

The Opinions of 14th Century Philosopher Ibn Khaldun on Urbanization

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Abstract

It is so important that Ibn Khaldun as a philosopher who lived many ages ago examined the urbanization and enlightened its problems while in today's modern world, the urbanization still takes a place among the important problems of many countries. Ibn Khaldun stated in his famous work, Muqaddimah that which conditions should be considered when a city is established and if those conditions aren't taken into account which damages could appear and this work includes a lot of original ideas for the social science. In this work, it aims to talk about and discuss Ibn Khaldun's opinions on the urbanization.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Urbanization, Muqaddimah, Cities.

1. Introduction

Cities are the part of, miniature and mirror of the economic and social systems on which they depend. All the features of the general structure with its good and bad sides reflect them. We can easily find Italy in Rome, England in London, Jakarta in Indonesia and Turkey in Istanbul. A city is the place where the culture and power of a society concentrate, the product of the time and the accumulation. There is a close relation between urban life and civilization. (Keleş, 2005: 9-10). According to Ibn Khaldun, civilization is the phenomenon not to be avoided. To him, it isn't a choice that people live together; it is a situation arising from an obligation. This obligation requires that people get together around the notions of cooperation and solidarity. The mode of living of the communities which consist of living together and the strong solidarity between them because of consanguinity or other reasons evolves naturally from the nomadic life to sedentary one. A state which is the natural result of the sedentary life gains a presence as a main institution that regulates this life. So, to Ibn Khaldun, the criteria to civilization of human is to build cities where establish a fixed life and system. On that sense, cities represent the essential appearance of civilization. (Demircioğlu, 2013: 71). Cities have features of the society which they contain and are the part. With regard to community health care, it has a great importance that city whose character is a mirror of the society becomes

more habitable, healthier and more balanced. In this point, giving important recommendations and original ideas related to city establishment for many ages ago Ibn Khaldun who correlated between many problems and city establishments and developments should be understood better and be more familiar.

2. An Overview of the Life of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) who was a thinker exhibited original ideas in many ways from politics to economy and from education and history (Demircioğlu, 2013). The *Muqaddimah* is the most significant, and challenging, Islamic history of the premodern world. Its author was the fourteenth-century Mediterranean scholar Ibn Khaldûn (Lawrence, 2004). Ibn Khaldun revolutionized the study of history by analyzing events from the perspective of economic, sociological, and cultural factors. He is considered to be the first historian to promote a scientific approach to historiography. His use of cultural and sociological evidence to construct a scientific historiography marks him as one of the most important and original historians of all time. He wrote his most important work *Muqaddimah* (An Introduction to History), a theoretical preparation for the writing of a universal history. In the work Ibn Khaldun strove to establish a philosophical basis for the scientific investigation of history. He was the first to contend that a historian must examine the science of culture, that is, the cultural and social forces that generate historical change. Ibn Khaldun was such an original thinker that it took several centuries for scholars to recognize the importance of his theories. His theories of history first attracted widespread interest only after the 1860s, when they were translated into French (Dehse and Harris, 1999: 108). English historian Arnold Toynbee considered Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time and place (Falk, 2004: 140). Since the 18th century, the western world has taken Ibn Khaldun seriously, especially as his scientific ideas were very much like those that were to develop much later on in human history. He has, however, still not taken his rightful place as the founder of philosophy of history and the pioneer of sociology, although translations of his historical and social treatises have helped to some extent (Jubouri, 2005).

3. Conditions of City Establishment for Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun defends that tribes want to rest in ease and quietness after they reach an enough prosperity and wealth and have the wealth; the quietness and ease will be provided only if they settle down in somewhere. For him, the nomadic people have chosen a place to adopt a sedentary life because of constructing houses and mansions. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that this sedentary system needs to consider some special situations during the establishment of cities. These special situations and conditions can be examined under the title of security, environmental health, agriculture and transportation (Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*):

Security: While houses and shelters are constructed in order to reside, some reasons such as to prevent possible damages and to avoid sides to have a possibility of damage should be considered. To avoid damages, all around the houses and shelters need to be surrounded with a wall and rampart, the city is constructed in the peak of the mountain that it is hard to climb over and surpass or the place to be constructed should be surrounded by the sea or rivers and city entrance should be provided only by bridges or arched bridges. Thus, that the enemies attack to the city becomes more difficult and protection power will multiple and shield's strength will partially increase. If the city is constructed in the beachside and the place without steppe it will be open to enemy sudden attacks at night because of not being constructed in the mountain too difficult to climb over and the city will be defenseless to enemy attack to beachside because of being on the beach. The city is constructed in the foothill of precipitous mountain and if the more difficult it is to reach the city the easier it is to protect it against enemies. Ceuta, Lacinato and Kull despite of being small are the examples

of this.

