

## **'ASABIYYAH & 'UMRAN IN IBN KHALDUN'S THOUGHT**

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*Ibn Khaldun lived and experienced the decline of Muslims dominance in the early 13th and 14th centuries. He wrote on the history of the world in his "Kitab al Ibar" with an introduction chapter, the Muqaddimah based on his personal involvement in the various episodes, intrigues, observations and experience. He developed the theory of 'umran and the role played by 'asabiyyah in the rise and fall of 'umran. Accordingly, this paper extensively discusses and analyses these two theories propounded by Ibn Khaldun with the aim to find out the connection between them in the rise and fall of a civilization and social order.*

### **IBN KHALDUN'S LIFE**

Waliiyuddin Abu Zayd Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Jabir Ibn Muhmmad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun al-Hadhrami known to the world as Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis on 1 Ramadan 732H/ 27 May 1332 CE. Ibn Khaldun had traced his family's presence in Al-Andalus back to

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the Umayyad conquest of Iberia in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lacoste, many historians in medieval North Africa and Al-Andalus noted the fame of the Banu Khaldun in Andalusian political, military and intellectual history; the male members of the family were well regarded political advisors, religious scholars and generals. The Banu Khaldun had immigrated to Tunis from Al-Andalus after the fall of Cordoba and Seville (Ibn Khaldun 1958: 6-10).

Ibn Khaldun in his autobiography traced back his paternal roots to the companions of the Prophet Mohammad (*s.a.w.*), namely Wail Ibn Hajr. His family migrated to Seville during the Arab conquest of Al-Andalus. During the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, they went to Ifriqiya (Africa) and settled in Tunis during the rule of the Hafsid Abu Zakariyya (Calvert, 1984: 6). Ibn Khaldun's family had gained fame for excellence in politics and military due to the long history of service in the Umayyad, Almoravid, and Almohad dynasties of Al-Andalus. More important than his family's position and status, in Tunis was the social, intellectual, cultural and political environment in which he was born. His nearest grandparent Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun (d. 737) became a trusted government officer of Amir Abu Yahya al-Lihyani, a provincial leader during his time. Ibn Khaldun's early years in Tunis coincided with the Marinid's ruler Abu al-Hasan struggle for power. In 1347, Abul al-Hasan successfully occupied Tunis and he brought along with him a large entourage of literary figures and religious scholars.

Ibn Khaldun's father was a scholar who arranged for him to acquire the best education. His earliest Islamic education was from his father and other famous Islamic teachers in Tunisia. In this regard, his father had a great influence on his education. Ibn Khaldun admitted that: "I was educated under the influence of my father, may Allah shower His blessings on him, until I reached adulthood" (Ibn Khaldun 1958: 17). His learning of Qur'an and Islamic *fiqh* (law) as well as *ushul fiqh* (jurisprudence) from Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn Burr al-Ansari from Spain were extensive and covered many aspects of his life. In his

autobiography, he acknowledged many of his teachers such as Abu Abdilllah ibn Al-Arabi al-Hasayiri, Abu Abdilllah Muhammad ibn al-Shawwash al-Zarzali, Abu al-Abdas Ahmad ibn Qasar, Abu Abdilllah Muhammad ibn Bahr, from whom he acquired the knowledge of Arabic poetry. According to Ibn Khaldun, he learned the basic concepts of philosophy, logic, from the great logician Abu Abdilllah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Abili who influenced his intellectual development (Fromherz, 2011: 45).

Ibn Khaldun had a very stimulating intellectual environment and exposure at a very early age. Ibn Khaldun's life and career was interspersed between his interests in scholarships and politics. This obviously influenced his worldview of life itself. His career and travels, could be discerned from the writings of his autobiography. Ibn Khaldun was born into a family where education and learning were given top priority. The fact that his family was among the nobles in the society, he had easy access to political figures and scholarly discourses.

Walter Joseph Fischel and Syed Farid Alatas suggested that Ibn Khaldun's life would be better understood if divided into comprehensible important phases (Wan, 2014). Fischel divided it into two phases namely the Maghreb (from birth to fifty years) and Egypt (four years until his death); while Alatas divided it into three phases (namely first phase of twenty years covering his continued education, the period 20 years when he was in political office), and his third phase of thirty one years where he served as a scholar, teacher and magistrate. The first two phases he was in Spain, or Muslim west, and last phase between Maghreb and Egypt. There are other divisions or phases done by different scholars of his life such as Rosenthal (1967), Schmidt (1978), Al-labbâc (1992), and Simon (2002). Wan (2014) adopted the same approach and the researcher agrees.

