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March 23, 2018

The Power of *Asabiya*: Ibn Khaldun's Theory on the Rise and Fall of Nations

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## Abstract

### The Power of Asabiya: Ibn Khaldun's Theory on the Rise and Fall of Nations By Yusur Alsalihi

This paper is about Ibn Khaldun's social theory and its impact on his philosophy of history. Ibn Khaldun is a 14<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, economist and is considered by many the father of sociology. In his book *Al-Muqaddima* he describes the social cohesion that binds both rudimentary social groups, such as nomads, and modern social groups. He calls this social cohesion *asabiya*. Then he describes how the strength of *Asabiya* within a state corresponds to the stability of the state itself. Hence, *asabiya* can be used to describe the rise and fall of any given state. Consequently, *asabiya* is a tool to understand Khaludian philosophy of history, whereby history is seen as cyclical with perceptible stages. This thesis gives a summarized overview of *Al-Muqaddima*, and its many economical, political and philosophical findings, while also giving a condensed analysis of *asabiya*.

## Dedication

Dedicated to Sarah J. Mahmood, who gave me my first English book.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Goldenbaum, Prof. Cherribi and Prof. Corrigan, this thesis would not have materialized without their support. My eternal gratitude to my family; Mazin, Bushra, Ahmad, Nasmah, Al-Houmam, and Sally. A million theses dedicated to you guys are not enough. My sincere thanks to every teacher who guided my academic career at Emory University, and to every friend who helped me and supported me. I would not be the same without your constant input.

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## **Introduction**

This honors thesis lays out the theory of social organization of Ibn Khaldun and its relation to his philosophy of history. Ibn Khaldun was an Arabic scholar who dealt with various topics such as historiography, geography, sociology and economics. He wrote an extensive universal history with a special focus on the history of Berbers and Arabs in North Africa. Notably, he introduced an explanatory tool to describe changes in history: *asabiya*. The importance of this contribution is that he provides a method for understanding political change. Ibn Khaldun believes in the interrelationship between economic, social, political, and religious factors and his philosophical theory includes these multi-faceted perspectives.

Abū Zayd ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī was a Muslim scholar, who was born in 1332 in Tunis, North Africa, and died in 1406 in Egypt. He came from a prestigious, political family, which allowed him to study Greek and Roman philosophy, alongside with law, mathematics, logic and linguistics. He wanted to become a politician. At age 20, he began his career at the court of the Tunisian ruler Ibn Tafrakin in the position of Kātib al-'Alāmah (seal bearer). His responsibility included the writing of court documents, official announcements to the public, and letters to foreign dignitaries. It was at this court that Ibn Khaldun began to understand the intricacies of government.

However, by the end of the year, his employment with Ibn Tafrakin ended when the Sultan of Constantine,<sup>1</sup> Abū Ziad conquered Tunis. While Abu Ziad preserved Ibn Khaldun's job, Ibn Khaldun realized that his position was politically meaningless - for there was no ruler of Tunis to bear the seal of. He was then appointed as a secretary in the government of Abu ‘Inan,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Constantine is a city in North-Eastern Algeria. It is named in honor of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great in 313.

<sup>2</sup> Abu ‘Inan was a ruler of Morocco during the Marinid dynasty. He succeeded his father in 1348. His reign in North Africa covered the north of modern-day Algeria and Tunisia.

the prince of Marinid.<sup>3</sup> He worked at this court for three years, writing governmental proclamations, and letters to North African and Spanish diplomats on behalf of the prince. After the end of his third year in the court, he was imprisoned by Abu‘Inan on the charge of conspiracy against the royal family. Abu ‘Inan accused Ibn Khaldun of conspiracy due to the latter’s friendly relationship with another ruler in the region.

Abu ‘Inan was murdered in 1358 and his brother Abu Salim took the throne thereafter. He released Ibn Khaldun from jail. Ibn Khaldun was then promoted to the *mazalim*, as a judge, being in charge of non-religious matters. Ibn Khaldun tried to educate Abu Salim in politics and economics but Abu Salim was a shortsighted, impatient student. Unfortunately, he did not become the wise and strong sovereign that Ibn Khaldun had wished for but rather, he turned into a weak tyrant. Frustrated with Abu Salim’s oppressive rule, Ibn Khaldun left for Granada.<sup>4</sup>

There, Ibn Khaldun became a close friend of Ibn al-Khatib, a *wazir* (minister) to Muhammad V, then the prince of Grenada. Again, Ibn Khaldun attempted to educate Muhammad V in philosophy and logic. However, his friend Ibn al-Khatib considered this a serious error of judgment and forced Ibn Khaldun to stop his lessons to Mumammad V. Unfortunately, Muhammad V became a tyrant who imprisoned and executed Ibn al-Khatib. As a result, Ibn Khaldun was so scared of Muhammad V that he left Granada and refused to even write about this period of his life in his autobiography.

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<sup>3</sup> The Marinid dynasty was a Sunni Muslim dynasty of Berber descent that ruled Morocco from the 13th to the 15th century. The capital of the Marinid dynasty was Fez a city in Northern Morocco.

<sup>4</sup> Granada is a city in Al-Andalus on the Iberian Peninsula. It was under the control of the Moorish Emirate at the time. The Moorish empire refers to the Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb who occupied the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta during the Middle Ages.

In 1364, Ibn Khaldun arrived in Bijaya<sup>5</sup> where he had accepted a post as the prime minister for the Hafsid<sup>6</sup> ruler, Abu ‘Abd Allah. His first mission was to collect taxes from the Berber tribes in the surrounding mountains which had to be done by force. He used this mission to observe the customs of different tribes in the region. Abu ‘Abd Allah died in 1366 and the crown was transferred to his brother, Abu al-‘Abbas of Constantine. Ibn Khaldun began lecturing him in philosophy and politics, to mend his despotic tendencies. Especially, he tried to advise the ruler in creating an efficient state based on moderation. Again, Abu al-‘Abbas disregarded his advice and Ibn Khaldun fell out of favor at the court.

In the next years Ibn Khaldun attempted to leave the court of Abu al-‘Abbas and he successfully escaped to Grenada in 1374. Tired of court life and of the tempers of repressive rulers, Ibn Khaldun took up residence in a remote tribal fortress, Qal’at Ibn Salama. By November of 1377, within only five months, he finished the first draft of *al- Muqaddima*. In December of 1378, he reconciled with the powerful Hafsid ruler Abu al- ‘Abbas and returned to his court. But in 1382, he asked for permission to go to Mecca for the Muslim pilgrimage. Instead of going to Mecca, however, Ibn Khaldun headed to Egypt in order to escape the turmoil of the court. He would never again hold a political position. He was then about 50 years old.

In Egypt, Ibn Khaldun took on several positions first, as a teacher and then as a judge again. He was first appointed as a professor at Qamhiya College, and then, as a chief Maliki judge of Egypt. In 1389, it came to a conflict with Barquq, the ruler of Egypt. Ibn Khaldun was accused to have signed legal documents against Barquq. As a result, Ibn Khaldun was forced to

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<sup>5</sup> This is the name of a port city in modern Algeria. At the name of Ibn Khaldun the city was named Béjaïa

<sup>6</sup> Hafsid dynasty is a muslim dynasty of Berber descent who ruled modern day western Libya, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria from 1229 to 1574. It was named after its founder Muhammad bin Abu Hafṣ, a Berber from the Masmuda tribe of Morocco.

step down from his post as a judge as well as from his presidency of a Sufi scholarly institute. Yet, Ibn Khaldun claimed that he was forced to sign these opinions, and that Barquq was unfair in his judgment. In 1390, Faraj, the son of Barquq re-appointed Ibn Khaldun as a judge.

In 1401, just after the Turco-Mongol conqueror invasion of Damascus, Ibn Khaldun visited the said region. In fact, Ibn Khaldun had been lowered over the walls of the city of Damascus to meet with Timur, the Turco- Mongol conqueror, upon the latter's request. He spent one month with this conqueror of the world, in frequent conversations. Ibn Khaldun wrote reports and discussed his theories with the Mongolian ruler and also successfully negotiated the release of Damascene workers from prison. When he returned from Damascus to Egypt, his caravan was attacked by robbers. Fleeing the scene, Ibn Khaldun reached the coast and boarded a ship heading to Gaza. There he made the acquaintance of the representative of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I. Eventually, Ibn Khaldun returned to Egypt where he was re-appointed as judge although he was again relieved of this position and re-appointed several times. Ibn Khaldun died on March 17<sup>th</sup>, of 1406.

His experiences at the courts of various political rulers and his various travels provide a compelling insight into human social and political organization. From his extensive travels he drew conclusions to the various conditions needed for survival. Moreover, his close personal acquaintance with many of the rulers, was tantamount for the deep understanding of his theories of politics, economics, warfare, and political administrations. His interest in philosophy and politics was driven by his education, and his family's involvement in politics but his numerous encounters with political leaders helped him understand the dark reality of governance. To be active in politics in North-Africa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century meant engaging with these tyrants in some

way since one's position and political status depended on this relation with these powerful and impulsive rulers.

Ibn Khaldun first sought to change the political reality by educating and advising these tyrants. After several instances of imprisonment though, he abandoned his early hopes of reshaping society through political education of the rulers. Instead, he began to focus on education as means to shape society, hoping that his books could become the keys for solving political and social problems. Ibn Khaldun wrote two books, the first was *Kitab al-'Ibar* or 'book of lessons,' containing seven volumes. These seven volumes detail the history of the world and more specifically, the history of the Berbers and Arabs. The first volume is called *Al-Muqaddima* (the Prolegomena) and was supposed to serve as an introduction to what followed. Volumes two through five cover ancient history till the 14<sup>th</sup> century, volumes six and seven cover the history of the Berber people in the Maghreb. Ibn Khaldun wrote a second book that includes his autobiography; called *Al-Taarif bi Ibn Khaldun*. His Autobiography details Ibn Khaldun's travels, his life at the court and his various encounters with historical personalities.

My thesis is restricted to the *Al-Muqaddima* and follows the course of it. In my first chapter, I lay out the progression from a nomadic into a developed sedentary society as seen by Ibn Khaldun. In *Al-Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun, introduces the notion of *asabiya* early on. He begins by describing nomadic life, the harsh conditions of the desert and the reliance of the tribe members upon themselves. He points out how the tribe can only survive by being one cohesive social unit and names this strong social cohesion *asabiya* - specifically, tribal *asabiya*. When tribe members choose to settle into specific land, nomadic life is transferred into a sedentary lifestyle.

In the second chapter, I will explain the progression of the political state and its institutions according to Ibn Khaldun. I will follow his detailed descriptions of the ministries formed by the political state, their functions and their impact on the public. Also, I will present his view of the ruler's duties to his people and the people's duties to their leader as well as his theory on economics, monetary policy, taxation and law enforcement. Most importantly, I will explain Ibn Khaldun's explanation of the decline of tribal *asabiya* in sedentary societies and the consequences of this that lead to the development of a new form of political *asabiya*.

In the third chapter, I describe Ibn Khaldun's notions on religion. According to him, religion serves as a great unifier of the people. Religion can work to strengthen or weaken a ruler. This unity is thus seen as another version of *asabiya* -- religious *asabiya*. He also describes how religious institutions strengthens the state and help shape the nation's laws. Finally, I highlight some of the differences, Ibn Khaldun emphasized between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

In chapter four I describe Ibn Khaldun's explanation of decline of the state, the many factors that erode its foundations, and the various ways in which the state can fail. While for Ibn Khaldun the fall of every empire is inevitable in the end, he describes how both, the actions of the people and the ruler contribute to the decline of the state. Most important, it is the weakening of *asabiya* that necessarily leads to the fall of the state. In chapter five, I reflect on Ibn Khaldun's cyclical philosophy of history and on his concept of *asabiya* in its close connection with the rise and the fall of empires.

Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history was seen as a far-fetched theory. Only Egyptian scholars such as al-Jabarti and al-Tahtawi mentioned him intensely in their works. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Ibn Khaldun was introduced to the west when his writings were

translated into French by Silvestre de Sacy in 1806. Franz Rosenthal, a German professor of Semitic literature at Yale University, was the first to produce a three-volume annotated English translation of *Al-Muqaddima*. According to Rosenthal, *Al-Muqaddima* was written in the form of academic lectures to be read aloud. Thus, the work is repetitive, and ideas are often scattered. Printing was not invented at the time and making cross references to earlier version of the argument was a difficult task. Therefore, it was always necessary for oral presentation to repeat the information already given in earlier chapters. I used Rosenthal's translation as a primary source for my thesis and quote according to his division of volumes, followed by chapters and finally sections. For example, quotes that have the in-text citation of 1.2.3, are quotes that are found in the first volume of Franz Rosenthal translation of *Al-Muqaddima*, the second chapter, and the third section.

Ibn Khaldun's significance as a scholar of the 14<sup>th</sup> century cannot be overestimated. His insights in economics, from taxation to labor division, from law to warfare, are ahead of his time. His ideas belong to the earliest theories of political economy.<sup>7</sup> He describes division of labor and specialization as means to improve profits. He also details the relation of supply and demand for price determination. Furthermore, he distinguishes between 'surplus' profit and 'sustenance' profit. Ibn Khaldun makes these economic remarks while describing how political ministries must work as regulatory agencies to sustain the state and to protect the rights of the people. His suggested regulations range from ensuring the authenticity and the weight of the national currency to the organization of taxes.

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<sup>7</sup> Ead, P. and Eid, N. (2014). Between Ibn Khaldun and Adam Smith (Fathers of Economics). *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(3), pp.54-56; See also; Owness, I. (2018). "*Ibn Khaldun, the Father of Economics*". [online] Faculty.georgetown.edu. Available at: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/imo3/ibn.htm> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2018]; and Soofi, A. (1995). Economics of Ibn Khaldun Revisited. *History of Political Economy*, 27(2), pp.387-404.

Furthermore, as a historian, Ibn Khaldun gives one of the earliest accounts of a comparative history of various societies through time. He provides evidence for his evaluations from the many courts he had worked for and sites he visited. In addition, he develops a critical historical method, where, rather than simply compiling past historical records, he insists on evaluating and comparing accounts for accuracy. This is a huge departure from then-current methods of translating and passing along ancient works unedited and rather goes back to the high standards of Greek and Roman historians like Thucydides and Polybius. Last but not least, *Al-Muqaddima* is one of the earliest discussions of the dichotomy of rural versus urban life.

However, Ibn Khaldun's most notable concept is that of *asabiya*. His theory of social cohesion works as a measurement to understand the ever-changing society. It is what the nomads in the desert and the sedentary people in the cities have in common although in very different forms. The strength of social cohesion, of *asabiya*, within a given nation corresponds to the rise of the nation itself. In contrast, the weakness of *asabiya* is the reason why a nation is weakening or even falling. History can thus be understood as the rise and fall of *asabiya* in its various forms.

## ***1 The Rise of the State***

In this chapter, I describe how societies form according to Ibn Khaldun. I begin by explaining how individuals depend on mutual cooperation to secure basic necessities such as food, water and protection. Next, I depict the conditions necessary for the survival of nomadic tribes. Most notably, I explain the social cohesion that binds various tribal members together. Afterwards, I detail how sedentary societies form and create a political state.

### *1.1 Early Social Organization*

Ibn Khaldun begins his discourse by asserting that each individual requires the help of others for protection and defense. This is a God-given limitation that arises from the difference between man and beast. He remarks, “When God fashioned the natures of all living beings and divided the various powers among them, many dumb animals were given more perfect powers than God gave to man” (1.1). Two examples of these “more perfect powers” that animals possess over humans are the horse and lion. A horse is much faster than a man while a lion is much stronger than a man. These powers are a God-given advantage.

According to Ibn Khaldun, aggressiveness is a natural quality to all living beings (1.1) since God gave both, men and beast, the quality of aggressiveness. Moreover, God created each living being with a natural ability or a special limb. For example, some animals possess long legs and sharp teeth as tools of aggression while others have wings and sharp claws. Even man has the God-given tools to aggress upon others such as; his hands, his legs, and his teeth. However, God gave man not only the quality of aggressiveness but that of reason as well. Man can use their wit to outsmart bigger, stronger animals. Men use crafts to best those animals that are above them in strength and ferocity. Their crafts serve them in producing tools as defense against

animals. Ibn Khaldun writes, “Lances, for instance, take the place of horns for goring, swords the place of claws to inflict wounds” (1.1). Man can use reason to avoid aggression altogether, yet man cannot be guaranteed to always use reason.

Ibn Khaldun continues his discussion of human organization by explaining the natural limitations of man, in order to better distinguish between man and beast. According to Ibn Khaldun, God created man in a fashion that requires constant sustenance and protection. He writes, “God created and fashioned man in a form that can live and subsist only with the help of food. He guided man to a natural desire for food and instilled in him the power that enables him to obtain it” (1.1). However, the means of an individual are not sufficient to afford a convenient living. All human beings are unable to constantly provide enough food and protect themselves alone. Ibn Khaldun even calculates, based on an absolute minimum intake of food, the adequate sustenance to feed one individual for one day would be unachievable for a single individual. Even if one assumes a diet of wheat only, one must plant, grind, and cook the wheat. Therefore, even if the individual has the strength to cultivate food, a man may not have the time to do everything needed to accomplish it. In addition, such actions require tools and they in turn require human crafts to make them. Thus, Ibn Khaldun concludes, “It is beyond the power of one man alone to do all that, or [even] part of it, by himself” (1.1).

In addition, the power of one individual to both manufacture defensive tools and to keep watch over predatory animals is limited at best. Ibn Khaldun writes, “The power of one individual human being cannot withstand the power of any one dumb animal, especially not the power of the predatory animals” (1.1). A solitary man is unable to defend himself against a solitary animal. However, a group of men can defend themselves against an animal. Thus, it becomes absolutely necessary for man to aide and be aided by his fellow men. These God-given

limitations force men to seek the cooperation and help of others. Through such cooperation human beings can sustain themselves and each other. If man lived in solitude he would have no means of gaining a livelihood, and the human species would die off.

From his earlier thoughts on human cooperation, Ibn Khaldun expresses the importance of social communities and cooperation in the beginning of human civilization. He goes on to explain the types of communities that are formed and where they reside. The first communities that arise produce only the bare necessities of life. Such groups are only occupied with surviving to the next day and consequently, they do not build concrete walls or cities, for they constantly and unpredictably move in search of food. These groups are described as Bedouins, or Arab nomads but he uses that term also for other early human communities.

