JRAS, Series 3 (2024), **34**, 729–743
doi:10.1017/S1356186324000191

ARTICLE

Ibn Khaldūn's reception in colonial South Asia

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Abstract

Scholars commenting on the reception of the historian and theorist 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) in modern South Asia have held that it was orientalists and Westernised intellectuals rather than indigenous intellectuals who popularised him in the region. Contesting these impressions, I argue that local intellectuals displayed their agency in using the historian's work to respond to various crises of colonial modernity. They read, translated, and appropriated Ibn Khaldūn to seek inspiration for modern Muslim nationalism, as validation for sectarian convictions and the rhetoric of Islamic reform, and to resist colonial and Hindu revivalist narratives of despotic Muslim rule in India.

Keywords: colonial; Ibn Khaldūn; orientalism; reception; South Asia

Introduction

The reception history of the historian and theorist 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) has been the subject of heated scholarly debate. For generations of orientalist scholars, the fact that Ibn Khaldūn was not received in the Muslim world with the enthusiasm of modern Western readers served to confirm their judgment of premodern Islamic culture as intellectually stagnant or repressive. The popularity of this impression in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincided with the yearning of modern Muslim intellectuals for inspiring Muslim figures from the premodern past that could help them resist colonialism and envision new futures. Yet many scholars from the post-World War II generation felt that such views of Ibn Khaldūn and Islamic intellectual history were mistaken. The 'failure' of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* to make major inroads into mainstream Islamic traditions was due to the awkwardness and inconsistencies within this work, while the hype around Ibn Khaldūn was a questionable orientalist legacy that modern Muslim societies had uncritically adopted and reproduced.[1]

An examination of Ibn Khaldūn's reception in colonial South Asia shows that the thinker's ideas were not merely a Western cultural re-export[2] to the Muslims of this region. Rather, modern South Asian Muslims read and appropriated Ibn Khaldūn's ideas creatively for their peculiar colonial concerns.[3] These objectives ranged from supporting

[1] R. Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), pp. 162–203; see also A. Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London, 1981).

[2] I borrow the phrase 'Western cultural re-export' from Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, p. 189.

[3] The translations, interpretations, and appropriations of Ibn Khaldūn by modern South Asian intellectuals suffice to question the orientalist re-export thesis, even though seminal works and translations published in

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ideas of religious reform, validating sectarian views, to resist colonial narratives of despotic Muslim rule of India. While orientalist scholars indeed played an important part in drawing attention to Ibn Khaldūn throughout the Muslim world in the early nineteenth century, interest in Ibn Khaldūn took on a life of its own among modern Muslim scholars, particularly those with cosmopolitan links with the Middle East. It is correct that certain South Asian reformists adopted orientalist readings of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*. But such reform-minded individuals were searching for inspiring Muslim intellectuals from a long bygone past to begin with. In other words, they actively selected orientalist opinions on terms that agreed with their ideological visions, rejecting those Western thinkers who viewed Islamic intellectual history differently. Furthermore, orientalists had no direct role to play in Urdu translations of Ibn Khaldūn's massive *Kitāb al-'ibar* (*The Book of Lessons*), to which the *Muqaddimah* belongs. In fact, beginning in the late nineteenth century, Urdu readers developed an interest in those volumes of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* that were of little interest to Western readers. As the translations continued, certain volumes took on a special significance in the context of Muslim nationalist struggles against colonial narratives of 'despotic' Muslim rule in India.

Previous Ibn Khaldūn scholars have largely ignored the reception history of Ibn Khaldūn in South Asia. Ahmed Abdesselem,[4] Abdesselam Cheddadi,[5] 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī,[6] Muhammad Abdullah Enan,[7] Aziz Al-Azmeh,[8] Farid Alatas,[9] Robert Irwin,[10] Allen James Fromherz,[11] Bernard Lewis,[12] Cornell Fleischer,[13] and others[14] have studied the reception of Ibn Khaldūn in North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Russia, Yugoslavia, and among Western thinkers. On South Asia, however, we only have brief—albeit insightful—comments of Islamicists Hamid Enayat, Bruce Lawrence, and Nomanul Haq. Whereas Enayat and Lawrence note how the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) used Ibn Khaldūn to defend Ataturk's abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924,[15] Haq questions

the USA, Europe, and elsewhere are of a demonstrably superior quality. It is not my intention to show that South Asian scholarship on Ibn Khaldūn was just as rigorous as elsewhere, but rather that there was considerable original scholarship and engagement with Ibn Khaldūn that was particular to the South Asian context. Moreover, what is true of most Ibn Khaldūn scholarship is also true of his South Asian Muslim readers: intellectuals often end up representing Ibn Khaldūn in the image of their own convictions. On this point, see A. Abdesselem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs* (Paris, 1983), pp. 49–50, 57 ff.; Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, pp. 162–208, especially p. 186.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] A. Cheddadi, *Ibn Khaldûn: l'homme et le théoricien de la civilisation* (Paris, 2006), pp. 169–80; A. Cheddadi, 'Ibn Khaldūn, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edn, (eds.) K. Fleet et al. (Brill Online, 2018), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30943 (accessed 19 November 2019).

[6] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Muʾallafāt Ibn Khaldūn,* (Cairo, 1962).

[7] M. A. Enan, *Ibn Khaldun: His Life and Work* (Lahore, 1993), pp. 150–167.

[8] Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship*.

[9] S. F. Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun* (New Delhi, 2013), pp. 100–116.

[10] Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, pp. 162–203.

[11] A. J. Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times* (Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 149–164.

[12] B. Lewis, 'Ibn Khaldun in Turkey', in *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*, 2nd edn (Chicago and La Salle, IL, 1993), pp. 233–236.

[13] C. Fleischer, 'Royal authority, dynastic cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldûnism' in sixteenth-century Ottoman petters', in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, (ed.) B. B. Lawrence (Leiden, 1983), pp. 46–68.

[14] Although rather dated now, the most wide-ranging discussion of bibliographies on Ibn Khaldūn is Abdesselem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs*, pp. 9–10, n. 1; in addition, there are several references in the works cited earlier. Apart from these, see the various contributions in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, (ed.) Lawrence, p. xl; for a recent take on Ibn Khaldūn's Ottoman reception, see K. Tekin, 'Reforming Categories of Science and Religion in the Late Ottoman Empire' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2016), pp. 131–173.

[15] H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London, 1982), p. 60; B. B. Lawrence, 'Ibn Khaldun and Islamic reform', in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, (ed.) Lawrence, vol. xl, pp. 69–88, especially p. 82.

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Iqbal's reading of Ibn Khaldūn as a forerunner of modern thinkers.[16] Having limited themselves to a single—albeit important—thinker in Iqbal, scholars have ignored the wider Muslim readership that Ibn Khaldūn enjoyed in South Asia. This is especially striking given the fact that the most complete translation of Ibn Khaldūn's *Kitāb al-ʻibar* today is in the Urdu language—a culmination of generations of scholarly interest in the region.

