

# Examining Khaldunian perspective for analyzing Indonesia's historical dynamics

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## Abstrak

This article examines the significance of Ibn Khaldūn's theories for understanding the dynamics of Indonesia's history and society. Adopting a Khaldunian perspective, it analyzes recurring socio-political patterns that have shaped Indonesia's historical trajectory. Drawing on the concepts of *'aṣabiyya* (group solidarity), *'umrān* (civilization), and cyclical historical development, the article explores key historical events, political transitions, and cultural dynamics. It demonstrates the continued relevance of *'aṣabiyya* in explaining social and religious solidarity in pre-modern Islamic kingdoms and its role in fostering national unity during the independence movement. The concept of *'umrān* is employed to elucidate socio-economic transformations, while the cyclical pattern provides an analytical lens for understanding political change and cultural development. Moving beyond conventional narratives, the article highlights the interaction of geographical, cultural, and socio-economic factors in shaping Indonesia's historical and societal dynamics.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldūn; *'aṣabiyya*; *'umrān*; cyclical pattern; Indonesia's history

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## Introduction

Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), a prominent scholar and historian of the Islamic medieval centuries, has gained widespread recognition for his pioneering social concepts and theories that continue to hold significance over centuries and geographical boundaries. His most notable work, *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) which is a part of his magnum opus *Kitāb al-'Ibar* (The Book of Lessons), provides profound insights into the flows of civilizations, the intricacies of social solidarity, and the cyclical nature of societal progress.<sup>1</sup> Although Ibn Khaldūn's theories

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<sup>1</sup> *Muqaddima*, often translated as "Introduction" or "Prolegomenon," is the most important work on Islamic history of the premodern world, written by the great fourteenth-century Arab

developed within the framework of medieval North African societies, their applicability extends far beyond both his era and the confines of his geographic region.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, this article seeks to examine the relevance and significance of Khaldunian theoretical frameworks in uncovering the dynamics of Indonesia's history, society and culture.

Some studies have sought to employ Ibn Khaldūn's theoretical perspective to analyze the dynamics and development of Islamic dynasties and societies in pre-modern and modern periods. Alatas, for example, systematically introduces Khaldunian concepts and theories to scrutinize how great dynasties such as the Ottoman and the Safavid underwent political and economic transformation, while proposing what is called "Asiatic mode of production."<sup>3</sup> He also extends his studies on Ibn Khaldūn and endeavors to popularize the latter's theories in portraying societal development in the Islamic world,<sup>4</sup> as Ardiç mentions Alatas' contribution to Khaldunian studies.<sup>5</sup> Önder and Ulaşan apply Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical theory to deal with the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, maintaining that there may have been problematics in the applicability of analyzing different empires in different historical and social contexts, between the previous dynasties within Bedouin milieu and those in civilized societies.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars like Ismail and Rahim have studied different societies in different historical contexts, using Ibn Khaldūn's theories in comparison to modern social theories.<sup>7</sup> The applicability of Khaldunian concepts and theories is to a certain degree subject to critical evaluation by modern scholars since there have been differences with regards to temporal and spatial contexts.<sup>8</sup> Ruthven, in her scholarly analysis of the event that

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scholar Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406). This monumental work established the foundations of several fields of knowledge, including the philosophy of history, sociology, ethnography, and economics. The first complete English translation, by the eminent Islamicist and interpreter of Arabic literature Franz Rosenthal, was published in three volumes in 1958, and received immediate acclaim in the United States and abroad. A one-volume abridged version of Rosenthal's masterful translation first appeared in 1969. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105.

<sup>3</sup> Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun*, 121-125.

<sup>4</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, "A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology for the South," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2006): 397-411; Syed Farid Alatas, "The Historical Sociology of Muslim Societies: Khaldunian Applications," *International Sociology* 22, no. 3 (2007): 267-288.

<sup>5</sup> Nurullah Ardiç, "Khaldunian studies today: The contributions of Syed Farid Alatas," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2017): 77-85.

<sup>6</sup> M. Önder and F. Ulaşan, "Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory on the Rise and Fall of Sovereign Powers: The Case of Ottoman Empire," *ADAM AKADEMİ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 2 (2018): 231-266.

