



Scan to know paper details and
author's profile

Geohistory of Globalization: The Case of the Spread of Islam in Africa through an Approach of IBN Khaldun

Rodrigo Corrêa Teixeira, Joelton Carneiro de Lima & Luiz Pereira

Pontifical Catholic University

RESUME

This article proposes a reflection about Ibn Khaldun and the myth of the "Arab invasion" in North Africa. Through an analysis of Ibn Khaldun's work and in the light of Edward Said's critique of a Western thoughts about east (Orientalism), a Eurocentric narrative in which the Arabs cannot create knowledge, only carry it. Therefore it is a search for a contribution to studies on the Global South.

Keywords: ibn khaldun; africa; islam; global history; geohistory.

Classification: DDC Code: 823.4 LCC Code: PR3330

Language: English



London
Journals Press

LJP Copyright ID: 573333
Print ISSN: 2515-5784
Online ISSN: 2515-5792

London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 22 | Issue 11 | Compilation 1.0



© 2022 Rodrigo Corrêa Teixeira, Joelton Carneiro de Lima & Luiz Pereira. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>, permitting all noncommercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Geohistory of Globalization: The Case of the Spread of Islam in Africa through an Approach of IBN Khaldun

Rodrigo Corrêa Teixeira^α, Joelton Carneiro de Lima^σ & Luiz Pereira^ρ

RESUME

This article proposes a reflection about Ibn Khaldun and the myth of the "Arab invasion" in North Africa. Through an analysis of Ibn Khaldun's work and in the light of Edward Said's critique of a Western thoughts about east (Orientalism), a Eurocentric narrative in which the Arabs cannot create knowledge, only carry it. Therefore it is a search for a contribution to studies on the Global South.

Keywords: ibn khaldun; africa; islam; global history; geohistory.

Author α: Professor of the Graduate Program in Geography at PUC Minas, Brazil.

σ ρ: Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article develops a reflective sath against -hegemonic readings of Ibn Khaldun's work, highlighting the diversity of the thinker's production and the multiple readings that his work has provided.

From the emergence of Islam in the 7th century, arab's historiography followed its mercantile and religious expansion, increasing and intensifying their domains. The first stories Arab globals were born from the need to legitimize Islam as a universal and truth belief, for that, at this time, historiography was methodologically a tributary of religious exegesis. However, the Arabs were increasingly interested in the subjugated peoples of the Near East, North of Africa and Spain. The cultural mosaic created by the confluence of Muslims, Jews and Christians contributed to increase the interest of Arab historians in the history of other peoples.

II. GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE: IBN KHALDUN

Starting from the discussions around alterity, the Eurocentric view of the Arab and Islamic world as constituting the so called Orientalism (SAID, 2007), a branch of academic studies that emerged in European universities for the study of the so called "Orient (East)". This approach also had a strong impact on the vision of Africa. As a counterpoint to this, brings a classic author, who offers, however, a counter-hegemonic perspective: Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun, during the 14th century, built a privileged perspective on the Maghreb (North Africa), providing to the contemporary researchers testimonials and analysis of refined quality about the culture, social relations and political dynamics of African's societies in that region. Next to Idrisi and Ibn Batuta, Ibn Khaldun is certainly one of the thinkers of the last centuries. Most studied pasts of the Arab-Muslim world today. Ibn Khaldun wrote to Muqaddimah and the following books, convinced of the need to let to posterity a picture of the Arab-Muslim civilization as a whole. It has been considered for over a century a work classic of historical thought, the first known attempt to create a science of societies independent of theology and philosophy. Studying North Africa and the Empires there formed over the centuries, Ibn Khaldun conceived a philosophy of history, a sociology and a geopolitics with great critical sensitivity. Standing far from tradition, Ibn Khaldun reached to the possible limits, in that historical context, of the independence of thought (SENKO, 2011 and 2012; KHALDUN, 1958 – 1960).

Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in 1332 and died in Cairo in 1406. The first part of His life was

devoted to politics at a particularly turbulent period in North African history. The wars and infighting that characterized the entire fourteenth century brought the ruin of many urban centers and the impoverishment of public finances in the Islamic world. Maghreb in this century became an cultural identity , with singulars and particulry characteristics in the the Islamic world. Far away for long years from his homeland, to which he never returned after going into self-exile, Ibn Khaldun cultivated his Maghreb roots until the end of his life, and whenever possible, he showed proud in belonging to the geopolitical and cultural environment forged under the influence of Al-Andalus, land of their ancestors (BISSIO, 2012).

Ibn Khaldun testified a period of transition, in which Muslim countries tried to preserve the knowledge of the classical period in the legal and religious planes, as well as in the scientific, artistic and literary domains. At this historic moment, Islam was more focused on the past rather than the future (BISSIO, 2012). In the period between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the borders of the Muslim world have changed substantially. In the eastern area, a Mongol dynasty, coming from East Asia, conquered Iran and Iraq, and put an end to the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 1258 (HOURANI, 2001, p. 100).

Converted to Islam, the Mongols were held back in their attempt to march to the west by the Egyptian army made up of military slaves (Mamluks). Coming from Caucasus and Central Asia, the Mamluk military elite ruled Egypt for over two centuries (1250-1517); also ruled Syria from 1260, and controlled the holy cities of the Peninsula Arabica. In the western part, the decline of the Almohad Dynasty gave place to several states; in the Maghreb, among them, that of the Marinids in Morocco (1196-1465) and that of the Hafsids in Tunisia, 1228-1574, (HOURANI, 2001, p. 101). Most of Al-Andalus, the Muslim Iberian Peninsula, from where came from the Beni Khaldun family, fell into the hands of the Christian kingdoms of the North and, in the middle of the in the fourteenth century, from the ancient Muslim splendor, only the kingdom of Granada remained in the south (BISSIO, 2012).

In his biography there is a remarkable episode which was his meeting between the greatest warrior leader of the world at the time, Timur-i-Lenk (in Portuguese Tamerlão), at the end of the 14th century, at the gates of Damascus (now the capital of Syria and formerly the seat of the Arab Caliphate). The Mongolian Warrior CallsKhaldun, impressed by his fame, and both engage an intense dialogue. Tamerlane makes questions to Khaldun, interrogating him on topics of the time and the history of North Africa. By this debate, the Mongolian leader orders Khaldun to be safely taken beyond the gates of Damascus (KHALDUN, 1958-1960, vol. I, p. 553).

Ibn Khaldun had the opportunity to meet and live in the great centers of power, which were also the poles of cultural effervescence, notably Cairo, under Mamluk control, where he served as qadi (judge) and taught at the University of Al-Azhar (BISSIO, 2012).

Although his family emigrated from Seville during the Christian conquest, reaching the North Africa around 1235, he was originally from Hadramaut, so his most probably origin was Arabic (as he himself attested). At the age of 20, he became secretary to the Sultan¹ of Fez, Morocco – and was happy to escape with only two years in prison when he lost the sultan's favor. Most later he entered the service of the King of Granada – and found himself in trouble again. In 1375, tired and disappointed but matured, he retired with his family to Kalaat Castle Ibn Salama, near Oran, and for four years worked on his Prolegomena - Muqaddimah.

Among the contributions he makes in this work, Ibn Khaldun argues that the social phenomena appear to obey laws which, while not as absolute as those govern natural phenomena, are enough constants to make events social networks to follow their well-defined, popular patterns and sequences. These laws operate on the masses and cannot be significantly influenced by isolated individuals. The attempts to a reformer to rejuvenate a corrupt state, for example, are unlikely to succeed, because individual effort are

¹ Sultan “means more or less 'holder of power'” (HOURANI, 2001, p. 100).

crushed by the irresistible power of social forces. The same laws operate in societies that have the same type of structure, even though these societies are separated in space and time.

When Ibn Khaldun took on the task of systematizing all his knowledge and his experience in a book – a mission that imposes itself during four years of reclusion in a fortress from the Algerian countryside, as he highlights in his autobiography – he seeks to give a radical answer to the challenge faced by Islam: a new science was needed, which would provide universal laws capable of explaining the functioning of human societies. It is this science that he intends to found with his most important work, the *Muqaddimah*, through which he went to the posterity. The effort was not in vain: that book – in fact the Prolegomena to a Universal History in various volumes – has been considered for over a century a classic work of historical thought, the first known attempt to create a science of societies independent of theology and philosophy.

