

IBN KHALDUN AND SOCIOLOGY

SUBMITTED

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INTRODUCTION

Sociology has been defined, simply, as "the science which deals with the organization and functions of groups and institutions." (Chaplin, 1979, 501) This relatively simple definition, however, either encompasses or relates to a multitude of other disciplines or areas of inquiry which impact or influence the organization, functioning, and behavior of groups and institutions. These other disciplines and areas of inquiry include history, ontology, epistemology, geography, economics, education, and political science. When the complexities of the science of sociology are considered, the definitions applied to the science become more specific. The sociology of knowledge has been defined as the determination of the impact on human thought, knowledge, and culture caused by human participation in social life, (Edwards, 1967d, 475) and the sociology of history seeks to identify and to define the relationship between these two disciplines. Thus, while the science of sociology is a broadly based and widely encompassing discipline, the applications of the theories and principles of this science will, most often, occur in a more restricted environment.

The theories and principles on which the science of sociology in western civilization has been based, therefore, have tended to have been drawn from a wide spectrum of human intellectual endeavor. A somewhat surprisingly large proportion of these principles and theories were first formulated in the west during the time period from 1820 through 1920, and some of the more prominent western contributors to the theoretical base for western sociology were:

1. Auguste comte, 1798-1857, French philosopher.
2. Emile Durkheim, 1858-1917, French Philosopher, and later, sociologist.
3. Karl Marx, 1818-1883, German social and economic theorist.
4. Herbert Spencer, 1820 - 1903, English philosopher, and

5. Max Weber, 1864 -1920, German historian and philosopher, and , later sociologist.

While the science of sociology in western civilization in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century is based upon the theoretical foundations provided by these and other contributors during the last three - quarters of the Nineteenth Century and the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, many of the theories and principles formulated by these individuals were predated in eastern civilization by more than 400 years in the works of Abd-ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, more generally known as Ibn Khaldun. (Issawi, 1955, xi)

It was the purpose of this research to examine the contributions of Ibn Khaldun to the science of sociology. In order to place these contributions in perspective, this examination has been presented in the following format:

1. A bibliographical sketch of Ibn Khaldun.
- 2 . An introduction to Ibn Khaldun's major literary work, Universal History, and a review of his introduction to this work, the Prolegomena.
- 3 . An examination of the sociological theories and principles formulated by Ibn Khaldun, and a comparison of these theories and principles with those formulated later by comte, Durkheim, Marx, Spencer, and Weber.

and

- 4 . A summary of the perceptions of Ibn Khaldun by sociologists and historians in western civilization during the last half of the Twentieth Century.

IBN KHALDUN, THE UNIVERSAL HISTORY,

AND THE PROLEGOMENA

Ibn Khaldun lived from 1332-1406, a total of seventy - four years, however, his greatest work, the Prolegomena of his Universal History, was compiled, formulated, and written in a consecutive four-year time period from 1375 through 1378. (Edwards, 1967b, 107-108) In this section of the examination of Ibn Khaldun's contributions to the science of sociology, a brief biographical sketch of Ibn Khaldun has been presented, along with an introduction to the Universal History and a review of the Prolegomena.

The Life of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in North Africa. His family had been well established in both North Africa and in Spain. As a result, Ibn Khaldun received a formal education, which included: (Issawi, 1955, 3)

1. Learning the Qur'an by heart, which also included the memorization of all of the different accepted variations "in the intonation of certain passages." (Issawi, 1955, 3)

2. A study of grammar and poetry.

and

3. A study of jurisprudence.

Upon completion of his education, Ibn Khaldun entered the public service at the age of twenty as Secretary to the Sultan of Fez, Morocco. The

political environment in North Africa was unsettled at that time, the 1350s, and Ibn Khaldun was eventually imprisoned for two years when he fell from the Sultan's favor. In 1362, Ibn Kahldun migrated to Spain, where he became an ambassador for the King of Granada to the king of Castille. Later in the 1360s, Ibn Khaldun returned to North Africa, where he soon became the Prime Minister of Algeria. (Issawi, 1955, 4) It should be noted that all political positions in this area of the world were appointed positions during this era. In 1375, Ibn Khaldun retired, and between 1375 and 1378, he wrote the Prolegomena to his Universal History, which is actually the first seven chapters of the work.