### **Socio-political Conditions**

D. H. Garrison has rightly argued that the historical descriptions of the political, economic, social and intellectual environments of 14<sup>th</sup> century Maghrib would depend on the source. In order to understand the relevance and significance of Ibn Khaldun's political thoughts and ideas, it is important to place it in the context of the

socio-political conditions of his time. Lawrence and Lacoste say that during Ibn Khaldun's time, North Africa was relatively enjoying commercial prosperity, technological advancement and intellectual achievement (Garrison, 2012).

On the other hand, Nathaniel Schmidt had different opinion on Ibn Khaldun. The researcher considers Schmidt exaggerated the environment in Ibn Khaldun's time when he said the experiences and exposure he went through "took him to huts of savages and into the palaces of kings, into the dungeons with the criminals and into the highest courts of justices; into the companionship of the illiterate, and into the academics of scholars; into the treasure houses of the past and into the activities of the present; into deprivation and sorrow and into affluence and joy. It had led him into the depths where the spirit broods over the meaning of life" (Ashraf, 2015: 4).

Marshall Hodgson's "*The Venture of Islam*" (1974: 477) gives the socio-political situation of the region after the fall of the Almohad Empire in 1269 CE by fairly and realistically depicting after the collapse it created and isolated unstable emirates throughout North Africa and the Muslim Spain was left as a memory only. The effect was that they could no longer focus their attention on sustaining their social, economic and intellectual activities; instead they had to concentrate on defending themselves. Ibn Khaldun depicted the picture of the Islamic world during the 14<sup>th</sup> century as decline and disintegration set in (Mahdi, 1957: 26). Taking into account this depiction of his life, it goes to show Ibn Khaldun was confronted with continuous political intrigues and jealousies in his career and life but whatever action he took was for his survival. The changes of allegiance of Ibn Khaldun to different rulers and regions from Arab Spain to Syria often led to negative perceptions of him and led some modern scholars to criticise Ibn Khaldun as opportunistic who lacked a sense of patriotism.

Tunis unfortunately suffered when the Marinid rule came to an abrupt end and with it the flourishing intellectual centre as a result of the political power struggle and the Black Death in 1348

that swept the region. The Black Death killed his parents, all his teachers, and many of his extended family members. Fromherz (2011: 7) and Garrison (2012: 15) said the plague dramatically impacted Ibn Khaldun's worldview on public sanitation, urban life, and urbanisation and inspired him to write the *Muqaddimah*. Such compounding trauma no doubt had a lasting impact on his thoughts (Calvert, 1984: 7).

### **Intellectual Environment**

With the death of his parents during the plague in Tunis and the departure of the Marinid rulers, Ibn Khaldun felt the emptiness of the intellectual environment of the city, while he still had a great thirst for learning (*Tarīf*). He was invited to go to Fez and he accepted it because Abu Inan like Ibn Khaldun's father promoted learning and scholarship in Fez. In Fez, Ibn Khaldun was able to meet, work, and study with a large number of scholars. Ibn Khaldun joined the Sultan's *majlis al-'ilmi* (intellectual circle) and while serving in this position he was able to complete his education. Due to his family's wealth, privilege, and political status, Ibn Khaldun had received the best education available, studying under the best teachers in North Africa in very diverse academic fields. He was fortunate that he studied outside the state-control system. His teachers gave him intellectual freedom and allowed him to have a broad-based education, which influenced his critical thinking and creativity. He was an interdisciplinary scholar.

He learned the Qur'anic *tafsir* (exegesis), *hadith* collections, learning the fundamentals of Maliki *fiqh* (law), and theosophy of Sufism. Beyond the religious studies, Ibn Khaldun also took lessons in literature, poetry, Arabic linguistics and foreign languages, biographical and historical sciences, and academic writing. In addition, he was educated in the 'modern' Hellenistic subjects of mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, and in metaphysics. He read Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. In the Islamic philosophy, he was well-versed, *inter alia*, in the works of al-Farabi, al-Razi, al-Tusi, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Sina.

