

# A Medieval Approach to Social Sciences: The Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun

## Some Historical Notes and Actual Reflections

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In the history of Islamic philosophy Ibn Khaldun deserves a place of honor. His analytical method is a perennial contribution to the analysis of social dynamics. His critique of the omnipotence of the state, his denunciation of high fiscal spending, and his exaltation of political freedom show him to be a precursor of modern political science and of classical liberalism. His imperishable fame survives today, particularly for the *Muqaddima*, prologue to an ambitious work on the universal history never brought to an end: the *Ibar*. In this work, Ibn Khaldun affirms repeatedly that it is not the amount of money reserve or precious metals that is the measure of a country's prosperity but the division of labor between the inhabitants. This, in fact, generates a "virtuous circle" that augments productivity in a right distribution of roles and risks.

Due to global changes and new geopolitical assets, a renewed interest in the Islamic culture and the richness of its philosophy has appeared in Western universities and institutions. A particular outlook is rightly oriented toward the first centuries of Islam in which—apart from the conquests and territorial expansions—a new culture tried to find a proper way between the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions. Especially during the Middle Ages many thinkers contributed significantly to the development of the human civilization by translating many Greek philosophers' works and commenting on them in precious books. On this basis, we can properly affirm that a variety of matters were studied with originality and skillfulness: from mathematics to geography and physics to law. Not so far from the collapse of the Muslim domination of Spain, Ibn Kaldun was emblematic in understanding the importance and the contradictions of a declining empire.

Ibn Khaldun's life is so rich with events and vicissitudes that it assumed epic tones. A legendary aura of impassibility and courage against all difficulty accompanies the figure of this distinguished scholar of society and magisterial interpreter of history. Capable of a synthetic and farsighted comprehension of the events in a period that very often saw the ascent and decline of sovereigns and kingdoms, he was not afraid of changing allegiances and duties in an incessant saga of intrigues and betrayals. Some have seen in him an indomitable hero, others a free thinker with the typical characteristics that would have been depicted later in the Renaissance's Machiavellism. The survival law in a region of hard social disputes and bloody rebellions shows historically that his chameleonlike decisions matured thanks to an unusual sagacity and an acumen worthy of admiration.

Recent research has shown some interesting aspects that were not completely expressed in previous years. His critiques of the omnipotence of the state, his denunciation of the high fiscal charging, and his exaltation of freedom show him to be, contrary to some rhetoric, a precursor of modern political science and classical liberalism. Discovered by Western historiography in the late nineteenth century, this approach is strictly connected by a veil of misunderstood geniality that has characterized, at least until present times, all the researches and monographs of his works and their intrinsic value. Ibn Khaldun's method, deeply analytical and rigorous, has been mistakenly shown by some Western lecturers to be a forerunner of the positivist theories of history to be considered, exaggerating in the contents and arguments, an idol *ante litteram* of historical materialism.<sup>1</sup>

The forced westernization, moreover, in the structural and philological studies is fruit of an unclear scientific hermeneutics with an evident attempt at manipulation that has depicted him as a scholar out of the canonical schemes of the Islamic culture. Accepting this would be as inauthentic for Khaldun himself as it would be for the history of Arab-Islamic culture and philosophy. We cannot agree with a posterior interpretation that wants, with the force of secularization and ideology, to reduce all philosophy to a pure human science devoid of any spiritual heritage and religious tradition.<sup>2</sup> This academic celebration, sometimes laborious and politically factious, has been transferred—especially during the period of decolonization in Northern Africa—to the Arab cultural circles that have viewed him, rightly, as a scrupulous and methodical interpreter of the ancient origins of contemporary adversities and vicissitudes. H. Corbin, one of the most important Orientalists, did not hesitate to criticize the westernizing excesses in the interpretation of Ibn Khaldun.<sup>3</sup> We agree with him in clarifying, *in primis*,<sup>3</sup> that Ibn Khaldun is not an isolated case who suddenly appeared in history: He is a son of his time, of his land, and of the Islamic culture.