Furthermore, even in the case of Iqbal's reading of Ibn Khaldūn, the few scholarly insights on the subject remain unsatisfying. Not only are they partial analyses of Iqbal's use of Ibn Khaldūn, but they also serve to support the orientalist re-export thesis. Neither Enayat nor Lawrence studies the full significance of Ibn Khaldūn for Iqbal and limit themselves to the issue of the Turkish caliphate. In fact, Lawrence feels uncertain about the originality and creativity in non-Western readings of Ibn Khaldūn, given the significant role of orientalist scholars in drawing attention to the historian.[17] In this respect, Haq's assessment of Iqbal's reading of Ibn Khaldūn's is largely in agreement with Lawrence. Speculating on Iqbal's sources, Haq articulates the notion that Ibn Khaldūn was an orientalist re-export as follows:

> Iqbal lavishes profuse praise upon Ibn Khaldūn. One might venture to *speculate* a kind of back-formation here: by the time Iqbal was writing, Western scholars had begun to recognize the eminence of this Muslim philosopher of history, and he came into prominence in the twentieth-century Islamic world as an echo it seems from the West, *not owing to any indigenous intellectual developments*. In all likelihood, it is through Western sources that Iqbal too focused on Ibn Khaldūn. Moreover, it is also likely that he has *no recourse to the original text of the* Muqaddima since his Ibn Khaldūn is sometimes his own construction, an Ibn Khaldūn freely re-shaped.[18]

As we shall see, while it is arguably the case that South Asian translations, engagements, and appropriations of Ibn Khaldūn have not been as academically rigorous as those of Western scholars, it is not correct to assume that South Asia altogether lacked any 'indigenous' traditions of reading Ibn Khaldūn, as Haq puts it. Iqbal seems to have relied heavily on orientalist scholars only for some of his views on Ibn Khaldūn. For the rest, he most likely drew on South Asian translations and interpretations.[19] Iqbal's appropriation of Ibn Khaldūn is in my view better seen as a case that is typical of South Asian appropriations of the medieval historian, in which local concerns intersect with orientalist readings in diverse ways. In other words, instead of viewing Ibn Khaldūn's reception in South Asia as a binary—either fully creative and based on original sources or as a mere parroting of orientalist views—it is far more instructive to study how the varying agendas of South Asian intellectuals set the terms on which they drew on orientalist sources. At times, they relied largely on orientalist readings, whereas, in other instances, they read Ibn Khaldūn using primary sources with limited influence from Western thinkers.

This article, then, not only fills a gap in the scholarship on the reception history of Ibn Khaldūn, but also seeks to explain how and why modern South Asian thinkers read Ibn Khaldūn in unique ways. I study how, when, where, and why Ibn Khaldūn became significant for South Asian Muslims through the colonial period. Printed sources on Ibn Khaldūn from the early twentieth century that survive in the major libraries of Lahore also provide

[16] Haq finds Iqbal to be on shaky ground when the latter claims that Ibn Khaldūn pioneered ideas later found in modern psychological studies of mysticism. Furthermore, Haq takes special issue with Iqbal's assertion that Ibn Khaldūn's view on time and change parallels and precedes those of the modern French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). S. N. Haq, 'Iqbal and classical Muslim thinkers', *Iqbal Review* 50.4 (2009), pp. 98–112.

[17] Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 60; Lawrence, 'Ibn Khaldun and Islamic reform', vol. xl.

[18] Haq, 'Iqbal and classical Muslim thinkers', emphases added.

[19] See the discussion on Iqbal and prior readings of Ibn Khaldūn detailed later in this article.

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vital clues to a forgotten history of reception. A wealth of print publications from the twentieth century, many of which are available in online archives, constitute the main set of sources on which I draw to examine Ibn Khaldūn's reception in modern South Asia.[20] Of special concern to me is to identify and study prominent South Asian thinkers for whom Ibn Khaldūn was inspiring, useful, or controversial enough to be emphatically refuted. I analyze their sources on Ibn Khaldūn along with their discussions of the thinker, considering their intellectual identities and concerns.

Ibn Khaldūn in South Asia

It is in the colonial period with its emerging Muslim nationalisms that Ibn Khaldūn became a thinker of interest in South Asia. Even though the precise channels of his introduction to Muslim intellectuals are difficult to identify, it seems likely that they first learnt about the medieval historian from orientalists and colonial officers working under British rule. Before the 1857 uprising, the English civil servant and historian Sir Henry Miers Elliot (1808–1853) worked with the East India Company to compile a highly prejudiced selection of Persian chronicles on Indian history, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, published posthumously from 1867 to 1877 in eight large volumes.[21] In the preface to this work, in derogatory passages that are intended to dismiss the intellectual worth of premodern Indian Muslim historians, Elliot made a passing reference to Ibn Khaldūn as the exception among all Muslim historians for properly attending to 'philosophical' lessons from history.[22] It is not clear whether Elliot passed his appreciation of Ibn Khaldūn on to learned Indian Muslims with whom he worked on his project of collecting Persian historical chronicles prior to 1857.[23]

However, it is highly likely that the Austrian orientalist Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893) did indeed pass his high opinion of Ibn Khaldūn on to Indian Muslim intellectuals. Compared with Elliot, Sprenger had far more to say on Ibn Khaldūn. The medieval historian inspired Sprenger to take a broad approach to his own historical writing on early Islamic history, focusing on historical processes as opposed to the minutia of facts.[24] Sprenger also drew on Ibn Khaldūn's ideas on the rise and fall of nations to formulate his peculiar views on the importance of studying Eastern history and literature. The ancient cultural roots of European nations were in the East, and it was Eastern history—especially of Arabs—that could help Europeans understand their likely future. These passages, in which Sprenger frequently cites Ibn Khaldūn as the unparalleled authority on the history of nations, are found in a preface that he wrote to his translation of the historian al-Mas'ūdī's *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*.[25] Although Sprenger penned the preface in 1841 before moving to India in the September of 1843, he spent several decades in India during which he was actively involved in Indian higher education and the publishing

[20] Additionally, I have also examined the extensive catalogues of the British Library containing yearly lists of published works in colonial India. See the discussion that follows.

[21] On Elliot's prejudiced views and agenda, see H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (London, 1867), pp. xv–xxvii; M. A. Syed, *Muslim Response to the West: Muslim Historiography in India, 1857–1914* (Delhi, 2006), pp. 25–27.

[22] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, p. xix.

[23] The destruction of libraries and personal collections holding these historical texts during the 1857 uprising is discussed in S. M. Haq, *The Great Revolution of 1857* (Karachi, 1968), pp. 241–242.

[24] J. Fück, *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa: bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1955), pp. 178–179, http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/5808940 (accessed 27 September 2021).

[25] al-Mas'ūdī was the same historian who inspired Ibn Khaldūn's own history writing. A. Sprenger, 'Preface', in *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* (London, 1841), pp. v–lxxii.

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of historical studies. He worked with librarians, Indian Muslim scholars, and generations of students. Most notably, he served as the principal of Delhi College—one of the most important centres of modern education for nineteenth- and twentieth-century Muslim intellectuals.[26]

Ibn Khaldūn and the Aligarh modernists

In the history of Ibn Khaldūn's early reception in South Asia, Sprenger's most important associate was arguably Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898)—the pioneer of Islamic modernism in South Asia.[27] In the year 1846, Sprenger oversaw the publication of Sayyid Ahmad's translation of a Persian treatise on the astrolabe into Urdu. Sprenger was effectively one of Sayyid Ahmad's mentors, advising him on what and how to write. It was he who suggested that Sayyid Ahmad should write the widely acclaimed *Āthār al-ṣanādīd* (*Heroes' Monuments*), first published in 1847. Furthermore, Sprenger seems to have been the guide behind the shift in the prose style of Sayyid Ahmad from an ornate and archaic one to a more lucid Urdu in his post-1847 writings.[28]