Thus, he was a person exposed to Islamic intellectual heritage

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as well as classical Greek philosophy, which inspired him in the academic pursuits as well as gave him the ability for critical and rational inquiry. The wide ranging training he went through had a profound effect on the way he looked at knowledge and human capacity for rational and critical thought. It made the young Ibn Khaldun to realise humanity's limitation and began to discuss the 'phenomenon of prophecy' and man's relation with outsider in a more systematic and scientific manner. This enabled him to be proficient in the fields of revealed (*naqli*) and rational (*aqli*) sciences. This could be clearly seen especially in his writings in the *Muqaddimah* and *Tarikh*.

Politics played an important role in Ibn Khaldun's intellectual works. In Fez, Abu Inan, the son of Abu al-Hasan appointed Ibn Khaldun as the state secretary, the post which he took up unenthusiastically. Ibn Khaldun is narrated in *Tarikh* to have said that: "I devoted myself to reflection and to study, and to sitting at the feet of the great teachers, those of the Maghrib as well as those of Spain who were residing temporarily in Fez and I benefitted greatly from their teaching". Rosenthal (1967: 8) in his translation of the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun says that Ibn Khaldun was more focused on his desire to learn more than to his position in politics. Nevertheless, he held this position for three years, as he was imprisoned for two years on the charge of conspiring to help the exiled Hafsids Amir of Bijaya, Abu Abdullah to regain his throne. He went through many of such allegations of intrigues and betrayals throughout his career as a scholar and politician/statesman serving under several rulers and princes of the Marinid, Hafsids, Ziyarids and Granada emirates. For Ibn Khaldun even though there are those who branded him as a dangerous opportunist, every new intrigue and political manoeuvres he went through allowed him a new exposure to understand better the dynamics of human social interactions and the inner workings of inter and intra state politics (Mahdi, 1957: 37-52).

Ibn Khaldun wide exposure to palace politics provided him the insightful perspective and enabled him to critically analyse history, *mulk* and social change. Ibn Khaldun synthesised his

experience of North African and Andalusian politics and collected data using his knowledge of classical and Islamic history to develop the historical principles society and politics. Thus, his theory based on his experiences and observations are lessons and examples for contemporary as well as future leaders. His theory has been crafted in a manner that can be utilised for practical application (Fromherz, 2011: 60-96).

Albeit, he was a witness to the rise and decline of Islamic states and dynasties in North Africa and Spain, he observed how the Islamic populace and political organisations in Maghreb lost their political power and disintegrated into oblivion after ruling for a period of several hundred years. Ibn Khaldun in his investigation was keen to find answers to the following questions: why was Maghreb an unstable state? Why were there very few attempts made to reinstate the state to its *'umranic* position of peace, wealth and prosperity? And if there were such attempts why did they end up in failure? Ibn Khaldun was keen to know why and how did empires rise to its highest peak and subsequently fall to its lowest pit. Ibn Khaldun's analysis of how civilisations were built was premised on what is politics, what is the purpose of government and what were the forces that drove society in a given situation.

Ibn Khaldun was a scholar who gained fame for his *Muqaddimah* where he expounded the philosophy of history and the theory of the rise and fall of civilisations (Campo, 2009: 334). He travelled extensively to different regions of Africa, Arab and European countries like Morocco, Spain, Egypt, Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula. His writings were based on his experiences and observations. In the Prolegomena, Ibn Khaldun presented his theory of *ilm al-'umran* on social; historical development; and the rise and decline of a society. His work enables historians to establish a benchmark in judging recorded events and social changes in historical reporting. Ibn Khaldun considered understanding the past history of mankind as significant to shape the present and plan for the future.

For the first time, he propounded the methodology on history

not being merely a recorded chronology of events, but as sociology. He took a different approach from Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd and al-Ghazali in not focusing his attention on metaphysical, philosophical and religious issues, instead he decided to discuss the challenges and problems of society and social sciences. Ibn Khaldun took a unique perspective by stating his theory and conclusions are based on natural science. Even though it was difficult to draw a line between what are natural sciences and positive sciences or divine law, he introduced what he called as new "science of culture". He categorically emphasised that this science has never been done before and was premised on natural philosophy. His theory relates to the study of human society and the causes of its rise and fall. His sociology examined the present, which would shed light on history and the past. Using his experience and observations as a statesman, diplomat and politician who had travelled extensively, he had gained empirical evidence of the events and episodes in politics and history. He was thus able to study different forms of human society by investigating their nature and characteristics and examines how the evolution of human society took place.

