

## The Relationship Between Man and Nature in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*

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**Abstract:** Ibn Khaldun, one of the most prominent Muslim social scientists of the Middle Ages, is famed for his historical ideas and unique insights into the emergence and collapse of civilisations. This study aims to explore the relationship between man and nature in light of Ibn Khaldun's greatest work, The *Muqaddimah*. A vast number of scholars have examined human civilisation from various perspectives as expounded in the *Muqaddimah* but works dedicated to the relationship between man and nature are still few. As a result, this article investigates Ibn Khaldun's view of the relationship between man and nature through a qualitative content analysis of the *Muqaddimah*. Since Ibn Khaldun was a great Muslim thinker who had a deep effect on the Muslim world, his concept of the relationship between man and nature is readily accepted by Muslims and may play a constructive role in environmental conservation in the Muslim world. After reading and analysing the *Muqaddimah*, this article concluded that Ibn Khaldun's examination of the link between man and nature can be found in every chapter. He thinks that the environment has a significant impact on individuals and human civilisation, as well as he advocates that man should respect nature and utilize it rationally to sustain civilisation's healthy development.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun; The *Muqaddimah*; man; nature; civilisation

### Introduction

Since the beginning of human civilisation, nature has provided man with everything he needs to survive, and it is regarded as the source of life, knowledge, and happiness for humans, as well as important for the growth of human civilisation (Bordoloi, 2020; Dhungel, 2020). As a result, humans should fear and love nature while coexisting in harmony with it. However, human enterprises have been in direct rivalry with nature due to the rapid expansion of productivity since the industrial revolution. They have violently transformed nature and treated it with a hostile and predatory attitude in order to meet their selfish goals.

Capitalism and its enabling ties are even more brutal in their infliction of awful violence on humans and life beyond humans (Moore, 2017; Yang, 2018). For example, humans have been murdering wildlife and deforesting for profit for hundreds of years, leading wildlife populations to collapse and species to become extinct at an unparalleled rate (Chen, 2021). According to the IUCN Red List, 40084 species have been threatened with extinction by 2021, and this is a chilling figure. Furthermore, global climate change and glacial melting are important challenges that directly impact the Arctic Ocean's route as well as the riverine civilisations that flow through the three continents (Vinokurova et al., 2021).

As it turns out, a succession of ecological disasters has shown that nature cannot continue to grow predatory industrialization. To keep human civilisation going ahead, people must re-evaluate the connection between man and nature at its core and create a peaceful civilisation to replace the harsh industrial civilisation. Before pursuing all economic growth and maximizing personal gains, the principle of respecting and

conserving the environment should be given top priority in the process of civilisation development (Yang, 2020).

People have acknowledged the necessity of environmental protection as the ages have progressed and have attempted to create answers and technology to environmental concerns from diverse viewpoints (Cadotte et al., 2017). One way to improve the effectiveness of environmental actions is through theoretical education and cultural influences on people's values, political orientations, and even personal experiences (Duchi et al., 2020; Soliman & Wilson, 2017), so that as a famous scholar who analysed the relationship between man and nature, Ibn Khaldun's discussion is worthy of a thorough examination by modern scholars.

Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in 1332 and died in Cairo, Egypt in 1406. He was one of the finest Muslim philosophers and social scientists of the Middle Ages (Abdullah, 2018; Patriarca, 2010). He grew up in an entirely Islamic atmosphere, held key positions in several nations, as well as had the chance to contact Muslim leadership directly. He comprehended the truest politics of society at the time because of his sharp intellect and great observation. The understanding of civilisation is also more profound and unique (Karim, 2020).