Although there is no direct mention of Ibn Khaldūn in Sayyid Ahmad's writings,[29] he seems to have learnt about him from his European contacts. It is well known that Sayyid Ahmad spent most of his life associating with and learning from European scholars and officials in India, even as his engagement with Western thinkers was incomplete and unsystematic—what the historian Faisal Devji has termed 'apologetic modernity'.[30] Sayyid Ahmad may have first learnt of Ibn Khaldūn during his time with Sprenger, given the latter's enthusiasm for the medieval historian. Someone as eager as Sayyid Ahmad about inspiring Muslims from the past would not have missed the deep admiration for Ibn Khaldūn that was current among nineteenth-century orientalists and European colonial officials, especially those who oversaw Muslim populations. In the unlikely case that Sayyid Ahmad did not learn of Ibn Khaldūn in India, he may have learnt about him in his trip to Europe during 1869–1870, as, soon thereafter, he oversaw the publication of two articles on Ibn Khaldūn.[31] In the year 1871, not long after his return from London in the December of 1870, the first volume of his reformist *Tahdhīb-ul-akhlāq*

[26] B. Auer, 'Early modern Persian, Urdu, and English historiography and the imagination of Islamic India under British rule', *Études de Lettres [Online]* 2–3 (2014), p. 8, doi: 10.4000/edl.710; M. I. Chaghatai, 'Dr Aloys Sprenger and the Delhi College', in *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857*, (ed.) M. Pernau (New Delhi, 2006), pp. 105–124.

[27] Chaghatai, 'Dr Aloys Sprenger', pp. 121–122; C. W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 63–64.

[28] Chaghatai, 'Dr Aloys Sprenger', p. 122; Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, pp. 63–64, 102–103.

[29] I have not found any clear evidence of Khaldūnian ideas in any of Sayyid Ahmad's writings. The recent attempt of Sarah Qidwai to find such connections is rather dubious. She has compared Sayyid Ahmad's views on evolution to Ibn Khaldūn's. However, she does not cite any specifically Khaldūnian ideas or references that one may find in Sayyid Ahmad's writing. S. Qidwai, 'Darwin or design: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's views on human evolution', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, (eds.) Y. Saikia and M. R. Rahman (New Delhi, 2019), pp. 214–232, especially p. 222.

[30] On Sayyid Ahmad's life and legacy, see Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*; A. Ḥussayn Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāwed*, two vols (Āzād Kashmīr, 2000); on the character of Sayyid Ahmad's modernity, see F. Devji, 'Apologetic modernity', *Modern Intellectual History* 4.1 (2007), pp. 61–76, doi: 10.1017/S1479244306001041; also D. Lelyveld, 'Naicari nature: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the reconciliation of science, technology and religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, (eds.) Saikia and Rahman, pp. 69–85.

[31] For a comprehensive account of Sayyid Ahmad's trip to Europe, including various primary sources and Sayyid Ahmad's own travelogue, see M. M. I. Pānīpatī (ed.), *Sir Sayyid kā safarnāmah Musāfirān-i-Landan*, 3rd edn (Aligarh, 2009).

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journal was published. In this first volume, his friend and associate Nawab Muhsin al-Mulk Mahdi Ali (1837–1907) penned two review articles on Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*. As far as I can tell, Mahdi Ali's was the first scholarly treatment of Ibn Khaldūn in Urdu.

Mahdi Ali came from a respected Sayyid family, received an early education in Arabic and Persian, and later worked as Deputy Collector for the Nizam of Hyderabad. Although he joined Sayyid Ahmad's Scientific Society in 1864 and shared his reformist concerns, Mahdi Ali felt uncomfortable with Sayyid Ahmad's theological views concerning nature and scripture.[32] Despite his reservations, Mahdi Ali's support for Sayyid Ahmad's view is evident in the reviews he wrote on Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*.

An examination of the first review article by Mahdi Ali firmly establishes that Sayyid Ahmad and his associates held Ibn Khaldūn in the highest regard and sought inspiration and justification for their modernist ideas from him. In addition to translated excerpts, the first review includes Mahdi Ali's introduction and commentary, using language charged with sneering dismissal of medieval Islamic traditions on the one hand and enthusiasm for modern European thinkers on the other. He stereotypes the *'ulamā'* as the timeless bearers of medieval Islamic norms out to censor groundbreaking research such as Ibn Khaldūn's, contrasting them with forward-looking Europeans. It is thanks to the latter, Mahdi Ali suggests, that we get to learn of writings by past Muslim researchers (*muḥaqiqūn*).[33]

Mahdi Ali's stated intentions in reviewing Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*—to inspire Muslim readers and to counter accusations of heresy (literally, 'infidelity and apostasy', *kufr wa ilhād*)[34]—were just another way of saying that he meant to support the reformist ideas of Sayyid Ahmad.[35] It is no coincidence that Mahdi repeatedly highlighted Ibn Khaldūn's use of the term *ṭabī'ah* (nature) in his review. He rendered it with the Urdu equivalent *ṭabī'at*, but also wrote *naychur* (nature) in parentheses. This seems to be a deliberate move because when, in 1863, Sayyid Ahmad identified 'nature' as a criterion of truth as valid as scripture, his Muslim critics began using the dismissive label *naychurī* ('naturalist') for him.[36] Similarly—in line with Sayyid Ahmad's scepticism of isnād-based Islamic historiography and his elevation of nature and reason as criteria of truth[37]—Mahdi Ali emphasised how Ibn Khaldūn relied solely on *'aql* (reason) and *naychur* (nature) to dismiss erroneous historical reports and illustrate his method.[38]

Mahdi Ali's polemical dismissal of Islamic historiography as largely uncritical and a cause of Muslim decline, and his contention that Ibn Khaldūn was the exception to this general trend were geared towards supporting Sayyid Ahmad's rethinking of Islamic traditions. It is thus not surprising that Mahdi Ali decided to reproduce Ibn Khaldūn's discussion of chiliastic Sunnī views of the Mahdi (the future Muslim saviour) in extended detail. Since Muslim scholars widely accepted the Mahdi traditions—in terms of hadith scholars, the Mahdi reports had reached the level of *tawātur* (reliable widespread narrative)—Ibn Khaldūn's criticism of these traditions implied that most hadith traditions,

[32] See M. M. A. Zubayrī, *Ḥayāt-i-Muḥsin* (Aligarh, 1934).

[33] In other words, Mahdi Ali felt that orientalists were to be thanked for their retrieval of thinkers such as Ibn Khaldūn who had been long ignored by Muslims. M. A. Sayyid, 'Pehlā rīwyū Muqaddimah ta'rīkh-i Ibn Khaldūn par', in *Tahdhīb-Ul-Akhlāq*, 4 vols (Lahore, 1991), vol. I, p. 203.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[35] Sayyid Ahmad sought to rid Islam of superstition and reinterpret the religion light of his understanding of Enlightenment ideas. The classic study on this is Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*.

[36] Lelyveld, 'Naicari nature', pp. 72, 78–79.

[37] Syed, *Muslim Response to the West*, pp. 42–43; Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, pp. 104–143.

[38] Sayyid, 'Pehlā rīwyū Muqaddimah ta'rīkh-i Ibn Khaldūn par', vol. I, p. 195; later in the same review, building on Ibn Khaldūn's criticisms, Mahdi Ali launched a critique of hadith traditions in general. Citing Ibn Khaldūn yet again, he reminded his Indian readers that even Abū Ḥanīfah (699–767), the eponym of the Hanafi legal tradition in Indian, chose not to use hadith because of their weak reliability. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–215.