At the end of 1378, Ibn Khaldun returned to Tunis, where he continued to study and lecture; however, jealousy on the part of both scholars and courtiers caused him to decide on a pilgrimage to Mecca. On the journey, he stopped in Cairo, where he accepted a lectureship, and, later, the office of Chief Justice of Egypt. His diligence in the latter position placed him in conflict with many vested interests in Egypt, and he eventually resigned and resumed his pilgrimagy journey in 1387. After completing his pilgrimage, Ibn Khaldun returned to Cairo, "intending to lead a quiet life". (Issawi, 1955, 5) In 1400, however, he was appointed to a commission of judges and jurists who accompanied the Sultan to Damascus, which was then threatened by the Tartars. On his return from this commission, he was once again appointed Chief Justice of Egypt, a post which he held until his death in 1406.

Nationalism was not well established in the Mediterranean area during the Fourteenth Century, and it is not considered unusual for an individual to have served in several political jurisdictions. Ibn Khaldun, as was true of most Muslims at that time, perceived his basic loyalty to be to Islam, rather than to any specific political jurisdiction.

Ibn Khaldun's Universal History is a massive work of supreme intellectual quality which serves as a history of Muslims through the Fourteenth Century. The prolegomena serves as the introduction to the entire work, and comprises the first seven chapters of the work. In the Prolegomena, he develops and employs his method of dealing with history, which is: (Durant, 1957, 691 - 692)

1. To first deal with the philosophy of history.

2. Then to deal with the history of the professions occupations, and crafts.

3. Then to deal with the history of science and art.

and

4. Lastly, to deal with the political history of the various nations. The history of the various nations is not a part of the Prolegomena, but is, rather, the balance of the Universal History of the Arabs.

Charles Issawi, formerly of Oxford University and of the American University in Beirut, has stated that the " ...

Prolegomena represents the most comprehensive synthesis in the Human Sciences ever achieved by the Arabs....." (Issawi, 1955, 1) In the Prolegomena, Ibn Khaldun "... Studies the nature and the development of society ... " (Issawi, 1955, 7) and, in this context, he provides the basis for the science of sociology. Ibn Khaldun stated that "The past resembles the future as water resembles water; therefore, Sociology, the study of the present, casts light on History, the study of the past, just as History provides the materials for Sociology." (Issawi, 1955, 7) .

It has been said of Ibn Khaldun that: " In his chosen field of intellectual activity he appears to have been inspired by no predecessors, and to have found no kindred souls among his contemporaries, and to have kindled no answering spark of inspiration in any successors; and yet, in the Prolegomena... he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever been created by any mind in any time or place." (Toynbee, 1939, 322)

Charles Issawi added that: "Ibn Khaldun was indeed singularly unlucky in his times. Had he been born two or three centuries earlier he might have been translated into Latin, along with so many other Arab philosophers, scientists, and historians, and thus have influenced European thought. Two centuries later he might have profited from the West, where, he reports, 'the philosophical sciences are reviving in numerous centres in Rome and other lands of the Franks..... He was discovered by the West too late to influence its thought; but there, perhaps even more than in the East, his genius has been fully appreciated.', "(Issawi, 1955, 25) Whether Ibn Khaldun was able to influence the development of the science of sociology in the west does not alter the fact that many of the theories and principles of the science of sociology in the western civilization were predated by the theories and principles formulated by Ibn Khaldun, thus providing a basis for the claim that he is the "Father of Sociology."

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND

PRINCIPLES FORMULATED BY

IBN KHALDUN

The sociological theories and principles formulated by Ibn Khaldun have been presented in this section of the examination in separate discussions of his thoughts related to :

In the context of human society, Ibn Khaldun noted that : (Issawi, 1955,

Ibn Khaldun defined sociology as "the study of human society in its different forms, the nature and characteristics of each of these forms, and the laws governing its development." (Issawi, 1955, 7) Far more clearly than many later sociologists in the West, Ibn Khaldun perceived the interrelation of various disciplines and areas of inquiry within the science of sociology.

