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IDENTITY FROM AN IBN KHALDUNIAN PERSPECTIVE. THE SEARCH FOR THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY WITHIN IBN KHALDUN'S MUQADDIMAH

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ABSTRACT

The attempt to understand certain social concepts requires tracing them back to early stages of human thought. Returning to the fundamentals always clarifies the path these concepts have taken through their interaction with spatial, temporal, and epistemological contexts until reaching their contemporary form—such as the concept of identity.

When speaking of sociology, Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah stands as the foundational pillar of this science and the earliest systematic reflection on it. In it, he included his ideas about the phenomena and systems related to human society and civilization, and the resulting social, political, cultural, historical, and geographical issues—the core subjects of the science he founded.

This research paper thus seeks to explore the concept of identity within Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah, while also attempting to interpret it through sociological and even anthropological perspectives on identity. The study's main findings indicate that the notion of identity appears in the Muqaddimah both as a term and as a social meaning expressing various forms of belonging and affiliation.

KEYWORDS

Identity, Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun, Human Civilization, Sociology

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1. Introduction:

The topic of identity is addressed across various academic fields, beginning with philosophy, and has become an essential part of the intellectual heritage of sociology and other human and social sciences. From philosophical thought—particularly logical thought—the concept of identity can be found as both a term and a meaning within numerous theories, approaches, and disciplines, each interpreting identity according to its own conceptual and terminological framework.

Within the psychological approach, identity is understood as “the awareness that something is itself despite being subject to change” (R. VandenBos, 2015, p. 519). It may refer to a set of physical, psychological, and personal characteristics that are not entirely shared with any other person—such as gender, body shape, mental states, and personality traits—whose interaction produces one’s self-identity and sense of self. It may also refer to a set of ascribed affiliations (such as race) and social roles, or from a behavioral perspective, to actions that determine whether an individual can activate or inhibit certain behaviors. Behavioral theorists define it as “the enduring and prominent part of one’s inner self-perception, representing the mental schemas and social categories that convey specific meanings to behavior” (D. Simons, 2021, p. 4).

From the anthropological perspective, identity refers to “the shared characteristics associated with groups or categories.” It encompasses both individuality—the fundamental differences that make a person distinct from others, as in “self-identity”—and similarity, where individuals associate or identify themselves with others based on shared and significant traits, as in “ethnic identity” (Alan Barnard & Spencer, 2002, p. 441). Identity is also understood through the anthropological study of the body, as developed by David Le Breton in his work on the “signs of identity,” where the body becomes a “workshop” and a site for the display of the self, centering his research on the body and its identity.

From the sociological approach, identity is defined as “that which makes a person what they are, and thus synonymous with sameness.” In this sense, it represents “the unity of the person (or group), what makes them themselves—that is, what renders them identical to themselves and grants them continuity through time. It denotes what belongs to the person or group and what distinguishes them as well” (Sabila & Al-Harmouzi, 2017, p. 528). The sociological treatment of identity raises issues related to the criteria by which it is determined, the reference levels used to distinguish it from other identities, and its position between unity and stability on one side, and multiplicity and transformation on the other. It also involves three dimensions: the physical (body), the intellectual (cogito), and the social (status) (Sabila & Al-Harmouzi, 2017, p. 528).

Identity has been the subject—directly or indirectly—of several sociological theories. We find it in Émile Durkheim’s notion of the “spirit of adherence to order” and the “collective conscience,” in Norbert Elias’s idea of the “balance between the I and the We,” and in Max Weber’s discussion of “the process of rationalization” and the different forms of social relations and actions.

Looking further back in sociological thought, Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah embodies traces of all these approaches, in addition to others such as historiography and political science. In it, Ibn Khaldun integrated all the issues arising from human association—social, political, cultural, historical, and geographical. Hence, this paper seeks to explore the notion of identity within Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah, raising the central question:

What is the place of identity in Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah, and how can it be understood by comparing the Khaldunian perspective with modern and contemporary approaches?

