

Research article

The Contemporary Significance of Ibn Khaldun for Decolonial Sociology: Methodological and Theoretical Dimensions

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Abstract

This paper discusses the significance of Ibn Khaldun for the social sciences with reference to a number of methodological and theoretical dimensions. The discussion revolves around what I refer to as the levels of scholarship on Ibn Khaldun, which range from the meta-theoretical to the empirical and applied. It is claimed that in order for Ibn Khaldun to be taken seriously by the major disciplines in the social sciences, more work of a meta-theoretical and theoretical nature on his writings needs to be done. It is further argued that when considered in terms of all the levels of scholarship, Ibn Khaldun's work should be viewed as an exemplar for a modern social science that is rooted in Islamic tradition. The paper makes the case for Khaldunian sociology as an aborted tradition in the modern social sciences, introduces the levels of scholarship, and discusses the levels at which Khaldunian scholarship is more and less prominent. The paper also raises a methodological and theoretical issue in relation to Ibn Khaldun's work.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun; Decolonial; Sociology; Method; Theory

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مقالة بحثية

راهنية ابن خلدون في نزع الطابع الكولونيالي عن علم الاجتماع: الأبعاد المنهجية والنظرية

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ملخص

تناقش هذه الورقة أهمية ابن خلدون في العلوم الاجتماعية من خلال عددٍ من الأبعاد المنهجية والنظرية، وتدور مناقشتها حول ما أعتبره مستويات البحث عن ابن خلدون. وتتراوح هذه الأخيرة من مستوى فوق نظري إلى مستوى إمبريقي وتطبيقي. أزعّم أننا بحاجة إلى المزيد من الأبحاث الفوق نظرية والنظرية حول كتابات ابن خلدون إذا ما أردنا أن يُؤخَذَ مُنْجَزُهُ على محمل الجد في أهم تخصصات العلوم الاجتماعية، وأجادل بأن يُؤخَذَ بالاعتبار كنموذج لعلم اجتماعي حديث مُتجذر في التقليد الإسلامي. تناقش هذه الورقة مستويات البحث عن ابن خلدون باعتباره إرثاً جرى إجهاضه في العلوم الاجتماعية الحديثة، وذلك ابتداءً من المستويات الأكثر أهمية إلى أقلها أهمية. كما تشير الورقة عددًا من القضايا المنهجية والنظرية ذات العلاقة بالمُنْجَزِ العلمي لابن خلدون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ابن خلدون، أهلنة، علم الاجتماع، المنهج، النظرية

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Introduction

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (A.H. 723-808/A.D. 1332-1406), the fourteenth century Muslim social theorist, had this to say about his discovery of a new science:

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. It does not belong to rhetoric, one of the logical disciplines (represented in Aristotle's *Organon*), the subject of which is convincing words by means of which the mass is inclined to accept a particular opinion or not to accept it. It is also not politics, because politics is concerned with the administration of home or city in accordance with ethical and philosophical requirements, for the purpose of directing the mass towards a behavior that will result in the preservation and permanence of the (human) species. The subject here is different from that of these two disciplines which, however, are often similar to it. In a way, it is an entirely original science. In fact, I have not come across a discussion along these lines by anyone¹.

It is this originality that led Ibn Khaldun to be frequently lauded as a precursor or founder of sociology and other social sciences. He has not, however, in general been considered as a source of modern social theory. There is, therefore, a neglect of Ibn Khaldun at the theoretical level, in both the West and the Muslim world. It has often been said that Ibn Khaldun had no followers in the pre-modern Muslim world. While this is not entirely true, no Khaldunian tradition in the modern social sciences ever developed. A Khaldunian or neo-Khaldunian sociology or social science has yet to develop.

This paper defines the significance of Ibn Khaldun for the social sciences in terms of a number of methodological and theoretical dimensions. The discussion is framed in terms of the levels of scholarship on Ibn Khaldun, which range from the meta-theoretical to the empirical and applied. I argue 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. I further argue that when considered in terms of all the levels of scholarship, Ibn Khaldun's work can be seen to be an exemplar for a modern social science in the Islamic tradition. The paper proceeds as follows. The next section makes the case for Khaldunian sociology as an aborted tradition in the modern social sciences. While Ibn Khaldun was taken seriously by European sociologists in the late 19th century and early 20th century, he was excluded from the sociological canon as it became established after the Second World War. It is suggested here that in order for Ibn Khaldun to become more known and read in the mainstream social sciences, more

1 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 56 [I, 78]. The first set of page numbers refers to the Arabic edition by Cheddadi. See 'Abd al-Ra'īman. *Al-Muqaddimah*, 5 vols., *Abd al-Salam al-Shaddadi [Abdesselam Cheddadi]* (Casablanca: Bayt al-Funun wa al-'Ulum wa al-Adab, 2005).

Page numbers in square brackets refer to Rosenthal's English translation of the *Muqaddimah* from which quotations are taken. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibn Khaldun: The Muqaddimah-An Introduction of History*, 3 vols., translated from Arabic by Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

work on Ibn Khaldun at the theoretical and meta-theoretical levels needs to be done. The section after this then introduces the levels of scholarship, discussing the levels at which Khaldunian scholarship is more and less prominent. The two sections that follow briefly raise a methodological and theoretical issue in relation to Ibn Khaldun's work. The concluding section discusses Ibn Khaldun as an exemplar for a sociology in the Islamic tradition.

The Abortion of a Tradition

It has been widely assumed that Ibn Khaldun was "discovered" by the Europeans and promoted by them. Although this view has some basis, it has to be qualified. Ibn Khaldun was by no means unknown during his own time in the Maghreb as well as the Arab East. Nevertheless, those that came after him, even those who considered themselves as his followers, did not engage in the kind of work that would have led to a Khaldunian school in the science of human society, as Ibn Khaldun termed it. Still, a start for what may have become a Khaldunian school was made¹. Among the more important followers of Ibn Khaldun in the pre-modern Muslim world, was Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin al-Azraq al-Andalusi (831/1428 – 896/1491)². Aldila Isahak correctly notes that there is a dearth of works of Ibn al-Azraq among Western scholars. Although there was more attention paid to him by Arab scholars³, this did not result in the development of a Khaldunian school in the science of human society. Another important follower of Ibn Khaldun was the historian, al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1441). Al-Maqrizi, died about fifty years before Ibn al-Azraq, and had attended Ibn Khaldun's lectures in Cairo⁴. Some two centuries later, Ottoman scholars poured over the *Muqaddimah* to search for reasons for what they understood to be the decline of their empire and for support to positions they took in the discourse on the Ottoman state⁵.