<sup>7</sup> N.F. Ismail and A.A. Rahim, "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of 'Asabiyyah and Its Impact on the Current Muslim Community," *Journalism and Mass Communication* 8, no. 6 (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Alatas systematically applies Ibn Khaldūn's theoretical perspective to specific historical aspects of Muslim societies in North Africa and the Middle East, successfully integrating concepts and frameworks from Khaldunian sociology into modern social science theories. See Syed Farid

transpired on September 11, 2001, utilizes this occurrence as an illustrative example. She asserts that while the aforementioned act was orchestrated by technically advanced Islamist ideologies, the significant presence of hijackers hailing from Saudi Arabia's Asir region, with their connections to Yemeni tribal affiliations, signifies a pre-modern pattern of rebellion. This pattern aligns itself with the paradigm of cyclical rebellion and dynastic rejuvenation, as identified by the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldūn in his philosophical examination of history.<sup>9</sup> Even, some studies has revealed that Ibn Khaldūn can be said to be a precursor of intercultural or intercivilizational discourse.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to Indonesia's history and society, studies on the application of Ibn Khaldūn's concept and theory is still limited, whereas to discern historical events, economic transformations, political transitions, and cultural dynamics using Khaldunian perspective is quite possible. For examples, the ascent and decline of ancient empires such as Majapahit, the rise and fall of Islamic kingdoms up to colonial encounters, independence and the process of democratization after 1998 up to the present, can serve as illustrations that demonstrate the lasting relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's concepts for analyzing societal dynamics. By scrutinizing pivotal and historical examples, it is possible to unravel the intricacies of Indonesian society and acquire valuable insights into strategies for inclusive development, social cohesion, and nation-building. It can be asserted that Ibn Khaldūn's concepts, such as *'aṣabiyya* (group solidarity), *'umrān* (civilization), and the cyclical nature of societal development, offer a perspective through which one can comprehend the intricacies of Indonesian society and history.

This article seeks to explore the application of Ibn Khaldūn's concepts and social theories to analyze the historical trajectory and development in Indonesia's society. This article argues that the significance of Ibn Khaldūn's concepts and theories in understanding Indonesia's history and society reside in their profound insights into the dynamics of social unity, economic progress, and political transitions. By employing concepts such as *'aṣabiyya*, *'umrān*, and cyclical patterns, this article endeavors to acquire valuable perspectives on the complexities of Indonesian society, encompassing its historical progression and current challenges and opportunities.

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Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldūn: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Malise Ruthven, "The eleventh of September and the Sudanese mahdiya in the context of Ibn Khaldun's theory of Islamic history," *International Affairs* 78, no. 2 (April 2002): 339–351.

<sup>10</sup> Yolanda Gamarra, "Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406): A Precursor of Intercivilizational Discourse," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 28, no. 3 (2015): 441–456.

## Ibn Khaldūn's theories and their relevance

Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī was born in 1332 in Tunis, which was then part of the Hafsid Sultanate (modern-day Tunisia), hailed from a prestigious and scholarly family. Raised in an environment steeped in learning, he received a traditional Islamic education, delving into Qur’anic recitation, Islamic jurisprudence, ḥadīth studies, and other subjects of Islamic scholarship. This early upbringing laid the foundation for his future intellectual pursuits.<sup>11</sup> Embarking on a career in civil service, Ibn Khaldūn served in various administrative capacities across the North African Maghreb region. His professional journey took him to the courts of prominent dynasties such as the Marinids in Fez and the Hafsids in Tunis. Alongside his bureaucratic duties, Ibn Khaldūn undertook diplomatic missions and scholarly endeavors, which led him to traverse vast territories, including North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean region. These travels exposed him to diverse cultures, societies, and intellectual traditions, profoundly shaping his worldview and scholarly outlook.<sup>12</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn emerged as an eminent figure among Muslim scholars and philosophers of the fourteenth century, celebrated for his profound discernments into the essence of societies and civilizations. At the core of his intellectual heritage lies his important work, *Muqaddima*, completed in 1377, which forms the bedrock of his social theory. Serving as an introduction to his larger historiographical masterpiece, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, also known as *The History of the World*, the *Muqaddima* stands as a comprehensive study encompassing historiography, sociology, economics, and political science. Within this work, Ibn Khaldūn expounds his theories on the cyclical nature of history, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the significant role of *‘aṣabiyya*, in societal development.<sup>13</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn’s insights into the workings of society, power dynamics, and human behavior were groundbreaking for his time and continue to resonate across various disciplines. His emphasis on empirical observation, critical analysis, and the systematic study of human societies laid the groundwork for modern social sciences. Indeed, as Schmidt maintains, Ibn Khaldūn is often hailed as one of the founding figures of sociology, historiography, economics, and even philosophy.<sup>14</sup> He is also said to have been the first to write a theoretical and empirical

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). For a brief description of Ibn Khaldūn’s life, see “Biographical Note,” in Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 1-6. For discussion on Ibn Khaldūn’s life in Egypt, see Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research (1382–1406): A Study in Islamic Historiography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> For a more comprehensive biography, see Allen James Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun, Life and Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*; see also Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun*.

