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# CONTENTS

Editorial	89
<i>Fauziah Fathil</i>	

## Articles

Major Trends in the Study of Malay Statecraft since 1900	93
<i>Mohamad Hazizie bin Sulkafla</i>	

The Transformation of Islamic Studies: An Ethical and Methodological Analysis	120
<i>Muhammad Mumtaz Ali</i>	

Emerging Social <i>Waqf</i> Model for the Welfare of Pandemic Orphans	139
<i>Saheed Busari</i>	

In Awe of the Holy City: Mecca in the Eyes of Five Medieval Travellers	159
<i>Aditya Pratama Widodo and Alwi Alatas</i>	

Unveiling Historical Trajectory and Civilisational Evolution: A Comparative Examination through the Lenses of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler	184
<i>Zhilwan Tahir and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori</i>	

The Power Struggle between the Military Junta and Democracy in Myanmar	213
<i>Amirah Syuhada binti Shahrudin and Fauziah Fathil</i>	

## Book Review

Idris Zakaria, <i>The Summary of Islamic Political Thought (Ikhtisar Pemikiran Politik Islam)</i>	233
<i>Makmor Tumin</i>	

# Unveiling Historical Trajectory and Civilisational Evolution: A Comparative Examination Through the Lenses of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler

Zhilwan Tahir<sup>1</sup> and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This research article examines the comparative perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler regarding the progression of history and the advancement of civilisations. This article aims to argue that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler shared a similar perspective on the progression and decline of nations and civilisations. At the same time, they had different perspectives as they lived in distinct historical periods. The study posits that their perspectives on history, society and civilisation are characterised by a reduced level of subjectivity and a greater emphasis on rationality. The analysis reveals that despite their shared cyclical historical patterns, there exist notable disparities on the mechanisms behind the growth of civilisations and the conceptualisation of civilisation's lifespan. The interpretations and definitions of history and civilisation put forward by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler have had a profound impact on the field of human sciences, fostering notable advancements. To attain a high level of accuracy, this study uses qualitative research techniques as a means to accomplish its aims. Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler possessed a comprehensive perspective of culture and history and the processes through which history unfolds. When discussing history, individuals tend to adopt a particular perspective and contemplate on the various facets

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of the subject matter. A comprehensive examination is warranted to enhance comprehension of their theoretical framework and grasp of the aforementioned topic..

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Oswald Spengler, civilisation, history, *aşabiyyah*, culture

## Introduction

When it comes to comprehending and analysing history, there are two prominent schools of thought that play a crucial role: the cyclical theory and the linear theory. Advocates of the cyclical theory propose that history can be likened to a living organism, with each society experiencing a recurring life cycle referred to as the phenomenon of cyclical change. In contrast, the proponents of linear theory argue that history consistently progresses ahead, and linear evolutionism is defined by the recognition of sequential phases that lead towards a predetermined objective. A linear theory of historical development suggests a constant and one-way advancement from a primitive or underdeveloped society to a more sophisticated or developed state. This paradigm posits that human societies progress in a linear manner, with each stage of advancement building upon the accomplishments of the preceding stage. For instance, advocates of the linear theory of historical progression contend that human cultures have advanced from a condition of savagery to a condition of barbarism, and subsequently to a condition of civilisation. This concept posits that each phase of evolution is distinguished by distinct cultural, social and economic attributes, which are considered to be universal and relevant to all human cultures. The primary distinction between a linear theory of historical development and a cyclical theory lies in their conceptualisation of progression. The former asserts a consistent and one-way advancement, whilst the latter suggests a recurrence of cycles or patterns across time. Notable historians who have attempted to understand history through the concept of a cyclical progression of civilisations include the medieval Islamic sociologist Ibn Khaldun and the contemporary German philosopher Oswald Spengler. Although they resided in distinct eras, both individuals were firmly convinced of the soundness and apparent veracity of the cyclical idea of historical progression. This comparative study aims to re-examine

the perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler about historical development. It also aims to summarise history and civilisation as seen by these two prominent philosophers. Ibn Khaldun opined that cultures move through tribal, sedentary, thriving and decrepit eras. This includes moving from nomadism to urbanism. Meanwhile, Spengler regarded civilisations as living creatures with a genesis and a completion. This means that every civilisation has a lifecycle with periods of ascent, fulfilment and decay moulded by cultural and creative advances. This comparative study compares these two perspectives, examining the numerous factors that shaped their ideas and their consequences for historical interpretation and understanding.

### **Overview of Historical Approaches by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler**

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), a 14<sup>th</sup>-century Arab historian, sociologist and philosopher, gained recognition for his significant contributions to history and his theoretical insights on the cyclical nature of civilisations' ascent and decline. Ibn Khaldun, who hailed from Tunis, dedicated much of his life to serving as a diplomat and judge in several urban centres across North Africa. His most notable contribution is the book titled *Muqaddimah*, which comprehensively analyses human society and its historical progression. In this seminal work, Ibn Khaldun postulated a cyclical trajectory of civilisations, characterised by phases of expansion, zenith, deterioration and ultimate disintegration. He ascribed these oscillations to the degree of societal cohesiveness and the potency of the ruling dynasty.

In his seminal work titled *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), a renowned 20<sup>th</sup>-century German historian, delved into similar concepts. He expounded a gloomy perspective on the course of history, positing that the collapse of civilisations is an inevitable consequence of their inherent limits and cyclical patterns. Drawing from diverse historical illustrations, Spengler observed that societies follow a predictable pattern of ascent and decline before eventually succumbing to the influences exerted by internal and external forces. He believed that cultural and artistic manifestations serve as a means to gain insight into the essence of a society and can serve as indicators of its eventual deterioration. Despite facing criticisms for his deterministic viewpoint,

Spengler's work continues to have a significant influence in the fields of history and cultural criticism.