In the modern period, Muslim reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mu'ammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida were influenced by Ibn Khaldun⁶, although this attention did not result in any sort of Khaldunian social science theories. The significance of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* can

1 - See Syed Farid Alatas, "The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies: Khaldunian Applications," *International Sociology*, 22(3) (2007), pp. 267-288; Aldila Isahak, *Ibn al-Azraq's Political Thought: A Study of Bada'i al-Silk fi Taba'i al-Mulk* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010), pp. 2-3.

2 - Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin Al-Azraq, *Bada'i' al-Silk fi TabA'i' al-Mulk* (Tunis: Dar al-'Arabiyyah li al-Kitab, 1976).

3 - See Aldila Isahak, *Ibn al-Azraq's Political Thought*, p. 4, for references to Arab language works on Ibn al-Azraq.

4 - Ahmed Abdesslem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), p. 14; Charles Issawi, "Introduction," in *An Arab Philosophy of History: Selections from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (1332-1406)*, translated and arranged by Charles Issawi (London: John Murray, 1950), p. 24.

5 - For more on this see Cornell Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldunism' in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 18(3-4) (1983), pp. 198-220; Ş. Tufan Buzpinar, "The Question of Caliphate under the last Ottoman Sultan," in Itzhak Weismann & Fruma Zacks, (eds.), *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 1-18, pp. 10-11; Alatas, *The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies*, pp. 273-276.

6 - Abdesslem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs*, pp. 60ff.

be summarized as follows:

1. It conceived a new science referred to as the science of human organization (*al-'umran al-bashari*) or of human society (*al-ijtima' al-insani*), deemed to be necessary for the correct interpretation of history;
2. It presented a new theory of the rise and decline of states and dynasties;
3. This is an empirical theory, rather than an ethical theory, which avails itself of the traditional methods of philosophy known to and elaborated by the Muslims, but applied to an area not paid attention to by the philosophers;
4. It constitutes a critique of earlier historical works said by Ibn Khaldun to be founded on erroneous assumptions and methods.

Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* constitutes a prolegomenon to a new science that he maintained was required for a more rational and empirically true account of history. The *Muqaddimah* forms Book One of the three books of his *Kitab al-'Ibar*. The Introduction to the *Kitab al-'Ibar*, the *muqaddimah* (not to be confused with the *Muqaddimah* or Prolegomenon) provides a detailed account of the various errors to be found in the historians that preceded Ibn Khaldun¹. In addition to detailing the errors of past historians and presenting the requirements for the new science, the *Muqaddimah* also advanced a new theory of the rise and decline of states, with reference mainly, but not exclusively, to the Berber and Arab dynasties of the Muslim east and west².

Furthermore, the theory is an empirical one, generalizing about states and societies as they are or as they develop, rather than outlining the ideal state. It can also be said that Ibn Khaldun's approach was materialist. For example, he explains the differences between the Bedouin and sedentary modes of making a living in terms of economic and geographical factors rather than divine intervention³. Although Ibn Khaldun did not introduce a new method in his theory, what was new was the fact that he applied the Greco-Arabic methods of argumentation to the subject matter of history and society. As stated by Hodgson, Ibn Khaldun's *al-ijtima' al-insani* was conceived by him to be "a self-consistent body of demonstrable generalizations about historical change, generalizations which would in turn be based on premises taken from the demonstrated results of "higher", i.e., more abstract, sciences – in this case chiefly biology, psychology, and geography"⁴.

1 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 13-48 [I, 15-68].

2 - For a discussion of Ibn Khaldun's critique of history and his new science see Syed Farid Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012, ch. 2).

3 - Stephen Frederic Dale, "Ibn Khaldun: The Last Greek and the First Annaliste Historian," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38 (2006), 431-451, p. 440.

4 - Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Vol. 2 (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 479-480.

Regarding Ibn Khaldun's critique of earlier historical works, an example of such work can be found in Tabari. In the introduction to his monumental *History of Prophets and Kings*, Tabari issued a disclaimer. He makes it clear that any inconsistencies or illogicalities contained in his *Tarikh* are not due to faults with his own reasoning as he had merely reported accounts or *akhbar* that he received from previous transmissions¹. This was precisely the method that Ibn Khaldun wishes to avoid, that is, the overreliance on received reports. The absence of knowledge of the nature of society did not allow for the proper and thorough examination of such reports. It was knowledge about the nature of society that made it possible for the scholar to distinguish false from true reports on the grounds of their possibility (*imkan*) or absurdity (*istihalah*) in the study of human society.

We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental (to civilization) 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 doubts. Then whenever we hear about certain conditions occurring in civilization, we shall know what to accept and what to declare spurious. We shall have a sound yardstick with the help of which historians may find the path of truth and correctness where their reports are concerned².

Thus, Ibn Khaldun placed much value on the logical and systematic study of society. As a result, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the formative period of the disciplines of sociology and the other human sciences, he was frequently referred to as a precursor or even a founder of sociology. Several European and American scholars had expressed their admiration for the new science of society that Ibn Khaldun founded.

Among the early European works on Ibn Khaldun and probably the first article in English about him is the article by Jacob Gräberg de Hemsö in 1834. De Hemsö was extremely laudatory in his remarks:

In one word, among all the numerous Arabic and other Oriental manuscripts that are moldering in the rich libraries of Europe, and still more, amongst those that have hitherto been published, with or without translations, there is not one that offers such an assemblage of worth, rarity, importance, general utility, and extensive learning, with respect to the history of Africa, as this most excellent work of A'bd-Ar-Rahmán Ibn Khaldun. And I do not consider myself going too far in asserting, that the skillful and learned Arabic scholar who would undertake to make an abridged and commented translation of this classical work, into a generally known European language, would reap everlasting honor and praise, and at the

1 - Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari: Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1417/1997), p. 13, cited in Mohammad R. Salama, *Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion Since Ibn Khaldun* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p. 82.

2 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 56 [I, 77].

same time, in a high degree, deserve well of the whole commonwealth of letters¹.