He was born, in fact, in Tunis in 1332 into an influential Arab-Andalusian family coming from Seville—at that time in the hands of the *Christian Reconquista*—with ancient origins in the Hadramawt. The years of adolescence were characterized by a solid general education according to the traditional Islamic teachings. The Maranid Invasion (1347/1349) had opened the doors of the town to eminent scholars and literates. Unfortunately, a grave pestilence, commonly known in the annals of universal history as the Black Death,<sup>4</sup> decimated the population, and Tunis was reduced to a ghost town.<sup>5</sup> He lost his parents and the majority of his teachers and friends.<sup>6</sup> He left us a meticulous description of this apocalyptic disaster:

Civilization in both the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. It swallowed up many of the good things of civilization and wiped them out. It lessened the power of the dynasties and curtailed their influence. It weakened their authority. Their situation approached the point of annihilation and dissolution. Civilization decreased with the decrease of mankind. Cities and buildings were laid waste, roads and way signs were obliterated, settlements and mansions became empty, nations and tribes grew weak. The entire inhabited world changed.<sup>7</sup>

The splendor of the past was finished, leaving an “intellectual emptiness”<sup>8</sup> that pushed Ibn Khaldun to find refuge from his malaise and his loneliness in the town of Fez, the nerve center of North African cultural life and important commercial crossing where everyone was engaged to “build mansions and palaces of stone and marble decorated with ceramic plaques and arabesques. They passionately sought out silken robes, fine horses, good food and jewels of gold and silver. Well-being, comfort and luxury were everywhere.”<sup>9</sup> There, he accepted a position in the administration of the Sultan Abu Ishak (1350), profiting by the presence of eminent scholars in the town and taking advantage of their teachings. The experience in this office did not last long because the invasion of *Afrikiya* by the Amir Abu Yazid (1352) caused disorders throughout the region. From that moment, his life was characterized by a series of adventurous and sudden changes in perspective. He lived in several places in Northern Africa, giving his services to a cohort of several sovereigns and despots with different tasks among which was the position of courtier’s poet to the Sultan Abu Salim. The Sultan’s environment was not very suitable because of hostility and antagonism. Fortunately, he obtained permission to reach Granada where he was received with honor and appreciation. During that period, he had the occasion to visit Seville—the town in which the memory of his family and his ancestors was still alive—where he was received by Peter the Cruel who prayed him insistently to remain, having

perfectly understood his innate qualities as a statesman and promising him in exchange the restitution of all the properties and goods of his family.

He, instead, made the journey back toward the African coasts and reached the town of Bougie where he offered his services at the cohort of ‘Abu Abd Allah Muhammad, old companion of conspiracy during his stay in Fez (1365). This experience was also very brief because of the invasion of the Emir of Constantine in the spring of 1366. After some peregrinations, he found refuge in Biskra at the cohort of the Banu Muzni. In this period, notwithstanding the serious intentions to dedicate himself to letters and reflections, he did not hold back, on account of a visceral desire to take part actively in the events of history, from the conjures and complots among the sovereigns of the region (Marinids, Hafsid, and other local despots). In that geographical context it was as easy to have the honor of the thrones as to fall in the dust and blood. His insistent participation in the political activities caused legitimate suspicions of secret machinations and betrayals.

He retired in the residence of Banu Salama in a locality—not so far from the city of Frenda—suitable to the concentration and studies where he found the right inspiration to write his most important work: the *Muqaddima*. At the end of his stay at the castle of Banu Salama, he felt the desire to come back to Tunis where he obtained permission by the Hafsid cohort to dedicate himself to the redaction of his *Ibar*, whose first copy would be given to the Sultan Abu ‘l-‘Abbas. Such a success and glory were cause for jealousy and envy. With the pretext of a pilgrimage to Mecca, he took the occasion to abandon his hometown, avid with wickedness and perfidy against him, to which he would return no more.

He arrived in Cairo, the capital of Mameluke, and at first sight he had a marvelous impression of magnificence. Very famous is his description of the town as “the mother of the world, great center of Islam, mainspring of the sciences and the crafts.”<sup>10</sup> In another passage, rich with emotive emphasis and sincere admiration, he writes:

I saw there moons and stars shining among its scholars (*ulama*): on seeing the Nile, I thought I was seeing the river of paradise; one would say that its waters came from heaven, and spread everywhere good health, as well as fruits, flowers and riches. I saw the city filled with passers-by, and its bazaars of merchandise. We did not stop talking about this city for a long time and admiring its great and beautiful buildings.”<sup>11</sup>

The contact with the metropolis and its fervent cultural activity was a stimulus for his character keen with curiosity and knowledge. His notorious fame brought him to teach in the University of Al-Azhar, the most prestigious school of the town, where his courses in *malikit fikh* were attended by so great a number of

students that he achieved the title of *kadi* (1384). Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar, present at the lectures, described his teacher with these words: “He was very eloquent, an excellent essayist and exhibited a deep knowledge of the subjects, particularly those relating to the state.”<sup>12</sup>

