes. These are not only the source of particular situations and phenomena but also the effects of prior causes (Ibn Khaldun, 1981: 6). One must, however, reiterate that Ibn Khaldun rejected vehemently the possibility of an endless stream of a limitless number of causes and stated instead that all things lead to a first or primary cause (Çaksu, 2007: 54).

Demonstration (*burhan*) was the method utilized by Ibn Khaldun in the *Muqaddimah*. In this method, one must endeavor to begin his analysis from assertions that are accurate and able to produce sound knowledge (, 2014:27). But this was not the only method he used in the criticism he levelled at Muslim historians. He also used the dialectical method to reveal the shortcomings of their historiography. The intent of dialectical argumentation is not to produce truthful premises, but rather to disprove or accept opinions. This aim is achieved by exposing the incongruity of opposing opinions. "In other words, a dialectical argument is purely logical in that it does not necessarily proceed from true premises" (Alatas, 2014:28). Ibn Khaldun disagreed with Fakhr al-Din Ibn al-Khatib and Afdal al-Din al-Khunaji who declared logic to be its own discipline, instead of a mere tool for other sciences. He used both demonstration and dialectics as methods in his

critique of traditional historical scholarship and the elaboration of his new science of human society (*'ilm al-'umran al-bashari*). While not new, his methodology was nonetheless inventive in its materialist orientation. He recognized the importance of material factors in the transition from nomadic to sedentary society.

Muhsin Mahdi stated that Ibn Khaldun's new science "aims at the demonstrative knowledge not of the individual events themselves, but of the principles that underlie them and other similar events (…)" (Mahdi, 1964: 228). Its purpose is to study historical phenomena that are not accidental or fortuitous, in the hopes of articulating general findings about them. Therefore, the primary end of Ibn Khaldun's science of human social organization is to amend historical reports by distinguishing those based on facts from those rooted in myths, rumors, and the general misunderstanding of things. Hodgson noted that this new science was elaborated as a set of abstractions that could be demonstrated through the following principles: "(i) human society is a necessity, and (ii) the physical environment influences humans socially, psychologically and physically" (Alatas, 2020: 89).

The two major criticisms frequently levelled against Ibn Khaldun's theoretical model question its applicability and relevance. His desire to identify certain regularities in human history has led some social scientists to assert that his conception of human history leads to determinism. The lack of suggestions for possible reforms to redress the decline of states is often presented as an example of his supposed "fatalism" and his acceptance of the cycle of rise and fall as "an inevitable and almost mechanical process" (Gibb, 1933: 27). His science of human social organization being interested in the unfolding of historical events, and not so much with the exploration of "unrealized possibilities", does not "demonstrate what must be done in a particular situation or what the best mode of conduct is regardless of circumstances" (Mahdi, 1964: 230).

> "For instance, in studying political regimes, the science of culture is concerned with the consideration of that segment of the nature and causes of man's acts which lead to the establishment of the regimes known to have existed. If these regimes happened to be the product of man's lust for power, prosperity, or honor and how they lead to the establishment of political regimes" (Mahdi, 1964: 231).

This view of his work is based on a misunderstanding of the fundamental distinction between a view centered on causal relations and one based on determinism. Fatalistic thinking views all events as inevitable and inescapable fates, while causal thinking considers that there are causal relationships between different facts and events leading to specific outcomes, which allow us to analyze and understand them (Meuleman, 1991: 117). These outcomes are the byproduct of the interactions between various factors and can change as these relations fluctuate and are reshaped. Frantz Rosenthal and Kamil Ayad defended Ibn Khaldun against those same assertions (Gibb, 1933: 26). Rosenthal remarked that *'asabiyyah*, a central concept of Ibn Khaldun's theory of state formation, does not require divine aid to rise in human society, but is instead the natural result of a human desire for co-operation and mutual aid (Gibb, 1933: 26).