Among the first Western sociologists to be influenced by Ibn Khaldun was the Polish, Ludwig Gumplowicz. Like Ibn Khaldun, Gumplowicz viewed the state as a central feature in his explanation of state formation as a result of the interplay of extra-economic forces rather than the slow process of economic differentiation². At the beginning of the twentieth century, the German sociologist, Franz Oppenheimer, also noted the contribution of Ibn Khaldun to the study of the state and its role in conflict³.

Another early sociologist, Elmer Barnes, stated that it was Ibn Khaldun rather than Vico who “has the best claim to the honor of having founded the philosophy of history, and his view of the factors involved in the historical process was sounder and more modern than that of the Italian of three centuries later”⁴. Barnes also stated elsewhere that Ibn Khaldun was the “first writer to possess the modern dynamic idea of progress and the unity of the social process”⁵.

Lester F. Ward had the following to say on the role of sociology in generalization, with reference to the historical perspective:

It is the discovery of law in history, whether it be the history of the past or the present, and including under history social as well as political phenomenon. There is nothing very new in this. It is really the oldest of all sociological conceptions. The earliest groping after a social science consisted in a recognition of law in human affairs. The so-called precursors of sociology have been those who have perceived more or less distinctly a method or order in human events. All those who have done this, however dimly, have been set down as the heralds of the new science. Such adumbrations of the idea of law in society were frequent in antiquity. They are to be found in the sayings of Socrates and the writings of Aristotle. Lucretius sparkles with them. In medieval times, they were more rare, and we scarcely find them in St. Augustine, but Ibn Khaldûn, a Saracen of Tunis, in the fourteenth century gave clear expression to this conception. His work, however, was lost sight of until recently, and Vico, who wrote at the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, was long regarded as the true

1 - Jacob Gräberg de Hemsö, “An Account of the Great Historical Work of the African Philosopher Ibn Khaldûn,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3(3) (1834), 387-404, p. 404.

2 - Ludwig Gumplowicz, “Ibn Chaldun, ein arabischer Soziolog des XIV. Jahrhunderts,” in Gumplowicz, *Soziologische Essays, Soziologie und Politik*, IV of Ludwig Gumplowicz Ausgewählte Werke Band IV (Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner, 1928), pp. 90-119. First published in the Polish review, *Przegląd filozoficzny* in 1898. See also Franz Oppenheimer's remarks on Ibn Khaldûn and Gumplowicz in “Tendencies in Recent German Sociology,” *Sociological Review*, 24 (1932), 1-13; 125-137; 249-260, pp. 253-254.

3 - Franz Oppenheimer, *System der Soziologie*, Zweiter Band, Der Staat (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1926), pp. 173-174. See also Howard Becker & Elmer Barnes, *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, 3 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961 (first published in 1938)), Vol. I, p. 267.

4 - Harry Elmer Barnes, “Sociology before Comte: A Summary of Doctrines and an Introduction to the Literature,” *American Journal of Sociology* 23(2) (1917), 174-247, p. 198.

5 - Harry Elmer Barnes, “Ancient and Medieval Social Philosophy,” in Barnes, (ed.), *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 3-28, p. 25.

forerunner of Montesquieu¹.

Howard Becker and Elmer Barnes in their classic *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, pay a great deal of attention to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun². They refer to Ibn Khaldun as the first writer after Polybius to apply modern-like ideas in historical sociology, remarking that it was a non-European who did so³. Ibn Khaldun became known among Western historians and social scientists who were not necessarily in the field of Middle Eastern, North African or Islamic Studies chiefly because of the efforts of scholars like Barnes, Becker and others before them in the nineteenth and early twentieth century⁴.

An interesting example of the European revival of Ibn Khaldūn that has implications for the attempt to incorporate Ibn Khaldun's ideas into the modern social sciences and a rare attempt at the application of Ibn Khaldun's theory to social phenomena can be found in an article by the Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset. Appearing in 1934, the article is entitled "Ibn Khaldun Reveals the Secret to Us: Thoughts on North Africa". In it, Ortega reflects on Melilla, a city in North Africa, conquered by the Spaniards at the end of the fifteenth century. For Ortega, what presented itself as an intellectual problem was the fact that Melilla was for centuries, up to his own time, enclosed within its own walls, having no relations or only hostile relations with the countryside⁵.

Ortega says that Europeans had to ask a native of Africa for the solution to the problem. The answer could not come from Europeans who operated according to a different conception of history than that was required for understanding Africa. However, in spite of their having studied and written historical books, native Africans were generally not thinkers⁶. Ibn Khaldun is then

1 - Lester F. Ward, *Pure Sociology: A Treatise on the Origin and Spontaneous Development of Society* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 56.

2 - Becker & Barnes, *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, Vol. I, pp. 266-279.

3 - Becker & Barnes, *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, Vol. I, p. 266.

4 - Other examples are Alfred von Kremer, "Ibn Chaldun und seine Kulturgeschichte der Islamischen Reiche," *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosoph.-histor. Klasse)* (Vienna) 93, 1879; Robert Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History in France, Belgium, and Switzerland* (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 153ff; René Maunier, "Les idées économiques d'un philosophe arabe au XIV^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 6 (1913); Nathaniel Schmidt, *Ibn Khaldūn: Historian, Sociologist and Philosopher* (New York, 1930); José Ortega Y Gasset, "Abenjaldūn nos revela el secreto," *Revista del Instituto Egicio de Estudios Islámicos en Madrid*, 19 (1934/1976-1978), pp. 95-114. First published in 1934 in *El Espectador*, 7, 9-53; Hellmut Ritter, "Irrational Solidarity Groups: A Socio-Psychological Study in Connection with Ibn Khaldūn," *Oriens* 1, 1 (1948), pp. 1-44. Indeed, Baali cites Barnes and Becker, alongside Sorokin and Gumpłowicz, as being among those who recognize the Arabic contribution to the field of sociology. See Fuad Baali, *Ilm al-Umran and Sociology: A Comparative Study* (Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University, 36th Monograph, Vol. 7, 1986), p. 17.

