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Syed Farid Alatas

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The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies

Khaldunian Applications

Syed Farid Alatas

National University of Singapore



abstract: This article argues that the theoretical perspective on the rise and decline of states developed by 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldūn (723–808 AH/1332–1406 AD) should not be confined to historical interest but is of relevance for the study of various aspects of the history of Muslim societies. The reasons for the relative neglect or marginalization of Ibn Khaldūn as a source of theory to be applied to definite historical empirical situations is partly due to the predominance of Eurocentrism in the social sciences. The manner in which Eurocentrism has defined Khaldunian studies is discussed, but the main focus of this article is the possibilities of a Khaldunian historical sociology of Muslim societies that is founded on a non-Eurocentric approach to his work. The article specifies what is meant by non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn's theory. Several illustrations of these applications are provided. The serious consideration of Ibn Khaldūn's status as a founder or precursor of sociology would require such theoretical applications. Ibn Khaldūn's work should no longer be regarded as a mere source of historical data or an outdated perspective.

keywords: historical sociology ♦ Ibn Khaldūn ♦ Muslim societies ♦ sociological theory ♦ sociology

Introduction

The writings of Ibn Khaldūn, particularly the *Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomena*) has rightly been regarded as being sociological in nature. For this reason, Ibn Khaldūn has been widely regarded as the founder of sociology, or at least, a precursor of modern sociology. While he was given this recognition, however, few works went beyond proclaiming him as a founder or precursor to the systematic application of his theoretical perspective to specific historical aspects of Muslim societies in North Africa, the Middle East or Central Asia.

What has been said above with regard to the state of Ibn Khaldūn studies in the West holds equally true for the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Since the education systems in the Muslim world are mirror images of those in the West, it follows that the problems of Eurocentrism are defining features of the social sciences there as well, with the added dimension that in the Muslim world Eurocentrism implies alienation from the Muslim tradition of scholarship. An examination of sociological theory syllabi in many Muslim countries will illustrate just this point. I have seen course outlines for introductory and advanced courses on classical social thought and social theory in universities in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia and have found this alienation to be a persistent theme (Alatas and Sinha, 2001: 318, n. 4).

The bulk of work on Ibn Khaldūn consists of (1) biographical details of his life; (2) descriptive restatements of his general theory of state formation or discussions on specific concepts contained in his work; and (3) analyses of the methodological foundations of his writings. There has been very little by way of theoretical applications of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of state formation to empirical historical situations. This is partly due to the continuing presence of Eurocentrism in the social sciences that stands in the way of the consideration of non-European (for European read also American) sources of theories and concepts.

This article, however, argues for the possibility of non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn's work. This would involve creative approaches to the study of various aspects of history and society, including the theoretical integration of Khaldunian theory into a framework that employs concepts and theories from the modern social sciences. I do not argue that there are no non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn in the literature. I do say, however, that these are few and far between.

I begin in the next section with a brief introduction to Ibn Khaldūn's sociology. This is followed by a discussion of Eurocentrism and its impact on the development of Khaldunian sociology. Of particular significance is one trait of Eurocentrism, that is, the imposition of European categories and concepts. I then move on to the main focus of this article, the documentation and elaboration of several examples of non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn's theory. I then conclude with some remarks on the future of Khaldunian sociology.

The Problematization of History as the Basis for Sociology

Before proceeding with the case for Khaldunian sociology, it would be useful to show that, to begin with, the work of Ibn Khaldūn belongs to the discourse of sociology.

Walī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn al-Tūnisī al-Ḥaḍramī (732–808 AH/1332–1406 AD) was born in Tunis on 1 Ramadhan of the Muslim year into an Arab family who originated from the Hadhramaut, Yemen and had subsequently settled in Seville at the beginning of the Arab conquest of Spain. His ancestors left Spain for North Africa after the Reconquista and settled in Tunis in the 7th/13th century. Ibn Khaldūn received a customary education in the traditional sciences, after which he held posts in various courts in North Africa and Spain. Ibn Khaldūn lived during the period of the political fragmentation and cultural decline of the Arab Muslim world. The picture of chaos and disintegration that Ibn Khaldūn grew up with must have influenced the development of his thought. After a number of unsuccessful stints in office, he withdrew into seclusion to write his *Muqaddimah*, a prolegomena to the study of history, which was completed in 1378 and which introduces what he believed to be a new science, which he called ‘*ilm al-‘umrān al-basharī* (science of human social organization) or ‘*ilm al-ijtimā’ al-insānī* (science of human society).¹ His central concern was the explanation of the rise and decline of states and societies and he believed that he had discovered an original method for this purpose.

Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddimah* is a prolegomena to his larger historical work on the Arabs and Berbers, the *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*. He begins the *Muqaddimah* by problematizing the study of history, suggesting that the only way to distinguish true from false reports and to ascertain the probability and possibility of events is the investigation of human society (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 38 [1967: Vol. 1, 77]).² The old historical method of verifying the authenticity of chains of transmission is in itself inadequate unless supplemented by an enquiry into the nature of society. It is this investigation that he refers to as ‘*ilm al-‘umrān al-basharī* (science of civilization) or ‘*ilm al-ijtimā’ al-insānī* (science of human society), which has also been widely translated as sociology. Ibn Khaldūn made the distinction between the outer forms (*ẓāhir*) and the inner meaning (*bātin*) of history (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 1 [1967: Vol. 1, 6]). The outer forms consist of facts and reports while the inner meaning refers to explanations of cause and effect. The new science, therefore, is presented by Ibn Khaldūn as a prerequisite for the study of history or, perhaps more accurately, complementary to the study of history, because it is directed to uncovering the inner meaning of history.³

Empirically, Ibn Khaldūn’s interest was in the study of the rise and fall of the various North African and other Arab states of the East (*al-Mashriq*). The details of this theory, involving concepts such as ‘*aṣabiyyah* (group feeling or solidarity), nomadic and sedentary forms of social organization, caliphate and royal authority and religio-political reform (*taghyīr al-munkar*) are well known and have been discussed in numerous works.