The advent of royal authority is also the outcome of the political nature of human beings, which incites them to unite and form families, clans, and nations. This is, according to Rosenthal, a perfect example of Ibn Khaldun's conviction that history is shaped by the exercise of man's free will and not his adherence to a fatalist outlook on human destiny (Gibb, 1933: 26). What can be at first glance interpreted as a challenging limitation of the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's approach is in fact an advantage that allows it to concentrate on the understanding of historical intricacies that might be difficult to uncover without an in-depth understanding of the complex interplay of multiple factors. Ibn Khaldun has often been criticized for failing to apply his theory in Book Two and Three of his *Kitab al-'Ibar*, where he expounded on the history of specific nations. Dale notes

that the explanation of his dialectical model occupies a bigger portion of the *Muqaddimah* than his description of the basic principles of his historical methodology. For some, by not applying his theoretical framework to analyze and interpret the history presented in the following volumes of his *Kitab al-'Ibar*, he proved the methodological limitations of his approach. Therefore, for his critics, Ibn Khaldun's work resembles a contemporaneous study of history rather than a grand narrative of history.

However, Alatas posits that this perspective is grounded in a mistaken reading of Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab al-'Ibar*. The relationship between the *Muqaddimah*, his prolegomenon of history, and the two following books is not to be found in a standard application of his theory to the facts detailed in these books, but rather in "how the Muqaddimah guides the manner in which the rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* is organized" (Alatas, 2020: 91). In modern historical sociology, the past is restored according to the edicts of a theoretical model. Historical sociology doesn't simply imply a presentation of facts, it also examines the reciprocity between history and the theories that study it. Such an approach, however, was not part of the conventional methodologies familiar to Ibn Khaldun in his epoch. Theoretical speculation and inquiry into the primary causes of historical events were the main objectives he set for himself in his endeavour. It is only fair then that he should be assessed "in terms of his own objectives" (Alatas, 2020: 92). What the *Muqaddimah* provides is a model that elucidates the historical evolution of dynasties; therefore, the uniqueness of Ibn Khaldun's work is to be found in its ability to establish a new science and elaborate a unique theoretical model.

Western contemporary readings of Muslim societies tend to approach the subject through Western concepts and methodologies that often echo the Orientalist assumptions and arguments so prevalent in Western thought. While the criticism of Orientalism and Eurocentrism are often

the focal point of postcolonial theory, the calls for the production of alternative discourses remain for the most part unexplored options. In fact, even in the Global South, the production of social sciences independent from the canons of Western sociology is almost nonexistent. Walter Mignolo states that one needs to take a certain distance from the Eurocentric tradition to truly partake in the decolonization of knowledge. In other words, it is essential to bring Western epistemology back into the fold of the pluriversal by substituting the current homogeneous culture of the modern sciences with a plurality of heterogeneous knowledges.

Syed Farid Alatas' recommendation to adopt a far more multicultural approach to the teaching of sociology seems to fall within the decentralization of Western-centric thought suggested by Mignolo and Santos. Classical sociology usually encompasses the works consolidated after World War Two as the canons of the discipline. While Durkheim, Marx, and Weber are widely taught as the foundational authors of classical sociology, "non-Western progenitors and contributors to social thought and theory" are completely erased from the discussion (Alatas, 2014:152). This persistent ostracism of non-Western social scientists and their contributions remains the primary hindrance to the advent of a more inclusive and multicultural sociology. Khaldunian sociology fits perfectly in this endeavour to find alternatives to the ongoing hegemony of Eurocentric traditions in contemporary sociology. What is lacking from the discipline today are alternative ideas and theories susceptible of "enriching and universalizing" it (Alatas, 2014: 152).

