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Towards a New Science of Civilization

**A Synthetic Study of the Philosophical Views of
al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun, Arnold Toynbee, and Samuel Huntington**

Abstract

This article presents a synthetic study of the philosophical views of al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun from classical Islam and Arnold Toynbee and Samuel Huntington from the modern West on the subject of civilizational science. On the basis of the Aristotelian idea of a true science, this article argues that al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun were the real founders of civilizational science. Through his reformulation of the topics constituting the subject matter of this science as first defined by al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun immediately made the science more comprehensive and created several new sciences as its branches. Within the epistemological framework of Ibn Khaldun's new civilizational science, Toynbee developed the study of comparative civilization, which is yet to attain its true status as a science. It is further argued that Huntington's possible contribution to civilizational science would be through the concept of politics of civilization. A more refined civilizational science may only emerge in this century if the civilizational views of these thinkers and others are to be synthesized.

Keywords

civilization, science, Islam, the philosophical, epistemology, 'umran, madani, social organization, the political, the intellectual

Introduction

The main aim of this article is to discuss the key ideas and concepts that are deemed integral to any academic discipline that claims to be a true science of civilization. Since the concept of science of civilization is by no means clear to every scholar or academic in the social sciences and the humanities, not even to most of the students specializing in civilizational studies themselves, there is a great need to clarify the full meaning of the science in question. This need, which we maintain is primarily an epistemological one, dictates an inquiry into the necessary and sufficient conditions for the creation of the science of civilization. This article proposes to undertake this epistemological inquiry through selected studies of the views of well-known world thinkers on the subject of civilization. For the purpose of this study we have selected four social thinkers, two of whom are from the classical Islamic period, while the other two are from the modern West. The two classical Muslim thinkers are al-Farabi (870–950 CE)¹ and Ibn Khaldun (1332–

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For a comprehensive and detailed account of the life, works and significance of al-Farabi,

see Osman Bakar, *Al-Farabi: Life, Works and Significance*, Kuala Lumpur: The Islamic



1406).² Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975)³ and Samuel Huntington (1927–2008)⁴ are presented here as their modern Western counterparts by virtue of their common concern with civilizational issues, notwithstanding the wide intellectual gap that separates them from both al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun insofar as their worldviews are concerned.

In our view, for the purpose of studying the rather complex issue of the science of civilization, our choice of the four social thinkers in review is quite justified and also meaningful. All of them dealt with civilizational issues, although in depth and breadth their respective treatments of these issues somewhat differ from each other. They had different philosophical perspectives on the meaning and significance of civilization. There are commonalities as well as differences in their conceptions of civilization that are in themselves issues of great importance to comparative civilizational studies in our own times. Toynbee and Huntington were twentieth century contemporaries, who were separated in time from Ibn Khaldun by more than five centuries. Ibn Khaldun, in turn, was separated from his fellow Muslim predecessor, al-Farabi, by another five centuries. Thus, in the entire span of a thousand years that separated al-Farabi from Huntington we see Ibn Khaldun as occupying a kind of middle position between them, at least in its temporal if not also intellectual sense.

However, it is Ibn Khaldun's middle position, in its intellectual sense between early classical Islam, with which we identify al-Farabi and late Western modernity with which we identify Toynbee and Huntington that interests us more here. The issue of Ibn Khaldun's intellectual link with the philosophical tradition of al-Farabi's tenth-century Islam that preceded him and with his future admirers among the social thinkers of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries is indeed of great interest to contemporary scholars. We argue that it is possible to define Ibn Khaldun's middle position thus understood. In civilizational terms, a span of five or even ten centuries is not considered as a long period of time. Such a lengthy kind of span of time, as this would be viewed by the purely empirical sciences, is by no means problematic to scholars of civilizational studies who are usually gifted with a universal and holistic mind to comprehend, or an eagle's eye to visualize civilizational phenomena over a long period of time. But there are prerequisites to the realization of such a comprehension or visualization. We must know the intellectual landscape and climate of both early classical Islam and late modernity in the West between which Ibn Khaldun is said to intellectually stand well, as well as his intellectual outlook and his contemporaneous world.

There have actually been many modern Western scholars, including Toynbee, whose estimation of Ibn Khaldun as a thinker would place the latter in an intellectual position that, while connected to the early Islamic philosophical schools, was also advanced enough as to be recognized by modern social thinkers both in the West and in the Islamic world as their own intellectual father. According to this view, Ibn Khaldun was blessed with a mind that was characteristically "modern", that set him far apart from his Muslim predecessors or contemporaries. For this reason it is understandable why many modern scholars were attracted to his works, especially the celebrated *Muqaddimah* that serves as an introduction to his voluminous work on history and civilization, *Kitab al-'ibar (The Book of Lessons)*.⁵ The *Muqaddimah*, in particular, earned him universal acclaim as the founder of modern sociology and other scholarly tributes, including being acknowledged as the founder of several other modern disciplines such as economics and philosophy of history. For example, the late Muhsin Mahdi, an Iraqi-American and contemporary Har-

ward authority on classical Islamic political philosophy, and his contemporary, Heinrich Simon, a German scholar of classical Islamic thought, both claimed that Ibn Khaldun was the founder of a new science of culture or civilization

Academy of Science, 1987. This book was based on a chapter of the author's doctoral thesis that was presented to the Department of Religion, Temple University in Philadelphia, USA. When this thesis was first entirely published as a book under the title *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Studies, 1992) without any changes made to its content, its chapter 1, dealing with the life, works and significance of al-Farabi, was thus retained as the first chapter of the new book. There are only a few contemporary writings that provide detailed updated accounts of al-Farabi's life and works. It was only fifteen years after the appearance of our book on al-Farabi's biography that another work on the same subject was published. The work, written by Majid Fakhry, a well-known modern scholar of the history of Islamic philosophy to whom we made several references in our two works just cited, has the title *Al-Farabi, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence* (Oneworld Publications, 2002), which is similar to ours. In response to the claim made in Fakhry's work that it is the first comprehensive treatment of this Peripatetic philosopher to have been made, it might be pertinent to point out that six out of eleven chapters of our *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* are devoted to the study of the life and thought of al-Farabi. Probably because its title does not mention al-Farabi the book escapes the attention of many people interested in knowing more about his thought. However, this book is highly relevant to our present study, since it includes treatment of al-Farabi's idea of 'science of civilization' or 'civilizational science' (*al-'ilm al-madani*), for the first time in Islamic history that such an idea was ever expounded. Al-Farabi's idea of this science will be discussed later in further detail.

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Unlike in the case of al-Farabi, we have far more sources that we could rely upon for our knowledge of Ibn Khaldun's biography. To start with Ibn Khaldun is known to have written an autobiography, which was edited by Muhammad Tawit al-Tanji and published under the title *al-Ta'rif bi ibn Khaldun wa Rihlatuh Gharban wa Sharqan* [*Biography of Ibn Khaldun and Report on his Travels in the West and in the East*], Cairo: Lajnat al-ta'lif wa'l-tarjamah wa'l-nashr, 1951. For its more recent edition, see *The Autobiography of Ibn Khaldun* (in Arabic), Jiahu Books, 2013. This autobiography has served as a useful basis for later historians and scholars both in the Muslim world and in the modern West to produce a more complete account of Ibn Khaldun's

biography. These modern biographies, among the prominent ones, include those of William MacGuckin de Slane (in French) and Franz Rosenthal, which were included in the introductions to their respective translations of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun's celebrated work. For the biography part of each translation, see Ibn Khaldun, *Les prolegomenes d'Ibn Khaldoun*, ed. and trans. by William MacGuckin de Slane, Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1863, Vol. 1, pp. vi–lxxxiii; and Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. by Franz Rosenthal, London, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. xxix–lxvii. Another biography worthy of mention is that of Muhammad Abdullah Enan, *Ibn Khaldun, His Life and Work*, Lahore, 1941. The most recent and also the most complete biography of Ibn Khaldun is the work of Allen James Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

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There are several works on the life of Arnold Joseph Toynbee. See, in particular, William H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; and Louise Orry, *Arnold Toynbee, Brief Lives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. However, there are many works written about his thoughts particularly pertaining to history and human civilization as contained in his magnum opus, *A Study of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934–1961), a twelve-volume book on universal history for which, by and large, he became widely known.