What is important to point out here, however, is that underlying his many substantive concerns with the rise and decline of states is Ibn Khaldūn's interest in elaborating a new science of society. This new science is necessitated by Ibn Khaldūn's discovery of problems surrounding the nature of historical studies up to his time. An understanding of the relationships between the state and society, group feeling or solidarity and the question of the development of society requires an understanding of the nature of society which Ibn Khaldūn approaches by way of the study of the constituent elements of society, such as economic life and urban institutions (Mahdi, 1957: 234), the organizing ability of the state (Mahdi, 1957: 235) and solidarity or group feeling (*'aṣabiyyah*), which is the primary factor effecting societal change (Mahdi, 1957: 253–4, 261).⁴ The preceding can be said to be the elements of Ibn Khaldūn's general sociology, applicable to all types of societies, nomadic or sedentary, feudal or prebendal, Muslim or non-Muslim.

Ibn Khaldūn should continue to be read today, not only for the sake of recovering his role in the early development of the field of sociology in the West, but also because his theory of the rise and fall of states, as I suggest later, has a great deal of potential applicability to areas and periods outside his own. The question remains as to why he is not read in this way. I believe that a principal reason for this has to do with the predominance of Eurocentrism in the social sciences.

Eurocentrism and its Impact on the Development of Khaldunian Sociology

Eurocentrism is a particular instance of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is generally defined as the regard of one's own ethnic group or society as superior to other groups. It involves the assessment and judgement of other groups in terms of the categories and standards of evaluation of one's own group. Eurocentrism, therefore, refers to the assessment and evaluation of non-European societies in terms of the cultural assumptions and biases of Europeans. In the modern world, Eurocentrism cannot be dissociated from the economic cultural domination of the United States as a result of the settlement of America by Europeans and the subsequent rise to hegemony of the US. We would therefore be more accurate to refer to the phenomenon under consideration as Euroamericentrism.⁵

Having given a general definition of Eurocentrism, how can we understand its manifestation in the social sciences? Eurocentrism in the social sciences can be understood as the assessment and evaluation of European and other civilizations from a decidedly European point of view. For our purposes, we may further define Eurocentrism in terms of a number of

traits, as follows: (1) the foregrounding of Europeans in the history of the social sciences; (2) the idea of Europeans as originators of ideas in the social sciences; (3) the subject–object dichotomy, according to which Europeans are knowing subjects, that is, sources of theories and concepts by which the world is interpreted, while non-Europeans are sources of data and information; and (4) the imposition of European categories and concepts. It is this last trait of Eurocentric social science that this study is concerned with.

Eurocentric social science establishes and employs concepts derived from European philosophical traditions, and its social scientific and popular discourse. These are applied to the empirical study of history, economy and society. The empirical field of investigation is selected according to European (for European read also American) criteria of relevance. As a result, any particular aspect of historical or social reality is constructed in terms of European categories, concepts as well as ideal and material interests. There is a failure to present the point of view of the other (Tibawi, 1963: 191, 196; 1979: 5, 13, 16–17).

The impact of the dominance of European categories and concepts on Ibn Khaldūn is such that interest in his work tends to be historical. 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 thought 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.⁶ The dominance of European and North American derived concepts and theories in the teaching syllabi of sociology⁷ and the other social sciences translates into research. In the study of religion, for example, the bulk of concepts originate from Christianity. Concepts in the philosophical and sociological study of religion such as church, sect, denomination and even religion itself are not devoid of Christian connotations and do influence the social scientific reconstruction of non-Christian religions (Matthes, 2000). The field of the sociology of religion has yet to enrich itself by developing concepts and categories derived from other ‘religions’ such as Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and so on.

If the role, contributions, significance, values, passion and efforts of non-Europeans are largely ignored in teaching and research in the social sciences, the marginalization of such scholars will persist. So, while Ibn Khaldūn is not ignored in the social sciences, his role is principally as an object of investigation in which his theories are described and analysed or his work sifted through for data on various aspects of Muslim history, and not as a knowing subject, a source of theory through which history can be interpreted.

Non-Eurocentric Readings and Applications of Ibn Khaldūn

A non-Eurocentric reading of Ibn Khaldūn is one that looks at his works as a source of theory with potential applications to historical cases. Ibn Khaldūn is not relegated to a mere object of study but becomes a perspective from which to view both the historical and contemporary development of states. Such a reading is a reversal of the trait of the imposition of European categories and concepts.

In what follows, several examples of the application of Khaldunian theory to real historical and contemporary cases are provided. For the purpose of the present study, the works that can be said to be illustrations of non-Eurocentric applications of Ibn Khaldūn fall into two broad categories: (1) works on Ibn Khaldūn by scholars that lived in periods and areas uninfluenced by the modern social sciences; (2) works by scholars writing in the postcolonial context where the modern social sciences make up the dominant discourse. The works of category (1) tend to be more descriptive of Ibn Khaldūn's theory as well as more normative in nature, that is, using Ibn Khaldūn to prescribe change of a certain nature. The works of category (2) are positive and analytical, being applications of Khaldunian theory to historical and contemporary cases of state formation.

