

TRANSFORMATIVE ISLAM AND IBN KHALDUN'S ETHICAL 'ASABIYAH: A DECOLONIAL ANALYSIS BY SYED FARID ALATAS

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Abstract: This article examines the reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's concept of '*asabiyyah*' through Syed Farid Alatas's post-Khaldunian and decolonial approach and explores its relationship with transformative Islam. It aims to recover the broader social, moral, religious, and political dimensions of '*asabiyyah*' and to develop ethical '*asabiyyah*' as the authors' conceptual reconstruction for contemporary social analysis. Using qualitative content analysis, the study examines *al-Muqaddimah* together with Alatas's major works through interpretive comparison of key conceptual statements. The findings show that '*asabiyyah*' is not limited to tribal solidarity, but functions as a social force related to cohesion, political power, religion, and civilization. Ethical '*asabiyyah*' is formulated as solidarity directed by justice, public responsibility, and the common good. Corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility are discussed as contemporary illustrations of how ethical '*asabiyyah*' can be applied to interpret moral and institutional problems in modern society. This article argues that ethical '*asabiyyah*' can be connected with transformative Islam through justice, social criticism, liberation, social agency, praxis, and the ethical role of religion.

Keywords: Ethical '*Asabiyyah*'; Ibn Khaldun; Syed Farid Alatas; Decolonial Sociology; Transformative Islam.

Introduction

The ideas of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Khaldūn (1332–1406) in his monumental work *al-Muqaddimah* have long been recognized as a crucial foundation in sociology, historiography, and the philosophy of history. Long before the emergence of Western thinkers such as Auguste Comte (1830), Karl Marx (1867) or Durkheim (1893), Ibn Khaldun had already formulated social laws that were empirical, rational, and systematic.¹ In his thought, the concept of ‘aṣabīyah is understood as a collective social force that serves as the primary driving force behind the birth, development, and collapse of a civilization. This social solidarity enables the formation of political power (*mulk*) and civilized life (*‘umrān*), but it can also lead to decline when moral values and justice begin to weaken.² Although Ibn Khaldun is widely recognized, his sociology remains underused in modern social theory. Alatas links this condition to the marginalization of non-Western intellectual traditions and calls for the recovery of Khaldunian sociology as an alternative source of social theory.³

Recent studies have demonstrated the continuing relevance of Ibn Khaldun's thought to contemporary social analysis. Halim et al. applied the concept of ‘aṣabīyah to modern Muslim society and emphasized its relevance to social integration, morality, and nation-building.⁴ Malešević revisited ‘aṣabīyah through a comparison between Ibn Khaldun and Ernest Gellner, particularly in explaining the formation of group solidarity.⁵ Alagha further demonstrated the relevance of Khaldunian thought to modern social theory, while

¹ Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology*, Routledge Advances in Sociology 104 (Routledge, 2014), 1–5, 26–30; Syed Farid Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun: Makers of Islamic Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2013), ix; Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 5th ed., ed. Thoha Ahmadie (Pustaka Firdaus, 2005), 63.

² Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton University Press, 1967), 168.

³ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 1–5, 26–30; Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun: Makers of Islamic Civilization*, ix.

⁴ Asyiqin Abdul Halim et al., “Ibn Khaldun's Theory of ‘Aṣabīyah and Its Application in Modern Muslim Society,” *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research* 11, no. 9 (2012): 1232–37.

⁵ Siniša Malešević, “Where Does Group Solidarity Come from? Gellner and Ibn Khaldun Revisited,” *Thesis Eleven* 128, no. 1 (2015): 85–99.

Ardic examined Syed Farid Alatas's contribution to the development of contemporary Khaldunian studies.⁶ More recent scholarship has extended this discussion toward epistemic decolonization. Moosavi and Alatas examined the marginalization of non-Western social thought through the critique of hegemonic knowledge and the idea of autonomous knowledge, while Sehlíkoglu argued that the decolonization of Ibn Khaldun requires more than simply restoring his position within the history of social thought.⁷ In the Indonesian context, Ahmad Nur Fuad has demonstrated the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's concepts of *'aṣabīyah*, *'umrān*, and cyclical historical development in interpreting political transitions, social solidarity, and the rise and decline of kingdoms in Indonesian history.⁸ In a related field, Akmaliah developed the concept of transformative Islam as an Islamic framework oriented toward liberation and social change.⁹

Despite these developments, an important conceptual gap remains. Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of *'aṣabīyah* to modern society, while post-Khaldunian scholarship has sought to recover Ibn Khaldun from the marginal position of non-Western social thought.¹⁰ Meanwhile, transformative Islamic scholarship has developed a normative orientation toward justice, liberation, and social change. However, these strands have not yet been sufficiently integrated into a conceptual framework that connects the post-Khaldunian reconstruction of *'aṣabīyah* with the normative-transformative orientation of Islam. This article addresses this gap by developing ethical *'aṣabīyah* as a conceptual bridge between these two fields. This article does not treat ethical *'aṣabīyah* merely as an extension of tribal or group solidarity. Instead, it

⁶ Joseph Alagha, "Ibn Khaldun: A Sociology of History," *International Sociology* 32, no. 2 (2017): 180–88; Nurullah Ardic, "Khaldunian Studies Today: The Contributions of Syed Farid Alatas," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2017): 77–85.

⁷ Leon Moosavi and Syed Farid Alatas, "The Intellectual Biography of Syed Farid Alatas: Hegemonic Orientations, Epistemic Decolonisation and the School of Autonomous Knowledge," *Current Sociology* 72, no. 6 (2024): 1163–84; Sertaç Sehlíkoglu, "Genealogy, Critique, and Decolonisation: Ibn Khaldun and Moving beyond Filling the Gaps," *Open Research Europe* 4 (2025).