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A real biography of Huntington is yet to be written. He died only in 2008 making him the most recent of our four selected figures under study. Like al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun and Toynbee, Huntington also has at least one well-known work dealing with civilizational issues that may serve the very purpose of our present study, which is to assess their possible contributions to the creation of a new science of civilization. For Huntington, the work in question is *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

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The full title of the book is *Kitab al-'ibar wa diwan al-mubtada' wa'l-khabar fi tarikh al-'arab wa'l-barbar wa man 'asarahum min dhawi al-sha'n al-akbar* [*The Book of Lessons, Record of Beginnings and Events in the History of the Arabs and the Berbers and Their Powerful Contemporaries*], Bulaq, 1867–1868, 7 vols. Hereafter, the introduction to this book will be cited as the *Muqaddimah*.

(*ilm al-‘umrān*).⁶ This claim will be examined later as it is of great significance to the present study. We are particularly interested in investigating the issue of whether there is an epistemological continuity in the treatment of the idea of civilization from al-Farabi through Ibn Khaldun to Toynbee and Huntington. For the science of civilization to be seen as an evolving scientific discipline that dated back in its origin to pre-modern times it is desirable to show that the envisaged epistemological continuity actually exists. It seems to us that Ibn Khaldun served as the indispensable link in this continuity.

Toynbee, a contemporary of both Mahdi and Simon, knew Ibn Khaldun and his *Muqaddimah* and seemed inspired by him. He was lavish in his praise of the latter. In *A Study of History* Toynbee praised Ibn Khaldun as “the most illuminating interpreter of the morphology of history that has appeared anywhere in the world so far”.⁷ Toynbee also referred to him as “the outstanding genius in the field of the study of morphology of history”.⁸ He went on to speak of Ibn Khaldun’s “illuminating general conclusions about the relation between politics and religion”.⁹ In yet another acknowledgment of his intellectual appreciation of his medieval Muslim predecessor, Toynbee wrote the following:

“From his observations he developed a penetrating analysis of social morphology, embracing, in a panoramic vision, the rises and falls of empires and civilizations.”¹⁰

Although Toynbee’s explicit references to Ibn Khaldun or the *Muqaddimah* are rather few,¹¹ we may discern a deep influence of the latter on the structure of *A Study of History* and the range of civilizational ideas and issues that he addressed in the work. We may claim that the eleven chapters of this work of Toynbee are structured along the lines of the *Muqaddimah*, notwithstanding the several new themes in civilizational studies that he treated, particularly inter-civilizational relations and comparative civilization.¹²

The science of civilization: The Aristotelian roots

Before discussing the issue of the epistemic status of the science of civilization, it is necessary to first make clear what it takes to create a new science or scientific discipline. In other words, we are interested in knowing the fundamental constituents of what we call science or scientific discipline whether this pertains to the study of the natural or the human world. Prior to Ibn Khaldun, the Islamic intellectual tradition was already in possession of well-established schools of thought – legal-ethical, philosophical, theological, and mystical – that found general agreement among them on the meaning of scientific discipline (*ilm* with the plural *‘ulūm*), albeit not without heated debates and disputes. One of these intellectual schools, popularly known as the Peripatetic (*mashsha’i*) school of Islamic philosophy, was founded by al-Kindi¹³ (c. 801 – c. 873 CE) but profoundly shaped and developed by two of his leading intellectual successors, namely al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE).¹⁴ With al-Farabi born a few years before al-Kindi died, and Ibn Sina, in turn, only three decades after the death of al-Farabi, the three thinkers together formed an almost unbroken chain of philosophical tradition that stretched over a period of approximately two hundred and fifty years.

This philosophical tradition survived until the time of Ibn Khaldun. In fact, it found a new lease of life during the second half of the thirteenth century right into Ibn Khaldun’s century through the remarkable intellectual activities

and corpus of the philosophic-scientific circle led by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi¹⁵ (1201–1274 CE). Al-Tusi's famous student and a leading member of his intellectual circle,¹⁶ Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi¹⁷ (1236–1311 CE) died two decades

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See Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964 (first Phoenix edition); first published in 1957 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London. It was Mahdi who in this work first undertook an in-depth study of Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-umrān*, which he translated into English as 'the science of culture' (p. 10). Heinrich Simon wrote an entire work in German under the title *Ibn Khaldun's Wissenschaft von der Menschlichen Kultur* as a doctoral thesis that was completed in 1956 and presented in the same year to the Humboldt University in Berlin. But it was only in 1959, two years after the publication of Mahdi's *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* that Simon's thesis was published (Leipzig, 1959). Apparently, the two scholars were studying Ibn Khaldun's new science around the same time but independently of each other. According to Simon, he had access to Mahdi's above book when his work was already in print. For an English translation of Simon's work, see *Ibn Khaldun's Science of Human Culture*, trans. with preface by Fuad Baali, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1978.

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Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: The One-Volume Edition Illustrated*, London: Oxford University Press, Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1972, p. 489. For the purpose of references to Toynbee's *A Study of History* in our present article, we are using this new one-volume edition, which was revised and abridged by the author himself in collaboration with Jane Caplan. Hereafter, this work is cited as *ASH* to distinguish it from the original ten-volume work.

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Arnold Toynbee, *ASH*, p. 490.

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Ibid., p. 491.

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Ibid., p. 494.

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The references are mostly found in Part XI of the book entitled "Why Study History?" in the section with the heading "Historians in Action," pp. 489–499. Ibn Khaldun was one of the historians in action singled out by Toynbee for the purpose of buttressing his philosophy of history.

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A. Toynbee, *ASH*, pp. 7–10.

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Entitled the "Philosopher of the Arabs", al-Kindi was noted for his encyclopedic intellectual interest but with a concentration on the philosophical and natural sciences. A prolific author with about 270 works to his credit and with immense influence in both the medieval and Renaissance West, al-Kindi has been described by historians of classical Islamic thought as primarily a philosopher-scientist, just like other members of his school. For this reason, the philosophical school he founded has also been described as "the school of philosopher-scientists". In justifying the use of this term, Nasr argues that "in this school, science was combined with philosophy and, in fact, was considered as a branch of it just as in another sense philosophy began with the classification of the sciences. The great figures of this school, like al-Kindi himself, were philosophers as well as scientists." See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 9–10. See also Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1998, pp. 31–32, note 7 [1st edition: Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Studies, 1992].

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Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina were the two intellectual giants of Islam who belonged to this school. Another intellectual giant of Islam, al-Ghazzali (1058–1111 CE) who was born just a year after the death of Ibn Sina, but belonging to the school of *kalām* ("dialectical theology"), their bitter critic, considered them as the two most outstanding members of the Peripatetic school.

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On this figure, his intellectual significance and the intellectual climate of his time, see Hamid Dabashi, "Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi: the philosopher/vizier and the intellectual climate of his times", in: *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, London, New York: Routledge, 1996, Vol. 1, pp. 527–584. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 54–56 [reprint: Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003].

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This new intellectual circle has its center in Maragah in present-day Azerbaijan.

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On the life, thought and significance of this philosopher-scientist see O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, chapter 10.

before Ibn Khaldun's birth. Ibn Khaldun referred to al-Tusi several times in the *Muqaddimah* and spoke of him as a distinguished scientist and scholar,¹⁸ but not even once did he mention Qutb al-Din. In terms of his writings and intellectual influence in the latter history of Islamic thought, especially in the tradition of classifying the sciences, Qutb al-Din was actually an important figure. Like all the four prominent members of the school just mentioned – al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and al-Tusi – Qutb al-Din also authored a work on the classification of the sciences.¹⁹ A thorough acquaintance and a deep understanding of the classification tradition that preceded Ibn Khaldun are especially needed in our present inquiry into the epistemic status and characteristics of the science of civilization. It was the classification tradition that inspired the various attempts, since al-Farabi and up until Ibn Khaldun, to arrive at a comprehensive science of society.

