



Akademik Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (AJESS Journal)

The Influence of Khaldunian Thought on Human Civilisation An Analytical Study of the Theory of ‘Aşabiyya and Its Role in the Rise and Fall of States

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Article History

Received: 20/03/2026; Accepted : 27/08/2026; Published : 05/09/2026

Abstract:

Ibn Khaldun is one of the most prominent figures in Islamic and world thought. In the *Muqaddima*, he developed a comprehensive theory of the emergence, flourishing, and collapse of states, drawing on his political and social experience and on the concept of tribal and religious ‘aşabiyya. His theory identifies three principal stages: strong ‘aşabiyya at the state's foundation, a period of relative equilibrium and stability, and a final phase of weakening that leads to the decline of royal authority and the collapse of the state. Rather than presenting these ideas as abstract assumptions, Ibn Khaldun supported them with historical examples drawn from states of his own time and situated them within a broader account of human civilisation. His theories of the state and ‘aşabiyya became central to his social thought and influenced later Western scholarship in the social sciences and intellectual history.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, ‘aşabiyya, state formation, political authority, civilizational cycles

Introduction

Muslim scholars made major contributions to human intellectual history. Among the most influential was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldun, best known for his *Muqaddima*. This study examines one aspect of his thought: the theory of ‘aşabiyya and its role in the rise and fall of states. It analyses his method for studying nations, the principles underlying his analytical framework, and the historical cases on which he drew. Ibn Khaldun maintained that ‘aşabiyya plays a pivotal role in the emergence of political entities, grounding his theory in both historical accounts of earlier nations and events he witnessed.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldun is one of the most prominent Muslim thinkers to have enriched human thought through his original theoretical contributions, particularly his theory of ‘aşabiyya and its role in the rise and fall of states, as set out in the *Muqaddima*. He addressed the concept, conditions, and importance of ‘aşabiyya in Books Two and Three, which concern Bedouin civilisation, states, royal authority, and the caliphate. Ibn Khaldun also drew on his political experience in the Islamic West to apply his theory to several Maghrebi states, particularly in volume 6, devoted to the history of the Islamic Maghreb. There he traced tribal branches and Berber subdivisions to clarify and interpret historical events.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following questions:

- What role does ‘aşabiyya play in the rise and fall of states?
- What are the types of ‘aşabiyya, and what is their importance in consolidating rule and royal authority?
- What is the value of Ibn Khaldun's theory for contemporary research?

First: Ibn Khaldun: Life and Intellectual Formation

Ibn Khaldun's full name was 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Jābir ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldun.¹ He was born in Tunis in Ramadan 732 AH/1332 CE and died in Egypt in 808 AH/1406 CE. In his *Autobiography*, he wrote that his lineage originated in Hadhramaut, among the Arabs of Yemen, and extended to Wā'il ibn Ḥujr.²

Ibn Khaldun was an encyclopedic scholar who worked across jurisprudence, judicial practice, literature, philosophy, and history. He became renowned for the *Muqaddima*, which forms part of the *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*. He studied with leading scholars of his time and produced major works that established him as an important figure in Islamic and world thought. His ancestry and career linked him to Yemen, Tunis, al-Andalus, Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt.

Second: The Standing of Khaldunian Thought in the World

At the end of his book *The Works of Ibn Khaldun*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawi counted 61 studies published in Arabic on Khaldunian thought, compared with 215 studies in various foreign languages. The substantial Western scholarship on the *Muqaddima*, including studies of the rise and fall of states, has led some scholars to regard Ibn Khaldun's thought as an important contribution to the development of European social theory.³

Khaldunian thought gained international recognition through the *Muqaddima* and its innovative political and social theories, making Ibn Khaldun a pioneer of political thought. Scholars have identified similarities between his ideas and those of European thinkers, especially Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Vico, and Marx, and have argued that Ibn Khaldun anticipated certain realist ideas, particularly through the theory of 'aṣabiyya.⁴

Ibn Khaldun occupies a distinctive place in intellectual history. His influence extends across sociology, philosophy, political science, and related disciplines, and his theories have therefore been studied from multiple specialised perspectives. This study argues that Ibn Khaldun made early contributions to the philosophy of history and political science through ideas that transcended his age. He drew on extensive political experience and historical study, combining practical observation with historical evidence to construct a comprehensive theory of human civilisation.