Environment and Health: While the city is constructed, one of the things to be taken into account is a state of health in the city. Nice weather of the city and its effects on health should be considered. Because if the city is constructed next to waters, smelly water beds, a humid and dirty meadow place which have still-air or unhealthy and harmful weather, people and animals that live there will be condemned to get ill easily. This is visible. Cities which are constructed without being considered its nice and healthy weather have generally illnesses. One of those is Kabis city that was constructed in Cerid region, North Africa and known with bad weather in the West. A few inhabitants and visitors in this city were able to get over epidemics and illnesses. Reportedly, beforehand this city didn't have any illness; this illness appeared after the construction. The reason of an occurrence of illnesses such as malaria and pestilence generally arises from still-air. If the wind blows and moves the air to right and left, illnesses arising from the stability of air relatively decrease.

Agriculture and Livestock: To provide the establishment of a new beginning will gain favor and interests the city and facilitate the means of subsistence it is necessary to take into account a number of points. One of the issues to be considered when establishing the city is water. The city should be constructed next to a river or a place to construct a city where there are a lot of fresh water supplies and fountains at the level of the city. Because the city is close to where there is water, it will enable to reach water supply that is the first requirement and facilitate and provide a benefit to living. One point that should be considered when establishing cities, in order that inhabitants of the city graze their animals is the presence of pleasant and beautiful meadows around the city. The presence of good pasture near the city will facilitate the living of citizens. Because those who settle in any place, they have to feed them to replicate the animals or to use passenger. They need to the pasture for feeding these animals. The closer the city to the pasture, the easier the inhabitants live. How far pastures are away from the city, people will put up with that rate challenges. That city around the presence of fertile lands that can be cultivated should be considered when constructing because the land will help the people of the city to achieve very easily livelihoods and crops. If the fields are far from the city, people will put up with inconvenience. When setting up the city, and the necessary structures and trees for fuel wood needs to be considered to be close to the city. Because it is necessary to heat and wood for cooking among general needs. The tree is required to place the ceiling of the house and many other places to use trees.

Transportation and Trade: That the city is close to the river and ship processors should be also paid attention. The sea and rivers are easier to transport goods into the city from outlying areas (Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah).

According to Ibn Khaldun when the city is constructed these conditions to be followed are varied in proportion to the needs and necessities of the people. Who founded the city may not have taken into account these conditions, not have chosen well or have consider the conditions for only the requirements for their own personal and can be attached to it and haven't paid attention to the needs of others. Arabs didn't give any attention to these conditions while they were constructing in Iraq and North African in the early period of Islam. They only gave attention to nourish their lifestyle but grass for grazing and to overcome the camels near the cities established in terms of trees and camels and the presence of salt water. They considered the presence of grass in order to provide trees and wood, the sea and rivers near to the city. Kairouan, Kufa and Basra etc. can be given as an example. These cities have begun to be quickly devastated because of not being considered those conditions and situations (Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah). The relation between air pollution and wind laid down by Ibn Khaldun has an importance for today's world. Because air circulation is the most important factor that controls the amount and duration of stay ambient air pollutant emissions. (Keser, 2001: 81).