It is important to note that the worlds in which Ibn Khaldun and Spengler flourished were very distinct from one another. Ibn Khaldun resided in an era characterised by substantial political and social turmoil, which undoubtedly influenced his intellectual perspectives. He experienced the ascent and decline of multiple Islamic empires and dynasties, and directly witnessed the consequences of their economic and political transformations on society. He prioritised the significance of comprehending the historical backdrop in which events unfold and the influence that economic and social elements have on defining the trajectory of history. Meanwhile, the historical milieu in which Spengler resided undoubtedly exerted a substantial influence on his contemplation of the deterioration of Western culture and the impact of history on the formation of human communities. His thoughts were shaped by the political and social transformations occurring in Europe during that period, together with the particular historical circumstances of Germany following World War I as well as the emergence of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. According to him, democracy was a symptom of the cultural levelling that was occurring in Europe at the time, and its ascent indicated the collapse of Western civilisation. The political shifts that occurred in Europe following World War I, such as the emergence of democratic administrations and the dissolution of old aristocratic institutions, probably had an impact on this viewpoint.

### **Purpose and Scope of the Study**

This article aims to compare the perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler on the nature of historical events in human history, taking into account the ongoing discourse among historians and philosophers in both Western and Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, a substantial body of literature exists about historical events spanning several epochs, including ancient, medieval, modern and current eras. One prevalent theory that has influenced the thinking of several intellectuals and philosophers is the concept of cyclical development. The significance of this approach to historical study lies in its emphasis on developing a comprehensive and rigorous theoretical framework for the field. Nevertheless, the majority of historical literature fails to



extend beyond the narrative phase. A fundamental understanding of the phenomena of development and transition across different historical contexts is necessary for exploring and examining the trajectory of history. Moreover, this study will especially compare the foundations of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's perspectives and approaches used in analysing the character and substance of historical occurrences, including notions about sovereign authority and civilisation. This article is anticipated to serve as an instructive resource for anyone with an interest in this particular domain, owing to the extensive and profound concepts advanced by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler about the trajectory of history and the process of societal reconstruction.

### **Organisation of the Discussion**

This article is structured into three main parts. First explains Ibn Khaldun's perspective on the rise and fall of civilisation through the concepts of *umrān* (societal advancement) and *aṣabiyyah* (social cohesion). Oswald Spengler's historical analysis is also discussed here. It demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts relevant to the topic of the study. It also provides the broader areas of knowledge under consideration. Second, the article compares Ibn Khaldun's perspective to Oswald Spengler's on the rise of sovereign powers and civilisation to uncover their similarities and differences. Third, the applicability, narrow scope and generalisation of their views in contemporary society are briefly discussed.

### **Theoretical Framework of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler**

Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler share and differ in their methods for interpreting historical events. Ibn Khaldun studied the cycle of society, especially the transition from nomadic to established civilisations and the collapse and rise of new civilisations. He utilised Birth, Youth, Maturity and Death metaphors to explain his ideas. Meanwhile, according to Spengler, civilisations go through spring, summer, autumn, and winter phases, just as the seasons in a year. Social, political, and economic circumstances impact Ibn Khaldun's and Spengler's phases.

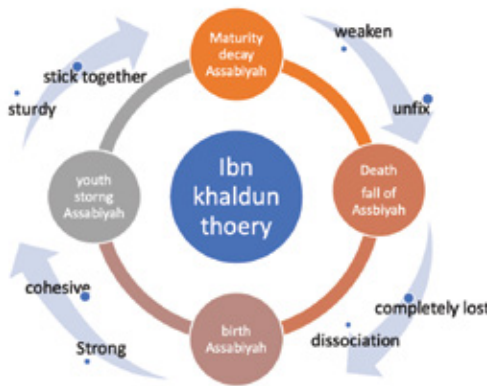


Figure 1: Ibn Khaldun’s Theory of Civilisation



Figure 2: Oswald Spengler’s Theory of Civilisation

### Ibn Khaldun’s Perspective on Human Civilisation

Ibn Khaldun contended that history and civilisation undergo cyclical changes characterised by recurring phases of development, expansion and, ultimately, an inescapable fall. He believed that the ascent and decline of civilisation are influenced by intricate social interactions deeply embedded in evolving political processes. In his seminal work titled *Muqaddimah*, he provides a comprehensive examination of the progression of human civilisation by using the dialectical framework that emphasises on the interdependent connection between urban

centres and rural areas. This symbiotic link is deemed essential for the sustainability of society.

The sedentary stage of royal authority follows the stage of desert life. It does so of necessity, as a result of the fact that royal authority is necessarily accompanied by a life of ease. In the sedentary stage and under (sedentary) conditions, the people of a given dynasty always follow the traditions of the preceding dynasty. They observe with their own eyes the circumstances (under which the preceding dynasty lived), and, as a rule, learn from them (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 230)

According to Ibn Khaldun, the progression of civilisations occurs through the mutual reliance of two primary and separate modes of existence. Firstly, sedentary communities possess the capacity to cultivate novel abilities, concepts, knowledge and an economic framework essential for societal advancement. Secondly, nomadic tribes can furnish coercive power, unity and moral fortitude required for a specific civilisation's formation, safeguarding and sustainability (Malešević, 2015). Ibn Khaldun classified civilisation into two distinct categories: the first is the desert or Bedouin type, characterised by its simplicity, and the second is the passive or city-based culture, which is more intricate. These two categories of civilisation are designated as such due to their distinct phases of societal development. Ibn Khaldun used the word *ḥaḍārah* to signify the state of sedentary civilisation and *umrān* for its pinnacle of advancement (Bakar, 2016).