A great tragedy awaited him. His family, which finally had obtained the permission to reach him by the intercession of the Sultan Al-Zahir Barkuk, would never reach the port of Alexandria because of a disastrous shipwreck near the Bengasi’s coast. In addition to this personal suffering, there was a strong chauvinism of the local cultural elites who saw an excess of power in the hands of a “stranger.” For this reason, he was obliged to resign his position (1385), dedicating himself primarily to the teaching in different schools of the town. This engagement absorbed him entirely for fourteen years. In 1399, he was recalled again to the task of *kadi* that he would leave a few months later when he was obliged to follow Al-Nasir in the expedition toward Damascus where Tamerlan had already imposed his power. He was received by the cohort of the dreadful leader by whom he was cordially entertained. It is said, in fact, that Tamerlan was so deeply impressed by the wisdom and culture of Ibn Khaldun that he invited him to remain at his service. Knowing the surly disposition and vindictive character of the Mongol chief, he did not hesitate to accept, provided that he would return to Cairo to retrieve his books without which he would not have been able to live and continue in his studies. By this stratagem, testimony of elevated skills of shrewdness and astuteness, he could come back to Cairo where he died in 1406.

As we have seen, his life was a series of tragic fatalities and sudden changes, due also to his longing for power and his personal ambition. Thanks to his pen, we have much information on Northern Africa in those troubled times. His imperishable fame survives today, particularly for the *Muqaddima*, prologue to an ambitious work on the universal history never brought to an end: the *Ibar*. This work shows some historical gaps, especially regarding the dynasty of the Almohads<sup>13</sup> and does not realize the assumptions and premises of the prologue. Among the other works, the *Ta’rif*—a biography rich with detailed particulars— and the *Shifa’ al-sa’il*, a treaty of mystics—written presumably at the end of his life—whose authenticity is still a motif of discussion, deserve to be mentioned.

The first draft of the *Muqaddima* belongs to the period of voluntary exile at the residence of Ibn Salama (1375/1379). In it appears all the richness of his thought in which the traditional disciplines of the Islamic pedagogy are joined to an impassive capacity of analysis,<sup>14</sup> the fruit of his whirling political adventures and of a clear psychological investigation not only of the powerful individuals but, primarily, of social groups. The author’s intention is, without any doubt,

laudable and innovative: It deals with “an encyclopaedic synthesis of any necessary cultural and methodological knowledge that permits the historian to produce a truthful scientific work.”<sup>15</sup> Considering the method of his predecessors too slavish to transcribe the exploits of the leaders and devoid of a sane thirst for critical analysis, he applies a new definition of history: To understand the past it is necessary to explain the social, cultural, economic, moral, and religious aspects. In fact, history finds its value in properly investigating the conditions of the nations and in understanding the effects of tyranny and of arbitrary policies on the collective mentality as well as in analyzing the qualities of the prince, the defense of the state, the devotion of the army, and the inclination of the sovereign toward commerce and exchange for the well-being of the nation. To these important points is connected the inquiry on the greediness and avarice of the prince regarding his people, which in the long run could become sedition; thus bringing the nation toward a form of degeneration and anarchy.

In an ode dedicated to the Sultan Abul Abbas, upon the occasion of the consignment of the first copy of the *Muqaddima*, he explains poetically his *modus investigandi*:

*Here in the histories of time and peoples  
Are lessons the morals of which are followed  
by the just.  
I summarized all the books of the ancients  
And recorded what they omitted.  
I smoothed the methods of expression  
As if they submitted to my will.  
I dedicate it, a glory, to your realm,  
Which shines, and is the object of pride.  
I swear that I did not exaggerate  
A bit of exaggeration is hateful to me.<sup>16</sup>*

The criterion that moves his investigation starts from the assumption of the conformity to reality (*kanun al-mutabaka*) as a term of comparison of any historical event. In this perspective, his effort to understand the reason of evolution in history in a ceaseless aetiological research of the “social laws,” that determine each case in question, appears evident. In order to realize scientifically a correct interpretation, it is necessary that this science be independent (*'ilm mustakill bi-nafsih*). Additionally, the investigation’s first object has to be civilization (*al-'umran al-bashari*) intended as the merging of the characteristics of the social facts in their integrity. Without lingering in the description of the six chapters of the *Muqaddima*, it is important to present their intrinsic value.