Contrary to the widely accepted view that Ibn Khaldūn was first promoted by the Europeans after they 'discovered' him, several of his contemporaries in North Africa as well as scholars after his time in the Muslim world wrote what may be called Khaldunian works. The most important follower of Ibn Khaldūn was Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad bin al-Azraq al-Andalusī (831/1428–896/1491). His *Badā 'i' al-Silk fī Ṭabā'i' al-Mulk* contains a detailed summary of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, which is discussed in connection with al-Azraq's concern with the relationship between ethics and royal authority (*mulk*) (Abdessaem, 1983: 19; al-Azraq, 1976). Ibn Khaldūn is also said to have been influential over the 15th-century historian al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1441), who attended his lectures in Cairo (Abdessaem, 1983: 14; Issawi, 1950: 24). Later on, 17th- and 18th-century Ottoman scholars developed an interest in Ibn Khaldūn, whose ideas they utilized in the discourse surrounding the Ottoman state.

As the modern social sciences spread across the Arab world from the 19th century onwards, there was a handful of Muslim and western scholars who began to use Khaldunian categories to study the historical and contemporary realities of their societies. Among the Muslims influenced by Ibn Khaldūn were the reformers Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (Abdessaem, 1983: 60ff.). In our times, scholars such as Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī (1971) and Alı Oumlil (1979) have attempted to understand Ibn Khaldūn's thought in a non-Eurocentric

manner. While these studies are not applications of Ibn Khaldūn to historical or empirical contexts, they are nevertheless important theoretical appraisals of his work that 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 applications. Western scholars who have attempted applications of Khaldunian theory to Muslim history and society include Ernest Gellner (1981) and Yves Lacoste (1966).

We now turn to several examples of non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of state formation from both categories (1) and (2).

The Use of Ibn Khaldūn by the Ottomans

It is fitting to begin the account of non-Eurocentric uses of Ibn Khaldūn with the Ottomans as they differ in one very important respect from the examples that are being covered later in this article. The Ottoman interest in Ibn Khaldūn discussed here, which dates back to the 17th century, was independent of European influences, as was the case with some of the Arab examples referred to earlier. By that I mean that Ottoman interest in Ibn Khaldūn did not arise as a result of their learning about him via European sources. The active interest of Ottoman scholars and statesmen has to be contrasted with the relative absence of such interest among Arab, Iranian and other Muslims during the same period.

The first Ottoman scholar to systematically make use of Ibn Khaldūn was Kātib Çelebi (d. 1657), a prolific writer, having composed some 21 works covering history, biography and geography (Gökyay, 2002). In his *Düstür ü'l-Amel li-İslāh il-Halel* (*The Mode of Procedure for Rectifying the Damage*) he discusses the causes of state financial deficits and suggests remedies (Kātib Çelebī, 1982). It is in this work that Ottoman history is thought of in terms of Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical stages of rise and decline (Fleischer, 1983: 199).

Following Kātib Çelebī was the Ottoman historian, Na'imā (d. 1716), who was greatly influenced by both Ibn Khaldūn and Kātib Çelebī. In his annalistic work of history, *Tārīh-i Na'imā*, he makes reference to Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical theory of the rise and decline of states, and the contradiction between nomadic and sedentary societies (Fleischer, 1983: 200). Na'imā adopts the idea of the Circle of Equity, that is, eight interconnected principles of good government. He attributes this to Kınalızade 'Alī Çelebī's well-known *Ahlāk-i 'Alā'i*, who in turn derived it from Ibn Khaldūn (Thomas, 1972: 78). Ibn Khaldūn himself refers to eight sentences of political wisdom arranged in a circular fashion, that is, around the circumference of a circle, attributing this to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Book on Politics* (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 39–40 [1967: Vol. 1, 81–2]). The eight principles are (Kınalızade, 1248/1833, Book III: 49, cited in Fleischer, 1983: 201):

1. There can be no royal authority without the military;
2. There can be no military without wealth;
3. The subjects produce the wealth;
4. Justice preserves the subjects' loyalty to the sovereign;
5. Justice requires harmony in the world;
6. The world is a garden, its walls are the state;
7. The Holy Law (*sharī'ah*) orders the state;
8. There is no support for the *sharī'ah* except through royal authority.

Ibn Khaldūn states that his understanding of the principles of royal authority are an outcome of his 'exhaustive, very clear, fully substantiated interpretation and detailed exposition of these sentences', which did not require the instruction of Aristotle (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 40 [1967: Vol. 1, 82]).

The Circle of Equity cited by Na'īmā is as follows:

1. There is no *mulk* and no *devlet* (state) without the military and without manpower;
2. Men are to be found only by means of wealth;
3. Wealth is only to be garnered from the peasantry;
4. The peasantry is to be maintained in prosperity only through justice;
5. And without *mulk* and *devlet* there can be no justice.

In other words, the closing of the circle implies that the military and manpower are essential to justice. As Thomas observed, the circle served to justify the necessity of the domestic reforms of the Ottoman *vezir* Hüseyin Köprülü in order to protect the empire from its European enemies (Thomas, 1972: 78).