Civilization may be either desert (Bedouin) civilization as found in outlying regions and mountains, in hamlets (near) pastures in waste regions, and on the fringes of sandy deserts; or it may be sedentary civilization as found in cities, villages, towns, and small communities that serve the purpose of protection and fortification by means of walls. (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 99)

*Ḥaḍārah* is distinguished by the presence of urban life, expansion in economic activities, abundance and the development of cultural sophistication. The Bedouin civilisation, in contrast, is distinguished by its tribal lifestyle, military expertise and collective unity. According to Ibn Khaldun, these two forms of civilisation differ fundamentally in their social structure, principles and methods of production. He

contended that *ḥaḍārah* exhibits a greater inclination towards hierarchy and individualism, whilst the Bedouin type displays a tendency towards egalitarianism and collectivism. Furthermore, he thought that there is perpetual rivalry and friction between the two civilisations as they both aspire to rule over the other. Ibn Khaldun put forth that urban civilisations are frequently built in a way that stresses on social stratification and the consolidation of power in the hands of a small number of elites. This was the basis for his argument that *ḥaḍārah* tends to be more hierarchical and individualistic. In comparison, Bedouin societies are more equal, with resources and power shared more evenly among all group members. Likewise, his argument about the Bedouin type being more collectivist implies that they place great importance on social unity and cooperation. Members of Bedouin tribes rely on each other for survival in difficult surroundings, and this develops in them a strong sense of community and shared identity. Conversely, *ḥaḍārah* exhibits a greater inclination towards individualism, as individuals prioritise their interests and objectives over the collective demands of the group.

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework about the progression and decline of civilisations encompasses several periods, namely the nomadic and sedentary stages. During the nomadic phase, individuals strongly feel family and community solidarity. However, a more individualistic mindset emerges in the stationary phase, emphasising on material acquisition (Dhaouadi, 1983). Ibn Khaldun classified the development of a governing authority into five distinct phases. The first phase encompasses the building stage, during which collective cohesion facilitates the selection of a leader and delegation of authoritative power for governance. The subsequent phase is consolidation, during which the leader tries to enlist followers to strengthen his leadership position. The third phase represents a period of prosperity, characterised by exercising governing authority and establishing harmonious living conditions for the populace. The fourth stage pertains to happiness, in which individuals get satisfaction from leading a tranquil and wealthy existence. The fifth stage represents a period of decline, characterised by the governing authority's engagement in acts of tyranny, avarice and extravagance, driven by their pursuit of personal gratification and indulgence. This is a phase characterised by a nation's trajectory towards its demise. Following the dissolution of the governing body, a subsequent civilisation will arise, leading to a cyclical recurrence of the

phases above under the newly established governance. This concept, referred to by Ibn Khaldun as the formulated cycle theory, is found in *Muqaddimah* (Abdullah, 2018).

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework about the longevity of empires is predicated upon the notion that the historical trajectory of an empire may be delineated into three distinct phases, with each phase aligning with the passage of a generation (Qadir, 1941), which is similar to a span of 120 years. He contemplated the containment of economic downturns inside the cyclical wave, with a suggested timeframe of 40 years or more (Mohammad, 2010).

Among the generations of the three phases, the first generation is often called the Builders Generation, characterised by their strong allegiance to authoritative power structures and their endorsement of state institutions. The Lovers Generation, as the second generation, derives economic and political advantages from the prevailing power structure without much consideration for the state's welfare. The third generation, sometimes called the Avalanche and Broken Generation, lacks emotional attachment to their nation and engages in behaviours without concern for the state's overall welfare. The impending collapse of a state is likely to occur when it reaches the third generation (Hernawan, 2017).

As explained in Ibn Khaldun's *muqaddimah*, the presence of *aşabiyyah* (social cohesion) is a crucial determinant of the efficacy and durability of the ruling authority. *Aşabiyyah* is a concept that pertains to the collective unity and social integration resulting from a shared sense of identity, including elements such as common lineage, religious affiliation and even linguistic ties. According to Ibn Khaldun, the concept of *aşabiyyah* exhibits its most significant strength during the first phases of a dynasty, whereby the ruling lineage and its adherents possess a profound sense of collective identity and common objectives. As the dynasty expands and sees more affluence, the cohesion derived from *aşabiyyah* gradually diminishes. Consequently, the ruling family and its adherents will shift their priorities towards preserving their economic and political influence rather than prioritising the principles and customs that first propelled them to authority. The gradual erosion of *aşabiyyah* within the dynasty will result in increased susceptibility to

internal schisms and foreign challenges, culminating in its decline and eventual downfall (Onder & Ulasan, 2018).

This brings in Ibn Khaldun's views on religion, understanding how it has shaped human civilisation and how it continues to influence our lives. According to him, religion significantly emphasises on preserving five essential elements: religion itself, life, intelligence, offspring and property. Furthermore, he believed that a stable and equitable dynasty serves as a safeguard for property, which is a fundamental aspect in his perspective. Within this context, religion may be seen as a moral and ethical structure that guides people and society to uphold and safeguard these fundamental principles. Religious doctrines and teachings often proscribe theft, fraud and other unethical conduct that risk safeguarding property and other fundamental societal principles (Alrefai, 1994).

Religion can enhance *aşabiyyah* and augment its societal significance. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that religion alone does not suffice. Additional reasons are required to sustain a robust societal framework. Homogeneity, which is the degree of resemblance among individuals within a community, is essential in establishing a robust dynasty. According to Ibn Khaldun, a sovereign needs to emerge from the most influential faction within a society, as this ensures the preservation of governance, the establishment of societal harmony and the safeguarding of the nation from external and internal perils. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that elements other than religion's mere presence are needed to establish a formidable dynasty (Hernawan, 2017).

The first leader of a dynasty assumes the crucial role of establishing the lineage and solidifying authority. This is achieved by using the dynasty's inherent group spirit, or *aşabiyyah*, which denotes an innate attribute of unity and coherence among individuals within a collective entity. The inaugural king is additionally accountable for establishing an equitable governance system and preserving the ancestral customs and traditions. The first monarch of a society must be well entrenched in the habits and traditions prevalent within the desert region. He needs to be external to the urban centre, assuming the role of chieftain over nomadic military forces and commanding authority over various tribes and collective sentiments. The subordinate fighters and tribe leaders need to experience apprehension and deference towards the inaugural

generation's sovereignty, as each distinct faction that recognises the ascendancy of the leader's collective sentiment is inclined to comply with their authority (Pišev, 2019).