He goes on to highlight the areas where Bedouins settle. They must live in large, empty areas for herding. However, they must also have access to water for their daily chores. He details how the southern part of the earth has greater portions of empty, vast areas, while he describes the Northern part of the earth as marred by mountains and cliffs. Furthermore, the upper part of the earth is far away from the equator and is characterized by “the bitter cold and frost,” (1.96) while the southern part is empty and hot. Thus, Bedouins roam in water-accessible areas, characterized by hot weather and vast land for herding.

The Bedouins are the first social group of Arabs that arises out of cooperation between men. Bedouins restrict themselves to the basic needs of food, clothing and living conditions. Most of them work simple jobs. They work as herders, raise camels, or are craftsmen producing tools and weapons. Ibn Khaldun states that Bedouins, “cannot avoid the call of the desert because it alone offers the wide fields, acres, pastures for animals” (1.2.1). The primary concern

for Bedouins is survival, they have to move from one region to another. Agriculture and settlement are unusual for the Bedouins. Rather, the men work as food gatherers and herders, while the women adopt simple crafts of sewing, knitting and basket making. Ibn Khaldun continues outlining the lives of Bedouins by stating that “the Bedouins are defended against outside enemies by a tribal militia composed of noble youths of the tribe who are known for their courage” (1.2.7). Thus, the tribe is a self-sufficient entity.

### *1.2 Tribal Group Feeling*

Ibn Khaldun states “the desert is a place of hardship and starvation, but to [Bedouins] it has become familiar and accustomed.” (1.2.7). The Bedouins structure their livelihood and social system according to the needs of living in the desert. Such a social system relies heavily on the unity of the people.

The need for such a strong unity leads to the rise of tribal group feeling. Group feeling does not only produce the unity of a tribe, but it dictates how a tribe feels, thinks and operates on a specific issue. Group feeling is the reason that an individual never leaves their tribe. Bedouins need group feeling to survive in the harsh conditions of a desert. Tribal group feeling is a sense of belonging that reduces members of the tribe into one individual. It is a natural phenomenon that is in its strongest form in tribes and close-knit groups. It relies on the familiarity of each individual in the tribe with each other and on the particular place and function each individual has. Tribal group feeling stems from the belief that the survival of one individual in the tribe is essential for the survival of the entirety of the tribe. If an individual is distant, then he is not contributing to the survival of said tribe. A constant familiarity is needed for the clan to become dependent upon each other and to be formed into one entity.

Ibn Khaldun stresses the importance of tribal group feeling for the continued existence of the Bedouin tribes. He argues that only tribes held together by group feeling can live in the desert. Tribal group feeling is the compassion and affection for one's blood relations and comrades that live in close proximity. Group feeling provides mutual support and aid while increasing the overall strength of a tribe. Again, everyone is familiar with the members of the tribe. If they are not family by blood, then they are family by marriage.

Even in instances of danger, no individual abandons the tribe. Losing one's family members and loved ones is not the only hindrance to forsaking one's tribe. If people choose to leave their tribe, they surrender themselves to the harsh conditions of the desert, where their livelihood would be threatened. Ibn Khaldun sees this as the reason why no one would ever leave, "no...one slinks away and seeks to save himself, because he is afraid of being left without support and dreads [that prospect]" (1.2.7). Indeed, the cohesion of the group as one entity insures that those who are in the group do not want to leave, and those outside it cannot enter.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun explains that group feeling is also needed as protection against the evil tendencies of man. He asserts: "God put good and evil into the nature of man. Ibn Khaldun quotes several verses in the Holy Qur'an as evidence of man's capability to commit evil acts. He quotes: 'We led him along the two paths,' and 'inspired (the soul) with its wickedness as well as its fear of God' (1.2.7). Thus, he sees evil as a God-given quality in men. Without the guidance of God, most men will propagate evil (1.2.7). Additionally, Ibn Khaldun states that some of the major evil qualities that exist in man are injustice and aggression (1.1). He explains that a man who is jealous of the properties that his brother possesses will take these possessions. Only a restraining force can prevent such evil actions in the tribe. This restraining force comes

from the group feeling, which is the social cohesion of the group. The Bedouin tribes do have *shaykhs* or chieftains that personate and enforce this restraining influence.

These leaders tend to be the heads of large families and clans. Their authority directly relies on the tribe's group feeling, *asabiya*, which glues them together as one. These leaders do not arise by elections but rather come to power through the influence of their family (1.2.8). The most powerful family or even the largest family will produce a leader that represents the whole tribe (1.2.8). This system works because the tribe deals like one big family. There is no divide between the internal family and the extended one; it is all one in the eyes of the members and of the leader.

Those who try to live in the desert need group feeling, not only to survive, but also for affection and respect. Affection rises naturally for one's own family members and loved ones, and respect comes from the protection that members of the clan provide for each other. Protection from evil, survival in the harsh conditions, and interdependence between the individuals are the major benefits of tribal group feeling (1.2.8). To live without a tribe is to live without a family. To live without a family under the harsh conditions of the desert is putting oneself to death both physically and emotionally.

### *1.3 Rise of Sedentary Lifestyle*

When the numbers of the Bedouins tribes increase, the labor power of the tribe increases. With every increase, some members of the tribe can specialize in new crafts (2.3.13). In other words, the tribe no longer requires all tribe members to hunt. The remaining individuals can work on something, such as crafts, and even specialize in them. The labor power of women evolves especially, for they do not constantly hunt for food, and can remain in the tents for manufacturing. Their labor power leads to further specialization, and greater production. Tribes

now can manufacture goods not merely to survive but also to trade. This trading happens between multiple tribes. They exchange their products with outside tribes and some will make that a regular habit.

As trading between the tribes further develops, the need for trading routes and trading centers grows. Certain members who specialize in trading turn into merchants, and these merchants seek a common place to do their trading permanently. The conditions of survival of these merchants switch from their tribe's traditional hunting, herding, or crafting to their own individual businesses. Their survival now depends more on their business than on the tribe. They create permanent markets to exchange their crafts and meet costumers and merchants from other tribes. Over time, their tribe identity becomes blurred, favoring instead to settle permanently near the markets. They can build concrete houses of clay because they settle permanently and surround themselves with walls to determine the boundaries of their markets and houses. These settlements are the end of their Nomadic life and the beginning of their sedentary lifestyle.

The market serves as the true heart of the city where prosperity and wealth develop and goods are exchanged. But the markets also remain the places where the sedentary group and the Bedouins come in contact with one another. The Bedouins exchange their craft or labor with the sedentary group and then return to their roaming ways. The heart of the city is the market and it pumps continuously according to the exchange of goods. Therefore, it seems that the market for Ibn Khaldun represents the economic hub where nomadic Bedouins interact with sedentary folk.

While both groups existed in Ibn Khaldun's time, he is convinced that the Bedouins must have existed prior to the sedentary people. He states, "[in] investigating the inhabitants of any given city [,] we shall find that most of its inhabitants originated. Furthermore, he describes "the (bare) necessities are no doubt prior to the conveniences and luxuries" (1.2.3). The sedentary life

changes the habits of the people living in the cities because they are no longer concerned with basic necessities. Indeed, the goods exchanged in the markets do not only cover the basic necessities but go far beyond them, providing comfort and even luxury. The life of sedentary people is also very different from that of Bedouins. They do not have to constantly hunt for food and their efforts to make a living are less intense; instead they can live a life where they can expand their efforts elsewhere to develop their craftsmanship, become professional merchants, and even study the sciences or arts.

Ibn Khaldun sees commerce as a natural part of civilization because it contributes to the overall well-being of society. He supports competitive markets, because they provide the greatest prosperity to society (2.4.32). More so, he argues that governmental policies that restrict competition will restrict power and wealth to the few and reduce the wealth of the general public. These markets are the driving engine of the cities' economies that bring about the arts, the sciences, and the humanities. Finally, because the sedentary people do not only look for the base necessities of life, they develop life's enjoyments.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the prosperity of a city relies upon division of labor. He writes:

*Civilization and its well-being as well as business prosperity depend on productivity and people's efforts in all directions in their own interest and profit. When people no longer do business in order to make a living, and when they cease all gainful activity, the business of civilization slumps, and everything decays*  
(1.2.11)

This passage demonstrates that the prosperity of the individual is the prosperity of the city. An individual who finds his passions in a craft and pursues said crafts has his best interest at

heart along with that of the city. Division of labor is a necessity for the individual to acquire sustenance and also a necessity for the society as a whole. He also realized that for the city to grow and prosper, a political administration must be established. I will discuss, in detail, the circumstances that lead to the formation of a political administration in the next chapter.

#### *1.4 Decline of Tribal Group Feeling and the Rise of Royal Authority Group Feeling*

##### 1.4.1 Decline of Tribal Asabiya

As has been explained above, the settlement in cities moves their inhabitants away from their tribes. The sedentary individual does not pledge allegiance to a chieftain, rather his allegiance is to his craft and his source of income. He no longer solely relies on his tribal members, but likewise on members of other tribes who live in their sedentary societies. With each generation, his family members diffuse their lineage, losing more and more of their sense of tribal kinship. Thereby, they lose their tribal group feeling or *asabiya*. Ibn Khaldun writes, “Family lines in this manner continually changed from one tribal group to another, and some people developed close contact with others [of a different descent]” (1.2.10).

The sedentary people lose their kinship to each other and to their tribe; they lose the close contact they have with their tribe members, and they lose the need of the tribe for survival. The natural bonding of *asabiya* that held the individuals of a tribe together disintegrates. The residents of the city do not know each other as closely and have, beyond their families, competitive interests that hinder them to form tribal *asabiya* with one another. Given that *asabiya* does not only serve the tribes to sustain their life but also to restrict immoral behavior and external attacks, this makes the sedentary people vulnerable in these regards. These conditions contribute to the establishment of a state.

##### 1.4.2 Rise of Royal Authority

The population of the people living within the cities continued to increase. With this increase, the businesses of merchants and craftsmen grew. Labor became readily available and thus, specialization and competition grew. Specialization and division of labor allow producers to generate surplus products allowing merchants to begin expanding their trade routes. Businessmen established trade routes between major cities to display their goods. Such trade routes serve as means to improve the wealth of the merchants.

However, in the beginning the trade routes lacked protection. As Ibn Khaldun notes, the trade routes will be frequently attacked by the Bedouins who will form “a surprise attack at night” (1.1.7). Such an aggression against a city can be “averted with the help of a militia [or] of government auxiliary troop” (1.1.7). Those who use the trade routes become therefore more invested in the formation of a militia to protect these routes. The city seeks the leadership of an official that promises to secure the routes in exchange for monetary compensation by the businessmen. Then, a greater number of cities seek such protection measures and pledge allegiance to the military leader for protection. The collection of such cities under one protecting leader became a state that stretched over several cities and could involve a sizable territory. The leader of the militia became the ruler and was responsible for the protection of a state and its citizens.

Ibn Khaldun goes on to explain that the ruler requires help to protect the people from external attacks. He also requires help to establish peace and order within the state. The ruler would seek help from those of common descent or common upbringing. This is because a ruler is most familiar with his family members. Second, while tribal *asabiya* is declining, some leftover group feeling remains. This remnant tribal feeling is present in familial bonds because families naturally depend on each other for survival. The ruler will choose his relatives for these tasks

because they are the people he trusts the most, and they are the ones with the strongest group feeling. Thus, the ruler would appoint his family members in these political branches. Ibn Khaldun writes, “royal authority exists only through group feeling” (2.3.1). This is due to every ruler choosing those of common descent in his political administration because they are bonded by familial dependency.

Tribal *asabiya* does not vanish away in sedentary society; it evolves. The ruler does still have remnants of tribal *asabiya* wherein one depends on others for one’s own survival. Thus, the ruler depends on his family members. Even within the general public in a sedentary society, there exists familial ties and group feeling amongst those who depend on each other for their livelihood. For example, a merchant who buys grains from a farmer has loyalty for and dependency on the farmer. The merchant has group feeling with the farmer. However, this group feeling is not as strong as tribal group feeling. This is because survival in Bedouin society is much harder than survival in sedentary society. The merchant can easily select another farmer to purchase from and he can even choose to not trade in grains altogether. In the desert, options are limited, and resources are scarce. Therefore, there is a stronger reliance and a stronger group feeling.

However, due to the aggressive nature of man, conflicts naturally arise. Thus, there must be a force that hinders men from attacking each other. In other words, while the merchant and the farmer rely on one another and will not attack each other, neither one has any reliance on the basket-maker. Thus, the basket-maker should expect that both the farmer and the merchant to attack him, but that does not occur. This does not occur because the ruler (political authority) exists. The ruler protects everyone in the city, and everyone relies on the ruler for protection. In essence, everyone in a sedentary society has group feeling with the ruler. If the merchant decides

to attack the basket-maker, the ruler will retaliate, and the merchant will lose the protection provided to him by the political authority. This dependency on the political leader for protection is called royal authority group feeling.

Political leadership established in the cities relies on superiority to prevent inner conflict and establishes political institutions to implement these laws. Ibn Khaldun explains:

*“group feeling gives protection and makes possible mutual defense, the pressing of claims, and every other kind of social activity. We have also mentioned before that according to their nature, human beings need someone to act as a restraining influence and mediator in every social organization, in order to keep the members from (fighting) with each other. That person must, by necessity, have superiority over the others in the matter of group feeling. If not, his power to (exercise a restraining influence) could not materialize. Such superiority is royal authority (mulk)” (1.2.16)*

The growth of the city’s population leads to greater surplus in production, leading to the establishment of inter-city trade routes. Such trade routes require the protection of a ruler. The ruler forms a militia group to protect the city, while in turn, the city provides monetary compensation for the militia and the ruler. More cities ask for the protection of the royal leader, establishing a political state with expanding borders. Ibn Khaldun states that large nations require strong royal authority, which is attained only through group feeling (2.3.1). The stronger the leader, the more dependent his subjects are on him for protection. Thus, the stronger the leader, the stronger the royal group feeling. The tribal group feeling will always be stronger than the royal group feeling.

## 2 *Of Political Functions*

In this chapter I describe the various duties of the ruler, and how the ruler requires an administrative council to aid him. The ruler's subjects require defense in numerous remote territories, where the ruler must enforce restraining laws among his subjects to protect their property and the legitimacy of the state's currency. He must also deal with the threats of other rulers and enforce diplomatic measures when necessary. Additionally, he must ensure that the laws of the land are implemented. Such duties require the formation of multiple channels that pertain to each task and help instituting peace within the state.

The ruler of the newly established states, by himself, is weak. He is merely one man that must rule the many. Therefore, he must ask for help to rule the territories stretched over several cities. Ibn Khaldun inscribes "He [the ruler] needs their help for the necessities of life and for all his other requirements. How much more, then, does he need it to exercise political leadership over his own species" (3.4.32). Ibn Khaldun writes:

*"(1) (His activities) may concern ways and means of protecting the community, such as the supervision of soldiers, armaments, war operations, and other matters concerned with military protection and aggression..."*

*(2) Or, they may concern correspondence with persons far away from the ruler in place or in time, and the execution of orders concerning persons with whom the ruler has no direct contact..."*

*(3) Or, they may concern matters of tax collection and expenditures, and the safe handling of these things in all their aspects. The man in charge is the chief of tax and financial matters..." (2.3.32).*

The ruler appoints other men in the state and designates a title that corresponds to their rule within the state. Thus, the power of the ruler is divided into sub-departments, each ruled by a man in charge. Ibn Khaldun writes “The ruler must use the services of men, such as soldiers, policemen, and secretaries, in all the departments of political power” (5.3). The ruler is the one to pick these leaders. Ibn Khaldun retains that the power is focused on the one ruler. He explains “the authority of political administration extends to all these men, and the highest... authority is the (common) source of (power for) their various branches” (5.3). The power of these sub-leaders and branches stems from the power of the one ruler.

The mentioned subdivisions within the two branches operate under the guidance of a *Wazir* (minister) and are called *Wizarah* (ministries). He writes “*Wizarah* (wazirate) is derived either from *mu'azarah* ‘help,’ or from *wizr* ‘load’” (4.32). The *wazir* is the aid that oversees a specific ministry in the state. He is the liaison between the ruler and the people within the state. He is the reigning political authority in that division, by the power given to him by the ruler. He states “the wazir were helping the...[ruler] whom he supports to carry his burdens and charges” (4.32).

### 2.1 *The Police and Jurisprudence*

When the group feeling among Bedouins vanishes, they are less supportive to each other, hardly know each other, or even feel jealousy and resentment. That is how deception, crime, and corruption can arise because group feeling does no longer guarantee moral behavior. As a result, institutions have to be installed who protect people from each other’s misbehavior. For example, the purpose of the police is, “to cut down corruption, to stamp out criminality, to destroy and dissolve the homes and centers of criminal activity, and to enforce the punishments imposed by the religious law and by the political authorities, as concern for the general (public) interests in a

town requires” (2.3.37). The office of the police is held by those subordinate to the military general “who at times uses the (chief of police) to execute his orders” (2.3.37). The office of the police has a great reputation and standing, it was entrusted to high military leaders and important clients of the court. The police office had a different meaning in each dynasty. In Spain, the office was known under the name of ‘*Modeer Al- Madina*’, or town chief, who was responsible for maintaining order and peace, while fulfilling other town duties. In a way, the police chief was more like a mayor in our modern conception. In Maghreb, the police chieftain was also the magistrate of the town while in the Turkish dynasty the office was held by the governor.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the office of the police was originally created by the ‘Abbasid dynasty, and the person who held it had two responsibilities. First, he was concerned with combating crime in the town and finding the perpetrator. Second, he acted as the judge that executed the legal punishments. The police chieftain had therefore to be proficient in the laws of the land, both the religious and the civil laws. He also had to be knowledgeable in the various kinds of punishments as dictated by the religious law.<sup>8</sup>

The religious law concerns itself with the punishment necessary to convicted criminals, but it does not concern itself with the proceedings of the legal court. There is no mandate on the formation of a court and the handling of the accused and the defendant. Thus, political leadership must concern itself with investigating the crime, and presenting the case. He pens “[political leadership] does this through the magistrate, who, being in the possession of all the circumstantial evidence, forces (the criminal) to confess, as is required by the general (public) interest” (2.3.37). Sometimes the police chieftain was “given sole jurisdiction over capital crimes

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<sup>8</sup> Punishments in the Muslim world were dictated mostly by the religious law as we will explain in the next section

and legal punishments, and those matters were taken away from the judge's jurisdiction (2.3.36).