According to Ibn Khaldun, a man could not live and purely survive as a self-satisfying individual, thus, is very much dependent on his physical environment since he could not possibly be the producer and at the same time the supplier for all his needs. This requires him to be associated with others hence, an individual has to live in a family, with a tribe or in a nation and cooperate with other human species. This phenomenon was how Ibn Khaldun introduced and explained how tribes or clans in strengthening their bonds for safety and security as well as cementing group feeling or social solidarity. Ibn Khaldun developed this behaviour of human beings into a political and social concept, whereby he believes with the sense of *'asabiyyah*, there would be peace and political stability.

Ibn Khaldun confessed that he decided to write on history for the following reasons: (1) problematic and wrong facts by previous historians; (2) to rearrange historical facts and reflections; (3) to



provide a focus on the history of the Arabs and Berbers of Maghreb including their early origin up to his time and finally; and (4) to make new commentaries on the evolution of civilisation, urbanisation, human social organisation and dynasty building. He was seeking answers on the subjects of human nature, social organisation and social change (Schleifer, 1985: 225-231). The result was his *Muqaddimah* which made him famous among the classical and contemporary scholarship. Ibn Khaldun wrote his *Muqaddimah*: the introduction to his "*Kitab al-Ibar*", "the Book of Lessons" in restful tranquillity away from Maghrebi politics. One can find Ibn Khaldun's theory of state, *'umran*, *'asabiyyah*, and method of analysing of history, society, human nature and politics. It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldun also incorporated his voluminous book on history of the Arabs, Berbers and Turks, i.e. "*Kitab al-Ibar*" into the *Muqaddimah* after he travelled to Egypt and Levant.

For Ibn Khaldun, two conditions for understanding of history are important which he observed in his *Muqaddimah*: First, understanding the causes and nature of events. Second, the information relied on must be correct and the sources verifiable. This is of paramount importance in order to distinguish between what is the right and wrong information. Lenn Goodman (1972: 250) said this demonstrates Ibn Khaldun's demand for clarity, realism and critical thinking. Ibn Khaldun avoids intentionally from applying traditional methods in his historical research and interpretations. He advocated that his *Muqaddimah* must be useful not only for his period but in the context of contemporary life. For him, to get the true lessons from history, the methodology of inquiry and understanding must change. He believed the inquirer must be critical in their examination of facts and in interpreting events, cultures and civilisations based on underlying realities. It was here that he introduces his science of culture (Mahdi, 1957).

#### **IBN KHALDUN'S THEORY OF 'ASABIYYAH**

A precise translation of the term *'asabiyyah* into English is difficult. Therefore, scholars linguistically and etymologically use the original

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Arabic term and define it based on its functions and what the word conveys. Hence, *'asabiyyah* has been defined differently. A. Halim (2012: 14) outlines the origin of the word from different sources. She traces *'asabiyyah* from the root word *'asab*, which has the meaning of "to bind". For Baali *'asabiyyah* literally means 'binding' which would reflect being bound to a group. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* says, "*'asabiyyah* denotes as having meaning of tribal kinships and there is a masculine sense to the term, the implication of the strengthening bond".

*The Arabic English Lexicon* gives more depth to the possible meaning of *'asabiyyah* by suggesting, "a person demonstrates group feeling when he feels angry and compelled to act in defense of his group". The same dictionary also says etymologically *'asabiyyah* has the literal meaning "of bounding the turban round one's head" (the turban could be a metaphor for the tribe and for the head, representing individual disposition but the former seems more likely). Thus, *'asabiyyah* incorporates the quality of an individual's "action in helping his people or group against any aggressive action against them whether they are wrongdoers or wronged and in protecting them".

Goodman says the root word of *'asabiyyah* means 'nerve' as in the 'fiber or sinew' by which a group is held together. *Lisan al-Arab* defines *'asabiyyah* as the request of mutual self-aid or cooperation. Rosenthal in his translation of *Muqaddimah* simply defines *'asabiyyah* as 'group feeling'. Monteil likens it to a sense of 'esprit de corps' or 'esprit de clan', whilst Durkheim was the first to use the term of 'mechanical solidarity' or 'organic solidarity'. He ascribed this to mean Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyyah* is simply solidarity tout court. Other scholars have given a variety of meanings depending on the circumstances and situations of its usage.