<sup>14</sup> Nathaniel Schmidt, *Ibn Khaldun, Historian, Sociologist, and Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

work of structural history, although his work was not known in the West until the nineteenth century, and its importance has only been recognised since the 1960s.”<sup>15</sup> His works have left an indelible mark on subsequent generations of scholars and thinkers, both within the Islamic world and beyond, shaping intellectual discourse and influencing academic inquiry worldwide.<sup>16</sup>

At the center of Ibn Khaldūn's theory lies the notion of *‘aṣabiyya*, which refers to the group solidarity and collective action within a society. Ibn Khaldūn recognized *‘aṣabiyya* as a fundamental factor in the rise and fall of civilizations, emphasizing its role in fostering unity, cooperation, and stability. However, he observed that as societies become more affluent and complacent, *‘aṣabiyya* tends to weaken over time, leading to social decay and eventual decline.<sup>17</sup> This concept underscores the importance of maintaining strong social bonds and collective identity for the longevity of civilizations. Ibn Khaldūn posited that the destiny of civilizations hinges upon the robustness of this cohesion within a society.

The very concept of *‘aṣabiyya* encompasses the magnitude of solidarity, unity, and collective awareness among individuals, serving as a propelling force behind societal advancement or regression.<sup>18</sup> In Stauth's interpretation, *‘aṣabiyya* occupies a central position within the empirical basis of a universal cyclical law that is inherent in the processes of civilization. It encompasses a particular notion of social dynamism: the solidarity among tribes serves as the driving force behind the revitalization of peaceful urban structures and institutions. Due to the fact that nomads, by and large, are individuals residing in desert regions and rural areas and are therefore considered marginalized, sociology has frequently misconstrued *‘aṣabiyya* as a mere concept denoting the social cohesion of tribal or local communities. Similarly, Islam has often been perceived as the religion of communal holism and stagnant societies.<sup>19</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *‘umrān*, akin to civilization, traces societal development from simplicity to complexity. Chabane suggests *‘umrān*'s translation as ‘urbanization.’ Derived from Arabic, *‘umrān* encapsulates the progression of civilizations from basic to sophisticated forms. Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical theory posits

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<sup>15</sup> Donald M. MacRaild and Avram Taylor, *Social Theory and Social History* (London: PalgraveMacmillan, 2004), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Fuad Baali and Ali Wardi, *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Thought-Styles: A Social Perspective* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981).

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*.

<sup>18</sup> *‘Aṣabiyya* (of Beduin, pre-Islamic, secular origin: from *‘aṣaba*, meaning to bind, to fold, to wind, and *‘aṣaba*, the group of male relatives) is one of the most important concepts of the social history of the Arabs and of Islam. Meaning a basic form of social and material human relations, it is a concept which integrates biological, geographical, social, and cultural terms. Georg Stauth, “*‘Aṣabiyya*,” *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. George Ritzer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 180-185.

<sup>19</sup> Stauth, “*‘Aṣabiyya*,” 181.

phases of growth, maturity, decline, and renewal for societies.<sup>20</sup> *Umrān* encompasses various aspects of societal development, including urbanization, economic specialization, and cultural achievements. He identified *umrān* as a cyclical phenomenon characterized by phases of growth, maturity, decline, and renewal. He observed that civilizations navigate through these cycles, influenced by factors such as *ʿaṣabiyya*, the caliber of leadership, and the interplay between urban and nomadic lifestyles.

Several factors influence the cyclical nature of societies, as identified by Ibn Khaldūn. Effective leadership can promote social cohesion, economic development, and political stability, while ineffective or corrupt leadership may hasten societal decline. Additionally, the strength of social cohesion, economic prosperity, cultural and moral values, and external pressures all play significant roles in shaping the trajectory of civilizations. Historical examples drawn from diverse civilizations, including ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Islamic world, supported Ibn Khaldūn's theory, showcasing recurring patterns of rise and fall in these societies' histories.<sup>21</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn highlighted the critical role of leadership, governance, and socio-economic factors in shaping the trajectory of civilizations, emphasizing the delicate balance between material prosperity and moral integrity. Societies reach their zenith when they uphold this balance but decline when they succumb to decadence, corruption, and internal strife.<sup>22</sup> On the importance of leadership and its relation to *ʿaṣabiyya*, Ibn Khaldūn maintains: "This is because leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through group feeling. Leadership over people, therefore, must, of necessity, derive from a group feeling that is superior to each individual group feeling. Each individual group feeling that becomes aware of the superiority of the group feeling of the leader is ready to obey and follow him."<sup>23</sup> According to his theory, societies progress from rudimentary Bedouin communities to intricate urban civilizations, only to confront eventual decay and the potential for revival across different generations: Ibn Khaldūn asserts: "As one can see, we have there three generations. In the course of these three generations, the dynasty grows senile and is worn out. Therefore, it is in the fourth generation that (ancestral) prestige is destroyed."<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, Ibn Khaldūn proposed that human societies follow a cyclical pattern of rise and fall, akin to the life cycle of individuals. In this context, he said: "In this way, the life span of a dynasty corresponds to the life span of an individual; it grows up and passes into an age of stagnation and thence into retrogression.