Ibn Khaldun lists how some of the rulers have dealt with the police. Because it is not designated by any religious laws, political leaders had some leeway in constructing this office. For example, the Spanish Umayyad designated two branches to the office, one called the great police, and the other the small police. The great police “had jurisdiction over government dignitaries, and, in cases of wrongdoing, could restrain them, their relatives, and other persons of rank who were connected with them as clients” (2.3.37) while the chief of the small police was concerned with commoners. The police in the Almohad dynasty, in the Maghreb, had no authority over government dignitaries (2.3.37).

### 2.1.1 Jurisprudence and the laws of Court

Jurisprudence is, according to Ibn Khaldun, knowledge of the laws of God and their classification.<sup>9</sup> These laws concern the actions of all Muslims and are classified under obligatory, forbidden, recommendable, disliked, or permissible actions. These religious laws are derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (traditions that detail the life of the prophet and the early followers), and from previous evidence established by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh<sup>10</sup>). They together constitute the science of *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the lawgiver as ordained by God.

As Ibn Khaldun explains, in the beginning of Islam, not all followers of the prophet were qualified to make decisions on legal matters nor were they scholars of the Quran. Most could speak to the prophet directly or to those of higher ranking connected to him. In fact, most

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<sup>10</sup> Stands for, ‘Peace Be Upon Him.’ A complimentary and honorary phrase given to Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims were illiterate at the time of the prophet and the Quran had to be recited to them so they could understand its meaning. Men who were able to read the Qur'an were called 'readers.'

These men "knew the Qur'an and were acquainted with the abrogating and abrogated, the ambiguous and unambiguous verses, and with all the rest of the evidence that can be derived from the Qur'an" (3.5.12). Then, when Islam spread, illiteracy decreased among the Arabs due to Islamic teaching that encouraged education. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was honed and became a craft and science that was constantly studied and revised. These Quranic readers became jurists and religious scholars.

*Fiqh* is seen as a science because it is based on logical deductions and previous precedent. Judges have to state their opinion on the matter using specific verses, relating to previous evidence and detailing their work. The Qur'an and Sunnah are viewed as having all the answers necessary, one only has to discover it and interpret it. Judges have to handle the cases based on four interpretations. In this section, we will detail the four interpretations and their characteristics.

The Sunnah's reliability differs widely depending on who is reciting it from Muhammad's (pbuh) early followers. Ibn Khaldun explains "their [the Sunnah's] legal contents, as a rule, are contradictory. Therefore, a decision is needed [as to which interpretation is more valid]" (3.5.12). In addition, there are new cases which arise in the modern world that are not covered by the two texts. Furthermore, the Arabic language has words that have multiple meaning. All of this causes unavoidable differences of opinion among Muslim scholars.

Thus, the jurists developed two main approaches to *fiqh*. One was the use of reasoning through analogy, adopted by the Iraqis. The other was the use of tradition adopted by the Hijazis

(a region in the west of present day Saudi Arabia) (3.5.12). For example, both schools of thought may have to give their opinion on driving cars. The Iraqis will use the analogy of riding camels or horses for transportation to say that riding cars is permissible. The Hijazis say that the Prophet and his family have traveled by various means and set a precedent for traveling and, as such, using a car for traveling is permissible. This case was one of many cases that scholars presented to the courts and debated amongst themselves in an effort to draw direct conclusions to the Quran.

The chief of the Iraqi school was Abu Hanifah al-Nu`man b. Thabit. Ibn Khaldun describes his place as “unrivaled” and “attested [only] by those of his own caliber... Al-Shafi’i” (3.5.12). Al- Shafi’i is the leader of the Hijazis school and the successor to the founder Malik b. Anas. Both, Al- Shafi’i and Anas, were students to al-Nu`man. He writes “Malik b. Anas was followed by Muhammad b. Idris al-Muttalibi ash-Shafi’i. He traveled to the 'Iraq after Malik's time. He met the followers of the imam Abu Hanifah and learned from them” (3.5.12). The Hijazis school split when Al-Shafi’i, “combined the approach of the Hijazis with those of the 'Iraqis.” Consequently, the Hijazis school was split into those who follow Malik, and those who follow Al-Shafi’i. Then, Ahmad b. Hanbal, who was one of the highest-ranking *hadith*<sup>11</sup> scholars under Abu Hanifah’s school, founded a separate school. As a result, there were four schools of thought; Al- Maliki, Al- Shafi’i, Al- Hanafi, and Al- Hanbali.

Adherents to Abu Hanifah lived and taught mostly in Iraq, India, China, Transoxania,<sup>12</sup> Persia and Turkey. His students served in courts of the Abbasid Caliphate as consultants to the

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<sup>11</sup> Hadith is one of various reports describing the words, actions, or habits of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The term comes from the Arabic language and means a "report", "account" or "narrative".

<sup>12</sup> “Land beyond the river” includes present day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and southwest Kazakhstan.

ruler himself (3.5.12). He states “their [Abu Hanifah’s pupils] writings were numerous and their disputations with the Shafi’ites were frequent. Their ways of dealing with controversial questions were excellent” (3.5.12). Their presence at the high courts supplied the jurisdiction for the ruler, who would consult them in manner[s] of war, taxes and even inheritance. They were held in high regards for their ability to answer these controversial questions. The adherents to Al- Shafi’i were concentrated in Egypt more than any other Muslim region (3.5.12). His school also spread through the regions occupied by Abu Hanifah’s alongside regions such as Khurasan which includes central Asia. This school along with Al- Hanafi were the two oldest and largest of the four schools of thought. Thus, most of the writings of Al- Shafi’i were under discussion or rebuttals with the ways of those of Al-Hanafi. They would hold “many discussion meetings, and [write]... books on controversial questions...full of the various kinds of (Shafi’ite) argumentation” (3.5.12) against the followers of Al- Hanafi. Al- Hanafi followers, too, had a court standing and were tasked with legal matters, mostly in Egyptian courts.

These four authorities are the ones recognized in Muslim cities according to Ibn Khaldun and their authority extends to now. The technical terminology of *fiqh* grew larger which prevented people from easily establishing their own school of thought. Furthermore, another deterrent to establishing a new school of thought is the fear that unqualified opinions and dubious reasoning might enter the religion. Leaders and judges would not adhere to the opinion of new schools and eventually, these newly established schools die out. Lastly, the Arabic language has become so technical it is not easy to start a new tradition of interpretation. Thus, Muslims cities, their rulers, and the scholars of the four traditions had people adopt these existing traditions. Judges “had to make reference to the established principles from the school doctrine of their authority, in order to be able to analyze problems in their context and disentangle them when they got confused”

(3.5.12).

Judges had a limited ability in applying independent judgement and analogy. Analysis of the scholarly books pertaining to the four scholars became a requirement for the judges. They had to study the four traditions in Islamic court and then to judge the matter. Ibn Khaldun concludes “basic textbooks had been produced in the correct manner, and the continuity of their transmission had been established, was to hand down the respective school traditions and, for each individual adherent, to act in accordance with the traditions of his school. Today, jurisprudence means this, and nothing else. The person who would claim independent judgment nowadays would be frustrated and have no adherents” (3.5.12).

## *2.2 The ministry of financial operations and taxation*

The soldiers and policemen provide protection but need to be paid for their services. Hence, a ministry must be established to oversee national spending. Ibn Khaldun describes the role of the ministry as follows: “It guards the rights of the dynasty in the matters of income and expenditures. It takes a census of the names of all soldiers, fixes their salaries, and pays out their allowances” (4.32). Ibn Khaldun explained that these monetary transactions are to be kept in a book dubbed *diwan*. *Diwan* also refers to the place where the tax chiefs hold their offices.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the first person to set up the *diwan* in the Muslim dynasty was Caliphate Umar Ibn Al Khattab (1.4.33). One story goes that when his general Abu Hurayrah arrived with a large sum of money from Bahrain,<sup>13</sup> the administrative officials around Umar saw

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the Islamic Empire had two religious laws concerning taxation. One related to Muslims and the other to non-Muslims. Muslims paid 2.5% of any *excess* money after the passing of one whole year on the original balance. Excess money is defined as any money left over after necessary spending such as, money for food, medicine and housing. For non-Muslims, Islam tolerated the existence of Abrahamic religions and never forced any Jew or Christian to convert into Islam. The Christian and Jewish were considered ‘on the conscious’ on the Muslim Dynasty and did not pay the Muslim tax. However, they paid a tax for protection at the end of the year. This tax

that the sum of money was too large and did not know how to distribute it among the branches of the government (4.33). Thus, Khalid b. al-Walid, also a general in the Muslim army, advised the use of the *diwan*, stating that in the Levant, which was under Roman rule, the rulers keep such *diwans*. Ibn Khaldun tells another story where al-Hurmuzan, an Iranian aristocrat, noticed that the soldiers' salary was being dispatched without a master roll of the soldier's present. He feared that some soldiers have already died but others are taking their salary. He asked Caliphate Umar who keeps track of the dead soldiers, or those who defected from the army. Al- Hurmuzan explained that some soldiers might abuse the lack of such a master roll and suggested Umar begins keeping such a roll as financial records.

In both cases, a census of the army was ordered. Then this census was used to pay the salary of those in the military. The census was arranged according to family relationships and the degree of the relationship to the soldiers. Those relatives are notified in case anything happens to the soldiers. This office has the “complete freedom to levy, collect, and handle money, to control the activities of officials and agents in this connection, and then to make disbursements in the proper amounts and at the proper times” (2.3.32). The caliphate required a means to keep track of those who served in the army and their dues.

Ibn Khaldun ends his introduction of the subsection on *diwan* of taxes on an ironic, if not sardonic, tone. He writes “occasionally, in some places, the office was held by persons who had a good understanding of it” (2.3.32). the establishment of the taxation ministry is only possible if the royal authority is firmly established (2.3.32). The royal authority must have superior control over all aspects of ruling to be able to seeks monetary compensation from its people. This

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excluded the poor, women, children and the elderly. (Bowering, Gerhard, et al., editors. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2013)

authority must also have an established administrative side. Ibn Khaldun states that there should be one person that supervises this ministry. Furthermore, each town that pledges allegiance to the royalty in exchange for protection should have a branch within the taxation ministry. Each branch will have a supervisor that oversees tax collection in that town. There must also be an office that oversees all the branch supervisors and reports back to the royal authority.

### 2.2.1 The Mint

The mint is used in commercial transactions within the state and is “concerned with the stamping of the dinars and dirhams” (2.3.34). The word *sikkah*<sup>14</sup> refers to the stamp, or the piece of iron used to stamp the coin. The word was also used to designate the process of engraving on the said coins. The production of these coins is supervised by the office of the mint. The word has thus come to designate that office.

This process of engraving *sikkah* requires supervision by a designated authority. Pictures or words can be engraved that represent the ruler of the land. Of course, before engraving the coin, the coin is tested according to a set standard. The coin must be of the proper weight, and of the proper purity. The authorities that oversees these standards are the office of the mint. Ibn Khaldun details “at the beginning of Islam, the weight of the dirham had been six *danaqs*. The weight of the *mithqal* was one dirham and three-sevenths of a dirham, so that ten dirhams made seven *mithqals*” (2.34). According to Islamic law, the Islamic dinar has a specific weight of 22k gold equivalent to 4.35 grams. The Dirham is of pure silver with a weight of 2.975 grams<sup>15</sup>. Both the dinar and the dirham were round coins.

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<sup>14</sup> The word directly means ‘coin mold’

<sup>15</sup> Porteous, John (1969). "The Imperial Foundations". *Coins in History: A Survey of Coinage from the Reform of Diocletian to the Latin Monetary Union*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. pp. 14–33.

Another reason for fixing the weight of the coins is because, during the rule of the Persian empire, the weight of the official dirham varied. The dirham might have weighed, “twenty, or twelve, or ten carats” (2.34). However, because taxes needed to be paid to the government, people ended up paying different tax amounts using coins with the same name but different values. To correct this, the Persian government stipulated that the average of the three weights should be collected, which would be 14 carats. Nonetheless, it can be imagined that this was a logistic nightmare since it required a constant weighing of the coins. Accordingly, when Umar b. Al-Khatib came into power, he “gave orders to investigate and determine which dirham was most commonly used in transactions” (2.3.34) and fixed the weight of the dirhams accordingly.

The office of the mint has a crucial role in the finances of a state. The mint enables the residents to distinguish between good and bad coins, in other words, those approved by the ruler from those not approved. The stamp of the ruler guarantees that the coins can be used in exchange of goods in the state. During the Umayyad caliphate, al-Hajjaj, a notable governor of Iraq and modern day Saudi Arabia, began the discontinuation of coins that do not have clear stamps authorized by the ruler upon them. Al Hajjaj was ordered by Sa'id b. al-Musayyab and Abu Zinad Abd-al- Malik, the former an Islamic judge and the latter the ruler of the Umayyad Caliphate. Such authorization of the coins through stamps became necessary because “frauds practiced with [bad] dinars and dirhams...became very serious” (2.3.34). Later on, Abd al Malik ordered all regions of the Empire to use stamped coins only.

When 'Abd-al-Malik took office, he instructed that all coins have legends on both sides to indicate their authenticity. Ibn Khaldun writes about the used legends: “On one side, the legend included the names of God with the formulas: ‘There is no God but God; and ‘Praised be God,’

and the prayer for the Prophet and his family; on the other side, it included the date and the name of the caliph” (2.34). This was the engraving used because words are more representatives of the Arab spirit, and because the religious law forbade pictures. This design was used during the dynasties of the 'Abbasids, the 'Ubaydid (Fatimids), and the Spanish Umayyads. After 'Abd-al-Malik, the coinage remained the same for the whole Muslim period.

### 2.2.2 Taxation

The ministry of finances oversees the expenditures of the state. The ministry requires a census to gauge the required cost of the military and of the policemen, as well as to keep track of the expenses of the ruler. The financial matters of all administrative employees must rely exclusively on taxes collected from the people (2.3.38). This is why a census is used to collect the appropriate tax revenue. The salary of federal government workers should be derived from tax revenue. Furthermore, the ruler’s income must come solely from subsidies given by the state (2.3.38).

The reason that the ruler cannot have income outside of his governmental subsidies, is because it might lead to a slump in the economy of the state. Ibn Khaldun writes “Other (measures) taken by the ruler, such as engaging in commerce or agriculture, soon turn out to be harmful to the subjects, to be ruinous to the revenues, and to decrease cultural activity” (2.3.36). When a ruler acquires a business, he jeopardizes the economy of the state. First, the ruler will expose himself to the fluctuations of the market, where he will abuse his power to sway the market to his favor by selling his stock at a mark-up or buying his supplies at a lower price (2.3.38). Also, “the ruler can appropriate much of (the agricultural products and the available merchandise), if it occurs to him. (He can do it) by force, or by buying things up at the cheapest possible price...there may be no one who would dare to bid against him” (2.3.38). Even if the

ruler demands to be treated as fairly as the next merchant, he will still face favoritism from those vying for his status and friendship.

Furthermore, “when the ruler, who has so much more money than they, competes with them, scarcely a single one of them will (any longer) be able to obtain the things he wants, and everybody will become worried and unhappy” (2.3.38). In other words, the ruler would begin his business with a greater wealth than common businessmen and will be more concerned with maintaining his capital than politics. The common merchants are at an equal playing field according to the rules of the market, but when the ruler enters the race, the balance of the market will shift in his favor.

Finally, the involvement of the ruler in business would shift the fiscal policy of the country. The ruler is not expected to pay taxes per his duties as the ruler. Thus, he would not pay any taxes on his business (2.3.38) while other merchants will. Thus, these merchants will be less motivated to enter the market. This indicates that the tax revenue will decrease (2.3.38). Such a decrease will force the ruler to either increase the tax rates or to expand his own business to levy the losses. However, both of these options will lead to an economic decline in the long term.

In the beginning of the dynasty, group feeling is still strong and allegiance to the political leader is high as the majority of residents comes from the same tribe. The tasks of the ruler are limited, and he does not need a large budget and imposes small amounts of taxes (2.3.36). Taxes that will be imposed on property such as grain and cattle, and on land. These taxes will be imposed under the guidance of the religious law which stipulates the frequency of taxation, and the rates. These low taxes help “cultural enterprises grow and increase, because the low taxes bring satisfaction. When cultural enterprises grow, the number of individual imposts and

assessments mounts. In consequence, the tax revenue, which is the sum total of (the individual assessments), increases.” (2.36) where the tax revenue of the state depends on individual taxations. In other words, having low taxes increases the spending power of the individual who will invest in enterprises.

As the state continues to grow and populations continue to increase, group feeling thins. Rulers who were born in the Bedouin tribe forget more and more the Bedouin ways, and became more cultivated and sophisticated. Ibn Khaldun clarifies “the Bedouin attitude and simplicity lose their significance, and the Bedouin qualities of moderation and restraint disappear” (2.3.36). As the leader’s habits adapt to sedentary culture, the royal costumes become more luxurious (2.3.36) and this continues in the following generations. This will raise the expenses of the court and thus the ruler will impose higher taxes to leverage the increased costs of maintenance. Additional taxes such as those placed on articles of commerce, and those charged at the city gates will be added to those already implemented (2.3.36).

Next, Ibn Khaldun discusses who should be exempt from paying taxes. He states that the ruler and his immediate entourage should be the only people in the state who are exempt from paying taxes because tax revenues are the only source of income of the ruler. Merchants, wealthy men and other powerful men who seek it as a favor from the ruler that they may be exempt from paying taxes are jeopardizing the welfare of the state. He writes “exemption from taxes and customs duties is more likely than anything else to cause one's capital to grow, and it brings quick profits” (2.3.38). However, a decrease in tax revenue is a decrease in the income of the ruler, and the overall welfare of the state. Thus, the ruler must prevent those who seek such favors from influencing his fiscal decisions.

Eventually taxes will become a large burden for the subjects of the ruler. They will cease to pay out of allegiance to the ruler but rather out of obligation and fear of punishment (2.3.36). At that point of development, the subjects will not even remember the original purpose of the taxes because of the gradual increase of taxes over long time periods. These taxations increase beyond the means of equity (2.3.36)<sup>16</sup> and will prevent the subjects from investing their money in enterprises and make them spend less. The decrease of investments and of spending will hurt the tax revenues of the state because property taxes and income taxes will decrease. Thus, while higher taxes will result in an initial increase in the collected revenue, eventually, the economy will slow down, and less tax revenue will be obtained in the long run.