As we have argued in several of our works, Qutb al-Din's classification had a number of new features that indicated his departure on several issues from the long established and popularly accepted classification system as recorded and discussed in the *Muqaddimah*.²⁰ Among the new features are the introduction of a new category of knowledge as indicated by the term '*ulūm dīniy*'²¹ that he had coined and a reinterpretation of the *naqliy*-*'aqliy* division of knowledge. For some reason or other, Qutb al-Din's classification escaped the attention of Ibn Khaldun. In our comparative study of the classifications of these two scholars we maintain that, most probably, the latter was not aware of the existence of the former's work, partly because it was composed in the Persian language.²² Had Ibn Khaldun known it and also realized its challenging epistemological implications for other knowledge classification systems, including his own, he would probably have provided an interesting response. Regardless of how much he knew the writings of al-Tusi and other intellectually prominent members of his Maraghah circle, the important point to be noted is that Ibn Khaldun knew the works of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina particularly well, which constituted a major source of influence on his philosophical thought. The *Muqaddimah* contains many references to the ideas of these two famous Muslim Peripatetics, either directly or indirectly. This means that Ibn Khaldun's new science of culture cannot be fully appreciated unless attempts are also made to understand the works of his predecessors dealing with human society.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, when there was a growing academic interest in the West in Ibn Khaldun and the *Muqaddimah*, but its academia was still mostly in the dark on the Islamic philosophical tradition prior to him, we saw two distinct responses from them. One response was the attempt to treat Ibn Khaldun as a solitary figure who somehow did not have any predecessors influencing him. Another response, as Heinrich Simon put it, was the attempt "to establish the connection of Ibn Khaldun's work with the philosophical tradition"²³ that preceded him. Simon, who identified himself with the second response, rationalized his doctoral study of Ibn Khaldun's new science of culture by saying that what he wanted to impress upon the world of scholarship of his time was that his intellectual achievement was attained not in spite of not having contributions of ideas from his predecessors, but rather because of the strong "ties which unite him with his predecessors" that "determine his basic philosophical position".²⁴ As we come to know more about the history of Islamic philosophy, Simon's thesis becomes more corroborated and strengthened.

An integral part of the philosophical tradition to which Ibn Khaldun was heir was the knowledge classification tradition already discussed. The Muslim Peripatetic contribution to the overall Islamic classification tradition was immense. As a result of this tradition, which had its roots in Aristotle's con-

ception of science and classification of the sciences, the idea of science or scientific discipline that was epistemologically sound became more refined and classifications of the sciences more elaborate. Both in its name and in its thoughts and intellectual perspectives the Islamic Peripatetic school was closely associated or identified with Aristotle whom they referred to as the First Teacher (*al-mu'allim al-awwal*). Al-Farabi himself was honoured with the title of the Second Teacher (*al-mu'allim al-thani*). Modern scholars have suggested different reasons why this honorific title was conferred on al-Farabi.²⁵ Ibn Khaldun seems to have provided the gist of the answer when he offered the following explanation:

“He [Aristotle] improved the methods of logic and systematized its problems and details. He assigned to logic its proper place as the first philosophical discipline and the introduction to philosophy. Therefore [Aristotle], is called the First Teacher.”²⁶

However, Sayyed Hossein Nasr, a leading contemporary scholar of Islam, who is well-versed with the Islamic philosophical tradition, gave a fuller and appealing explanation of why Aristotle and al-Farabi were honored with the titles of the First and the Second Teachers respectively. According to Nasr, the term ‘teacher’ or *mu'allim* as used in reference to both of them

“[...] does not mean one who teaches or is a master of the sciences. Rather, it means one who defines, for the first time, the boundaries and limits of each branch of knowledge and formulates each science in a systematic fashion.”²⁷

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The Muqaddimah, Vol. 3, pp. 148, 315.

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For the classifications of these Muslim Peripatetics see Al-Kindi, *Fi aqşam al-'ulūm* [*On the Divisions of the Sciences*], which is discussed in details in George N. Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi, the Philosopher of the Arabs*, Rawalpindi: Islamic Research Institute, 1966, pp. 32–40; al-Farabi, *Kitab ihṣā' al-'ulūm* [*The Book of Enumeration of the Sciences*], ed. by 'Uthman Amin, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1949; Ibn Sina, *Fi aqşam al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah* [*On the Divisions of the Sciences*], trans. Muhsin Mahdi in: Ralph Lerner, Muhsin Mahdi, Ernest L. Fortin (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1967, pp. 95–97. As for Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, his classification, which is confined to the division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics and politics, is discussed in details in *The Nasirean Ethics by Nasir ad-Din Tusi*, trans. by G. M. Wickens, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964. For Qutb al-Din's classification see his *Durrat al-taj li-ghurraṭ al-dibaj fi'l-hikmah* [*Pearls of the Crown, the Best Introduction to Wisdom*], Vol. 1, ed. by Sayyid Muhammad Mishkat, Tehran: Majlis, 1317–1324 AH.

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See O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge*, chapter 11 on Qutb al-Din's classification of the sciences; see also Osman Bakar, *Islamic Civilization and the Modern World: Thematic Essays*, Gadong, Brunei Darussalam: UBD Press, 2014, chapter 4.

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Literally, the term means ‘religious sciences’. Qutb al-Din's definition of ‘*ulūm dīniyy*’ as being either transmitted (*naqliyy*) or rational-intellectual (*'aqliyy*), or both, is rather novel. While his religious sciences are viewed as identical to the Sharia sciences, a feature already present in al-Ghazzali's classification, Qutb al-Din also posits the existence of another category of knowledge which is neither philosophical (*hikmiyy*), nor religious and which he calls non-philosophical (*ghayr hikmiyy*) and non-religious (*ghayr dīniyy*).

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For this comparative study and the implications of Qutb al-Din's classification for subsequent classification attempts in Islam, see O. Bakar, *Islamic Civilization and the Modern World*, chapter 4.

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H. Simon, *Ibn Khaldun's Science of Human Culture*, p. 8.

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Ibid., pp. 8–9.

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For a discussion of these different explanations see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Chira Farabira mu'alim-i thani khandihand?” in his *Essays on Farabi*, First Part, pp. 9–14.

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The Muqaddimah, Vol. 3, p. 139.

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S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 134, note 13.

It was in light of this understanding of the term ‘teacher’, Nasr argued, that both thinkers were called as such, since it is a well-known fact that each of them authored what was at once the earliest and the most influential classification of the sciences of the time. In fact, their works continued to be referred to by historians of philosophical and scientific thoughts until our present times. In the case of Aristotle, we refer to his threefold division of the sciences into theoretical, practical, and productive as described in Porphyry’s *Isagoge* which, in the Syriac logical tradition to which al-Farabi became heir, was placed at the head of the *Organon* as an introduction.²⁸ As for al-Farabi, the classification in question is entitled *Ihsa’ al-‘ulum* (*Enumeration of the Sciences*).²⁹ Nasr further strengthened his argument by adding another case, which is that of Mir Damad (d. 1631 or 1632 CE), a Persian philosopher, who is fondly referred to within the Twelve-Imam Shi’ite world of the Safavids as the “Third Teacher” for having performed the same kind of task Aristotle and al-Farabi had done, but on a much smaller scale.³⁰

Al-Farabi is known to be one of the greatest Muslim commentators of Aristotle. He wrote commentaries on the entire *Organon* which constitutes the whole corpus of Aristotelian logic. These commentaries contain the ideas and principles that were to serve as the basis of al-Farabi’s conception of scientific discipline or demonstrative science and his knowledge classification system. The Muslim Peripatetics were thus regarded as disciples of ancient Greek learning, and particularly as the followers of Aristotle, who were instrumental in transmitting, commenting and interpreting Aristotle and the pre-Islamic Aristotelian tradition. However, it would be misleading to view the members of this school as mere transmitters and followers of Aristotle. In every science that they had inherited from Aristotle and his tradition, be this logic, physics, ethics or politics, they had shown in their commentaries of his works a critical and independent mind at work. While retaining most of his teachings which they saw as being affirmed by both reason and the Islamic revelation, they departed from his position on many issues, thereby introducing innovative ideas. Al-Farabi’s knowledge classification system is a good case in point. While inspired by and basing himself on Aristotle’s classification of the sciences, al-Farabi produced an original work on the subject that, among others, takes into account the kind of time and cultural space in which he lived and thought. There is both continuity and discontinuity between Aristotle’s classification of the sciences and that of al-Farabi.³¹ In the context of our present study we are interested in the issue of the continuity of epistemological problems encountered in the notion of the all-embracing science of society, which Aristotle and al-Farabi called “architectonic” and “*al-‘ilm al-madani*” respectively. As to what would be the most apt English rendering of the term, *al-‘ilm al-madani* is itself a matter of dispute among modern scholars of Islamic thought, particularly those specializing in Farabian studies.