Third: The Theory of 'Aṣabiyya in Khaldunian Thought

A. Linguistic Definition of 'Aṣabiyya

A linguistic definition of 'aṣabiyya requires recourse to Arabic dictionaries, including *Lisān al-ʿArab* and *Kitāb al-Ayn*, to clarify the concept. *Lisān al-ʿArab* states that the 'aṣaba are a man's sons and paternal relatives, including his male guardians and heirs. They were called 'aṣaba because they gather around a man and derive strength from their affiliation with him. The Arabs therefore called his relatives "the extremities," since they surround him and are connected to him by lineage.⁵

Linguistically, 'aṣabiyya derives from the verb 'aṣaba and primarily denotes association, unity, mutual support, and solidarity. It is connected to kinship, lineage, tribe, homeland, religion, common destiny, and everything that reinforces the group's unity and cohesion.

B. Terminological Definition

As a technical term, 'aṣabiyya has generated substantial disagreement because scholars have interpreted Ibn Khaldun's thought in different ways, and the concept has become closely associated with him. Although 'aṣabiyya was known in early Islamic historical sources, particularly in discussions of tribes and clans, Ibn Khaldun accorded it considerable intellectual and theoretical importance, prompting Arab scholars and Orientalists to offer numerous interpretations and definitions.

Al-Jābirī regards 'aṣabiyya as a social and psychological bond grounded in kinship. It intensifies when a group confronts danger, giving the group the capacity for cohesion and resistance. He also connects Ibn Khaldun's concept of the state with the nature of the ruling 'aṣabiyya, the relations among its members, and the stages of its development from the acquisition of power to its loss.⁶

Al-Jābirī is among the most prominent thinkers to have examined Ibn Khaldun's thought, particularly the concepts of the state and 'aṣabiyya. He regarded 'aṣabiyya as a psychological, conscious, and unconscious bond and an essential means by which the state arises. Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī maintains that 'aṣabiyya is the central axis of most social discussions in the *Muqaddima* and constitutes an integrated theory in sociology generally and in political sociology in particular. It cannot be understood from a single chapter because Ibn Khaldun developed his theory progressively across the chapters of the *Muqaddima*.⁷

¹ Ibn Khaldun, *Autobiography of Ibn Khaldun and His Journey West and East* (Lebanese Book House for Printing and Publishing, 1979), 3.

² Ibn Khaldun, *Autobiography*, 4.

³ 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi, *The Genius of Ibn Khaldun*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Okaz Library Company), 239.

⁴ Muḥammad al-Jawharī and Muḥsin Yūsuf, *Ibn Khaldun: A Renewed Intellectual Achievement* (Alexandria Library, 2008), 162.

⁵ Ibn Manẓūr al-Ifriqī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 1, s.v. "'aṣaba" (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir), 605.

⁶ Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Ibn Khaldun's Thought: 'Aṣabiyya and the State*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1992), 167, 200.

⁷ Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī, *Studies on Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddima* (Cairo: Al-Khānjī Library, 1967), 333.

Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī's proposition differs from that of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, who maintains that most of Ibn Khaldun's research concerns the state. 'Alī al-Wardī, in turn, disagrees with both Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī, holding that Ibn Khaldun's theory revolves around a subject broader than either 'aṣabiyya or the state alone: the Bedouin way of life, civilisation, and the conflict between them.⁸

Critical Discussion

Scholars differ in their interpretations of 'aṣabiyya and Ibn Khaldun's thought. Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī regarded 'aṣabiyya as the central axis of Ibn Khaldun's thought on human civilisation and viewed it as a comprehensive theory that could be understood only by reading across the books of the *Muqaddima*. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, by contrast, addressed Ibn Khaldun's thought in *The Social Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun* and levelled several criticisms at the *Muqaddima*, maintaining that it contained repetition and lacked clarity and methodological organisation, an assessment shaped by his engagement with Western thought.⁹ This interpretation arguably conflates 'aṣabiyya with fanaticism, thereby risking an overlooking of Ibn Khaldun's distinction between group solidarity and the blameworthy zealotry condemned by Islamic law.