Ibn Khaldun's work is steeped in a theoretical framework that emerged from a unique intellectual and cultural setting far removed from that of the Western world. His model offers an opportunity to partake in the study of social phenomena from a rather unique theoretical perspective. By centering the concept of *'asabiyyah* Ibn Khaldun asserted that each society

possesses characteristics that are unique, and depending on these features they'll embark on specific historical paths. The study of Muslim societies within the social sciences is often riddled with essentialist portrayals of said societies that ascribe all their political woes to oriental despotism; in this context Islam is defined as being anathema to modernity, and thus being the very source sabotaging any political development in the Muslim world. Even efforts made to overcome the usual trappings of Orientalism by adopting a different perspective, have a hard time escaping the wide net thrown by the essentialist readings of Muslim history in Western thought.

The strength of the Khaldunian model resides in its recognition of the diversity inherent to human societies and the complexity of the dynamics that shape their evolution. However, the potential of Khaldunian sociology to produce new and unique readings pertaining to human societies, outside of the purview of Western epistemology, remains, for the most part, unexploited. Our thesis is but a first step in showcasing how Khaldunian sociology, far from being a remanent of the past or an example of proto sociology, remains an exciting framework through which modern historical events could be analyzed. Through his study of the rise and fall of dynasties and their states, Ibn Khaldun was trying to understand the process through which an effective leadership emerges within human societies. Royal authority can only be established through *'asabiyyah* when a strong and efficient leadership arises. However, when the application of Ibn Khaldun's theoretical model is mentioned leadership and its psychological dimensions are never the focal point. It is rather his description of the passage from a primitive social organization *('umran badawi*) to a civilized social organization *('umran hadari*) that elicits interest. Yet, through his investigation of *'asabiyyah*, he tries to ascertain what good leadership implies. The pattern he delineates in the rise and fall of states is one that centers the ruler. The concept of worthiness is fundamental to his model as he attempts to decipher the changes that can impact a

dynasty's capacity to exercise leadership efficiently. Our focus on this aspect of Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework demonstrates not only the versatility of his model but also just how much of his work remains to be studied beyond merely descriptive accounts of his theory.

Ibn Khaldun's political ideas, which are the bedrock of his theory of state formation, are deeply rooted in the corpus of Islamic political thought. His views concerning the significance of society, the importance of the state, the role of the ruler, and even his understanding of the concept of leadership, all can be traced back to the works of Farabi, al-Mawardi, Nizam al-Mulk, and Ibn Taymiyyah. Furthermore, unlike the accepted reading grid where the innovative nature of Khaldunian thought is said to be the cyclical pattern of rise and fall, the recontextualization undertaken in this thesis has revealed that its originality resides instead in the extension of the traditional analysis found in Islamic political writings, beyond the realm of the political and the religious. Traditionally, Islamic political writings focused mostly on those in positions of authority. Ibn Khaldun, however, extended his analysis beyond the usual boundaries of Islamic political writings to incorporate the role of society in the emergence of royal authority.

Through his explanation of the connection between leadership and '*asabiyyah,* he highlighted the relationship between the social and the political. Ibn Khaldun was not the first scholar who delineated the path toward societal decline through a cyclical process. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah had already created a similarly cyclical pattern of societal decline. In his model, religion is the focal point; every religious community loses overtime its connection to the core principals of its religion. They begin to slowly drift away from the core fundamentals and tenants of their religion. This loss of faith triggers the appearance of ignorance, which causes the spiritual and intellectual decay of society. Ibn Khaldun's own model explains the decline of dynasties through the transfer of power down the generational line. Therefore, *'Ilm al-'umran al-bashari*, as

a science, is meant to investigate the human social organization in order to explain the emergence of the state. In fact, the cyclical view of history that informs both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun's theoretical models is one that can be traced back to the Qur'an, in which human history is portrayed as repetitive.