The *Muqaddimah* is Ibn Khaldun's magnum opus, which made him famous around the globe. It has been translated into other languages, including English, French, and Chinese, and is highly respected by researchers from varied cultural backgrounds all over the globe. Philosophers and academics from across the world have drawn inspiration from the concepts in this book and gone on to accomplish great things (Wawan, 2015; Stockton, 2020). The focus of the *Muqaddimah* is on social phenomena and history (Stockton, 2020), which is consistent with the attention of many researchers. Despite the fact that Ibn Khaldun's portrayal of man's connection with nature is apparent in every chapter of the book, particularly the opening chapter, few academics have addressed it, leaving a research gap for this study. The focus and goal of this article are to summarise and analyse the factors in the *Muqaddimah* that deals with the relationship between man and nature, and to conclude that nature not only influences the natural image of mankind but also the development of human civilisation and that mankind should therefore respect and protect nature while developing social civilisation.

## Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, specifically a literature-based study, focusing on the analysis and interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's writings in the *Muqaddimah*. The primary objective is to examine the relationship between man and nature as discussed by Ibn Khaldun. This study involves a detailed examination of relevant chapters, sections, and passages in the *Muqaddimah* that address this topic.

The primary source of data for this research is the *Muqaddimah* itself. The content analysis method is employed to analyse the *Muqaddimah*. The translated version of the *Muqaddimah* by Franz Rosenthal serves as the main reference text. Data collection entails a thorough reading of the relevant sections to identify and extract key insights, ideas, and concepts pertaining to the topic of the relationship between man and nature. The analysis of the data follows a structured process, including the following steps:

- i. Identification of relevant passages: A careful reading and examination of the *Muqaddimah* to locate sections that directly or indirectly address the relationship between man and nature.
- ii. Coding and categorization: Development of a coding framework to categorize the identified passages based on themes, concepts, and perspectives related to the relationship between man and nature.
- iii. Interpretation and synthesis: Analysis of the coded passages to understand Ibn Khaldun's viewpoints, the factors influencing the relationship, and the implications for human society.

By employing a qualitative literature-based approach, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between man and nature as elucidated by Ibn Khaldun in the *Muqaddimah*. The analysis contributes to the existing knowledge of Ibn Khaldun's ecological and environmental thinking and sheds light on the relevance of his ideas in contemporary discussions on sustainability and the human-nature interface.

## Findings and Discussion

### 1. The Concept of Humans in The *Muqaddimah*

Ibn Khaldun's interest in humans is strong, and his investigation of man is not isolated but embedded in a network of connections, the centre of which is God. He discusses numerous elements of man in several chapters of the *Muqaddimah*, primarily the topics of his origin, composition, nature, attributes, and duty on earth. The specifics are provided below.

Table 1. The concept of humans in The *Muqaddimah*

Creation	Components	Essence	Trait	Status
God	Physical and spiritual	Political	Kingship	Vicegerents of God on earth

Ibn Khaldun's thinking was affected by Islamic ideas since he lived in the Islamic world and was a devout follower of Islam his whole life. In his greatest work, the *Muqaddimah*, he declares that God is both the creator and the best defender of man. To answer the difficulty of acquiring food, God created all things, so that might supply man with the essentials of life and other requirements, in addition to infusing in him the ability to seek food. God has also endowed man with the capacity to think, nearly flawlessly and beyond all else. God also gave man the need to sleep and sleeping permits him to enter a realm beyond the grasp of logical reason. God also created prophets to instruct mankind on the road to salvation and to bring them closer to truth and righteousness (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

Man is made up of two components, one physical and one spiritual, which are blended. To live, people banded together and collaborated to acquire greater surplus value and a safer environment. The collected people needed discipline and supervision due to their naturally aggressive nature, and they picked the most talented and strong person from their own tribe, with the greatest moral character, to be king. Laws were enacted throughout the administration process to ensure order. This line of reasoning demonstrates that politeness is man's most prominent quality, and kingship is man's natural feature (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