⁸ Ahmad Nur Fuad, "Examining Khaldunian Perspective for Analyzing Indonesia's Historical Dynamics," *Journal of Islamic Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 8–14.

⁹ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif: Conceptualizing Liberation Theology for Indonesian Muslim Society," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 14, no. 1 (2024): 188–210.

¹⁰ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 112.

reconstructs the concept as a form of social-moral solidarity grounded in morality, justice, and public responsibility.

Building on Alatas's post-Khaldunian approach to the recovery and reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's social thought, this article develops the notion of ethical 'aṣabīyah to describe a form of social solidarity grounded in moral values, justice, public responsibility, and institutional integrity.¹¹ The term ethical 'aṣabīyah is not explicitly employed by Alatas, but is developed in this article from his post-Khaldunian reading of the moral, religious, and political dimensions of Ibn Khaldun's social theory. Ethical 'aṣabīyah is therefore employed not merely as a reinterpretation of group solidarity, but as a conceptual bridge between Khaldunian social theory and the normative orientation of transformative Islam. In this context, transformative Islam provides a framework in which Islamic thought is oriented toward justice, liberation, and social change.¹² This article therefore addresses the question of how 'aṣabīyah can be reconstructed through Alatas's post-Khaldunian approach and developed into ethical 'aṣabīyah within the framework of transformative Islam. Specifically, this article seeks to demonstrate that 'aṣabīyah is not a fatalistic or closed theory, but a dynamic social-moral concept whose moral, religious, and political dimensions can be reconstructed in response to contemporary social realities.

This article employs a qualitative content analysis approach¹³ based on a literature review of Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah* and the contemporary works of Syed Farid Alatas. The main textual corpus consists of *al-Muqaddimah*, Alatas's *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (2014), and *Ibn Khaldun: Makers of Islamic Civilization* (2013). These texts were selected because they directly discuss the concept of 'aṣabīyah, its relationship with religion, morality, justice, political power, and civilization, as well as the relevance of Khaldunian thought to modern social theory. The unit of analysis consists of conceptual statements and argumentative passages related to these themes. The analysis was conducted through an interpretive reading by identifying, comparing, and

¹¹ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 1, 54; Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun: Makers of Islamic Civilization*, 118–19.

¹² Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

¹³ Philipp Mayring, "Qualitative Content Analysis," *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung* 1, no. 2 (June 2000).

relating the meanings of *‘aṣabīyah* across Ibn Khaldun’s classical formulation and Alatas’s contemporary interpretation. The terms excavation, transposition, and reformulation are not treated in this article as formal methodological stages formulated by Alatas. Instead, the analysis follows his post Khaldunian orientation of recovering and reconstructing Khaldunian sociology, “lifting Ibn Khaldun from his time,” and integrating Khaldunian concepts with modern social science.¹⁴ Through this procedure, the analysis first examines the original meaning and moral religious dimensions of *‘aṣabīyah*, then compares them with Alatas’s reconstruction and contemporary application, and finally develops ethical *‘aṣabīyah* as the authors’ conceptual reconstruction within the framework of transformative Islam.

Ibn Khaldun’s Thought from the Perspective of Syed Farid Alatas

Ibn Khaldun is known as one of the early thinkers who formulated a scientific approach to understanding society and history. In his work *al-Muqaddimah*, he not only presents a chronology of events but also seeks to explain the underlying social patterns and causes. He introduced the concept of *‘ilm al-‘umrān al-basharī*, the science of human civilization aimed at uncovering the social laws governing societal life.¹⁵ Ibn Khaldun’s approach combined empirical observation with rational reasoning. He observed various socio-political phenomena in North Africa and Al-Andalus, then drew general conclusions about how societies form, develop, and decline. In this regard, the method employed was not merely descriptive but also analytical, as it sought to identify cause-and-effect relationships within social dynamics.¹⁶

One of the central concepts in his theory is *‘aṣabīyah*, which refers to the power of social solidarity that forms the basis for the formation of groups and power.¹⁷ This solidarity enables the forma-

¹⁴ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 1, 42, 54, 146.

¹⁵ Alagha, “Ibn Khaldun: A Sociology of History”; Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 140.

¹⁶ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 227–28.

¹⁷ Malešević, “Where Does Group Solidarity Come from? Gellner and Ibn Khaldun Revisited”; Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun’s Philosophy of History: A Study in the*

tion of political power, but it weakens when society becomes trapped in luxury that erodes the collective spirit.¹⁸ Within this framework, civilization is understood as a dynamic process influenced by social forces and the moral conditions of society. Ibn Khaldun also emphasized that moral factors, particularly religion, play a crucial role in sustaining civilization.¹⁹ Religion functions not only as a system of beliefs but also as a social force capable of strengthening solidarity and directing collective behavior toward justice. Thus, in Khaldunian theory, the development of civilization is determined not only by material factors but also by the ethical qualities present within society.

Despite his significant contributions, Ibn Khaldun's sociology has not always been developed as a source of theory in modern social science. Alatas argues that Ibn Khaldun is often recognized as an important historical figure, but his concepts are less frequently reconstructed and systematically applied as theoretical resources for contemporary social analysis. For this reason, Alatas emphasizes the recovery and reconstruction of Khaldunian sociology and its engagement with modern social science.²⁰

Based on this post Khaldunian orientation, this article uses the term ethical 'aṣabīyah as the authors' conceptual reconstruction. The term is not explicitly employed by Alatas. In this article, ethical 'aṣabīyah refers to a form of social solidarity in which the social and religious dimensions of 'aṣabīyah are connected with morality, justice, and public responsibility. This reconstruction draws on Ibn Khaldun's theory and Alatas's discussion of the relationship between religion and 'aṣabīyah, particularly his explanation of religion as a force that can strengthen solidarity beyond tribal boundaries.²¹ In this reconstruction, solidarity is no longer limited to blood ties or narrow group affiliations, but is understood as a broader social bond grounded in moral values, justice, and public responsibility. In this

Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture (George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 100–110.