'Abd al-Ghanī Maghribī maintains that most interpretations of 'aṣabiyya have focused on meanings such as social solidarity, tribal cohesion, kinship, and group spirit, but have not fully captured its meaning in Ibn Khaldun's thought. 'Aṣabiyya is a concept situated between the Bedouin way of life and civilisation and constitutes a central axis of the *Muqaddima*. Ibn Khaldun made it the key to understanding social dynamics and used the term more than 500 times.¹⁰

Further Discussion

'Abd al-Ghanī Maghribī is an Algerian scholar of Ibn Khaldun's thought. He regards 'aṣabiyya as a social phenomenon that arises from society and requires a human group. He also rejects interpretations that he regards as imposed on the Khaldunian concept and affirms that 'aṣabiyya is a central axis and a key to social dynamics and the rise of states. Nūr al-Dīn Ḥārūsh agrees that 'aṣabiyya is a fundamental principle in the formation and dissolution of states, since a tribe cannot assume rule and make the transition to civilisation without possessing 'aṣabiyya.¹¹

Al-Anṣārī examines 'aṣabiyya in greater depth by considering its types and origins. He explains that it is an Arabic word denoting connectedness, unity, and association, and that it is principally linked to Bedouin society, where it serves as a fundamental basis. He further explains that the concept evolved as society developed and came to express the interconnection of interests, the exchange of benefits, protection, and alliances between tribes. The bond of lineage thus gradually became a means of justifying alliances and tribal cohesion.¹²

Al-Nabhān depicts 'aṣabiyya as the concept closest to that of the nation, although national bonds are not bonds of lineage or kinship but linguistic and historical ties. 'Aṣabiyya is a bond of kinship that expands until it forms an administrative unit among a large group of people who share a sense of belonging to a single lineage or ancestor.¹³

'Abd al-'Azīz Qabbānī defines it as a bond that brings together a group of people and impels them toward unity, solidarity, a sense of shared danger, and action in confronting others.¹⁴

'Abd Allāh 'Inān describes it as the power and prestige enjoyed by a tribe or family, grounded, in his view, in ties of lineage, kinship, and similar bonds. This 'aṣabiyya is the source of leadership, authority, or the state in Bedouin society.¹⁵ Al-Ḥabābī maintains that Ibn Khaldun's concept of 'aṣabiyya rests on blood ties and tribal spirit, forming the basis of social and political relations within the tribe. It also unites tribes, grants them strength and protection, and moves their members to rally around a leader or military authority.¹⁶

Another definition is offered by the scholar Ma'n Khalīl, who describes 'aṣabiyya as "blood relations and ties of lineage that connect individuals through cohesive organic and social bonds within a single kin group."¹⁷ The scholar appears to connect it directly with lineage. Although Ibn Khaldun does indeed refer to lineage, he also adds the 'aṣabiyya of alliance, clientage, and other forms, which are discussed below as types of 'aṣabiyya.

⁸ 'Alī al-Wardī, *Ibn Khaldun's Logic in the Light of His Civilisation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār Kūfān, 1994), 76.

⁹ Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *The Social Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun*, trans. 'Abd Allāh 'Inān (Beirut: Lebanese Book House, 1975), 98.

¹⁰ 'Abd al-Ghanī Maghribī, *Social Thought in Ibn Khaldun*, trans. Muḥammad bin Dālī (Algeria: National Book Encyclopaedia, Office of University Publications, 1988), 144.

¹¹ Nūr al-Dīn Ḥārūsh, *History of Political Thought* (Bordj El Kiffan: Dār al-Umma, 2012), 230.

¹² Muḥammad Jābir al-Anṣārī, *The Arab Political Crisis and Islam's Position* (Lebanon: Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, 1995), 80.

¹³ Fārūq al-Nabhān, *Khaldunian Thought through the Muqaddima* (Beirut: Al-Risāla Foundation, 1988), 156.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-'Azīz Qabbānī, *Aṣabiyya: The Structure of Arab Society* (Beirut: Dār Āfāq, 1997), 50.

¹⁵ Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh 'Inān, *Ibn Khaldun: His Life and Intellectual Legacy*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 2006), 127.

¹⁶ Muḥammad al-Ḥabābī, *The Dynamic Driving Force of History in Ibn Khaldun*, trans. Fāṭima al-Ḥabābī (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2004), 86.

¹⁷ Ma'n Khalīl 'Umar, *Sociology of the Family* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 2000), 148.