The *Muqaddimah* also states that there is a significant distinction between man and animals. Thinking, earning a livelihood, being civilized, and the necessity for restriction and authority are all attributes that separate man from animals. All creatures are devoid of human awareness and inspiration. Human perception involves the capacity to comprehend scientific information as well as internal moods, and human inspiration is obtained via the inherent human disposition. The human soul is part of the second level of human thought, which is higher than intellectual perception but lower than pure perception and absolute thinking. The human soul has a natural yearning to think, with the goal of becoming infinitely closer to the angels. As well as the soul does not rely on learned capacities to transition from human nature to heavenly nature, but rather on a basic inherent propensity bestowed by God (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

In the meantime, man needs to fulfil his duty as vicegerent of God on earth such as to rule people as well as apply orders and recommendations of God among people, animals, and non-living things. While fulfilling his everyday needs, man needs to pay attention not to disturb the balance of the living and non-living nature that surrounded him. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun also highlights that there are variances between persons. These distinctions are mostly represented in lineage differences since there are disparities in the ethnic groupings produced by various lineages. Customs and features vary amongst ethnic groups (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

### 2. The Relationship Between Man and Nature in The *Muqaddimah*

A review and interpretation of the *Muqaddimah* on the link between man and nature reveal that nature has a tremendous influence not just on individuals but also on human civilisation.

#### *Nature has an impact on individuals*

Ibn Khaldun provides a more thorough understanding of nature's effect on man in the *Muqaddimah*. He claims that man's appearance, colour, health, disease, happiness, population, spirit, mind, ability to think, intellectual, lifestyle, purity of blood, character, temperament, customs, temperance, goodness, evil, courage, fortitude,

habits of life, resistance, moderation of the nation, architecture, practice, and rest are all influenced by the natural environment. For example, in the *Muqaddimah* Ibn Khaldun states:

*“The black skin common to the inhabitants of the first and second zones is the result of the composition of the air in which they live, and which comes about under the influence of the greatly increased heat in the south..... In consequence, the colour of the inhabitants is white, and they tend to have little body hair. Further consequences of the excessive cold are blue eyes, freckled skin, and blond hair.”*

(Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 121-122)

Ibn Khaldun split the planet into seven zones centred on the equator, and these seven regions received varying quantities of light and heat based on their latitude. He included this in his explanation of why individuals in various locations looked so different, arguing that varying degrees of light and heat, as well as diverse air compositions, resulted in different human appearances. The capacity to think rationally about the components that influenced human appearance was a huge undertaking throughout the Middle Ages when science and technology were not yet highly developed. Some of his findings seem to have scientific merit today. For example, his belief that skin colour is influenced by light and heat is supported by current biological research, which shows that there are numerous factors that impact melanin formation in human skin, one essential component that cannot be overlooked is sunlight penetration, namely UV radiation (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2000).

Nonetheless, it is manifestly unconvincing to credit all distinctions in human appearance to the function of the environment. According to research on substantial distinctions in human appearance, there are considerable disparities in the traits of various groups, which are strongly related to the environment, human origins, genes, migration, and evolution (Wang et al., n.d.; Wilke et al., 2023). Consequently, variations in human appearance are a highly complicated problem, and although the environment does have some impact on the human look, not all differences in appearance can be traced to the environment. While explaining his ideas on the impact of climate on the character of man, Ibn Khaldun elucidates that:

*“Purity of lineage is found only among the savage Arabs of the desert and other such people. This is because of the poor life, hard conditions, and bad habitats that are peculiar to the Bedouins. They are the result of necessity, in as much as their subsistence depends on camels and camel breeding and pasturage.”*

(Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 174)

The infestation of wild animals and foreigners, harsh weather, and paucity of resources all contribute to the awful environment in which Ibn Khaldun's Arabs dwell. Such conditions compelled Arabs to develop a strong desire for unbreakable unity. The inherent trust and maintenance that occurs between blood relatives is the strongest and is naturally greatly valued by them. Even today, when a natural catastrophe strikes, most individuals turn to their own families for assistance.