¹⁸ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 71; Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 53.

¹⁹ Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 153; Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 41.

²⁰ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 1–5; Ardiç, "Khaldunian Studies Today: The Contributions of Syed Farid Alatas."

²¹ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 41.

way, *‘aṣabīyah* becomes more relevant for understanding the dynamics of modern and plural societies.²²

Alatas’s post-Khaldunian approach aims to recover and reconstruct Ibn Khaldun’s sociology for contemporary social analysis. He argues that this requires an attitude enabling scholars to “lift Ibn Khaldun from his time” and bring Khaldunian concepts into dialogue with modern social science. Alatas also emphasizes theory building, systematic application, and theoretical integration as crucial elements in developing Khaldunian sociology beyond its original historical context.²³ Within this framework, Ibn Khaldun’s concepts are treated not merely as historical ideas, but as theoretical resources that can be reconstructed and applied to different social contexts.

Through this orientation, Ibn Khaldun’s thought is no longer treated merely as a static theory of history, but as a theoretical resource that can be reconstructed for contemporary social analysis. In this sense, Alatas serves as a bridge between the classical intellectual legacy of Ibn Khaldun and the development of modern social theory.²⁴

The combination of Ibn Khaldun’s formulation of *‘aṣabīyah* and Alatas’s post-Khaldunian approach provides the conceptual basis for the reconstruction developed in this article. Ibn Khaldun provides the theoretical foundation of *‘aṣabīyah*, including its social, moral, and religious dimensions, while Alatas provides an approach for recovering and developing Khaldunian sociology beyond its original historical context. On this basis, the following section examines the reconstruction of *‘aṣabīyah* from a decolonial perspective before discussing its relationship with transformative Islam more systematically.

²² Halim et al., “Ibn Khaldun’s Theory of *‘aṣabīyah* and Its Application in Modern Muslim Society.”

²³ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 1,42,54,146; Alatas, *Ibn Khaldun: Makers of Islamic Civilization*, 117–18.

²⁴ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 42, 54,146.

A Reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's Concept of 'Aṣabīyah from a Decolonial Perspective

In Ibn Khaldun's thought, the concept of 'aṣabīyah lies at the heart of his explanation of how societies form, develop, and decline. 'aṣabīyah is not merely understood as a tribal bond, but as a social force that fosters cohesion and solidarity among group members. This solidarity arises from the fundamental human need to live together, cooperate, and protect one another in the face of life's various challenges.²⁵ In other words, 'aṣabīyah is the social energy that enables humans to build organized social structures.

According to Ibn Khaldun, 'aṣabīyah serves as the foundation for the formation of political power. Ibn Khaldun explains that no power can endure without strong social solidarity. Groups with a high degree of 'aṣabīyah will be able to dominate other groups and establish a stable government. Conversely, when that solidarity weakens, power becomes fragile and easily collapses.²⁶ This demonstrates that power does not depend solely on military or economic strength, but also on the social bonds that unite members of society.

Furthermore, 'aṣabīyah is also closely linked to the concept of 'umran, or civilization. In Ibn Khaldun's view, civilization does not emerge suddenly, but grows out of strong social solidarity. In the early stages, societies living a simple life such as Bedouin groups exhibit a high degree of 'aṣabīyah because they depend on one another for survival. As these groups succeeded in establishing power and entered a more settled way of life, they began to develop a more complex civilization. However, at the same time, luxury and comfort can weaken this social solidarity, thus marking the beginning of a civilization's decline.²⁷

Ibn Khaldun also emphasized that religion plays a crucial role in strengthening and guiding 'aṣabīyah. Solidarity based solely on blood ties or worldly interests tends to be narrow in scope and prone to conflict. Therefore, religion serves as a moral force that broadens this solidarity into a more universal one. When 'aṣabīyah is framed

²⁵ Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 57.

²⁶ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 91; Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 72.

²⁷ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 91–93.

by religious values, it can develop into a broader, trans-tribal form of solidarity that binds people not only socially but also morally and spiritually.²⁸ In this context, society unites not merely for group interests but also through a commitment to the values of justice and truth. Thus, in Ibn Khaldun's theory, *'aṣabiyyah* can be understood as a social force with three primary functions: as the foundation of social cohesion, as a source of political power, and as the foundation of civilization. These three are interrelated and form a unified whole that explains the dynamics of human history. However, this force is not static; rather, it changes according to the moral and social conditions of society.

Although Ibn Khaldun's theory possesses a high degree of analytical depth, some modern interpretations have tended to simplify his theory of civilizational change. One such interpretation views the Khaldunian cycle as deterministic and fatalistic, in which civilizations inevitably pass through repetitive stages with little possibility of change.²⁹ Such a reading risks reducing Ibn Khaldun's theory to an automatic narrative of rise and decline, while overlooking the social, moral, and religious factors that operate within his explanation of historical change. It also limits the use of Khaldunian concepts as theoretical resources for understanding social realities beyond their original historical context.

A closer reading, however, shows that Ibn Khaldun's theory was developed from observations of recurring social and political patterns rather than from an abstract doctrine of historical fate. His account of the rise and decline of dynasties describes how strong *'aṣabiyyah* contributes to political power, how settled life and luxury may weaken solidarity, and how changing social conditions affect the continuity of political authority.³⁰ From this perspective, Khaldunian theory can be read as an analytical framework for examining the conditions under which social and political change occurs. A decolonial reading in this article therefore involves more than simply restoring Ibn Khaldun to the history of sociology. Following Alatas, it means treating Ibn Khaldun as a knowing

²⁸ Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 235; Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 41.