Muṣṭafā al-Fawwāl defines it as a set of complex social relations based on the biological fact of birth and the social phenomenon of marriage.¹⁸

The concept of 'aṣabiyya has also received extensive attention from Western scholars. Arnold Toynbee regards it as the psychological foundation of political and social systems, while Hellmut Ritter compares it with Machiavelli's concept of virtù. Yves Lacoste considers 'aṣabiyya a complex concept that represents a social and political reality, rather than merely an emotion or psychological behaviour, despite its psychological effects.¹⁹

Among modern interpretations is Gaston Bouthoul's proposition that a modern rendering of 'aṣabiyya may be embodied in the solidarity of a powerful social group united by a common motive and objective. He argues that the philosophy of 'aṣabiyya is a philosophy of solidarity, since this characteristic expresses the power of a particular human group through the force of a social body.²⁰

Based on these definitions, this study proposes the following formulation:

'Aṣabiyya is the opposite of pre-Islamic zealotry. It is a human bond that seeks to establish a collective entity under a common name and leader; religious restraint is essential to prevent this solidarity from departing from its legitimate framework.

Fourth: Occurrences of 'Aṣabiyya in the Muqaddima

Ibn Khaldun developed 'aṣabiyya into a comprehensive theory that remains the subject of scholarly study, distinguishing it from earlier meanings associated primarily with conflict and zealotry.

A. Occurrences of 'Aṣabiyya in Book Two

A survey of the *Muqaddima* shows that Ibn Khaldun discusses 'aṣabiyya in detail in Book Two, entitled "On Bedouin Civilization, Savage Nations and Tribes, and the Conditions That Arise Therein."²¹

Ibn Khaldun begins his detailed account of 'aṣabiyya by explaining its connection with tribes and groups bound by 'aṣabiyya. He affirms that it is fundamentally grounded in cohesion through lineage and kinship and grows stronger when lineage is closely connected; it may also be reinforced through clientage and alliance.²²

Ibn Khaldun affirms that power and predominance form the basis of leadership and the continuation of 'aṣabiyya, and that authority passes to the strongest 'aṣabiyya, while honour, prestige, and clientage strengthen its cohesion. He also explains that 'aṣabiyya is necessary for the establishment of royal authority, whereas luxury, humiliation, and submission cause it to weaken and collapse. When the 'aṣabiyya of a state collapses, authority passes to another, stronger 'aṣabiyya, and power shifts from one group to another.²³

B. Occurrences of 'Aṣabiyya in Book Three

Ibn Khaldun affirms that 'aṣabiyya is the basis of the state and royal authority and that, at its inception, a state requires power to consolidate its authority. Religious preaching also helps strengthen 'aṣabiyya, whereas competing 'aṣabiyyas, luxury, and dependence on clients and retainers weaken it. 'Aṣabiyya is strongest at the centre of the state and weaker at its periphery, which may lead to secession and the state's collapse.²⁴ The chapters of the *Muqaddima* indicate that Ibn Khaldun regards 'aṣabiyya as a natural phenomenon necessary for the rise and defence of states, while rejecting fanaticism concerning lineage and pride in ancestry as blameworthy pre-Islamic zealotry that Islamic law condemns and that serves no useful purpose.

Fifth: Forms of 'Aṣabiyya and Causes of Decline

A. 'Aṣabiyya and the State

Ibn Khaldun affirms that 'aṣabiyya is necessary for the establishment of society and the state, although its manifestations differ between Bedouin and urban populations. It is the basis of social cohesion and the establishment of royal authority, because predominance and accession to power cannot be achieved without a strong 'aṣabiyya that enables its members to claim and maintain royal authority.²⁵

Ibn Khaldun argues that strong 'aṣabiyya is necessary to prevail over other 'aṣabiyyas and establish royal authority. Once an 'aṣabiyya has achieved predominance over its own people, it seeks to expand and subjugate other groups, thereby increasing its strength, extending its influence, and attaining greater control.²⁶

Ibn Khaldun connects the strength of 'aṣabiyya to the state's duration and territorial reach: a strong 'aṣabiyya facilitates expansion, whereas competing 'aṣabiyyas limit the state's influence. The state passes through three stages:

¹⁸ Muṣṭafā al-Fawwāl, *Bedouin Sociology*, foreword by Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalīfā (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa, 1979), 217.

¹⁹ Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun: The Eminent Scholar*, trans. Michel Suleiman, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Al-Farabi Library, 2017), 206.