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<sup>20</sup> Djamel Chabane, "The structure of *ʿumrān al-ʿalam* of Ibn Khaldūn," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13, no. 3 (2008): 332.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*.

<sup>22</sup> Laroussi Amri, "The concept of *ʿumran*: the heuristic knot in Ibn Khaldun," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13, no. 3 (2008): 351-361.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 229.

Therefore, people commonly say that the life span of a dynasty is one hundred years. . . .”<sup>25</sup> He then identified four stages of societal or dynastic development, namely: the tribal stage based on *‘aṣabiyya*, the sedentary stage marked by urbanization and civilization (*‘umrān*), the decadent stage characterized by moral decay and social disintegration, and the reversion stage, which ushers in a new cycle of rise and fall. In this regard, Alatas explains that after the establishment of a new dynasty, the tribesmen who hold power gradually embrace a stationary way of life, resulting in a deterioration of their social unity or *‘aṣabiyya*. This decline in cohesion weakens their military strength and undermines their capacity to govern with efficacy. Eventually, the dynasty is overthrown by pre-sedentary tribes with a stronger *‘aṣabiyya*, thus perpetuating the cycle. While the ruling elites are cyclically replaced, the system maintains its stability. This is the fundamental nature of the Khaldunian cycle.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Ibn Khaldūn’s relevance***

The enduring relevance of Ibn Khaldūn’s social theory is conspicuous in its persistent influence on social sciences and historical studies. Despite being formulated centuries ago, his ideas provide priceless insights into the dynamics of societies throughout time and space. Scholars and researchers continue to draw from his work to elucidate the complexities of human civilization and to discern patterns of societal progression and deterioration. In this manner, Ibn Khaldūn’s contributions persist as a testament to the abiding relevance of his intellectual heritage. Despite the substantial temporal and cultural disparities between Ibn Khaldūn’s epoch and contemporary times, his theories present lasting insights into human society. Rooted in historical observation and analysis, these theories furnish a framework for comprehending social dynamics that transcend specific time periods. Whether in fourteenth-century Muslim societies or modern-day contexts, numerous facets of human behavior and societal organization exhibit remarkable continuity.

Ibn Khaldūn’s theory of societal cycles finds significant application in various historical contexts, shedding light on the rise and fall of civilizations across different epochs. In ancient Mesopotamia, civilizations like Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Assyria illustrate the cyclical nature of societal development. These civilizations experienced periods of prosperity marked by advancements in agriculture and governance, followed by decline due to internal conflicts and invasions. Similarly, in ancient Egypt, cycles of growth and decline shaped by factors such as political instability and foreign invasions reflect Ibn Khaldūn’s theories of leadership and societal cycles.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 229.

<sup>26</sup> Alatas, "A Khaldunian Exemplar," 401.

Within Islamic civilization, the early caliphates and the cultural flourishing of Muslim society demonstrate the relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's concepts. The cycles of conquest, consolidation, and decline experienced by the Rashidun (632-661), Umayyad (661-750), and Abbasid (750-1258) caliphates illustrate his theories of leadership and *'aṣabiyya*.<sup>27</sup> Moving into the medieval and early modern periods, examples like the mode of production of the state formation of the Ottoman (1299-1923) and the rise and fall of the Safavid (1501-1736), highlight aspects of Ibn Khaldūn's theory, as exemplified by Alatas' analysis.<sup>28</sup> The rapid expansion and eventual decline of these empires reflect dynamics of leadership, *'aṣabiyya*, and societal cycles.