Ibn Khaldun's thesis posits that the second generation of a civilisation succeeds the first generation. Nevertheless, when the second generation assumes authority, they often exhibit less cohesiveness and prioritise the preservation of their affluence and influence. The first generation's establishment of the power structure has resulted in economic and political advantages for them. However, the second generation's primary emphasis tends to be on their own interests, with a diminished concern for the overall welfare of society (Hernawan, 2017).

The second generation is responsible for attaining royal authority and establishing a governing body, transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled and organised society, and relocating from rural areas to urban centres. This phenomenon is further characterised by transitioning from adversity to a life of opulence, from participating in triumph to experiencing enjoyment. It entails a change from a state of indolence to one of exertion and a transformation from a position of power and influence to one of subordination and shame. The concept of *ašabiyyah* exhibits some fragmentation, though the recollections of the first generation persist (Zaynalebaidin, 2013). The second generation's phase, also known as the second stage, is widely regarded as a period characterised by strength and prosperity. During this stage, civilisation attains its peak in excellence, robustness, stability and mastery in various industries and sciences. The generation residing in this stage experiences economic prosperity, urbanisation and a high level of expertise. Consequently, they transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled and civilised existence, marked by an increased focus on luxury and comfort (Mansur, 2022).

In the second stage, the monarch effectively consolidates control by establishing a monopoly. He ascends to the position of an autocratic leader and can establish an improved state. This consolidation of power is the inevitable outcome of a governance system that sprang from inherent social unity. To consolidate his power monopoly, the monarch in question employs strategies such as the removal of coexisting power holders, the erosion of the initial sense of unity that supported his rise as well as the acquisition of loyalty from bureaucrats and mercenaries who

prioritise their allegiance to him and their employer above any kinship or religious motivations (Ibn Khaldun, 2005)

In addition to the employed military and administrative apparatus, a cohort of erudite counsellors play a significant function in ensuring the alignment of the state with the ruler's aims. Concerning the advising corps, Ibn Khaldun observed that those with expertise in a particular field may only sometimes possess the necessary skills to advise on political matters effectively. Individual specimens are sometimes overlooked in favour of the broader concept of species due to the emphasis on seeing general characteristics rather than specific details in their education. Moreover, individuals comprehend social and political matters via analogy rather than evaluating them based on their inherent qualities. Consequently, they are inclined to provide unsuitable political guidance (Stowasser, 1984).

The third generation, also called the Avalanche and Broken Generation, has a diminished emotional connection with their nation and demonstrates a propensity to act without consideration for the prevailing circumstances of the state. The subsequent generation exhibits a lack of interest in upholding societal order and needs more dedication to collective unity that was prevalent among their predecessors. Consequently, their actions contribute to the deterioration of *aşabiyyah*, which serves as the cohesive force that sustains societal unity; this deterioration eventually leads to the collapse of the civilisation. According to Ibn Khaldun, after a state has entered its third generation, it is said to be approaching the imminent decline and collapse of its political structure, which spans around one century. Hence, it is evident that the third and last generation assumes a pivotal position in a civilisation's decline and ultimate collapse since they are the primary contributors to the erosion of *aşabiyyah* and the disintegration of societal structures (Hernawan, 2017).

In summary, Ibn Khaldun has established a lasting presence in history and society, both in the East and the West. He has provided a unique interpretation of the cyclical nature of history, specifically regarding the patterns of ascent and decline in civilisations. However, certain aspects of his perspective seem only relevant to the historical era of the Middle Ages. As such, they are gradually diminishing in relevance in light of the events associated with modernity. Conversely, many tenets espoused by Ibn Khaldun in question possess a widespread resonance,



as shown by his assertion that *aşabiyyah* serves as the fundamental element for fostering coherence within a state, hence facilitating its optimal functioning. The current state of the world environment and its organisation are closely intertwined with the notion of *aşabiyyah*. Subsequently, by introducing his ideas, Ibn Khaldun's concept of *aşabiyyah* has increasingly gained importance and relevance in the social structure of human societies (Ahmed, 2002). According to Ibn Khaldun's proposition, the progression of human history is characterised by recurring cycles resulting from the ongoing struggle between the Bedouin nomadic communities and the settled urban societies. As long as individuals are categorised based on their geographical location, the resulting disparities in their environments need adaptation and upheaval until a favourable outcome is achieved.

### **Oswald Spengler's Perspective on Civilisation**

This section expounds on Oswald Spengler's views about the emergence and demise of civilisations. According to him, civilisations are like biological creatures, exhibiting a life cycle encompassing infancy, youth and old age. He viewed each civilisation as possessing its trajectory of development and decline, influenced by its cultural and environmental factors. His conceptualisation of the dynamics of civilisation revolved around the notion that it is a perpetual process of evolution and transformation and not a state of permanence that characterises these entities. He maintained that these patterns are an inherent aspect of the world's structure, asserting that they are impervious to alteration or intervention. According to Spengler, civilisations undergo many phases during their life cycle. The first phase of a civilisation might be referred to as the "spring," representing its early life. During this period, the civilisation exhibits notable attributes such as optimism, innovation and expansion. Subsequently, the civilisation enters a phase referred to as the "summer," denoting the early stages of development characterised by territorial expansion, military conquest and the emergence of a prevailing cultural identity. The third phase might be called the "autumn" or the middle age of civilisation, distinguished by a prevailing sentiment of decline, deterioration and stagnation. Subsequently, the civilisation enters a phase called the "winter," which symbolises the period of old age, characterised by a decline, collapse and ultimate demise.

Spengler posited that every civilisation has a distinct morphology or structure, which is influenced by factors such as culture, history and geography. Every civilisation also has a unique and discernible essence, sometimes referred to as its “soul,” which finds expression in many domains such as art, religion, philosophy and politics. Spengler believed that the morphology of a civilisation plays a pivotal role in shaping its ultimate fate, asserting that the transplantation of a civilisation into a distinct cultural context is an unattainable endeavour. His notion of societal morphology has significantly influenced the development of cultural relativism, advocating for assessing each culture based on its criteria, rather than through the lens of universal norms (Adomeit, 2015).

Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay and never return. There is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in the deepest sense of the word ‘unique,’ each limited by its own nature to its own world. (Spengler, 1928, p. 21)

According to Spengler, cultures are influenced by their surrounding environment, historical context and established customs. Each culture has a distinct worldview that is manifested in various forms of expression, such as art, literature, religion and philosophy. Cultures undergo development due to the obstacles and possibilities posed by their environment while also being shaped by the preceding cultures. As such, they should not be evaluated in terms of superiority or inferiority, but instead recognised as distinct entities with unique characteristics. Every culture has contributed to advancing human civilisation, emphasising on the need to understand and value these variations (Reilly, 2003).

The essence of culture pertains to its intrinsic vitality, including many expressions such as art, music, literature and religion. The concept of cultural spirit encompasses the external manifestations of a society, including its political, economic and social frameworks. According to Spengler, a profound interconnection exists between a culture’s soul and spirit, significantly influencing the ultimate trajectory of its civilisation. Hence, his notion of each culture’s distinctive essence and intrinsic nature comprehends its underlying attributes and ultimate trajectory (McInnes, 1997). According to his thesis on the life cycle of

civilisations, different groups of people are categorised into two distinct classifications: pre-civilised peoples and civilised peoples. Pre-civilised societies are characterised by their innate ability to comprehend and embody the symbolic elements of their culture without the need for conscious cognitive analysis. Society is now in its nascent phase of cultural development, whereby culture remains a dynamic entity intricately intertwined with its creators.

Conversely, societies that have reached an advanced phase of cultural progression are referred to as “civilised peoples” by Spengler, denoting the culmination of their cultural evolution. This particular stage is distinguished by the prevalence of rationality and technology over cultural and traditional aspects, resulting in the gradual decline of spiritual and creative influences that sustain a particular civilisation. Individuals at this stage have a notable level of self-awareness and tend to lead their lives mechanically. Pre-civilised societies have a natural and effortless command over cultural practices. However, modern societies have started to see these practices as cumbersome and prioritise logical examination, leading to their potential reconstruction or replacement (Swier, 2019).

Oswald Spengler used the term “peasant peoples” to describe societies he believed could not produce a civilisation. According to him, these societies are characterised by a lack of creativity, historical consciousness and a focus on the cyclical rhythms of nature, rather than the linear progression of history. He believed that peasant societies are fundamentally different from civilisations and are incapable of producing the art, science and philosophy that characterised the remarkable past civilisations. Spengler saw the rise of peasant societies as a sign of the decline of civilisation and believed that the future belongs to the new cultures that would emerge from the ruins of the old decline of civilisation (Callan, 1975).

Regarding the significance of religion in the context of civilisation and culture, Spengler believed that religion constitutes a foundational element inside every given society. It is a manifestation of the collective consciousness of a society and helps to influence the development of artistic, literary and philosophical endeavours. Spengler claimed that every community has a distinct theological viewpoint manifested via cultural expressions. The deterioration of a society is often concomitant

with a waning belief in its religious customs, resulting in a diminishment of cultural vigour. For instance, the collapse of Western civilisation may be attributed, in part, to the erosion of its Christian spiritual traditions and the concurrent ascent of a secular and materialistic perspective. In Spengler's perspective, religion is seen as a fundamental element within the framework of a civilisation, serving a pivotal function in forming its cultural fabric and collective identity (Hundert, 1967).

Spengler's theory of the life cycle of civilisations, as outlined in his book, *The Decline of the West*, includes several stages of development, including culture, civilisation and senility. The culture stage, also known as the spring stage, is characterised by a strong sense of community, a flourishing of art and culture as well as a deep connection to religious and spiritual traditions. Civilisation begins when the soul awakens with all its capabilities and begins to mature and form, which causes civilisation to bear the image of its existence. This is because civilisation is a spirit in which the fertile and vigorous forces of realisation reside, coming into existence in an external environment in absolute chaos, thus spreading order and imprinting its character around it. During this stage, a civilisation is still developing and has not yet reached its full potential.

The civilisation stage, also known as the summer stage, is characterised by expansion and conquest. During this stage, a civilisation reaches its peak of power and influence, and its culture becomes more complex and sophisticated; this is the stage following feudalism, so it is the turning point in every society. Here, there is a deviation from the value aspect as a result of the beginning of the influence of the clergy on power and their claim of mediation between God and Man. This causes every civilisation to witness the phenomenon of religious reform, which means the return of religion to the purity of its first idea. However, the civilisation becomes more bureaucratic and less creative, and its connection to its spiritual traditions weakens.

The senility stage, known as the autumn and winter stages, is characterised by decline and decay. A civilisation loses vitality and creativity in this stage, and its culture becomes stagnant and repetitive. Senility is the final stage in the life of civilisation, as it witnesses the dissolution of people's morals, whereby materialistic utilitarian ties prevail and their hearts become petrified and disappear. Due to the

domination of material and technical methods over human life, people's conscience does not give weight to the spiritual aspects, and there is no criterion except for the material criterion. The civilisation becomes more concerned with preserving its past achievements than creating new ones, and its connection to its spiritual traditions is lost.

In summary, Oswald Spengler created a theory that interprets civilisation grounded on a biological framework and centred on cyclical succession. This phenomenon may be attributed to the parallelism between the developmental phases and functions experienced by society and those seen in the life cycle of an organism, including birth, growth, youth, aging and, ultimately, death. From the inception of the soul's awakening to its development, maturity and ultimate depletion, the inevitable outcome for this soul is its destruction and cessation.

### **A Comparison of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's Perspectives on Civilisation**

The primary objective of this comparative study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progression of history and civilisation. It draws upon the scholarly investigations conducted by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler, whose intellectual contributions were significantly influenced by their subjective experiences. Upon juxtaposing and evaluating the two divergent schools of thought, it becomes evident that both intellectual alignment and disparities exist between them.