²⁰ Gaston Bouthoul, *Ibn Khaldun: His Social Philosophy*, trans. 'Ādil Zu'aytir (Cairo: Arab Books Revival House), 87.

²¹ 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Darwīsh, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār Ya'rub, 2004), 243.

²² Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, 256, 260.

²³ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, 278.

²⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, 308, 324; al-Nabhān, *Khaldunian Thought*, 170.

²⁵ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, 272.

²⁶ 'Umar Farrūkh, *History of Arab Thought up to the Time of Ibn Khaldun*, 4th ed. (Lebanon, 1983), 207.

foundation and strength; stability and luxury; and weakness and collapse. Authority then passes to a new 'aṣabiyya, and another cycle begins.²⁷

The foregoing demonstrates that 'aṣabiyya plays a major role in the state's strength and weakness. For Ibn Khaldun, the state has a lifespan comparable to that of an individual: birth, youth and strength, maturity and expansion, old age and decrepitude, and finally dissolution and extinction. He regards these as the stages of the state and presents this sequence as a regular historical pattern analogous to a law of nature.²⁸

Ibn Khaldun maintains that a state founded on 'aṣabiyya begins to weaken when its ruler monopolises glory, luxury, and prestige, causing the groups that supported him to turn against him and his power to decline. He nevertheless holds that once firmly established, a state may temporarily function without active 'aṣabiyya if the authority of the ruling family has become entrenched and its members have inherited rule across generations, so that leadership becomes accepted among the people.

B. Types of 'Aṣabiyya in Khaldunian Thought

The *Muqaddima* shows that Ibn Khaldun addressed multiple types of 'aṣabiyya, a subject that has attracted scholarly attention. The concept expanded to encompass different forms of solidarity according to their bases and purposes, making it difficult to enumerate all types.²⁹ These include the following:

1. Religious 'Aṣabiyya

Ibn Khaldun maintains that religious preaching strengthens 'aṣabiyya and supports the establishment of the state, since predominance requires a cohesive 'aṣabiyya, and religion unites its members and removes rivalry and envy among them. When a group unites around a common religious objective, its efforts are directed toward a single end, increasing its strength and its capacity to establish the state and extend its influence.³⁰

Religious 'aṣabiyya is a bond that unites members of a group based on religion and the principles of Islamic law. In this account, it is stronger than the bond of blood and lineage because it is a shared spiritual bond. Ibn Khaldun maintains that religious 'aṣabiyya requires a collective 'aṣabiyya to bear and defend it: 'aṣabiyya provides strength and cohesion, while religion refines it, purges it of fanaticism, and harnesses its positive aspects.³¹

In Chapter Five, Ibn Khaldun invokes historical examples confirming the role of religious 'aṣabiyya in strengthening the group. These include the tribes' rallying around Ibn Tūmart's preaching and the establishment of the Almohad state; the Maṣmūda's rallying around the Maḥdī and their defeat of the Zanāta despite the latter's numerical superiority; and the Kutāma's rallying around Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī'ī. For Ibn Khaldun, these examples demonstrate religion's capacity to unify 'aṣabiyyas and strengthen them.

2. Tribal 'Aṣabiyya

Ibn Khaldun treats attachment to lineage and the kin group as a human instinct that impels individuals to support and assist one another and to protect their relatives, thereby increasing their strength and deterring their enemies. In Arab society before Islam, the tribe formed the basis of the social and political order and sustained manifestations of solidarity and strength.³²

'Aṣabiyya was the source of the Arab tribe's strength, enabling it to remain cohesive and defend itself in an environment governed by predominance and force. The stronger its 'aṣabiyya, the greater its power and prestige.³³

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ belonged to Banū Hāshim, one of the powerful clans of Quraysh, which provided him with strong tribal support. This tribal 'aṣabiyya meant that an attack on him would entail confronting Banū Hāshim and Quraysh, underscoring the importance of 'aṣabiyya in protecting and supporting the individual.³⁴

The discussion indicates that Abū Ṭālib defended the Prophet ﷺ due to the tribal 'aṣabiyya prevalent in Arab society at the time. Ibn Khaldun maintains that the strength of 'aṣabiyya is connected with proximity of lineage: the closer and more continuous the lineage, the greater the cohesion and mutual support, whereas 'aṣabiyya weakens as lineage becomes more distant. Al-Jābirī broadens the concept by affirming that the tribe rests not only on blood ties but also on psychological bonds and collective allegiance.