Departing from tradition, Ibn Khaldun reached the limits possible, in the context history in which it found itself, of independence of thought (BISSIO, 2012). In this context, one of the primitive aspects of Islam stands out, the zeal for the production scientific research, as well as the exchange of knowledge through the interaction between peoples.

With a public life of activity in the turbulent courts of North Africa and Andalusia, Ibn Khaldun participated in the ups and downs of various aristocratic regimes. If on the one hand your life public reflects the instability of the region, on the other hand, it is in the register of a theorization of its personal experience that he speaks of issues that reach beyond the immediacy of events (SENKO, 2011 and 2012; KHALDUN, 1958 – 1960).

If in the 14th century the Islamic world presented a convulsed scenary, with the economy and politics in a critical phase, the instability in these areas has not managed to destroy the cultural unity; on the contrary, it became deeper as new contingentes humans converted to the Muslim

faith. In fact, by this time, following the Nile River valley and the coast East Africa, the Islamic religion continued its expansion, along the commercial routes, often carried by the merchants themselves and indifferent to political and military conflicts. O the advance continued through the Sahel and along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, advancing towards the interior of Africa (BISSIO, 2012). Khaldun's special attention is drawn to the stagnation and the beginning of decadence of Muslim societies in North Africa, just as Islam manifested itself with greater vigor in the large Sudanese states and also became more active in the Swahili city-states.

Ibn Khaldun does not observe the conflicting situation of the Maghreb and the Islamic world with the perspective of linear progress, but in the context of a cyclical evolution: a negative phase that puts an end to a cycle of power will necessarily be followed by a positive phase, reconstruction. Thus, the fourteenth century would present itself as a period to wait for a new cycle of civilization (*umram*) under the aegis of a new people – which he identifies, towards the end of his life, as with the Turks. It is based on this conception of history that Ibn Khaldun, despite the difficulties and challenges of that moment – including the horrors of the devastating Black Death, which killed his parents and its first masters and decimated the population of the Arab-Islamic world as much as that of Christianity - does not develop a pessimistic view. In fact, he believes that the human order, once reached maturity, it is essentially stable, almost immutable. And, in his opinion, this maturity had been reached by Islamic civilization (BISSIO, 2012).

Ibn Khaldun defines human civilization as being formed by free individuals, autonomous and equal and constituted by two poles in balance, rural civilization (*umram badawi*) and urban civilization (*umram hadari*), both being complementary. To reach this conclusion he takes as a reference for analysis the forms used by man to ensure his subsistence and also analyzes the city, following its changes over time and the particularities cultural and regional in the use and organization of space (BISSIO, 2012).

This does not mean that there still wasn't place for improvement. But, Ibn Khaldun considers, on the one hand, that sciences and techniques, with the accumulated heritage of the Greeks, of the Persians and the Arabs, they have already reached the maximum level of the potential of the human spirit; think, also, that with Islam religion had reached its highest degree of perfection (BISSIO, 2012).

It should be noted that Ibn Khaldun places the cultural turning point in the history of humanity in urbanization, often the result of inter-ethnic conflicts and frictions, a necessarily condition, in its analysis - even if it is not enough, for reasons that it develops when studying the decay of empires - for the development of civilization. From there, the historian studies the influence that the physical, social, institutional and economic space has on history and reaches the conclusion that the geographical environment creates important possibilities for the life of social groups, but it does not exercise strict determinism (BISSIO, 2012).

Ibn Khaldun perceives the historical process as inscribed in an alternating cycle between two basic forms of social organization, which are as follows: Bedouin (nomadic) or sedentary. This one pendulum movement is not hierarchical, but complementary. However, despite of the problems from this theorization, Ibn Khaldun problematizes the development of society, dedicating himself to to write a general history of the Maghreb dynasties:

