

An Analysis of Ibnu Khaldun's Thoughts About Islamic Rationalism

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Abstract

This paper briefly discusses Ibn Khaldun's philosophical and rational construction of Islam and its metaphysical discursus as set forth in his classical works such as Kitab al-'Ibar, Al-Ta'rif, Tahrir al-Ahkam, and al-Muqaddimah. This work expressed his highly rational outlook that developed a critical and rational understanding of religious and moral premises. It also summarized its dynamic ground that contributes to expound instructive discussion of related ideas and themes. The study is based on library research using content analysis and analyzed through analytical and descriptive approaches. The finding concludes that Ibn Khaldun has brought forth a rational interpretation of history based on the unique philosophical and socio-cultural analysis he introduced in his al-Muqaddimah. This characteristic approach of the rational ideal has significantly impacted Islam's modern history and tradition. His rational and argumentative principle has largely influenced the works of contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Malik Bennabi, Rashid Ghannoushi, and Muhammad Asad.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Kitab al-Muqaddimah, Islamic rationalism, School of thought

Abstrak

Kertas ini membicarakan falsafah pemikiran Ibn Khaldun tentang faham rasionalisme Islam seperti yang dibahas dalam karya-karyanya yang monumental seperti Kitab al-'Ibar, Al-Ta'rif, Tahrir al-Ahkam, dan al-Muqaddimah. Kitab-kitab ini mengungkapkan falsafah pemikirannya yang rasional yang mempertahankan idealisme dan kefahaman agama yang kritis. Ia turut merumuskan landasan fikrahnya yang dinamis dan sumbangannya dalam menggariskan metode perbincangan teks yang instruktif. Tinjauan ini berasaskan metode penelitian perpustakaan dari jenis analisis kandungan secara deskriptif dan analitik. Ibn Khaldun telah menggariskan manhaj pemikiran yang rasional, dan komprehensif dalam perbincangan tentang sains, sejarah, budaya, peradaban, dan sosial seperti dalam al-Muqaddimah. Hasil penelitian membuktikan Ibn Khaldun telah mempelopori dasar rasionalisme yang signifikan dalam tradisi Islam. Ini dibahas dalam karya-karyanya yang menjadi titik perbincangan sejarah yang penting. Dari perbincangan ringkas tentang asas rasionalisme ini, tulisan memperlibatkan sumbangan pemikiran Ibn Khaldun dalam menzahirkan faham rasionalisme Islam dan pengaruhnya kepada pemikir Islam moden seperti Malik Bennabi, Rashid Ghannoushi dan Muhammad Asad.

Kata Kunci: Ibn Khaldun, Kitab al-Muqaddimah, Mazhab pemikiran, Rasionalisme Islam

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the framework of rational thought put forward by Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) in his work *al-Muqaddimah*. He discusses the school of rational thought that he founded and its influence on modern Islamic thinkers, such as Malik Bennabi, Rashid Ghannoushi, and Muhammad Asad. Extensive emphasis is given to the discussion of Ibn Khaldun's manhaj thought in proposing a rational understanding of Islam, and looking at the strength of the argument he made and its impact on contemporary Islamic schools of thought and jurisprudence. Ibn Khaldun reveals significant rational principles and philosophy in *al-Muqaddimah* which Bennabi, Ghannoushi, and Muhammad Asad completely defended in their works, such as *Phenomenon of the Qur'an: Essays on the theory of the Qur'an* (Le Phenomene Coranique; essay dune theorie sur le Coran), *The Origins of Human Society: On the Origins of Human Society: The Social Relations Network*, *Islam in History and Society*, *Question of Ideas in the Muslim World*, *al-Hurriyyah al'Ammah fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah* (Public Freedom in an Islamic State) and *The Message of the Qur'an* (Risalah al-Qur'an).¹

The problem of the study that is trying to be addressed is the problem of literal interpretation of the text which does not look at the broad socio-cultural context and background. This thinking is what Ibn Khaldun tries to criticize, who initiated his critical interpretation of the understanding of religion and history which he brought in the context of his rational understanding and philosophical flow.² This formulation was influential in universal reviews of modern ideology and philosophy, which took the basis from its historical considerations and the socio-cultural thoughts it developed, forming the dominant schools and principles in modern historical views.³ This study is important given the lack of attention to the methodology and rational view brought by Ibn Khaldun and his basic construction and constructive historical formulations that emphasize the characteristics of universal and creative understanding related to history and social phenomena.