By the 18th century, Ibn Khaldūn was well established in Ottoman circles as having provided a framework that explained the decay of the Ottoman state. The Ottoman empire was said to be in Ibn Khaldūn's stage of 'stasis and decline'. According to Ibn Khaldūn's theory, the differences in social organization between nomadic and sedentary societies was such that the former naturally evolved towards the latter in the sense that 'sedentary culture is the goal of bedouin life' and that 'the goal of civilization is sedentary culture and luxury' (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 371 [1967: Vol. 2, 291]). Fundamental to his theory is the concept of '*aşabiyyah*' or group feeling. Only a society with a strong '*aşabiyyah*' could establish domination over one with a weak '*aşabiyyah*' (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 139, 154 [1967: Vol. 1, 284, 313]). In this context, '*aşabiyyah*' refers to the feeling of solidarity among the members of a group that is derived from the knowledge or belief that they share a common descent. Because of the superior '*aşabiyyah*' usually found among the bedouin, they could defeat sedentary people in urban areas and establish their own dynasties. Having become urbanized, however, tribal solidarity diminished and

with this went their military strength and their ability to rule. This left them vulnerable to attack by ever ready supplies of pre-urban bedouins with their *'aşabiyyah* intact, who eventually replaced the weaker urbanized ones with diminished *'aşabiyyah*.

And so the cycle repeats itself. A tribe conquers a dynasty, founds a new one and rules until it is overthrown by a reform-minded leader who has the support of tribes eager to cash in on the city. The luxury of city life is the chief cause of the rise of decadence, impiety and the loss of tribal solidarity (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 154–5, 172–4 [1967: Vol. 1, 284–5, 347–51]). Hence, the importance of a religious leader who is able to unite the pre-urban tribes. As Ibn Khaldūn states:

When there is a prophet or saint among them, who calls upon them to fulfill the commands of God and rids them of blameworthy qualities and causes them to adopt praiseworthy ones, and who has them concentrate all their strength in order to make the truth prevail, they become fully united (as a social organization) and obtain superiority and royal authority. (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 151 [1967: Vol. 1, 305])

According to Ibn Khaldūn, the cycle lasted for approximately four generations and took place over the five stages of (1) the overthrow of opposition; (2) the consolidation of power in the hands of the ruler and his family; (3) leisure, tranquillity and economic prosperity; (4) stasis; (5) waste, squandering, senility and disintegration (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 175–6 [1967: Vol. 1, 353–5]).

Ottoman scholars like Kātib Çelebī and Na'īmā believed that the Ottoman state was at the stage of stasis and heading towards decline. They were concerned with institutional and administrative reforms that might serve to halt or reverse the decline (Fleischer, 1983: 200).

The appropriation of Ibn Khaldūn's ideas by the Ottomans is interesting because it provides us with a rare example of not only a non-Eurocentric but a pre-Eurocentric reading of Ibn Khaldūn. But, it is also true that their reading of Ibn Khaldūn was generally normative and ideological. The so-called Circle of Equity was cited to justify reforms designed to strengthen royal authority. One of the mechanisms that did this was the *kānūn* or dynastic law by decree that allowed for the suspension of laws derived from the *sharī'ah*. This mechanism was used exclusively by Ottoman sultans to rule and undertake reforms that may have been blocked by the *sharī'ah* in the absence of the *kānūn* mechanism (Fleischer, 1983: 202).

Ibn Khaldūn was also used by the Ottomans to justify their holding the caliphate. It was widely believed in the Muslim world that the caliphate should be in the hands of Arabs, specifically, descendants of the tribe of the prophet Muḥammad, the Quraysh. Pirizāde Mehmet Sahib (1674–1749) and Cevdet Paşa, who between the two of them, completed the Ottoman

Turkish translation of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, and were greatly influenced by his ideas, sought to justify Ottoman claims to the caliphate by arguing that in their time the requirement that the caliph came from the Quraysh was no longer relevant (Buzpınar, 2005: 10–11). The title of the caliph could be assumed by anyone who fulfilled the functions of that office. This function was in fact taken over by non-Quraysh, whose rule should be considered as legitimate. The argument of Ibn Khaldūn was in fact sociological, stating that the requirement of Qurayshite descent fell under the heading of competence. If it was considered a necessary condition that the caliph belonged to a group that possessed superior *'aşabiyyah* or group feeling in order that other groups would follow them, the Quraysh might not always fulfil that condition (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 196 [1967: Vol. 1, 401]).

Another issue surrounding the caliphate was that of the permissibility of having two caliphs. In 1726, the Afghans sent a delegation to Istanbul to ask the Ottoman sultan to accept the coexistence of two caliphs. The Ottomans objected to this on the grounds of a *ḥadīth* (proverb of Muḥammad) that holds that it was not permissible for two caliphs to be appointed (Buzpınar, 2004: 4; Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 193 [1967: Vol. 1, 392]). Furthermore, the Ottomans abided by a *fatwa* that declared coexisting caliphs as permissible only if they were separated by a great geographical barrier such as the Indian Ocean so that mutual interference in internal affairs would be difficult (Buzpınar, 2004: 4).⁸ Again, Pirizāde drew from Ibn Khaldūn for his position against the idea of coexisting caliphs.

What is lacking in the Ottoman discourses that appropriate Ibn Khaldūn is a systematic application in the tradition of positive social science of his theory of the rise and decline of dynasties with appeal to the historical facts of the Ottoman case. The application of Ibn Khaldūn's theory would result in the search for empirical manifestations of the consolidation of *'aşabiyyah* among the Turkic tribes that formed the military force behind the rise of the Ottomans, and of the decline of *'aşabiyyah* in terms of changes in land tenure systems. For example, it could be said that the assignment of *timars* (benefices) to tribal chieftains had the effect of creating an economic and moral gap between the chieftains and the tribesmen, which in turn would affect *'aşabiyyah*. In other words, the stages of growth and decay that a dynasty passes through in Ibn Khaldūn's scheme can be discussed in the context of the transition of the conquering tribesmen from the pastoral nomadic mode of production to the prebendal feudal mode of production, that is, one founded on the assignment of benefices. This brings me to the next example of the non-Eurocentric application of Ibn Khaldūn. Indeed, the next few examples of Khaldunian applications belong to category (2), that is, applications that are not prescriptive or normative but analytical and positive.

