

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2018.035.002](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2018.035.002)

**MOHAMMAD AKVAN**

Islamic Azad University, Iran (Islamic Republic of)

**MAHMOOD SEYYED**

Department of History, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran (Islamic Republic of)

## **PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CAUSES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE ATTITUDE OF IBN KHALDUN**

### **Abstract:**

Every society, whether simple and elementary or complex and advanced, has changed in the historical context. This change has always been due to some reasons which have absorbed historians', philosophers' and researchers' attention. In fact, change and transformation have been considered as integral parts, inherent nature and internal features of human societies. What matter is that every change and transformation happens because of some reasons that have historical, cultural, political and social roots, all of which realize in the context of history and force the human society to experience change and transformation.

Ibn Khaldun as a social researcher and history philosopher has constantly paid attention to the inherent dynamics and internal upheaval of the human society and discussed its movement course, quality of change procedure in the context of history. He concerned both short-term and long-term changes. He has spent time seeking such social changes.

Ibn Khaldun' attitude to social changes can be considered as a kind of evolutionism, because he in his historical explanation and analysis of human communities and relevant processes, looked at both evolution and its causes and also various stages of social transformation and its features. In fact, from Ibn Khaldun's point of view, movement from a certain kind of community to another takes place in a longitudinal link and communities are located in cyclic and evolutionary process, that is, every community comes into existence and takes steps to perfection, it begins its downward trend then, finally changes into another one. What matters in the attitude of Ibn Khaldun, is that he never believes this cyclic and evolutionary movement of communities and their repeatability to be algebraic and uniform. In his opinion this movement is a kind of evolution and creation accompanied by growth and perfection. Thus societies emerge, are formed, grow and develop, eventually are transformed, but their existence signs, that is, culture and civilization never disappear completely and just are transferred from one community to another. So another community with previous cultural background and civilization is formed in another horizon. Therefore, in Ibn Khaldun's view, change and transformation is not a closed cycle but it has an open horizon toward perfection and progress.

In this article, efforts have been made to study the historical, philosophical causes of social changes and transformation from Ibn Khaldun's perspective.

### **Keywords:**

Ibn Khaldun, social transformation, social evolution, perfectionism, cyclic movement , evolutionary movement .

## **The concept and meaning of social change**

Those who used to study the society and investigate social issues never supposed that there was any distinction between the concept of social change and social transformation. But some of the contemporary sociologists have found social change and social transformation two distinct categories and separated them from each other. Gay Roche, contemporary sociologist, thinks that realization of social transformation takes a long time and it can be observed after passing various stages and successive generations. While social change is short- term and can even be observed and realized during just one generation. He defines the social transformation as a set of changes which takes place during a long period, over one or several generations in a society . Social transformation can be considered as a single scene composed of a mass of details which can't be observed except from a high altitude. On the contrary, social change refers to visible and searchable phenomena which are visible and searchable during a short time so that every ordinary individual, in his or her life time even a short period of life can personally pursue a change (Roche, 1987, 21). But Ibn Khaldun puts no distinction between the concepts of social change and social transformation and makes use of them as a single meaning. He raises social change and social transformation in a broad meaning so that it includes all the changes and transformation occurring in different social stages, transformation that emerge at various phases of social organizations, culture and cultural patterns, institutions, infrastructures, affairs concerning ethics and behavior. Considering the fact that the direction of the transformation is not necessarily progressive and it might be backward and regressive, Ibn Khaldun focuses his attention to both social changes and social transformation. He puts emphasis on both meanings. Status of nations and generations changes due to the conversion and transformation of ages and passage of time and this is like a chronic disease which is so hidden and invisible because it needs to pass long centuries to happen. Only a handful of people who are aware of nature's transformation can understand the point. This is because of the fact that the quality of world and nations' customs, life styles and religions can't continue in a same way and a stable manner. They begin to vary, shift from one status to another, by the passage of time. The same thing as it happens to individuals, time and big cities, tends to happen in lands, countries, centuries and states (Ibn Khaldun, 1987, vol1, 52). Therefore Ibn Khaldun can be regarded as an evolutionist or perfectionist. Analyzing and explaining the social change and transformation, he deals with fundamental roots of transformation that contain both gradual and general aspects and pass through defect to reach perfection and also have different stages. In his historical analysis of human societies and their trend, he refers to both gradual and general transformation from simple to complex, from faulty to perfect, and discuss the various stages of these transformation and characteristics of each stage in details. Moving from one type of social organization to another kind is discussed in a longitudinal link. In addition, the intermediate stages between the main initial stage and the

final one and subsidiary types of either of main types, haven't been ignored by Ibn Khaldun (Sadeghi Fasaee, 2000. 77).

