

IBN KHALDUN - THE FOUNDER OF SOCIOLOGY

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Abstract:

Ibn Khaldun prioritizes the key sociological category of social justice. He advocates for states that are viable only when they adhere to justice and laws. His main goal was to seek ways to serve humanity by addressing social and political problems within the framework of justice. Ibn Khaldun's methods and approaches to studying the state and society laid the theoretical foundations of sociology. He was the first to analyze state and society from this perspective, establishing Ibn Khaldun as the earliest founder of sociology.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Sociology, Civilization, Historical Cycles, Social Science, Group Solidarity, Philosophy of History, Political Economy, Rise and Fall of Civilizations, Leadership and Power, Social Dynamics.

Introduction

The great scholar Abdurahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun was born in 1332 in the city of Tunis, North Africa. He left a lasting legacy in history, sociology, economics, Sufism, logic, and poetry. Ibn Khaldun served in high-ranking positions at the courts of the sultans of Egypt. He gained worldwide fame among scholars with his work *Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena).

Ibn Khaldun was the first among scholars of his time to integrate history, economics, and sociology in his research. This interdisciplinary approach is evident in all his works. According to Ibn Khaldun, all phenomena in the world have causal aspects. Everything follows a certain order and laws. The world is a manifestation of the sequential interaction of complex entities: minerals, plants, animals, and humans. Humans are naturally derived from the animal world and have risen above it as the highest level of existence. Moreover, according to the scholar, the distinguishing features of humans are their intelligence and conscious activity. "As the world of animals expanded and their species multiplied, eventually, humans with the ability to think emerged. Humans are distinguished by sharpness and the capacity for perception," he wrote.

RESEARCH METHODS AND LITERATURE ANALYSIS

Ibn Khaldun believed that labor is a unique characteristic of humans, representing their means of obtaining the necessities of life. He explained that active lifestyles can be observed among bees and locusts, but for them, this activity is not driven by conscious thought but by "instinctive desires they are unaware of." In contrast, human activity is purposeful and conscious. Thanks to the ability to think and work, humans develop unique activities such as science and craftsmanship, which distinguish them from the animal world. Ibn Khaldun noted that different types of activity play varying roles in human life. Humans constantly require the means of subsistence, and God shows them the ways to achieve this. Therefore, labor is a "necessary and natural" condition for human existence and is even



more important than less essential pursuits like scientific research. This principle is one of the fundamental laws of sociology.

From the characteristics of the individual, Ibn Khaldun derived the unique features of human society. These include monarchy, income, science, and craftsmanship. One of the philosopher's key principles is that "differences in people's lifestyles depend solely on differences in the ways they obtain their means of subsistence." Essentially, Ibn Khaldun was the first to formulate the sociological principle that the method of material production plays a decisive role in society's functioning and development. This perspective led him to an unprecedented approach to explaining social life and the cultural differences between various peoples.

Ibn Khaldun divided the entire population of a state into rural and urban inhabitants based on their means of livelihood. Rural dwellers engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, while urban dwellers pursued crafts, trade, and the arts. In other words, the social division of labor defined the social structure of the population.

According to Ibn Khaldun, rural life historically preceded urban life. This progression is marked by humans starting with "essential and simple necessities" and then moving on to less necessary items. Initially, people focused on securing their means of survival. Later, with the development of labor, surplus wealth emerged. Human needs evolved, leading to the creation of high-quality food, luxurious clothing, grand homes, running water, and so on.

Ibn Khaldun's teachings highlight that the emergence of urban populations and the increasing complexity of social structures result from the advancement of labor and its productivity. Therefore, as the scholar emphasized, while rural populations are content with essential items, urban dwellers are drawn to luxuries, such as higher incomes and opulent goods. Here, Ibn Khaldun's ideas on economic development become evident.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun divided society's history into two periods based on the means of obtaining sustenance. The first is the rural lifestyle, and the second is the emergence of urban lifestyles. The transition from the first to the second period is tied to economic development and increased labor productivity.

Ibn Khaldun argued that strong kinship ties among rural populations indicate that rural life is more ancient than urban life. With the shift to urban living, these ties weaken and eventually disappear. This transition brings specific changes to the organization of society.

Ibn Khaldun believed that human nature encompasses both good and evil. However, if humans are not guided by divine instructions, they tend toward evil. In rural areas, kinship and tribal leaders prevent people from committing wrongs. In cities, rulers and state power prevent mutual hostility among people. The state emerges in rural conditions when one individual suppresses the will of their tribe to maintain control. "The essence of monarchy," he wrote, "is the domination of a single individual over others who, in turn, submit to humiliation and servitude."