²⁹ Ardiç, "Khaldunian Studies Today: The Contributions of Syed Farid Alatas"; El-Sayed el-Aswad, *Post-Asabiyya: Ibn Khaldun and the Discourse of Reform* (Tabsir: Insight on Islam and the Middle East, 2006).

³⁰ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 91–93.

subject and a source of concepts and theory, rather than merely as an object of historical study. At the same time, this approach does not seek to replace European concepts with Islamic ones, but to broaden social science by bringing Khaldunian concepts into dialogue with other theoretical traditions.³¹

From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun's theory is better understood as a pattern of possibilities, not as an absolute law. His explanation of the rise and decline of dynasties is based on recurring relationships between 'aṣabīyah, political power, settled life, and luxury. These patterns describe the social conditions under which political strength may emerge and decline, but they should not be understood as an automatic historical fate.³² In this sense, Khaldunian theory remains open to different social outcomes because changes in solidarity, moral conditions, political authority, and social organization can affect the direction of historical development. This understanding also allows Ibn Khaldun's concepts to be used as analytical tools beyond the specific societies that originally informed his theory.

The problem becomes clearer when particular interpretations of Ibn Khaldun are examined. Alatas notes that Gautier interpreted Ibn Khaldun within a French colonial framework by exaggerating the opposition between nomadic Arabs and sedentary Berbers in North Africa. He also discusses Gellner's reconstruction of the Khaldunian model through circles of tribes and describes it as a simplified version of Ibn Khaldun's account. Other Khaldun-inspired interpretations, including those of Wansborough and Brett, presented North African society through a deficiency model in which nomadic social patterns and Arab-Berber conflict were treated as major sources of instability.³³ These examples show that the problem does not lie in Western social science as a whole, but in particular interpretations that narrow the historical and theoretical complexity of Khaldunian thought.

This reduction can lead to the loss of an important dimension of Ibn Khaldun's concept of 'aṣabīyah. Although kinship is an important element, Alatas explains that 'aṣabīyah is also related to

³¹ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 151–52.

³² Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 91–93.

³³ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 57, 84–85; Malešević, "Where Does Group Solidarity Come from? Gellner and Ibn Khaldun Revisited."

religion, political authority, and material sources of power. Religion, in particular, can strengthen solidarity and broaden it beyond tribal ties into a trans-tribal form of solidarity.³⁴ Therefore, a decolonial reconstruction does not reject the tribal basis of *‘aṣabīyah*, but seeks to recover its broader social, moral, and political dimensions. Thus, *‘aṣabīyah* can be understood not merely as tribal solidarity, but as a broader theoretical concept that remains relevant to contemporary social analysis.

Furthermore, deterministic interpretations often overlook the role of humans as social agents. In Ibn Khaldun’s theory, humans are not merely part of the social structure, but also actors capable of influencing that structure. The collective actions of society and the actions of rulers have an important influence on the condition of social solidarity and political power. When solidarity remains strong and moral values are maintained, political power can remain more stable. Conversely, when a society is mired in conflict, injustice, and excessive luxury, decline occurs more rapidly.³⁵

Ibn Khaldun explains that religion plays a crucial role in strengthening *‘aṣabīyah* and directing collective behavior. He views religion not merely as a system of beliefs, but as a social force capable of strengthening solidarity and guiding human behavior. Religion provides a moral orientation that can reduce internal jealousy and direct members of society toward common goals. With religious values in place, social solidarity is not merely pragmatic but also gains a stronger moral foundation.³⁶

Alatas’s reading further shows that the relevance of Khaldunian theory does not depend on reproducing the historical cycle exactly in modern society. He explicitly notes that the same cyclical logic does not operate in the contemporary context, but several general relationships within Khaldunian theory remain useful for social analysis.³⁷ Religious solidarity, for example, can transcend tribal, class, and ethnic boundaries, while the relationship between religion and *‘aṣabīyah* can also be examined in non-tribal forms of solidarity. At the same time, Alatas argues that changes in *‘aṣabīyah* and religiosity must also be understood within their political and

³⁴ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 41–42; 151–52.

³⁵ Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 183–85.

³⁶ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 35–36; 41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 90–91.

economic contexts. This broader reading is important because it moves the analysis beyond a simple cycle of rise and decline and makes it possible to examine 'aṣabīyah as a multidimensional concept involving social solidarity, religion, political power, and material conditions.³⁸

Based on the above assumptions, it can be understood that Ibn Khaldun's theory is dynamic and open to further theoretical development. It provides a framework for understanding historical patterns, while also allowing its concepts to be reconstructed and applied in different social contexts. This understanding is important because it allows 'aṣabīyah to be treated not only as a concept explaining the rise and decline of dynasties, but also as a theoretical resource for contemporary social analysis.

Building on Alatas's post Khaldunian approach, this article reconstructs the concept of 'aṣabīyah through the notion of *ethical* 'aṣabīyah. Although the term *ethical* 'aṣabīyah is not explicitly used by Alatas, it is developed here based on the social, religious, moral, and political dimensions found within Khaldunian theory. Alatas shows that 'aṣabīyah is related not only to kinship ties, but also to religion, political authority, and material sources of power. He further explains that religion can broaden solidarity beyond narrow tribal boundaries into a trans-tribal form of 'aṣabīyah.³⁹ On this basis, *ethical* 'aṣabīyah is reconstructed as a form of social solidarity grounded in moral values, justice, and public responsibility.