Research Objectives:

1. To trace the concept of identity in Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah as a foundational text in social thought.
2. To analyze Ibn Khaldun’s conception of identity through his ideas on human civilization (‘umrān basharī) and social phenomena.
3. To interpret the notion of identity in Ibn Khaldun’s work through modern sociological and anthropological frameworks.
4. To identify the manifestations of identity in the Muqaddimah, both as an explicit term and as an implicit social meaning related to forms of belonging and affiliation.
5. To demonstrate the precedence of the Muqaddimah over many Western sociologists and thinkers in laying the foundations for key social issues such as identity, belonging, homeland, and cultural geography.
6. To clarify the capacity of Ibn Khaldun’s text to accommodate modern sociological readings

Significance of the Study:

1. Bridging heritage and modernity, as this study seeks to fill a knowledge gap by linking a contemporary concept (identity) to one of the earliest foundational texts in sociology.
2. Enriching Khaldunian studies by offering a new and distinctive reading of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* focused on the concept of identity, thereby expanding the scope of research on his intellectual legacy.
3. Demonstrating that modern social concepts have deep historical roots in human thought, which enhances our understanding of them—a process that may be described as the socio-historical foundation of the concept of identity.
4. Providing a deeper understanding of Ibn Khaldun's notions of belonging and contributing to a richer comprehension of forms of affiliation and social ties (such as 'asabiyyah and civilizational belonging) that shape both individual and collective identity, based on an analysis grounded in social, political, cultural, and even physical dimensions.

Related Studies

1. First Study: This study was conducted by Rabi' Zeman and Mohamed Hamdaoui, entitled "Lineage in Ibn Khaldun: Its Role and Importance in Organizing Tribal Society." It was published in Issue 01, Volume 14, 2019, in *Al-Mawaqif Journal for Studies and Research in Society and History* (Mustapha Stambouli University, Mascara, Algeria).

The study focuses on the concept of lineage (*nasab*) as a foundation for the formation of social identity in traditional societies, according to Ibn Khaldun's analysis. Lineage—whether real or imagined—emerges as a fundamental factor in determining both individual and collective belonging, structuring the social hierarchy, and ensuring group cohesion and solidarity. This mechanism differs from that of modern societies, which are based on citizenship and legal frameworks.

The relevance of this study to our research lies in its reinforcement of the role of lineage in shaping identity. Our research identifies lineage (*nasab*) as one of Ibn Khaldun's four key dimensions of identity, and this study confirms that lineage was not merely a contributing factor but rather "the foundation of social and political structure." It also directly links lineage to 'asabiyyah (group solidarity), stating that lineage creates the cohesive bond and solidarity of the group. This provides a strong theoretical foundation for connecting two dimensions in our analysis: the ethnic dimension (lineage) and the social dimension ('asabiyyah), thereby illustrating how genealogical belonging naturally generates social power (solidarity), which in turn forms the basis of collective identity.

2. Second Study: This study was conducted by Amani Obaidallah Ali Abu Zahra, entitled "Identity Between Philosophy and Sociology." It was published in Issue 03, 2020, in the *Journal of Educational and Human Sciences* (Emirates College of Educational and Psychological Sciences – European University of Arts and Humanities, Salzburg, Austria).

The study presents a socio-philosophical vision of the concept of identity by combining philosophical and sociological perspectives. From a philosophical standpoint, it examines the existential and logical dimensions of identity through the works of philosophers such as Heidegger, Aristotle, and Paul Ricœur, focusing on the nature of the self and the formation of individual identity. From a sociological perspective, it discusses identity as a phenomenon arising from cultural and social interactions, drawing upon the works of Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Pierre Bourdieu, and analyzing the influence of factors such as race, gender, and social class. The study ultimately seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of identity in the context of contemporary challenges such as globalization and technology.

The relevance of this study to our research lies in its affirmation of the originality of Ibn Khaldun's ideas on identity. It enables us to analyze how the social factors mentioned by Ibn Khaldun—lineage and race, region and geography, customs and culture—parallel those identified by modern sociologists—race, gender, and class. This highlights the sociological depth of Ibn Khaldun's analysis and shows that bridging Khaldunian thought and contemporary theories of identity is both possible and valuable.

For example, the study discusses Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, referring to the set of dispositions and behaviors that individuals acquire from their social environment, shaping their conduct and identity. This concept can be directly connected to Ibn Khaldun's notion of "habit" ('*āda*), as we will examine later, further demonstrating the enduring relevance of Ibn Khaldun's sociological insights.