Similarly, while originally basing their definition of scientific discipline on the Aristotelian notion of science, the Muslim philosophers concerned with logic and epistemology, of whom al-Farabi is an excellent example, continuously refined the conception until they arrived at a universally accepted definition that transcends the different schools of thought. According to Aristotle,

“Every demonstrative science is concerned with three things: the subjects which it posits (i.e. the genus whose essential attributes it studies), the so-called common axioms upon which the demonstration is ultimately based, and thirdly the attributes whose several meanings it assumes. There is no reason, however, why certain sciences should not disregard some of these three things; e.g., omit to posit the existence of the genus if its existence is evident (for the existence of number is not so obvious as that of hot and cold), or to assume the meaning of the attributes

if it is quite clear; just as in the case of the common principles the meaning of ‘when equals are subtracted from equals the remainders are equal’ is not assumed, because it is well-known. Nevertheless there holds good, this natural threefold division into the subject, the object and the basis of demonstration.”³²

However, quite early in the Islamic philosophical tradition, at least among the Peripatetics, a refinement of the Aristotelian definition of science had already occurred. When al-Farabi composed his *Enumeration of the Sciences* he was already in possession of a theory of the epistemic structure and fundamental constituents of a true science that was to be inherited by his successors in the philosophic tradition. In Aristotle’s definition and characterization of demonstrative science quoted above we see that this science is structured with three epistemic elements as its components, namely its subject matter or object of study, foundational axioms, and object or goal of demonstration. Al-Farabi broadened this definition so as to include disciplines that employ dialectical syllogisms apart from the demonstrative sciences which employ demonstrative syllogisms.³³ Thus, in his classification of the sciences he includes the religious science of *kalām*, which in his view largely employs dialectical syllogism. Since in his notion of science al-Farabi is no longer merely concerned with the demonstrative type of proof (*burhān*), but also with the dialectical type (*jadāl*), a slight modification to Aristotle’s definition of scientific discipline is necessary. The modification pertains to the inclusion of methods of proof in the list of the fundamental structural elements of a science, since each science is now seen as having its own methods of inquiry into its subject matter and establishing proofs. In other words, each true science is epistemologically structured in such a way that it has a fourfold division of fundamental constituent elements that define it, and not a threefold division. The four elements in question are now identified as subject matter of the study, foundational axioms about the subject matter, method of study, and goals and objectives of the study.

These four characteristic features that are common to all the true sciences were already common knowledge, at least among students of philosophy, when Umar Khayyam (1048–1131 CE), another Peripatetic and a confessed follower of Ibn Sina,³⁴ reproduced the following description of a true science. According to Khayyam, every scientific discipline “possesses a subject matter (*mawḍuʿ*) whose properties, essential or otherwise it investigates, and primary principles or premises (*muqaddamāt*) which it assumes to be true”.³⁵

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On the place of the *Isagoge* in the Syriac curriculum of Aristotelian logic that al-Farabi had inherited, see al-Farabi, *A Short Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics*, trans. by Nicholas Rescher, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1963.

29

This classification is discussed in detail in O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, chapters 1–6.

30

S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 134.

31

For a detailed treatment of this issue, see O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, particularly chapters 5 and 6.

32

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 76b3 ff.

33

For a detailed discussion of al-Farabi’s conception of syllogism and its different types and their corresponding methods of proof, see O. Bakar, *Classification of Islam*, chapter 3, section titled “Al-Farabi’s Theory of Methodology,” pp. 83–89.

34

Khayyam is generally regarded as the world’s greatest mathematician in the medieval period.

35

See Osman Bakar, “Economics as a Science: Insights from Classical Muslim Classifications of the Sciences”, *Islam and Civilization*-



Each science, he adds, seeks to provide “an essential definition of the object [being investigated] and the principles and rules of the art”.³⁶ Terminologically speaking, however, there was some variance among the philosophers in their usage of words. The technical term usually used for the goal of arriving at an essential definition of the subject matter under investigation is *hadaf* (plural: *ahdāf*),³⁷ which in its ultimate form is generally referred to as the perfect definition (*al-ḥadd al-tamm*) or the perfect conception (*al-ḥadd al-tamm*).³⁸ As for the method of investigating and studying the subject matter that comprises “the principles and rules of the art”, to use Khayyam’s expression, the common term used is *ṭariqah* (plural: *ṭuruq*). In light of this identification of the fourfold division of science into the subject matter, the goal, the foundational assumptions, and the method of proof, it is important that we verify whether or not these four criteria of a true science have been fulfilled by the ongoing studies of civilization from the time of al-Farabi until the contemporary period.

Al-Farabi’s *al-‘Ilm al-Madani*: Is it the science of civilization?

In his novel classification of the sciences, *Ihsa’ al-‘ulūm*, which departed from the Aristotelian classification in a number of respects, al-Farabi introduced a new science which he termed *al-‘ilm al-madani*. The term was indeed new and so was part of its content. The new science appears, at first glance, as a kind of replacement or substitute for the threefold division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics, and politics that was to be found in the preceding Aristotelian classification of the sciences. In al-Farabi’s classification ethics, economics and politics do not appear as distinct branches of practical philosophy that are given separate treatments. Without doubt, the term *al-‘ilm al-madani* has raised a host of issues some of which, in our view, are far from being settled even now. The first issue may be stated as whether or not it is true that the new science is given prominence in al-Farabi’s classification at the expense of the traditional sciences of ethics, economics, and politics. According to Fauzi Najjar, one of the leading twentieth century scholars of Farabian studies, especially of his political thought, al-Farabi ignored the Aristotelian threefold division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics, and politics and kept silence about the first two sciences.³⁹ Najjar posits the view that the eclipsing of ethics and economics by al-Farabi in the *Ihsa’ al-‘ulūm* was motivated by his desire to give a predominant position to political science, the third in the traditional triad constituting practical philosophy.

Najjar’s views need some comments. It is true, though, that in the classification work in his treatment of the social sciences al-Farabi abandons the popular Aristotelian approach of focusing on ethics, economics, and political science. But it would be quite misleading if we were to say that he is silent on ethics and economics, if by being silent Najjar means that the epistemological concerns of the two sciences are not discussed at all in his *al-‘ilm al-madani*. Upon careful reading of the epistemic content and scope of this new science, we are convinced that al-Farabi was interested not in presenting *al-‘ilm al-madani* as being exclusively concerned with politics to the extent of ignoring ethics and economics as claimed by Najjar, but rather in comprehending the Aristotelian threefold division of practical philosophy. On the contrary, in our view, al-Farabi saw his *al-‘ilm al-madani* as a new and an all-embracing science of human society, the most comprehensive to have ever been conceived

by any human mind before and contemporaneous to him. Further, he saw it as an epistemological attempt to integrate politics, ethics, and economics into a broader and more exclusive new science. We venture to claim that his *al-ilm al-madani* as described in the *Ihsa' al-'ulūm* may be regarded as the first successful attempt in the history of human thought prior to his time at a formulation of a legitimate science of civilization. This new science is his 'architectonic science' in the sense that it is clearly seen as the most embracing of all sciences then known. It may be viewed as al-Farabi's answer to Aristotle's search for the architectonic science that comprehends all other sciences, which his commentators in subsequent generations mostly referred to as the supreme political science but which remained problematic in its conceptual formulation and epistemic identification.