In their review of the critical foundations and constructs in Ibn Khaldun's edifice of thought, Salah Machouche and Benaouda Bensaid formulate the critical importance of their 'Umraniyan vision which is shaped by their essential understanding of the dynamics of society, particularly its practical dimensions, which have inspired these theories. the theory he built on the science of society ('*umran bashari*)⁴ which challenges past theories about the truth, value, and purpose of human life. He reflects widespread practice in Islamic scholarship in his critique of the intellectual disciplines within the different religious and rational disciplines.

¹ Fadila Grine dan Ouassila Yaiche Khezzar, "Ibn Khaldun's Political Thought and Relevance: Abdallah Sharif's Critical Perspective," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 13, no. 2 (20 Desember 2018): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol13no2.1>.

² Arno Tausch, "Learning from Classical Arab Writers: G-Zero and the Cultural Aspects of Changing Global Leadership: Rediscovering Ibn Khaldun's 'Asabiyya' with the Latest PEW Global Survey and World Values Survey Data," dalam *The Future of the Gulf Region: Value Change and Global Cycles*, ed. oleh Arno Tausch, Gulf Studies (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 205-42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78299-3_5.

³ Abdul Rahim, "Power Relations of The National Sharia Council and The Construction of Islamic Identity through Sharia Discourse Masification," *JURNAL PENELITIAN*, 10 Agustus 2021, 109-18, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v18i2.3546>.

⁴ Salah Machouche dan Benaouda Bensaid, "The Roots and Constructs of Ibn Khaldun's Critical Thinking," *Intellectual Discourse* 23, no. 2 (19 Desember 2015), <https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/id/article/view/694>.

And produce a deep understanding of the causes and properties of things. In his writings on Ibn Khaldun's influence in the East and West, Ahmad Syafii Maarif reveals the external side of the book *al-Muqaddimah*, which records the range of past power and its inner side, a philosophical framework of critical and careful investigation to find the truth; an intelligent explanation of the causes and origins of all things; in-depth knowledge of how and why something happened.⁵

Irzum Farihah⁶ shows in his study of Ibn Khaldun as a pioneer of modern history and sociology that Ibn Khaldun's style of thought was very rational, as a Muslim philosopher, who strongly enforced the spirit of logic - impressed by the influence of Ibn Rushd. But he showed his distinctive thinking in philosophical and religious matters - the amalgamation of the ideas of al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd. W. M. Watt is of the view that Ibn Khaldun's thoughts are a continuation of Ibn Rushd's thoughts, especially regarding two things, namely the empirical method (*tajribiy*), induction (*istiqrā'*) and the concept of causality (*al-ta'thir, al-ta'li*).⁷

Rahmat Effendi found in his research on the Sufism ideas of Ibn Taimiyah and Ibn Khaldun, that in his critique of Sufism teachings, Ibn Khaldun took a theological-rationalist approach to reconstruct his historical conceptions and provide rational explanations.⁸ His interest in the logic of possibility stems from his early influence, where at a young age, he has mastered the sciences of logic, philosophy, and metaphysics (*'ulum al-'aqliyah*), in addition to studying political science, history, economics, geography, and others as well as writing in many fields including arithmetic, logic, and history.⁹ In his review of the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun's civilization and the laws of its existence, Jazilus Sakhok Mahsun shows that Ibn Khaldun has developed a rational analysis of historical events, whether an event is considered to be rationally possible or not, with his sociological analysis of patterns.¹⁰ dialectical spiral. Syed Hussein Alatas (1928-2007) in his study of historical constructs and the understanding of the progress of society and intellect, characterizes Ibn Khaldun *al-Muqaddimah*'s work as no less than the book of *Ihya 'Ulumuddin* (as a lake of wisdom and a source of knowledge) even though Ibn Khaldun examines these questions.¹¹ about history and society, in which he succeeded in explaining and understanding why society had its moral collapse, why the influence of religion rose or fell.¹²

⁵ Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Ibn Khaldun dalam pandangan penulis barat dan timur* (Gema Insani, 1996).

⁶ Irzum Farihah, "Agama Menurut Ibn Khaldun," *Fikrah* 2, no. 1 (2014): 61892.