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taken to be on a lower level of epistemic reliability (*ṣiḥah*), were certainly not to be counted on.[39] In addition to this attempt to weaken the authority of hadith traditions to rethink Muslim belief, Mahdi Ali also cited Ibn Khaldūn's criticism of certain historical claims in *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis) traditions as paralleling Sayyid Ahmad's views.[40]

In Ibn Khaldūn, Mahdi Ali even found support for Sayyid Ahmad's controversial interest in Christianity. Apart from his eager adoption of modern European ideas, many South Asian Muslims criticised Sayyid Ahmad for his views on Christianity. He wrote the first, albeit incomplete, commentary on the Bible and agreed with Unitarian beliefs about the essential unity of all religions and the later development of the Trinitarian doctrine.[41] In his review, Mahdi Ali quoted an excerpt from the *Muqaddimah* in which Ibn Khaldūn had supported the historical reliability of Jewish scriptures. But this time he cited the Arabic original without an Urdu translation. He also added a footnote with a mark of irony: 'Now doesn't he [Sayyid Ahmad] seem to be an infidel (*kāfir*) (for this)?' [42] This was taking a clear aim at the Arabic-literate *'ulamā'* while avoiding the attention of the average reader due to the sensitive nature of the issue.

Within South Asia, Mahdi Ali's writing on Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* had a defining role to play in drawing attention to Ibn Khaldūn as an intellectual resource for reformist thinkers. The view that Ibn Khaldūn was the most outstanding Muslim historian, who was ahead of his time, exceptional for his critical approach to historiography, and a reliable historical source in his own right, would become commonplace. The devoted modernist historian Mawlwī Muḥammad Zakā'ullah (1832–1910) cited large sections of Mahdi Ali's review and utilised Ibn Khaldūn's ideas to develop his own approach to historiography.[43] Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh (1877–1931), a lawyer and an Islamist from Patna, wrote an article for Hyderabad's *Islamic Culture* in which he argued that Ibn Khaldūn wrote an objective work of history and society long before secular European thinkers chose to do so.[44] The historian and theologian Shiblī Nu'mānī (1857–1914) admired and adopted Ibn Khaldūn's ideas on testing historical reports against their context.[45] Noteworthy historians and Islamicists who succeeded Shiblī,[46] such as Ḥājī Mu'īn al-Dīn Nadwī (1891–1941), Shāh Mu'īn al-Dīn Aḥmad Nadwī (1903–1974),[47] Abū'l Ḥasan Nadwī (1913–1999),[48] and Mas'ūd 'Ālam Nadwī (1910–1954),[49] cited Ibn Khaldūn's writings in support of their claims about Islamic history.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 212–215.

[40] In particular, these were Ibn Khaldūn's denial that the legendary City of Pillars used to explain Qur'an 89:7 ever existed, as well as his dismissal of the Gog and Magog traditions used as the background for interpreting Qur'an 18:94 *ibid.*, pp. 192–193.

[41] Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, pp. 59–100; B. D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2014), pp. 319–26; Y. Saikia and M. R. Rahman, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, (eds.) Saikia and Rahman, pp. 69–85, especially p. 11.

[42] Sayyid, 'Pehlā rīwyū Muqaddimah ta'rīkh-i Ibn Khaldūn par', vol. I, p. 195.

[43] M. M. Zakā'ullah, *Ta'rīkh-i-Hindustān*, 10 vols (Aligarh, 1915), vol. I, pp. 4, 15–30, 40–41; Syed, *Muslim Response to the West*, p. 64.

[44] See S. K. Bukhsh, 'Ibn Khaldun and His History of Islamic Civilization', *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review* 1.1 (1927), pp. 567–607.

[45] Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Al-Fārūq: Ya'nī Haḍrat 'Umar Raḍī Allah 'Anhu Kī Mufaṣṣal Sawāniḥ 'Umrī*, two vols (Azamgarh), vol. I, pp. 8–9, 11, 13–14.

[46] See M. Q. Zaman, 'A venture in critical Islamic historiography and the significance of its failure', *Numen* (1994), pp. 26–50.

[47] A. Maqsood, 'Contribution of North India to the Study of Islamic History from 1870 to 1947' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1989), pp. 152–166, http://hdl.handle.net/10603/85304 (accessed 24 May 2024).

[48] M. S. A. Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, *Insānī dunyā par musalmānūn̲ kay 'arūj wa zawāl ka athar* (Lucknow, 1979), pp. 162–163.

[49] M. 'Ālam Nadwī, *'Arbūn̲ Kī Qawmī Taḥrīk* (Lahore), p. 11.

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While orientalist views may be related to certain ideas among modernist thinkers, it was hardly the case that Western scholarship defined or constrained their readings of Ibn Khaldūn. For instance, Zakā'ullah cited and agreed with Elliot's view of Ibn Khaldūn's exceptional stature among all Muslim historians of the past, but only as part of a larger project of synthesising Western and Islamic approaches to historiography.[50] Although Zakā'ullah cited numerous Western philosophers and historians—including Bacon, Hegel, Voltaire, Carlyle, and Spencer—as his guides for history writing, he concluded his introduction by using Khaldūnian terms: history should draw 'lessons' (Zakā'ullah uses the Urdu term *'ibrat*, the singular equivalent of Ibn Khaldūn's *'ibar*) from the conditions (*aḥwāl*) of the past; furthermore—as with Ibn Khaldūn and other Muslim historians—the history of prophets, saints, and religious scholars is a subject that is just as legitimate as are kings and poets for critical history writing based on 'scientific' principles.[51]

In the case of Shiblī's high regard for Ibn Khaldūn, his cosmopolitan links with Middle Eastern and Ottoman scholars seem to have been more significant in forming his opinion than his reading of orientalist scholarship. Interestingly, for almost decade after Shiblī began writing historical works in 1886—a period during which he worked closely with Sayyid Ahmad and was exposed to Western writers—he refrained from adopting the prevalent view of Ibn Khaldūn's excellence as a historian. Even though he cited Ibn Khaldūn frequently with respect, he often criticised his historical claims.[52] It was only by the time he began writing *al-Fārūq* in 1894 that he singled out Ibn Khaldūn for praise, taking him to be the founder of the 'philosophy of history' (*falsafah-i-ta'rīkh*), on a par with, if not better than, Western historians, and the only Muslim historian to have laid out principles of a critical historiography that were worthy of emulation in the present.[53] It helps to remember that Shiblī wrote *al-Fārūq* several years after returning in 1893 from his trip to the Middle East and Turkey. He may have acquired a complete printed edition of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* during that journey.[54] Along with a better edition, discussions with Muslim scholars during the trip may have changed his views about Ibn Khaldūn.

Ibn Khaldūn and Iqbal

Iqbal was arguably South Asia's most creative and influential modernist.[55] Following his studies under the orientalist and historian Thomas Arnold (1864–1930)—a friend of Sayyid Ahmad and Shiblī who supported the Aligarh modernist cause—Iqbal gradually developed a peculiar narrative of Islamic intellectual history on which his reformist thought rested. In his widely read lectures, first published in 1930 as *The Reconstruction*

[50] Zakā'ullah, *Ta'rīkh-i-Hindustān*, vol. I, pp. 4, 40–41.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

[52] In his 1887 al-Ma'mūn, he largely followed Zakā'ullah's line, writing that Muslim historians' achievements—including those of Ibn Khaldūn—paled in comparison with the critical histories written by Western historians: Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Al-Ma'mūn: Ya'nī Sawāniḥ 'umrī Khalīfah Ma'mūn al-Rashīd A'zam* (Delhi), pp. 5–6. In his 1989 publication, Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Maḍmūn Kutub-Khānah-i-Iskandariyyah* (Agra, 1902), p. 24, he criticised Ibn Khaldūn for accepting legends about the burning of Persian books in early Islamic history.