In our work, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, written three decades ago, we asserted on the architectonic nature of al-Farabi's *al-'ilm al-madani*. Upon analysis of the content of this new science we wrote:

"In general, al-Farabi's political science (*al-falsafah al-madaniyah*) embraces anthropology, sociology, philosophy of law, practical psychology, ethics, and public administration. As such, it is the most comprehensive branch of the humanities."⁴⁰

Our usage of the term 'political science' in this quoted passage as a rendering of the Arabic term *al-falsafah al-madaniyah*, as found in the *Ihsa' al-'ulūm* and several other writings of al-Farabi, needs clarification. At the time we wrote the work we were very much aware of the comprehensiveness of the subject matter of al-Farabi's *al-'ilm al-madani*, the unique nature of the new science, and also the epistemic problems and conceptual issues that had to be faced and resolved if we continued to use the term 'political science' to render al-Farabi's *al-'ilm al-madani*. Despite having this awareness and not being happy with it, we continued with its usage for, what we thought then, the lack of a better term. But there was also the reason of wanting to conform to the terminological usage of the leading scholars of Farabian studies.

Without exception, scholars of classical Islamic thought, particularly of Farabian studies, have rendered *al-'ilm al-madani* into English as 'political science'.⁴¹ In a way, these scholars, as a result of being bound to "traditional" terminological usage, are only perpetuating the problematic legacy of Aristotle's notion of political science as the supreme architectonic science when, in fact, al-Farabi himself had found a way out of this epistemological mess.

al Renewal, Vol. 1 (2010), No. 3, p. 428. Our quotation of 'Umar Khayyam and another quotation that follows are from our translations of the relevant passages in his original work *Fi sharh ma ashkala min musadarat kitab Uqlidus [Concerning the Difficulties of Euclid's Elements]*, ed. by 'Abd al-Hamid Sabra, Alexandria: Munsha'at al-Ma'arif, 1961, p. 2.

³⁶ O. Bakar, "Economics as a Science", p. 428.

³⁷ Another term, *ghāyah*, is found in al-Farabi's writings.

³⁸ For al-Farabi's understanding of this ultimate epistemological goal of a science, see O.

Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, pp. 58–61.

³⁹

See Fauzi M. Najjar, "Al-Farabi on Political Science", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 48 (1958), No. 2, p. 94, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1958.tb02245.x>.

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O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, p. 145.

⁴¹

Leading scholars of Farabian thought such as Muhsin Mahdi, Fauzi Najjar and Franz Rosenthal have all adopted the same translation.

The most problematic issue that arises from the above identification of *al-‘ilm al-madani* with political science was how to legitimize the epistemic status of what Najjar calls ‘politics proper’ (*siyāsah*) and that of architectonic politics. It did not occur to us then that it would be more epistemologically sound if we were to render *al-‘ilm al-madani* as civilizational science or science of civilization. Now, thanks to the progress made in civilizational or cultural studies in modern times and, interestingly, thanks also in no small measure to our better understanding of Ibn Khaldun’s new science of culture (*‘ilm ‘umrān*), we have stronger reasons to go with the claim that *al-‘ilm al-madani* deserves to be interpreted as science of civilization, the epistemic outlines of which are provided in the *Ihsa’ al-‘ulūm*. We maintain, however, that it is not enough to support the claim by relying on this classification work alone. There are several other works of al-Farabi that are very much relevant to the task of strengthening the claim, including *The Politics of Civilization (Al-siyāsah al-madaniyah)*,⁴² *The Attainment of Happiness (Tahṣīl al-sa‘ādah)*,⁴³ *Extractions of Civilizational Wisdom (Fuṣūl al-madani)*,⁴⁴ and *The Virtuous City (Madīnat al-faḍīlah)*.⁴⁵ While by itself the *Ihsa’ al-‘ulūm* merely provides the outlines or the skeleton of the new science, al-Farabi’s other works mentioned above provide in greater details its thematic and epistemological contents that were made available by the existing body of knowledge of his time.

With al-Farabi, following the above contention, the term used for civilization is *madaniyah*. The subject matter of his new science – *madaniyah* – is defined as “the various kinds of voluntary actions and ways of life, human tendencies, morals and states of character that leads to these actions and ways of life, the ends for the sake of which they are performed, and how they must exist in man”.⁴⁶ It further comprises the methods or means of “distinguishing between ends which are true happiness and those which are presumed to be so although they are not”.⁴⁷ Further, detailing the components of the subject matter of his science of civilization, al-Farabi includes politics (*siyāsah*) which he identifies with the operation of the royal craft that requires leadership and governance. Politics is essentially concerned with “the way of ordering the virtuous states of character and ways of life in the cities and nations and making known the royal functions by which the virtuous ways of life and actions are established and ordered among the citizens of the cities, and the activities by which to preserve what has been ordered and established among them”.⁴⁸ Quite clearly, al-Farabi’s science of civilization possesses a well-defined subject matter that has to be necessarily all-embracing in its treatment of man and human society by virtue of the fact that it is nothing less than a civilization. Although the latter Peripatetics such as Ibn Sina, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi did not pursue al-Farabi’s pioneering civilizational approach to the study of human social organization, they had indirectly helped enrich and refine the new science, both its subject matter and methodology, through their successive treatments of the sciences of ethics, economics and politics. With respect to the human dimension of social organization, including its metaphysical and spiritual significance, the subject matter of al-Farabi’s *al-‘ilm al-madani* was epistemologically comprehensive and far-reaching enough as to be unsurpassed by the subject matter of Ibn Khaldun’s *‘ilm al-‘umrān*. However, the *Muqaddimah* was to show, five hundred years later, that, from the perspective of Ibn Khaldun’s time, al-Farabi’s vision of civilization was rather neglectful of the physical, demographic, and historical dimensions of human social organization.⁴⁹

The most fundamental axiom or foundational assumption of al-Farabi’s science of civilization pertains to the idea and reality of human happiness. The

most fundamental premise of this science is that the ultimate goal of human life is supreme happiness (*al-sa'ādāt al-quswā*).⁵⁰ Al-Farabi presents an idea of happiness that has two phases, the first being happiness in this earthly life (*al-sa'ādāt al-dunya*'), and the second in posthumous life which is what he calls supreme happiness. There is a continuity between the two phases of happiness. The second happiness is conditional upon the first.⁵¹ A person's present earthly life will determine the degree or state of his happiness or his misery in the posthumous life as the case may be. Happiness in the present life results from a person's acquisition of virtues. According to al-Farabi, the pursuit of collective life and civilization is the pursuit of happiness. However, he distinguishes between true happiness and false happiness. Not every civilizational pursuit, especially of the material type, will lead to true happiness. His theory of civilization is centred on the doctrine of happiness. Thus, in his science of civilization, spiritual and moral health and acquisition of virtues on which it essentially depends are featured as being among its major themes. His doctrines on happiness, psychological health, and acquisition of virtues and human perfection together with their epistemological consequences for anthropology, ethics, politics, and economics serve as the fundamental axioms or assumptions of his science of civilization. As a whole, this science possesses a multi-layered foundational assumption comprising essentially the metaphysical, the cosmological, the anthropological, the ethical, the political, and the economic. However, as we shall later see, Ibn Khaldun's '*ilm al-'umrān*' clearly shows that the foundational elements of the science of civilization constructed or assumed by al-Farabi are not complete. On the basis of all his works on civilizational studies – works in which the word *madani* or *madaniyah* appear in their respective titles – the metaphysical, the cosmological, the political, and the ethical foundations of al-Farabi's science of civilization seem to be quite solid. But the anthropological and the socio-economic foundations are in need of new constructions.