5 - Ortega y Gasset, "Abenjaldūn nos revela el secreto", p. 95. I have relied on an unpublished English translation of the Ortega's article Ortega (2000). In late 1999, I had given a copy of Ortega's article to my uncle, Prof. Syed Muhammad al-Naquib Al-Attas, the then Founder-Director of the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur. He gave it to Ms. Saida del Moral Llobat, a PhD student at ISTAC at that time, who translated the article to English. My uncle then presented the manuscript of the translation to me in April 2000.

6 - Ortega y Gasset, "Abenjaldūn nos revela el secreto", p. 97. We shall leave aside concerns with Ortega's Orientalist orientation for now.

named by Ortega as an exception, an eminent exception, who has a clear and insightful mind in the way of the Greeks. Ibn Khaldun reveals to us that the apparent chaos of events in North Africa can be understood in terms of the co-existence of two ways of life, the nomadic and sedentary¹. Ortega notes that for Ibn Khaldun, state and society in North Africa are radically separated. Herein lies the secret of historical change. Two completely different human types create each social group. Government is created by nomadic groups while society is the creation of sedentary peoples. The nomads with a higher level of moral discipline and greater courage are able to get the better of sedentary people and take control of cities. They create states. But the states they found are transitory because the nomads in the cities become infected by the “virus of softness”². The weakened sedentarized nomads are now at the mercy of fresh supplies of nomadic invaders. The process is repeated every three generations or about one hundred and twenty years³. This is the basis of Ibn Khaldun’s philosophy of history, which Ortega regarded at the same time as the first sociology⁴.

The secrets revealed to us by Ibn Khaldun are not only useful for the understanding of Melilla and its relationship with the countryside but can also tell us something about life in Spain itself. For example, Castile has elements of Berber culture. The house of the Castilian peasant is similar to the *kabyliya* house and the coat bears resemblance to the *djelaba*⁵. Ortega also suggests that Ibn Khaldun’s theory can be applied to the rise of the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula. Ortega was wrong in attributing the extremist orientation of the Wahhabi movement to Islam itself. He says:

The Muhammadan faith is intrinsically polemic, warring. First, they believe that others have no right to believe what they believe not. Rather than monotheism, the psychologically exact name of this religion should be ‘non-polytheism’. Within Muhammadanism there are periodically new forms of archi-puritanism. One of them is Wahhabism...⁶

Clearly, Ortega here betrays an Orientalist understanding of Islam. Nevertheless, he was correct about the utility of Ibn Khaldun’s theory for our understanding of the rise of the Saudi Wahhabi state and the role of Wahhabi orientations in that⁷. A Khaldunian-type of explanation is also found in an interesting quote from Engels.

Islam is a religion adapted to Orientals, especially Arabs, i.e., on one hand to townsmen engaged in trade and industry, on the other to nomadic Bedouins. Therein lies, however, the embryo of a periodically recurring collision. The townspeople grow rich, luxurious and lax in the

1 - Ibid., p. 98.

2 - Ibid., p. 99.

3 - Ibid., p. 100.

4 - Ibid., p. 101. In this, Ortega was not accurate. Ibn Khaldun’s work was primarily sociological history and not a philosophy of history although a philosophy of history can be derived from his writings.

5 - Ibid., p. 108.

6 - Ibid., p. 112.

7 - Ibid.

observation of the “law”. The Bedouins, poor and hence of strict morals, contemplate with envy and covetousness these riches and pleasures. Then they unite under a prophet, a Mahdi, to chastise the apostates and restore the observation of the ritual and the true faith and to appropriate in recompense the treasures of the renegades. In a hundred years, they are naturally in the same position as the renegades were: a new purge of the faith is required, a new Mahdi arises and the game starts again from the beginning. That is what happened from the conquest campaigns of the African Almoravids and the Almohads in Spain to the last Mahdi of Khartoum who so successfully thwarted the English. It happened in the same way or similarly with the risings in Persia and other Mohammedan countries. All these movements are clothed in religion but they have their source in economic causes; and yet, even when they are victorious, they allow the old economic conditions to persist untouched. So the old situation remains unchanged and the collision recurs periodically¹.

Although there is no reference to Ibn Khaldun here, it is very possible that either Engels or Marx had heard of Ibn Khaldun and knew of the *Muqaddimah*². Although we may speak of the beginnings of a modern Khaldunian sociological tradition if we refer to the works of scholars such as Ortega, or those who came after them such as Lacoste, Carré, Gellner, and Michaud³, this tradition has yet to develop, whether in the Muslim world or in the West. In the Muslim world itself the works of scholars such as Mu‘ammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri and Ali Oumlil are not applications of Ibn Khaldun to historical or empirical contexts, although they are important in that they seek to understand Ibn Khaldūn in terms of the categories and concepts of his own time, a prerequisite for any serious attempt to develop such Khaldunian applications⁴.

Despite the early attention given to Ibn Khaldun, particularly after the English and French translations of Rosenthal and Monteil⁵, Ibn Khaldun continues to be, at least theoretically, neglected. This could have had something to do with the establishment of the sociological canon. Ibn Khaldun became marginal to the discipline, along with Gumplowicz, Ward and Oppenheimer themselves. The development of a Khaldunian tradition within Western sociology

1 - Frederick Engels, “On the History of Early Christianity,” in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Religion* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 276.

2 - G. H. Bousquet, “Marx et Engels se sont-ils intéressés aux questions Islamiques ?,” *Studia Islamica*, 30 (1969), 119-30, pp. 123-5.

3 - Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World* (London: Verso, 1984). First appeared in French in 1966; Olivier Carré, “Ethique et politique chez Ibn Khaldūn, juriste musulman : Actualité de sa typologie des systèmes politiques,” *L’Année sociologique*, 30 (1979-80), 109-127; Olivier Carré, “A propos de vues Néo-Khalduniennes sur quelques systèmes politiques Arabes actuels,” *Arabica*, 35, 3 (1988), 368-87; Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Gérard Michaud, “Caste, confession et société en Syrie : Ibn Khaldoun au chevet du ‘Progressisme Arabe’,” *Peuples Méditerranéens*, 16 (1981), 119-30; Gérard Michaud, “Le mouvement islamique en Syrie (1963-1982),” in Olivier Carré & Michel Seurat, *Les Frères Musulmans (1928-1982)* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2001), 123-203.