At the beginning, there is a socioanthropological study on the influence of the environment of human nature arriving at the description of the first nomad civilizations (*'umran badawi*). The concept of *'umran* contains in itself a plurality of meanings: from inhabited geographical place to society *stricto et lato sensu*.<sup>17</sup> From here, the interest comes to the first institutional forms and their evolutionary characteristics until arriving at the more developed and sophisticated forms of social aggregation in an urban and sedentary context (*'umran hadari*). In this way, he analyzes the modalities of commerce and the development of manufacturing activities and their indissoluble contribution to the flourishing of a thriving society where philosophy, culture, and art bloom freely and without impediment.

The complex methodological *organon* shows a concrete study of the historical dynamics in which appear *in nuce* the *Idealtypen* of the *Verstehende Methode* with the analysis of the structural dichotomies such as town/countryside, nomad/sedentary society, and tribal solidarity/individual egoism.<sup>18</sup> This global vision of history permits Ibn Khaldun to formulate an economic theory characterized by the cyclicity in which the state, originally, has a limited power, and the taxation is at a relatively low level so that it allows a constant growth of production and consumption. After this phase (*first and second generation*) the state concentrates in itself all the power augmenting the fiscal charging and reducing the freedom of initiative and spirit of enterprise to which follows an evident diminution (*third generation*) of consumption and production. The final phase (*fourth generation*) is a strong economic stagnation whose principal effect is the paralysis of the state.<sup>19</sup> This cyclical analysis can be adapted to different historical situations because, according to C. Isawi, in societies with the same structure, similar laws and social mechanisms reign even if such societies are separate in time and space.

In this theory of evolution and decline—in which are analyzed all the symptoms and evils of a society that appear, grow, and die—the *'asabiyya* plays a fundamental role. It is—according to the different and punctual definition of the historians of Ibn Khaldun—public spirit, social solidarity, group's cohesion, common will, *Lebenskraft*.<sup>20</sup> This sense of common belonging and “reciprocal solidarity inspired at the fight for life”<sup>21</sup> binds each member of the community in a widespread effort toward a common aim. To this *Volksstreben* is connected the destiny of the society because the *'asabiyya* is “*die motorische Kraft in staatlichen Geschehen*.”<sup>22</sup> It joins the individuals through those agreements (*asaba*) that bind the survival of the group with respect to a common code of values. In the historical parabola of each civilization, it is possible to read “the development, the acmes and the deterioration”<sup>23</sup> of these solidarity bonds that are the intrinsic force. This capacity to offer his service for the general interests,

sacrificing egotism appears to Ibn Khaldun to be the necessary condition for cooperation and public action.

To fortify spirits and political power is necessarily a common religious conviction that is considered a spiritually bonding agent. “A dynasty—Ibn Khaldun affirms—that begins its history supported by the religion doubles the force of *'asabiyya* that helps it in its formation.”<sup>24</sup> In its cyclical paths, a civilization is in the beginning characterized by a common religion and a strong spiritual and ascetic union among the members. After years, the state or the political authority becomes the unique administrator of the religious sphere, which assumes a merely social value, abandoning the original mystical sense. Society begins to lose that centripetal force of defense, and the enjoyment of riches substitutes for the spirit of sacrifice and ascetic practice. This generational path marks the end of social solidarity and of common good. The *'asabiyya* of the origins loses its strong spiritual characterization until being completely substituted by another emerging and different social movement.

Concerning his concept of social development, Ibn Khaldun affirms repeatedly that it is not the amount of money reserves or precious metals that is the measure of the prosperity of a country but the better specialization or division of the work between the inhabitants. This, in fact, generates a “virtuous circle” that augments the productivity in a right distribution of roles and risks: The artisan receives a reward for his work, the merchant deserves his profit by virtue of the risks, the authorities have the right to compensation for the services and the protection of public and private goods.<sup>25</sup> This social task, anyway, should not be misunderstood: it does not justify a constant interference in the private sphere and in the free development of human activities because

attacks on people’s property remove the incentive to acquire and gain property. People, then, become of the opinion that the purpose and ultimate destiny of acquiring property is to have it taken away from them. When the incentive to acquire and gain property is gone, people no longer make any efforts to acquire any. The extent and degree on which property rights are infringed upon determines the extent and degree to which the effort of the subjects to acquire property slackens. The disintegration of civilization causes the disintegration of the status of dynasty and ruler.<sup>26</sup>