In this reconstruction, 'aṣabīyah is understood as a social bond that connects individuals in society through ethical values. This bond operates not only on an emotional level but also on a normative level, as it shapes how individuals behave in social life. Solidarity is no longer limited to specific groups but can extend broader form of solidarity. In a modern context, this can be seen in various forms of solidarity, such as national solidarity, professional solidarity, and solidarity within public institutions based on the values of justice and shared responsibility. In this way, *ethical* 'aṣabīyah does not replace Ibn Khaldun's original concept, but develops

³⁸ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 113; Mulyadi Erman and Junaidi, "Dynamics of Power and Politics in Ibn Khaldun's Social Philosophy," *Journal of Modern Islamic Studies and Civilization* 2, no. 03 (2024): 233–45.

³⁹ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 41–42, 90–92.

its analytical potential for understanding forms of solidarity beyond its original tribal context.

From a decolonial perspective, this reconstruction also changes the position of Ibn Khaldun within modern social theory. Alatas argues that non-European thinkers are often treated merely as objects of historical study, while European thinkers are more frequently positioned as producers of concepts and theories. In this context, Ibn Khaldun should not be treated only as a historical figure whose ideas are described, but as a knowing subject and a source of theory that can be used to interpret historical and contemporary social realities.⁴⁰ By placing Ibn Khaldun in this position, the reconstruction of *‘aṣabīyah* becomes part of an effort to broaden the sources of social theory and to recover concepts that have remained marginal in mainstream sociology.

This decolonial approach does not mean rejecting modern social science or replacing European concepts with Islamic ones. Alatas emphasizes that a non-Eurocentric reading should enrich social science by bringing a wider variety of concepts and perspectives into theoretical discussion. The purpose is therefore not to replace one form of ethnocentrism with another, but to create a more open dialogue between Khaldunian concepts and modern social theories.⁴¹ In this article, ethical *‘aṣabīyah* is developed within this perspective. It is not presented as a substitute for existing sociological concepts, but as a reconstruction of Khaldunian solidarity that can contribute to contemporary social analysis while retaining its moral and religious dimensions.

The decolonial reconstruction discussed above provides the basis for developing ethical *‘aṣabīyah* as a contemporary analytical concept. By repositioning Ibn Khaldun as a source of theory and bringing his concept of *‘aṣabīyah* into dialogue with Alatas’s post-Khaldunian approach, this article moves from conceptual recovery toward theoretical reconstruction. The following section therefore examines how ethical *‘aṣabīyah* can be developed as a framework for understanding contemporary social realities. Its relationship with transformative Islam will then be discussed in the final theoretical synthesis, particularly in relation to justice, moral responsibility, and social change.

⁴⁰ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 151–52.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Ethical '*Aṣabīyah* as a Contemporary Reconstruction of Khaldunian Social Theory

The contemporary reconstruction of '*aṣabīyah*' in this article is based on Alatas's post-Khaldunian approach to recovering and developing Ibn Khaldun's sociology beyond its original historical context. According to Alatas, Khaldunian concepts should not be treated merely as historical ideas, but can also be developed as theoretical resources for understanding different social realities. This requires an approach that allows scholars to "lift Ibn Khaldun from his time" and bring his concepts into dialogue with modern social science.⁴² At the same time, it is important to distinguish between the general concepts developed by Ibn Khaldun and the specific historical conditions in which those concepts originally appeared. Consequently, the contemporary application of '*aṣabīyah*' does not simply involve transposing a classical concept directly onto modern society; instead, it seeks to identify theoretical elements that can be further developed and applied within different social contexts.

Within this framework, ethical '*aṣabīyah*' is used in this article to describe a form of solidarity that connects social cohesion with moral values, justice, and public responsibility. Its formulation draws on Khaldunian thought in which '*aṣabīyah*' is shaped not only by kinship ties, but also by religion, political authority, and material conditions. Religion, in particular, can strengthen solidarity and extend it beyond narrow tribal ties into a trans-tribal form of '*aṣabīyah*'.⁴³ Based on these dimensions, the concept emphasizes the moral and public orientation of solidarity in contemporary social life.

The relevance of this reconstruction to contemporary society lies in its application beyond the original tribal setting of '*aṣabīyah*'. Alatas explains that the relationship between '*aṣabīyah*' and religion can also be extended to non-tribal forms of social cohesion.⁴⁴ In contemporary life, such bonds may appear within national communities, professional groups, civic organizations, bureaucratic institu-

⁴² Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 42; 54; 146.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41–42; 90–91.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; Halim et al., "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of '*Aṣabīyah*' and Its Application in Modern Muslim Society."

tions, and other forms of collective organization. Although these settings differ from the tribal structures examined by Ibn Khaldun, they still involve common purpose, authority, shared responsibility, and social cohesion. Therefore, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* does not reproduce tribal solidarity in a modern form, but develops the analytical potential of Khaldunian theory for understanding collective bonds within contemporary social and institutional life.

This broader reading is also supported by studies that extend Khaldunian solidarity into contemporary social settings. El-Aswad argues that *'aṣabīyah* needs to be reconsidered in relation to changing forms of social organization.⁴⁵ Salvatore's analysis of civility and social institutions further shows the growing importance of institutional and public forms of social connectedness in modern Muslim societies.⁴⁶ These studies show that Khaldunian concepts can be used beyond their original tribal setting without losing their theoretical foundation. In this article, however, the reconstruction of *ethical 'aṣabīyah* gives particular attention to the moral and religious dimensions of solidarity. The aim is not simply to give *'aṣabīyah* a modern meaning, but to examine how social cohesion is shaped when moral values, institutional responsibility, and shared interests are brought together.