⁷ Samsul Nizar, *Filsafat pendidikan Islam: pendekatan historis, teoritis dan praktis* (Ciputat Pers, 2002).

⁸ Rahmat Effendi, "Sufism in the Perspective of Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Taimiyah: A Comparative Study," *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 5, no. 1 (30 Juni 2021): 70–82, <https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v5i1.4098>.

⁹ Mustafa Dasuki Kasabah, "Namadhij Min Al-Fikr al-Mali Fi al-Islam: Waraqah Ma'lumat Asasiyyah," *TSAQAFAH* 5, no. 1 (31 Mei 2009): 139–80, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v5i1.151>.

¹⁰ Jazilus Sakhok Mahsun, "Ibn Khaldun dan Pandangannya tentang Eksistensi Peradaban Manusia," *Jurnal YADIM* 8 (Jun 2006): 113.

¹¹ Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita dan Islam Tumbuh Tiada Berbuah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 2019), 70.

¹² Mahmood Zuhdi Ab. Majid, *Tokoh-Tokoh Kesarjanaan Sains Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 2003), 76.

DISCUSSION

Islamic Rationalism

Islamic rationalism is a term used to refer to the role of reason in framing theological issues in Islam. He envisions the position of reason as a fundamental justification for knowledge or belief. The principle of rationalism is the notion that God and nature can be understood through the intellectual power created by God in humans. Regarding God, this perception means that the existence of God, His oneness, and His attributes can be known through reason. Regarding nature, he meant that natural events and their structures, humans, and their actions could be understood logically.¹³

Consideration of rationalism places reason as the main tool or one of the main tools to arrive at religious truth, and chooses reason over revelation and tradition (hadith) to deal with the problem of kalam, especially when conflicts arise between them.¹⁴ The perspective and understanding of rationalism are rooted in the influence of Greek philosophy that entered and developed in Islamic areas in the ninth century. Muslims were attracted to the Greek method of argumentation from his philosophical and scientific works which were translated into Arabic. The spirit of the Greek search dominates the religious and intellectual views of the *mutakallimun* group who try to formulate and present a controversial interpretation of the issues of kalam.

The tradition of kalam has also become the basis for rational thought that puts forward logical argumentation methods and rationalist methods. He became a bulwark to defend religion against the impact of scientific discoveries and the healing power of Greek philosophy and broke the theological propaganda brought by Christianity. This struggle for ideas also provided the basis for applying reason to revelation and reconciling Greek thought with the pillars of Islam.

In his book *Knowledge Triumphant*, Franz Rosenthal formulates that Islamic civilization is built on a scholarly tradition, which has sparked scientific discoveries and rational understanding and formed significant traditional philosophical and philosophical principles,¹⁵ "Islamic civilization is one that is essentially characterized by knowledge (*'ilm*), for *ilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion." Muslim civilization]. Syed Hussein Alatas in his book *We and Islam* defines rationalism, namely,¹⁶ details based on reason, (which) is very necessary to build a system of religious life. Imam Ali (*kny*) stated in Imam Ali bin Abi Talib's *Spiritual Discourse (kny)*: "reason makes you the owner of the times, while lust enslaves you for the times".¹⁷

¹³ Binyamin Abrahamov dan Elizabeth Susan Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Lawrence V. Berman, "George F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbâr* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Pp. 158. \$6.50.," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 2 (April 1976): 316–19, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800023345>.

¹⁵ Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, 1st Edition (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹⁶ Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita dan Islam Tumbuh Tiada Berbuah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 2019), 151.

¹⁷ Sharif al-Rida Muhammad b. al-Husayn, *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ma'arif lil-Tiba'ah wa'l-Nashr, 2004).

Ibn Khaldun s rationalism

Ibn Khaldun, or Waliy al-Din Abu Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Jabir b. Muhammad b. Abraham b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Khalid (Khaldun) al-Hadrami (732-808/1332-1406) was a significant historical thinker and founder of Islamic philosophy and rationalism with his works emphasizing idealism and deep rational thought as expressed in *al-Muqaddimah* and *al-'Ibar*. The strength of Ibn Khaldun's influence and the broad impact of his thought lies in the fields of sociology, philosophy, history, science, and civilization. His extraordinary influence in the tradition of Islamic thought has raised his reputation and prominence as the founder of modern historiography, sociology, and economics. His philosophical ideas and framework are described by Albert Hourani as "full reminders of the fragility of human effort"—out of his experiences.¹⁸ Arnold Toynbee in his study of history and his compendium of writing and philosophy Ibn Khaldun wrote "he conceived and created a philosophy of history that was doubted the greatest work ever created by a man of intelligence."¹⁹ He imagined and wrote a philosophy of history which is, without doubt, the greatest work ever produced by a thinker]. History has recorded him as a defender of religious traditions, enforcers of law and justice, and the initiator of an inclusive and dynamic understanding of freedom and cultural principles, as noted by al-Sakhawi about his role as a Qadi "was well-known by the maintenance of justice". Justice.²⁰