In the *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun is convinced that an oppressive government brings about the ruin of public prosperity<sup>27</sup> and that

one of the greatest injustices and one which contributes most to the destruction of civilization is the unjustified imposition of tasks and the use of subjects for



forced labor... An injustice even greater and more destructive of civilization and the dynasty is the appropriation of people's property by buying their possessions as cheaply as possible and then reselling them at the highest possible prices by means of forced sales and/or purchases.... If no trading is being done in the markets, the subjects have no livelihoods and the tax revenue of the ruler decreases or deteriorates, since ... most of the tax revenue comes from customs duties on commerce. It should be known that all these practices are caused by the need for money on the part of dynasty and ruler.... The ordinary income does not meet the expenditure. Therefore, the ruler invents new sorts and kinds of taxes, in order to increase the revenues and to be able to balance the budget.... The need for appropriating people's property becomes stronger and stronger. In this way, the authority of the dynasty shrinks until its influence is wiped out and its identity is lost and it is defeated by an attacker.<sup>28</sup>

The first symptoms of this delegitimation of the original power are, in fact, strictly connected to tax regulation. Very often without the personal stimulus to productivity and engagement, the society itself is condemned to implode in the apathy caused by a political system that is coercive and disrespectful toward individual freedom. Concerning this, he affirms in a famous statement that "it should be known that at the beginning of a dynasty, taxation yields a large revenue from small assessments. At the end of a dynasty, taxation yields a small revenue from large assessments."<sup>29</sup> In this precise anticipation of the Laffer Curve, he explains very clearly that having lost their austere habits and having increased their luxurious necessities, the sovereigns impose a heavy taxation on their subjects, pushing up the level of the old taxation to enlarge their benefits. The effect of this augmentation is the diminishment of the economic activity. In this delicate situation, the government seems to have no any other solution than a depreciation of the money that generates an infinite series of evils as Al-Makrizi, a distinguished Egyptian disciple of Ibn Khaldun, demonstrated in depth in his works,<sup>30</sup> reaffirming the precise statement that "it should be known that treasures of gold and silver are no different from other minerals. It is civilization that produces them in abundance or causes them to be in short supply."<sup>31</sup>

Ibn Khaldun's work, from every point of view, is worthy of admiration. His empirical method goes beyond the cold transcription of the events to be correctly defined as "historical science" in which the law of cause and effect and the distinction between essential and accidental are the starting point for any historical definition.<sup>32</sup> He, presenting his scientific criterion, affirms to have chosen "a remarkable and original method"<sup>33</sup> to comment "on civilization (*'umran*), 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."<sup>34</sup>

Y. Lacoste even comes to affirm that if “Thucydides invented history, Ibn Khaldun turned it into a science.”<sup>35</sup> Even though, not without a bit of reticence and sarcasm, some have described the philosophy of Ibn Khaldun as *ancilla sociologiae*,<sup>36</sup> it would be incorrect not to concede that it is rightly meritorious from a straightforward philosophical perspective. His thought is the fruit of a perfect synthesis in which sociology and social psychology and political science and economy appear as auxiliary sciences to history in a complex unity. Ibn Khaldun admonishes that “it is necessary that the historian knows the fundamental principles of the art of government, the true character of events, the difference between the nations, the countries and the times in which observe the costumes, the uses, the behavior, the opinions and religious sentiments and all the circumstances that influence the society.”<sup>37</sup>

The work of Ibn Khaldun was more often made the object of a comparative analysis with the philosophy of N. Machiavelli, but if “the great Florentine instructs us in the art of governing people, he does make it as a foresighted politician. Ibn Khaldun was able to analyze the social phenomenon as a deep economist and philosopher, a fact that invites us to see in his work such a critical methodology totally unknown in his epoch.”<sup>38</sup> At the end of this brief article dedicated to the social thought of Ibn Khaldun and in accord with A. J. Toynbee, eminent historian of the civilizations, we can say that “[Khaldun] has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history that is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been produced by any mind in any time and place.”<sup>39</sup>