First: The Linguistic and Lexical Concept of Identity

When we explore the concept of identity (*al-huwiyya*) linguistically across different Arabic dictionaries and encyclopedias, we find that it is derived from the pronoun “*huwa*” (he) combined with the suffix “*-iyya*” that denotes attribution. The term thus refers to the existence of a thing as it is in reality, with its inherent characteristics and distinguishing features. Linguistically, identity takes its meaning from “*huwa*” and signifies “the other self.” It stands in contrast to *aniyya* (“I-ness”), for a thing derives its identity from “the other.” (Arabic Language Academy, 2008, p. 654).

The term also appears in classical and traditional Arabic works on terminology, such as *Al-Taʿrifāt* by Al-Jurjani, who defined identity as “that a thing is what it is, having no opposite,” indicating the stability of identity. It is also found in philosophical dictionaries under the term *aniyya* (from *ana*, “I”), which corresponds to *ipseity* in English. Al-Farabi used it in his book *Al-Huruf*, contrasting it with the term *alterity*, meaning “otherness” (Hanafi, 2012, p. 17). The term *aniyya* is also found in modern Algerian intellectual discussions, such as Mouloud Qassem Nait Belkacem’s *Al-Inniyya wa al-Asala* (I-ness and Authenticity).

From a sociological and encyclopedic perspective, identity has been defined in various ways, depending on theoretical orientations. Focusing on the social dimension, the definitions include the following:

- In *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*, identity is defined as “a sense of self that develops when a child separates from his or her parents and family and gains a place in society” (Bruce & Yearley, 2006, p. 144). This definition provides a sociological view of identity by emphasizing the roles of socialization, interaction, and social relations as key processes shaping the self as a social product within diverse contexts.

The dictionary also presents two contrasting perspectives on identity:

1. The modernist perspective, which sees identity as flexible and revisable—allowing individuals to redefine their identities by changing lifestyles, habits, beliefs, and even physical appearance.

2. The ethnic or genetic perspective, which has grown with advances in genetic knowledge, leading individuals to become increasingly interested in their genetic origins and heritage, and how these influence their sense of identity (Bruce & Yearley, 2006, p. 144).

- In the *Encyclopedia of Key Concepts in the Humanities and Philosophy*, citing Voltaire, identity is viewed as a multifaceted concept that both names and reveals and evaluates or distinguishes (Ferriol, 2011, p. 100). It emphasizes the distinction and manifestation of the self. The encyclopedia references major theorists of identity such as Erik Erikson—who sees it as a subjective sense of personal unity and self-continuity—and Erving Goffman, whose studies on stigma and labeling highlight the social processes influencing identity. It also touches upon Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, where individuals continuously negotiate between internal and external forces in defining who they are (Ferriol, 2011, p. 102).

- The *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* defines identity as “a sense of self, of personality, of what sort of person one is; identities always involve both similarity and difference” (Nicholas et al., 2006, p. 190). For example, an individual who identifies as Algerian shares similarities with other Algerians while differing from non-Algerians. Beyond this duality of similarity and difference, the dictionary notes another duality—between viewing identity as fixed or given and as flexible and subject to change. The latter understanding supports the sociological notion of identity acquisition, emphasizing that individuals can acquire new identities through changing contexts and experiences (Nicholas et al., 2006, p. 190).

Second: Why Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah?

Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun is considered one of the earliest thinkers to develop a scientific study of society, articulating social laws and a comprehensive theory that explains human civilization (*‘umrān basharī*) and its phenomena. The historian Arnold Toynbee described him as having “conceived and formulated a philosophy of history that is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind ever created by any mind in any time or place” (M. Sidani, 2008).

In 1377 CE, Ibn Khaldun wrote *Al-Muqaddimah* (The Introduction) as the first volume preceding his larger historical work, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-‘Arab wa al-‘Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man ‘Āsarahum min Dhawī al-Sultān al-Akbar*. In *Al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun presented his ideas on the phenomena and systems of human society, describing this as a distinct science:

“It is a science independent by itself; it has its own subject matter—human civilization and social organization—and its own problems, which are the various conditions and phenomena that arise from it, one after another. This is the case with every science, whether rational or empirical.” (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p. 69).