As for the methodological dimension of al-Farabi's science of civilization, its principal method of study is the demonstrative method termed *al-burhān*.

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See al-Farabi, *Kitab al-siyasah al-madaniyah*, ed. by Fauzi Najjar, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964.

43

See Alfarabi, "The Attainment of Happiness", in: Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, ed. and trans. by Muhsin Mahdi, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962, pp. 13–52.

44

See Al-Farabi, *The Fusul al-Madani / Aphorisms of the Statesman*, ed. and trans. by D. M. Dunlop, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

45

See Abu Nasr al-Farabi, *On the Perfect State*, ed. and trans. by Richard Walzer, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

46

R. Lerner, M. Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy*, p. 24. See also O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, p. 103.

47

O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, p. 103.

48

R. Lerner, M. Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy*, pp. 25–26. See also O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, p. 143.

49

A study of the historical development of the physical, demographic, and institutional dimensions of civilization during the period that separated the lives of al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun would be an interesting academic pursuit, but the scope of this article does not allow us to undertake it, notwithstanding its significance to the present study.

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O. Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, p. 143.

51

This doctrine of al-Farabi on happiness accords fully with the teachings of the Qur'an.

For him, this method is the best employed in all the philosophical sciences by virtue of its most excellent forms of arguments and proofs. To use a modern term, *al-burhān* may be described as the scientific method in its best form. In several of his writings he argued why *al-burhān* is indeed the best among all methods. His science of civilization is almost identical to practical philosophy and, thus, the appropriate method of study would be *al-burhān*. He wrote many works on various components and dimensions of *madaniyah*, the subject matter of his science of civilization, especially the political (*siyāsah*) which earned him the title of “founder of political philosophy in Islam”.⁵² In these works he principally applied the method of *al-burhān*.

In his description of the subject matter of *al-‘ilm al-madani*, Farabi has defined it in such a way that there we already have a broad outline of the properties and attributes of civilization that can guide students of the science of civilization to a more detailed knowledge of *madaniyah*, or civilization, in all its aspects and dimensions. In al-Farabi’s classical terminology, the goal of the theoretical dimension of the science of civilization is to attain a perfect definition of civilization through a long interactive process of civilizational experience and philosophical reflections aided by scientific studies. As for the practical or applied dimension of the science, it is to guide, especially those entrusted with rulership (*ri’āsah*) of cities and nations, to organize and administer civilizational life that will lead to happiness. In modern terms, the goal of the science of civilization is to produce accumulative knowledge of the nature and characteristics of civilization in light of the definition given to it and the foundational assumptions made about its reality.

Ibn Khaldun and his science of civilization

Many modern scholars are in agreement that Ibn Khaldun founded a new science, which he termed *‘ilm al-‘umrān*. These scholars include Toynbee, Simon, Nasr, Mahdi, all of whom have been quoted earlier in this article in relation to Ibn Khaldun’s new science, and Aziz al-Azmeh.⁵³ Al-Azmeh asserts that his book *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation* “analyses the logic according to which, in real terms, the project of the New Science [of Ibn Khaldun] validates its status as an historical *Organon*”.⁵⁴ This section will show that not only is Ibn Khaldun’s *‘ilm al-‘umrān* a true science of civilization, but also more developed, refined and sophisticated than al-Farabi’s *‘ilm al-madani*. This should not come as a surprise, since much civilizational progress was achieved during the five centuries that separated the two thinkers. To begin with, Ibn Khaldun himself claims that the *Muqaddimah* is an embodiment of his new science of civilization (*‘ilm al-‘umrān*). He writes:

“He [God] led us to a science whose truth we ruthlessly set forth. If I have succeeded in presenting the problems of (this science) exhaustively and in showing how it differs in its various aspects and characteristics from all other crafts, this is due to divine guidance. If, on the other hand, I have omitted some point, or if the problems of [this science] have become confused with something else, the task of correcting remains for the discerning critic, but the merit is mine since I cleared and marked the way.”⁵⁵

Thus, in his own assessment, his new science is comprehensive and exhaustive and it is different from all other sciences. Further, he is convinced that his new science stands on a solid foundation. The constitution of his new science is explained in detail in six chapters the headings of which are listed at the end of his preliminary remarks in “Book One” of the *Kitab al-‘ibar*.⁵⁶ As a whole, Ibn Khaldun maintains that

“[...] it is an entirely original science. In fact, I have not come across a discussion along these lines by anyone.”⁵⁷

Ibn Khaldun clearly maintains that the object of his study is civilization (‘*umrān*’).⁵⁸ By civilization or ‘*umrān*’ he means “human social organization”, which is “something necessary”.⁵⁹ Rosenthal affirms Ibn Khaldun’s claim that “the object of his new science is human social organization or civilization (‘*umrān*’).”⁶⁰ The semantic field of the word ‘*umrān*’, as used by Ibn Khaldun in the *Muqaddimah*, suggests that it would be a more fitting term than *madaniyah* to denote civilization in its most comprehensive sense. We have put forward the idea of the territorial base of a civilization in our study of comparative civilization.⁶¹ This idea is basically concerned with the geographical location and the demographic features of a particular civilization. With this idea in mind, we may speak of the physical and demographic dimensions of social organization. Interestingly and also beneficially, in Ibn Khaldun’s usage, the word ‘*umrān*’ acquires a wide range of meanings that are connected in one way or another with civilization. Etymologically, ‘*umrān*’ means cultivation and construction, since its root word has the meaning of to “build up and cultivate”. Conceptually, it means any human settlement or social organization regardless of its size or complexity.⁶² Since there would be no settlement or organization without a physical location and human population, understandably Ibn Khaldun is also found to be using the word ‘*umrān*’ to mean population.⁶³

In light of these basic ideas conveyed by the term ‘*umrān*’, Ibn Khaldun was able to speak of civilizational development and progress⁶⁴ of which both geo-

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One of these works in whose title the word *madaniyah* occurs is *Kitāb al-siyāsah al-madaniyah*. In keeping with the practice in twentieth century scholarship on classical Islamic political thought of translating *madani* as political, Najjar rendered the above title of al-Farabi’s book into *Al-Farabi’s Political Regime*. See al-Farabi, *Kitāb al-siyāsah al-madaniyah* [*Al-Farabi’s Political Regime*], ed. by Fauzi Najjar, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964. We prefer to translate it as *The Book of Civilizational Politics* or *The Book of Politics of Civilization*. Interestingly, in his controversial book *The Clash of Civilizations* Huntington is found to be using the term ‘politics of civilizations’, but he and al-Farabi are talking about different issues. The point is that, terminologically wise, the expression ‘politics of civilization(s)’ is not out of place altogether. Just as a note, it would be problematic indeed to translate *al-siyāsah al-madaniyah* into English if we were to understand *siyāsah* as politics proper and *madaniyah* as politics in a comprehensive sense and then have them coined together.

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For Al-Azmeh’s relevant work on Ibn Khaldun, see his *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Re-interpretation*, London, Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1982.

54

Ibid., p. xi.

55

The Muqaddimah, Vol. 1, p. 83.

56

Ibid., p. 85.

57

Ibid., p. 78.

58

Ibid., p. 91.

59

Ibid., p. 89.

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Ibid., p. 91.

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For our discussion of this idea see O. Bakar, *Islamic Civilization and the Modern World*, chapter 1 titled “Islamic Civilization as a Global Presence with Special Reference to Its Knowledge Culture”.

62

The Muqaddimah, Vol. 1, p. lxxv.

63

For example, Ibn Khaldun uses the word ‘*umrān*’ when referring to the population of North Africa and the *Maghrib*, the Western wing of the classical Islamic world, as mostly constituted by the non-Arab Berbers. See the *Muqaddimah*, Vol. 3, p. 352.