[53] Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Al-Fārūq*, vol. I, pp. 8–9, 11, 13–14; despite Shiblī's high regard for Ibn Khaldūn, when the latter's views did not align with his own, he did not hesitate to refute him. See his disagreement with Ibn Khaldūn on the date of Muslim military innovations, in Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Al-Fārūq*, vol. II, p. 256.

[54] This is suggested by the fact that it was in the 1894 *al-Fārūq* that Shiblī listed the *Kitāb al-'ibar* as one of the historical sources that were available in print and also in his personal possession. Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Al-Fārūq*, vol. I, p. 14.

[55] The literature on Iqbal is immense. For recent scholarly appraisals, see the contributions in C. Hillier and B. Koshul (eds.), *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, 1st edn (Edinburgh, 2017).

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of Religious Thought in Islam, Iqbal held most classical Muslim thinkers responsible for departing from Qur'anic views, because of which Islam and Muslims went out of sync with the progress of God's creative change in the world. On the one hand, Muslim philosophers adopted the 'dualistic' thought of the Greeks while, on the other, popular Sufis mainstreamed a pantheistic, otherworldly, and human agency denying Persian mysticism.[56] Iqbal's intellectual reform involved eschewing these tendencies by recovering the 'anti-classical' ideas of the Qur'an. In his view, doing away with the Greek philosophical legacy would strengthen Muslim faith with scientific reflection on the data of sense experience, whereas an end to mainstream Sufi mysticism would empower individuals as unselfish and ethical agents of the Divine.[57]

Ibn Khaldūn was central to the reformist program of the *Reconstruction*—the exception to the errors of classical Muslim thinkers. Here was a case that served to illustrate the gains from a proper recovery of Qur'anic meaning, as Iqbal saw it. Ibn Khaldūn's scientific discussion of mystic states—including the purported ecstatic utterances of Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (858–922)—was Iqbal's basis for considering him to be the first Muslim intellectual to have properly appreciated the modern empirical attitude of the Qur'an, almost reaching 'the modern hypothesis of subliminal selves'.[58] For Iqbal, the 'whole spirit' of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* was inspired by the Qur'anic insistence that systematic reflection on the history of nations would yield scientific generalisations about human societies. The Qur'anic notion of 'life as a continuous movement in time' was Ibn Khaldūn's main interest; it was due to this concern that he became the most outstanding premodern thinker, outshining Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine.[59]

Ibn Khaldūn's critique of the Mahdi traditions took on a special significance in Iqbal's reformist views of Islamic intellectual history. With his convincing refutation of the Mahdi traditions, Ibn Khaldūn overcame the 'Magian crust' on Islam that gave Muslims a false view of history along with a false sense of salvation. Instead of relying upon themselves for change, Muslims longed for a future saviour who never came. Hence, Ibn Khaldūn's response to the Mahdi traditions had the effect of restoring Islamic teachings on individual resolve and confidence—character traits that, in Iqbal's view, Muslims had lost to modern Europeans. The historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) was thus wrong to consider Islam 'Magian' at its core.[60]

Finally, Iqbal approvingly cited Ibn Khaldūn's views on the institution of the caliphate to support the Turkish abolition of the caliphate. The institution of the caliphate, in Iqbal's reading of Ibn Khaldūn, was a matter of expediency and not indispensable to Muslim faith. Drawing on Ibn Khaldūn's views on the caliphate, it was now possible to think about alternative international institutions of Islam that were better suited to the realities of the modern age.[61]

Beyond Iqbal's questionable claims about Ibn Khaldūn's treatment of mystic psychology, the main question that concerns us is whether Iqbal read Ibn Khaldūn singularly through the eyes of orientalist scholars. In some significant respects, he certainly did. His larger narrative of Islamic history and its progress was based on orientalist notions of Semitic and Persian minds.[62] Furthermore, there is no physical copy of the

[56] See Haq, 'Iqbal and classical Muslim thinkers'; S. Rizvi, 'Between Hegel and Rumi: Iqbal's contrapuntal encounters with the Islamic philosophical traditions', in *Muhammad Iqbal*, (eds.) Hillier and Koshul, pp. 112–141.

[57] M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (ed.) M. S. Sheikh, 1st edn (Stanford, CA, 2013), pp. xlv–xlvi, 1–14, 76 ff.

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 77, 101–102, 150–151.

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 110–113.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–126.

[62] See Rizvi, 'Between Hegel and Rumi'.

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Muqaddimah that survives in Iqbal's personal collections,[63] suggesting that he may never have read the complete original text himself. His claim that Ibn Khaldūn very nearly developed the modern notion of subliminal selves was taken straight from the American orientalist Duncan Black MacDonald's (1863–1943) 1906 lectures, printed as *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam.*[64] Equally useful for Iqbal was the theologian and philosopher Robert Flint's (1838–1910) evaluation of Ibn Khaldūn's ideas. In his personal copy of Flint's *Philosophy of History*, Iqbal highlighted passages in which Flint applauded Ibn Khaldūn for understanding history as a process of continuous movement and change.[65] Later, in the *Reconstruction*, Iqbal presented Ibn Khaldūn's view of history using entirely identical phrases.[66] Even Iqbal's observation that Ibn Khaldūn was opposed to metaphysics[67] was already found in both MacDonald[68] and Flint.[69]

Yet, on the whole, Iqbal's reading of Ibn Khaldūn is shaped more by his modernist view of Islam as a creative and dynamic religion than the views of Western readers. Although Iqbal often cites orientalists, his appropriation of their ideas remains subject to his modernist concerns. As the intellectual historian Sajjad Rizvi has shown, while Iqbal often read Muslim intellectuals from an orientalist perspective, he also offered contrapuntal readings of Western thinkers that were based on his reading of Muslim thinkers.[70] In other words, it is a mistake to consider Iqbal a mere parrot of Western writers. Flint and MacDonald were useful for Iqbal only to the extent that they supported his view of Ibn Khaldūn as a true champion of Islam's spirit. He dismissed MacDonald's understanding of Islamic mysticism and philosophy[71]; he also chose to ignore criticisms of Ibn Khaldūn's historiography that Flint cited and approved.[72] He could do so because such readings had little relevance to his reformist concerns.

Furthermore, in some instances, Iqbal drew on Ibn Khaldūn without Western intermediaries. His lament of the enslaved condition of the colonised is a possible instance of such borrowing from Ibn Khaldūn, but a clear case in which Iqbal shows his wider knowledge of the *Muqaddimah* is his discussion of Ataturk's abolition of the Ottoman caliphate. Iqbal faithfully reproduces Ibn Khaldūn's subtle ideas on the caliphate and applies them to the Turkish case. Flint and MacDonald do not discuss this issue, so Iqbal may have learnt about it from unidentified sources. He may even have been reading the original text of the *Muqaddimah* in public libraries or from personal copies that no longer survive—this would hardly be surprising given that, as we shall see, both the Arabic text and its Urdu translations were available in India by the first decade of the twentieth century.

[63] I have personally examined Iqbal's collections that are available at Iqbal Academy Pakistan in Lahore. The fuller catalogues of Iqbal's books also lack any mention of Ibn Khaldūn's works. See M. Siddiq, *Descriptive Catalogue of Allama Iqbal's Personal Library*, 1st edn (Lahore, 1983); A. N. Khan, *Relics of Allama Iqbal: Catalogue: Preserved in Allama Iqbal Museum*, 1st edn (Lahore, 1982).