The tough natural environment, according to Ibn Khaldun, could have moulded the Arab's irascible disposition. To survive, individuals sometimes strive to adapt in every way to the environment in which they live, therefore the Arab temperament seems to correspond with the severe weather they lived in. Personality characteristics are generally long-lasting patterns of thinking, emotion, and behaviour that are impacted by both internal genes and the external environment. The character that is formed afterward is not static either, it can appear in different conditions at various ages (Hopwood et al., 2011; Sanchez-Roige et al., 2018). The function of the natural environment in moulding human personality, as underlined by Ibn Khaldun, should therefore be treated seriously.

To summarise, humans live in a natural world, and nature has varying degrees of influence on them. People should pay attention to the effect of nature on humans throughout the process so that the natural environment can better contribute to human survival and development. Man cannot live outside of nature and cannot rule it, but he must understand and obey its laws. Only by following nature's laws can man transform the biosphere into the anthroposphere. Otherwise, man will be subject to nature's wrath (Bakhtiyarova, 2022). Of course, people will make errors, since according to God, it is part of human nature to make mistakes.

However, humanity cannot use this as a justification to loot nature in large quantities. Rather, mankind should learn forgiveness from God and be nice to all species with whom they cohabit (Ibrarullah & Inamullah, 2022).

#### *Nature has an impact on human civilisation*

Humans banded together to construct cities in order to survive better. Cooperative labour boosted job efficiency and provided individuals with greater surplus value. The material abundance and people's different desires for a pleasant and better existence resulted in the fast development of many trades and technologies, as well as the progress of human civilisation. Nature has given not only the fundamental material necessities for survival but also the raw materials for the manufacture of highly intricate crafts. Moreover, nature has been engaged in every step of the origin, growth, and fall of human civilisation, and has played a part in the whole process (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

The relationship between humans, animals, and the living environment has an impact on urban growth and must be considered in the planning process (Vanhove et al., 2021). Furthermore, urban development is an important part of the development of human civilisation. Ibn Khaldun explains in the *Muqaddimah* that the natural environment determines the values of the city's civilisation. People prioritize the natural environment while deciding where to reside. In addition, the abundance of natural resources determines the need for treasure, comfort, and relaxation. For example, in the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun states:

*“In connection with the importation of useful things and conveniences into towns, one must see to several matters. There is a water problem. The place should be on a river, or near springs with plenty of fresh water. The existence of water will be a general convenience to the inhabitants. Another utility in towns, for which one must provide, is good pastures for the livestock.”*

(Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 407)

Rivers are the connection between the atmosphere, the lithosphere, the biosphere, and the anthroposphere as a transporter of natural materials and a site of energy exchange, and their geographical and temporal distribution defines the essential features of the area environment (Wang et al., 2019). Most significantly, floodplains foster socioeconomic development, agricultural development, cultural advancement, and fisheries development. Therefore, human presence on floodplains has expanded considerably in many regions of the globe, with 33% of the Chinese population living on floodplains in 2015, with a population density 3.6 times that of locations beyond the floodplains (Mazzoleni et al., 2021). Fresh water, as a source of life for humans, not only offers ease for drinking and cleansing but also fundamental necessities for the growth of human industry, ensuring the development of human health and civilisation. Furthermore, freshwater is the primary engine of culture and civilisation (Wang & He, 2022). Ibn Khaldun was already keenly aware of the importance of fresh water for human survival and the layout of towns, and he also noted that, in addition to fresh water, the air and temperature of the location were also factors that had to be considered in the development of human civilisation. For example, he states:

*“When the air is stagnant and bad or close to corrupt waters or putrid pools or swamps, it is speedily affected by putrescence and it is unavoidable that all living beings who are there will speedily be affected by illness..... Towns, where no attention is paid to good air, have, as a rule, much illness.”*

(Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 406)

As a fundamental requirement for human life, the quality of air may cause illnesses and have a direct impact on human health (Tainio et al., 2021), causing certain social disputes and impacting societal progress. At the same time, the enormous number of people and structures is one of the reasons for the degradation of air quality in cities. As a result, Ibn Khaldun acknowledges the relationship between man and the environment, and that the harm perpetrated by man to nature for his own survival and progress would ultimately return to him.