64

The Muqaddimah, Vol. 1, pp. lxxvi–lxxvii.

graphical and population size are among the determining factors. These ideas also allow him to speak of two types of civilization, namely, the simpler kind of civilization, which is the desert or Bedouin type and the more complex kind, which is the sedentary or the city-based civilization. These two types of civilization are so called because of their different stages of social development. Ibn Khaldun uses the term *ḥaḍārah* to denote sedentary civilization or *‘umrān* in its most developed stage. Thus, contrary to the contemporary understanding among many Muslims, *ḥaḍārah* is not the same in meaning as *‘umrān*. *Ḥaḍārah* basically refers to urban civilization and is, thus, a particular form of *‘umrān* rather than to human social organization as a whole or *‘umrān* as such. According to him, civilizational advancement is commonly measured according to the nature and quality of the production and consumption of material goods. While a Bedouin type of civilization pursues only material goods that are categorized as necessities in life, an urban-sedentary type is also in pursuit of conveniences and necessities. As a historian, Ibn Khaldun also observed that the peak of civilizational achievements was to be followed by civilizational decline. From a broader historical perspective, he was able to analyse the social phenomenon of the rise and fall of civilizations, which was to emerge as important thematic content of his science of *‘umrān*. Quite clearly, Ibn Khaldun was able to accomplish a detailed study of many dimensions of social organization, particularly the physical, demographic, historical, and socio-economic that were missing in al-Farabi's science of civilization.

Ibn Khaldun's *ḥaḍārah* may be identified, more or less, with al-Farabi's *madaniyah*, since the territorial basis of the latter type of civilization is identified with cities and towns. In this sense, al-Farabi's *madaniyah* may be seen as a special kind of *‘umrān*, thereby validating the view that Ibn Khaldun's science of civilization is far more comprehensive than that of al-Farabi. The topics covered under the subject matter of Ibn Khaldun's science of *‘umrān* are far more numerous and detailed than those presented by al-Farabi in his science of civilization. However, there is epistemological continuity between their subject matters, which overlap at their core. This common core pertains to the human dimension of social organization that is characteristic of urban civilization, or *madaniyah*, if we are to use al-Farabi's terminology. More specifically, this common core concerns the political and ethical dimensions of urban social organization and civilizational issues that are universal and thus independent of the size, type and stage of development of social organization.

Ibn Khaldun mentions some of the foundational assumptions of his *‘ilm al-‘umrān* in his introduction to the science of history which he defines as “information about human social organization, which itself is identical with world civilization”.⁶⁵ These assumptions concerning civilization include the social and political nature of man, the human need for political authority as a restraining influence, the need for languages, and the civilizational role of the Sharia.⁶⁶ Ibn Khaldun maintains that it is through the higher purposes of the Sharia that civilization is preserved.

“Therefore, [the laws] pay attention to the things that belong to civilization.”⁶⁷

Quite clearly, except for the place of the doctrine of happiness in al-Farabi's foundational assumptions on civilization, which properly belongs to metaphysical or spiritual anthropology, Ibn Khaldun's foundation of science of civilization is almost identical to that of his predecessor.

The method of study employed in Ibn Khaldun's new science is primarily that of the discipline of history. The philosophic method of inquiry adopted by

al-Farabi was retained and further refined by Ibn Khaldun, since the latter's new science requires him to deal with philosophical issues pertaining to history. Furthermore, since Ibn Khaldun was dealing with the social contexts of human civilizational organization and its underlying sociological issues, he had to devise new methods of study that were appropriate to his empirical investigations of social phenomena. Consequently, and rather significantly, Ibn Khaldun achieved several firsts in the course of pursuing his historical study of human social organization. He is justly called the founder of philosophy of history and modern sociology.

The goal of Ibn Khaldun's science of civilization is a deep knowledge of the nature and characteristics of human social organization. He himself made a major contribution to this body of knowledge, improving vastly on the knowledge contributed by al-Farabi and his successors in the Islamic philosophical tradition during the four to five centuries predating him, and adding his own original ideas and thoughts on human society. Ibn Khaldun's contribution to the goal of the science of civilization may be gauged from the contents of the *Muqaddimah*. He summarized the contents in six chapters:

"[1] on human civilization in general, its various kinds, and the portion of the earth that is civilized; [2] on desert civilization, including a report on tribes and savage nations; [3] on dynasties, the caliphate, and royal authority, including a discussion of government ranks; [4] on crafts ways of making a living, gainful occupations, and their various aspects; and [6] on the sciences, their acquisitions and study."⁶⁸

The contributions of Toynbee and Huntington to the science of civilization

Toynbee considers Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history and science of sociology as unsurpassed until modern times insofar as their respective scopes of epistemic concern and depths of analysis are concerned. The ultimate epistemic boundaries of the science of civilization drawn by al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun seem to be final. The headings of the eleven chapters that constitute Toynbee's monumental work *A Study of History* seem to confirm his own estimation of the epistemic worth and significance of the *Muqaddimah*. In this respect Toynbee's treatment of history and civilization in the singular does not extend beyond the scope outlined by Ibn Khaldun. Where Toynbee made a significant contribution to the study of the science of civilization is in developing its new branch, namely, the study of civilizational diversity and comparative civilization. He commented that, quantitatively speaking, Ibn Khaldun's study of civilizations is rather limited. He only studied one civilization, which was his own Islamic civilization,⁶⁹ and this is something which he could hardly be proud of. However, to his credit, says Toynbee, "he was able, by noting the difference in the effects of two Arab invasions of North-West Africa, to arrive at illuminating general conclusions about the relation

65
Ibid., p. 71.

66
Ibid., pp. 79–80.

67
Ibid., p. 80.

68
Ibid., p. 85.

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"[...] Ibn Khaldun, working in North-West Africa and Egypt in the fourteenth century of the Christian Era, had only a single civilization – his own Islamic civilization – at his command, since his knowledge of non-Islamic civilizations, contemporary or antecedent, was dim." A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, p. 491.

between politics and religion”.⁷⁰ In contrast, Toynbee tells us that, by the year 1961, he was able to survey thirty-one civilizations, excluding the African civilizations that he has just begun to study. There is no doubt that in terms of quantity and diversity, thanks to the work of Western archaeologists and orientalist since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Toynbee has a far richer study of human civilizations, especially their morphological aspect.

Toynbee’s historical study of the civilizations of the world demonstrates the plurality and diversity of human civilizations. The staggering wealth of information at his disposal on these civilizations enables him to undertake a comparative morphological study of civilizations. It contributes to a greater awareness in the twentieth century of civilizational diversity, but its implications for the contemporary world order are still slow to be appreciated. Just as the plurality and diversity of religions calls for the introduction and development of comparative religion, so the fact of civilizational diversity necessitates the formulation of a new science of comparative civilization as a new branch of the universal science of civilization founded by al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun. As admitted by Toynbee himself, it was Ibn Khaldun who founded a morphological study of civilizations. The idea of a culture or civilization as being similar to a biological organism, which serves as the basis of the morphological study of civilizations, has its roots in Ibn Khaldun’s concept of the genus of human social organization or ‘*umrān* that comprises many species with varying sizes, processes of growth and development, and life-spans. For Ibn Khaldun, ‘*umrān* is indeed a living cultural organism. An epistemological continuity between Ibn Khaldun’s ‘*ilm al-‘umrān* and Toynbee’s study of world civilizations is thus preserved, at least through the science of comparative civilizational morphology, which may be regarded as a branch of the science of civilization.

The theme of civilizational plurality and diversity seems to be gaining more attention from contemporary scholars of different academic disciplines, partly because the issue itself is multi-disciplinary in nature. Huntington approaches the study of this theme primarily from the perspective of international politics. It was his political analysis of this theme on the basis of contemporary global political configurations that led him to write his controversial work *The Clash of Civilizations*. This work provides an historical account of relationships, especially bilateral, between the world’s major and still surviving civilizations and their political significance for the contemporary world. In this work, Huntington discusses the related issue of what he calls the global politics of civilizations. But by this term he refers mainly to the growing civilizational rivalry during the last several decades that could precipitate a major clash of civilizations, principally involving Islam and its civilization.