Hence the meanings can be taken in different contexts, to mean 'group consciousness', '*gemeinsinn*', 'national *itatsidee*', 'corporate spirit', 'feeling of solidarity', 'group solidarity', 'group will', 'communal spirit', 'social cohesion', 'martial spirit', 'striking power' and 'social solidarity'. All meanings of *'asabiyyah*

demonstrate the presence of commonality of objectives to form a collective will to cooperate for a certain specific objective. Having examined the meaning and definition of this theory, the study attempts to show that the Malay society in their struggle against colonial rule and for independence used race, religion and nationalism to create group feeling and solidarity. It was an exemplary developing agro-based nation beginning with rural economy to become an *'umranic* state that enjoys peace and economic growth by democratic means.

Whatever definitions or contexts one applies to define the term, traditionally the word and practice of *'asabiyyah* is frowned upon in Islam but on further examination Prophet Mohammad (*s.a.w.*), as reported by Abu Dawood as authentic *hadith*, has not categorically forbidden it. It is narrated that Prophet Mohammad (*s.a.w.*) has pronounced that "helping your own people in an unjust cause" and "He is not of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partisanship and he is not of us who fights in the cause of tribal partisanship; and he is not of us who dies in the cause of tribal partisanship". When his companions asked him to further explain about the meaning of *'asabiyyah* (tribal partisanship), he (*s.a.w.*) explained that "(It means) helping your own people in an unjust cause" (Asad, 1961). Premise on the complete recital of the Prophet Mohammad's tradition, it would not be wrong to say the natural *'asabiyyah* of Ibn Khaldun coupled with religion and justice is not contrary to Islamic teachings.

### **Formation of 'Asabiyyah and Its Dynamic Role**

*'Asabiyyah* was formulated to bring group feeling and solidarity of a tribe on the basis of blood or clan relationships but later on to include any group or allies with a common objective to assert itself for political power and authority. Ibn Khaldun holds the view that *'asabiyyah* is an inevitable phenomenon in constructing the human society. He considers the human species have the natural tendency to establish grouping as a collective endeavour to cooperate with each other. He further added in order to strengthen the sense of *'asabiyyah*, it has to be complemented by the practice religion

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and the sense of justice. He argued that *'asabiyyah* will not drift away from its natural purpose of serving the interest of the whole group and collectively of men when guided by religion and justice. *'Asabiyyah* corrupts and drifts away when selfishness and individualism of the leaders and its group members and elites is the guiding force of *'asabiyyah*. Chances of social corruption and injustices become many. Here, alliances and groups formed will promote the selfish interests of certain individuals at the expense of the common good.

Ibn Khaldun turns *'asabiyyah* into a political concept in understanding social organisation, civilisation, and rise and fall of states/dynasties. For him, the term has a positive meaning or connotation and defines it in a way that would not be contrary to the teachings of Islam contained in the Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad's traditions. He considers it as an essential attribute of human beings (human nature) to live together in a group/community; hence for him society is a natural outcome and necessary. *'Asabiyyah* becomes a political and social tool to work together to achieve solidarity and with it unity to for a common and shared objective to establish an organised political society, to bind together for defense, agricultural and industrial fulfilments. He develops the economic concept of dependency and complementarity in society or group, for the exchange of resources or production for supply to the needs of other members of society. *'Asabiyyah* is a necessary prerequisite for all social relations and the driving force for cultural, intellectual and economic development. Ibn Khaldun, however, considers *'asabiyyah* have its own cycle of ups and downs whenever group feeling and solidarity erodes which would enable a new group with stronger *'asabiyyah* to assert itself and gain political control and dominance for *mulk*.

In Ibn Khandun's view, *'asabiyyah* interacts with *'umran* through five stages and move society and life towards *'umranic* lifestyle or causes the decline of the *'umranic* life. They are: (1) Conquest: this is based on strong feelings of *'asabiyyah* that produces an irresistible strength among the tribesmen; (2) Single ruler: emergence of a charismatic, respected leader; (3) Broadly popular

rule: the period when the leaders draw strength from the group; (4) Over confidence: the ruler becomes complacent and cut off from the majority of population. The ruler becomes reclusive and surrounds himself with most loyal servants. Population has become sedentary and accustomed to the luxuries of city life; and (5) Collapse: new underdog tribal group seizes control. Their togetherness gives them the edge.