The first part of this work, the *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena), continues to attract attention until today. In it, Ibn Khaldun tried to explain the rise and fall of dynasties in a way that serve as a standard for assessing the credibility of historical narratives. He thought the way the most simple way and most ancient of human society was that of the people of the steppes and mountains, cultivating the land or raising livestock, and following leaders who had no power of coercion organized. These people had a certain natural goodness and energy, but they could not by themselves create stable governments, cities or great

culture. For this to be possible, it was necessary a ruler with exclusive authority, who would only be established if he could form and controlling a group of followers endowed with *asabiyya*, that is, with a corporate spirit aimed at obtaining and maintaining power. Ideally, the members of this group were chosen from among the energetic men of the steppe or the mountain; the group would be held together by a sense of common ancestry, real or fictitious, or by bonds of dependency, and reinforced by the acceptance of a common religion. A ruler with a strong and coherent group of followers could found a dynasty; when your government were stable, stable populous cities would arise, and in them there would be trades specialties, luxurious lifestyles and high culture. Every dynasty, however, carried the seeds of its decline; would be weakened by tyranny, extravagance, and loss of command qualities. Power would actually pass from the ruler to members of his own group, but sooner or later the dynasty would be replaced by another formed in a similar way (HOURANI, 2001, p. 16)².

In his work, Ibn Khaldun defines human civilization as being formed by individuals free, autonomous and equal and constituted by two poles in balance, rural civilization and urban civilization, both being complementary. To reach this conclusion, he takes as analysis reference the forms used by man to ensure his subsistence and analyses, the city, following its changes over time and the cultural particularities and regional in the use and organization of space (SENKO, 2011 and 2012; KHALDUN, 1958 – 1960).

For him, nomads were warriors or better prepared for war. than urban or agricultural populations. Thus, “[...] the bellicose aptitudes of the group of populations strengthened tribal structures, preventing warlords from expanding considerably their authority, what could be done over a population disarmed” (LACOSTE, 1991, p. 31-32).

Ibn Khaldun was the first Arab intellectual who consistently studied this phenomenon, especially

² All citations in this text have been translated for better interpretation.

in North Africa, of nomadic peoples of the desert (in particular Bedouins) and he built a theory of power cycles, where those who were nomads become sedentary and later they end up defeated by the new nomads who take over the cities and repeat this cycle. It is what some call the sociology of Bedouinity (BISSIO, 2012; SENKO, 2011 and 2012; KHALDUN, 1958 – 1960).

The cyclical-historical movement of society could be accompanied by the model of four generations proposed by the philosopher, in which corruption, probably understood as the departure from the virtues of the one who conquered glory, marks the historical process in a predictable in the intricacies of suzerainty succession. Perhaps because he is from Tunis, present-day Tunisia, his initial training in the schools of jurisprudence and the religious formation of his family (Madrassas, "house of studies"), contributed in travelings through the vast Mediterranean world.

His most relevant work is the *Muqaddimah*, the Prolegomena³ fruit of your memory and observations of sultanates in the 14th century:

In his philosophy of history, for example, he proposed a rigid method of separating reality and fiction. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun bequeathed us an explanation of the universal laws that regulate societies in time. One of the most khaldunian concepts important in *Muqaddimah* is *aassabiya* which is defined as the group spirit. (RUDDER, 2019, p. 38)

This group spirit (*aassabiya*) was analyzed by Ibn Khaldun, in the political-religious context, as something decisive in the society of that time. A category can be considered interpretation applicable to contemporary societies from the aspects of the uniqueness of the social systems. Ibn Khaldun presents the notion of *aassabiya* exposing the perspective of unity Muslim - us and them - or inside society, the faithful, and outside society, the unbelievers.

³ Divided into three volumes (I, II and III) these Prolegomena describe Muslim society in its different political, social and interaction contexts of these groups with the different in various African and European spaces.

It also differentiates between nomadic and sedentary societies. Producing his work in the midst of countless turbulent and controversial political conflicts, mainly involving the Hafsid dynasty (1228 -1574) and the Marinid dynasty (1196 - 1465),

Ibn Khaldun served both dynasties and was involved in friction with the Banu Hilal tribe. Maghreb. In a macro sense, North African policy was being pressured by the Seljuk Turks coming from the Asian environment, the advance of the Mongols and the interests of political expansion. Survivor, Ibn Khaldun was able to negotiate towards his interests and managed to - with the aim of continuing his intellectual work - to maintain always close to power, whether they are jurisprudence or "diplomat" (LEME, 2019, p. 39).