In the colonial and modern periods, European colonialism and contemporary globalization processes offer further application of Ibn Khaldūn's theories. Colonial cycles of exploitation and resistance shaped by power dynamics and socio-economic disparities resonate with his ideas. Similarly, contemporary globalization raises questions about the future trajectory of human societies, echoing Ibn Khaldūn's emphasis on external forces and interconnectedness. In modern Muslim societies, such as those found in present-day Indonesia, there exists a shared cultural heritage that includes the intellectual legacy of scholars like Ibn Khaldūn. His theories resonate with contemporary Muslims, offering a lens through which to analyze societal development and challenges. This shared heritage serves as a foundation for intellectual discourse and cultural identity.

### Indonesia's historical trajectories in Khaldunian lens

Indonesia's distinction is deeply rooted in its historical evolution, cultural diversity, and socio-political dynamics. The historical context of Indonesia's Islamic heritage dates back to the thirteenth century when Islam was introduced to the archipelago through trade routes connecting the region to the Middle East and India.<sup>29</sup> Muslim merchants played a pivotal role in spreading Islam to coastal communities, particularly in Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi. This early Islamic influence coexisted with the pre-existing Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, such as Srivijaya (671-1025) and Majapahit (1293-1527), which flourished from the seventeenth to the fifteenth centuries, leaving behind a legacy of cultural and architectural achievements.

The rise and fall of ancient kingdoms in Indonesia provide compelling case studies for applying Ibn Khaldūn's theory in analyzing societal dynamics. One such example is the Majapahit Empire, which emerged in the thirteenth century and epitomized the concepts of *'umrān* and *'aṣabiyya*. During its rise, the Majapahit Empire experienced a period of remarkable prosperity and expansion under

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 177.

<sup>28</sup> Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 92-130.

<sup>29</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008).

the leadership of Hayam Wuruk (r. 1350-1389).<sup>30</sup> This era exemplified Ibn Khaldūn's notion of *'umrān*, emphasizing the civilization's advancements in governance, military prowess, and cultural achievements.

Central to the success of the Majapahit Empire was its strong sense of *'aṣabiyya*, or social cohesion, which unified diverse ethnic groups across the archipelago. The empire's administrative systems, religious tolerance, and economic policies fostered a collective identity among its subjects, contributing to stability and prosperity. This sense of unity and shared purpose enabled Majapahit to undertake ambitious territorial conquests and establish itself as a dominant regional power.

However, despite its initial success, the Majapahit Empire eventually faced internal and external challenges that led to its decline. Internal conflicts, regional rebellions, and the erosion of central authority weakened the empire's *'aṣabiyya*, resulting in fragmentation and disintegration.<sup>31</sup> Viewed from Khaldūnian's lens, this disintegration was caused by the decline of *'aṣabiyya* among rulers and at the same time the empire's leadership became weak.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, external pressures from neighboring kingdoms, particularly with the rise of Demak power (1475), its rebellion against the Majapahit, further exacerbated Majapahit's decline, ultimately leading to the collapse of the empire and the emergence of new political entities in the region, i.e., the Islamic kingdom of Demak.

Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia, such as the Sultanate of Demak (1475-1568), Sultanate of Mataram (1586-1755), and Sultanate of Aceh (1496-1903), provide compelling case studies of the rise and fall of Islamic civilizations in the archipelago. These kingdoms emerged as centers of Islamic governance, trade, and cultural exchange, influencing the socio-political landscape of the region for centuries.<sup>33</sup> The Sultanate of Demak, established in the early sixteenth century on the island of Java, played a pivotal role in spreading Islam throughout the region. Under the leadership of Sultan Trenggana (r. 1521-1546), Demak became a stronghold of Islamic resistance against Portuguese colonial expansion, asserting its sovereignty and religious identity. The rise of Demak exemplifies Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *'aṣabiyya*, as the Sultanate united diverse ethnic and religious communities under a common Islamic identity, fostering social cohesion and resistance against external threats.

However, the fortunes of Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia were not without challenges, as internal conflicts, external pressures, and shifting power dynamics

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<sup>30</sup> Slamet Muljana, *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* [The Collapse of Javanese-Hindu Kingdom and the Rise of Islamic States in Nusantara] (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> See Muljana, *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara*.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 177.

<sup>33</sup> H.J. de Graaf, *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam Pertama di Jawa* [The Early Islamic Kingdoms in Java] (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1985).

often precipitated their decline. The Sultanate of Mataram, for instance, experienced periods of expansion and consolidation under the rule of powerful sultans such as Sultan Agung (r. 1613-1645) and Amangkurat I (r. 1646-1677). Yet, internal strife, succession disputes, and Dutch colonial incursions gradually weakened Mataram's authority and territorial control.<sup>34</sup> The decline of Mataram illustrates the complexities of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of cyclical patterns of societal development, as periods of growth and consolidation were followed by stagnation and decline due to internal and external factors.