4 - Muhammad ‘Abid Al-Jabiri, “Ibistimulujjiya al-Maqul wa al-Lamaqul fi Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun,” in *A‘mal Nadwah Ibn Khaldun* (Rabat: Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, 1971), 73-132; Ali Oumlil, *L’Histoire et son discours. Essai sur la méthodologie d’Ibn Khaldoun* (Rabat: Éditions techniques nord-africaines, 1979).

5 - Ibn Khaldūn, *Discours sur l’histoire universelle: Al-Muqaddima*, traduit de l’arabe, présenté et annoté par Vincent Monteil, 3rd ed. (Paris: Sindbad, 1997).

was aborted. The same is true of Muslim scholarship in sociology.

As sociology was introduced to the Muslim world from the West, the Western canon proved no less influential in academia in Muslim countries than it was in the West itself. As a result, Ibn Khaldun also occupied a marginal status in sociology in the Muslim world. What is meant by this marginal status? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to refer to the problem of Eurocentrism in the social sciences and the impact this has on the main categories or levels of scholarship on Ibn Khaldun.

Eurocentrism and the Levels of Scholarship on Ibn Khaldun

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 cases¹. 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.

A major cause of the marginal status of Ibn Khaldun and other thinkers from outside of the Western canon is the ubiquity and resilience of Eurocentrism in the social sciences. The problem of Eurocentrism has been extensively dealt with by many others. Among the first to do so were A. L. Tibawi, Anouar Abdel-Malek and Edward Said³. Nevertheless, basic introductory courses and textbooks in the social sciences tend not to raise concerns implied by the critique of Eurocentrism. I have elsewhere noted, for example, that courses on sociological theory do not attempt to correct the Eurocentric bias by introducing non-Western scholars alongside those of the canon⁴. I have dealt elsewhere with the manner in which Eurocentrism has impacted on the development of Ibn Khaldun studies within the modern social sciences⁵. There

1 - For a review in relation to sociology see Syed Farid Alatas, "Ibn Khaldun and Contemporary Sociology," *International Sociology Review of Books*, 21(6) (2006), pp. 782-795.

2 - For review of works, which do attempt theoretical applications of Ibn Khaldun to historical and contemporary cases in a non-Eurocentric way, see Syed Farid Alatas, "The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies: Khaldunian Applications," *International Sociology*, 22, 3 (2007); Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2014).

3 - Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 44 (1963), 103-140; A. L. Tibawi, "English Speaking Orientalists," *Muslim World*, 53 (1963), pp. 185-204 (First Part); 298-313 (Second Part); Al. Tibawi, "Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to the Islam and the Arabs," *Islamic Quarterly*, 23(1) (1979), 3-54; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

4 - Syed Farid Alatas & Vineeta Sinha, "Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore: The Context of Eurocentrism," *Teaching Sociology* 29(3) (2001), pp. 316-331; Syed Farid Alatas, "Teaching Social Theory as Alternative Discourse," *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI (46) (2011), pp. 48-54.

5 - See Alatas, "The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies".

I discussed a number of traits of Eurocentrism that can be listed as follows:

- a. The subject-object dichotomy – Europeans are the knowing subjects while non-Europeans are silent or, as Abdel-Malek put it, passive, non-participating, non-active, non-autonomous and non-sovereign¹. This silence is noted in textbooks and introductory classes in the social sciences. One might be inclined to think that Ibn Khaldun is an exception to the rule because he does get mentioned in textbooks. If he is mentioned, however, he is referred to for historical interest rather than as a source of contemporary theory.
- b. Europeans in the foreground – Non-Europeans tend to remain in the background rather than highlighting inter-civilizational encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans. Modernity is viewed as a European project and creation. The social sciences are a part of that project. Encounters with non-Europeans in the fields of knowledge are rarely seen to have resulted in any significant impact on the development of European disciplines. I had mentioned above that Becker and Barnes in their *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, devoted several pages to a discussion of Ibn Khaldun and his impact on European sociology. Such an interest in Ibn Khaldun was never sustained by the later generations of sociologists.
- c. Europeans as originators – Europeans are generally presented as the originators of ideas. The tendency is not to view the modern social sciences as having multicultural origins. A quote from Alfred Weber, the younger brother of Max Weber, sums up this attitude. Weber noted that the Arabs were “apt pupils of the Greeks, Persians, and Hindoos in science. Their philosophy is the continuation of Peripateticism and Neo-Platonism. It is more learned than original, and consists mainly of exegesis, particularly of the exegesis of Aristotle’s system...”² This attitude is also to be found in works on the history of sociology and other social sciences.
- d. The imposition of European categories and concepts – This is a consequence of the above mentioned three traits of Eurocentrism, that is, the “persistence in studying Islam and the Arabs through the application of Western European categories...”³ Even if Ibn Khaldun was studied, his theories of state formation and social change were not developed and incorporated into the modern social sciences. They were not considered as being applicable to historical empirical realities⁴.

1 - Abdel-Malek, “Orientalism in Crisis”, pp. 107-108.

2 - Alfred Weber, *History of Philosophy*, Frank Thilly, (trans.) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), p. 164n.

3 - Tibawi, “Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists”, p. 37.

4 - Furthermore, there is a lack of exposure of sociology to Ibn Khaldun because of the perception that non-Western works belong to the area studies. Works on Ibn Khaldun are assumed to belong to and are “relegated” to Middle Eastern, North African or Islamic Studies. One indication of this is that among the numerous works on Ibn Khaldun that were published in the West, there were very few that appeared in sociology journals. Some exceptions are B. S. Turner, B. ▶▶

- e. The European as the universal – The universal by default refers to the works of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and other European and North American thinkers. Theory is associated with the universal. It is therefore the European, which is universal. Knowledge yielded by Ibn Khaldun is, by definition, of the particular and of more local relevance.

The Eurocentric orientation, understood in terms of the subject-object dichotomy, Europeans in the foreground, Europeans as originators, and the dominance of European concepts and categories, is such that non-Western thinkers like Ibn Khaldun are marginal in the social sciences. This is not to say that Ibn Khaldun is completely absent in the social sciences. The impact of Eurocentrism on Ibn Khaldun is such that it marginalizes certain types of scholarship on Ibn Khaldun while facilitating others. Any body of work on a social thinker or perspective in social theory can be found to consist of a number of levels:

1. The theoretical level – This refers to the systematic description, analysis and critique of the theory with reference to the central concepts utilized, the assumptions about the subject matter, and empirical verification.
2. The metatheoretical level – This refers to the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the theory as well as the historical, social and intellectual forces that shaped it.
3. The level of theory building – This refers to the process of abstraction from the existing theory with the objective of creating new theory.
4. The applied level – This refers to the critical assessment of existing cases of the application of theory as well as continuous efforts to apply theory.
5. The level of dissemination – This refers to the effort to disseminate work at the above-mentioned levels via regular panels or papers at mainstream conferences in the social sciences.
6. The level of teaching – This refers to teaching theory in mainstream sociology courses from mainstream sociology or sociological theory textbooks.