The first similarity between Ibn Khaldun and Spengler is their view of the cyclical character of historical patterns. Ibn Khaldun (2005) observed the following:

When people have acquired royal authority, they no longer do the tiresome chores they had been used to undertaking while still in search of it. They prefer rest, quiet, and tranquillity. Now, they seek to enjoy the fruits of royal authority, such as buildings, dwellings, and clothing. They build castles and install running water. They plant gardens and enjoy life. They take as much pride in apparel, food, household goods, and furnishings as possible. They get used to this attitude and pass it on to later generations. It continues to grow in their midst until God permits His command to be executed. God allows the ruling dynasty to end, its life to stop, and

disintegration to afflict it from all sides. The founder of a new dynasty is hardly able to make a stand against the established one. Consequently, he falls back on patience and perseverance until the senility of the ruling dynasty becomes apparent. Then, his people lost the belief that they owed submission to the ruling dynasty. They become sufficiently spirited to make an open attack in concert with (the founder of the new dynasty). Victory and domination are the results. (p. 223)

Similarly, Spengler made the following observation:

Every Culture passes through the age phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. It is a young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings, that reveals itself in the morning of Romanesque and Gothic. It fills the Faustian landscape from the Provence of the troubadours to the Hildesheim. (Spengler, 1928, p. 107)

Both Ibn Khaldun and Spengler provide compelling parallels in their respective view of the cyclical character of historical patterns. Ibn Khaldun, a prominent historian and philosopher within the Muslim intellectual tradition, posited a theoretical framework suggesting that civilisations undergo a cyclical process characterised by phases of ascent, maturity, deterioration and ultimate collapse. Similarly, Spengler, a renowned German historian and philosopher, posited that civilisations experience a cyclical progression characterised by the emergence of a vibrant culture, which then embarks on a trajectory of development, accomplishment and ultimate decline. Both authors emphasise on the inescapable nature of civilisations' fall and ultimate collapse, attributing these outcomes to intrinsic vulnerabilities within their societal frameworks.

In terms of the importance of religion, Spengler noted:

Every soul has religion, which is only another word for existence. All living forms in which it expresses itself, all arts, doctrines, customs, all metaphysical and mathematical form-worlds, all ornament, every column, and verse and idea are ultimately religious and must be so. (Spengler, 1928, p. 358)

This assertion posits that religion constitutes an intrinsic element of human existence and society, permeating many facets of life. Spengler contended that religion encompasses more than just ideas and rituals—it serves as a framework for existence that influences our perception of the world and our position within it. He further posited that many manifestations of human expression, including art, literature, science and mathematics, may be traced back to fundamental religious impulses and concepts. From this perspective, religion transcends its individualistic nature and assumes a collective and societal role in shaping and preserving a cultural framework.

It has become clear that to be caliph, in reality, means acting as a substitute for the Lawgiver Muḥammad (pbuh) about the preservation of the religion and the political leadership of the world. The Lawgiver was concerned with both things, with religion in his capacity as the person commanded to transmit the duties imposed by the religious laws to the people and to cause them to act following them and with worldly political leadership in his capacity as the person in charge of the (public) interests of human civilization. They would be perfect if established through religious laws because they better understand the (public) interests (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, pp. 273-274).

According to the above excerpt by Ibn Khaldun, establishing organisations that serve the public interest would achieve a higher level of perfection if founded upon religious laws since these laws have a superior understanding of the public interest. Furthermore, religion may contribute to mitigating immoral behaviour by offering a structured framework that prioritises ethical behaviour and virtuous activity. Individuals with a collective religious belief system are inclined to adhere to its moral values, which include exhibiting compassion and respect towards others, refraining from engaging in detrimental actions as well as striving for personal growth and achievement. Moreover, the fear of divine retribution for engaging in unethical conduct might function as a disincentive to engage in such actions. Religion has the potential to foster social cohesiveness via the establishment of a collective belief system and moral structure that unify individuals and motivate them to collaborate towards the advancement of the collective welfare, thus contributing to the resilience and endurance of a society.

In terms of shared identity and values, Spengler noted that:

So long as the man of a Culture approaching its fulfillment continues to live straight before him naturally and unquestioningly, his life has a settled conduct. This instinctive morale may disguise itself in a thousand controversial forms, but he does not controvert it because he has it. When Life is fatigued, a man is put on to the artificial soil of great cities - intellectual worlds - and needs a suitable theory to present Life to himself; morale becomes a problem. Culture-morale is what a man has, and Civilization-morale is what he looks for. The one is too deep to be exhaustible by logical means; the other is a function of logic. (Spengler, 1928, p. 354).

According to Spengler, culture plays an essential role in providing the fundamental basis for the development of civilisation. He posited that culture is fundamental to advancing civilisation by establishing a community's collective sense of identity, values and purpose. The absence of culture would result in a society that needs a coherent understanding of purpose and guidance, rendering it more susceptible to fragmentation and dissolution. Similarly, the diverse manifestations of religious beliefs across cultures are evident in several domains, such as art, politics, social structures and other facets of human existence. Spengler asserted that the essence of a culture is intricately linked to its historical progression, serving as the foundation for its artistic manifestations and evolution over time. Social cohesiveness is an essential element of culture, serving as the fundamental basis for the development of civilisation.

Ibn Khaldun also proposed shared identity, values and social cohesion.

One of the various tribal group feelings must be superior to all, to bring them together, to unite them, and to weld them into one group comprising all the various groups. The superior group feeling then influences all the various groups (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 221).

According to Ibn Khaldun, the process of uniting several tribal groupings necessitates the establishment of a prevailing sentiment inside one of the tribes, which is deemed superior to the others. This sense of collective superiority will foster cohesion among diverse



groups, amalgamating them into a unified collective identity, including all groupings above. Consequently, the importance of power inside a particular group will impact all other groups. A robust collective consciousness is essential for fostering cohesion among disparate tribal entities. Therefore, the attainment of this objective is contingent upon the ability of a particular group to exert dominance and promote unity among all other groups.