[64] D. B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam: Being the Haskell Lectures on Comparative Religion Delivered Before the University of Chicago in 1906* (Chicago, 1909), p. 42.

[65] I have personally examined Iqbal's copy, available at Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore.

[66] Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 113; cf. R. Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History* (Edinburgh and London, 1893), p. 169.

[67] Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 113.

[68] MacDonald, *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, pp. 130–131.

[69] Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History*, p. 160.

[70] Rizvi, 'Between Hegel and Rumi', pp. 113–114.

[71] Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 14, 54.

[72] Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History*, pp. 161–162.

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Ibn Khaldūn and the Ahl-i Hadith of South Asia

Both the modernists and the Ahl-i Hadith traced, with some justification, their intellectual roots to reforms initiated by Shāh Walīullāh (1703–1762) and his followers. They were united in their use of scriptural sources—the Qur'an and hadith traditions—to contest popular customs and established traditions of Islamic law. For the Ahl-i Hadith, the reform efforts of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd Barelwī (1786–1831) were especially significant, as it was after his death that his followers prepared the way for a new group identity to emerge. Along with Sayyid Nazīr Ḥussayn (1805–1902), Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (1832–1890) was one of the two leading proponents of the Ahl-i Hadith from the post-Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd generation. Within the Ahl-i Hadith and without, these two are widely regarded as the founders of the modern Ahl-i Hadith of South Asia.[73] Ibn Khaldūn figures prominently in the extensive writings of Ṣiddīq Ḥasan—a prolific author of works in Arabic and male consort to Shah Jahan (1838–1901), the third ruling begum of Bhopal.

With close connections between the Ahl-i Hadith and the modernists, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan may have first learnt about Ibn Khaldūn from Sayyid Ahmad's circle. Jointly opposed to popular Islamic traditions and devotional practices in India, the Ahl-i Hadith had much in common with Sayyid Ahmad's modernist reform. Like Sayyid Ahmad, most leading Ahl-i Hadith scholars of the nineteenth century belonged to families of the Mughal political and religious elite who were undergoing loss of power, prestige, and identity under British rule.[74] Interestingly, even though, in general, the Ahl-i Hadith *'ulamā'* disdained the modernists, Sayyid Ahmad himself identified with Ahl-i Hadith in matters of Islamic praxis.[75] Moreover, in 1906, Mahdi Ali wrote *Taqlīd awr 'aml bil hadith* (*Taqlīd Versus Acting on Hadith*), in which he opposed the majoritarian Sunnī reliance on established law schools. Instead, he extolled the Ahl-i Hadith's use of hadith to properly understand and live by Islam.[76]

Ṣiddīq Ḥasan was familiar with Ibn Khaldūn's writings well before Mahdi Ali's 1871 review of the *Muqaddimah*. With his education in Arabic letters and traditional Islamic sciences, he certainly did not need Urdu translations to learn about Ibn Khaldūn's ideas. Already, in his 1866 Arabic book on the Sunnī hadith canon *al-Ḥiṭṭah fī dhikr al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah* (*Relieving the Burden of the Six Ṣaḥīḥ Books*),[77] he had cited Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* several times as an authoritative text on Islamic intellectual history.[78] His repeated references to the *Kitāb al-'ibar* in later works should thus be seen as a development of this interest. Some of his many writings that cite considerable sections of the *Kitāb al-'ibar*, at times without mentioning the source, include the 1874 *Luqṭat al-'ajlān mimmā tamassa ilā ma'rifatihi ḥājat al-insān* (*The Impatient One's Bargain of the Knowledge that Human Need Urgently Demands*), the 1878 *Abjad al-'ulūm* (*Elementary Principles of the Sciences*), the 1882 *al-Tāj al-Mukallal* (*The Invested Crown*), and the 1884 Qur'an commentary *Fatḥ al-Bayān fi maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* (*Elucidation of the Eloquent Qur'an in View of its Objectives*).

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[73] See Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 264–296; S. Haroon, 'Reformism and Orthodox practice in early nineteenth-century Muslim North India: Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed reconsidered', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21.2 (2011), pp. 177–198; H. O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-Century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah* (New Delhi, 2008).

[74] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 268–269; C. Keen, 'The rise and fall of Siddiq Hasan, male consort of Shah Jahan of Bhopal', in *The Man behind the Queen*, (eds.) C. Beem and M. Taylor (Springer, 2014), pp. 185–204, especially pp. 186–187.

[75] Shiblī Nu'mānī, 'Mawlwī Ḥakīm Muḥammad 'Umar Ṣāḥib kay nām', in *Makātīb-i Shiblī*, (ed.) S. S. Nadwī (Azamgarh, 1928), vol. I, pp. 46–49, especially p. 46.

[76] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 270.

[77] I base the 1866 date for this work on Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, Nawab of Bhopal [1248–1307/1832–1890]* (Lahore, 1973), p. 186.

[78] Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *Al-Ḥiṭṭah Fī Dhikr al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah* (Beirut, 1985), pp. 56, 60–61, 71–73, 79.

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Ṣiddīq Ḥasan made extensive use of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* in his writings,[79] citing Ibn Khaldūn as an undisputed authority in support of Ahl-i Hadith views concerning Islamic traditions. For instance, in *al-Ḥiṭṭah*, he quoted Ibn Khaldūn to support the view —obviously dear to the emerging Ahl-i Hadith—that the six books of the Sunnī hadith canon were meticulously researched, comprehensive, and reliable sources of knowledge on history and Islamic teachings. The six books, with the works of Imām Bukhārī (810–870) and Imām Muslim (815?–875) being of foremost significance, barely left out any useful material on the Prophet's teachings.[80] In his *Fatḥ al-Bayān*, he reproduced Ibn Khaldūn's refutation of erroneous historical reports in classical Qur'an commentaries.[81]

Ṣiddīq Ḥasan's extensive knowledge of Ibn Khaldūn was most likely due to his exposure to scholars from the Ottoman Middle East who held the medieval historian in high regard. Between his move to the Bhopal state in 1854 and his ultimate elevation to the rank of nawab consort in 1871, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan's links with the broader network of Muslim scholars in the Ottoman Middle East expanded considerably. Followers of the reform-minded Yemeni scholar Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī (1759–1834) were already present at the Bhopal court when Ṣiddīq Ḥasan first came to Bhopal. Over time, he was able to access modern printed materials as well as to disseminate his own writing using an intricate network of traders, activists, and scholars who were moving between the Ottoman Middle East and British realms. His links with this international network of Muslim scholars, especially those impressed by the ideas of the reformer Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (1759–1834), were further deepened during his *ḥajj* trip in 1869.[82]