Ibn Khaldun pioneered the principle of rational thought that relies on the foundation and *manhaj akliyah*, *taakul* efforts, and pragmatic analysis based on experimental and scientific methods. He developed the skeptical method outlined by al-Ghazali in his books *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* and *Mi'raj al-Quds*. In the book *al-Muqaddimah*, he discusses the philosophy that relies on the intellect and logical syllogisms criticize the views of philosophers, and breaks their argument, especially in metaphysics. According to him, the blasphemy of philosophers only shows a brilliant interpretation of philosophy, without creating any arguments or proofs. Their syllogisms and syntheses are constructed only on the basis of the conditions which they exclude from their logical work.²¹ However, by means of this insufficient proof, he has presented the best theoretical framework that can be put forward. His rational perception is heavily influenced by the views of al-Ghazali and Plato who present rational philosophy and basic assumptions that are grounded and realistic. Ibn Khaldun has outlined significant historical, sociological, religious, and cultural notions that outline essential rational views and messages. This review attempts to highlight aspects of Ibn Khaldun's rationalist thought and his in-depth discussion of the arguments of philosophy and kalam and their influence in the development of modern history.²²

¹⁸ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Arnold Toynbee dan D. C. Somervell, *A Study of History* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

²⁰ Fuad Baali, *Society, State, and Urbanism: Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought* (SUNY Press, 1988).

²¹ Tazul Islam, S. M. Yunus Gilani, dan Amina Khatun, "Integration Between Pure Rational and Revealed Knowledge: An Analysis of Al-Ghazali's Views," *Advanced Science Letters* 24, no. 4 (1 April 2018): 2799–2801, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2018.11063>.

²² Ibnu Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* (Princeton, 2015).

The Influence of Ibnu Khaldun's Rationalism

In understanding the principles of Ibn Khaldun's rationalism, and his views on Islamic rationalism and principles, his writings have greatly influenced the interpretation of philosophy and intellectual principles adopted by modern Islamic thinkers such as Malik Bennabi, Rashid Ghannouchi, and Muhammad Asad. From their intellectual foundation and influence, they take a rationale that seems to carry the rational ideas and understanding that they pioneered. This is tried to be reviewed in subsequent research about the influence brought from the *fiqrah* and philosophical traditions of Ibn Khaldun in their thinking.

Malik Bennabi (1903-1973/1323-1393) an Islamic thinker from Algeria who is famous for his ideas on the origin of the nation, the aspirations of the revival (which is described in his book *Preconditions for the Awakening* (*Les conditions de la renaissance*) [1948]) and the theory of civilization. with the views and ideas of Ibn Khaldun's rationalism. He admired the power of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy and historical conception and characterized him as an important figure in the history of Islamic rational thought and tradition. He characterizes the classics of Ibn Khaldun as a genuine embodiment of Islamic rationalism. This is reflected in his prolific writing and thinking. Bennabi examines the causes of the downfall of civilizations such as the Almohad dynasty in North Africa and the Islamic empire in Spain, which have removed Islam's role as a great world power. Defeat to the colonialists has shackled and bound the movement of the people, which was killed by a passive attitude and succumbed to imperialism and colonialism, and exacerbated by problems of moral lameness, the gravity of ideas, and a bankrupt civilization.

Bennabi's analysis leads to the enlightenment and revitalization of ideas, the restoration of *fiqrah* and the birth of rational philosophy, the revival of culture, and the promotion of fresh scientific traditions. In his book, *Les Conditions de la renaissance*, he explores the demands of renewing cultural and aesthetic aesthetics, ethics, increasing the spirit of the renaissance and pragmatic technical competence that fosters a dynamic society, and the formulation of ideas that can develop. In his book *the Question of Culture* (1954), he analyzed the crippled and dilapidated cultural problems of society. According to him, the organization of life and its movements, in fact, has become agitated and stagnate, has a close relationship with the system of ideas in that society.