*Asabiyyah* exists in every stage but the degree of its effectiveness varies from high to low. It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldun, connects the degree of effectiveness of *'asabiyyah* with political leadership. The stronger and just the leader of a community is the stronger and durable the *'asabiyyah* and the *'umran* would be. When *'asabiyyah* is high or strong, society moves towards *'umranic* stage of its development but the *'umranic* phase of life erodes when *'asabiyyah* begins to decline. The reason for the decline of *'asabiyyah* and the subsequent fall of the *'umranic* life style is the complacency of the political leadership. When leaders become complacent and become engrossed in unfair and corrupt practices, *'asabiyyah* declines and *'umran* collapses.

Ibn Khaldun, in the *Muqaddimah*, also described the process of transformation of rural to an urban society with economic growth and civilisational progress, changing the life styles, wealth, prosperity, luxury and comfort of the people. But Ibn Khaldun believed that *'asabiyyah* was stronger in the nomadic phase, and decreased as civilisation advanced. The society becomes more liberal and individualistic and their sense of solidarity and unity become relax. Tibi (1997) opines that when the sense of *'asabiyyah* declined, another more compelling *'asabiyyah* may take its place; thus, civilisations followed by rise and fall, and history describes these cycles of *'asabiyyah*.

For his case study, Ibn Khaldun used the Bedouin community as a reference point to show how *'asabiyyah* was formed to make the tribe stronger and felt superior to the others. The unity and solidarity brought by *'asabiyyah* amongst the Bedouins (*badawa*) enabled them to defeat urban or sedentary people (*hadara*) who were settled in towns and cities due to the loosening of their

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*'asabiyyah* or group feeling. Upon victory, the *badawa* group would obtain *mulk* and establish political institutions of the state/dynasty to administer the polity/city. This cycle in term of social development, subsequently with *mulk* establish their state that has wealth and prosperity, to enjoy the new urban dwellers life experiencing luxury and comfort of sedentary life. The sense of *'asabiyyah*, under these circumstances, according to Ibn Khaldun, is weakened when the *hadara* group becomes complacent and individualistic, and failed to practice good governance and tolerate corruption. This will cause the decline and ultimately collapse of the state or dynasty.

### The Key Feature of 'Asabiyyah

The aim of *'asabiyyah* is to acquire *mulk*. *Mulk* at once embodies the state structure and the institutions under it. Therefore, the fundamental feature of *'asabiyyah* is that it is considered as the engine that drives power and exercise of authority through state institutions. In this way, one can understand the relationship that exists between society, religion and state as a consequential process. Ibn Khaldun believed that power and authority could be fully realised if the binding force, i.e. *'asabiyyah* is legitimate. State and exercise of power become legitimate when *'asabiyyah* is legitimate and *'asabiyyah* in Ibn Khaldun's view draws its legitimacy when political leaders gain the peoples' or tribes' support when they propagate religious ethos and promote justice for all members of the community.

Ibn Khaldun said that the *badawa* people living in remote areas of the desert with very harsh environment and conditions, which drove them to cooperate and stay together for survival against harm from all kinds of external threats. The *'asabiyyah* or group feeling was the cementing element to keep them together and strong. Hence, *'asabiyyah* was the binding force for the group feeling and solidarity to ultimately gain and maintain *mulk* and the state or perhaps in Ibn Khaldun's words royal authority. It is necessary to note that Ibn Khaldun did not advocate a specific form of state, i.e. monarchic, democratic or theocratic.

In Ibn Khaldun's opinion, state draws its legitimacy from its purpose which constitutes the basis of its material cause, i.e. *'asabiyyah*. And the purpose of state which *'asabiyyah* aims to achieve is justice and public interest and the well-being of the citizens. But, *'asabiyyah* will lose its legitimacy and will wither away and the group's hold onto power will disintegrate when political leaders abandon the purpose of formation of *'asabiyyah* and the formation of state and exercise of power.

Ibn Khaldun opined that when the political elite began to abuse and misuse power and state institutions are used to promote parochial selfish interests of small group of individuals, then public interest and the well-being of the citizens are given lip service attention. Citizens feel disillusioned and disenchanted and begin to withdraw their support of the political leaders and the state in favour of another set of elites whom they feel can serve their interests. In this way, the *'asabiyyah* weakens, the political elite lose legitimacy and eventually lose *mulk* that is, to hold onto power and control of state.