RESEARCH RESULTS

Unlike ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun focused on monarchy as the sole form of the state. He identified two stages of state existence corresponding to society's two historical periods: the rural stage and the urban stage. He described five phases of state evolution:

1. Emergence of monarchy: The ruler collaborates with the people to achieve the nation's glory, defense, and security. Kinship is the integrating factor of society.



2. Separation from the people: The ruler distances himself from the population and suppresses their collective aspirations to share in governance.
3. Peak development: This is the most prosperous phase of the state, where the ruler has full authority.
4. Peaceful period: The ruler avoids conflicts with neighbors and lives off the achievements of predecessors.
5. Decline and waste: Increased expenses and extravagance lead to the ruler losing all that previous generations accumulated. At this stage, the dynasty weakens, ultimately succumbing to an incurable decline.

Ibn Khaldun adopted the idea of historical cycles from ancient philosophers but introduced novel elements. In his theory, each phase of state evolution reflects a qualitatively distinct societal condition with unique characteristics. People living in each historical phase differ due to the conditions shaping their lives. Ibn Khaldun emphasized, "People's morals are shaped by the specific conditions surrounding them."

Ibn Khaldun's cyclical concept of history, like many ancient thinkers, is rooted in historical anthropomorphism. "All phenomena in society, such as rural and urban life, power, and subjects, are limited to a specific lifespan, much like an individual," he wrote. According to Ibn Khaldun, dynasties last about as long as a human's natural lifespan—approximately 120 years. Each generation's lifespan corresponds to the average age of mature individuals, typically around 40 years. Consequently, dynasties rarely exceed three generations.

In the first generation, people retain the traits of rural life, including bravery, solidarity, and kinship ties. The second generation transitions to urban lifestyles, fostering autocracy and weakening kinship bonds. Although the second generation retains some virtues of the first, such as ambition and patriotism, they also embrace wealth and luxury.

According to the author, the third generation loses all signs of their former rural life. Their previous ambitions and tendencies to assist one another disappear, as blood relations vanish. They are corrupted by abundance and admire luxury. They lose their ability to make demands and defend themselves, thus becoming submissive to a strong, authoritarian power and seeking protection from it. However, the government itself, possessing such subjects, cannot defend itself from external enemies. In such a situation, the ruler is forced to seek the help of brave mercenaries. However, even these mercenaries cannot save a dynasty that is increasingly weakening and declining. Ibn Khaldun writes: "Old age may weigh down and defeat a dynasty even before invaders arrive. If external attacks were launched, no defender would be found for the king. When the time for a dynasty's death comes, it happens without delay." With the death of a dynasty, cities decline, and the state collapses. Thus, the historical cycle of the dynasty concludes. The scholar, in his concept, proves that historical cycles have a strictly necessary, objective nature. In short, this is expressed as an objective law of social motion.

The unique feature of Ibn Khaldun's concept of civilization is that the historical periods described within it are not completely closed in nature. He acknowledges continuity between old and new dynasties. Under new conditions, the founder of a dynasty adopts the customs of the previous one. Thus, in the scholar's opinion, the Arabs adopted their lifestyle from the Persians.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

In studying historical cycles, the scholar pays particular attention to the way of life. According to him, the more refined the way of life, the wealthier the country, and the stronger the state. However, since the choice of lifestyle depends on the sovereign's authority, all "wealth stems from the sovereign's



authority." Ibn Khaldun, while distinguishing between the state and society, considers their unity and does not oppose them to one another. "The wealth of the subjects depends on the wealth of the state; the wealth of the state, in turn, depends on the wealth and number of its subjects."

In his work "Muqaddimah," Ibn Khaldun concludes: "Civilization is the ultimate manifestation of human society." This raises the question of why this is so. This is because civilization and the state are phenomena that always require each other and are interdependent. The state creates the conditions necessary for the development of the economy, and the people benefiting from it produce material wealth, i.e., surplus products. With the accumulation of material wealth, civilization forms. Thus, the state acts as the protector of property and a means of its development. In other words, the state is a product of the development of property. The increase in property occurs as a result of surplus production. The state's size, scope, and influence contribute to the development of civilization. Property—"the blessings of the land"—primarily benefits "state officials," meaning that the property taken from the lower classes is redistributed among the upper classes. In this regard, civilization manifests as a "state of society," representing an entire community. However, not all members of society can benefit from the wealth created. This is due to methods of alienation such as various taxes, levies, and confiscation of property imposed by the ruling elite, which serves as a source of enrichment for the upper class: "The state collects money from the subjects and spends it on its people and subordinates... it flows to the state officials and then to the capital's population connected to them."