Ibn Khaldūn and the Modes of Production Framework

Moghadam suggests a reformulation of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of dynastic cycles using historical materialism but fails to integrate any Khaldunian concepts in the reformulation (Moghadam, 1988: 401ff.).

I have suggested that Ibn Khaldūn's theory of the dynamics of tribal state formation could be applied to the Ottoman empire and Safavid Iran. While there is a notion of historical change in Ibn Khaldūn, the conceptualization and typology of the economic system is missing. This gap could be overcome by understanding change in Ottoman or Safavid history in terms of a mode of production framework, the dynamics of which are derived from the Khaldunian model of change (Alatas, 1990, 1993). I now turn to an example of a similar application of Ibn Khaldūn, this time taking precolonial Morocco as the empirical field.

Many works on precolonial Moroccan economy and society tend to describe the system in terms of unitary modes of production. Lacoste characterized the North African precolonial economy in terms of the Asiatic mode of production (Lacoste, 1984: 30), and Mourad in terms of feudalism (Mourad, 1972: 36). My approach, following Amin (1975) and Wolf (1982), is to argue that precolonial Moroccan society was organized along the lines of three modes of production: the tributary, petty commodity and pastoral nomadic modes of production.

The tributary mode of production itself has its centralized and decentralized variants. An example of the centralized variant is the Asiatic mode of production: power is centralized in the state, which appropriates the entire economic surplus. The state is the owner of agricultural and manufacturing property (Akas, 1981: 70; Marx, 1970: 791; 1974: 77–80). The state is also both landlord and sovereign. Taxes coincided with rent in the sense that there was no tax that differed from ground-rent (Marx, 1970: 791). However, unlike Asiatic modes to be found in China and Southeast Asia, the power of Moroccan dynasties did not derive from the control of large-scale irrigation or other public works. Rather, the centralized tributary mode of production here was based on the control by the state of superior tribal military capabilities provided by pastoral nomads such as the *Ṣanhājah*, the *Maṣmūdah* and the *Zanātah*. The state was a major owner of land denoted by the term *jazā'* or *makhzan*, which was often either rented out to cultivators or cultivated through crop-sharing or wage labour arrangements with the state (Schatzmler, 2000: 121–2, 124–5).

However, not all rural and urban land was owned by the state or administered directly by the state. There was a category of land called *iqṭā'*, a term for a form of an administrative or military grant or benefice. It is possibly due to the identification of the *iqṭā'* with the European fief that some scholars

had described the mode of production in precolonial North Africa in terms of feudalism. But the similarities between the *iqṭā* and the fief are superficial. Unlike the European fief, the granting of *iqṭā* did not involve a contract of personal fealty but rather fiscal considerations. Benefices were granted largely in return for military and administrative services. The differences between the European feudal system and that based on the granting of benefices were sufficiently great and led Weber to conceptualize the latter as prebendal feudalism (Weber, 1978: Vol. 1, 255). Prebendal feudalism can be said to be a decentralized or fragmented variation of the tributary mode of production.

The beneficiaries of *iqṭā* in precolonial Morocco included members of the political elite, and Arab and Berber tribal *shaykhs* (Schatzmler, 1984: 25). In Marinid Morocco, for example, tribal chieftains received landed *iqṭā* worth up to 20 gold *mithqāl* in taxes and in kind (Schatzmler, 2000: 126). Sometimes, an entire village would have been granted as an *iqṭā*. There was a tendency for *iqṭā* holders to gain a degree of independence from the ruler to the extent that it became his private property. It often happened that tribal chieftains became rulers of their own smaller-scale *makhzans*, which contained within them towns, villages and tribal populations (Cook, 1990: 81).

The second mode of production to be found in precolonial Morocco is the petty commodity mode of production. In this mode of production, production for the market is carried out by producers who own their own means of production. It often involved private owners who hired craftsmen as wage labour on a small-scale as well (Schatzmler, 1997: 197). Unlike the tributary mode of the production, in the petty commodity mode of production, the producer does not live directly off the products of his labour. This mode of production was found in both rural and urban areas. In the rural areas, it was found where peasants owned land.

Many of the large cities of medieval Morocco under the Almoravids, Almohads and Marinids were important centres of manufacturing. Fez, for example, was well known for its artisans and craftsmen. During the reigns of the Marinids, Abū al-Ḥasan (1331–51) and his son, Abū 'Inan (1351–8), the most important industry in Fez was weaving, which employed about 20,000 persons (Abun-Nasr, 1971: 136). Other industries found in the Maghrib include carpentry, tailoring, shoe production, leather production, silk weaving, goldsmiths and others (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 401 [1967: Vol. 2, 348]). Wage labour was common within these industries and this involved men as well as women. Examples of work in the urban areas in this mode of production involving wage labour of women include flax spinning, silk weaving and hairdressing (Schatzmler, 1997: 189–96). In rural areas there was private ownership of medium and smallholdings and the land was often cultivated on a share-cropper basis (Schatzmler, 1984:

25). Producers would include free cultivators (*fallāḥīn*), quasi-indentured share-croppers (*khammāmīs*) or clients (*mawālī*) (Cook, 1990: 71).