Regardless of how Ṣiddīq Ḥasan first learnt about Ibn Khaldūn, his reading of Ibn Khaldūn rested largely on publications in the Ottoman Middle East of the nineteenth century. He hardly—if at all—engaged with orientalist views on Ibn Khaldūn. As we have seen, he drew on Kātib Çelebi's *Kashf al-zunūn*—a text that discusses Ibn Khaldūn's life and work—for his *Abjad al-'ulūm*. However, the most telling indication of how he read Ibn Khaldūn is in *al-Tāj al-Mukallal*—a biographical dictionary of outstanding Muslim scholars. There, in an entry on Ibn Khaldūn, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan esteemed Ibn Khaldūn as a historian and hadith specialist of the first rank. He proudly declared that he had the seven-volume Bulāq edition of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* in his personal possession, and that he was deeply indebted to this text in many of his own works. While Ṣiddīq Ḥasan discussed several medieval Muslim biographical sources on Ibn Khaldūn, he cited just one contemporary source in support of his view of Ibn Khaldūn's impeccable character and scholarly excellence.[83] This was the *Āthār al-adhār* (*Monuments of the Ages*)—a historical encyclopaedia published in 1877 by the modern press in Ottoman Lebanon. Even though the *Āthār al-adhār* responded passingly to orientalists who were writing on Ibn Khaldūn without naming any sources,[84] there is nothing in *al-Tāj al-Mukallal* to suggest that Ṣiddīq Ḥasan was concerned with orientalist scholarship on Ibn Khaldūn. Here, it is also worth noting that Ṣiddīq Ḥasan made it clear in his biographical entry on Ibn Khaldūn that he was interested in the entirety of the *Kitāb al-'ibar*, including the *Autobiography*. This stands

[79] Many of Ṣiddīq Ḥasan's works raise complex issues of authorship, as he had many collaborators, modelled his works on other authors, and often cited other texts verbatim. See Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan*, pp. 83–123.

[80] Khān, *Al-Ḥiṭṭah Fī Dhikr al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah*, pp. 56, 60–61, 71–72.

[81] Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *Fatḥ Al-Bayān Fi Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, 1992), p. 223/15.

[82] Keen, 'Rise and fall of Siddiq Hasan', p. 192; see also S. Alavi, 'Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan and the Muslim cosmopolis', in *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 267–330.

[83] Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *Al-Tāj al-Mukallal Min Jawāhir Ma'āthir al-Ṭirāz al-Ākhir Wal-Awwal* (Qatar, 2007), pp. 344–346.

[84] S. J. al-Khawrī and K. Shiḥādih, *Āthār Al-Adhār: Al-Qism al-Ta'rīkhī*, two vols (Beirut, 1877), vol. II, pp. 304–308.

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in contrast with most orientalist readers, who were attracted primarily to the theories of the *Muqaddimah*.[85]

Another Ahl-i Hadith scholar of note who was drawn to respond to Ibn Khaldūn for sectarian concerns and without any noticeable role of orientalist scholarship was Shams-ul-Ḥaq ʻAzīmābādī (1857–1911).[86] A student of Nazīr Ḥussayn, ʻAzīmābādī was a pioneer in the use of commentaries on classical hadith texts to construct religious authority in modern South Asia.[87] Part of this construction of religious authority involved refuting past and present rival positions.[88] As we saw earlier, Mahdi Ali cited Ibn Khaldūn's discussion of the awaited Mahdī at length to cast doubt on the authority of aḥādīth and issues of purported Sunnī doctrinal consensus. ʻAzīmābādī responded to this challenge with a subtle rejoinder to Ibn Khaldūn in his *ʻAwn al-maʻbūd* (*The Worshipped One's Aid*), first published between 1901 and 1906.[89] This was a voluminous commentary on *Sunan Abī Dā'ūd*—one of the six hadith books that form the Sunnī hadith canon.

Read in the background of Mahdi Ali's use of Ibn Khaldūn to weaken the authority of hadith traditions, Ibn Khaldūn came to serve as the respected conversation partner with whom ʻAzīmābādī debated to demonstrate the validity of Ahl-i Hadith convictions. Although ʻAzīmābādī clearly stated that Ibn Khaldūn was wrong to dismiss all the aḥādīth on the Mahdī, the language of his rejoinder was measured and highly respectful. It was in fact not an outright rejection of problems with the Mahdī traditions that Ibn Khaldūn identified. Rather, Azīmābādī felt that Ibn Khaldūn exaggerated (*bālagha*) his case when he declared *all* the aḥādīth on the Mahdī to be weak. This was off the mark (*lam yuṣib*) and faulty (literally, 'he [Ibn Khaldūn] erred', *akhṭa'a*) because the hadith narrations in question *varied* in their ratings (*ṣiḥah*).[90]

Translating Ibn Khaldūn

It was in Delhi and Allahabad that local *ʻulamā'* allied with nationalist publishers in an effort to translate Ibn Khaldūn's works. Allahabad took the lead, thanks to the exceptional energies of Aḥmad Ḥusayn Allahābādī (1859–1933)—an outstanding *ḥakīm* (practitioner of Greek medicine)[91] who moonlighted as a historian. Having already written inspirational biographical works on the lives of the medieval military leaders Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (1118–1174) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī (1138–1193), in 1897, Allahābādī began publishing excerpts from the *Kitāb al-ʻibar* in his own monthly magazine, *Mubārakat-ul-Islām* (*The Blessedness of Islam*). Translated excerpts were published as episodes in the Allahabad-based local magazine until 1910, soon after which Allahābādī stopped handling the magazine's affairs due to worsening health. Nevertheless, Allahābādī's brother Munshī Ḥāmid Husayn, who ran a printing press and was affiliated with the family's medical practice, kept publishing entire volumes of the translated *Kitāb al-ʻibar*. By the time

[85] Khān, *Al-Tāj al-Mukallal*, p. 345.

[86] I am grateful to Ebrahim Moosa for pointing this out to me.

[87] Albeit devotional, the most detailed and well-researched work on the life and work of 'Azīmābādī is M. ʻUzayr Shams, *Imām Al-Muḥaqiqīn Wal-Muḥadith al-Shahīr ʻAllāmah Abū Ṭayyab Muḥammad Shams-Ul-Haq ʻAzīmābādī Raḥimahu Allah: Ḥayāt Wa Khidmāt*, 2nd edn (Karachi, 2008).

[88] As the Islamicist Muhammad Qasim Zaman has shown, while commentaries on classical Arabic texts emerged from an existing tradition, they also served to constitute a tradition. This remaking of tradition involved elaborating on existing positions; refuting past and present rival positions; and positioning texts, authors, and communities within a genealogy. M. Q. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, 2004), p. 42.

[89] Shams, *Shams-Ul-Haq 'Azīmābādī: Ḥayāt Wa Khidmāt*, p. 76.

[90] S.-Ḥaq ʻAzīmābādī, *ʻAwn al-Maʻbūd ʻAlā Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dā'ūd*, 1st edn (Beirut, 2005), p. 1950.

[91] On this medical tradition in colonial India, see S. Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition 1600–1900* (Ranikhet, 2007).

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that Allahābādī passed away in 1933, 14 out of the original 18 volumes had been completed and published.[92]

Allahābādī's approach to Ibn Khaldūn contrasted with those of most Western readers of the medieval historian. Unlike them, Allahābādī was not concerned primarily with Ibn Khaldūn's innovative theories in the *Muqaddimah*. Rather, when Allahābādī began the translation project in 1897, he did so by translating excerpts from the second and third volumes of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* on Berber, Arab, and other histories. He planned to turn to the *Muqaddimah* only if, and when, he had finished the rest of the text.[93] In other words, his interest was more in medieval historical narrative than in theory.