²⁷ [Citation details to be supplied by the author.]

²⁸ 'Abd Allāh Sharīf, *Selected Texts from the Philosophy of Ibn Khaldun* (Algeria: National Book Foundation, 1984), 49.

²⁹ Khālīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Juraysī, *Tribal 'Aṣabiyya from an Islamic Perspective*, supplement of the fatwas of senior scholars (Saudi Arabia), 33.

³⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, 313, 315.

³¹ Jāsim Sulṭān, *Philosophy of History: Strategic Thought in Understanding History*, 4th ed. (Umm al-Qurā Foundation, 2005), 36.

³² Aḥmad Amīn, *The Dawn of Islam* (Beirut: Arab Book House, 1969), 4.

³³ 'Alī Jawād, *History of the Arabs before Islam*, vol. 1 (Baghdad: Tafīd Press), 365.

³⁴ Ibn Hishām, *The Prophetic Biography*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, vol. 1 (Beirut: Arab Heritage Research Library, 1994), 169.

3. The 'Aṣabiyya of Alliance, Clientage, and Retainership

Ibn Khaldun discusses the 'aṣabiyya of clients and retainers here, which arises from alliance and allegiance rather than lineage. Clients become integrated into the group's 'aṣabiyya and form part of it, in accordance with the Prophet's statement: "The client of a people is one of them."³⁵

The 'aṣabiyya of clients is based on alliance, allegiance, and common interests. A ruling 'aṣabiyya may ally itself with groups to which it has no ties of lineage, language, or religion. Būṭālīb affirms that such incorporation grants individuals rights to security, economic and political rights, and tribal protection, without necessarily achieving complete kinship or social unity.³⁶

Ibn Khaldun maintains that 'aṣabiyya begins primarily with lineage. As the state expands and its enemies multiply, however, it must form alliances with other 'aṣabiyyas grounded in allegiance and common interests. The stronger these ties, the greater the state's strength and stability, making external alliances a means of protecting the original 'aṣabiyya from weakness and extinction.

4. Aberrant Forms of 'Aṣabiyya

Ibn Khaldun maintains that actors outside the established elite may seize power if they possess a strong 'aṣabiyya when that of the elders or the state is weak. Such an 'aṣabiyya is generally temporary; established authority may recover its strength and mobilise a broader 'aṣabiyya against the rebels.

5. 'Aṣabiyya of Incorporation

A type of 'aṣabiyya called the 'aṣabiyya of incorporation may be inferred from the *Muqaddima*. It arises when an outsider joins a group, becomes integrated into it, and submits to its laws and rules until that person is counted among its members, thereby acquiring their rights and duties. Levels of 'aṣabiyya thus vary according to the nature of the bonds among group members, ranging from kinship and blood ties to the family, clan, subtribe, and tribe.³⁷

Scholars classify the types of 'aṣabiyya differently, depending on their perspectives and specialisations. Al-Jābirī, for example, divides them into particular and general 'aṣabiyyas. This study adopts this classification because of its simplicity, clarity, and ease of application in research, while affirming that Ibn Khaldun's conceptions of 'aṣabiyya were carefully considered and grounded in his experience and the reality of the society in which he lived.

C. Corruption and Decline of 'Aṣabiyyas

Ibn Khaldun's theory of 'aṣabiyya is comprehensive: he did not confine himself to explaining its role in the rise and stability of states but also addressed the causes of its weakening and collapse. These causes include the centralisation of royal authority, luxury, and the excesses of urban civilisation, as well as religious and doctrinal factors that weaken and fragment tribal 'aṣabiyya, ultimately bringing about its disappearance.³⁸

The principal factors in the corruption of 'aṣabiyya may be summarised as follows:

1. Luxury and Ease

Ibn Khaldun maintains that luxury and excessive ease lead to the loss of 'aṣabiyya and the spirit of dignity, protection, and defence. Members of the ruling group become dependent on the state until their 'aṣabiyya weakens and collapses. Ibn Khaldun connects this proposition with the Qur'anic warning against luxury and immorality as causes of the destruction of nations.³⁹ Ibn Khaldun presents luxury dialectically: it is initially a manifestation of civilisation and prosperity and may reinforce the state's strength and standing, but excess transforms it into a cause of corruption, weakness, and decrepitude. Luxury thus reflects the historical cycle of the state, which moves from strength and prosperity to weakness and then decline.⁴⁰

Luxury is among the most important factors in the corruption of 'aṣabiyya because of its economic, social, and moral effects. It leads to indulgence in desires and to weakened morality, courage, and cohesion. Rulers' extravagance and oppression of their subjects, the unlawful imposition of financial levies, and encroachments upon subjects' property and rights also weaken allegiance and spread corruption, ultimately causing the collapse of 'aṣabiyya and the ruin of the state.