In each of these discussions, the theories and principles formulated by Ibn Khaldun will be compared with similar theories and principles formulated by the theoreticians of Western civilization at later dates. The Western theoreticians included in these discussions are, principally, Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Spencer, and Weber; however, other theoreticians, as appropriate, have been included in the discussions.

6. Social methods.

and

- ## 5. Economics and sociology.

- #### 4. Political sociology.

- ### 3. Social change.

- ## 2. Geography.

1. Society.

1. Social phenomena appear to obey laws which, while not as absolute as those governing natural phenomena, are sufficiently constant to cause social events to follow regular, well-defined patterns and sequences. Over 400 hundred yeears later, Auguste Comte noted that the only true freedom is the submission by human beings to scientific laws, and that scientific laws are equally as applicable in the social sciences as they are in the physical sciences. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177).

2. Social laws operate on masses, and cannot be significantly influnced by individuals. It was almost 500 years later, when Emile Durkheim hypothesized that human societies were irreducible. (Edwards, 1967a, 438)

3. That social laws can be discovered only by the gathering of a large volume of facts and by "observing concomitances and sequences"; and that these facts can be collected by both reviewing the records of past events and by the observation of present events. (Issawi, 1955, 8) Comte, some 400 years later, (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177) and Max Weber, some 500 years later, (Edwards, 1967e, 282-283) each concluded that social laws could best be formulated through the gathering and analysis of statistics, and that observation of current behaviour was a prime source of such data.

4. That similar social laws operate within those societies with similar structures, regardless of the separation of such societies by either space or time. Karl Marx, approximately 450 years later, also concluded that similar social laws are operational within societies with similar structures, regardless of the time and the place in which such societies exist. (Edwards, 1967b, 171-175)

5. That societies eventually die, and that, although certain actions may be implemented which will delay this result, it is enevitable. (Rosenthal, F., 1973a, 249). It was approximately 450 years later that Herbert Spencer, in England, noted that societies-all societies--eventually die. (Edwards, 1967d, 526)

and

6. That the laws which apply to social behavior of human beings are "sociological and not a mere reflection of biological impulses, or physical factors. (Rosenthal, F., 1973b, 270) It was approximately 450 years later that Comte drew a similar conclusion. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177)

One of the key elements in the theory of sociology formulated by Ibn Khaldun was the concept of 'asabiya, which translates into the social solidarity of a group of people forming a society. (Issawi, 1955, 99-130) Ibn Khaldun considered social solidarity as a principle factor leading to the formation of societies. It was almost 500 years later before Emile Durkheim, in France, reached this same conclusion. (Edwards, 1967a, 438) Ibn Khaldun perceived that solidarity would initially result from tribal dependence, but that, as societies became sedentary, religion would be the most powerful factor leading to social solidarity. (Issawi, 1955, 99-130) In the middle years of the Nineteenth Century, Comte formulated a similar hypothesis. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177)

The theories relating to the formation and the maintenance of societies form one of the foundations of modern sociology, and they were formulated by Ibn Khaldun in the last quarter of the Fourteenth Century. Similar theories were not formulated by scholars of western civilization until the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

Geography

Although Ibn Khaldun perceived that invironmental and geographic factors, i.e., climate and food supply, impact social behavior, he attributed a greater influence on societal behavior to social factors, such as social cohesion, occupations, and societal wealth. (Issawi, 1955, 38-70) He noted that among the nomadic tribes of Arabs that "the poverty of their deserts means that nothing ties them to the land of their birth, so that all countries seem equally good to them. This together with the.... more upright and more self-reliant character of

tribesman, accounts for the numerous conquests of large and apparently powerful empires by smaller but more cohesive tribes." (Issawi, 1955, 38-70) The social cohesiveness in such instances is the result of factors other than geographic. Ibn Khaldun did note, however, that geography does impact climate, food, and occupation, and that each of these factors do impact the character of groups of human beings—societies. (Issawi, 1955, 38-70; Rosenthal, F., 1973a, 104-107; and Rosenthal, F., 1973b, 357-367)