In the following excerpt, Ibn Khaldun distinguishes two types of civilisation.

The Bedouins restrict themselves to the bare necessities in their way of life and are unable to go beyond them, while sedentary people concern themselves with conveniences and luxuries in their conditions and customs. Bare necessities are no doubt before the conveniences and luxuries. Bare necessities, in a way, are basic and luxuries secondary. Bedouins, thus, are the basis of, and before, cities and sedentary people (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 166).

Meanwhile, Spengler noted: “Every culture has its own Civilization, and Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture” (Spengler, 1928, p. 41).

The approaches of both historians vary in their methods of comprehending these features. Ibn Khaldun’s methodology emphasises on examining social and historical determinants that contribute to the formation and development of civilisations, including elements such as geographical conditions, climatic influences and social structures. He differentiated between desert (Bedouin) civilisation and sedentary civilisation, highlighting the distinct qualities associated with each kind. In contrast, Spengler placed significant emphasis on civilisation’s cultural and creative manifestations, including but not limited to art, literature and philosophy. He stated that every civilisation has a distinct “soul” or “spirit” that finds expression through various cultural manifestations. Thus, the emergence of civilisation occurs when a culture attains its ultimate degree of development.

On the beginning of civilisation, according to Ibn Khaldun, the concept of civilisation may be seen as a societal framework that originates from a nomadic lifestyle mainly observed in desert regions.

Moreover, he posited that each civilisation has shared essence and encounters analogous to circumstances Ibn Khaldun also mentioned group feelings: “Group feeling results only from blood relationships or something corresponding to it” (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 173). In contrast, according to Spengler, the beginning of civilisation occurs when “a culture is born at the moment when a great soul awakens” (Spengler, 1928, p.123).

Ibn Khaldun and Spengler’s theories vary in their methodologies for comprehending the origin of human civilisation. In Spengler’s perspective, culture emerges when a profound individual has a spiritual awakening. In essence, a culture is formed by manifesting an exceptional personality or a great soul who personifies that particular culture’s distinctive attributes and principles. Subsequently, this person serves as a source of inspiration for others, prompting them to adopt and advance cultural practices, which gives rise to a unique civilisation. On the contrary, in Ibn Khaldun’s perspective, individuals often experience a profound feeling of allegiance and affiliation towards those bound by familial ties or have congruent interests and ideals. Establishing a collective sense of identity and mutual claims provides the fundamental underpinning for cultivating and advancing human civilisation. Spengler was more inclined to examine spiritual genuineness throughout the first stages of cultural development, as opposed to Ibn Khaldun’s focus on *aşabiyyah*.

The maximum symbolic and super-personal form coincides with that of the Late period of the Culture - in China about 600, in the Classical about 450, for ourselves about 1700. The minimum in the Classical lies in the time of Sulla and Pompey, and for us will be reached (and possibly passed) in the next hundred years. (Spengler, 1928, p. 419)

The next difference between Ibn Khaldun and Spengler concerns the age of each cycle, or the concept of the maximum and minimum of symbolic and super-personal forms in different periods of culture. Based on the above excerpt, Spengler argued that the Late period of a culture—such as in China around 600 or in the Classical period around 450—represents the maximum symbolic and super-personal form. In contrast, the minimum symbolic and super-personal form in the Classical period lies in the time of Sulla and Pompey. He further

suggested that for the present time, which he refers to as “ourselves,” the maximum of symbolic and super-personal form was reached around 1700, and the minimum will be reached (and possibly passed) in the next hundred years. Spengler believed that each cycle of civilisation has its unique age, which is characterised by the dominant cultural and spiritual values of that period.

On the life span of dynasties, Ibn Khaldun commented:

Their duration may differ according to the conjunctions. However, as a rule, no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations. A generation is identical to the average duration of the life of a single individual, namely, forty years, the time required for growth to be completed and maturity reached. (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 227)

Ibn Khaldun noted that while the duration of a dynasty may differ depending on various factors, as a general rule, no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations. Thus, a generation is identical to the average duration of the life of a single individual, which is 40 years. This is the time required for growth to be completed and maturity to be reached.

Upon evaluating their respective perspective of cultural decline and civilisational patterns, it becomes apparent that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler have divergent viewpoints. Ibn Khaldun claimed that the ascendance and deterioration of civilisations are shaped mainly by factors such as social cohesiveness, collective identity and the societal function of religion. According to his perspective, the fall of civilisations may be attributed to the erosion of social cohesion and the disintegration of conventional norms and values. In contrast, Spengler held the perspective that the fall of civilisations is an inherent and unavoidable phenomenon marked by the depletion of cultural ingenuity and the onset of social deterioration. Spengler emphasised on the cyclical characteristic of civilisations, drawing attention to the inescapable pattern of ascent and decline seen in many cultures throughout history. In contrast to Ibn Khaldun, Spengler also claimed that societies are shaped by cyclic patterns that recur throughout time, instead of being influenced primarily by social cohesiveness. The variation in interpretation may be ascribed to the differing circumstances and life experiences of Ibn

Khaldun, who wrote during the Islamic Golden Age, and Spengler, who wrote in post-World War I Germany.

### **A Brief Discussion on the Application, Limited Scope and Generalisation of Ibn Khaldun and Spender's Perspectives in Current Society**

Oswald Spengler's notion of civilisation might be considered as approximately synonymous with Ibn Khaldun's notion of *umrān* and *ḥaḍārah*. Ibn Khaldun coined the term *umrān* to denote the phenomenon of societal advancement and growth that takes place when individuals establish permanent urban settlements and actively participate in economic and cultural endeavours. He held the belief that *umrān* is an indispensable prerequisite for the advancement of civilisation, marked by the expansion of knowledge, expertise and establishments that facilitate communal living in larger and more intricate societies. Ibn Khaldun employed the term *ḥaḍārah* to denote the tangible civilisation that arises from the *umrān* process. *Ḥaḍārah* is distinguished by a significant level of social order, cultural sophistication and economic wealth. Furthermore, he argued that *ḥaḍārah* relies on the authoritative power and collective unity offered by nomadic tribes.