Ibn Khaldun remains marginal in the discipline of sociology and the other social sciences because there is little work done on him at the levels of theory building, theory application, dissemination and teaching. Many works on Ibn Khaldun describe his theory and discuss his methods. In order for a theoretical tradition to develop, however, it is necessary that there be activities in theory building, application with continuous dissemination via conferences, seminars and teaching. The objective is to create what might be called a neo-Khaldunian

►► S., "Sociological Founders and Precursors: The Theories of Religion of Emile Durkheim, Fustel de Coulanges and Ibn Khaldun," *Religion*, 1 (1971), 32-48; Mahmoud Dhaouadi, "Ibn Khaldun: The Founding Father of Eastern Sociology," *International Sociology*, 5(3) (1990), 319-335; Syed Farid Alatas, "Ibn Khaldun and Contemporary Sociology," *International Sociology Review of Books*, 21(6) (2006), 782-795; Syed Farid Alatas, "A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology," *Current Sociology*, 54(3) (2006), 397-411; Alatas, "The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies".

theory that is relevant and applicable to historical periods and geographical areas outside of his own. Existing work on Ibn Khaldun at the theoretical and metatheoretical levels are abundant, existing in several languages, the most important being Arabic, English and French, although there are also some important works in Persian, Turkish and German. Such works should also continue as they provide the methodological and theoretical bases for building neo-Khaldunian theory. The effort to build Khaldunian theory should also be accompanied by the systematic critique and assessment of previous such attempts by scholars such as the works of Gellner, Lacoste, Carré, and Michaud.

What I have said about the marginalization of Ibn Khaldun in the modern social sciences is true not only of Western scholarship but also of that in the Muslim world where Ibn Khaldun is considered to be of heritage value. The education system in the Muslim world, being clones of European and North American institutions of higher learning, are also defined in a not insignificant way, by Eurocentrism¹. In the next two sections, I raise some issues pertaining to methodology and theory, issues that I consider to be of great relevance for the development of a Khaldunian tradition in sociology and the other social sciences.

The Methods of the Science of Human Society

Ibn Khaldun discovered a new science and his originality is to be found at that level, that is, the level of theory, and not the methodological level. As far as methods are concerned, he merely applied methods of argumentation already known and well-developed among Muslim philosophers, theologians and scholars of jurisprudence. His point of departure was the critique of the dominant method used by the historians of his time and earlier. He reproached them for employing a method that did not enable them to distinguish truth from error on the grounds of the possibility (*imkan*) or absurdity (*istihalah*) of certain reported events.

We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental (to civilization) 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 doubts. Then whenever we hear about certain conditions occurring in civilization, we shall know what to accept and what to declare spurious. We shall have a sound yardstick with the help of which historians may find the path of truth and correctness where their reports are concerned².

Traditional historians were more concerned with the reliability of the transmitters of

1 - A glance at the sociological theory syllabi of the universities of many Muslim countries will confirm this. I have looked at the syllabi for introductory and advanced courses on social theory of universities in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia and have found this alienation from heritage to be persistent. See Alatas & Sinha, "Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore", 318, No. 4.

2 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, p. 56 [I, 77].

information and the reliability of the sources rather than the inherent possibility or absurdity of events as they are reported. The possibility and absurdity can be ascertained from logical demonstration of from what is known about the essence of society. Ibn Khaldun, like other heirs to the classical Islamic tradition regarded the method of demonstration (*burhan*) to be the most reliable in terms of yielding certain knowledge. As Hodgson noted, the new science of human society was conceived as an internally consistent body of generalizations that were demonstrable from certain premises¹. These premises or *muqaddimat*², include the following: (i) human society is a necessity³; and (ii) The physical environment influences humans socially, psychologically and physically⁴.

Above, I stated that Ibn Khaldun's originality is not to be found at the methodological level. Ibn Khaldun did make a crucial contribution, however, to the application of these methods by suggesting the importance of applying various methods in the human sciences. He did not confine himself to the method of demonstration. He also applied the method of dialectics or *jadal*. His originality lies in the application of these methods to the critique of the science of history of his time and the generation of a new science, that was to be applied to the study of history. In the classical Islamic tradition method, conveyed by the term *mantiq*, referred to the conventions that made it possible to distinguish right from wrong⁵. In general, the procedures involved include the formulation of definitions (*hudud*) that refer to the essence (*mahiyat*) of phenomena, and arguments that lead to judgment or apperception⁶. Knowledge, therefore, is either conception (*tasawwur*), that is, the perception of the essence of things, or it is apperception (*tasdiq*) or the judgement establishing the correspondence between the concept and the phenomenon in question. *Tasawwur* entails the knowledge of the five universals, that is, genus (*jins*), difference (*fasl*), species (*nu'*), property (*khassah*) and general accident (*'ard al-'am*)⁷. Ibn Khaldun noted that every phenomenon possesses its own essence as well as accidental conditions or properties that attach themselves to the phenomenon. If one knows the essence or the nature of events as well as the accidental conditions that attach themselves to those events, it would help one to distinguish truth from falsehood because it leads to a critical approach to historical information⁸.

Obtaining knowledge of the five universals involves a process of abstraction from phenomenon, which takes place until the highest genus is reached. The early Muslims studied

1 - Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 479-480.

2 - The *muqaddimat* are assertions whose demonstration do not fall within the scope of the new science of human society but taken as self-evident. See Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, p. 172.

3 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 67 [I, 89].

4 - Ibid., I, 71, 132, 138, 140 [I, 94, 167, 174, 177].

5 - Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, p. 160.

6 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, III, 91 [III, 137].

7 - Ibid., III, 94 [III, 142].