Ibn Khaldun tells an interesting story about what type of taxes could give the best outcome. He seems to suggest a particular tax, that on wine. He details a story where a jurist was asked where he wanted the funds of his salary to come from. As previously mentioned, government officials receive their salaries from the tax revenues. The jurist replied that he wished his salary to come from taxes imposed on wine, stating: “I choose the tax that is not haunted by the souls of those who had to pay it. Rarely would anybody spend his money on wine unless he were gay and happy with the experience of (drinking wine) and did not regret it. His soul, therefore, does not cling to the money he has had to spend” (2.3.38). Ibn Khaldun described this response as ‘remarkable.’

### *2.3 The ministry (diwan) of official correspondence and writing*

This office constitutes the third pillar of the established administration. It controls

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldun never explicitly explains what he means by ‘beyond the means of equity,’ but one can infer that he means beyond the means of the religious laws.

communication of the ruler with his administration and with the people. The office is responsible for writing governmental orders and for communicating between different cities under the royal authority.

In the 'Abbasid caliphate the office was highly coveted to the most educated of men in the caliphate. The chief of correspondence was called the secretary of the caliphate, where his responsibilities included issuing governmental documents freely with his signature. The secretary had his own seal on governmental letters, a seal that represented the ruler of the land. These sealed documents are issued as an official law or norm that should be followed in the state.

One of the duties of the secretary is called *tawqi*, which means transcribing the ruler's speeches during governmental meetings or the ruler's opinion on a specific topic. The transcriptions are distributed to the people in the markets. Ibn Khaldun details "the secretary sits in front of the ruler during his public audiences and takes notes (*yuwaqqi'*), in the most concise and stylistically most perfect manner" (2.26). Thus, the person who becomes the secretary must have great skill in writing well and have beautiful stylistic hand-writing. Ibn Khaldun even talks about the competition between stylists to learn different styles and techniques.

The secretary has to be educated in courtly manners. He also had to have great knowledge of history and be familiar "with the principal branches of scholarship, because such things may come up in the gatherings and audiences of the ruler" (2.27). Furthermore, he had to have good manners and pay attention to etiquette for he would be the constant companion for the royal authority. He must have been proficient in poetry and literature to be able to help the ruler express his wishes in the best manner possible.

Ibn Khaldun details how some dynasties gave the job of the secretary to military men

instead of educated nobles pointing out that these dynasties “have no regard for scholarship on the account of simplicity of group feeling (prevailing in them).” (2.28). He explains that in some dynasties the administration is made up solely of the relatives of the royal authority, which were given these offices because of their close relationship to the ruler. The ruler gives these offices to his relatives because he shares a strong group feeling with them.

In cases where administrative offices are given to people based on group feeling, the job of the secretary should be split into one representing the council of the president and one representing the royal authority alone. The one that would represent the council would be a distant or non-related individual that is chosen for his penmanship and knowledge. The other would be one the ruler uses to confide in and would be part of the family of the royal authority.

Ibn Khaldun realized the enormous influence the secretary has on the ruler because he is with the ruler at all times, and even speaks for the ruler.<sup>17</sup> What the secretary seals is considered the wishes of the ruler and must be enforced. He lists the requirements of the secretary as follows:

*“The secretary needs...to be mild where mildness is needed, to be understanding where judgment is needed, to be enterprising where enterprise is needed, to be hesitant where hesitation is needed. He must prefer modesty, justice, and fairness. He must keep secrets. He must be faithful in difficult circumstances. He must know (beforehand) about the calamities that may come. He must be able to put things in*

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that when Ibn Khaldun was 20 years old, he worked at the Chancellery of the Tunisian ruler Ibn Tafrakin. Whereby his position was the ‘seal bearer’ (*Kātib al-'Alāmah*). His job description was consistent with the detailed description Ibn Khaldun gives for the duties of the seal bearer in the Office of correspondence (“Ibn Khaldun: His Life and Works | Muslim Heritage”. muslimheritage.com. Retrieved 2017-12-05.)

*their proper places and misfortunes into their proper categories. He must have studied every branch of learning and know it well, and if he does not know it well, he must at least have acquired an adequate amount of it. By virtue of his natural intelligence, good education, and outstanding experience, he must know what is going to happen to him before it happens, and he must know the result of his actions before action starts. He must make the proper preparations for everything, and he must set up everything in its proper, customary form.”*

He asserts that all those who are vying to become secretaries to the ruler must have adequate knowledge of the sciences and of religion. The starting point in the education of any secretary is gaining knowledge of the Holy Quran, and of the life of prophet Mohammad (pbuh). He must then study the Arabic language and oratorical literature, learn poems and figures of speech in order to write the most eloquent laws. The secretary must be “acquaint[ed]...with both Arab and non-Arab political events, and with the tales of (both groups) and the biographies describing them, as that will be helpful to you in your endeavors.” (2.30). Finally, secretaries should gain an understanding for accounting and the taxes of the various lands.

### 2.3.1 The Seal

Ibn Khaldun tells the anecdote that when prophet Mohammad (pbuh) wanted to write to the Byzantine Emperor, he was told that the non-Arabs accepted only sealed letters. Thus, the prophet took a silver ring with the following legend engraved upon it: ‘Muhammad, the Messenger of God,’ and used it as a seal (2.3.34). The seal became a government symbol during the time of the prophet. Then, each new caliphate engraved the own seal of the current Caliph to authenticate his letters. The first who used a seal after the death of the Prophet was Mu'awiyah I. Mu'awiyah I established the Umayyad dy

But Ibn Khaldun also mentions more reasons why seals have been introduced. Through a messenger named 'Amr b. az-Zubayr. Mu'awiyah I. gave the order that Al-Zubayr should obtain 100,000 dirhams, but the letter was opened, and the sum was changed from 100,000 to 200,000 Dirhams. When the excess payment was noticed, Mu'awiyah held 'Amr responsible and jailed him until 'Amr's brother paid the sum on his behalf. It was after this incident that Mu'awiyah introduced the seal to the ministry (2.3.34). Sealing “expresses the idea of ‘end’ or ‘completion,’ in the sense that a writing thus (sealed) is correct and valid” (2.3.34).

Using a seal was specific to the ministry of correspondence. The secretaries see to it that the letters of the ruler are expedited and authenticated. Seals do not have to be an engraving used for closing letters but can also be a phrase written in a specific way or a signature. Ibn Khaldun writes:

*“A particular letter somehow becomes effective through the use of such a signature...without it, it would be invalid and imperfect. The sealing may (also) be (effected) through something written by hand at the end or the beginning of a letter, some well-chosen words of praise and glory (the formulas ‘Praised be God’ and ‘Glory to God’), or the name of the ruler or amir, or of the writer of the letter, whoever he may have been, or through terms descriptive of the writer. Such (formulas) written by hand indicate the correctness and validity of the letter”*  
(2.3.34).

## 2.4 On Economics

### 2.4.1 Prices and Profits

Ibn Khaldun begins his explanation of prices in the market, by dividing the needs of

people into two categories; necessities and luxuries. These needs are satisfied in the markets, where both necessities and luxuries are sold. Necessities include “wheat and barley; corresponding foods, such as beans, chick-peas, peas, and other edible grains; and wholesome foods such as onions, garlic, and the like” (2.12) while “seasonings, fruits, clothes, utensils, mounts, all the crafts, and buildings” (2.4.12) belong to luxuries. When the population of the city is small, and its development is weak, the prices of necessities are high while those of luxuries are low. In contrast, the prices of necessities in highly developed cities are low and those of luxuries are high.

The reason for such a disparity is that necessary food has a stable demand because people will always demand grains for sustenance. When the population is small, there are not many farmers or many laborers to harvest the lands and it is hard to satisfy the necessary needs of the population. Furthermore, if the farmers had a bad yield, this will jeopardize the sustenance of the entire city. In such small populations, most farmers are farming for the sustenance of themselves and their family, without necessarily providing food for the city’s residents. Furthermore, in small populations, there may be just one farmer who has no one to compete with him. This sole farmer is able to name his own price on his merchandise, he can inflate the prices of these necessities. On the other hand, in large cities with great populations, farmers have enough laborers to harvest and procure grains. Also, the large number of farmers creates a place for competition in which farmers will lower the price of their merchandise in an effort to sell it. This is why prices in faraway regions are higher than those in large cities.

Luxuries or conveniences do not matter as much to the public. Most of the public may not seek out these luxuries unless they have a surplus of money. When the population is small, the demand for these luxuries is low and thus, their price is low. What need is there for species if

the consumer does not have grains to cook? However, in large cities with high populations the demand for these luxuries will grow and thus, their prices will be high. Ibn Khaldun describes “when a city has a highly developed, abundant civilization and is full of luxuries, there is a very large demand for those conveniences and for having as many of them as a person can expect in view of his situation... and prosperous people used to luxuries will pay exorbitant prices for them, because they need them more than others. Thus, as one can see, prices come to be high” (2.12).

The price of necessary or luxury commodities also depends on the condition of the cities. If the city is known for its agricultural strength, the price will be low for products of agriculture, while in cities famous for craftsmanship the prices of luxury products may be lower. He writes:

*“It is reflected in these prices. This has happened in Spain at the present time. The Christians pushed the Muslims back to the seacoast and the rugged territory there, where (the soil) is poor for the cultivation of grain and little suited for (the growth of) vegetables. They themselves took possession of the fine soil and the good land. Thus, (the Muslims) had to treat the fields and tracts of land, in order to improve the plants and agriculture there. This treatment required expensive labor (products) and materials, such as fertilizer and other things that had to be procured. Thus, their agricultural activities required considerable expenditures. They calculated these expenditures in fixing their prices, and thus Spain has become an especially expensive region...” (2.4.12).*

Next, Ibn Khaldun discusses the impact of taxes levied on food and other such needs acquired in the markets. He notes that the prices in highly developed cities increase as the ruler

begins to impose taxes on food. He notes “prices in cities, thus, are higher... because customs duties and other duties and levies...in cities, especially in the later (years) of a dynasty” (2.4.12) are higher. This increase in taxes contributes to the instability of the state. I will further discuss the impact of high prices in developed cities in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter and how they drive the fall of the state.

When these prices rise, the ruler may be tempted to force merchants to sell at lower prices to appease the people. This, according to Ibn Khaldun, is detrimental to the profits of the merchants. Profits are collected from two sources, crafts and commerce (2.4.12). Where commerce means “the buying of merchandise and goods, storing them, and waiting until fluctuation of the market brings about an increase in the prices of (these goods)” (2.4.12). This is in an effort to gain profit. There are two types of profit; *ribh* and *kasb*. *Kasb* is one’s daily income while *ribh* is the *total* income of the individual after all his debts/ investments are subtracted. It can also be thought of as one’s capital. When merchants are forced by their government or rulers to trade at lower prices they lose their *kasb* and eventually their capital (*ribh*). He states “when the prices of any type of goods, victuals, clothing material, or anything else (that may bring in) capital, remain low and the merchant cannot profit [*kasb*] from any fluctuation of the market affecting these things, his profit and gain stop...the merchants lose their capital [*ribh*]” (2.4.12).

Ibn Khaldun gives the example of grain producers that are forced to sell their grains at a lower price, causing them to lose income. These grain producers will soon go out of business which will impact the conditions of “millers, bakers, and all the other occupations that are connected with grain from the time it is sown to the time it can be eaten” (2.4.12). Within a short period of time, the ruler’s income collected from taxing the farmers diminishes and he has

compromised his own living conditions. Thus, when prices are too low, they destroy the livelihood of the merchants who trades in these merchandises and thereby, the economy of the state. Thus, these merchants must not be forced by any ruler to trade at lower prices, even though the people may be angry at the ruler for the high prices of grains and other products, and appeal to him to fix these prices, the ruler must not interfere, or he will disrupt the economic prosperity of the state.

#### 2.4.2 Natural and Unnatural Ways of Making a Living

Ibn Khaldun defines livelihood as the desire for sustenance and the effort to obtain it (2.5.1). One may obtain sustenance and profit in various ways. The government obtains its income through taxation, which is done by appropriate and recognized means (2.5.1). This is how the ruler keeps his sustenance. Other people may obtain income by hunting wild animals or catching fish in the sea and selling any excess, or by domesticating animals such as bees or cows to produce products such as milk and honey, or by agriculture. One can gain sustenance by using one's labor in, "a craft, such as writing, carpentry, tailoring, weaving, horsemanship, and similar (crafts)" (2.5.1), or in other professions and activities. Finally, sustenance can also be achieved through commerce and barter.

Agriculture is the first means of obtaining a livelihood because of its very nature (2.5.1). It is simple and innately natural, it needs not extensive knowledge or rules. It was invented by Adam who taught it to his children and so on. It existed from the earliest times, and its use by less developed cities for their sustenance indicates its simplicity. Even before there was an understanding of plants and of the best way to plant seeds, there have been already people planting the lands. This shows that minimal knowledge is needed and that this knowledge came

from rudimentary beginning, the father of all mankind. Agriculture is “the oldest way of making a living and the one most closely related to nature” (2.5.1).

In contrast, being a servant is not a natural way of making a living. In proving why servanthood is unnatural, Ibn Khaldun argues that the person who hires the servant as well as servant have both unnatural characteristics. First, servants can exist only because most people who live in luxury are too proud to take care of their own needs or do not know how to do so (2.5.3). They require servants to take care of their own needs and pay them for their services. However, such a situation violates what is natural to a man, and it is a sign of weakness to rely on others for one’s own needs.

Man is born with the ability to take care of his own needs and the needs of his household; thus, to be unable to take care of oneself due to laziness is unnatural. When a man chooses servants to take care of him, while he is fully able to do so himself, it is because he is accustomed to being taken care of or babied. Ibn Khaldun writes that “custom causes human nature to incline toward the things to which it becomes used. Man is the child of customs, not the child of his ancestors” (2.5.3). Thus, the man who hires a servant lacks these natural characteristic due to his laziness and his improper customs.

Being a servant requires two natural qualities; that of capability and trustworthiness. A servant who has both of these qualities will only choose servitude if it is for someone of high rank or office, in effort to alleviate their own rank. Such a servant earns his keep through the tax revenue. A servant who has neither quality will not be hired by anyone. Finally, servants who lack either quality are unnatural servants because servitude requires both capability and trustworthiness. In summary, Ibn Khaldun sees servitude as unnatural because neither the master

nor the servant have sufficient natural qualities

This is how Ibn Khaldun explains the development of a state from its nomadic origins. It started with the task of protecting people from external and internal interruptions of everyday life and business and become an organized system of governance with a large administration consuming great financial resources. More so, Ibn Khaldun uses the history of the Islamic state and their institutions as an example to the development of the state and its different branches. Next, I will turn to the role of religion in this newly established state.

### **3 Of Religion in relation to politics and asabiya**

In this chapter, I explain the relationship between political authority and religion in the state. Religion has a uniting power which becomes essential with the decline of tribal *asabiya* and even with the weakening of political authority. In other words, religious *asabiya* can work to fortify the ruler or destabilize the government. In this chapter, I highlight how religion effects specific aspects within the state such as; war, the police and the judiciary system. Lastly, I explain the differing political agendas of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, according to Ibn Khaldun.

#### *3.1 Religion, Royal Authority and Group Feeling*

Each man has different desires and wishes. Men's heart can "succumb to false desires and are inclined toward the world, mutual jealousy and widespread differences arise" (2.3.4). Such jealousy can even force some to reject the truth and advance towards ideas that cater to their beliefs. Sometimes, before religion, there are no agreeable truths or mutual cooperation between subjects. Religion serves to unite the people of different tribes and nations. If individuals "are turned toward the truth and reject the world and whatever is false, and advance toward God, they become one in their outlook" (2.3.4) and thus, jealousy and differences decrease. Cooperation and support among the population grows. Religion strengthens the dynasty's group feeling and thus, increases the state's stability and power.

When there is a religion among the people, it exercises an inward restraining influence (1.2.26). Prophecies, sainthoods, or some great religious events unify the people behind a leader. This union strengthens the nation. Group feeling stemming from religion, religious *asabiya*, can work to strengthen the state and the political authority. More so, religion causes men to sacrifice

their life for the survival of said religion. If an attack on the country is seen as an attack on the religion then, the ruler can use religion as a tool to unify the country and cement his power.

Ibn Khaldun writes: “when people (who have a religious coloring) come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object one of common accord. They are willing to die for (their objectives)” (1.2.5).

Nations that have their group feeling supported by a religion are stronger than those that have their group feeling supported by mere affection to the political leader (1.2.5). Nations that do not have religious influences may have larger armies and seem stronger, but their people are not fighting for one common cause. Those without religion have “false purposes, and (the people of the worldly dynasty) come to abandon each other, since they are afraid of death. Therefore, they do not offer resistance to (the people with a religious coloring), even if they themselves are more numerous” (1.2.5). When the people feel that what they are doing is the righteous, godly thing, they are more likely to fight fiercely against those who they see as unreligious (1.2.5).

Ibn Khaldun gives a historical illustration of the strength of group feeling when coupled with religion. During the defeat of the Persian Empire against the Muslims Empire:

*“The armies of the Muslims at al-Qadisiyah and at the Yarmuk numbered some 30,000 in each case, while the Persian troops at al-Qadisiyah numbered 120,000, and the troops of Heraclius, according to alWaqidi, 400,000. Neither of the two parties was able to withstand the Arabs. (The Arabs) routed them and seized what they possessed... their religious organization doubled the strength of their group feeling through (their) feeling of having (the right religious) insight and (their) willingness to die, as we have stated, and nothing could withstand them” (1.2.5).*

When a religion is destroyed or weakened, the religious *asabiya* vanishes (1.2.5). The power of the dynasty and political authority is reduced to its political or tribal group feeling. This means a decrease in the strength of the state which may cause the ruler to lose some of his control over his people. Different rebellious groups within the nation or outside of the nation, may use this sudden weakness of the state to rebel. If such a rebellious group has stronger group feeling and stronger loyalty to their particular leader, they can overpower the existing political authority.

Some political leadership relies so heavily on religious notions, that the ruler is acting in place of a prophet or as a representative of God. He acts as a religious and political figure (2.3.29). In the Muslim dynasty, “to be caliph in reality means acting as substitute for the Lawgiver (Muhammad) with regard to the preservation of the religion” (2.3.29). The caliphs are not only tasked with preserving the religion but must also preserve the political leadership of the state. So, the ruler has the capacity to make institutions and laws that are outside the religious scope, but still serve the public interest. These institutions are “more perfect if they were established through religious laws, because (the religious law) has a better understanding of the (public) interests” (2.3.29).