The hallmark of the decline of human society and its civilization is luxury. Luxury, due to its impact on the state and society, intensifies conflicts. In the early stages following the establishment of a state, luxury "increases the power of the state... because when property and luxury appear among the population, the birth rate rises, expanding the state's influence, strengthening solidarity, and increasing the number of 'clients,' or 'protected' social strata." The generation of this period grows up in prosperity and luxury, their numbers increase, and their power grows.

However, as luxury continues to increase over time, it begins to play a negative role for society. The "civilized people," once considered "state people," now enter a phase of weakening. To protect themselves and their wealth, they start hiring mercenaries and guards. "The manners associated with civilization and luxury are inherently corrupt; for humanity recognizes profit and avoids harm. In essence, a person is truly human only when possessing good morals. However, a civilized person cannot satisfy their needs—either due to their delicate nature resulting in weakness or excessive prosperity and luxury leading to arrogance."

The desire of the "state people" for a luxurious life and the expenses for maintaining mercenary armies lead to an increase in the cost of living. Consequently, the economy faces a crisis, as "the growing expenses of states lead to the imposition of even newer taxes."

Now, society begins to experience moral decline. Ibn Khaldun also links human morality (behavior) closely with geographic factors—climate or weather conditions. The formation of morality is also tied to the social environment in which a person is raised. Moral norms, shaped by this upbringing, transform into specific "customs" and begin to correspond to the level of development of the state, strongly influencing the morality of the subjects. Regarding this, Ibn Khaldun states: "Know that the state undergoes different stages and new conditions, and in each stage, people acquire behaviors specific to that stage, differing from the behaviors of other stages."

In the final stages of their existence, the state and civilization are characterized by moral corruption, deceit, hostility, and cunning, all of which are directed toward "obtaining means of subsistence by any



means necessary.” “You will see them lying, participating in dangerous games, deceiving, cheating, stealing, breaking guarantees, engaging in usury, and failing to comply with trade agreements. Then you will see them becoming increasingly skillful and shameless in deception and its various forms, until they reach the point of losing all decency and morality. This even occurs among relatives.”

Thus, civilization and luxury, at the end of their life cycle, signal the crisis and ultimate end of human society. Regarding this, Ibn Khaldun states: “If a city plants many bitter orange trees, it signifies its destruction. For this reason, many common people fear planting bitter oranges in their courtyards. This is not due to the specific nature of the bitter orange, as neither its taste nor its benefits are significant. However, gardens and their irrigation are associated with civilization, and despite appearances, they indicate the end of civilization because they are planted in gardens only for aesthetics and only after achieving luxury and extravagance. As we said earlier, this stage poses the risk of the city’s destruction and ruin.”

The primary cause of society's decline and the center of all vices is the state. This view forms the central idea of "Muqaddimah." Ultimately, the destruction of society results from the various forms of violence employed by the state. Regarding this, Ibn Khaldun writes: “Do not think that injustice is only the seizure of someone’s property or wealth without reason or compensation. This is well-known. Injustice is a much broader concept. Anyone who appropriates someone else’s property or labor results by force, demands something from them illegally, or compels them in any way contrary to the law is committing injustice against that individual. Similarly, unjust tax collectors are oppressors, those who encroach on others' property are oppressors, those who rob people are oppressors, those who prevent others from exercising their rights are oppressors, and all those who accumulate wealth unjustly are oppressors. All these calamities ultimately lead to the destruction of society, rooted in the state itself.” Ibn Khaldun's critical attitude toward the states of his time is so clearly expressed that he, in his concept of the emergence, development, and decline of states, reveals specific economic and sociological laws. In Ibn Khaldun's view, the state blindly functions as a force, approaching life based on objective causes, and according to these objective causes, it becomes parasitic, then destroys society and perishes itself.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, the concept of social justice occupies a central place in Ibn Khaldun's sociological views. He promotes the idea that only a just state, adhering to laws, can endure. The scholar's main goal is to find ways for the state and society to serve humanity based on justice principles, using sociological categories and laws. He recommends methods for resolving social and political problems that arise during the development of the state and society, warning humanity about them. Ibn Khaldun's methods and approaches to studying the state and society largely form the theoretical laws of sociology. The initial research in this direction was carried out by Ibn Khaldun himself. It is evident that Ibn Khaldun is the earliest founder of sociology as a discipline.



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