The diplomacy exercised by Ibn Khaldun enabled him to travel throughout North Africa and in many areas of the Mediterranean world. The benefits of such transit, also of having been arrested and then released in a change of government, can be identified in all that is left of their records widely used by the academic community, their different functions, always close to the administration. The ability to change himself professionally while maintaining his position can be considered a mark of Ibn Khaldun. When the sultan who had freed him died and reappointed to the administrative council, he becomes a professor in Bujaya - in eastern Tunisia, fleeing political pressures, but keeping close to news from the kingdom:

From there he became master of the mosque in Bujaya (North Africa), but as soon as he teach to work with the lord of Tlemcen, Abu Hammu. Khaldun was responsible for registering and collecting the taxes of the kingdom of Tlemcen, in addition to being the *hajib* (one who maintains harmony within Islamic society). This position of tax collector was not to Khaldun's liking and he retired to a meditation retreat, after which he returned to serve the new Marinid sultan, Abd-al-Aziz (LEME, 2019, p. 40).

When he was in Castile, he became close to King Pedro I the Cruel, son of Alfonso IV. As proof of his political aptitude, we can point out that it was Khaldun who managed to obtain from this King the signing of a peace treaty that would put an end to the rivalry between the peoples of Andalusia and from Castile. Despite these influences, he refused to be a royal adviser, returning to former roles resuming its functions in 1370 (LEME, 2019, p. 40).

The written biography of Ibn Khaldun written in this context, and then the considerations of his World History, gains shine and pomp when he moves to Cairo where he was received with honors to teach at Al-Azhar University. (LEME, 2019, p. 40). It must be realized that in a university structure, being able to teach and be concurrently a judge, his social life remains hectic. Spite of being distant from the controversies, its social position guarantees an unequal volume of passive information for analysis, organization and detailed explanation (LEME, 2019, p. 40).

In the midst of the contributions given by North African writers and thinkers of this period, highlighting Ibn Khaldun as the greatest exponent of this process, can be presented as one of the greatest contributions to the association between different disciplines that made possible not only the future structuring of the same, as already in his writings the possibility of shedding light on the future observing in a multi-angle way the different features of society:

His great concern with enabling an innovative methodology made him allied this with his philosophy of history which he sought meaning in the movement of social events. In addition to trying to understand the meaning of history in the past Khaldun at the same time tried to predict actions from the possible future. Through the idea of universal reason that governs society, civilization could be founded (LEME, 2019, p. 41).

The Umma expressed in Khaldun constitutes the civilization where the faithful can, and are linked to each other by greater bonds of commitment and identification. interweaving all aspects of city

life and the effects of this “civilization” beyond the different levels of culture and proximity to the collective organization. With this thinker, the universe⁴ could be identified as different levels of society where different groups interconnected by forces of belonging and cohesion interact by approaching or distancing themselves by forces controllable by the government. For this thinker too, culture and, above all, the arts tend to decline and perish at the as cities decline in their organizational structure.

In Khaldunian logic, it will still be the descendants of the conquering sovereign who will go to ire extreme luxury. And it will be at that moment that the luxurious life in the city and without memory of any sense of assabiya that this power will decay. Ibn Khaldun pointed this out to both the oldest and most well-known civilizations as the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Peninsular Arabs, Maghreb and Andalusian as well as berbers. He draws attention to yet another reason for the decay of a civilization or of just one tribe, the presence of mercenaries alongside the local men-at-arms. At mercenaries ambitions have nothing to do with identity and conquest desires of the men-at-arms of the sultans or caliphs (LEME, 2019, p.46).

It was Ibn Khaldun who presented the different possibilities of the failure of the cities of time, and the different organizations. For the same, the inherent corruption of men is the point of rupture of the organizational fabric and the possibilities of social evolution. For the thinker, assabiya, this spirit of collectivity and social integration, crosses the all whether settled townspeople, nomads or any other groups (LEME, 2019, p.46).