In the pastoral nomadic mode of production, the absence of permanent habitation determined by geographical factors defines the means of production. These consist of domesticated animals and land incapable of cultivation. Animals such as sheep, camel and goats provided basic needs such as butter, cheese, meat, milk, clothing, fuel (from dung) and means of transportation. While animals, tools and dwellings were often owned on an individual basis, grazing land was considered as belonging to the tribe. In the Maghrib, the ruling tribes lived in the *makhzan*, while the non-tax paying tribes, both nomadic and sedentary, populated the *sība* (Lacoste, 1984: 35, 73).

The key to understanding the decline of a dynasty such as those of the Almoravids, Almohads and Marinids is the phenomenon of *'aṣabiyyah*. A decline in *'aṣabiyyah* means that the tribal chieftain, now the ruler, is no longer able to command the military support of the tribe that brought him to power in the first place, by appealing to kinship ties. His hold over the *makhzan* decreases until the dynasty is overrun by another tribal group with a superior or stronger *'aṣabiyyah*. This cycle repeats itself. The mechanisms by which this happens can be restated in terms of a modes of production approach, that is, in terms of the relationship between the pastoral nomadic mode of production on the one hand, and the centralized and decentralized tributary modes of production on the other.

Ibn Khaldūn's theory provides an explanation for the basis of the centralized tributary mode of production in Morocco. According to the popular variant of the Asiatic mode of production, the basis of the power of the state is derived from its control over large-scale public works. Ibn Khaldūn's theory and the case of precolonial Morocco provide the argument and historical data for understanding the basis of another type of centralized tributary mode of production, one in which the power of the state is derived from its control of tribal military support. Once the state is formed, however, the basis for the gradual decentralization of the mode of production is established. It is this decentralization that provides the context for the erosion of *'aṣabiyyah*.

Ibn Khaldūn notes that once the dynasty was established, the supporting tribes were absorbed into the sedentary life of the *makhzan*. This fact can be restated to mean that these tribes were absorbed into the prebendal feudal mode of production, whereas they were previously organized in terms of the pastoral nomadic mode of production. After the dynasty was established, the problem of remunerating members of the tribal elites and their armies arose. The initial tribal force that eventually helped in the establishment of a dynasty had seniority (*sābiqah*) and was entitled to higher salaries and greater benefits in terms of offices, land, tax exemptions and patronage

(Cook, 1990: 79). In addition to this core group of fighting manpower, there was also the main army consisting of military tribes, the *jaysh*. They provided military services on a more systematic basis and were paid in terms of tax exemptions and the right to collect taxes, *iqṭā* and so on, and constituted a kind of nomadic aristocracy (Cook, 1990: 80–1).

According to Schatzmiller, the state in Morocco never lacked the funds to pay salaries in return for military services (Schatzmiller, 1984: 25). According to Lacoste, citing Marçais, the granting of *iqṭā* was more prevalent during times of economic downturn (Lacoste, 1984: 82). The first grants of *iqṭā* were made in the second part of the 12th century and became more popular in the 14th century. The logic of this is that in periods of lesser prosperity, rulers had to resort to the granting of *iqṭā* as a means of paying members of the tribal elite. But, as Schatzmiller notes, while *iqṭā* land was supposed to revert back to the state after the services were granted, when the government was weaker the *iqṭā* land remained in the possession of its holders and eventually became *mulk* or private property, *makhzan* on a smaller scale than that of the ruling dynasty. The tribal elite then attained an independence of sorts from the ruler. When Ibn Khaldūn says that the tribesmen lose their discipline and group feeling (*‘aṣabiyyah*) as a result of becoming set in the ways of luxurious city life, he was possibly referring to the *iqṭā* holders. In any case, the phenomenon of *iqṭā* holding is one means by which *‘aṣabiyyah* diminishes.

This negative effect on *‘aṣabiyyah* of the incorporation into the prebendal feudal mode of production is exacerbated by a tactic resorted to by the ruler. Ibn Khaldūn observed that the ruler often tried to become less reliant on the ruling tribe by granting positions and salaries to clients and followers from groups and tribes other than those on whose power the dynasty was established (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 154 [1967: Vol. 1, 314]). The reason for this was that the tribe that brought the ruler to power constituted a potential ruling class (Gellner, 1981: 76).

The impact of the absorption of the ruling tribe into the prebendal feudal mode of production, therefore, had two consequences. First of all, the tribal elite were alienated from the ruler, formerly a tribal chieftain himself. This happened either because they attained some independence as a result of the grants of *iqṭā* land or because the ruler himself attempted to dispense with their support by relying on new clients. Second, the tribesmen themselves, after having become sedentary as a result of being either *iqṭā* holders or wage earners, also experienced diminishing *‘aṣabiyyah* and could not provide that level of military support that would stave off an attack from fresh supplies of hostile tribes from the *sība*.

Ibn Khaldūn's account of the rise and decline of dynasties is decidedly sociological in the sense that he speaks of social groups such as tribes and the state or ruling dynasty, and relations between them. The central concept

of *'aṣabiyyah* is also sociological as it refers to a type of social cohesion founded on the knowledge of common kinship or descent. But Ibn Khaldūn's explanation of the mechanisms according to which *'aṣabiyyah* declines and the ruling dynasty is deprived of the source of its power is offered without any reference to the mode of organization of economic life. His theory lacks a concept of the economic system. What I have attempted in this section is to provide an economic basis for Ibn Khaldūn's theory of state formation by integrating into it a modes of production framework.