Spengler's view of civilisation shares a common focus on the significance of cultural and aesthetic accomplishments as well as the possibility of deterioration and decline in human society. He posited that civilisations undergo a life cycle, commencing with a phase of expansion and vigour, subsequently transitioning into a phase of maturity and equilibrium, and ultimately culminating in a phase of deterioration. According to Ibn Khaldun, the Islamic civilisation emerged from the process of *umrān*, which began with the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. This migration marked the beginning of a new era in Islamic history, as it allowed Muslims to establish a new community based on shared religious beliefs and practices. Over time, this community grew and developed into a more complex society, with the establishment of cities, trade networks and political institutions. This process of *umrān* led to the development of the Islamic *ḥaḍārah*, which was characterised by a high degree of social organisation, cultural refinement and economic prosperity. The Islamic civilisation produced many great achievements

in fields such as science, art and literature, and it had a profound impact on the world. Similarly, Spengler's concept of civilisation can be seen in the development of Western civilisation. According to him, Western civilisation emerged from the process of cultural and artistic development that began in ancient Greece and Rome. This process led to the emergence of a distinct Western culture, characterised by a focus on reason, individualism and scientific inquiry. Over time, this culture developed into a more complex society, with the establishment of cities, political institutions and economic systems. This process of development led to the emergence of Western civilisation, which produced many great achievements in fields such as philosophy, art and technology.

When judging the usefulness and importance of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's respective ideas in the modern context, it is important to keep in mind the limitations and historical contexts that affected their respective work. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* and Spengler's *The Decline of the West* provide significant contributions to the understanding of historical dynamics. However, it is important to approach these views with a measure of care. The cyclical theory proposed by Ibn Khaldun, which focuses on the cyclical nature of dynastic rise and fall, may not provide a comprehensive explanation for the intricate dynamics seen in modern cultures. This is mostly due to the distinct features of current societies, such as their extensive worldwide interconnections and the quick pace of technological breakthroughs.

In a similar vein, it can be argued that Spengler's notion of the biological evolution of civilisations may be characterised as too deterministic since it fails to adequately acknowledge the role of human agency and the possibility of societal advancement. Nevertheless, certain elements of their ideas continue to have significance. The emphasis placed by Ibn Khaldun on the significance of social cohesiveness and the influence of economic variables might provide significant perspectives on contemporary geopolitical processes. In the same way, Spengler's focus on the decay of culture and the need for cultural rejuvenation might incite contemplation over the current issues faced by society. To arrive at a comprehensive assessment of their ideas, it is essential to adopt a nuanced perspective that integrates several academic perspectives and also take into consideration the unique characteristics of the contemporary global context.

When analysing the literary contributions of Ibn Khaldun and Spengler, it is crucial to explore the inherent limitations and broad generalisations that may be found in their respective works. Both historians endeavoured to delineate the course of history and civilisation, but their interpretations are not devoid of limitations. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* has often been subjected to criticism due to its tendency to concentrate on the Arab-Islamic world, overlooking the significant contributions made by other civilisations. Moreover, one may argue that his explication of historical cycles exhibits an excessive degree of simplification and fails to demonstrate a thorough comprehension of the intricate dynamics inherent in human civilisations. Spengler's *The Decline of the West* has been subjected to criticism due to its Eurocentric perspective, which neglects the significant contributions made by non-Western civilisations. Furthermore, while extensive in scope, his cyclical model of civilisation might be seen as a reductionist methodology that overlooks the intricacies inherent in particular historical circumstances. Hence, it is important to adopt a cautious stance while engaging with the scholarly works of both historians, recognising the inherent limitations and generalisations included in their assessments of historical events and societal development.

## Conclusion

Examining the ideas that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler proposed about the trajectory of history and the development of civilisations have uncovered several shared characteristics and divergences. Both historians emphasised on the cyclical nature of history and civilisations' inevitable rise and fall. Nevertheless, their respective understanding of the origins and processes behind these cycles varies. According to Ibn Khaldun, the ebbs and flows of civilisations are shaped mainly by the level of social cohesiveness and the robustness of the collective or tribal entity. Similarly, Spengler posited that civilisations possess an intrinsic life cycle and experience a decline due to the depletion of cultural and creative resources. Ibn Khaldun's theory exhibits greater depth and complexity since it considers climate, geography and socio-economic dynamics. In contrast, Spengler's theory is more inclined towards determinism, stressing on the inexorable nature of decline.

In general, both theories have significantly contributed to the study of history and civilisation. Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler had a comprehensive perspective on civilisation and history, including many dimensions, and offered insights into historical processes' development. The historical narrative provides a one-sided perspective and delves into all facets of the subject matter entirely and inclusively. Both Ibn Khaldun and Spengler saw the study of the state and civilisation as a means of conducting historical inquiry to enhance our understanding of historical events. Both philosophers also saw civilisations as organic entities with an impending demise. It is essential to acknowledge that these theories include inherent limits and may need further refinement to fully encompass the intricacies and variations of historical phenomena. The works of Ibn Khaldun and Spengler have considerable academic significance in the contemporary study of history and culture because they provide useful perspectives on the emergence and decline of civilisations, placing significant emphasis on the role of cultural and social elements in influencing their development. The idea of *aşabiyyah* put forward by Ibn Khaldun and the theory of cultural and historical cycles proposed by Spengler provide distinctive viewpoints for comprehending the patterns and dynamics shown by civilisations across various historical periods. These theoretical frameworks enable us to better comprehend the current condition of human society and provide vital insights for altering the trajectory of our civilisations. Given this perspective, it is imperative for future research endeavours to further develop and expand upon these theoretical frameworks to get a more thorough comprehension of historical events and the evolution of human civilisation.

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