Thus, the science he founded studies:

- Human association as a social phenomenon; and
- The resulting political, social, economic, educational, religious, and scientific issues that emerge from this association—forming the six thematic sections of *Al-Muqaddimah*.

In answer to the question, Why Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*?:

- *Al-Muqaddimah* is Ibn Khaldun's most influential work, and the first systematic attempt by any historian to uncover the structures and dynamics that shape human societies, based on the principle that "history is an account of human social organization." This contrasts with traditional historiography, which merely chronicles events.
- It offers multidisciplinary interpretations of historical events—what can be called a philosophy of history—touching on economics, education, and various other fields. Across six books, Ibn Khaldun discusses: human civilization, nomadic life, states and power, urban society, crafts and livelihoods, and the acquisition of knowledge.
- It provides a comprehensive model of human relations, from person-to-person interaction (e.g., Chapter X, "On How Lineages Become Intermixed") to the relationship between humans and their geographical, cultural, and environmental surroundings (e.g., "On the Moderation or Deviation of Climates and the Effect of Air on Human Color and Temperament").
- It offers profound insights into belonging and identity, whether in the form of tribal solidarity ('*asabiyyah*), attachment to homeland or state, racial or genealogical lineage, or spatial belonging. Here lies the sociological root of identity in Ibn Khaldun's thought, often expressed through '*asabiyyah*, which he defines as the bond that unites individuals and groups—whether through blood, alliance, or shared belief—and which manifests as a feeling of belonging that gives rise to social behaviors and collective consciousness.

2. The Search for Identity in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*

In this section of the research paper, we present the main findings regarding the presence of the concept of *identity* in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. Although no Arabic or foreign studies have explicitly examined identity from an Ibn Khaldunian perspective, our exploration of the indicators of identity in his thought—through the *Muqaddimah*—has led us to identify three dimensions of the concept: identity as a term, as a philosophical notion, and as a social meaning.

A. Identity as a Term: The word *identity* (*al-huwiyya*) appears twice in the *Muqaddimah*, both in the eighteenth chapter, which Ibn Khaldun devoted to the science of Sufism and its concepts. In this context, he discussed various schools of thought among Muslim mystics and logicians who used the concept of *huwiyya* to express the divine existence. He distinguished between two groups:

- Those who saw their own beings as distinct and separate from the transcendent divine essence, and
- Those who claimed union with the divine essence.

Ibn Khaldun favored the earlier Sufis—whom he referred to as *Ahl al-Haqq* (the People of Truth)—for describing the Divine Essence as having an *identity*, *existence*, and *attributes* distinct from creation. In contrast, he criticized the later mystics who believed that "the Creator is united with His creatures in His identity, existence, and attributes" (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p. 521).

Thus, *identity* here refers to the Divine Self and Oneness, paralleling the Aristotelian philosophical sense in which *identity* is synonymous with *essence* or *being itself*.

B. Identity in the Philosophical Sense:

It appeared in *Al-Muqaddimah* from the Aristotelian perspective related to logic, where Ibn Khaldun referred to it using another linguistic term, "*al-mutābaqa*" (correspondence), based on the idea that considering a thing as "itself" means its conformity with its own essence. This was mentioned when he discussed Aristotle's book "the text" (*al-nass*).¹ "*Which he devoted to logic. In the fourth book of the eight texts, the Book of Demonstration (Al-Burhān), Aristotle stated that it is 'the study of syllogisms that produce certainty... and in this book, the discussion concerns definitions and descriptions, since what is sought in them is certainty, due to the necessity of correspondence between the definition and the defined, which admits no alternative'*" (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p. 544).

¹ Ibn Khaldun refers by "the text" here to Aristotle's *Organon*, the work in which Aristotle presented his logical theories. The word *Organon* is a Latin term meaning "instrument" or "tool", reflecting the idea that logic is the instrument that refines thought and protects it from error.

This is the book in which Aristotle incorporated the three fundamental principles that we previously referred to as the laws of human thought, wherein he established ‘the definitions through which the *whatness* of things is determined, and the axioms or common principles, which we now call the *Principle of Identity* and the *Law of the Excluded Middle*’ (Ibn Rushd, 1984, pp. 16–17).