8 - Ibid., I, 53 [I, 72-73].

and further developed Greek logic in order to aid the process of analogical reasoning to ensure that the process of abstraction proceeds in the correct manner. The Muslims followed Aristotle in recognizing five kinds of analogical reasoning¹. Ibn Khaldun has described these as follows²:

1. Demonstration (*burhan*) – This is the syllogism that is founded on conditions that must be satisfied in order to produce certain knowledge;
2. Dialectics (*jadal*) – This form of analogical reasoning does not produce certain knowledge because its premises are not held to be certain ones. Dialectics is a form of disputation with has the objective of silencing an opponent. Dialectics may incorporate inductive, deductive, abductive or other forms of arguments;
3. Rhetoric (*khitabah*) – This form of analogical reasoning uses forms of speech directed to influencing or persuading rather than instructing people;
4. Poetics (*shi'ir*) – This is a form of reasoning that instructs via the employment of parable (*tamthil*) and similes (*tashbih*). Instruction is achieved through the stirring of the imagination rather than through demonstration;
5. Sophistry (*safsatah*) – is a form of reasoning that intends to deceive an opponent.

The principle methods employed by Ibn Khaldun were demonstration and dialectics. Demonstration was the method he used to elaborate his theory of the rise and decline of states. The nature of the reasoning used in the *Muqaddimah* was such that it was based on premises that were held to be self-evident and certain, therefore producing certain knowledge. It was the application of this method that enabled Ibn Khaldun to delve beyond the surface level of history to its inner meaning. On the surface (*zahir*) “history is no more than information about political events, dynasties, and occurrences of the remote past, elegantly presented and spiced with proverbs”³. The inner meaning (*batin*) of history, on the other hand, refers to “subtle explanations of the causes and origins of existing things, and deep knowledge of the how and why of events” and is “arrived at through speculation and an attempt to get at the truth”⁴. However, Ibn Khaldun also employed dialectical reasoning in his critique of the existing historiography of his time. The dialectical critique of the field of historiography was aimed at exposing the faulty arguments of historians. They were often not based on true, self-evident premises, as the objective was not to produce certain knowledge but rather to expose the flaws of the works of others. As such, dialectical reasoning may even be based on false premises,

1 - So called because the logical method argues from analogy in which the common properties of a set of objects are established and universal propositions are examined by making connections between those common properties. See Morris R. Cohen & Ernest Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934), pp. 286-287.

2 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, III, 93-94 [III, 140-141].

3 - Ibid., I, 5-6, [I, 6].

4 - Ibid., I, 6, [I, 6].

that is, it is purely logical reasoning that aims to reveal the falsity or absurdity of an opponent's view.

Ibn Khaldun Applying Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun has been frequently criticized for failing to apply his theory of state formation in his own history, that is, in Books Two and Three of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*. The Tunisian historian, Talbi, noted that Ibn Khaldun had been accused of not applying the framework laid out in the *Muqaddimah* to the events and facts recorded in the rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*. Talbi is inclined to regard such a critique of Ibn Khaldun as unreasonable. According to Talbi, it is indeed true that Ibn Khaldun did not apply his theory presented in the *Muqaddimah* to the facts detailed in Books Two and Three. However, Talbi says that it is unreasonable to expect any one person to write a universal history according to the theoretical demands of the *Muqaddimah*. To my minds, Talbi's defense does not address the central issue concerning the application of Ibn Khaldun's theory in the *Kitab al-'Ibar*¹. The impression is given that the rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* stands apart from the *Muqaddimah* and Ibn Khaldun is excused from applying his theory to his own work because he had already achieved a great feat of composing the *Muqaddimah* to begin with. This view is based on the mistaken reading that Ibn Khaldun had promised to "apply" the theory established in the *Muqaddimah* to the events and facts of history recorded in Books One and Two of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*. This, in fact, is not the relationship between Book One of *Kitab al-'Ibar*, that is, the *Muqaddimah*, and Books Two and Three. The *Muqaddimah* does influence Books Two and Three, but not in the sense that theory from the former is applied to the facts reported in the latter. Rather, the relationship has to do with how the *Muqaddimah* guides the manner in which the rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* is organized. On this, Ibn Khaldun says:

In (this book) I lifted the veil from conditions as they arise in the various generations. I arranged it in an orderly way in chapters dealing with historical facts and reflections. In it, I showed how and why dynasties and civilizations originate. I based the work on the history of the two races that constitute the population of the Maghrib at this time and people of its various regions and cities, and on that of their ruling houses, both long- and short-lived, including the rulers and allies they had in the past. These two races are the Arabs and the Berbers. They are the two races known to have resided in the Maghrib for such a long time that one can hardly imagine they ever lived elsewhere, for its inhabitants know no other human races.

I corrected the contents of the work carefully and presented it to the judgment of scholars and the elite. I followed an unusual method of arrangement and division into chapters. From

1 - M. Talbi, M., *Ibn Khaldun, The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat & J. Schach, (eds.), Vol. III (Leiden: E. J. Brill & London: Luzac & Co., 1971), pp. 825-831, p. 829.

the various possibilities, I chose a remarkable and original method. In the work, I commented on civilization, on urbanization, and on the essential characteristics of human social organization, in a way that explains to the reader how and why things are as they are, and shows him how the men who constituted a dynasty first came upon the historical scene. As a result, he will wash his hands of any blind trust in tradition. He will become aware of the conditions of periods and races that were before his time and that will be after it¹.

To Ibn Khaldun, the correct relationship between the *Muqaddimah* and the rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* is one of arrangement. It would be unfair for us to impose modern social scientific criteria regarding the application of theory in our assessment of Ibn Khaldun's work. In the modern discipline of historical sociology, the facts and events of the past are reconstructed in terms of a specific theoretical scheme established by the researcher. The theory is built from previous bodies of theoretical and empirical work. Good historical sociology cannot be a mere presentation of facts. The *modus operandi* of good historical sociology is the mutual engagement of the facts of history and theory. Such a conception of sciences was unknown to Ibn Khaldun and we could not expect him to have conceived of his craft in our modern terms.