In applying this framework to contemporary social issues, corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility are presented as illustrative cases rather than as empirically verified consequences of weakened *'aṣabīyah*. Since this article is based on qualitative content analysis and does not employ a systematic contemporary dataset to test causal relationships, these phenomena are used only to demonstrate how *ethical 'aṣabīyah* may function as an interpretive framework. Through these examples, the discussion highlights the relationship between moral solidarity, public responsibility, institutional legitimacy, and the broader functioning of social life.

One contemporary issue that can be examined from this perspective is corruption. Within the concept of *ethical 'aṣabīyah*, corruption may be interpreted as a condition in which loyalty to particular individuals or groups becomes stronger than responsibility toward

⁴⁵ El-Aswad, *Post-Asabiyya: Ibn Khaldun and the Discourse of Reform*.

⁴⁶ Armando Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2016), 50–57.

the wider public. Ibn Khaldun's discussion of political decline shows that luxury, the concentration of power, and the exclusion of other groups from authority can weaken the social bonds that sustain political order.⁴⁷ In a contemporary context, corrupt practices may therefore be used as an illustration of solidarity that remains strong within limited networks but is no longer directed toward justice and the common interest. In this sense, the problem does not necessarily lie in the absence of solidarity, but in the direction of solidarity when it becomes narrow and serves private or group interests rather than public responsibility.

Another issue that may be viewed through ethical 'aṣabīyah is declining public trust. Trust helps maintain the relationship between citizens and public institutions by supporting cooperation and the acceptance of institutional authority. When institutions are perceived as serving narrow interests rather than shared values, the moral bond between authority and society may become weaker. From a Khaldunian perspective, this condition may be read as a form of fragmentation in the social cohesion that supports political order. This interpretation does not assume that declining public trust is directly caused by weak 'aṣabīyah. Instead, the concept is used to examine whether justice, responsibility, and common purpose continue to connect institutions with the wider society. From this perspective, ethical 'aṣabīyah can be used to understand the moral dimension of public trust.

Institutional fragility can also be examined through the perspective of *ethical 'aṣabīyah*. Although institutions are supported by formal rules, administrative structures, and legal authority, their stability also depends on the social values that sustain them. From a Khaldunian perspective, political authority requires a form of solidarity that gives strength to the social order.⁴⁸ When institutional practices are no longer supported by justice, shared responsibility, and moral commitment, the relationship between formal structures and society may become weaker. In this context, institutional fragility may be understood not only as an administrative problem, but also as a condition in which institutions lose part of the social and moral support that gives them legitimacy. The example is

⁴⁷ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 35–37; Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 183–85.

⁴⁸ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 35–37; 41–42.

intended only to show how ethical *‘aṣabīyah* can be applied analytically, not to prove a direct causal relationship.

The three illustrations above show different ways in which ethical *‘aṣabīyah* can be used to read contemporary social problems. Corruption draws attention to the tension between narrow group loyalty and public responsibility, declining trust highlights the weakening moral relationship between authority and society, while institutional fragility points to the gap between formal structures and the values that sustain them. These conditions arise from complex political, economic, legal, and historical processes, and therefore should not be explained through a single Khaldunian cause. The value of ethical *‘aṣabīyah* lies instead in bringing the quality and direction of solidarity into the analysis. It asks whether collective bonds are directed toward justice and shared responsibility or toward limited interests that weaken wider social cohesion. In this sense, the concept adds a moral and social dimension to the interpretation of contemporary institutional problems without claiming to replace other forms of analysis.

Ibn Khaldun’s discussion of luxury and political decline remains relevant as a point of theoretical comparison. In his analysis, luxury can weaken the qualities that sustain *‘aṣabīyah*, while the concentration of power and the exclusion of former supporters can further weaken political cohesion.⁴⁹ These relationships cannot be directly equated with modern institutions because contemporary political systems operate under different social and institutional conditions. Even so, the Khaldunian perspective raises important questions about whether concentrated authority, institutional privilege, and narrow networks of loyalty can reduce collective responsibility and create greater distance between rulers and society. In this context, Ibn Khaldun’s concepts are used not as fixed laws for explaining contemporary decline, but as analytical tools for examining the relationship between power, privilege, and social cohesion.

The discussion above shows that ethical *‘aṣabīyah* can be understood as a contemporary development of Khaldunian social theory. Its main contribution lies in connecting social cohesion with morality, religion, justice, political authority, and public responsi-

⁴⁹ Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 91–93; Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 35–37; 42.

bility. The examples of corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility demonstrate how this concept may be used to interpret contemporary social problems, although they are not intended as empirical proof of a direct causal relationship. For this reason, ethical *'aṣabīyah* is primarily developed here as a theoretical framework for examining the quality and direction of social solidarity. The following section then discusses whether this reconstruction can be further developed within the normative orientation of transformative Islam.

Theoretical Synthesis and Implications: Toward a Transformative Islamic Paradigm

Based on the theoretical synthesis that has been developed, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* can be examined in relation to the framework of transformative Islam. This relationship cannot be established merely because both emphasize morality, justice, and social solidarity. Transformative Islam also involves social criticism, liberation from unjust conditions, the development of social agency, and an orientation toward social change.⁵⁰ Therefore, the position of *ethical 'aṣabīyah* within this framework needs to be examined through these characteristics. Rather than directly treating *ethical 'aṣabīyah* as a transformative Islamic paradigm, this article examines whether its moral and social dimensions correspond with these transformative orientations.