These insights on the part of Ibn Khaldun are in direct contrast to the formulation of the theory by Cevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829) that changes in human beings resulting from their environment would be transmitted to their progeny. (Durant and Durant, 1975, 327-331) Embracing the Lamarck hypothesis, Herbert Spencer concluded that the creation of a better environment would lead to the creation of a better man, hence, a better society. (Durant and Durant, 1975 329) Later the adherents of the philosophies of Karl Marx would adopt this concept in the Twentieth Century sociology of the Soviet Union, where it was not rejected until the middle years of the Twentieth Century

Social Change

Ibn Khaldun perceived that "societies are not static that social forms change and evolve." (Issawi, 1955, 99-130) The one apparent weakness in his perception of social change was that change occurred only as a result of contact between "different peoples and classes, and the consequent imitations and intermixtures." (Issawi, 1955, 8) His theory, however, did recognize the process of historical evolution of societies. It was not until the early years of the Nineteenth Century that Comte recognized the dynamics of sociological change. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177) The evolutionary aspects of sociological development and social change were not recognized by western scholars until the work of Herbert Spencer in the late Nineteenth Century, (Edwards, 1967e, 523-527)

and the weakness in Ibn Khaldun's perception of the causes of social change were not overcome by western scholars prior to the work of Max Weber, in the early Twentieth Century. (Edwards, 1967e, 282-283)

Ibn Khaldun recognized four stages of societal development; each a product of social change. (Rosenthal, F., 1973c, 69), These four stages of societal development were:

1. Creation by tribal solidarity. Society in this stage is characterized by cohesiveness and comradeship.

2. Sovereignty-- a period in which a ruler or a ruling class attempt to consolidate power.

3. Decay. Characterized by pomp and luxury; by a growing estrangement between the ruling class, or ruler, and the ordinary citizens of the society; and a declining economy.

and

4. Societal death due to either internal or external aggression.

In the early Nineteenth Century, Comte recognized three stages of societal development. The theological and metaphysical stages, which encompassed the solidarity stage in Ibn Khaldun's theory, and a part of Khaldun's sovereignty stage, and a positive stage, which encompassed a portion of Khaldun's sovereignty stage, and his decay stage; however, Comte did not recognize this element of societal development as decay. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177) Comte did not hypothesize the eventual inevitability of societal death; however, Herbert Spencer did recognize that societies must die, some 40 years subsequent to the formulation of Comte's theories, and some 450 years subsequent to the formulation of the theories of Ibn Khaldun. (Edwards, 1967e, 523-527)

POLITICAL Sociology

The concept of asabia, or social solidarity, was a key to Ibn Khaldun's theory of society and to his theory of political sociology. (Issawi, 1955, 131-139)
Under the concept of social solidarity, Ibn Khaldun held that: (Issawi, 1955, 10)

Society is natural and necessary, since the isolated individual could neither defend himself against the more powerful beasts nor provide for his economic wants. But individual aggressiveness would make social life impossible unless curbed by some sanction. This sanction may be provided by a powerful individual's imposing his will on the rest, or it may be provided by social solidarity. The need for a common authority creates the state, which is to Society as Form is to Matter, and as inseparable from it.

In some smaller societies, Ibn Khaldun traced social solidarity to blood ties; however, he noted that blood ties were meaningless unless "accompanied by proximity and common life, and that living together may generate as powerful a solidarity as kinship. (Issawi, 1955, 131-139) Ibn Khaldun stated that a sociological law in the political context was that "the extent of an empire will vary directly as the strength of the original solidarity which created it and inversely as the strength of the solidarities it encounters." (Issawi, 1955, 131-139) He further stated that: "A state can arise only on some original solidarity. Once established, however, its need for solidarity decreases, as custom and the spectacle of unquestioned and unbroken authority will secure the necessary acquiescence and obedience on the part of the subjects." (Issawi, 1955, 131-139)

Durkheim, in France some 500 years later, stated that the "prime need of any social collectivity is solidarity among its members..."