Similarly, the Sultanate of Aceh, located on the island of Sumatra, rose to prominence as a maritime trading power and bastion of Islamic scholarship in Southeast Asia. Lombard surveys the long history of the Aceh kingdom, seemingly following what is called *long durée* in the tradition of Annales school,<sup>35</sup> as also can be seen in Khaldunian lens. Known for its strategic location and robust naval capabilities, Aceh emerged as a formidable rival to European colonial powers in the region.<sup>36</sup> However, the Sultanate's fortunes waned in the face of transition of power to weaker sultans, and the coming of Dutch military campaigns, economic competition, and internal divisions, which led to its decline. This declining situation of Aceh underlines the challenges of maintaining *'aṣabiyya* and social cohesion in the face of external pressures and internal discord.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn's theory of *'umrān*, or civilization, offers insights into the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia. These kingdoms served as centers of trade, scholarship, and artistic expression, facilitating the exchange of goods, ideas, and innovations across maritime trade routes. The Sultanate of Mataram, for instance, flourished as a hub of Javanese politics and civilization. *'Umrān* also elucidates the process of state-building and territorial expansion undertaken by these kingdoms, as they sought to consolidate power, maintain social order, and assert their authority over rival factions and neighboring polities.<sup>37</sup>

However, the decline of Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia also highlights the limitations of Ibn Khaldūn's theory in capturing the complexities of societal transformation. While *'aṣabiyya* and *'umrān* may have contributed to the rise and

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<sup>34</sup> H.J. de Graaf's works on the Mataram reveal how this Islamic kingdom underwent cyclical pattern of historical trajectory, from its rise, glory and decline, before it was divided by the Dutch into two separate powers: Yogyakarta and Surakarta. See H.J. de Graaf, *Awal Kebangkitan Mataram* [The Early Emergence of Mataram] (Jakarta: KITLV, 2001); H.J. de Graaf, *Puncak Kekuasaan Mataram: Politik Ekspansi Sultan Agung* [The Peak of Mataram Power: The Politics of Sultan Agung's Expansion] (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1990); H.J. de Graaf, *Runtuhnya Istana Mataram* [The Collapse of Mataram Court] (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1987).

<sup>35</sup> Denys Lombard, *Kerajaan Aceh Zaman Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636)* [The Kingdom of Aceh in the Reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda 1607-1636] (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, Forum Jakarta-Paris, L'École française d'Extrême-Orient [EFEO], 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Amirul Hadi, *Islam and State in Sumatra: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> See de Graaf's works above.

consolidation of these kingdoms, internal conflicts, external pressures, and changing socio-political dynamics ultimately precipitated their decline. The Sultanate of Aceh, for example, struggled to maintain its sovereignty in the face of Dutch colonial aggression, economic competition, and internal divisions.<sup>38</sup> The cyclical nature of societal development, as posited by Ibn Khaldūn, underscores the inevitability of rise and fall in the fortunes of civilizations, as they navigate periods of growth, consolidation, decline, and renewal.

From a Khaldunian perspective, the cyclical nature of Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia reflects the inherent patterns of rise, consolidation, decline, and renewal that characterize the trajectory of civilizations. Ibn Khaldūn's theory posits that societies undergo a predictable cycle of growth and decline, driven by dynamics of social cohesion, economic prosperity, and political governance. Applying this framework to Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia, we can discern recurring patterns of societal development that shape their historical evolution.

Yet, despite their decline, Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia also demonstrate the potential for renewal and resilience in the face of adversity. The transformation of power dynamics, emergence of new leaders, and adaptation to changing socio-political conditions enabled some kingdoms to endure and evolve over time. The Sultanate of Banten (1527-1813), for instance, rose to prominence in the sixteenth century as a maritime trading power and center of Islamic scholarship, revitalizing the region's cultural and economic vibrancy despite the decline of neighboring kingdoms.<sup>39</sup> This cyclical nature of rise, decline, and renewal embodies Ibn Khaldūn's theory of societal cycles, underscoring the enduring relevance of his insights for understanding the complexities of Indonesian history and civilization.

By the sixteenth century, Islam had become the dominant religion in many parts of the Indonesian archipelago, leading to the emergence of Islamic sultanates like Aceh, Demak, and Mataram. These sultanates established Islamic governance and institutions, contributing to the consolidation of Islam as a central aspect of Indonesian society. To some extent, Indonesian Islam is characterized by syncretism, blending Islamic beliefs with indigenous animistic traditions and Hindu-Buddhist influences.<sup>40</sup>

Colonial encounters have played pivotal roles in shaping Indonesian society, offering intriguing case studies for the application of Ibn Khaldūn's theory of societal cycles. One such case study is Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, which profoundly impacted social cohesion and cultural identity. The imposition of Dutch colonial administration, land tenure systems, and economic exploitation disrupted existing social hierarchies, undermining traditional forms of *'aṣabiyya*.