## Notes

1. "His importance lies in the unique feat, for the time, of having been able to rationalize the subject of history and to reflect upon its methods and purposes. In marked contrast with the static or eschatological conceptions of contemporary Christian historiography was his dynamic thesis that the process of historic growth is subject to constant change, comparable to the life of the individual organism. He made clear the cooperation of psychic and environmental factors in the evolution of civilization. There was a pre-Marxian flash in his observation that the usages and institutions of peoples depend upon the way in which they provide their subsistence." H. E. Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York: Dover Publishing, 1963), 96.
2. I. A. Ahmad, "Islam and Markets," *Religion & Liberty* 6, no. 3 (May-June 1996): 6.
3. H. Corbin, *Storia della Filosofia Islamica* (Milano: Adelphi, 1991), 290.
4. "In the short span of five to ten years, the Black Death had an immediate and dramatic effect on all aspects of political, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life." See *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, s.v. "Black Death."
5. "It is now clear that the Black Death was fully as devastating in the Near East as it was in Europe. And in the long term its implications were far worse, since in the Near East this epidemic initiated a series of recurrences of the disease which struck more frequently and with greater severity than Europe. In particular, pneumonic plague, the disease's most lethal form, continued to reappear in the Near East after the Black Death; and whereas the plague had disappeared from most parts of Europe by the seventeenth century, it was still a recurrent and common scourge in the Near East until the late nineteenth century, when the advent of modern plague epidemiology made it possible to suppress the disease." See *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 9, s.v. "Plagues in the Islamic World."
6. The calamity "folded the carpet with all there was on it [and] the notables, the leaders and all the learned died, as well as my parents on whom be God's mercy." (Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:64.
7. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 1:64.
8. M. Talbi, "Ibn Khaldun," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 825.
9. Ibn Khaldun, *Histoires des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, trans. Baron De Slane, vol. 4. (Algiers: n.p., 1852–1856), 180.
10. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 3.274.
11. Quotation of the *Ta'rif*, 246–47, in *Ibn Khaldun in Egypt*, ed. W. J. Fischel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 19.

12. Quotation in M. A. Enan, *Ibn Khaldun* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1984), 66.
13. M. Talbi, "Ibn Khaldun," 829.
14. "In the *Muqaddima* he gives examples of how misunderstanding of history leads workers, artisans, teachers, and other people of low status to aspire to political power and authority that they cannot really possess. These examples helped him come to terms with the true position of the scribe. In the early days of Islam, he points out, the scribe was a minister of state and a member of ruling elite. In his own time the true political rulers were the sultans, the royal families, and the chiefs of the tribes that supported them. Now the scribe was only a servant. From history he could gauge his realistic prospects, temper his ambition, and re-establish his respect for the legitimacy of the established dynasties and the given social order." See *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 7, s.v. "Ibn Khaldun."
15. M. Talbi, "Ibn Khaldun," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 829.
16. Enan, *Ibn Khaldun*, 56.
17. Concerning this controversial point, Y. Lacoste affirms that "Ibn Khaldun does not, as is so often claimed, make any basic distinction between nomadic and sedentary groups. His views are much more complex and far-reaching. He did not study the rural population alone, but the entire population of the area, and its various social, intellectual, and material activities (material in sense of production and consumption). He uses the term *umran* to refer to this totality. Both De Slane and Rosenthal translate this as 'civilization,' which limits Ibn Khaldun's concept considerably by suggesting an explicit comparison with 'barbarism' and 'savagery.' The word *umran* derives from the Arabic root *amr*, meaning to live somewhere, to live with someone, to cultivate land, to make prosperous, to have a house, to have a fixed abode." Y. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World* (London: Verso Editions, 1984), 93.
18. L. Baeck, *The Mediterranean Tradition in Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 1994), 115.
19. *Ibid.*, 117.
20. W. J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldun in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 153–54; and Y. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 110–27.
21. S. Noja, *Breve storia dei popoli dell'Islam* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1997), 154.
22. F. Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldun's Gedanken ueber den Staat* (Munich: n.p., 1932).
23. S. Noja, *Breve storia dei popoli dell'Islam* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1997), 155.
24. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 2.325.

25. L. Baeck, *The Mediterranean Tradition in Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 1994), 116.
26. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 2.103–4.
27. Ibid., 1.106.
28. Ibid., 2.123.
29. Ibid., 1.89.
30. Enan, *Ibn Khaldun*, 99–100.
31. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 2.235.
32. M. Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), chaps. 3 and 4.
33. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 1.10.
34. Ibid.
35. Y. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, 142.
36. H. Corbin, *Storia della Filosofia Islamica* (Milano: Adelphi, 1991), 288.
37. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 1.6.
38. S. Colosio, “Contribution à l'étude d'Ibn Khaldun,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 24 (1914): 334.
39. A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 322.

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