The dynamics of state formation and decline elaborated in this Khaldunian modes of production framework can also be restated in terms of historical time frames, or what Turchin calls the Ibn Khaldūn cycle (Turchin, 2003: Ch. 7; Turchin and Hall, 2003). This is a secular wave 'that tends to affect societies with elites drawn from adjacent nomadic groups' and which operates on a time scale of about four generations or a century (Turchin and Hall, 2003: 53). These authors discuss four Chinggisid dynasties that fit the Khaldunian theory of the cyclical rise and fall of states, that is, the Yuan dynasty in China, the Jagataids in Turkestan, the Il-Khans in Iran and the Juchids in the Kipchak Steppe. All these dynasties went through the typical Khaldunian cycle of about 100 years.

Khaldunian Theories of the Modern State

One of the most challenging aspects of the development of Khaldunian sociology lies in the area of applications to the modern state. Here there is the realization that the use of Ibn Khaldūn extends beyond claiming that he is a precursor of the modern social sciences or seeing him as a tool for the justification of colonial rule among French Orientalists (Carré, 1979–80: 109). Rather, Ibn Khaldūn is critically assessed as relevant to the understanding of the contemporary state. Ibn Khaldūn is not merely regarded as being of historical interest or as just a source of historical data.

One attempt to apply Khaldunian theory to the modern state was undertaken by Michaud, who discusses what he calls the Khaldunian triad of *'aṣabiyyah*, *da'wah* (call, invitation) and *mulk* (absolute power) in the context of the modern Syrian state (Michaud, 1981).

With reference to the Syria of the 1970s, Michaud describes the state in terms of the relations of primary and secondary *'aṣabiyyahs*. Power is held by the minority Alawite community. At the head of the state is President Hafez al-Asad. Down the hierarchy are not only family members of the president such as his brother, Rifaat, but others who occupy the highest positions in the intelligence services (*mukhabarāt*), army, airforce and interior ministry. Power is constituted not just by membership in the Alawite community but by clientele, alliances and blood ties (*nasab*), the key to *'aṣabiyyah*. Michaud notes that according to Ibn Khaldūn, *'aṣabiyyah* not only does not exclude

hierarchy but, as a result of the integration of several *'aṣabiyyahs*, implies it (Michaud, 1981: 120). The significance of blood ties explains why a commandant may have greater power than a general in the Syrian army.

Since he had come to power in 1970, Hafez al-Asad strove to exert greater control over the Alawite community. He had some of the chiefs of the secondary *'aṣabiyyahs* eliminated for maintaining too close extra-community relations with the Sunnis of Damascus. All this suggests that the Khaldunian scheme of a dominant *'aṣabiyyah* of tribal origin persists in the city (Michaud, 1981: 123).

Legitimation is provided through the preaching of Arab progressivism. The Syrian Baathist state, unable to rely on a long tradition of centralized power or on a traditional system of allegiance, had to justify its existence by claiming to defend the honour of the Arab nation in the face of Zionism and imperialist aggression (Michaud, 1981: 125).

The state abandoned the civil facade of its relations with society, what Ibn Khaldūn referred to as *siyāsī* (politics that leads to the adoption of laws for the common interest), in favour of primitive power (*mulk ṭabī'ī*), that is, power through simple violence (Ibn Khaldūn, 1378/1981: 303 [1967: Vol. 2, 138]; Michaud, 1981: 123).

While Michaud's article amounts to little more than a description of the Syrian state and the nature of political power there, it has to be admitted that this is an advance in the development of Khaldunian sociology, or what Carré calls neo-Khaldunian sociology (Carré, 1988), because it is an attempt to apply Khaldunian concepts.

A more successful attempt in this regard is to be found in Carré's work, who develops a typology of the exercise of power. This is based on three major divisions in Ibn Khaldūn's thought on the state: that is, ideal vs rational systems, internal vs external repression and the interests of the governed vs the interests of the government (Carré, 1979–80: 118–19). In the resulting typology, there are six possible forms of the exercise of power:

1. Rational power with external oppression, functioning in the interests of the public. Repression is externally applied through enforcement of norms and codes, with the basis of solidarity being tribal. Examples are the types of Baath regimes advocated by Syria and Iraq under Saddam Hussein (Carré, 1979–80: 122).
2. Rational power with external repression, functioning in the interests of the government. Examples are the same Baathists regimes as in (1) above, this time not as advocated by their leaders but as actually existing systems that act to preserve their power by leveraging tribal agnatic ties (Carré, 1979–80: 122).
3. Rational power with external repression inspired religiously, which functions in theory in the interests of the governed and is founded on

solidarity that is partly tribal, partly professional in the urban milieu. Examples are Nasserism and the Muslim Brotherhood (Carré, 1979–80: 123).

4. Rational power with external repression inspired religiously, but functioning to advance the interests of the governing group and dependent on military solidarity. An example is the Nasserist regime in actuality (Carré, 1979–80: 124).
5. The ideal power of the utopian city with internal control and repression founded on faith in the virtue of social egalitarianism but also on legal repression in the context of military solidarity and a flourishing urban milieu. The example is South Yemen (Carré, 1979–80: 124).
6. The ideal power of the Medinan community around the prophet Muḥammad founded on purely internal control (Carré, 1979–80: 121).

What Carré has done here is to reflect on Khaldunian concepts such as *'aṣabiyyah* as well as Ibn Khaldūn's distinctions between the ideal and rational, internal and external and the interests of the governed and those of the government, in the light of the realities of contemporary Middle Eastern politics, and develops, therefore, a typology that has potential applicability to actually existing politics.

Conclusion

In concluding this article, I would like to make a few points with regard to the project of developing non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Khaldunian sociology.