So, beyond the discussion of borders, we resume their frictions and volatilities to emphasize how much this social identity was evidenced by Ibn Khaldun. In this context, let us observe the precepts that guided the groups closest to Mecca, Tunis and Cairo and how this spirit of unity cools down when you reach the north of the Islamic world (Iberian Peninsula). There is thus a

⁴ The so-called universal culture corresponds to the writings in search of a vision of the totality of the Muslim society of the era.

conceptual overlap between *assabiya* and the cohesive force of the creed as a whole of Muslims (LEME, 2019, p.47).

Ibn presents the Black Death (plague) ravaging a large part of the European population also the great Umma suffered from the Black Death, both the Berbers and the urban society of northern Africa and the Iberians, who were particularly affected by this terrible epidemic (LEME, 2019, p.47-49). We emphasize that Ibn Khaldun emphasizes his concern about the flight and reduction in the volume of intellectuals in this context, as well as the weakening of study groups and discussion. These, as well as other aspects, make possible hundreds of other studies, and a new volume of investigations around this who is one of the main thinkers of society Muslim and African since the Prophet's announcement (LEME, 2019, p.47-49).

Ibn Khaldun did not limit himself to narration or to leave open the questions that were his presented. He wanted to go further. And he made an important critique of historians, that applies from the ancient Greeks to the 18th century: that of not distinguishing between Military and Political History of Social-Economic Evolution (LACOSTE, 1991, p. 148). Specifically speaking of the World Arabic, History was inserted within the "Arab Sciences", where Grammar, Poetry, Religious Jurisprudence and Rhetoric (LACOSTE, 1991, p. 141). In Lacoste's conception (1991) there is a rationalist view of Khaldun's Philosophy as Islam's religious issues overlap with the economic and social relationships that it analyzes itself⁵. Having been of all his contemporaries the historian who went the furthest in his independence of thought, Ibn Khaldun immersed himself in the analysis of the functioning of human development, in the study of social transformations in long-term periods and emphasized the need to define a specific methodology for the study of historical facts, including a criterion for choosing documents. In

⁵ Ibn Khaldun is innovative. Although, he places the mundane dimension as imperfect in contrast to the divine world, considered perfect, it seeks empirical explanations and develops an entire science (LACOSTE, 1991, p. 141-142 and 163).

this sense, his work was extremely original and did not make any thinker school and left no followers (BISSIO, 2012).

III. IBN KHALDUN, ORIENTALISM AND EUROCENTRISM

If the Ibn Khaldun's work is a landmark of medieval Muslim civilization, with the process of Europeanization after 1500, the discourse of inferiorization of the Middle East and the Maghreb (northern Africa) was being built in a forceful way, like the work of Edward Said (2007), Orientalism, denounces in the style of literary criticism the applied Eurocentric geopolitical imagination the region.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006, p.182-185) has already pointed out that the East has always been the space of alterity: the West does not exist outside the contrast with the non-West, be it seen as an alternative civilization, as the center of history, either as a threat or as a resource. Or that is, the space of alterity is also the space of the diabolical description of the other as other, of the Manichean reduction between good and evil, between civilization and barbarism. But at the same time, there is description of the exotic, which is why the Orient can only be admired for the opulence of imperial courts, for the thousand and one nights, for sensuality. Despite being fundamentally seen feared and feared, the Orient is also seen as a resource, as an immense market to be explore, either by the number of inhabitants, or by the western dependence on resources (the The geostrategic importance of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf speaks for itself, as do the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan)⁶.

The conception of the non-West seen as the Orient was undoubtedly Orientalism. According to Edward Said (2007), Orientalism is the

⁶ Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006, p. 185) also notes that a besieged and highly vulnerable West tends to enlarging the size of the Orient, decreasing its own size, causing the perversion of the constitution of Orients within the West: "This was the meaning of the Kosovo War: the Slavic West transformed into a form of oriental despotism. This is why the Kosovars, in order to be on the 'right side' of history, could not be Islamic during the conflict. It had to be just ethnic minorities."