The consequence of polluting the resources on which humans rely for survival was long ago presented to future generations by Ibn Khaldun and other forefathers, but examples of polluted air still abound today with rapid industrial development, which necessitates changes from those humans who do not consider the

health of nature. There is nothing wrong with human progress, but we must seek to live in peace with the environment without jeopardizing future generations' development demands, rather than battling as we have done throughout history (Razak & Sanusi, 2010).

Ibn Khaldun also stresses that the natural environment influences lineage purity and collective unity, which has an indirect impact on the collapse of dynasties and the survival of civilisations. The extravagance of natural resources was a symbol of the monarch's authority and the corruption of the people, while the excessive pursuit of luxury items heralded the beginning of the downfall of monarchy and civilisation. For example, the *Muqaddimah* states:

*“People then also tend toward luxury in food, clothing, furnishings, and household goods. They take pride in such things and vie with other nations in delicacies, gorgeous raiment, and fine mounts. Every new generation wants to surpass the preceding one in this respect, and so it goes right down to the end of the dynasty.”*  
(Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 222)

The desire for more and better requirements in life is an expression of the human yearning for happiness. Ibn Khaldun contends that the desire for a happy existence is not a negative thing and that it was a driving factor in the development of civilisation during the early years of the dynasty. Nevertheless, when individuals transform their desire for a happy existence into the chase of vast sums of money and the joy of flaunting costly material items, their values alter radically, and this shift might eventually harm the evolution of society (Ibn Khaldun, 2015).

The pursuit of vast sums of money beyond one's means may give birth to human cultures with jobs as full of deceit as alchemy. Such occupations become the saviour of the poor with low talent, so they do not care about increasing their abilities or utilising suitable ways of survival, and they also lose their excellent values and become dishonest (Ibn Khaldun, 2015; Abdullah, 2018). This not only harms social fairness but also impedes the establishment of a healthy labour market. The pursuit of costly items that are above their means and have little use eventually impacts their own and their family's quality of life and generates a danger of societal conflict.

When one person pursues money and luxury goods beyond one's means, it may not have much of an impact on the development of society; however, when such values become a social habit and are passed down from generation to generation, there is a high risk that the latest generation of human beings will lose their desire to pursue courage, justice, struggle, and development. Then human civilisation, which is essentially propelled by humans, will cease to grow, deteriorate, and die (Ibn Khaldun, 2015; Abdullah, 2014).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, starting from the first chapter of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun discussed in great length on the role of the environment in shaping factors such as the image and character of man, and in the division of civilisation. Nature is mentioned as a factor affecting the evolution of human civilisation in the following chapters, with a specific focus on the influence of air, water, and temperature on human health and civilisation.

Regarding the origin of man and all things, Ibn Khaldun asserts that God created both man and all things. Man is essentially a vicegerent of God and therefore he needs to fulfil his duty to govern and ensure prosperity on earth. God loves man more than any other creation, and everything God made is for the sake of humans. This puts man above all other creatures and, as a result, validates the rationality of man's claim on nature. However, Ibn Khaldun opposes men neglecting nature's health and imposing harsh demands on it.

In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun's exploration of the relationship between man and nature is skewed toward the influence of nature on human life and civilisation, rather than how a man acts on nature. As a result, while investigating the connection between man and nature in the *Muqaddimah*, the researcher must often use reverse reasoning to evaluate how a man should treat nature. According to Ibn Khaldun's discussion of nature, he believes nature is the foundation for human survival and civilisation development, and that humans should respect and protect nature while pursuing their own development to ensure the sustainable and healthy development of human civilisation.

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