Allahābādī's interest in narratives about medieval Islamic history—to which his translation project of Ibn Khaldūn also belonged—was motivated largely by his concern for reversing the decline of the once ascendant Muslim *ummah* (nation). This was why he had earlier written inspirational biographies of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (1118–1174) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn 'Ayyūbī (1138–1193), for these figures had an established reputation in Islamic historiography as pious Muslim leaders who brought peace and stability to the Middle East and presented a united opposition to Christian crusaders.[94] Significantly, Allahābādī was especially excited about the volumes in which Ibn Khaldūn discussed Muslim conquests of India. Unlike the early printed volumes of the translation that have medical advertisements in their blurbs and brief introductions,[95] the lengthier introductions that Allahābādī and his editor wrote emphasised the significance of the thirteenth and fourteenth volumes on the Muslim invasions of India. They felt that Ibn Khaldūn's narrative of India's conquest held the lessons of national unity and piety—a potential source of building sincere Islamic nationalism in India. On the other hand, for British and Hindu critics of the Muslim rule of India, these volumes of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* showed that Muslims were the not the vile despots that they had been made out to be.[96]

It would take generations of collaboration between South Asia's learned Muslim publishers and scholars, working largely independently of Western scholarship, to produce a complete translation of all the volumes of the *Kitāb al-'ibar*, including the *Muqaddimah*. Already during Allahābādī's lifetime, his neglect of the *Muqaddimah* became a matter of concern for the nationalist publisher al-Waṭan in Lahore. Mawlwī Muḥammad Inshā' Allah, the editor and owner of al-Waṭan, commissioned a translation that was first published in 1904.[97] Yet another Urdu translation of the *Muqaddimah* was published in 1970

[92] M. Ṣuhayb, 'Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn kay mutarjim wa muḥaqqiq: Ḥakīm Aḥmad Ḥusayn Allahābādī', *Taḥqīqāt-i Islāmī* (2009), pp. 83–100, especially pp. 83–88.

[93] A. Ḥusayn Allahābādī, 'Dībāchah', in *Ta'rīkh-i Ibn-i Khaldūn* (New Delhi, 2010), vol. 1, p. 34.

[94] See K. Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors*, 1st edn (London, 2011).

[95] See 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Tarjamah Ta'rīkh-i 'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, (trans.) A. Ḥusayn Allahābādī, 18 vols (Allahabad, 1904), vol. VIII.

[96] M. Ḥāmid Ḥusayn, 'Tarjamah Ta'rīkh Ibn-i Khaldūn ki tayrah jildayn̲', in *Tarjamah Ta'rīkh-i 'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, 18 vols (Allahabad, 1927), vol. XIII, p. i; A. Ḥusayn Allahābādī, 'Dībāchah', in *Tarjamah Ta'rīkh-i 'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. XIII, pp. iii–iv; A. Ḥusayn Allahābādī, 'Dībāchah', in *Tarjamah Ta'rīkh-i 'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. XIV, pp. 1–2.

[97] It is noteworthy that the translator's own voice is minimal, for he writes nothing prefacing his three-volume translation of the *Muqaddimah*. By contrast, Inshā' Allah writes a brief foreword in which he notes how earlier translations—a clear reference to Allahābādī's translations—had not mustered the courage to translate the *Muqaddimah* because it was much more difficult compared with other parts of Ibn Khaldūn's *ta'rīkh*. al-Waṭan publishers took up the translation of the *Muqaddimah*, as it represented the spirit (*rūḥ*) of the Kitāb *al-'ibar*. Furthermore, it was what made Ibn Khaldūn exceptional in his intellectual achievements and popular among Western thinkers. For these reasons, Inshā' Allah's publishing house took it upon itself to have the *Muqaddimah* translated. The language of Inshā' Allah's foreword coupled with the total silence of the translator suggests that the real driving force behind the *Muqaddimah*'s first Urdu translation was none other than Inshā' Allah himself. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah-i Ibn Khaldūn Kā Urdū Tarjumah*, (trans.) Mawlwī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, three vols (Lahore, 1904).

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by Karachi's Nafīs Academy. From a foreword by Chawdarī Muḥammad Iqbāl Salīm Gāhandarī, the publications head at the time, we learn that the new translation was motivated by his dissatisfaction with Franz Rosenthal's English rendering of the Arabic in the *Muqaddimah*.[98] Gāhandarī and his successors at the Nafīs Academy continued to commission local scholars to improve and complete Allahābādī's translation of the *Kitāb al-ʻibar*. Eleven out of 12 volumes were printed by 1985, and it seems likely that the twelfth volume was ready for publication at around the same time.[99] Nevertheless, the first complete Urdu translation of the *Kitāb al-ʻibar* that survives today is Nafīs Academy's 2003 computerised edition.[100]

Conclusion

The reception of Ibn Khaldūn's ideas in modern South Asia that has been studied in this article questions the significance that scholars have given to orientalists in shaping how the medieval historian was understood and used by the region's Muslim intellectuals. Far from simply repeating and recycling orientalist readings, colonial South Asian Muslims translated and interpreted Ibn Khaldūn in the service of their unique interests. These interests varied from proposing religious reform, sectarian point-scoring, to countering colonial narratives of a despotic Muslim rule of India. It is hard to deny the role that orientalists played in drawing attention to Ibn Khaldūn throughout the Muslim world in the early nineteenth century. Yet, they were not the sole sources upon which South Asian readers relied, and nor was orientalist scholarship always relevant to them. This was especially true for cosmopolitan Muslim scholars who had contacts with the Middle East. Even when South Asian reformists adopted orientalist interpretations of Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, they deliberately cited those orientalist opinions that agreed with their ideological visions, ignoring or dismissing Western voices that presented a different view of Ibn Khaldūn.

The complete rendition of the voluminous *Kitāb al-ʻibar* was a major undertaking that involved generations of South Asian scholars and editors, with barely any direct role for orientalist scholarship. From the late nineteenth century, South Asian scholars began Urdu translations with those volumes of the *Kitāb al-ʻibar* that were of little interest to Western readers. Over the course of the translations, volumes on Muslim rule in India became especially interesting for South Asian readers. This can be understood in the context of Muslim nationalist contestations of demeaning colonial and Hindu revivalist narratives of Muslim rule of India. As in the colonial period studied in this article, Ibn Khaldūn would continue to appeal to South Asia's intellectuals post-1947, with the British rulers gone. However, Ibn Khaldūn's ideas would then interest an expanded readership trying to address the challenges of post-colonial Muslim nationhood.

Acknowledgements. This research was supported by funding from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. I am grateful to Hussain Ahmad Khan, Sarah Ansari, and Peter Adamson for their encouragement. I thank Ali Usman Qasmi, Ateeb Gul, Ebrahim Moosa, Layli Uddin, Muhammad Naeem, and Nur Sobers Khan for sharing valuable ideas and sources on Ibn Khaldūn's reception in South Asia.

Conflicts of interest. None.

[98] C. M. I. S. Gāhandarī, 'Fann-i 'umrāniyāt kā bānī', in *Muqaddimah Ibn-i Khaldūn* (Karachi, 1970), pp. 3–4, especially p. 4.

[99] This is suggested by the publisher's preface to the eleventh volume, in which he congratulates the translator for finishing the translation project that his father had begun. C. Ṭāriq I. Gāhandarī, ''Arḍ-i Nāshir', in *Ta'rīkh Ibn-i Khaldūn*, 12 vols (Karachi, 1985), vol. XI, pp. i–iv.

[100] ʻAbd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh-i Ibn-i Khaldūn*, (ed.) C. Ṭāriq I. Gāhandarī, (trans.) Ak̲h̲tar Fatiḥpurī, Jadīd kampyūtar 'aydīshan, 12 vols (Karachi, 2003).

Cite this article: Syed BH (2024). Ibn Khaldūn's reception in colonial South Asia. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* **34**, 729–743. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186324000191

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186324000191 Published online by Cambridge University Press