It can be concluded that in Ibn Khaldun's opinion, social evolution is not absolute. It doesn't simply mean that when a society or civilization is destroyed, a new society or civilization will replace it, but in his attitude, social changes mean evolution and creation. That is, no society or civilization is thoroughly destroyed but with decline of a society, its signs of living, culture and civilization, transfer from one community to another and the second community, by the assistance of previous community's culture and civilization develops in a more advanced stage. The evolution continues then it declines. So Ibn Khaldun thought that the process of social changes and transformation is not a closed one containing ups and downs and follows evolutionistic rules." Because the society, especially civilized society is always evolving- a revealed or hidden transformation, transformation of a society is something relative which is related to time and location- and depends on certain circumstance, region and period of time and can be explained just in light of these factors ( Baronz & Beker, 2005, 317). Therefore Ibn Khaldun believes that the process of social change and transformation is evolutionary and oriented. Overall, the society, owing to transformation, is going toward development, improvement and perfection and its ups and downs are evolutionary and progressive.

### **Factors of social change in the attitude of Ibn Khaldun**

Social transformation can't occur as a result of a certain cause. It is influenced by various factors which act together and simultaneously and this symmetry of the different factors cause social transformation. But this does not mean that all factors affect equally or all of them share the same ratio of influence. The quality of their effects differs from one another and some have deeper, more effective effects than others. The difference between the effects of various social causes depends on time, location, and situation of each community and the same pattern can't be determined for all communities. "So the effect of different factors varies in terms of their situations and status and it is impossible to generalize a single pattern and the same hierarchy for all the various situations and conditions (Roche, 1987, 4). Ibn Khaldun tries to specify the role of different causes in the social transformation. However he pays special attention to the role of various social, political, cultural, moral, geographical, and religious factors in the transformation of the community and avoids the impact of an exclusive factor. He believes that any social transformation arises from bonds and mutual, symmetric coordination of a chain of physical and spiritual causes. " a community like any other existence is subject to the causality system. Everything is affected by a series of causes. What is considered as concha or fortune in an unsophisticated person's view, is in fact an effect of hidden causes"(Baronz &Beker, 2005, 318). But Ibn Khaldun hasn't neglected the factor having deeper and more effective effect in creating and forming social transformation. Based on the Ibn Khaldun'e thought,

prejudice is considered as a dynamic and decisive factor so that social transformation and the necessity of the society are based on this principal but this factor also is not the same and uniform in all communities. It differs according to conditions and situations of societies.

### **The quality of a primitive community's transformation to an advanced one (civilized)**

Ibn Khaldun has found an advanced community or a civilized society as a community that has transformed from a simple, incomplete mode to a complex and perfect mode. According to Ibn Khaldun a advanced or civilized community is a one that has achieved significant progress in all aspects. But this advancement owes various causes. Having received impact from these causes, the society moves from an incomplete mode to a perfect one and signs of this mode could be progress in science and industry ( Ibn Khaldun, introduction, 380).

Ibn Khaldun believes that transformation of the society is created through two ways. A society is transformed whether by the factors existing in it or the factors outside. What causes a society transform from inside, are factors such as class conflict, weak troops, lack of organization and administrative, political cohesion and finally pressure from down by lower social class. If centralization and social cohesion which is the key to the state's success and social mobility become weak and pale and the state's authority is reduced, then the society will get prepared for transformation. In his opinion, if the state doesn't care about the society's structural problems, and just make effort to meet the short-term, every day needs, in such a society, structural crisis might emerge which causes both luxury-oriented behavior within the state and decrease in monitoring the political, administrative organization of the state. Due to luxury- oriented behavior and increased military spending, decreased basic income, the state has to increase the tax size in order to compensate for the deficit financing budget, but this kind of revenue is not sufficient for the luxury and military spending. As a result, the state's military power reduces and tax increase will bring about class conflict in the society. In fact, the key preparedness for the social transformation is created. If internal social transformation factors are associated with the external factors, then such a society will completely transformed. The new states will replace the previous one (Azad Armaki, 76, 189-191).