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<sup>38</sup> T. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang di Jalan Allah: Perang Aceh, 1873-1912* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008*.

<sup>40</sup> Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya: Jaringan Asia*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005)

Indigenous institutions were weakened as a result, leading to a fragmentation of community bonds. Despite colonial subjugation, Indonesian communities displayed resistance against Dutch imperialism. Movements like the Java War (1825-1830),<sup>41</sup> the peasant rebellion in Banten (1888),<sup>42</sup> and the Aceh War (1873-1914)<sup>43</sup> reflected efforts to preserve cultural identity, religious autonomy, and territorial sovereignty in the face of colonial oppression. The legacy of Dutch colonialism continues to influence Indonesian society, shaping patterns of governance, economic development, and cultural identity. Decolonization efforts and the struggle for independence drew upon *‘aṣabiyya* and collective resistance, underscoring the enduring impact of colonial encounters on Indonesian societal dynamics.

A number of modern historians have examined Indonesian history and society with the perspective of the *Annales school* of historical thought, such as Denys Lombard and Anthony Reid, who look at historical developments over a long period (*longue durée*), and place them in a broader context, Southeast Asia.<sup>44</sup> This is actually not different from Ibn Khaldūn who photographed the long history of the civilizations of previous nations, especially Muslim societies and dynasties until around the fourteenth century. The ups and downs of Islamic civilizations and dynasties, both according to the long historical trajectory of the dynasties that existed in Indonesia, and of each single dynasty can be explained by following the cyclical pattern proposed by Ibn Khaldūn.

Analyzing Indonesian civilization through the lens of *‘umrān* reveals distinct phases of growth, consolidation, stagnation, decline, and renewal. The early civilizations witnessed periods of growth and expansion, driven by advancements in agriculture, trade, and governance, while subsequent phases saw consolidation and integration of diverse ethnic groups under unified political entities, fostering cultural syncretism and religious pluralism. However, Indonesia also experienced periods of stagnation and decline, marked by internal conflicts, foreign invasions, and colonial subjugation, which disrupted societal development and cultural continuity. Nevertheless, moments of renewal and revival, such as the struggle for independence and subsequent nation-building efforts, demonstrate Indonesia's resilience and capacity for collective renewal.

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<sup>41</sup> Peter B. R. Carey (ed.), "Babad Dipanagara: An Account of the Outbreak of the Java War (1825–1830): The Surakarta Version of the Babad Dipanagara with Translations into English and Indonesian Malay," Monograph No. 9, The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Petaling Jaya, West Malaysia, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course and Sequel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

<sup>43</sup> T. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang di Jalan Allah: Perang Aceh, 1873-1912* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Lombard, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya*, vol. 2; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680, Vol. 1: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

Indonesia's journey to independence culminated in 1945 when the country declared independence, marking a significant milestone in its nation-building process. Guided by the principle of "*Pancasila*," which promotes religious pluralism and tolerance, Indonesia's constitution enshrines the belief in one God while recognizing the diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Indonesia's *Pancasila* ideology, that emphasizes principles of unity, diversity, and social justice, aligns with Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *ʿaṣabiyya* and the importance of social cohesion in diverse societies. *Pancasila* serves as a unifying force, encouraging tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation among different groups, contributing to social harmony and stability. Importantly, efforts to preserve Indonesia's indigenous cultures and traditions demonstrate the relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's emphasis on cultural resilience and identity. Initiatives to safeguard indigenous languages, arts, and customs contribute to the continuity of cultural heritage, maintaining social cohesion and collective identity in Indonesia.

The historical and cultural landscape of Indonesia is characterized by a complex interplay of indigenous traditions, Islamic influences, colonial legacies, and global trends.<sup>45</sup> This rich trajectory provides a nuanced backdrop for analyzing the applicability of Ibn Khaldūn's theories, which are deeply rooted in historical observation and analysis. In addition, Indonesia's political landscape, marked by a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy, presents a complex terrain for governance, religious pluralism, and social inequality. In this context, Ibn Khaldūn's perspective into power dynamics, social cohesion, and the cyclical nature of civilizations offer valuable perspectives for understanding the complexities of contemporary Indonesian society. Pluralism and diversity are fundamental tenets of Indonesian society, with the principle of *Pancasila* enshrined in the constitution to promote religious harmony and unity among the nation's diverse ethnic and religious groups.<sup>46</sup> In spite of commitment to pluralism, religious minorities in Indonesia, like Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, have occasionally faced instances of discrimination and persecution, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving full religious freedom and tolerance.