For Ibn Khaldun, the natural environment is simultaneously an obstruction and help. City planners and builders therefore ought to seek both to invite nature's aid and to drive back its attacks. If atmospheric phenomena and the geography of the city site are given due consideration, the placement and form of the city in relation to its site with arrangement of its axes and spaces may well be turned into a device for controlling ventilation, sanitation, heating, cooling, etc. Such a place will be safe and comfortable for living. It will be far less susceptible to illnesses caused by environmental factors than such as are neglectful of the same matter. Furthermore, as if Ibn Khaldun wants to say that humans must live on friendly terms with nature as much as such an arrangement is possible and needed. Under no circumstances can man in any endeavor of his declare a war on the natural environment, because, on account of many a physical, mental and emotional weakness of his and his actual total dependence on environment, man and nobody else is bound to emerge at all times as a dire loser. Ibn Khaldun thus wrote: "In connection with the protection of towns against harm that might arise from atmospheric phenomena, one should see to it that the air where the town is good, in order to be safe from illness. When the air is stagnant and bad, or close to corrupt waters or putrid pools or swamps, it is speedily affected by putrescence as the result of being near these things, and it is unavoidable that all living beings who are there will speedily be affected by illness. Towns where no attention is paid to good air, have, as a rule, much illness. When the wind gets into the putrid air, and disperses it left and right, the effect of putrescence is lessened, and the occurrence of illness among living beings decreases correspondingly. Ibn Khaldun placed the problem of water on top of his requirements for planning cities. By water he means both springs of fresh drinking water and streams and rivers. Water is the source of life not only for humans but also for flora and fauna. Without water the rest of the prerequisites for planning and building cities, even if available in abundance, will be rendered hollow and liabilities to communities rather than assets. Via plenty of water, the persistent problem of irrigation will be easily handled. Fields and crops could be thus effectively supplied with water by means of streams, reservoirs and channels (Omer, 2011).

Ibn Khaldun's opinions on agriculture, transport and livestock are also similarities with the traditional location theory proposed after centuries of it. The origin of the traditional location theory drives from the work published by the owner of a German land J. H. von Thünen in 1826. The founder of the location theory von Thünen is also known as he revealed that agricultural land use model / theory of the world's first geographically theory/model. Von Thünen tried to explain the central features of the geographical distance of the growing use of agricultural land around the city by taking into account the transportation costs and land prices. Von Thünen has demonstrated as a result of analysis that features of agricultural production and land use develops in a correct sequence and spatial arrangement of the environment from a central. According to the model high return activities such as gardening and milk production takes a close place to the market, activities with less revenue such as farming are located far from markets (Yiğit, 2014:109).

The conditions to adopt a sedentary life proposed by Ibn Khaldun have a great importance for the urbanization taking into consideration the circumstances in those times. To Ibn Khaldun, sedentary life's structure begins with the city establishment; rural establishments and nomadic life should be assessed within the nomadic structure. (Demir, 2003: 160). He states that inhabitants in cities have more responsibilities. Because the fall of civilization accelerates with loss of urban values despite of living in cities and non-fulfillment their roles (Albayrak, 2009). Ibn Khaldun defends that there will be no city without the state, the life of the city depends on the life of the state and the state establishes the city. The larger the state is, the bigger and healthier the city is. To Ibn Khaldun, the city metaphor is more different from the others and the city has timeless and placeless sides. The city includes the totality within it. The more people change the more the city changes (Uludağ, 2010). Interpretations and detections of urbanization and cities made by Ibn Khaldun for many ages ago have still effects and are examined by a lot of investigators with a great attention.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun has an important place with social phenomena and events in the history of ideas from lighting to reveal itself for a different method than previous thinkers; society is a natural origin and the state and asserts that natural historical process of development spending; In the history of ideas to demonstrate a theory of the state by the portrayal of this historical development it. His opinions on social and political problems with an original point of view by leaving the traditional structure of the Islamic philosophy have found an echo especially in the West (Yıldız, 2010: 26). Especially considering being the 14th century philosopher, Ibn Khaldun's opinions and thoughts on social life enlighten even today many problems. For example; identification of the type of selfish and narcissistic people is quite remarkable. The absence of empathy and that there are people ahead of selfish behavior by prominent narcissistic type have been for centuries and it is a personality that Ibn Khaldun observed in people living cities. Ibn Khaldun is that everything except their great from everything himself and everyone young and attitudes of the people of the idea that it is insignificant and tend to give direction on these persons said that especially in response to other people is the top task anger and hatred in return. According to Ibn Khaldun, human isn't innate individual, it is a social (civil) entity. No one can meet all needs without in solidarity with each other, but people perceive a person as a social being narcissistic is not with the people in the name of glorification of the grouping created by others; individuals are motivated by a mutual need for each other. Ibn Khaldun considers not only as individual, the attitude of being together and strong as the steps required for a virtuous society and happy people (Göcen, 2013: 192). It is seen that one of the medieval thinkers of Islam Ibn Khaldun, is a philosopher who has opinions not only on urbanization but also on many other important subjects of the social sciences. His opinions and recommendations can be the subject of the other studies and be assessed. We can say that especially his opinions and recommendations on the appearance, development and fall of the city enlighten the future of the state.

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