In fact, if the ruler does not bear in mind religious aspects of his decision, religion will become deterrent to political authority and will help mobilize group feeling *against* the current ruler (2.3.6). We will discuss the impacts of ignoring the religious laws in the chapter concerning the fall of the state and its causes.

### *3.2 Religious Functions*

As previously mentioned, there are two types of laws in the state; religious laws, and

political laws. Political laws refer to the types of ministries (*diwan*) and include the ministry of financial operations, the ministry of official correspondence, the office of the doorkeeper the police and the courts. The religious functions of the caliphate include “[national] prayer, the office of judge, the office of mufti, the holy war, and market supervision (*hisbah*)” (2.3.29). We will discuss the office of the Mufti, of the judge, the police, and the holy war to the extent they are related to religion. These functions fall under the title of the ‘great imamate.’ The imam is a religious leader that guides the well-being of the nation.

It should be noted that the courts and the police are present in both, the religious function and in the political function. In the political functions, Ibn Khaldun focuses on how the police is under the control of the army, the responsibility they have to the people, and how different nations structure their police force. Jurisprudence is also discussed as a political function but is explained in terms of the four schools of *fiqh*, which is a religious notion. I have opted to leave these sections as Ibn Khaldun has intended. Even though there are some aspects of the police and courts in the political functions that are religious, I kept it under the political function which has been presented in the former chapter.

### 3.2.1 The office of the *Mufti*

A *Mufti* is a religious scholar, specifically a Muslim scholar (2.3.29). Muftis have the power to issue *fatwa*. *Fatwa* is a ruling on a subject or law that sets a precedent for future rulings. For example, Muftis can issue a rule that says: ‘if one is traveling, they can shorten their prayer.’ These scholars have to explain why this is the appropriate thing to do, and they do so by interpreting the Quran and studying the Life of Mohammad (pbuh). This office is tasked with ensuring that religious scholars in the nation have the proper education to issue the proper

*fatwas*.

It is the ruler himself who oversees that these religious scholars are qualified (2.3.29). He is the one to “examine the religious scholars and teachers and entrust it [the position] only to those who are qualified for it” (2.3.29). He must also help them in any way he can. The caliphate ensures that teachers are available to educate these scholars, and that there are mosques that can hold classes for their education. The ruler has the right to give them a position, and to deny them from giving any *fatawa*. *Fatawa* can be seen as a new religious ruling, and Muftis are the people who write the religious law. Thus, the ruler is the one that reviews these laws, accepts them or strikes them down.

### 3.2.2 Office of the Judge

The office of the judge has to settle suits and break off disputes (2.3.29). Its procedure and precedents are outlined through the religious law as explained by the Quran and the life of Mohammad (pbuh). In the beginning of the Muslims’ dynasty, the ruler himself held that office personally. This is especially true in the time of the prophet who was seen as greatest judge. Then, the caliphate Umar al- Khattab began appointing judges in annexed land and the tradition of appointing judges was set.

In appointing the first judge in al-Kufah, a city in what is now southern Iraq, Umar Al-Khattab wrote a letter outlining the responsibilities of a judge. Ibn Khaldun mentions the letter as a template for judges, and its instructions are as follows:

1. “Understand the depositions that are made before you, for it is useless to consider a plea that is not valid.
2. Consider all the people equal before you in your court and in your attention, so that

- the noble will not expect you to be partial and the humble will not despair of justice from you.
3. The claimant must produce evidence; from the defendant, an oath may be exacted.
  4. Compromise is permissible among Muslims, but not any agreement through which something forbidden would be permitted, or something permitted forbidden.
  5. If you gave judgment yesterday, and today upon reconsideration come to the correct opinion, you should not feel prevented by your first judgment from retracting; for justice is primeval, and it is better to retract than to persist in worthlessness.
  6. Use your brain about matters that perplex you and to which neither Qur'an nor Sunnah seem to apply. Study similar cases and evaluate the situation through analogy with those similar cases.
  7. If a person brings a claim, which he may or may not be able to prove, set a time limit for him. If he brings proof within the time limit, you should allow his claim, otherwise you are permitted to give judgment against him. This is the better way to forestall or clear up any possible doubt.
  8. All Muslims are acceptable as witnesses against each other, except such as have received a punishment provided for by the religious law, such as are proved to have given false witness, and such as are suspected (of partiality) on (the ground of) client status or relationship, for God, praised be He, forgives because of oaths and postpones (punishment) in face of the evidence.
  9. Avoid fatigue and weariness and annoyance at the litigants.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> D.S. Margoliouth in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1910), pp. 307-26; D. Santillana, *Istituzioni di diritto musulmano malichita*, 11, 569; E. Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam*, I, 23 f., 106-113. It is also quoted in Ibn Hamdun, *Tadhkirah*, Topkapusaray, MS. Ahmet III, 2948, Vol. I, fols. 125b-126a; and Ibn Ukhuwwah, *Ma'alim al-qurbah*, pp. 202 f. Cf., further, C. Pellat, *Le Milieu barien et la formation de Gahiz*; (Paris,

Caliphs chose to appoint judges to represent them because “they were too busy with general politics and too occupied with the holy war, conquests, defense of the border regions, and protection of the center” (2.3.29). These duties could not be entrusted with anyone other than the caliph. Furthermore, the distance between the residence of the caliph and the edges of the state territories proved far too extended for travel, especially when it was on urgent matters. Instead, the caliph opted to stay in the central part of the state and delegated representatives to each region.

Even though the caliph gave the office of the judge to appointed delegates, these delegates had to share an important relation to the caliph; they needed to have a strong group feeling towards the ruler. The rulers have “always entrusted the office only to people who shared in their group feeling either through (common) descent or their status as clients. They did not entrust it to men who were not close to them in this sense” (2.3.29). Because of the importance of this position, the ruler must entrust it only to those who are closest to him and have the group feeling. When a judge reaches a verdict on a case, they have set a precedent that all Muslims should follow. The cases that are overseen by judges are extensive and they do include ruling on political policy.

In the beginning, judges oversaw jurisprudence, most importantly, they oversaw the correct interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah.<sup>19</sup> I discussed these interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah more extensively in the former chapter which details jurisprudence. The office of judges evolved from merely setting cases between litigants into more extended duties which

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1953), pp. 283 f. Taken from Rosenthal, 1967.

<sup>19</sup> Books and stories describing the life of prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

included; legal supervision of people who were mentally ill and their properties, of orphans, minors and incompetents under the care of guardians, about bankruptcies, supervision and implementation of wills, and the marriage of women with no guardian (2.3.29). Some nations might include other duties, such as “supervision of public roads and buildings, examination of witnesses, attorneys, and court substitutes to acquire complete knowledge and full acquaintance relative to their reliability or unreliability” (2.3.29) These things have become part of the position and duties of judges.

The necessity of religious judges and their impact on policy has long been debated. Ibn Khaldun argues that religious jurists and scholars have no place in the executive authority of the dynasty and they are merely honored personalities (2.3.29). The standing of religious scholars and jurists reflects respect for their education and their knowledge of the religious law in the royal council. The ruler has a desire to show reverence and respect for the religious ranks. However, these religious scholars have no executive authority, nor do they have authority to make decisions in these royal councils (2.3.29). If they do participate in making a political decision they do so “as a matter of form, with no reality behind it” (2.3.29). These religious scholars are merely respected and heard as authorities on religious law, whereby their legal decisions (*fatwa*) are the source of their authority.

Executive authority belongs to those who have the power to enforce their decisions (2.3.29). While some scholars may argue that rulers who keep judges out of their council are wrong, Ibn Khaldun does not agree. Royal authority is “conditioned by the natural requirements of civilization; were such not the case, it would have nothing to do with politics” (2.3.29). In other words, the nature of civilization does not require religious scholars to have a share in political authority, because this would undermine the power of royal leaders. Authority belongs

to the person that controls the group feeling, and through this group feeling he is able to exercise authority (2.3.29). Ibn Khaldun writes:

*“why should their [religious scholars’] advice be taken into consideration? Their advice as derived from their knowledge of the religious laws (is taken into consideration) only in so far as they are consulted for legal decisions (fatwa). Advice on political matters is not their province...To pay honor to (jurists and scholars) is an act of kindness on the part of rulers and amirs. It testifies to their high regard for Islam and to their respect for men who are in any way concerned with it” (2.3.29)*

### 3.2.2.1 The position of the official witness (‘adalah)

The official witness is a religious position that is connected with the procedures of the court and subordinate to the judge (2.3.29). The official witness testifies for or against the people’s claims (2.3.29). In other words, the official witness is the prosecutor for the royal authority. This job requires him to “serve as witnesses when testimony is to be taken, testify during a lawsuit, and fill in the registers which record the rights, possessions, and debts of people and other (legal) transaction” (2.3.29). This position could be understood as the people’s plaintiff in cases against the government. The official prosecutor represents the welfare of all the people in the state.

The official prosecutor is subordinate to the judge and operates under the judge’s permission (2.3.29). The judge himself must make sure that the official is honest and has “the quality of probity” (2.3.29). The judge must ensure that the official demonstrates this quality in their everyday life as well as in the courts (2.3.29). *Al-‘Adalah* must be unbiased in his judgment

and testament. Furthermore, he “must be able to fill in the (court) records and make out contracts in the right form and proper order and correctly, (observing) the conditions and stipulations governing them from the point of view of the religious law” (2.3.29). Finally, this official must be educated in the religious law and its various interpretations.

### 3.2.3 *The police*

The police too have a religious function and operate under the religious law in that respect (2.3.29). This institution is tasked with controlling crimes and imposing punishment. Their control is wider than that of the office of the judge. This office has jurisdiction over large districts, where judges typically have jurisdiction over smaller cities. Their tasks are to bring suspects into court and decide upon “preventive punishments before crimes have been committed” (2.3.29). After the court reaches a ruling, the police are tasked with imposing the punishments as required by the religious law. They determine penalties and other fines in cases of assault (2.3.29). Furthermore, they provide corrective measures for those who did not execute the crimes that they planned.

Later on, the police were split into two branches according to the crimes persecuted; the religious police and the non-religious. The religious police would impose punishments according to the religious law. The official who oversaw this office was appointed by the political ruler, they were sometimes called *walli* (governor) or the chief of police (*sahib ashshurtah*). The second branch of police dealt with punishments not provided for by the religious law. This branch of the police was combined with the duties of the judge. If there was no law how to punish these criminals, judges had the power to impose new laws, based on the laws of the land and interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah. Thus, the judges wrote the laws concerning such crimes as they happened. Of course, they did so through careful study of the science of

jurisprudence.

### 3.2.4 The Holy War

According to Ibn Khaldun, fighting and wars have always occurred in the world. War stems from the human urge to seek revenge on others (2.3.35). There is no state, race, or individual free from war (2.3.35). Each side of the fight is supported by those who share the same group feeling. In a way, a whole group can feel hostile to another group due to *Aasabiya*. War is when the two groups clash, one would seek revenge and the other seeks to defend itself (2.3.35). The reason to seek revenge could be “jealousy and envy, or hostility, or zeal in behalf of God and His religion, or zeal in behalf of royal authority” (2.3.35). It could also be in an effort to establish a new kingdom.

He categorizes wars into four types (2.3.35) , stating that the first two are ‘unjust and lawless,’ and the last two are ‘just and holy’:

1. War that occurs between neighboring tribes and competing families. This war is caused by disputes between the two groups over land, resources, or honor.
2. War that is caused by hostility and aggression. This type of war is found among savage nations who earn their livelihood by attacking others and depriving them of their livelihood. They have no means of establishing their own system of governance and royal authority, so they attack impulsively.
3. A War that is called upon by the religious law, or the ‘holy war.’
4. An internal war waged against seceding groups or tribes and those who refuse to yield to the leader

One can infer that the holy war is just because it protects the religion of the said group.

Furthermore, most religious people see it as their duties to spread the truth of the said religion. In both cases, a religious war can be seen as the will of God to spread and protect his word. Finally, a war against the sovereign is unjust. Thus, the ruler defending his authority against rebellious groups is just. While the first two kinds of war, those of jealousy and aggression, can be solved through policy and diplomacy. Thus, those wars are unjust wars.

In Islam, the holy war is a religious duty, because of “the universalism of the (Muslim) mission.” (2.3.31). There is an obligation to spread Islam to every region in the world (2.3.31) and every Muslim is a messenger. The religious and political authority is united in the commander who leads his troops into a religious war. The caliph, the commander of the army, has a duty to fight for the religion of Islam and for the people of his land (2.3.31).

#### 3.2.4.1 War and Group Feeling

Ibn Khaldun discusses the conditions of victory and defeats in wars. There is no guarantee for victory in war, even if there is a large numerical strength of the soldiers and a copious arsenal (2.3.35). Victory in war comes from luck and chance (2.3.35). The causes of victory depend on a combination of several factors, external conditions and hidden circumstances. External factors include, the “number of soldiers, the perfection and good quality of weapons, the number of brave men, (skillful) arrangement of the line formation, the proper tactics, and similar things” (2.3.35). These are the factors that are observable and easily manipulated.

Hidden factors are caused by human deception and trickery (2.3.35). They include: spreading false information to cause fear and deflection within the opposing ranks, surprising the opposing forces by sneak attack or attacking from above, and other means of spreading rumors

about the number of men fighting and their skills (2.3.35). Such factors affect armies psychologically and generate fear within their ranks. They cause confusion and result in retreats. Victory may occur as the result of such hidden causes, and this is what is meant by the word ‘luck.’ So, how can an army minimize the impact of hidden causes?

For one side to be superior, they need to have a single group feeling present in the army. If one side has a single, unified group while the other side is composed of numerous groups with differing loyalties, the unified side will be superior (2.3.35). Armies composed of different groups, who lack a shared group feeling “are likely to abandon each other, as is the case with separate individuals who have no group feeling at all, each of the groups being in the same position as an individual” (2.3.35). Group feeling is instigated by different factors but, as mentioned above, in sedentary large societies, none is as strong as religion. Religion can even motivate men to sacrifice themselves for the survival of their religion.

Tribal groups, as described in the beginning of this thesis, have *asabiya*, or strong group feeling, due to their interdependence. To survive, the members of the tribe depend on each other. Sedentary societies whose inhabitants belong to a variety of tribes, need a new kind of group feeling. However, because religion can unite the people so strongly, it can replace the *asabiya* of these tribes. In other words, when traditional tribal *asabiya* vanishes, religion *asabiya* takes over to secure the unity of a nation. It is through religion that different tribes can have something in common with others (2.3.35).

### *3.3 The political agenda of Islam compared to Jewish and Christian Faiths*

After the death of a prophet, religious groups must have someone to take care of the religion itself (2.3.31). Taking care of the religion includes reminding people of the religion and

compelling them to act according to the religious laws (2.3.31). This person stands in the place of the prophet and urges the people to abide to god and follow the religious laws imposed on them (2.3.31). This is how religion supports political organization. Political leadership “will cause them [the people] to act in accordance with what is good for them and who will prevent them by force from doing things harmful to them” (2.3.31). In other words, religion forces a specific set of behaviors in a state and appoints a figure of authority as a religious overseer. In summary, the political leadership will arise naturally once social organization has been established by religion.

The first obligation for political leaders had been the spreading of Islam through the holy war. As previously stated, the holy war was an obligation to Muslims, and they needed a commander to take them into the battle (2.3.31). The Muslim leader became the leader of the army. Prophet Mohammah (pbuh) was the first commander and he was followed by his closest disciples. With the command of an army comes power, power that is capable of establishing political authority and superiority (2.3.31). This is how the social organization of religion leads to the political foundations of a state.

In the Muslim tradition, prophet Mohammad (pbuh) presented both the religious aspect and the political one. He was followed by the four caliphs who fell on a spectrum of being more or less religious and more or less political. Thereafter, the Muslim dynasties opted to separate political and religious authority; that is why the judges and religious scholars who were invited to the ruler’s council were seen as mere advisors (2.3.29). The dynasties that arose, following the death of the last caliph, relied on the social organization that arose through the religion of Islam, but asserted their executive authority by political rule. Group feeling in these dynasties switched from being purely religious, to being religious and political (2.3.29).

Ibn Khaldun sees the duty of Muslims to spread Islam over the entire world, even though war, as specific to this religion; other Abrahamic religions did not have such a divine rule but see war as mere self-defense (2.3.31). Since their old books did not teach such a universal mission “the person in charge of religious affairs in (other religious groups) is not concerned with power politics at all” (2.3.31). Royal or political authority comes, in these religions, to those who have it by accident or, “in some way that has nothing to do with religion” (2.3.31).

It does, however, come from group feeling too, which is necessary for the establishment of any unified group; it just does not stem from religion (2.3.31). The group feeling of other Abrahamic religions, Ibn Khaldun argues, does not motivate their believers to gain power over other nations for the sake of religion. They merely establish their religion amongst their own people and defend their religion against others.

He gives the example of the Israelites referring to Moses and Joshua:

*“Moses and Joshua remained unconcerned with royal authority for about four hundred years. Their only concern was to establish their religion. The person from among them who was in charge of their religion was called the Kohen. He was in a way the representative... of Moses... For (supervision of the) political matters which naturally arise among human beings, the Israelites selected seventy elders who were entrusted with a general legal authority... This continued to be (the situation among the Israelites) until the nature of group feeling made itself fully felt and all power became political.” (2.3.31)*

The people of Israel remained without political power for nearly four hundred years (2.3.31). They did not have any royal power nor a natural leader. As a result, they had been

attacked by foreign nations, saw their right disregarded, and had often been exiled (2.3.31). Their lack of protection was due to the lack of a central figure that represented the voice of the Jewish people. The Israelites pleaded with God through their prophet Samuel to permit a king over them. Their wish was granted, and Saul became the king of the Jewish people (2.3.31). After Saul, David became king and then Solomon and so forth. Their royal authority had an uninterrupted duration of a thousand years (2.3.31).

However, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, deprived the Jewish people of their royal authority again (2.3.31). He did so not only by invading their country but by destroying their temples, burning their holy book Torah, and killing their religion (2.3.31). Their royal authority was thus weakened, and they lost their ruler. Their group feeling remained for they still shared the same religion, but they are unsupported by a royal authority. Their temples could be destroyed because there was no leader in place of the prophets to guide and protect them. The Jewish people were unable to defend their land until Persian rulers in the Achaemenid dynasty brought them back to Jerusalem, seventy years after their exile (2.3.31). The Jewish people rebuilt their temples under the protection of the Persians but were unable to reestablish royal authority. Royal authority belonged to the Persians now (2.3.31), who would have attacked them if they formed their own leader. Thus, they were unable to establish their own nation.

The same could be said about Christians who never established their own nation; they only resided within the Roman Empire. He writes “the attitude of the Roman emperors toward Christianity varied. At times, they adopted it and honored its adherents. At other times, they did not recognize it and persecuted its adherents and killed and exiled them” (2.3.31). This changed when Constantine came into power and then, every Roman emperor thereafter was Christian. There was group feeling that existed because of religion. There was, however, no establishment

of a Christian nation. This is due to the fact that they had no natural commander; their faith did not call upon them to fight holy wars or to spread the word of God except in gospels and sermons. Often times they were subordinate to other groups and nations because no natural leader arose to command them or lead them to war.

Later on, in Christianity, the pope became an extension of the existing royal authority.

Ibn Khaldun writes:

*“It is the custom of the Pope with respect to the European Christians to urge them to submit to one ruler and have recourse to him in their disagreements and agreements, in order to avoid the dissolution of the whole thing. His purpose is to have the group feeling that is the strongest among them (concentrated upon one ruler), so that (this ruler) has power over all of them. The ruler is called "Emperor", (The Pope) personally places the crown upon the head of (the emperor), in order to let him have the blessing implied (in that ceremony). The emperor, therefore, is called "the crowned one" (2.3.31)*

The pope signals the unity of the Christian people in placing the crown upon the Emperor. The Christian group feeling lies in the pope who in turn, supports the ruler. Rather than having the group feeling focused on the ruler himself, it is pledged to the pope who may or may not pledge allegiance to the political ruler.

In contrast, the Muslim nation pledges their allegiance (group feeling) to the political leader that represents the commander of the Muslim army, whose bound by his religious duty to spread Islam. The political authority is thus a continuation of the religious one. The group feeling, bound in political authority, is a continuation of the group feeling, bound in the religious

one. In the case of the Jewish people, they have no longer royal authority due to the destruction of the religion and their persecution. They can only live under the protection of other royal authorities. In the case of Christians, their group feeling lies with their pope who supports the ruler. They, too, have not founded their own nation; instead, they attached themselves to an already existing one.

## 4 *The Fall of the Dynasty*

In this chapter, I provide the reader with Ibn Khaldun's view about the decline of empires. I will begin with the conditions that exist before the fall of the dynasty, mainly in the decline of political group feeling. I give an overview of the political leader and the political authorities in the state on the one hand and highlight the view of the people who reside within the state. Both perspectives provide an insight of the struggle the state encounters during the various levels of its decline. These struggles are often times intensified by the actions of between the two elements that make up the said state; the ruler and the people. Both, weaken the group feeling that holds the dynasty together, resulting in the fall of the dynasty.

### 4.1 *Conditions that Contribute to the Fall of a Dynasty*

#### 4.1.1 Disintegration of the Royal Authority's Foundations

The foundations of royal authority are might and group feeling, money and taxation (2.3.45). However, the dynasty can be founded and established with group feeling alone -- it is the most basic requirement for royal authority (2.3.45). There needs to be a main, overarching feeling that unites the ruler with his subjects so that the people share a connection with the ruler and his royal family (2.3.45). Furthermore, the royal family has the strongest allegiance to the ruler himself, whom they see as their leader and as their relative. This allegiance is the strongest form of group feeling, it is made of close kinship reminiscent of tribal *asabiya*, and from political leadership.

When the dynasty grows in power, and thus the royal family grows in number, the ruler begins distancing his own family members out of fear of their claim to power (2.3.45). Growing

suspicion lets him begin to exile them or appoint them to remote regions – all to protect his own claim to power. His pride makes him forget that his family and relatives are those who enabled him to form the state itself. In the beginning, the ruler needed his family and entourage to establish a military organization to protect the people. But the ruler forgets that once he becomes more established in his throne. He becomes more fearful of his family members and may even begin to “kill and humiliate them and to deprive them of the prosperity and luxury to which they had become in large measure accustomed” (2.3.45). He aims to deprive them of their wealth, power, and diplomatic authority to protect his own throne. As a result, the ruler weakens his family and his family becomes fewer in numbers. Moreover, those family members, who held the strongest group feeling to the ruler, come to fear and hate him (2.3.45).

At first, the people do not rebel or attack their ruler because their admiration and love is still strong, and so is their group feeling toward the ruler and his family (2.3.45). The people still remember how the ruler and his family established the state and protected their ancestors. But, when the citizens of the state realize that their leader is killing and exiling the same family members that helped him rise to power, the citizen’s group feeling for the ruler is weakened (2.3.45). The people feel conflicted between their love for the ruler and their love for his family.

The group feeling that united the royal family was the strongest group feeling in the state; it is the group feeling that was capable of subordinating all other group feelings (2.3.45) of different tribes and organizations within the state. It constituted a large portion of the strength of the ruler. Therefore, once the ruler begins losing the support of his family members, he begins to look for other supporters and followers and attempts to derive a new group feeling with them (2.3.45). He attempts to derive this feeling through favors and by giving them offices. However, that new group feeling will never be as strong as the one shared by members of the same kin

(2.3.45). More so, these new followers have allegiances to their own respective family members and followers, and they will not wholeheartedly follow the king.

The fall of the state depends on other factors as well; most importantly: money, or the lack thereof. In the beginning of the dynasty, the Bedouins constitute the majority of the dynasty's population; they still have a desert attitude (2.3.45) and are satisfied with the mere necessities of life. The people, at the beginning, do not divulge in luxury or indulgence. They are moderate in their food, spending and even possess little property. Taxes are low because even the ruler maintains the desert attitude of moderate spending (2.3.45). The overall expenditure of the dynasty is low in its beginning.

As time goes on, more and more people are born with the sedentary attitude. They no longer remember times of hardship and grow up with ease and indulgence. Royal authority flourishes and calls for luxuries (2.3.45). Luxuries increase spending and causes the expenditures of the ruler to increase. The population itself also increases its spending and seeks more and more luxury. The wealthier citizens and the royal court begin to compete over who can attain the most luxury, which leads into a spiral of increased spending. The ruler feels that he must be the most luxurious individual in the state because he is the ruler while the citizens look up to the ruler and try to emulate him (2.3.45). Thus, extravagant expenditures mount.

To keep up with these expenditures, the ruler imposes more taxes on the citizens. First, he raises duties on articles sold in the markets. But with the constant increase of spending, customs duties no longer suffice to pay for them. Whereby custom duties are taxes imposed on goods imported and exported to other regions of the world. Ibn Khaldun writes "the dynasty, by this time, is flourishing in its power and its forceful hold over the subjects under its control. Its hand

reaches out to seize some of the property of the subjects, either through custom duties, or through commercial transactions, or... by hostile acts directed against (property holdings)” (2.3.45). Such continuous increases in taxes are not to the liking of the people, and they grow more and more dissatisfied over the actions of the government.

The soldiers, seeing their allowances stagnant in proportion with the ruler’s luxurious life, also become angry. Sensing this, the ruler tries to bribe their loyalty with bonuses and increased allowances (2.3.45). However, the soldiers continue to be emboldened by the actions of their ruler and lose their respect for him as their commander. The tax collectors gain more and more power in their office, and people become envious and spiteful of them. The ruler does not trust them either. The tax collectors begin accusing each other of appropriating tax money and suspicions follow them constantly (2.3.45). Ibn Khaldun warns “It becomes common for one tax collector to denounce another, because of their mutual jealousy and envy. One after another is deprived of his money by confiscation and torture” (2.3.45). The leader tries to dispense of any budget official who does not tell him what he wants to hear. Thus, the dynasty continues to lose tax collectors and the budget remains out of balance.

The dynasty is now without a properly secured budget, without a competent and trustworthy military, and without trusted financial officers. As a result, it is losing its remote regions and is even selling them to gain some momentary relief. People begin rebelling against the ruler and outwardly criticize him over their increased taxation. The strength of the dynasty crumples and eventually, it falls. Ibn Khaldun details “anyone who wants to attack it can.... If this does not occur, it will continue to dwindle and finally disappear -like the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted, and it goes out” (2.3.45).

#### 4.1.2 Needless Expansion of the Dynasty's Border

The citizens of a dynasty at its peak are distributed over provinces and border regions. These boundaries set the limits of law in a given dynasty. People spread over the border regions and provinces. But when the army troops cannot protect all regions of the dynasty, the territory of the state has reached its furthest point. If there are no occupants to fill these vacant stretches of land, the dynasty is stretched to the fullest.

Ibn Khaldun explains “If the dynasty then undertakes to expand beyond its holdings, its [widening territory] remains without military protection and is laid open to any chance attack by enemy or neighbor” (2.3.7). Such an unprotected region invites attacks from neighboring countries. While at first, these attacks may do little to harm the dynasty itself, it will paint the dynasty as weak and unable to protect itself (2.3.7). The enemies of the become emboldened to attack it again and again.

Each dynasty depends on the numerical strength of its citizens and the strength of their group feeling, both factors are impacted by expansion beyond the natural means of a dynasty (2.3.8). If the numbers of the people are exhausted through expansion of the territory, no subsequent conquest is possible (2.3.7). The dynasty will be sufficiently occupied with securing its borders against outside invaders and cannot worry about expanding its territory. Furthermore, having a large and extended empire lessens the impact of group feeling since group feeling is the glue that holds the dynasty together; it is “one of the natural powers,” (2.3.7) that keeps a dynasty together. Ibn Khaldun notes:

*“The reason for this is that royal authority exists only through group feeling.*

*Representatives of group feeling are the militiamen who settle in the provinces and*

*territories of the dynasty and are spread over them.” (2.3.8).*

Having no or nonsufficient military presence in regions far away from the center of the dynasty lessens the impact of group feeling. These regions become prone to attacks from outside. Such attacks decrease the influence of the state, and the respect it holds (2.3.7) among other states. It also weakens its diplomatic strength with its neighboring regions. A dynasty is always strongest at its center (2.3.7). There, the proximity of the people to their ruler and to each other fortifies their group feeling. Even when the dynasty is old and weak, its center may still remain intact because this is the region where group feeling is the strongest. If a dynasty is overrun from the center, the state falls immediately. In such a case, “it is of no avail to [the dynasty] that the outlying areas remain intact. It dissolves all at once” (2.3.7). But the dangers of a weakening group feeling and growing threats from the distant areas of the empire will, over time, lead to the fall of the dynasty.

#### 4.1.3 Injustice and Exaggerated Harshness

The citizens of the state depend on the ruler for protection of their lives and their property. The well-being of the state depends on whether citizens can make a living (2.3.41) and on them perusing what is the best for their business (2.3.41). Without citizens providing monetary compensation for the ruler, the economic welfare of the state dwindles, and consequently, the state falls. Thus, any injustice from the ruler that attacks the property or business of the citizens, weakens the state. There are multiple injustices that the ruler can impose on his subjects, in this section we will discuss these injustices.

Ibn Khaldun asserts that attacks on people’s property and any efforts to tamper with their livelihood is a great injustice (2.3.41). Such attacks on the property of citizens remove their

incentive for acquiring and gaining property; people will think that any property they purchase will be eventually stripped away from them. This will not only lead to a decrease in the citizen's income, but it will also lead to a decrease in tax revenue. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun concludes, the ruler must not attack the properties of his citizens without a just cause. Taking the land of the people for the ruler's personal gain, or to give away these land as gifts to his entourage will lead to the fall of the state. Furthermore, the ruler cannot take the property of his subjects to leverage his luxurious lifestyle, neither can the ruler increase taxes constantly for his personal gain.

Ibn Khaldun details the consequences of attacking people's property for personal gain by telling a story about a Persian king named Bahram b. Bahram. The chief religious dignitary of this king tried to show him the injustices he imposed on his people through a parable about a male owl that wanted to get married. The female owl agreed on the condition that the male owl gifts her twenty villages ruined in the time of King Bahram, so that she can hoot in them. The male owl readily agreed saying: 'If the King continues to rule, I shall give you a thousand ruined villages. This is of all wishes the easiest to fulfill'.<sup>20</sup> The king was so shocked that he asked for an explanation to which the dignitary replied the following showing how socio-economic cycles impact the stability of the state:

*"O King... Mighty royal authority is achieved only through men. Men persist only with the help of property. The only way to property is through cultivation. The only way to cultivation is through justice. Justice is a balance set up among mankind. The Lord set it up and appointed an overseer of it, and that is the ruler. You, O*

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. 1:80, above. Cf. also the English translation of this story from the Persian of Nizami by E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902-24), II, 404.

*King, went after the farms and took them away from their owners and cultivators. They are the people who pay the land tax and from whom one gets money. You gave their farms as fiefs to (your) entourage and servants and to sluggards. They did not cultivate (the farms) and did not heed the consequences... They were leniently treated with regard to the land tax and were not asked to pay it... The remaining landowners who did pay the land tax and cultivated their farms had to carry an unjust burden. Therefore, they left their farms and abandoned their settlements... Thus, cultivation slackened, and the farms were ruined. There was little money, and soldiers and subjects perished.<sup>21</sup>"*

Ibn Khaldun uses this story to show how injustices done to the people will eventually impact the ruling class. Some rulers think that their cities and states are sufficiently large and powerful and will always flourish, no matter what injustice is inflicted upon the people. But gradually, a city and its citizens will begin to feel the impact of these injustices (2.3.41). What the ruler inflicts on his people, however small, is not easily forgotten and will anger the people.

Injustice is not limited only to unfair taxes or to the confiscation of money or property of the citizens, although Ibn Khaldun considers those a great injustice; it extends to other means of infringement by the ruler upon his people. Ibn Khaldun states “whoever takes someone's property, or uses him for forced labor, or presses an unjustified claim against him, or imposes upon him a duty not required by the religious law” (2.3.41), has committed an injustice.

Ibn Khaldun goes into detail on some of these injustices. He explains that forced labor is

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. 1:80, above. Cf. also the English translation of this story from the Persian of Nizami by E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902-24), II, 404.

‘one of the greatest injustice’ (2.3.41), and that the labor of individuals constitutes capital for them (2.3.41). Whereby, individuals’ efforts are their means to acquire capital and make a profit to sustain their life (2.3.41). Forced labor consumes but does not sustain the value of an individual’s labor, and without compensation, an individual cannot survive. Furthermore, he argues that the practice of forcing people to sell their property below the market price and then resell the merchandise at a higher price (2.3.41) is an unjust act.

#### 4.1.3.1 Who Can and Cannot be Unjust

Ibn Khaldun discusses the question of what injustice is and also that of who is capable of being unjust. According to his view, injustice can “be committed only by persons who cannot be touched, only by persons who have power and authority” (2.3.41). Only the ruler and his entourage, his officers in the administration, and the army, can be unjust. He thus very much distinguishes injustice from other kinds of crimes which everybody is capable of, such as adultery, robbery and even murder. Injustice can only be committed by those who have power and authority (2.3.41). Ibn Khaldun explains this at the example of a highway robbery comparing it to the expropriation of land. He states that a highway robber has no ability to commit injustice because to be unjust, a person must be in total control with no rival (2.3.41). The unjust person has complete control about the situation and thus has the power to absolutely ruin any opponent. In contrast, a robber can cause fear, which allows him to rob the property of somebody. But those being robbed can still defend themselves against the robber and overcome their fear. That is, a robber can be overwhelmed by those robbed whereas those in power when taking away the property of others cannot be resisted by their victims. That is what makes them unjust.

Nonetheless, Ibn Khaldun describes both kinds of injustice as *th’olom* (ظلم) which

directly translates to injustice. However, he calls unjust acts committed by people of power as ‘*Alyad al-mabsoota.*’ A translation of this phrase is ‘the open hand,’ pointing out that nothing stands in the way. The powerful commit injustice unhindered. At the same time, he expressed hope that, because injustice can be committed only by the powerful, it can be censured and eliminated: “perhaps the persons who are able to commit injustice will find a restraining influence in themselves” (2.3.41). Because the ruler commits injustices through his power and his status, he can easily avoid them through self-restraint following insight. The ruler should always be aware himself that with each attack on his people, the authority of his dynasty dwindles, and the people’s dissent grows larger and larger.

#### 4.1.3.2 The Darker Side of *Asabiya*: Social Exclusivity

I noted previously how *asabiya* is social cohesion within a state. *Asabiya* is above all comradeship and brotherhood that nurtures the state and its citizens, and it is vital for the survival of the state. The population of the state depends on this feeling of unity to ensure peace and prosperity within the state. For example, social cohesion ensures that the citizens fight for their country if the country is under attack, or that inward fighting between citizens is reduced. Yet, what happens if *asabiya* is not used as a tool to bring people together but as a tool to keep others out? What happens when *asabiya* among some group of people within a state excludes others who belong to another group with their own respective *asabiya*?

Ibn Khaldun does not directly address how Political *asabiya* can be used to ensure conformity within the state against such exclusion tendencies. He does, however, mention how religion conforms the masses to one scripture and belief. In addition, he does discuss how tribal *asabiya* can also punish individuality. For example, breaking religious norms is seen as sinning,

and an individual can be jailed if not following the religious law. In tribal *asabiya*, if a person tries to break away from the tribe, they will die. In political *asabiya*, the distinction is less clear though. However, from Ibn Khaldun's discussions on injustice, one can see how *asabiya* can be used to favor certain members of society and keep others out.

In his discussions on political injustice, Ibn Khaldun makes multiple references to how the political leader takes the money or property of the people, to give to his own family or close allies. He mentions, for example, in the report about King Bahram mentioned above, how the king took the lands of the people to give it to his inner circle. He also writes that "the ruler's expenses mount excessively, on account of his expenditures for his entourage and the great number of allowances he has to grant. The (available) revenue from taxes cannot pay for all that. Therefore, the dynasty must increase its revenues" -- by increasing taxes (2.5.6). The injustice of the ruler shows displays the lack of his care for the unity of the state and his bias for the unity and loyalty of his inner circle.