(Edwards, 1967a, 439) and Durkheim also hypothesized that the type of solidarity existing within a society and the type of solidarity required within a society would change as that society developed. (Edwards, 1967a, 438)

Ibn Khaldun perceived that the science of economics stood apart from the philosophy of ethics, and that the laws governing economics were separate from any moral value of the laws. (Issawi, 1955, 15) Some of the valid economic precepts, or laws, recognized by Ibn Khaldun included: (Issawi, 1955, 71-98)

1. Production, rather than trade, is the source of wealth. Adam Smith was to point this out to those who still held mercantilism's belief that wealth derived from trade in 1776. (Smith, 1978, 479-520)

2. That gold and silver do not constitute wealth, but merely serve as a store of value, a concept of money which was not formulated in western civilization until the Seventeenth Century. (Issawi, 1955, 16)

3. That gold and other forms of hard currencies are obtained by nations through the process of foreign trade, and that gold producing nations are not, of necessity, the richest nations. This concept was developed in the west by John Locke in the late 1600s, (Edwards, 1967b, 487-503) and by David Hume in the middle 1700s. (Edwards, 1967b 74-90)

4. That the value of a commodity is derived primarily from the labor embodied in it; a theory later formulated in the west by Karl Marx. (Edwards, 1967c, 171-176) Karl Marx, however, expanded this theory to provide for the substitution of capital for labor. (Selsam and Martel, 1973, 129-130)

4. That, as civilization progresses, the relative importance of agriculture declines; a fact not noted by western economists prior to the Seventeenth Century.

6. That societal endeavors are never entirely economic in character, but, rather, an interrelation exists between political, social, economic, and demographic factors, which are combined into the science of social economics. (Issawi, 1955, 71-98) This fact was noted by Marx in the mid Nineteenth Century, (Edwards, 1967c, 171-176) and by Weber in the early Twentieth Century. (Edwards, 1967e, 282-283)

7. That the division of labor reinforces social solidarity. In the west, Adam Smith formulated theories relative to the division of labor in the latter years of the Eighteenth Century, (Smith, 1978, 109-116) and Durkheim, related the division of labor to social solidarity around the end of the Nineteenth Century. (Edwards, 1967a, 437-439)

and

8. "The difference between different people arises out of the differences in their occupations." (Issawi, 1955, 17) The influence of such economic factors on the social life of individuals was not hypothesized in western civilization until the works of Marx appeared in the mid and late Nineteenth Century. (Edwards, 1967c, 171-176)

In addition to the preceding economic precepts, or laws, Ibn Khaldun was also opposed to slavery, and saw it as a type of economic exploitation. Although western scholars opposed slavery on other than economic grounds at approximately the same time as Ibn Khaldun stated his opposition to the practice, Marx developed in the mid Nineteenth Century his theory of the exploitation of humans by humans through the application of economic factors, (Durant and Durant, 1975, 621), and, although Ibn Khaldun was a believer in free enterprise, it is not inappropriate to state that his views on the economic

aspects of slavery were similar to the later Marxist philosophy in relation to exploitation.

Social Methods

Ibn Khaldun stated that social laws could be discovered "only by gathering a large number of facts and observing concomitances and sequences... from records of past events or observations of present events. Explanation then consists in relating the correlations thus observed to accepted principles of psychology (individual and group), biology, etc." (Issawi, 1955, 26-37) Ibn Khaldun also pointed out subjugated peoples tend to imitate the "customs and institutions of (the) victors..." (Issawi, 1955, 9) Together, these two laws of scientific method for the study of sociology provide the basis for much modern sociological investigation. Ibn Khaldun also used "mechanistic concepts (such as the balance of forces... (and) the radiation of energy, or... biological concepts (such) as decay and growth, to explain social phenomena..." (Issawi, 1955, 10) It was not until the mid and later Nineteenth Century that such concepts were formulated by western philosophers and sociologists.