### **IBN KHALDUN'S THEORY OF 'UMRAN**

The two most important translations of *'umran* are 'culture' and 'civilisation'. Some scholars chose culture while others would prefer to translate it as civilisation. For the purpose of this research, the researcher uses civilisation. The *Muqaddimah* is about 1200 pages thick, which reflects the importance Ibn Khaldun attaches to the knowledge of *'umran* as precursor to the study of history (El-Rayes, 2008: 8). Ibn Khaldun's reason for giving so much attention on *'ilm al-'umran* (science of civilisation) is to indicate that the subject is a new science (*Muqaddimah*, Vol. I: 10-16). Ibn Khaldun claimed that no scholar before him ever attempted to deal with the subject of the science of *'umran*.

Edward William Lane says that the word *'umran* is derived from the Arabic verb-root *'-m-r* that literally means "he aged," "he grew old," "he lived," or "continued in life". However, according to the authoritative Arabic Lexicon, "*Lisan al-'Arab*", the substantives of *'-m-r* (i.e. *al-'amr*, *al-'umur*, and *al-'umr*) all signify

life (*al-hayat*). Based on this verb-root, Rayes says it points to the idea of growing up or getting old. In this manner, one is aware that one's span of life as human beings is limited. Rayes, in his thesis, says that among contemporary Arabic speakers, the word *'umran* would mean something like "building" or perhaps "a place flourishing with human activity". Ibn Khaldun uses the word *'umran* to denote human grouping, human flourishing, as well as an organising standard that makes this formation possible. The term therefore relates to the studies on the development of society or human social organisation (*al-ijtima al-insani*) in all its phases, beginning as nomadic state to an organised state with the emergence of a sedentary life style until its decline (*Muqaddimah*, Vol. I: 14-17).

In the opening line of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun made it clear that a human being is very much a societal being, hence cannot live on its own without society. It is his contention that *'umran* is a by-product of human cooperation and this allows the human species to live his natural life span. Albeit religion and history, Ibn Khaldun tells us *'umran* like all things, no matter how long it lasts, cannot exist forever. The life span (*'umur*) of a human being definitely has a beginning and an end. In this context, the principal object of Khaldun's science of *'umran* is to show the process in the cycle of growth, maturity and decline of societies.

M.A. Enan (1984) says the doctrine of *al-'umran* can be defined as sociology (Enan, 1984: 135). Mahmoud Dhaoudi (2005) defines *'umran* as a philosophy of history, social philosophy or the science of civilisation (Dhaoudi, 2005: 321-322). Ibn Khaldun defines *'umran* as the science of human civilisation (*'ilm al-ijtima' al-bashari*) or the science of human society (*'ilm-alijtima' al-insani*). Both L. Amri (2008) and M.A Enan say the concept is used primarily in and about studies of development of a society from its nomadic condition, to an organised state living in a sedentary or urban life, and moving from the phase of its rise to ultimate decline. Suleyman Uludag argues that Ibn Khaldun in the beginning of the *Muqaddimah* denoted that the origin of the meaning of the Arabic word *'umran* is a condition of being



developed and flourishing town (Ibn Khaldun, 1958: 12-113).

From the linguistic aspect, the term *'ilm al-'umran* originated from the root word *'amara* and *'amura* which has the meaning of "affluence" and "prosperity". This is justified if it is viewed from the wider perspective of its meaning, "a land, or house, inhabited, peopled, well stocked with people and the like, in the flourishing state, in a state the contrary of desolate or waste, ruined". Edward William Lane says it also has the meaning of *bunyan* or "a building, a structure, an edifice" or perhaps the act of building". On the other hand, the terminology of *'umrani* has the meaning of "cultural, civilisation, serving or pertaining to ... cultural development", in the circumstance, it can be taken to mean something relating to development of a society or civilisation.

Amri crystallises the concept of *'ilm al-'umran* further and says that it is the science what is called today 'sociology', the science of 'being together' and the science that is concerned with how to fill the empty space, that is to say, to occupy the land, to bring life to a territory, and to establish urban groupings, including the founding of a town. The *'imara* is a building, an edifice, a construction, located in a population centre. One can also leave the space and look for correspondences through time such as the term *'umr*, the age of a person, a human being, a natural element. Age is depository of life. There is an apparent subjectivising of meaning, an apparent relativising of the sciences of living beings, a sort of restriction of life to a part, a segment, a little piece fused with death, but passed by birth and the emergence of new generations". Amri contends that "the etymology of the linguistic stem in the Arabic Language refers to *'umran* as the fact of filling an empty space. But it can also have a semantic meaning referring to a contribution we bring to nature, that is to say, culture" (Amri, 2008: 351-361). Wahabuddin Ra'ees argues that *'umran* is referred as culture that becomes human product and is acquired and produced as a result of human relations (Ra'ees, 2004: 162).