The objectives that Ibn Khaldun set for himself were theoretical speculation (*nazar*) and inquiry (*tahqiq*) into the underlying causes of historical phenomena². Fairness dictates that we assess him in terms of his own objectives. As Ibn Khaldun himself stated in the quote above, he “followed an unusual method of arrangement and division into chapters” and “chose a remarkable and original method”. In other words, he consciously organised the *Kitab al-'Ibar* according to the logic established in the *Muqaddimah*. The underlying structure or *batin* of history is established in the *Muqaddimah*. This is, in modern terms, the theoretical framework for the study of history. The rest of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* furnishes us with the facts and events or *akhbar* of history, that is, the surface phenomena or *zahir* of history, of which the theoretical framework detailed in the *Muqaddimah* is an abstraction³. In this sense, Ibn Khaldun's promise to “apply” the theoretical findings of the *Muqaddimah* to history was fulfilled. A glance at the table of contents of the *Kitab al-'Ibar* will show that it is organized according to a scheme that is suggested by the *Muqaddimah*. Take the example of three North African dynasties discussed by Ibn Khaldun, that is, the Almoravids (al-Murabitun) (A.D. 1053-1147), Almohads (al-Muwahhidun) (A.D. 1147-1275) and Marinids (A.D. 1213-1524). These dynasties were founded with the military aid of Berbers tribes, that is, the the Sanhajah for the Almoravids, the Masmudah for the Almohads, and the Zanatah for the Marinids. The rise and decline of these dynasties is referred to in various sections of the *Muqaddimah* only to illustrate certain ideas that are introduced within the theoretical framework established in the *Muqaddimah*. Not all the facts and events pertaining to the three states are presented in the *Muqaddimah*. For this, the

1 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 9-10, [I, 11].

2 - Ibid., I, 6, [I, 6].

3 - Ibid., I, 5-6, [I, 6].

reader has to refer to Book Three of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*. The model that explains the rise and decline of these dynasties is furnished in the *Muqaddimah* but the facts that would enable one to establish the predictive value of the model is to be found in Book Three¹.

This is not to say that there are no weaknesses in Ibn Khaldun's presentation of history. But this is a weakness from the point of view of our modern criteria of theoretical applications to history. Consider Ibn Khaldun's discussion of the history of the dynasty of Ziyad in Yemen, under the suzerainty of the Abbasids. The founder of the dynasty was one Muhammad ibn Ziyad, a descendant of 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ibn Abu Sufyan. Muhammad ibn Ziyad won the favour of the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Ma'mun as he promised to protect Yemen from the Alids and succeeded in ruling over the entire Yemen. Ibn Ziyad was succeeded by his son Ibrahim, who in turn was succeeded by Ziyad ibn Ibrahim. He was followed by the brother of Ziyad, Abu al-Jaysh ibn Ibrahim, When Abu al-Jaysh died, he was succeeded by a young son, the guardians of whom were Abu al-Jaysh's sister and freedman, Rashid the Abyssinian (al-Habshi). From then on, the Ziyadite dynasty was ruled by Abyssinian or Nubian freedmen until its demise in 407 A. H.². In vain do we find in these pages accounts of the nature of Ziyadite '*asabiyah*, the causes of its strength, the mode of its decline and the political economic context within which this takes place. These matters are covered in a more theoretical sense in the *Muqaddimah*, but their Yemeni dimensions are not discussed in the relevant sections in the *Kitab al-'Ibar*. It is, therefore, the task of present day scholarship to fill these gaps in Khaldunian scholarship.

Ibn Khaldun as an Exemplar for a Sociology in the Islamic Tradition

Khaldunian social science has not developed in the modern period, partly because of the continuing dominance of Eurocentric orientations in academia. Eurocentrism determines the structure and intellectual content of education in such a way that marginalizes ideas and thinkers that exist outside of the canon, itself defined in a Eurocentric manner. As a result, a multicultural perspective of the origins and nature of the social sciences is not a common theme, making it highly unlikely that the works of non-European scholars such as Ibn Khaldun would be given the same attention as European and American social thinkers of the canon. Eurocentrism is an orientation that is not confined to Europeans or the West. It is an orientation that informs the way the social sciences are taught in the Muslim world as well, resulting in some degree of alienation from tradition and the neglect of ideas from the heritage.

An appropriate candidate for a social science in the mode of alternative discourses that correct the Eurocentric bias in the social sciences is the work of Ibn Khaldun. I conclude this paper with an appeal to view Ibn Khaldun's work as an exemplar for sociology in the Islamic

1 - See Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'Ibar*, Vol. 6 [Vol. 2].

2 - Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun al-Musamma bi Kitab al-'Ibar wa Diwan al-Mubtada' wa al-Khabar fi Ayyam al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man 'asarahum min dhawi' al-sultan al-akbar*, Vol. 4 (Beirut: Mu'assasat Jammal li Tiba'at wa al-Nashr, 1979), pp. 213-214.

tradition. This is because the *Muqaddimah* as well as the *Kitab al-'Ibar* together represent the best of the Islamic tradition in terms of drawing upon Islamic methodological tools and normative ideas as well as adopting methods from outside of the Islamic tradition. For example, there is the attention to all four methods of analogical reasoning of demonstration, dialectics, rhetoric and poetics. Argumentation is not limited to the employment of demonstration, contrary to what is the case in the modern social sciences.

There are not many works that systematically detail Ibn Khaldun's methods and subject them to critique. Apart from his use of demonstration and dialectics, there is also Ibn Khaldun's use of rhetoric, which has been given less attention. There is also the matter of definition. An example is the definition of *hadarah* and *badawah*. These have been translated sometimes as sedentary and nomadic and sometimes as urban and rural. The confusion has to do with the misunderstanding of the nature of *badawi* society. Ibn Khaldun defined nomadic society (*'umran badawi*) as that which is found in outlying regions and mountains, in pastureland, and areas on the fringes of deserts. He defined sedentary society (*'umran hadari*) as that which is found in cities, towns, villages and small communities¹. However, nomadic society was not totally devoid of agriculture and this may have led some to think that *'umran badawi* referred to rural society.

Another area that needs much work is that of the application of Ibn Khaldun's theory. I have noted above that Books Two and Three of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*, although arranged according to the scheme established in the *Muqaddimah*, fails to provide the much needed historical data that is implied by the theory discussed in the *Muqaddimah*. It should be the task of modern Khaldunian scholarship to supply this data with the view to clarifying and improving upon the theoretical framework established in the *Muqaddimah*.

1 - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, I, 62 [I, 84-85].

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