conception of the Orient(east) that dominates in the Sciences and Humanities, from the end of the 18th century, based on the following points main ones: a total distinction between Western “us” and Eastern “them”; the superiority of the West developed, rational and human, as opposed to the aberrant, inferior, underdeveloped, despotic; the West is dynamic, diverse, capable of self-transformation and self-definition, while that the Orient is static, eternal, uniform, incapable of self-representation; and, finally, the East is fearsome and must be controlled by the West, through war, invasion, colonization, “pacification” etc. That is, Orientalism studied Islam and other civilizations from the ideas European cultures of God, man, nature, society, science and history and, as a result, discovered that non-Western cultures and civilizations were inferior and backward and, like a mirror, codified Western desires and turned them into academic disciplines and then he projected his desires onto his study of the Orient. The criticism that is made, in part, of Said’s conception and that Walter Mignolo (2003, p. 82) explicit is that “there cannot be an Orient, as “other,” without the West as “the same,” the Occidentalism was the geopolitical figure that constellated the imaginary of the world system colonial/modern. As such, it was also the condition for the emergence of Orientalism.

And the Americas, therefore, are not different from Europe (as are Asia and Africa), but their continuation. Consequently, there is no modernity without coloniality, even if there are books on colonialism and others on modernity (as separate entities that do not neither overlap nor interact), even when it is said that modernity is a European issue, and coloniality something that occurs outside Europe. See, for example, that Algeria hardly will be “included as part of French national history, despite the fact that a history of Algeria, as a nation, cannot ignore France” (MIGNOLO, 2003, p.82).

The issue involving Human Rights has been debated and discussed, starting from the perspective that, after all, cultural diversity has been brought into contact and, therefore, it is necessary to verify parameters of dialogues and possibilities of mutual intelligibility. What have

prevailing, however, is an authentic “epistemology of blindness” or “sociology of absences”, a true production of non-existence in relation to everything that does not fit in the totality Eurocentric and linear time: the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local and the unproductive. How points out Boaventura de Sousa Santos,

[...] these are social forms of nonexistence because the realities they shape are only present as obstacles to the realities that count as important, be they scientific, advanced, superior, global or productive realities. They are, therefore, disqualified from homogeneous totalities, which, as such, only confirm the that exists and as it exists. They are what exists in irreversibly disqualified forms to exist (SANTOS, 2006, p.104).

Mignolo (2003) points out that his critique is a non-Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism, discussing the association between universalism and relativism with the colonial question and dualisms “barbarians/civilized” and “tradition/modernity”. The Coloniality of Knowledge reveals that, in addition to legacy of deep social inequality and injustice from colonialism and imperialism, marked by dependency theory and others, there is an epistemological legacy of Eurocentrism that prevents us from understanding the world from the point of view of the world in which we live and the epistemes that are their own. The fact that the Greeks invented philosophical thought does not mean that have invented thought. Thought is everywhere where different peoples and their cultures have developed and, thus, there are multiple epistemes with their many worlds of life. There is, therefore, an epistemic diversity that encompasses the entire patrimony of humanity about of life, water, earth, fire, air, human beings.

The critique to Eurocentrism is a critique of its episteme and its logic that operates through successive separations and various reductionisms. Space and time, nature and society, among many others.

There are, even in the hegemonic centers, those who point out these limits and natural science itself Eurocentric approach reveals its dialogue

with Eastern thought. Space and time is increasingly space/time and, in the social sciences, this non-dichotomous understanding allows us to see that modernity is not something that emerged in Europe and then spread around the world, as if there was in world geography a continuum of different times, as in its evolutionism unique and linear. However, Europe only places itself at the center of the world after the discovery of the America since, until then, only a marginal part of present-day Europe, Northern Italy and its financiers, were integrated in the dynamic commercial center of the world and that the Turks, in 1453, they had politically controlled, breaking those circuits. The right way was the one in towards the East, therefore, was to orient oneself! In the East were the so-called great civilizations, including their traditional religions and the weight of tradition was so strong there that, perhaps, it helps to understand the reason for the true obsession with the new that will characterize the Eurocentrism and its successive escapes forward.

Despite the information brought by Marco Polo and the extraordinary development scientific knowledge of the Chinese world, European access to its knowledge was limited, both by the distance geographical location and lack of knowledge of Mandarin and other “oriental” languages the mentality, characteristically, theocentric of medieval Christian Europe brought serious obstacles to the production of geographical knowledge, in addition to interrupting the dissemination of Greco-Roman geographical production.