According to Alatas, in order for Ibn Khaldun to be incorporated into the corpus of contemporary sociology, a methodical restoration of his theory needs to be undertaken in earnest. (Alatas, 2020: 77). More studies need to focus on examining the various aspects of Khaldunian thought in order for a neo-Khaldunian sociology to emerge. The content of the *Muqaddimah* must be reinterpreted through a recontextualization of Khaldunian though within the wider landscape of Islamic erudition (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015: 207). Only once such a restoration of Khaldunian though has taken place, can the possibility of applying Ibn Khaldun's theoretical model be discussed. In response to Alatas' call for more meta-theoretical studies on Ibn Khaldun, this thesis examined the genesis of Khaldunian thought by exploring the content of the *Muqaddimah* and the intellectual and historical contexts that fostered the making of Ibn Khaldun's magnum opus, in the hopes of gleaning from this process a deeper understanding of Ibn Khaldun's work.

Venturing into the possible application of the Khaldunian theoretical model brings to the forefront the tensions inherent to the confrontation between two types of research methodologies ingrained in two different perspectives and traditions, Islamic and Western. Ibn Khaldun belongs to a tradition in which the various guidelines that inform research are rooted in "the principle of revelation that comes from the creator" (Bakar et al., 2022: 921). Humans are advised to utilize their intellect to observe and examine situations so as to make sense of their world. The primary goal of research in Islamic erudition is to foster human knowledge in order to seek the truth, and in doing so, not only fulfill the will of God, but also succeed in this world and in the hereafter.

Therefore, research in the Islamic perspective has a "moral element based on religion" (Bakar et al., 2022: 921). Islamic thought and modern Western thought travelled in opposite directions. While they both perceive human reason as lacking the ability to figure out the metaphysical, since it is confined by its empirical nature, Western philosophical thought, unlike Islamic thought, was shaped by secularism, materialism and humanism (Safi, 2014: 18).

Islamic epistemology endeavored to constraint human rationality to the investigation of empirical reality and the examination of sensory data. Ghazali initiated the efforts to use "rational argument to describe the metaphysical reality", and in doing so, created a persuasive argument against Greek philosophy. In the West, however, in the aftermath of the enlightenment, "empiricist and rationalist philosophers began displacing God from the center of epistemological considerations (…)" (Peker, 2021: 594). Religion was reduced to a "matter of subjective experience rather than a phenomenon whose truth can be confirmed or disproved" (Peker, 2021: 595). Hence, the conversation pertaining to the application of the Khaldunian theoretical model entails a broader discussion about the incorporation of Islamic epistemology, and the guidelines of Islamic research unique to Islamic thought, into the landscape of modern sociology in order to facilitate the advent of epistemic pluralism within the discipline.

The contemporary relevance of Khaldunian sociology and its concepts is particularly evident when discussing the concept of Islamization of knowledge. In the late 1970's Muslim intellectuals who vehemently opposed the excessive dependence of the Muslim world on Western research methodologies proposed this approach as an alternative. The Palestinian-American philosopher and scholar, Ismael al-Faruqi saw in the secularization of knowledge that swept across the Muslim world, in the wake of Western colonialism, a sign of the Ummah's weakness and the profound malaise generated by this condition. For the advocates of an Islamization of knowledge,

it is crucial to reverse the current overreliance on Western research methodologies, which they see as contrary to the Islamic weltanschauung, by elaborating models of research which integrate Islamic concepts within the study of modern disciplines. Therefore, in order to liberate the contemporary Muslim intellectual milieu from the stranglehold of Western epistemology, it is imperative to highlight "the importance of re-emphasizing revelation as a major source of study in the formation of social theory"(Bakar et al., 2022: 926).

Louay Safi, who wrote extensively on the Islamization of Knowledge, rejects the idea of scholarly undertakings outside of the purview of religion. Despite recognizing the impressive nature of the *Muqaddimah*, he nonetheless placed Ibn Khaldun amongst the Muslim scholars he criticized for failing to properly explore the ideological underpinings inherent to society and history (Bakar et al., 2022: 926). Therefore, in the conversation pertaining to the elaboration of research methodologies indigenous to Muslim societies, and distinct from that of the Western-centric methods, Ibn Khaldun's work is already a part of the discussion, both as the object of critique and a possible source of inspiration in this current effort to bring about models of research, at least partly, rooted in the Islamic theological heritage.

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