Luxury appears when an 'aṣabiyya moves from the Bedouin way of life to civilisation. It may represent progress and prosperity, but once it becomes excessive, it corrupts social morals and spreads extravagance, wastefulness, cowardice, and obscenity. Luxury is connected to rulers' desire for glory and ostentation; Islamic law therefore emphasises regulating it through worship and moderation, thereby balancing religion and worldly life and preserving social morality.⁴¹

³⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥamad, vol. 3, "The Client of a People Is One of Them," no. 6522 (Riyadh, 2008).

³⁶ Najīb Būṭālīb, *Sociology of the Tribe in the Maghreb* (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2002), 88.

³⁷ 'Āmir Miṣbāḥ, *Introduction to Anthropology* (Cairo: Modern Book House, 2010), 203.

³⁸ Būziyānī al-Darrājī, *Tribal 'Aṣabiyya: A Social and Historical Phenomenon in the Light of Khaldunian Thought* (Arab Book House), 190.

³⁹ Qur'an 17:16.

⁴⁰ Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī, *On the Philosophy of History* (Alexandria: University Culture Foundation, 1975), 142.

⁴¹ 'Abd al-Majīd Mizyān, *The Economic Theories of Ibn Khaldun and Their Foundations in Islamic Thought and Social Reality: A Philosophical and Sociological Study*, 2nd ed. (Algeria: Office of University Publications, 1988), 222.

2. Humiliation and Submission

Ibn Khaldun regards humiliation and submission as major causes of the weakening of 'aṣabiyya because they destroy the capacity for defence, assertion, and resistance. He cites the Israelites, whom humiliation and submission to the Egyptians had weakened. He also considers taxes and financial exactions factors that erode 'aṣabiyya, a view disputed by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, who maintained that Ibn Khaldun was influenced more by a Bedouin outlook than by an Islamic one.⁴²

This study argues that Ṭāhā Ḥusayn conflates zakat with tolls and unjust taxes. Ibn Khaldun meant unlawful taxes, which burden subjects and lead to discontent and revolts, rather than zakat, which achieves social solidarity.

D. The Decline of Prestige and Lineage

A reading of the *Muqaddima* shows that Ibn Khaldun attributes the decline of prestige and lineage to two principal causes:

1. Internal Conflict among Members of an 'Aṣabiyya

Such conflict necessarily leads to the disintegration of the dominant or ruling group and may escalate into fighting among members of the same 'aṣabiyya, who are bound by blood ties.⁴³ The ruling family divides against itself because its members compete for power, and this division may cause the state to lose several provinces.⁴⁴

Internal conflict within the ruling 'aṣabiyya produces competing interests and dissolves the blood bond, contributing to the state's ruin and collapse. The danger increases when members of the ruling family compete for power or seek support from external 'aṣabiyyas, which exploit internal divisions to advance their interests, weaken the state, and seize control.

2. Intermixture of Lineages

Ibn Khaldun regards the intermixture of lineages as a cause of the weakening and eventual disappearance of 'aṣabiyya, whose strength rests on the perceived purity of genealogical bonds and a sense of belonging to a common origin. With the transition to urban life and greater openness toward other groups, especially through intermarriage, this bond weakens and the cohesion of 'aṣabiyya declines.⁴⁵

'Abd al-Ghanī Maghribī links the intermixture of lineages to indulgence in luxury and to the resulting danger to 'aṣabiyya: the gratification of bodily appetites and the pursuit of sexual desire through various forms of union, including illicit unions.⁴⁶