From the above discussion, it is safe to infer that when *'umran* is viewed as culture then it encapsulates state, political institutions, policies, norms, etc. When it is viewed as human product, then it

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is produced only when human beings come together, interact and cooperate. It is not produced by single individual in isolation but many must come together and agree unto it. Therefore, it is the feeling of coming together that becomes the real force behind human beings to develop and produce *'umran*. Ibn Khaldun said this group feeling exists when people see a shared objective or purpose in coming together. Ibn Khaldun called this group feeling *'asabiyyah* and therefore, the material cause of *'umran* is *'asabiyyah*. State, organisations, policies, institutions, powers are constituent elements of *'umran* or cultures are produced by *'asabiyyah* or group feeling among citizens of a given state or members of a given community. Closely connected is the issue of the rise and decline of *'umran*.

Therefore, *'umran* will only decline, dynasties will disintegrate, groups will be removed from power when the *'asabiyyah* of members who created the *'umran* weakens obviously due to abandoning of the pursuit of purpose of creation of *'umran* by the elites. So, *'umran* declines and people are removed from power when the leaders and the supporters part company. Citizens withdraw their support and part company from those in power. They believe that the leaders have become corrupt and begun to use the luxury of power for their own well-being and have abandoned promoting of the common cause and well-being of the community. The followers feel betrayed, cheated and deprived from the benefits of state policies. The *'asabiyyah* disintegrates and *'umran* collapses.

Abdessalam Cheddadi makes an interesting observation about Ibn Khaldun's typology of *'umran*. Ibn Khaldun categorises *'umran* into two types: (1) primitive *'umran* or *'umran badawi* and (2) civilised *'umran* or *'umran hadari*. Cheddadi says modern equivalents of *'umran badawi* and *'umran hadari* are rural-urban typology of society. Rural-urban typology for Cheddadi denotes life style, civility, the mode of land acquisition, town dwelling, economic disparity and solidarity of Ibn Khaldun's *'umran badawi* and *'umran hadhari* respectively (Cheddadi, 1005: 2). Ibn Khaldun said both are formed for different reasons and each has its own features.

For instance, people in *'umran hadari* are affluent live in large

cities that has confluence of social interactions and economic activities, the surplus and diversity of products will attract greater number of people to cities. These are absent in the *'umran badawi*. The city also employs professional army to protect the city against external threats which make their commodities and life secured. In the *badawi* situation, they have to provide their own security. Leaderships in the case of *badawi* are based on loyalty and allegiance to a prominent member of the community. During the *'umran badawi*, loyalty and adherence to order is more sincere and unconditional leaderships are not determined by law but by members of the community declaring their loyalty to a particular leader usually based on blood ties and the person is elected as leader. In *'umran hadhari*, power and state administration under the *mulk* has to be governed by law or state force and there must be obedience to these rules. In *'umran hadhari*, the leader possesses a security mechanism to defend him and the state structure.

However, decline of *'umran* will be due to the weakening of the sense of *'asabiyyah*, thus the loosening of group feeling, solidarity or and unity. Ibn Khaldun believed that when society during *'umran hadhari* reaches the peak of its development and economic success, it seems living in a state of comfort and luxury adversely affects the resilience of the society, it will cause the decline and ultimately collapse of the state. The decadence becomes imminent without strong religious bond and morality.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this paper discusses Ibn Khaldun's life, family background and intellectual environment that contributed to his growth as a scholar, statesman, historian and philosopher. His exposure in holding many positions under different rulers in Muslim Spain and the Maghrib as well as his knowledge in Islamic subjects and Greek philosophy made him an exceptional person. He found out the material cause of the eroding power of Muslims during his epoch. In search of the historical roots of the decline of Islamic civilisation, he concluded that civilisation is developed by human beings and attained the *'umranic* stage depend on what

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he called *'asabiyyah* and therefore the rise and fall of a civilisations very much depend on the degree of *'asabiyyah* in a particular social order.

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