Transformative Islam can be understood through several interconnected characteristics. Religious values are not limited to personal belief or normative teaching, but are directed toward the realization of social justice and the transformation of social life. Islam also functions as a form of social criticism by identifying conditions and social relations that produce inequality and marginalization. This critical orientation is accompanied by a liberative concern for groups that experience social and economic oppression. At the same time, transformative Islam emphasizes the development of social consciousness and agency, so that society is not positioned merely as a passive object of change. Religious values must therefore be connected with social praxis, allowing Islamic

⁵⁰ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

ethics to guide collective action and social transformation rather than remaining only at the level of moral discourse.⁵¹

One of the key aspects of the concept of ethical *'aṣabīyah* is justice. Within the Khaldunian framework, justice is closely related to the continuity of political order and civilization, while injustice contributes to their decline.⁵² In the reconstruction developed in this article, justice functions as a moral criterion for evaluating the direction of solidarity. A group may possess strong internal cohesion, but such cohesion cannot be considered ethical when it serves only narrow interests or produces injustice toward others. For this reason, the ethical quality of *'aṣabīyah* depends not only on the strength of collective bonds, but also on whether those bonds are directed toward justice and responsibility beyond the immediate group. This orientation is consistent with transformative Islam, which places social justice not merely as a religious ideal, but as a basis for evaluating and transforming unequal social relations.⁵³ In this sense, justice gives *ethical 'aṣabīyah* a normative direction through which solidarity can become a moral force for more just social change.

A second characteristic concerns the critical function of *ethical 'aṣabīyah*. Transformative Islam does not understand social problems merely as failures of individual morality, but also examines the social conditions and relations of power that produce inequality and marginalization.⁵⁴ In this respect, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* can be used to examine not only the existence of solidarity, but also the interests toward which that solidarity is directed. The previous illustrations of corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility show this analytical possibility. Strong internal loyalty may continue to exist within limited networks while becoming separated from wider

⁵¹ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif"; Norma Fitria and Miftahul Khairani, "Revisiting Transformative Islam: A Critical Note on the Current Indonesian Muslim," *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2022): 24–32; Zulkarnain, "Telaah Kritis Teologi Islam," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022).

⁵² Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 398; Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, 153.

⁵³ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

⁵⁴ Ibid.; Muhammad Ainun Najib and Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "From Wahhabi Pesantren to Progressive Islam: The Socio-Intellectual Legacy of Moeslim Abdurrahman (1948-2012)," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 9, no. 1 (2025): 144–71.

public responsibility. Therefore, the critical function of *ethical 'aṣabīyah* lies in examining whether collective bonds support justice and the common good or instead strengthen narrow interests. This gives the concept a critical dimension that moves beyond describing social cohesion toward evaluating the moral direction of social relations.

The third characteristic concerns the liberative direction of solidarity. In transformative Islam, religious commitment is not limited to formal piety, but is directed toward those who experience marginalization and unequal social relations. Akmaliah emphasizes that transformative Islam gives particular attention to the oppressed and places religious interpretation within an orientation of liberation and social advocacy.⁵⁵ Solidarity is no longer understood as an exclusive bond based on ethnicity or group affiliation, but as a collective commitment to safeguarding the common good. From this perspective, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* can be connected with transformative Islam because the moral value of solidarity depends on the direction in which collective bonds are used. Solidarity that protects only the interests of insiders may remain socially strong, but it does not yet possess a liberative orientation. Its ethical dimension becomes clearer when collective responsibility extends beyond narrow group interests toward the protection of wider social interests and those placed in weaker positions. In this sense, public solidarity reflects a shift from solidarity based primarily on group loyalty toward solidarity directed by moral responsibility and the common good.

Another important characteristic is the development of social agency and praxis. Within the transformative Islamic paradigm, social change is achieved not only through changes in policy or structure, but also through shifts in values and collective consciousness. This means that society is not positioned merely as the recipient of moral teaching, but also as an actor capable of developing critical awareness and participating in social change. Akmaliah shows that this orientation can be seen in the formation of communities, critical learning, collective economic initiatives, and the involvement of marginalized groups in their own transformation.⁵⁶ In this context, religious values acquire transformative

⁵⁵ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif"; Najib dan Fata, "From Wahabi pesantren to Progressive Islam."

⁵⁶ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

meaning when they are connected with collective action rather than remaining only at the level of moral teaching. *Ethical ‘aṣabīyah* does not by itself provide a specific program of social reform, but it offers a conceptual basis for understanding how social bonds, common purpose, moral responsibility, and collective commitment can support social agency. Thus, its contribution lies in linking moral solidarity with the collective capacity for change.

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This perspective highlights that religion plays a vital role as a source of values that guide social solidarity. In Ibn Khaldun’s theory, religion can strengthen *‘aṣabīyah* by providing a common orientation and reducing internal rivalry that may weaken collective action.⁵⁸ However, religion does not automatically make solidarity ethical. Its moral significance depends on how religious values are connected with justice, responsibility, and concern for the wider community. This understanding is consistent with transformative Islam, which does not place religion only at the level of belief or symbolic identity,

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 35–36; 41; Masdar Hilmy and Hammis Syafaq, “In Search for Muslim Ethics of Calvinism: Improving the Quality of Public Life through the Incorporation of Religious Narratives into the State Policies in Indonesia,” *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 18, no. 2 (2024): 49–74.

but connects it with social criticism, moral consciousness, solidarity, and social action.⁵⁹ Therefore, the religious dimension of *ethical 'aṣabīyah* lies not merely in the presence of religious identity, but in the moral direction that religious values give to collective solidarity.