The *Principle of Identity* here, according to Ibn Rushd’s interpretation in his commentary on *Al-Burhān*, represents the Law of Identity, which asserts that a thing is identical to itself — the foundational logical basis of the concept of identity.”

C. Identity in the Social Sense: Moving away from the linguistic, philosophical, and logical meanings of the term, identity in Ibn Khaldun’s thought appears through notions of affiliation, belonging, and the relationship between human conditions and their racial, geographical, climatic, and social environments, as well as through his critique of the genealogists’ errors regarding the distinctions among nations, their characteristics, and symbols. In clarifying the correct ways of distinguishing between nations, Ibn Khaldun stated:

“...They believe that the distinction among nations lies only in lineage, but that is not the case. The distinction of a generation or a nation may indeed be by lineage in some cases, as with the Arabs, the Israelites, and the Persians; or by region and complexion, as with the Zanj, the Abyssinians, the Slavs, and the Sudan; or by customs, symbols, and lineage, as among the Arabs; and also by other conditions, properties, and characteristics of nations.” (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p. 115)

If we consider that identity, as mentioned earlier, represents dimensions of physical, intellectual, and social belonging, and that it is measured through reference frameworks of distinction, then we can identify four forms of belonging that define social identity according to Ibn Khaldun.

Identity Derived from Racial Affiliation: By this, Ibn Khaldun refers to belonging to a specific racial origin, which he calls *nasab* (lineage). He gives examples such as the Arabs, the Israelites, and the Persians, emphasizing the importance of genealogy and its influence on human character. Belonging to a particular lineage implies belonging to a ‘*asabiyyah* (group solidarity), which falls within the ethnic definition of nations and peoples. Ibn Khaldun writes:

“Group feeling (‘*asabiyyah*) and social cohesion are like the temperament (*mizaj*) in the constituted being; and the temperament cannot exist unless one of the elements prevails. Thus, domination is a necessary condition for the formation of ‘*asabiyyah*.” (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p. 160)

When we approach this form of identity through modern sociological perspectives, it aligns closely with the “primordial concept” of identity (Concept Primordial). Proponents of this view, such as Clifford Geertz, argue that nations and cultural identities can be understood by tracing them back to their early civilizational roots — as extensions of kinship relations, fulfilling basic human needs. Moreover, these identities may disappear and reemerge throughout history (Hooper, 2011, p. 150).

This directly echoes Ibn Khaldun’s view of nations and ‘*asabiyyāt* (group solidarities) as natural responses to the human need for social cohesion and collective existence.¹ Ethnosymbolism one of the most prominent sociologists advocating this concept is Anthony D. Smith, who in most of his writings refers to nationalism with the term “ethno-nation” (D. Smith, 1991, p. 82), indicating the historical development of nations originating from one or more ethnic groups

3. Identity Derived from the Customs, Characteristics, and Dispositions of Nations

By this, Ibn Khaldun means that human beings are shaped by the conditions surrounding them — the time and place they live in — and by what they become accustomed to through habit, social upbringing, and adaptation to the ways of nations. This process is akin to what modern sociology calls socialization or habitus. Ibn Khaldun later discusses this idea when examining lifestyle habits such as food, air, and environment, introducing the concept of *al-‘āda* (habit), which is one of the most significant anthropological indicators of identity. The concept parallels Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus”, which helps explain how identities are formed and how individuals adapt to complex, changing social contexts (Ferieli, 2011, p. 102).

In this sense, habit defines the temporal and spatial boundaries of identity — “identity can be seen as a form of habit, a way of life, a system of values, or a moral code” (Pont et al., 2011, p. 991). It thus serves as a framework for individual interactions and a marker of belonging to systems of values and ethics.

¹ The Ethnosymbolic Concept of identities, secondly; here, the concept of identity is ethnic, expressed through ethnic symbolism

Ibn Khaldun writes in *Al-Muqaddimah*:

“The reason for this lies in habit; for when the soul becomes accustomed to something, it becomes part of its disposition and nature, since it is prone to transformation.” (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p.120)

Again, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the instability and mutability of identities — they are not fixed or static but constantly changing, as part of the divine laws governing nations and societies. He states:

“One of the subtle errors in history is the neglect of the transformations of nations and their conditions over the passing of ages and days... The states of the world, the nations, their customs, and beliefs do not remain on one constant path; they differ according to times, places, and states.” (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, p.60)

This form of belonging corresponds to two key modern definitions of identity:

- Charles Taylor’s Definition: Taylor views identity as a moral source of the self, particularly in the modern era. He argues that identity provides individuals with a framework for meaning, allowing them to distinguish between what is meaningful and what is not (Taylor, 2014, p.75).