Ibn Khaldun also stated that knowledge was impacted by social factors, (Issawi, 1955, 140-163) and that such subject as grammar, logic, and arithmetic should not be "studied for their own sakes but as a means of understanding the law, theology and physics." (Issawi, 1955, 18) Herbert Spencer, in the late Nineteenth Century, formulated the hypothesis that all education should prepare man to understand the sciences; a similar conclusion to that reached by Ibn Khaldun some 450 years earlier. (Edwards, 1967d, 523-527) Ibn Khaldun also believed that all knowledge was based upon the knowledge of a prior science, i.e., one could not learn astronomy without first learning physics, (Issawi, 1955, 164-180) and a similar theory was put forward by Comte some 450 years later. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177) Comte also formulated a sociological scientific method based upon observation, experimentation, and comparison, which was similar to that formulated by Ibn Khaldun. (Edwards, 1967a, 173-177)

Summary of Formulation of Sociological Theories

The bulk of the theoretical foundation of modern sociology was formulated in the last three-quarters of the Nineteenth Century and the first quarter of the Twentieth Century in western civilization. Although this theoretical base is not indebted to Ibn Khaldun for its existence, due to the fact that the work of Ibn Khaldun was unknown to most of western civilization during the Nineteenth Century and a good part of the Twentieth Century, there is no doubt that the theories and principles of sociology formulated by Ibn Khaldun between 400 and 500 years prior to the development of the theoretical foundation of western sociology are quite similar to this theoretical foundation, and could have provided a basis for a science of sociology in western civilization long before it was developed, had only these theories and principles of Ibn Khaldun been known in the west .

PERCEPTIONS OF IBN KHALDUN

BY WESTERN SOCIOLOGISTS AND

HISTORIANS IN THE LAST HALF

OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

although it is recognized that Ibn Khaldun did not influence the western philosophers, historians, economists, and sociologists who formulated the theoretical basis for modern sociology in western civilization, most western scholars do, in the last half of the Twentieth Century, recognize that:

1. Ibn Khaldun was the first to formulate many of the theories and principles upon which modern sociology is based.
2. Formulated a philosophy of history which remains unsurpassed, and

which was not equalled in the west for some 300 years subsequent to its formulation by Ibn Khaldun. (Flint, 1944, 86)

and

3. Formulated a scientific method for the study of history and sociology, which preceded such formulation in western civilization by more than 400 years, and which remains valid in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century.

The perceptions of Ibn Khaldun by western historians and sociologists in the Twentieth Century can best be appreciated by savoring one of their reflections, this is of:

Arnold Toynbee, who said:

.....Ibn Khaldun.... an Arabic genius who achieved in less than four years 'length, out of a fifty -four years' span of adult working life, a life-work in the shape of a piece of literature which can bear comparison with the work of Thucydides or the work of a Machiavelli for both breadth and profundity of vision as well as for sheer intellectual power. Ibn Khaldun's star shines the more brightly by contrast with the foil of darkness against which it flashes out; for while Thucydides and Machiavelli and Clarendon are all brilliant representatives of brilliant times and places, Ibn Khaldun is the sole point of light in his quarter of the firmament. He is indeed the one outstanding personality in the history of a civilization whose social life on the whole was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.' In his chosen field of intellectual activity he appears to have been inspired by no predecessors, and to have found no kindred souls among his contemporaries, and to have kindled no answering spark of inspiration in any successors; and yet, in the *Prolegomena*.... he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind in any time or place. (Toynbee, 1939. 322)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The science of sociology in western civilization was developed and based upon theoretical foundations formulated in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, although some of the theories and principles incorporated in the science were stated as early as the Eighteenth Century in western thought. The "wall" which existed between the Christian and the Muslim world in the Middle Ages effectively precluded any significant interchange of thought between the two worlds. Had this "wall" not existed, it is probable that the science of sociology would have been developed in western civilization several hundred years prior to the Nineteenth Century, as the same or similar theories and principles upon which western sociology was based were formulated by Ibn Khaldun in the last quarter of the Fourteenth Century.

As valid and as revolutionary as were the theories and principles stated by Ibn Khaldun in the Fourteenth Century, and as valid as these principles and theories remain in the Twentieth Century, they were neither widely known nor widely applied in either the western or the eastern worlds prior to the Nineteenth Century. This obscurity, however, does not detract from the validity of the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, nor does it detract from his claim to be the "father of sociology."

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