However, inter-civilizational relations and politics need not be viewed only from the perspective of conflicts, real or imagined, since there are deeper reasons why we need to focus on ethics in the politics of civilization. These reasons are to be found in the very foundation of the science of civilization itself. It is the *raison d’être* of the science of civilization as established by al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun to help secure mutual cooperation among human groups at all levels of social organization for the sake of the common good and the realization of higher purposes of human life. As earlier mentioned in this article, al-Farabi wrote a work entitled *The Politics of Civilization*, which is basically concerned with these civilizational issues. Despite the political misgivings of many people toward Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis, his work should be re-studied, not so much from the perspective of transient global

politics that is shaping our contemporary world, as from the perspective of inter-civilizational understanding and cooperation as partially resurrected in the United Nations' global agenda of "Alliance of Civilizations". In particular, perhaps new insights might be gained from a reading of Huntington's chapter on "The Global Politics of Civilizations" in his *The Clash of Civilizations* in light of al-Farabi's *The Politics of Civilization*. Be this as it may, as the science of civilizations continues to grow producing new branches, major and minor, the political dimension of human civilization needs to be further refined and strengthened.

Conclusion:

The significance of this synthetic study

This study shows that the science of civilization that has a well-defined object of study, foundational axioms, and methods and goals of study has its origins in classical Islam of the tenth century. The first founder of the science was al-Farabi. It was further developed by al-Farabi's intellectual successors in the philosophical tradition of Islam until the time of Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It was Ibn Khaldun who transformed al-Farabi's *al-'ilm al-madani* into a more comprehensive science of civilization through his conception of *'umrān* ('human social organization') that seems to be final, insofar as its ultimate epistemic boundaries are concerned, although this universal science has many potential branches that are only awaiting the appropriate times and conditions to be actualized as real offshoots.

Although al-Farabi may be legitimately called the first founder of this new science, epistemologically speaking, this claim does not prevent us from claiming that Ibn Khaldun is another founder of this science, although he belonged to an era five centuries after al-Farabi. The comprehensive nature of the science of civilization permits thinkers of the later periods to create new disciplines within its epistemic framework. Thus Ibn Khaldun claims, and justifiably so, that he has created a new original science, namely sociology and founded a philosophy of history. These claims, provided that we understand the various epistemological contexts in which he uses the term *'umrān* and also the epistemological scope of al-Farabi's *al-'ilm al-madani*, do not contradict the earlier claim that the latter was a founder of the science of civilization. Similarly, in claiming that Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umrān* possesses a number of qualities that are unsurpassed until modern times, Toynbee was still able to help develop the science of civilizational morphology as a new branch of the science of civilization. Although Huntington did not found any new branch of the science, his reflections on the theme of the politics of civilizations could generate ideas and insights that would contribute to the recognition of civilizational politics or comparative civilization as another branch of the science of civilization having the status of science.

The main significance of this synthetic study, in which synthesis of ideas is emphasized, is that we are able to show that, at least in its main outlines, the science of civilization founded by al-Farabi more than ten centuries ago has developed into a comprehensive universal science thanks to the contributions of classical thinkers in Islam, Ibn Khaldun in particular, and the modern thinkers of the West, especially Toynbee. This science now awaits twenty-first century enrichment from the community of scholars.

Osman Bakar

Prema novoj znanosti o civilizaciji

**Sintetičko proučavanje filozofskih pogleda al-Farabija, Ibn Halduna,
Arnolda Toynbeeja i Samuela Huntingtona**

Sažetak

Ovaj rad predstavlja sintetičku studiju o filozofskim stajalištima al-Farabija i Ibn Halduna iz klasičnog islama te Arnolda Toynbeeja i Samuela Huntingtona s modernog Zapada o temi znanosti o civilizaciji. Na temelju aristotelovske ideje o istinskoj znanosti, ovaj članak dokazuje da su al-Farabi i Ibn Haldun bili istinski utemeljitelji znanosti o civilizaciji. Reformuliranjem tema koje tvore predmet ove znanosti, koju je definirao al-Farabi, Ibn Haldun ju je odjednom učinio razumljivijom i izumio je nekoliko novih znanosti kao njezinih ogranaka. Unutar epistemološkog okvira Ibn Haldunove nove znanosti o civilizaciji, Toynbee se poduhvatio istraživanja komparativne civilizacije, što tek treba zadobiti status znanosti. Nadalje se pokazuje da bi Huntingtonov mogući doprinos znanosti o civilizaciji mogao biti u konceptu politike civilizacije. U ovom stoljeću rafiniranija znanost o civilizaciji može nastati samo ako se sintetiziraju civilizacijska stajališta ovih i drugih mislitelja.

Ključne riječi

civilizacija, znanost, islam, filozofsko, epistemologija, 'umrān, madani, društvena organizacija, političko, intelektualno

Osman Bakar

In Richtung einer neuen Wissenschaft von der Zivilisation

**Eine synthetische Studie der philosophischen Ansichten
von al-Farabi, Ibn Chaldun, Arnold Toynbee und Samuel Huntington**

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel präsentiert eine synthetische Studie der philosophischen Ansichten von al-Farabi und Ibn Chaldun aus dem klassischen Islam sowie von Arnold Toynbee und Samuel Huntington aus dem modernen Westen zum Thema Zivilisationswissenschaft. Auf der Grundlage der aristotelischen Idee einer wahren Wissenschaft vertritt dieser Artikel die Ansicht, dass al-Farabi und Ibn Chaldun die eigentlichen Gründer der Zivilisationswissenschaft waren. Durch seine Neuformulierung der Themen, die den Gegenstand dieser Wissenschaft bilden, wie sie zuerst von al-Farabi definiert wurde, machte Ibn Chaldun sie abrupt umfassender und schuf mehrere neue Wissenschaften als ihre Zweige. Innerhalb des epistemologischen Rahmens von Ibn Chalduns neuer Zivilisationswissenschaft trieb Toynbee die Erforschung der komparativen Zivilisation voran, die ihren wahren Status als Wissenschaft noch zu erlangen hat. Es wird weiterhin argumentiert, Huntingtons möglicher Beitrag zur Zivilisationswissenschaft würde in dem Konzept der Zivilisationspolitik liegen. Eine raffiniertere Zivilisationswissenschaft könnte sich in diesem Jahrhundert nur dann herauskristallisieren, wenn die zivilisatorischen Blickwinkel dieser und anderer Denker synthetisiert werden.

Schlüsselwörter

Zivilisation, Wissenschaft, Islam, das Philosophische, Epistemologie, 'umrān, madani, soziale Organisation, das Politische, das Intellektuelle

Osman Bakar

Vers une nouvelle science de la civilisation

**Étude synthétique des points de vue philosophiques
de al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldoun, Arnold Toynbee, et Samuel Huntington**

Résumé

Cet article présente une étude synthétique des perspectives philosophiques d'al-Farabi et d'Ibn Khaldoun issues de l'islam classique, et celles de Arnold Toynbee et de Samuel Huntington de l'Occident moderne. En se basant sur les idées aristotéliennes de la science vraie, cet article démontre que al-Farabi et Ibn Khaldoun ont été les véritables fondateurs de la science de la civilisation. En reformulant les thèmes qui constituent l'objet de cette science définie par al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldoun l'a aussitôt rendue plus compréhensible et a créé de nombreuses sciences nouvelles qui consistent en des ramifications de cette science. Dans le cadre de la nouvelle science de la civilisation d'Ibn Khaldoun, Toynbee développe une étude comparée des civilisations, recherche qui doit encore atteindre le statut de science. Plus loin, il est montré que l'éventuelle contribution de Huntington aux sciences des civilisations pourrait se situer dans le concept de la politique des civilisations. Une science de la civilisation plus recherchée pourrait émerger au cours de ce siècle à la condition de synthétiser les diverses perspectives sur la civilisation de chacun des auteurs.

Mots-clés

civilisation, science, islam, philosophique, épistémologie, 'umrān, madani, organisation sociale, politique, intellectuel