In view of this situation, from the rescue of the Greco-Roman contribution, a Strong investment in creating universities and encouraging scientific development, geography produced by medieval Islam became the mainstay in the medieval school of geographical thought.

In other, more synthetic terms, Islam saved Geography (CLAVAL, 2006). In the Middle Ages, real dialogues between Islam and Christianity are very scarce. Only the Renaissance, with the increase in trade relations between West and East,

will transform this situation. Considering this, Islam has made the link (a kind of bridge) between the Greco-Roman geographic contributions, forgotten in medieval Christian Europe, with the European Renaissance.

Islam invested in the production of solid geographical knowledge for religious reasons and economic. In the first case, locational guidelines were used to pray daily towards Mecca, so plan pilgrimages to that city. In the second case, being the Arabs, fundamentally, merchants, geographical knowledge accompanied the extraordinary Islamic expansion (LIMA, 2019). As the territorial expansion of the in the Islamic world, the production of geographic knowledge deepened, so that both one and the other evolved simultaneously.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is an extraordinary role played by Ibn Khaldun in the description of the *Ecumene*, that is, the inhabited part of the Earth. The expression *ecumene* derives from *oikos*, "the house", it translates well the both a regionalist perspective, around North Africa, while at the same time carrying out a Arab-Muslim representation of the world. In dialogue with Greco-Roman knowledge, Ibn Khaldun does not mimic it, but reinvents it.

Khaldunian narratives pay a great deal of attention to northern ways of life. Africa, contrasting nomadic life with urban life, but also understanding their correlations. The tradition of Western political philosophy understands change as a linear process in that the conflict takes all the time to a higher level of a continuous trajectory. In the West, the meaning of change has become a movement towards a preordained unity of thought and organized life that seemed to be latent in the western historical trajectory (COX, 2000, p. 195).

But not enough has been said about the character and quality of these Afro-Arab-Muslim narratives. In addition to being a geographer, social scientist, historian, in short, a polymath, Ibn Khaldun is a humanist from the Global South.

REFERENCES

1. BISSIO, B. O mundo falava árabe: A Civilização árabe-islâmica clássica através da obra de Ibn Khaldun e Ibn Battuta. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2012. 403p.
2. CLAVAL, P. História da Geografia. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2006. 140p. COX, R. W. Rumo a uma conceituação pós-hegemônica da ordem mundial: reflexões sobre a relevância de Ibn Khaldun. In: ROSENAU, J. N.; CZEMPIEL, E. O. (Orgs.). Governança sem governo: ordem e transformação na política mundial. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 2000. p. 210-240.
3. HOURANI, A. Uma história dos povos árabes. 2. ed. São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 2001. 501p.
4. KHALDUN, I. Os Prolegômenos, ou Filosofia Social. São Paulo: Safady, 1958 - 1960. LACOSTE, Y. Ibn Khaldun: Nascimento da História. Passado do Terceiro Mundo. São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1991. 254p.
5. LEME, E. C. S. Considerações Social de Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). *Basilíade: Revista de Filosofia, Curitiba*, v. 1, n. 2, p. 37-50, 2019.
6. LIMA, J. C. O Islã em África: historicidade e geopolítica. Belo Horizonte: Letramento, 2019. 148p.
7. MIGNOLO, W. D. Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2003. 505p.
8. MIGNOLO, W. D. Os esplendores e as misérias da “ciência”: colonialidade, geopolítica do conhecimento e pluri-versalidade epistêmica. In: SANTOS, B. S. (Org.). *Conhecimento prudente para uma vida decente: ‘um discurso sobre as ciências’ revisitado*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2004. p. 667-709.
9. SAID, E. *Orientalismo: o Oriente como invenção do Ocidente*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007. 480p.
10. SANTOS, B. S. *A gramática do tempo: para uma nova cultura política*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2006. 512p.
11. SENKO, E. C. *Ibn Khaldun: vida e trajetória de um historiador islâmico medieval*. São Paulo: Ixtlan, 2011. 102p.
12. SENKO, E. C. *Reflexões sobre a escrita e o sentido da História na Muqaddimah de Ibn Khaldun*. São Paulo: Ixtlan, 2012. 124p.