First of all, the preceding account or selective survey of non-Eurocentric applications of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of state formation was intended to demonstrate how the contributions of a social thinker may be approached not just as an object of study in which his or her theories and concepts are repeatedly described or in which his or her work is looked upon as a source of historical data, but as a source of theory that is potentially applicable to historical and contemporary settings. I have suggested that Eurocentrism, which maintains the subject–object dichotomy and which, therefore, perpetuates the dominance of European categories and concepts in the social sciences, is at least partly responsible for the lack of interest in Ibn Khaldūn as a knowing subject, as a source of theories and concepts that may be utilized to interpret and construct realities. The examples of non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn that I have presented in this article do not exhaust the list. Nevertheless, the list is not very long considering that Ibn Khaldūn's works have been known for 600 years.⁹

Second, such a project should be undertaken not for the purpose of replacing European categories and concepts with Arab and Muslim ones

but for the purpose of enriching the social sciences by making available a greater variety of ideas and perspectives. The idea is not to replace one ethnocentrism with another. As Djeghloul put it, being true to Ibn Khaldūn is to explain why and how things are as they are in the world that we live in (Djeghloul, 1983: 42–3), and it is in this spirit that we must make his ideas available to us.

Third, it should be noted that a non-Eurocentric reading of Ibn Khaldūn is not to be equated with a non-European reading of Ibn Khaldūn. The examples from the preceding sections show that many non-Eurocentric readings of Ibn Khaldūn are undertaken in European languages by Europeans. The Eurocentric/non-Eurocentric divide does not correspond to the European/non-European divide. In fact, the bulk of work in Arabic, Persian and Turkish on Ibn Khaldūn are descriptive writings on his theory; comparative studies between Ibn Khaldūn and the modern sociologists that are often designed to prove that Ibn Khaldūn was the founder of the discipline; and discussions of the epistemological and methodological foundations of his work. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there is a dearth of non-Eurocentric readings of Ibn Khaldūn in those languages, if by non-Eurocentric is meant the presentation of Ibn Khaldūn as a knowing subject, a source of theories and concepts with applicability to historical and contemporary realities. I note, for example, that many Persian-language works on Ibn Khaldūn fail to discuss the possible relevance of Ibn Khaldūn to the study of Iranian history and society (see Rahīmlū, 1990; Shaykh, HS1349; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995).

It should be stressed that the politics of knowledge does not simply determine the hegemony of certain paradigms in the social sciences within the western tradition but effects the elision of other civilizational discourses, and that this elision is noted despite the fact that Ibn Khaldūn is often referred to in the literature. The problem is not the omission of references to Ibn Khaldūn but the lack of consideration of Ibn Khaldūn in a non-Eurocentric manner, that is, as a knowing subject and as a founder of concepts and categories for the social sciences.

Notes

1. Ibn Khaldūn's chief works are the *Kitāb al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtadā' wa al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man Āsarahum min Dhawī al-Sultān al-Akbar* (*Book of Examples and the Collection of Origins of the History of the Arabs and Berbers*); *Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomena*); *Lubāb al-Muḥaṣṣal fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*The Resumé of the Compendium in the Fundamentals of Religion*), being his summary of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Compendium of the Sciences of the Ancients and Moderns*; and Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography, *Al-Ta'rīf bi Ibn Khaldūn wa Riḥlatuhu Gharban wa Sharqan* (*Biography of Ibn Khaldūn and His Travels East and West*) (1979).

2. Page numbers in brackets refer to Rosenthal's (1967) English translation from the Arabic.
3. The science of human society, as Ibn Khaldūn envisioned it, was to consist of a number of areas of enquiry: (1) society or social organization (*'umrān*) in general and its divisions; (2) bedouin social organization (*al-'umrān al-bada'wa*), tribal societies (*qabā'il*) and primitive peoples (*al-wahshiyah*); (3) the state (*al-dawlah*), royal (*mulk*) and caliphate (*khilāfah*) authority; (4) sedentary social organization (*al-'umrān al-haḍarah*), cities; and (5) the crafts, ways of making a living, occupations.
4. For a useful discussion on Ibn Khaldūn's typology of *'aṣabiyyah* see Carré (1973).
5. For other accounts of Eurocentrism, see Amin (1989) and Wallerstein (1996).
6. For these exceptions, see Lacoste (1966, 1984), Gellner (1981: Ch. 1), Djeghloul (1983), Michaud (1981), Carré (1988) and Alatas (1990, 1993) as well as others referred to later in this article.
7. A survey of major American and European sociology textbooks would reveal that it is extremely rare that non-western social thinkers are covered. One exception is Ritzer, who acknowledged Ibn Khaldūn as an example of a sociologist that predated the western classical thinkers. However, he was not able to do more than provide a brief biographical sketch of Ibn Khaldūn in his textbook (Ritzer, 2000: 10).
8. I would like to thank Tufan Ş. Buzpinar for translating the relevant passages from his article during our meeting in Istanbul on 22 February 2006.
9. Since the late 1990s, more works that can be considered as non-Eurocentric readings and applications of Ibn Khaldūn have appeared. See Tehranian (1998), Ruthven (2002), Jabar (2003), Dainotto (2004), Ahmed (2005) and Rosen (2005).

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Biographical Note: Syed Farid Alatas is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore where he has been since 1992. He lectured at the University of Malaya in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies prior to his appointment at Singapore. His areas of research are: the sociology of religion, historical sociology of Islam and the philosophy of social science. His books include *Democracy and Authoritarianism: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Macmillan, 1997) and *Asian Social Science: Responses to Eurocentrism* (Sage, 2006).

Address: Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, Singapore 117570, Republic of Singapore. [email: socsfa@nus.edu.sg]