- Claude Lévi-Strauss’s Definition: In his book *Identity*, Lévi-Strauss defines identity as “a kind of virtual space that is indispensable to us, a reference point that allows us to explain things that have no real existence” (Lévi-Strauss, 1987, p.332). He sees identity as a reference framework that societies return to in moments of confusion or loss of orientation. In traditional societies, identities often emphasize the superiority of the group over the individual — what Lévi-Strauss calls ethnic identity, a refuge claimed “when we no longer know how to assert a role, a title, or a hierarchy” (Pierre-Noël, 2009, pp.87–88). He thus distinguishes between ascribed identity (given through ethnicity and social relations within the group) and constructed identity, which reflects individuals’ ongoing attempts to define themselves within broader societies.

4. Modern and Contemporary Identity in Light of Khaldunian Analysis

In this section, we present a reading of modern and contemporary identity through a Khaldunian lens:

1. Identity as a Dynamic Phenomenon in the Khaldunian Perspective

From Ibn Khaldun’s viewpoint, modern identity appears as a flexible, multidimensional entity. His analytical framework allows us to interpret the formation of modern identities without relying on overly abstract philosophical terminology. The essential dimensions of identity, from a Khaldunian perspective, include:

- The Transformation of Lineage into Flexible Forms of Belonging:
- The shift from belonging to “Himyar and Muḍar” to belonging to “Damascus” mirrors today’s transformation from rigid ethnic identities to more fluid affiliations. The modern individual carries multiple identities that vary in intensity depending on the context — just as Ibn Khaldun described the mixing and fading of genealogies over time.

- Territory as a Framework for Cultural Distinction: What Ibn Khaldun called “region and feature” (*al-jihah wa al-simah*) corresponds to today’s cultural and civilizational distinctions among societies. Different geographical environments produce unique ways of life and cultural expressions — what Ibn Khaldun referred to as “the effect of fertility on the body and its conditions.”

- Customs and Symbols as Foundations of Cultural Identity: The *customs and symbols* Ibn Khaldun mentioned represent today’s cultural components of identity — traditions, behaviors, and social norms. These have become cultural markers distinguishing societies from one another, particularly in the age of globalization.

2. Mechanisms of Identity Formation from a Khaldunian Perspective

A close reading of Ibn Khaldun’s thought reveals several mechanisms that explain how contemporary identities take shape:

- Intermixture and Hybridization: Ibn Khaldun notes that “lineages pass from one people to another,” reflecting the continuous cultural blending that shapes modern identities. Contemporary identity, therefore, is the product of cultural hybridization, not original purity — consistent with Ibn Khaldun’s view of intermingling genealogies.

- Transformation and Change: Ibn Khaldun asserts that “the conditions of the world, nations, and customs do not remain constant.” This applies directly to modern identity, which is dynamic and adaptive, continuously reshaping itself according to social change. This aligns with Claude Dubar’s concept of “adaptive identity”, which describes identity as a product of trajectories and social interactions, not merely socialization. Dubar defines it as “the result of an individual’s pathways, experiences, and interactions with others” (Sbila & Al-Harmouzi, 2017, pp.528–529).

• Dominance and Hegemony: Ibn Khaldun's principle of "ghalabah" (dominance) remains relevant to understanding identity today. Competing narratives and power structures shape identity formation, with dominant cultural and political discourses often imposing their values — similar to the "prevailing 'asabiyyah" in Ibn Khaldun's theory. In the context of globalization, this takes the form of cultural dependency, where marginalized identities are absorbed by dominant global powers. Ibn Khaldun captures this dynamic:

"The vanquished always imitate the victor in his dress, mount, weapon... and in all his conditions." (*Al-Muqaddimah*, 2009, p.176) "In Chapter Twenty-Three of Book Two of *al-Muqaddimah*"

3. Identity as a Contemporary 'Asabiyyah (Group Solidarity)

Through this reading, contemporary identity emerges as an extension of Ibn Khaldun's conception of 'asabiyyah—a form of collective solidarity that combines flexibility in belonging as a substitute for fixed lineage, plurality of loyalties instead of a singular affiliation, and dynamism in formation rather than permanence. For all these reasons, Ibn Khaldun's analytical framework remains capable of explaining the formation of modern identities, emphasizing that identity—in all its forms—remains a social phenomenon governed by the laws of human civilization ('umrān basharī) that he unveiled, where geographical, cultural, and social factors interact to shape the identities of individuals and groups across time and space.