The ruler is interested in ensuring that his entourage agrees with him. Therefore, he punishes any member that disputes him and rewards those that agree. As a result, advisors to the ruler ensure that their opinions align with the wishes of the ruler. Furthermore, the ruler himself will not speak to those who do not share the same world view. He will even exile his own family members if they disagree with his world view. In summary, the injustices of the ruler come from his intolerance of dissenting opinions. This intolerance is in turn supported by the ruler's own feelings of unity (*asabiya*) to his entourage and inner circle rather than the citizens of his state.

The ruler is not exclusive in seeking to exclude those who do not agree with him from his courts. The people, too, attempt to exclude those who do not agree with them. The people within

the state feel an intolerance to those who do not adhere to their beliefs. Thus, they form distinct parties and groups to overthrow the ruling class, because overthrowing the ruling class means superiority of their group over all other people and groups. This superiority in turn fosters a feeling of exclusivity for such a group.

#### 4.1.4 People form Parties to Overtake the Ruling Class

As mentioned in the very beginning, according to Ibn Khaldun, it is natural for human beings to enter into close contact and to associate with each other; humans like to and must socialize (2.3.21). This is so in the Bedouin societies whose members form group feeling with their leader. This too occurs in sedentary societies, where the political leader must form a strong group feeling with the people. However, in a state, the group feeling one has towards his leader is not as strong as the group feeling one has towards his family. Familial group feeling is reminiscent to that of tribal group feeling (2.3.21). When the ruler hurts one family or distances them, the ruler's political authority over the family diminishes. The family man does not oppose the ruler directly, but instead he will form parties to diminish the ruler's power. In some cases, families group together not because the ruler has wronged them, but because of their jealousy towards the ruler and their ambition to take his place. He writes "the same friendship or hostility that is found among tribes and families, is found among them, and they split into parties and groups" (2.3.21).

Therefore, if people are more loyal to their respective groups than to their state and their ruler, they form parties with a group feeling on their own. If the leader is too weak, and the state is on decline, the inhabitants of the cities need somebody else to take care of their affairs (2.3.21). They rather look upon the elders or the superiors in their respective parties. Instead of

one central group that unites everyone in the country, the people split in smaller allegiances and party-affiliations (2.3.21). These groups compete to become more powerful and “try to have followers, such as clients, partisans, and allies, join them. They spend whatever they possess on the rabble and the mob. Everybody forms a group with his fellows” (2.3.21). The goal of each party and each leader of a party is to achieve superiority. Parties opposing the ruler form with the aspirations that they can take over the current ruling class, emulate them and become as important as the ruling class. These factions are capable of succeeding once the ruling group is on the decline (2.3.21).

Having many parties with different interests and opinions does not necessarily impact the state negatively, as long as a strong overarching group feeling still exists (2.3.9). If the political authority is powerful enough, the group feeling it shares with its citizens is likewise powerful enough to overcome the particular group feelings of all the parties and groups (2.3.9). However, having multiple groups, each with their own group feeling, makes ruling harder. Ibn Khaldun states “Behind each opinion and desire, there is a group feeling defending it. At any time, therefore, there is much opposition to a dynasty and rebellion against it” (2.3.9). He gives the example of the Iraqi people before and after the Muslim conquest. Before Islam, Iraq was overrun with multiple groups, each with its own group feeling, such as the Persians, Arabs and Byzantines (2.3.9). Their group feelings were the reason that Iraq was in constant struggle since each party strived for domination. It was only when Muslims occupied the regions that these groups succumbed to *one* rule and thereby one overarching group feeling (2.3.9). Even though these groups continued to live within Iraq, their allegiance to Islam was greater than to their respective parties. Islam deprived these particular parties of their power (2.3.9).

#### *4.2 Once Senility Has Set within the Dynasty It Cannot Disappear*

We have explained the natural cycle of dynasties, how they grow and eventually fall. According to Ibn Khaldun, such rise and fall is natural to a dynasty. Just like death and growth befalls all-natural living things, death will befall the state and from its fall rises another state (2.3.44). He explains “senility is a chronic disease that cannot be cured or made to disappear because it is something natural, and natural things do not change” (2.3.44). There is no state that can escape its decline, and only god knows when and how the state will fall (2.3.44).

Many politicians, and politically active citizens will notice the symptoms and understand the causes that will lead to the fall of the dynasty. These people consider it possible to eradicate these problems and they will attempt to protect the state against senility. They will try to cure this illness that results from the pride of the ruler, the imbalanced budget, the formation of new parties and the like. However, after a certain period when things develop as described above, these things are incurable; they are, moreover, natural because they are inevitable (2.3.44). It is not mere negligence or shortcoming in solving the problems, it is the very customs of the dynasty that cause its ruin (2.3.44). These customs have long become the second nature of the citizens’ life (2.3.44) and are difficult to correct.

Ibn Khaldun gives the example of a ruler who has seen his father and older relatives wear silk and use gold as ornaments. Because of this, the ruler sees his family members as inaccessible to the common folk and refuses to mingle with the latter. Such an individual will thus not be able to overwrite his customs to become a man of the people (2.3.44). He does not know how to live a different life. The ruler doesn’t even see any wrong in his habits because he is so accustomed to this lifestyle and thinks that everyone lives that way. Therefore, he is unable to change or to do something to strengthen the group feeling between him and the people.

Such alienation of the ruler from the people is not only driven by his upbringing and custom. Other people within his social circle will accuse him of craziness and insanity if he ever disregarded his ware and his status and began mingling with common people (2.3.44). They will accuse him of being ashamed of his custom and his family (2.3.44). Instead of repairing his government by connecting with the common people, he will undermine the group feeling of his family and his closest allies will turn against him. By the time the ruler understands that the state is showing symptoms of senility, group feeling is irreversibly on the decline (2.3.44). The ruler may finally be able to diagnose the problem only to see that the symptoms have metastasized, and nothing could be done any more (2.3.44).

### *4.3 The Fall of the Dynasty*

A dynasty falls because of a decrease of the dynasty's power, and because of the carelessness of the ruler. When the ruling dynasty is on the path to destruction, the rise and beginning of a new state takes place in two ways: either the state divides into little provincial states led by a variety of parties' leaders, or the state is taken over by a rebellion.

#### 4.3.1 Splitting of the Dynasty

The first occurs when the central power within the dynasty weakens and loses its influence in distant regions (2.3.47). Governors and provincial leaders begin to gain more and more influence in their regions. As the central political authority weakens, the governmental authority strengthens, and eventually the governors establish their own states (2.3.47). Then, their children will take over and inherit the political authority. Gradually, the region becomes its own separate entity with its own group feeling separate from its original country (2.3.43).

The dynasty splits because of the carelessness of the ruler who expands the territory beyond its means and population. He cannot afford to have sufficient military presence in areas distant from the center of the ruling dynasty, and thus, no group feeling with the ruler will remain or arise. A governor or any authoritarian figure can easily come in and become the leader of this region. The people will happily form allegiances with him because they consider him one of their own and develop a group feeling with him (2.3.43).

Another way for the dynasty to split is when the ruler exiles his own family to distant regions (2.3.43). Sometimes, such relatives of the ruler, who are loved by the people and could take away from the glory of the ruler, fear for their life and even choose to travel to these distant regions of the empire to escape (2.3.43). Ibn Khaldun explains “when royal authority comes into its own and achieves the utmost luxury and prosperity and when the ruler controls all the glory and has it all for himself, he is too proud to let anyone share in it.” (2.3.43).

Once these individuals live in these distant regions, the people there may acknowledge them as their own version of the royal family. They will admire the relatives as if they are the rulers and compare their merits to that of the ruler. Thus, the “refugee who is related (to the dynasty) gains control there. His power grows continually, while the authority of the dynasty shrinks. Eventually he becomes...an equal partner in the dynasty” (2.3.43). He is not only seen as someone from the ruling dynasty, but as someone who appears to be better than the ruling dynasty because he is close to the people and lives amongst them in these remote regions.

This method of establishing a new dynasty can avoid a war (2.3.47) because the new rulers in these distant areas understand that they have domination over a certain region and may not interfere with the city controlled by the established ruling dynasty (2.3.47). The regions are

either so distant from the central government that the ruler does not feel threatened by the secession of the region, or the struggles of regaining the region proves too far of an investment (2.3.47). Ibn Khaldun states that “(These new rulers) are already firmly established in their leadership and do not want to gain domination over the ruling dynasty” (2.3.47), especially when the ruling dynasty is weak and senile. The ruler is too weak to fight for these remote regions. This process results in the splitting of a dynasty into two, three or more dynasties that may or may not be controlled by the original members of the ruling class (2.3.43).

#### 4.3.2 Revolutions within the Dynasty

The second way for the dynasty to fall apart is through a rebellion in which a new leader takes control of the central government (2.3.47). The rebellion begins by showcasing the evil practices of the ruler. A rebel leader promises to reform the dynasty and to remove its evil practices. Some rebels will even smear the ruler and advocate for the abolishment of the ruling family (2.3.47). Others will attempt to reform the unjust practices of the royal family and will be labeled as revolutionaries and rebels (2.3.6). In both cases, the rebel needs group feeling to succeed.

The rebel leader could be chosen from “among the neighboring nations and tribes to revolt against the dynasty.” (2.3.47). The rebel makes propaganda for a particular cause to win the people over. He possesses a strong group feeling from amongst his supporters and this group feeling translates into their willingness to fight for his cause. Thereby, he possesses both, great might and strong group feeling. His goal is to attain royal authority and convinces his followers that they will obtain it together because they are superior to the followers of the ruling dynasty (2.3.47). His people then constantly attack and weaken the dynasty who has to fend off rebels

from within. Eventually these rebel groups overtake the royal family of the old dynasty.

The rebel leader may also come “from among the common people and of jurists who undertake to reform evil (practices)” (2.3.6). Those rebels may be religious people who follow the religion strongly and revolt against unjust rulers. They call for a change in the ruler’s policy and his evil practices. They do not seek the position of the ruler, but instead, hope for a divine reward for their efforts (2.3.6). They gain a great number of followers, because their cause is seen as pious and they as people who try to expel injustice.

Ibn Khaldun does not seem to have a favorable view for either types of rebellion, but even less for the second type. In the first case he simply indicates that the rebel group takes advantage of the weakened royal authority to gain royal authority. That is somehow natural, and the group wants the royal authority for itself. In the second case, he is much harsher in his description. Emphasizing that prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the last known prophet sent from god, he states that most people who say that they aim for religious reform want actually royal authority but disguise it with religious coloring. He writes:

*“If someone merely pretends to (achieve religious reforms) in order to gain (political) leadership, he deserves to be hampered by obstacles and to fall victim to perdition. (Religious reforms) are a divine matter that materializes only with God's pleasure and support, through sincere devotion for Him and in view of good intentions towards the Muslims. No Muslim, no person of insight, could doubt this (truth)” (2.3.6).*

But in both cases, for the dynasty to truly fall, there need to be a backing (group feeling) for the rebel group. In some cases, the group feeling, that can back these revolutionaries is

provided by their families and tribes who seek to overrule the existing royal authority (2.3.6). As we have stated, group feeling that stems from familial relations is extremely strong. But if these rebel groups were to voice their opposition publicly towards the political leader, then they are going not only against the ruler, but the people who align themselves with the ruler's group feeling (2.3.6). Therefore, these rebels deserve to be treated as insane, jailed, executed or even ridiculed and treated as 'buffoons' (2.3.6). If these rebels voice their opposition to the ruler before they have sufficient public support, then the people will oppose them in favor of the ruler.

#### 4.4 Not All Hope Is Lost: Prolonging the Life of the State

Once senility sets upon the dynasty it cannot be stopped. However, there are some ways to prolong the life of the state that suffers from this chronic disease. The only means of prolonging the life of the state depends upon strengthening the group feeling between the ruler and his followers. All of the factors mentioned in the previous sections undermine and destroy the group feeling leading to the fall of the state. If one can hold onto the group feeling, the state will not fall.

##### 4.4.1 Analogs of Group Feeling

Group feeling between the ruler and his subjects is that of admiration. When the state is established, not many citizens are relatives to the ruler, their group feeling can only be based on the actions of the ruler and its impact on the citizens. They will respect him for protecting them, they will look up to him as their ruler and their commander and, moreover, as their religious icon. They respect the strength of his family and their dedication to the ruler. They attempt to emulate him in his dress and his habits.

The leader can use this feeling of admiration to force his subjects into submission (2.3.2). Ibn Khaldun explains “(the dynasty) ...has colored the souls of its subject people with the habit of subservience and submission for so many long years that no one alive can think back to its beginning and origin. They cannot think of anything except being submissive to the ruler” (2.3.45). This type of group feeling is not only possible for the ruler. Military commanders and close advisors who object to the use of force are dismissed in favor of those who always agree to the ruler’s wishes. This claim to power is supported by the “submissiveness generally found in the human soul” (2.3.44). If anyone thinks of disobeying or rebelling against the ruler the general mass disapproves of his actions and rejects him in favor of obeying the ruler (2.3.44). The dynasty is safer with no rebel or group that opposes the ruler allowed in the dynasty (2.3.44). In other words, the dynasty remains intact because all subjects are conforming to the wishes of the ruler. We see here the potential conformity and exclusivity inherent in political *asabiya*.

However, the dynasty is still prone to outside attack. The citizens will not fight for this ruling dynasty because they view war as solely wars of the ruling dynasty (2.3.3). These hired mercenaries do not care if the dynasty will survive or fall, they are not members of this dynasty. In other words, they don’t have love or group feeling for the ruling class and fight without these emotions in wars. People will then seize any opportunity to be relieved of this ruler. Even if they *appear* docile and submissive as soon as the dynasty falls they will be the first to humiliate and turn against the ruling family.

#### 4.4.2 Royal Authority Can Pass from One branch to Another

When a ruler exiles his family members to remote regions and prosecutes them, these members become governors and gain control of these remote regions. These individuals can

acquire the love of the people around them (2.3.21). These members of the royal family can form their own government, becoming the new royal authority. Once he becomes powerful and acknowledged by his people, he may make a claim for the central government. Alternatively, at the death of the previous ruler, he may take succession due to his power and the support of the people who love him (2.3.21). Due to this, royal authority can keep moving among different branches of the royal family every time one branch has a stronger group feeling with the citizens than another (2.3.21).

## 5 *The Cyclical Nature of History*

After having gone through Ibn Khaldun's presentation of the origin of human society with the Bedouins, the formation of sedentary states and dynasties, and at the same time the respective changes in *asabiya*, I would like to discuss his overarching presentation of history. Clearly, he argues that history is repetitive and cyclical in nature, that states rise and fall, following regular patterns in doing so. In addition, he develops an interesting connection between historical cycles of a state and the strength and weakness of its group feeling. As previously stated, group feeling is like a light that shines on the state, it is not stagnant but a dynamic force that is influenced by the ruler's decisions and the attitudes of the people. In this chapter I discuss the correlation between the strength of *asabiya* and the stability of the state, and how fluctuations in *asabiya* corresponds to historical changes.

### *5.1 Dynasties' Lifespan are Like Those of Individuals*

Ibn Khaldun begins his discussion by referencing the opinion of physicians and astrologers. Ibn Khaldun believes that the maximum period an individual can live is 120 years: "It should be known that in the opinion of physicians and astrologers, the natural life (span) of individuals is one hundred and twenty years" (2.3.12). This life span of humans is surpassed only on the occasion of rare configurations and extraordinary positions (2.3.12). This lifespan, he claims, does not only apply to individuals but can be extended to the life span of dynasties.

The duration of a dynasty cannot last beyond the life span of three generations (2.3.12). Each generation corresponds to 40 years (2.3.12). This number is taken from the of 40 years that the Israeli people spent in the desert after their exile and humiliation in Egypt (2.3.12). These years "were intended to bring about the disappearance of the generation then alive and the

growth of another generation, (one) that had not witnessed and felt the humiliation” (2.3.12).

Thus, the duration of a generation is on average forty years.

However, these generations are not identical. During first generation, the dynasty “retains the desert qualities, desert toughness, and desert savagery” (2.3.12). The members of this first generation are used to hardship and the struggles to attain a dynasty (2.3.12). They share their accomplishments with those around them and have a greater sense of cooperation and thus group feeling (2.3.12). They are brave, daring and feared. Their group feeling is strong because they are seen as the first group of loyal authority. The people submit to them and share strong group feeling with them under the influence and establishment of the new royal authority. Their group feeling is composed of their shared values with the leader, they both strive for glory, power and security. Their group feeling also depends on their loyalty and obedience to the leader.

During the second generation, one sees changes from the desert or Bedouin lifestyle to the sedentary lifestyle. People no longer live in the harsh desert conditions but in luxury (2.3.12). The second generation switches from claiming glory to the political leader and his companions to solely claiming glory to the political leader. They are more likely to be subservient than their ancestors because they were born and raised under the control of someone else and that’s the only reality they know. Group feeling depends now only on obedience to the ruler and not on the shared values of the ruler and the people. The people stick to the leader because that is what their ancestors did, not because they believe in him. They look up to their ancestors and admire them for their power and glory. They either wish that conditions of the past generation come back to them or they believe that these conditions of power and glory are only present in the past.

The third generation is born and immersed in conditions far away from the desert life.

They have not experienced the toughness of desert life. They do not remember their ancestors' struggle for glory that established the state, or they do not see a need for it anymore. They have no interest in the original values of the first and second generations. Their group feeling consists of neither common values nor obedience but rather of force (2.3.12). Because they do not know how to live outside the state, they are forced to stay within the state for their livelihood and wellbeing. They do not even know how to defend themselves. Group feeling disappears completely (2.3.12). People forget how to "protect and defend themselves and to press their claims" (2.3.12). People chose to not 'press their claims' because they fear they will be prosecuted. Thus, they will lose their means of sustaining themselves. They do not look up for the ruler for protection anymore, but rather for protection from the ruler. Their group feeling is not of mutual values and obedience to the leader, but it is one of fear. They fear that, if they left, they will be unable to sustain their livelihood. Furthermore, they fear that their money and luxury will disappear (2.3.12.)

The third generation is motivated only by fear to retain the status quo. They are cowardly. If someone comes and "demands something from them, they cannot repel him" (2.3.12). The ruler may try to sustain the state as far as he can, but if the people are unable to defend the original values that the state is founded upon, it falls (2.3.12). The dynasty becomes senile and weak. Its prestige is gone. The fourth generation of leaders comes to power when the dynasty is falling. Often, the fourth generation has no means to stop this decline.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun states: dynasties last approximately 120 years. There are some instances in which the dynasty can continue even when it is senile and weak, namely if no one attacks it (2.3.12). If senility is prominent in the dynasty but no one claims glory by attacking the political authority or the regions of the state, then nothing will happen. However, "if there should

be one, he will encounter no one capable of repelling him. If the time is up, (the end of the dynasty) cannot be postponed for a single hour, no more than it can be accelerated” (2.3.12). To summarize, just like an individual, a state goes through establishment, stagnation, and retrogression.