Ibn Khaldun divides the external factors of social transformation into two groups: the first; the military attack by the stronger states that might not even be civilized to the civilized states. And the second; people's awareness of the upheavals happened in the history which has ended in the society's destruction or progress. So in Ibn Khaldun's attitude, internal factors underlie crisis and external factors put an end to social crisis and cause revolution.

### **prejudice is a fundamental factor for social change**

Society is constantly changing and transforming and it is quite obvious so that there is no need for reason. But this change and transformation in society aren't accidental events with

no reason, but they are purposeful and oriented, moving to a target. In Ibn Khaldun's perspective, this transformation of society sometimes happens in such a way that the nature of the society changes and of the previous society nothing remains. Sometimes, while the nature of the society doesn't change and remains stable, its traits, features and characteristics alter. In other words, society changes in terms of quality, quantity and location. Changes in the qualitative aspect are; change from a primitive society into an urban society, from kinship prejudice to ethnic prejudice, from ethnic prejudice to religious prejudice, or change from an economy based on simple daily living to a complex economy based on a civilized society. Changes in the quantitative aspect are; increase or decrease in the sovereign territory, population and the state's revenues, urban development and increase or decrease in the number of people who try to acquire knowledge. Changes in the location aspect are; transfer of the state from a place to another due to wars or conquest, transfer of human from desert to village and from village to city (Mahdi, 1979, 324).

In the Ibn Khaldun's opinion, the first cause that can have an effect on all changes is prejudice. The primitive society is formed through a certain type of prejudice and it persists. According to Ibn Khaldun, this type of prejudice is natural and only because of essential needs of human beings is created. On the next steps, the natural prejudice is moderated by reason and the law and stands beyond the basic needs of human beings. Moving from the natural prejudice to the natural prejudice based on reason and law, is a kind of transformation and social change itself and can affect the way man achieve the ultimate goal of human's social life and of the life which is based on meeting the natural needs and other needs beyond the natural ones. In fact, according to Ibn Khaldun, prejudice is the real stimulator of history or as Rosenthal says, it is the driving force of the state's transformation ( Altalebi, 2012, 51). From Ibn Khaldun's point of view, prejudice is a phenomenon that contains different dimensions and aspects such as social, cultural and political. It changes and transforms over time. Prejudice isn't subjective but real and it is the source of any action and activity.

So in his opinion, prejudice plays a vital role in social change and has a central position so that without considering the factor prejudice, social change and the process of society's growth and development won't be possible.

### **conclusion**

Ibn Khaldun is seeking to get to the root of social change causes in order to explain the process of growth and progress or decline of a society. Among the various causes, what interests him and is important for him is, prejudice, which can both bring about the growth and progress of the society and also its decline. Given that he considers the social change in its broad meaning, prejudice causing social change is also considered broad and extensive. For this reason, prejudice oscillates from the early stage to the highest stage, beginning from blood prejudice, kinship, ethnic, national and ending at religious prejudice.

Therefore it is concluded that although social, political, cultural and religious factors play significant roles in the social change, the factor that can have profound impact on the social change is prejudice which has been explained by Ibn Khaldun.

## References

Armaki, Taqi, sociology of Ibn Khaldun, Pejman Publications, Tehran, 1997

Ibn Khaldun, Abd-er-Rahman, Introduction, vol 1, 5th Print, translated by Gonabadi, scientific and cultural Publications, Tehran, 1987

Altalebi, Ibn Khaldun and history translated by Hasani, Rahanjam, history of Islam institute, Tehran, 2012

Barnes and Beker, history of social thought, translated by Yusefian and Majidi, vol1, Amirkabir university, Tehran, 2005

Roche, social changes, translated by Vosoughi, Ney Publications, Tehran, 1987

Sadeqi, Fasaee , A study on sociology of decline theory in Ibn Khaldun's view, Amirkabir university, Tehran, 2000

Tabatabaee, , Ibn Khaldun and social science, Thales publications, Tehran, 2012

Mehdi, Mohsen, , Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history, translated by Massoudi, Tehran, 1979

Nesar, Nasef, Ibn Khaldun's idea of realism, translated by Rahimloo, Academic publication center, Tehran. 1987