Based on these characteristics, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* can be related to transformative Islam through five interconnected dimensions. Justice provides a moral criterion for evaluating the direction of solidarity; social criticism examines whether collective bonds reproduce inequality or serve the common good; the liberative orientation extends solidarity beyond narrow group interests toward wider social responsibility; agency and praxis connect moral commitment with collective capacity for change; and religion provides an ethical orientation that gives meaning and direction to these forms of solidarity. The relationship between *ethical 'aṣabīyah* and transformative Islam therefore does not rest merely on their shared concern with justice or solidarity. It lies in the way solidarity is morally evaluated, critically directed, and connected with collective action. From this perspective, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* develops from an analytical concept of social cohesion into a framework that also provides a normative direction for social change. This synthesis allows Khaldunian social theory not only to explain social relations, but also to contribute to a more critical and transformative understanding of Islamic social thought.

This theoretical synthesis also carries a decolonial implication. Alatas's post-Khaldunian approach places Ibn Khaldun not merely as a historical object of study, but as a source of concepts that can contribute to modern social theory.⁶⁰ Transformative Islam similarly brings Islamic ethical values into critical engagement with contemporary social realities rather than treating them only as normative teachings.⁶¹ Within this relationship, *ethical 'aṣabīyah* connects these two orientations: its theoretical foundation comes from Khaldunian sociology, its reconstruction is developed through a post-Khaldunian perspective, and its normative direction is strengthened by transformative Islam. This synthesis demonstrates the potential of Islamic social thought to contribute to broader

⁵⁹ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

⁶⁰ Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 151–52; Moosavi and Alatas, "The Intellectual Biography of Syed Farid Alatas."

⁶¹ Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif."

theoretical discussions without separating itself from modern social science. Its decolonial significance lies in broadening the sources of knowledge and concepts from which social theory can be developed,

This synthesis should not be understood as presenting ethical *‘aṣabīyah* as a complete social theory or as a direct program for social transformation. In this article, the concept functions primarily as a theoretical bridge between Khaldunian social analysis and the normative orientation of transformative Islam. The previous discussion of corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility only illustrates how this concept may be used to interpret contemporary social problems; it does not establish these problems as direct consequences of weakened ethical *‘aṣabīyah*. Likewise, the concept does not by itself determine specific institutional policies or reforms. Its main contribution is to provide a framework for examining how solidarity is formed, whose interests it serves, the moral values that guide it, and whether it strengthens or weakens collective responsibility.

The theoretical synthesis developed above positions *ethical ‘aṣabīyah* not simply as a modern form of Khaldunian solidarity, but as a conceptual reconstruction that brings together Ibn Khaldun’s social theory, Alatas’s post-Khaldunian approach, and the normative orientation of transformative Islam. Ibn Khaldun provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the role of solidarity in social and political life, while Alatas shows how Khaldunian concepts can be recovered and developed beyond their original historical context.⁶² Within this synthesis, *ethical ‘aṣabīyah* connects social cohesion with moral responsibility and provides a bridge between the classical intellectual heritage and contemporary social analysis. Its transformative dimension emerges when solidarity is directed toward justice, social criticism, liberation, collective agency, and social change. In this respect, the reconstruction developed in this article demonstrates the potential of Islamic social thought to contribute to a more critical and socially transformative sociology. The novelty of *ethical ‘aṣabīyah* lies in this connection: *‘aṣabīyah* is developed from a concept primarily used to explain group solidarity, political power, and civilizational change

⁶² Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun*, 42, 54, 146, 151–52.

into a framework for examining how morally directed solidarity may contribute to transformative social processes.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that the concept of *'aṣabīyah* in Ibn Khaldun's thought cannot be understood only as tribal solidarity or as a fixed theory of historical cycles. In Khaldunian social theory, *'aṣabīyah* functions as a social force that supports cohesion, political power (*mulk*), and the development of civilization (*'umrān*). Its strength is also related to moral and religious conditions, particularly the role of justice, collective responsibility, and the social orientation of religion. Therefore, the concept contains a broader analytical potential than a narrow reading based only on kinship or cyclical decline.

The study further shows that the contemporary relevance of Ibn Khaldun depends on how his concepts are reconstructed beyond their original historical context. Following Syed Farid Alatas's post-Khaldunian approach, Ibn Khaldun is treated not merely as a historical object of study, but as a source of concepts that can enter into dialogue with modern social science. This decolonial orientation does not seek to replace modern social theory with an Islamic alternative, but to broaden the intellectual sources from which social theory can be developed. On this basis, this article develops the term *ethical 'aṣabīyah* as its own conceptual reconstruction. *Ethical 'aṣabīyah* refers to a form of solidarity in which social cohesion is evaluated according to its moral direction, especially its relation to justice, public responsibility, and the common good.

In contemporary analysis, corruption, declining public trust, and institutional fragility are used only as illustrative cases to demonstrate the analytical potential of this concept. They are not presented as empirically proven consequences of weakened *'aṣabīyah*. Their function is to show how *ethical 'aṣabīyah* may be used to examine whether collective bonds support broader public responsibility or instead become narrow, exclusive, and detached from justice. This distinction is important because contemporary social problems arise from complex political, economic, legal, and historical conditions that cannot be reduced to a single Khaldunian cause.

The article also finds that *ethical ‘aṣabiyyah* can be connected with transformative Islam through several interrelated dimensions: justice, social criticism, liberation from unequal conditions, social agency and praxis, and the ethical role of religion. This connection does not rest merely on shared normative concerns. It lies in the way solidarity is morally evaluated, critically directed, and connected with collective capacity for social change. In this sense, *ethical ‘aṣabiyyah* provides a conceptual bridge between Khaldunian social theory and the normative-transformative orientation of Islam.

The main contribution of this article therefore lies in reconstructing *‘aṣabiyyah* as a decolonial and transformative analytical framework without presenting it as a complete social theory or a ready-made program of reform. Its significance is to strengthen the position of Islamic intellectual traditions within contemporary sociological discussion and to provide a framework for examining how morally directed solidarity may contribute to more just and socially transformative processes.

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