Ibn Khaldun regards the intermixture of lineages as a cause of the weakening of 'aṣabiyya. In his account, as society moves from the Bedouin way of life to civilisation and groups intermarry, feelings of belonging and allegiance to the original 'aṣabiyya decline, thereby weakening mutual support and defence. Prestige and honour also diminish gradually over the generations as rulers become immersed in luxury. Ibn Khaldun thus offers a comprehensive theory of the cycle of 'aṣabiyya, beginning in strength and ending in weakness and collapse, which accords with Majdī 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ's interpretation of its stages of development.⁴⁷

Conclusion

This study yields the following conclusions:

- ✓ 'Aṣabiyya is a fundamental pillar in the rise, continuation, and fall of states in Ibn Khaldun's thought.
- ✓ 'Aṣabiyya originates in tribal and genealogical bonds and may be reinforced by religious solidarity in the establishment of certain Islamic states.
- ✓ The theory of 'aṣabiyya has generated extensive scholarship, and interpretations of it have varied according to scholars' intellectual and disciplinary orientations.
- ✓ Ibn Khaldun's political and scholarly experience contributed to the development of a historically grounded account of the role of 'aṣabiyya in power and political cohesion.
- ✓ Ibn Khaldun formulated a cyclical conception of the state, from emergence and strength to prosperity, weakness, and collapse. This framework influenced modern social and political studies.

⁴² Ḥusayn, *Social Philosophy*, 94.

⁴³ 'Abd Allāh al-Kīlānī, "Ibn Khaldun's Method in Engaging with Scriptural Texts on Authority and 'Aṣabiyya: Understanding and Analysis," *Islamic Knowledge Series*, no. 51 (2007): 179.

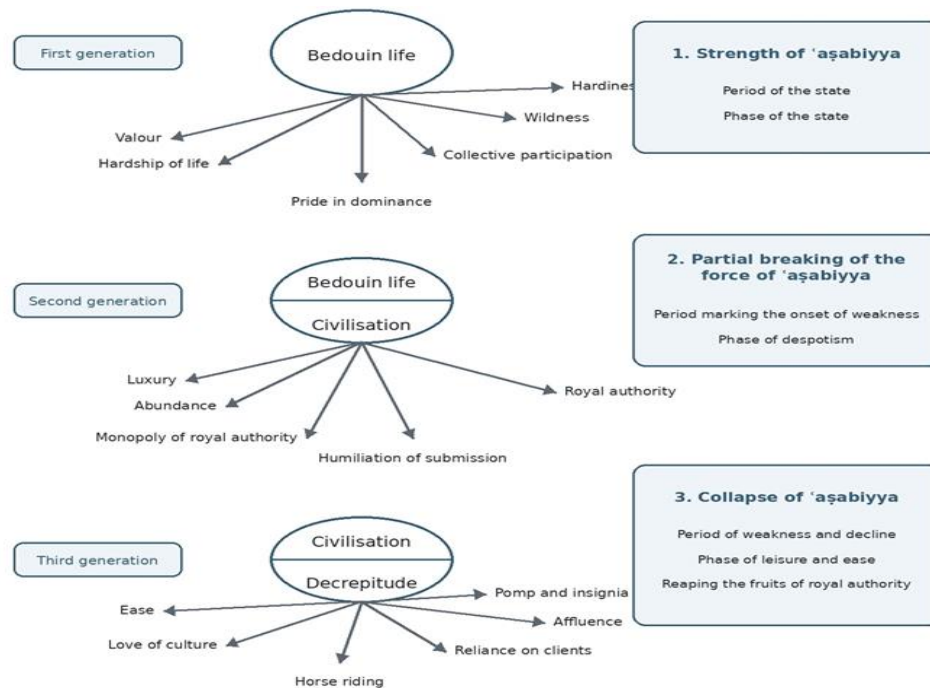
⁴⁴ Riyād 'Azīzī Hādī, "The Concept and Emergence of the State in Ibn Khaldun," *Journal of Political Science*, University of Baghdad, no. 37: 89.

⁴⁵ Samīra Sa'dūn, "Kinship Relations and Their Political Role in Ibn Khaldun" (state doctorate in political sociology, University of Oran 2, 2017–2018), 103.

⁴⁶ Maghribī, *Social Thought*, 95.

⁴⁷ Majdī 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ, *The Idea of Development among Islamic Philosophers*, trans. Hudā Kashrūd (Cairo, 2007), 130; see appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Stages in the Development of 'Aṣabiyya⁴⁸

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⁴⁸ Source: ‘Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ, *Idea of Development*, 130.

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