Conclusions

In the preceding discussion, we attempted to extract indicators of identity within Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah* and to clarify its meaning according to him. As we observed, his concept centers primarily on the influence of the social group upon the individual, wherein the individual self dissolves into the collective self. The group imprints the individual with characteristics and traits derived from lineage, geography, and daily life, and these traits are unstable and dynamic, subject to change across time and place.

Ibn Khaldun's significance does not lie merely in his role as a historian of his era's phenomena, but in his genius for formulating an analytical model—a methodological framework—for understanding the laws of human civilization. These laws, derived from his observation of the past and present, possess remarkable flexibility that allows them to be recalled and applied to subsequent contexts. Thus, describing him as a "foresightful historian" does not mean that he predicted specific events, but rather that he provided analytical tools capable of anticipating the mechanisms by which societies function across ages.

The presence of the term "identity" (*al-huwiyya*) in *al-Muqaddimah*, both in its theological sense (pertaining to divine essence) and its logical sense (the Law of Identity: $A = A$), is highly significant. It reveals two crucial points:

1. Ibn Khaldun was fully aware of the conceptual discourse prevailing in his intellectual culture, including philosophical and theological traditions, and he used the term within this traditional framework.

2. More importantly, the absence of the modern terminological sense of "identity" does not imply the absence of the concept itself. This is a key methodological point: examining the Khaldunian text reveals that the social concept of identity was strongly present, even if expressed through other terms such as *nasab* (lineage), *jihah* (region or direction), *'awā'id* (customs), and *shī'ār* (symbols). Thus, identity, for Ibn Khaldun, appears as a historical and social phenomenon, making him one of the earliest analysts of identity formation.

Al-Muqaddimah presents three social dimensions of identity, which constitute the core of Ibn Khaldun's contribution:

1. Ethnic-Genealogical Identity (Primordial Belonging): This dimension answers the essential question "Who am I?" in terms of origins and roots. It aligns with the Primordialist concept of identity, which emphasizes kinship and blood ties as deep-seated and quasi-sacred foundations of belonging. It also resonates with Anthony D. Smith's Ethno-symbolism, which posits that modern nations derive their legitimacy and strength from the myths, memories, and symbols of earlier ethnic communities. Ibn Khaldun's analysis of 'asabiyyah as a force stemming from lineage—real or imagined—provides the socio-historical foundation for these theories.

2. Geographical-Morphological Identity (Place-based Identity): This dimension answers the question "Where am I?" and explores how place shapes both the body and the psyche. Ibn Khaldun transcends the idea of geography as a mere spatial container, treating it instead as an active agent in identity formation. He offers an early theory of what might be called "the geography of identity" or "the anthropology of place." For him, the influence of *jihah* (geographical region) extends beyond physical traits (morphology) to include ethics, customs, and even religious practices—creating a collective character tied to a specific environment.

3. Cultural-Social Identity (Acquired Identity): This most dynamic dimension answers the question “How did I become who I am?” Ibn Khaldun’s central notion of ‘āda (habit or custom) parallels Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus—both denote a set of dispositions, values, and behavioral patterns internalized by individuals through socialization, forming part of their “nature” and unconsciously guiding their behavior. This dimension also relates to Émile Durkheim’s concept of collective conscience, wherein shared customs and symbols create a unified moral framework for the group—an embodiment of collective identity itself.

Hence, al-Muqaddimah does not present a fragmented theory of identity, but rather a synthetic, multi-layered model, where individual and collective identity are formed at the intersection of roots (lineage), place (region), and culture (customs). This Khaldunian model remains profoundly relevant for understanding the complex and evolving notion of identity today.

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