Furthermore, Indonesia's political transition to democracy serves as another compelling case study illustrating societal change. After decades of authoritarian rule under President Suharto's New Order regime, characterized by centralized power and limitations on civil liberties, Indonesia experienced a remarkable transition to democracy starting in 1998. The fall of the Suharto regime was precipitated by popular protests, civil society mobilization, and international pressure, reflecting Ibn Khaldūn's theory of societal renewal. The democratization process ushered in a period of political pluralism, institutional reforms, and democratic governance, fostering accountability, transparency, and citizen participation.

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<sup>45</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru: 1500-1900 dari Emporium Sam-pai Imperium*, vol. 1 (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2014), 429-450.

<sup>46</sup> Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008*.

However, this transition was not without its challenges, including political instability, corruption, and social unrest. *ʿAṣabiyya* among civil society actors, political parties, and grassroots movements played a crucial role in addressing these challenges, promoting democratic values and ensuring the sustainability of Indonesia's democratic experiment.

In its contemporary development, the political landscape of Indonesia is characterized by its democratic system, featuring a multi-party framework and regular elections. Political parties representing diverse ideologies, including secularism, nationalism, Islamism, and regional autonomy, compete within this democratic framework. Anchoring Indonesia's political ethos is *Pancasila*, the official state ideology, which upholds five principles: belief in one God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. *Pancasila* serves as the philosophical bedrock for Indonesian governance and political pluralism, guiding the nation's democratic trajectory.

## Conclusion

The application of Ibn Khaldūn's social theories provides very valuable insights in understanding the dynamics of Indonesian society. Through concepts such as *ʿaṣabiyya*, *ʿumrān*, and cyclical patterns of societal development, we can reveal the complexity of Indonesian history, culture, and politics. The concept of *ʿaṣabiyya* is fundamental to understanding Indonesia's collective identity and resilience. The nation's history of resistance against colonialism and its diverse yet cohesive cultural heritage exemplify the spirit of *ʿaṣabiyya*. However, challenges such as religious tensions and regional disparities underscore the need to strengthen social cohesion for promoting national unity and harmony. The concept of *ʿaṣabiyya*, as introduced by Ibn Khaldūn, serves as a lens through which to understand social cohesion within Indonesian communities. At its core, *ʿaṣabiyya* encompasses the sense of belonging, mutual support, and collective identity that bind individuals together. In Indonesia, this concept finds application in various facets of society, transcending ethnic and religious differences to foster unity and resilience.

Ibn Khaldūn's theory of *ʿumrān*, or civilization, provides a framework for contextualizing Indonesia's historical development and contemporary dynamics. Indonesia's cyclical history of successive empires, kingdoms, and colonial rule reflects patterns of rise, decline, and renewal characteristic of *ʿumrān*. Understanding this cyclical nature informs strategies for sustainable development and societal renewal, especially in the context of Indonesia's transition to democracy and efforts towards economic progress. Beyond Ibn Khaldūn's framework, numerous factors influence societal change in Indonesia. Social and cultural shifts, such as rapid urbanization and cultural revival movements, are transforming Indonesia's demographic and cultural fabric. The changes that have occurred in Indonesia's long history have been caused by complex, not single, factors. Unlike

Karl Marx who came after Ibn Khaldūn who emphasized material or economic aspects as determinants of societal development, Ibn Khaldūn emphasized the interplay of social, economic and geographic (climate) dimensions as factors of societal change and historical development. It seems that what was developed by the historians of the Annales school from France, is closer to what was theorized by Ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddima*.

Ibn Khaldūn's theories offer a perspective for examining the challenges and opportunities facing Indonesian society. By recognizing the cyclical nature of societal development, policymakers and practitioners can better navigate times of transition, crisis, and renewal. Understanding the role of *‘aşabiyya* in promoting social cohesion, the dynamics of *‘umrān* in shaping economic progress, and patterns of governance in political transitions allows stakeholders to formulate strategies that promote inclusive development, pluralism, and resilience. The continued application and adaptation of Ibn Khaldūn's theories is very important to overcome the growing complexity in analyzing Indonesian society. By integrating insights from historical analysis with contemporary realities, scholars can develop differentiated approaches to governance, economic development, cultural preservation, and social cohesion.

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