### *5.2 The Stages of a Dynasty*

According to Ibn Khaldun, every dynasty goes through different stages and encounters a new set of conditions in each stage (2.3.15). The stages do not only impact the dynasty, but the residents as well. These residents’ group feeling is also fluctuating with each stage. Ibn Khaldun writes, “the supporters of the dynasty acquire in that stage traits of character such as do not exist in any other stage” (2.3.15). In other words, the traits and attitudes that the people have in a specific point in time define the stage of the state.

There are five stages of a state. The first stage is that of ‘success’(2.3.15) when the dynasty has overthrown all opposition. The ruler in his strength and moral conviction by which he succeeded serves as a model for his citizens. The ruler is trusted, and he performs the functions of the dynasty such as collecting taxes, defending property, and providing military protection (2.3.15). The ruler “does not claim anything exclusively for himself to the exclusion of (his people), because (such an attitude) is what is required by group feeling” (2.3.15). The ruler’s accomplishment is seen as the citizens’ accomplishments and that shows that group feeling is very strong. The ruler is seen as the voice of the people.

The second stage is when “the ruler gains complete control over his people, claims royal authority all for himself, excluding them, and prevents them from trying to have a share in it” (2.3.15). The political (royal) authority is now firmly in the hands of the ruler, who is

representing his interest and not that of the people. The ruler is concerned with gaining followers and increasing his entourage. He begins to show stronger group feeling to his entourage, his descendants, and his party members than to his entire people. He is afraid of his political opponents whom he has to bar from gaining too much power. Ensuring that power remains among his allies, he distances the people from himself and his family.

The third stage is one of 'leisure and tranquility,' where the ruler stops attempting to expand his power and instead enjoys the fruits of his ancestor's conquests. He begins enjoying the "acquisition of property, creation of lasting monuments, and fame" (2.3.15). He is interested in building large cities and monuments to showcase the dynasty's accomplishments. He presents gifts to the nobles to gain their favor and bestows titles on his close followers. Also, he spends large sums on his soldiers and generals to celebrate their battles. This is evident in the soldier's extravagant dresses, fine equipment, and the designation of parade days. To leverage these expenses, however, the ruler must expand tax collection, regulate income and expenses, and plan expenditures. This stage is the last where the ruler has complete authority in the state. In all three stages so far, the ruler is independent in his opinion. But at this point, group feeling is stagnant. People look at the great monuments and the accomplishments of the previous rulers and feel pride. However, when looking at their current ruler they feel he is unfair because he constantly raises taxes. The people feel that the ruler favors specific members of society, mainly his entourage and inner circle, rather than the welfare of all citizens.

Finally, the fourth stage is one of 'contentment and peacefulness.' The ruler is more concerned with his predecessor's accomplishments than establishing his own legacy, trying to imitate the ways of previous rulers. He holds on to tradition and refuses to adapt to the changes around him. He fears that moving away from tradition would destroy his claim to power. He

holds no longer authority over his people but is just an image of his ancestor. The dynasty is not expanding, improving or growing but is instead stationary in hopes of a return to a 'greater' time. Group feeling dramatically declines at this stage. The people feel that the ruler is weak, they remember the previous strong rulers and constantly compare them to this current one. The people realize that their ruler is more occupied with his position of authority than with enhancing the nation.

The fifth, and final, stage is one of 'waste and squandering.' The ruler wastes his time and the people's money, by excessive generosity for his entourage and inner circle. He indulges in excessive and unnecessary pleasures. He is so concerned with acquiring followers and popularity that he may hire unqualified workers into his political council because they obey him uncontestedly. He also "seeks to destroy the great clients of his people and followers of his predecessors. Thus, they come to hate him and conspire to refuse support to him" (2.3.15). He fears losing his grip on power. Because he views the followers of his predecessor as disloyal to him, he strips them away from their status. His wasteful ways turn the officials of his government against him because the ruler is spending even the salary of the officials carelessly. The ruler ruins the foundations his predecessors instated and tears down the norms they previously ordained. Ibn Khaldun states "in this stage, the dynasty is seized by senility and the chronic disease from which it can hardly ever rid itself, for which it can find no cure, and, eventually, it is destroyed" (2.3.15).

### *5.3 Polybius' theory on the Cyclical Nature of History*

While *asabiya* is a wholly unique idea of Ibn Khaldun, some of his predecessors, have similar notions about the nature of history. In fact, a precursor to Ibn Khaldun, by the name of

Polybius drafted such a notion. Polybius was a Greek historian and philosopher between 202-120 B.C. He wrote *Histories*, a collection of 40 books detailing events between 220 to 144 B.C. He aimed to investigate how Rome acquired a large empire in only 53 years- a period described by him as 'short.' Only the first five of the forty books he wrote survived, and in book one, he describes his understanding of history. Polybius, too, believed that history is cyclical, that history follows specific stages and trends. Furthermore, he believed that politicians, in particular, must study these stages. Also, he believed historians must not only understand the facts surrounding a historical event but must understand the causes of such an event.

In his first book Polybius writes:

*“none of my contemporaries have undertaken to write a general history... As it is, I observe that while several modern writers deal with particular wars and certain matters connected with them, no one, as far as I am aware, has even attempted to inquire critically when and whence the general and comprehensive scheme of events originated and how it led up to the end...Special histories therefore contribute very little to the knowledge of the whole and conviction of its truth. 11 It is only indeed by study of the interconnexion of all the particulars, their resemblances and differences, that we are enabled at least to make a general survey, and thus derive both benefit and pleasure from history (1.3-1.12).”*

Ibn Khaldun is also, like Polybius, concerned with understanding the different stages of history. He attempts though to explain the change between these different stages by *asabiya*, which he sees as a driving force of change. *Asabiya* is constantly evolving, from tribal to the political and the religious, likewise, history is constantly evolving. *Asabiya* translates everyday

human interactions, feelings, and loyalties, into tangible, factual changes of the world. An individual's group feeling shapes their actions, these actions write history. Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiya* is the means between the individual and history. Polybius says nothing about *asabiya*, nor does he have such a strong tool to explain historical changes.

### 5.3 Group Feeling (*Asabiya*)

Throughout the discussion of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy, group feeling emerged as a central claim to his doctrine. Group feeling is present at every point in history. From the earliest phases with tribal *asabiya*, to the formation and the decline of the state. In fact, the decline of *Asabiya* is directly correlated to the decline of the state. This natural glue of a group presents itself in three forms: tribal, religious, and royal (political). In this section, I discuss the meaning of the word *asabiya*, how Ibn Khaldun describes *asabiya*, and the significance of *asabiya* to his philosophy.

#### 5.3.1 The Meaning of *Asabiya*

Linguistically, *Asabiya* (العصبية) comes from the root word *asab* (عصب). According to the *Oxford Arabic Dictionary*, *Asab* can be translated as 'nerves, connective tissue, or that which connects things'. It also comes in the meaning of 'tying or binding something,' such as tying a scarf. *Asab* can be used to describe an individual who is bound to an idea, figure, or even a material object. Such is the case with the common phrase: عصب بيتهُ which means an individual who will not leave his house and is bound to it. Furthermore, according to *The Encyclopedia of Islam* "[asabiya is the] Arabic word meaning originally 'spirit of kinship.'"

According to the *Arabic-English Lexicon*, the root word for *asabiya* is the word:

'*ta'asub*' (تعصب). This word translates to the 'binding of a scarf around one's head.' *Asabiya* is further defined as "the action of ones in helping his people or his group against any aggressive action, the quality of a person who is angry for the sake of his group and protecting them." *The Blackwell Reference of Sociology* defines *asabiya* as "basic form of social and material human relations, it is a concept which integrates biological, geographical, social, and cultural terms." Furthermore, the reference describes *asabiya* in French as 'esprit de corps' (group spirit). *Asabiya* is, then, the idea of nationhood, solidarity or cohesiveness among societal groups.

### 5.3.2 Ibn Khaldun's Description of *Asabiya* and its Forms in Comparison with Contemporary Sociological Thought

*Asabiya* is the group feeling that structures the tribe politically and socially. It is a sense of belonging that reduces members of the tribe into one individual (1.2.7). It is a God-given attribute, that exists strongest in tribes and close-knit groups, like families (1.2.7). It relies on the familiarity of each individual in the group with every other individual within the group. It also relies on the particular conditions that surround the members of a given tribe. Members that are spread apart do not experience a sense of unity such as the one experienced by those who live in proximity. *Asabiya* has three prominent forms as described by Ibn Khaldun, the first is: Tribal *asabiya*.

Tribal group feeling stems from the belief that the survival of one individual in the tribe, is essential for the survival of the entirety of the tribe. A constant familiarity is needed for the clan to become dependent upon each other, and therefore, to be glued into one entity. This group feeling does not only produce the unity of a tribe, but it dictates how a tribe feels, thinks and operates on a specific issue. Group feeling is the reason that an individual never leaves their

tribe. Bedouins need group feeling to survive in the harsh conditions of a desert.

The second form of *asabiya* is the religious one. Religion is seen as a great unifier of the masses. Religious *asabiya* is far-reaching. In other words, one does not need to live in close proximity to others of the same religion to be devoted to the said religion. Thus, an individual can feel a sense of belonging or loyalty to one who shares the same religion but lives on another continent. Even if the two individuals never meet, there remains a faint feeling of belonging. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun explains, that religious group feeling is also needed to unify large masses of people. Religion converges men onto a specific world view. Religions can define what is evil and what is acceptable. Most men, without the guidance of God through religion, will propagate evil (1.2.7). Ibn Khaldun explains that a man who is jealous of the properties that his brother possesses, will aim to take these possessions. Only a restraining force can prevent such egotistic actions from occurring. This restraining force can come from the religious group feeling, which ensures that all within a given group follow the same norms.

Finally, he describes political *asabiya* or royal group feeling. Royal authority is “group feeling in which (a member of a royal family) may have much power over nations and races, and the inhabitants of remote regions who support his power may be obedient (to that family) and submissive [to the ruler]” (2.3.3). This group feeling begins from the dependency of the people on the ruler for their protection. The people also love and admire their ruler because he protects them, so they try to please him and live like him. The people’s dependency grows into economic dependency as well, especially with printed coins that need to be approved by the state. Furthermore, the people grow dependent on the ruler in judiciary matters, for he assigns judges and imposes the laws.

A similar view has been developed in the late 19th century, by the German philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies. Tönnies was born on July 26th, 1855. In his sociological theory, he distinguished two social groupings -- *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft*, or community, refers to groupings based on feelings of togetherness. *Gesellschaft*, or society, refers to groups that are sustained by a common goal. For example, *Gemeinschaft* may refer to a family or a close-knit neighborhood while *Gesellschaft* refers to a company or a nation.

Tönnies describes how people in *Gesellschaft* (society) are inclined towards their own self-interests as individuals rather than to the self-interest of the group as a whole. Ibn Khaldun also speaks of how social relations are motivated by self-interest. We may recall how he describes the farmer negotiating with several merchants for the best price, and how the farmer does not have any strong allegiance to any particular merchant but to his own business instead. Ibn Khaldun also discusses the constitution of different factions or parties of those who oppose the ruler and push their own agenda. In the state, under political *asabiya*, people are also motivated by their self-interest in competition with *asabiya* to the whole of the state and this can lead to the decline of the state.

In *Gemeinschaft* (community), people are more inclined to consider the well-being of others or the whole. According to Tönnies, individuals within the same community are characterized by strong personal bonds that no individual wants to abandon. This strong allegiance serves as social control, where specific norms are enforced and followed by the community members. This social grouping is reminiscent of Ibn Khaldun's tribal *asabiya*, which enforces strict norms as well. More so, members of the tribe understand that their survival and well-being is tied to the well-being of others in their tribe. Thus, they are more likely to put the well-beings of others within their tribe above their own well-being.

### 5.3.3 The significance of *asabiya* to Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy

I believe that for Ibn Khaldun, *asabiya* is the tool for understanding history. History is dynamic. Nations constantly rise and fall; territories and occupations are in constant flux. Thus, Ibn Khaldun needed a tool as dynamic as the subject he investigates. He characterizes *asabiya* as something that can rise and fall, thereby determining the strength of the nation. More so, he describes *asabiya* as having different forms. At any given point in time, a specific form of *asabiya* exists. Whether it be at the beginning of nomad society or in the highly civilized society, *asabiya* is present although in very different forms.

This constant presence is what makes *asabiya* so appealing to a philosopher of history. What common factors exist between the highly civilized society, and those who live in tents as dwellers? It is the fact that each individual is dependent upon others for survival. Ibn Khaldun begins with this thought in the earliest pages of *Al-Muqaddima*. He understood the social dependency that each individual requires. He first begins by characterizing this dependency as only due to the striving for survival. In other words, he states that people never leave their tribes because they would die without being able to acquire food or protection with the help of others. However, Ibn Khaldun expands on this dependency further, especially when he describes religious and political group feeling. When discussing religious *asabiya*, dependency now includes salvation from a higher power: God. Finally, with political *asabiya* the people can pursue their own interests and luxuries in life. Instead of the people constantly worrying about the next attack that will strike them, or hunting for their food diligently, labor division allows them more freedom. Now, the soldier can focus on guarding the city, the painter on painting and the carpenter on his craft.

Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history relies heavily on the understanding that man is a social animal, and that there is no direct separation between 'man' and 'society'. Man cannot be separated from society because of his needs of sustenance and companionship. Man will always exist within a sociological system. More so, Ibn Khaldun does not describe man as existing before society. Man is never alone, and his actions are never independent from the actions of a group or community. Since birth, man is born into defined social organization groups that dictate his life choices and thinking process even if he chose to live in the wilderness. *Asabiya* bridges that gap between social-everyday-peer-interactions and the history of a nation.

Yet, the question remains why Ibn Khaldun uses such a sociological perspective to analyze historical changes? Ibn Khaldun does not explicitly address this question but the answer to it may lie in his own personal experience. He worked at the courts of various political rulers in North Africa, and he encountered problems at all of them. Even in his later years, when he worked as a judge, he was relieved and reinstated from his post several times. It seems that even when various aspects of the state are well organized, the ruler of the state is bound to make mistakes and these mistakes can be understood with the development of *asabiya*. *Asabiya* can lead to social compliance, and sometimes, *asabiya* appears to be closer to mob mentality than to true social cohesion.

I think even Ibn Khaldun had trouble drawing the line between unity and exclusivity. In most cases, *asabiya* really is comradeship and brotherhood, but there is a side of *asabiya* that rejects dissent and punishes individuality. For example, Abu al-'Abbas sought to give money to his own allies and when Ibn Khaldun tried to educate Al-'Abbas on proper spending, he was imprisoned. In 1389, Ibn Khaldun claims he was forced to sign legal opinions against Barquq, the ruler of Egypt, but Barquq is not convinced and he forces Ibn Khaldun's colleagues in the

Sufi institute to request that Ibn Khaldun steps down.

In the previous chapter, when I described the reason why a state falls, most of these reasons were due to group conformity. The ruler fills his cabinet with those that agree with him, even when they are unqualified for their positions. The ruler even exiles his own family members if he suspects a lack of loyalty to him. Khaldunian thought is deeply tied to the unstable conditions that existed during his life time in North Africa. Ibn Khaldun was closely watching with the lenses of a philosopher the social events that surrounded court life. He tried to formulate the fundamental reasons for the chaos in governance he observed. In a way, Ibn Khaldun realized that even if everyone was doing their job properly, there existed a thin thread that dictated the people's actions instead of rational considerations. This thin thread was *asabiya* but *asabiya* not in the sense of unity, but rather, mob mentality.

## **6 Conclusion**

The goal of this thesis was to detail Ibn Khaldun's theory on social organization as a tool to understand historical events. I began by giving a brief overview of Ibn Khaldun's life to gain a better understanding of his personal experiences and how these experiences shaped his world view. Most notably, Ibn Khaldun's various political positions and travels helped him gain valuable insight on human social and political organization.

Next, I described Bedouin lifestyle and the necessity of tribal *asabiya*. Tribal *asabiya* is essential in ensuring the unity of the tribe; tribal members understand that the survival the tribe depends on the survival of the individual. Then, I explained how subsequent increases in the tribe's population motivate some tribal members to settle down and form their own businesses. These businesses become their means to survive, replacing their dependence on the tribe. Then, these businessmen pledge allegiance to a ruler that provides protection in exchange of monetary compensation, this pledge is the beginning of the sedentary state. Consequentially, tribal *asabiya* is largely replaced by political *asabiya*.

I described the duties of the ruler and how the ruler is unable to perform these duties without the help of his aides and entourage. Thus, various political ministries and functions are formed to run the state. These governmental offices include; the taxation ministry, the police, the judiciary ministry, and the official correspondence ministry. These branches help unify the people under the ruler and enable the ruler to carry out his duties to the people. Next, I explained the role of religion in unifying the masses and the various religious functions that can exist within the state. I explained how religion within the political state can strengthen or weaken the ruler's claim to power. Finally, I detailed the difference between Christianity, Judaism and Islam as explained by Ibn Khaldun.

In the fourth chapter I described the factors that contribute to the fall of the state. The fall of the state coincides with a decrease in overall *asabiya*- as in, a decrease in the religious, the political and even the tribal (familial) *asabiya*. This overall decrease of *asabiya* occurs because of the people and the ruler's actions. The ruler's jealousy and anger against anyone who disagrees with him motivates him to form a council made of only those who follow his opinion blindly. This favoritism is seen when the ruler takes away from the possessions of his people to give to his allies and by the ruler's excessive spending. I also explained the rise of a darker version of *asabiya* that motivates the ruler and the people to exclude those of different opinions and attitudes. The people, too, weaken the overall unity of the state when they form their own parties to overthrow the ruler in hopes of becoming the ruling class.

The final chapter highlighted Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory of history and the different generations that exist within the state lifecycle. I also defined the term *asabiya* to gain a deeper sense of the literal meaning of the word and how it ties to Ibn Khaldun's definition of social solidarity. Furthermore, I explored the importance of *asabiya* as a tool to understand historical changes and how fluctuations in *asabiya* shape historical events.

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