The rational theory and philosophy he discusses emphasize the importance of embodying *ijtihad* and rejecting the corrupt and ignorant practice of *taklid*, which fools the mind, because "*ignorance is essentially polytheism because it does not cultivate the mind, but carves idols.*"

Rashid Ghannouchi (1941) was also inspired by the rational tradition of Ibn Khaldun. He is a Muslim activist and politician from Tunis who leads the important struggle for dignity in Tunisia. It carries a radical spirit of freedom and revival (*nahda*). Ghannouchi is the leader of Hizb an-Nahdah, the Renaissance Party. *An-Nahdah* was founded in 1988 after Ghannouchi was released from prison for his political activism with the *Harakah al-Ittihad al-Islami* (Islamic Tendency Movement) which was founded in early 1981. It was while in prison that Ghannouchi had many opportunities to reflect on and express Muhammad's ideas. Abduh—who has visited Tunis twice and established links there—and with many other Islamic scholars including Ibn Assyria and Malik Bennabi.

Ghannouchi is a thinker who is unique and prominent among others in promoting Islamic democracy and has lived in exile in England. He was ousted in 1989 and after 22 years, returned to his homeland of Tunisia in January 2011 and was proclaimed a hero. Ghannouchi's Hizb an-Nahdah Party—the Renaissance Party – won Tunisia's first free election, ten months after the revival sparked that toppled the leader, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who had banned the organization and imprisoned Ghannouchi before he decided to live in exile in London. Hizb an-Nahdah vowed to continue democracy after the first draw of the “Arab world” revolution had its impact on the Middle East and North Africa.

In his work, he pioneered the spirit of enlightenment and genuine Islamic rationalism which was inspired by the writings of Ibn Khaldun, such as *al-Muqaddimah*. Ghannouchi was impressed by the views and understandings of rational Islam that Ibn Khaldun and Malik Bennabi brought in their analysis of Muslim history, philosophy, sociology, and civilization. The principles of rational thought his reformed ideals and the critical influence of Ibn Khaldun and Malik Bennabi on Ghannouchi are evident in his formulation of Islamic democracy. “Malik Bennabi, Algerian thinker; which Ghannouchi describes as a pillar of Islamic thought and the trigger of Ibn Khaldun's rationalism, had a great influence on him. Ghannouchi sees Islamic rationalism as a duality of reason and revelation that neglects the source of knowledge. The relation of revelation to reason is like vision to light; one cannot exist without the other.”²³

While in prison, Ghannouchi translated Bennabi's *syarah* in French into Arabic under the title *Ad-Dimuqratiyah fil-Islam* (Democracy in Islam). It is in this Tetris that Ghannouchi finds the answer to an abstruse question “Is there any form of democracy in Islam? Bennabi, according to Ghannouchi, emphasized that the answer to this question should not be taken from the law of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) which was formulated from the Qur'an or Sunnah; but can be worked out from a comprehensive understanding of the essence of Islam. The Islamic model of democracy does not only go so far as to bestow human beings with political or social mandates and rights but will endow them with values that transcend any political or social values, values which are stated in the Qur'an verse 70, sura 17: "Now, indeed, we have exalted the children of Adam." This verse was revealed as if to outline the principles for a democratic model that beats every other model, in which the sacred element in humans is taken into consideration and not only human or social aspects as in other models. With it, a form of holiness is bestowed upon man; which elevates its dignity over whatever values the other models hold.

He considered the suffering he endured from his first imprisonment as a gift from fate as it took him away from the ravages of daily troubles, and dumped him into a state where he could work in a *lulus* shell to respond to the challenges he faced.²⁴ Bennabi's approach to dealing with the question of the relationship between Islam and democracy shows that a lively debate on the issue has been going on since the early 1960s among North African students in Paris. It is possible that Ghannouchi was inspired by renewed debate in his own country in

²³ Ahmad Farouk Musa, ed., *Wacana Pemikiran Reformis* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Renaissance Front, 2012), 14.

²⁴ Ghannouchi Rachid, *Al-Hurriyat al-Ammah fi al-Daulat al-Islamiyyah* (Bayrut: Dar al-Mujtahid lil Nashr wal Tawzi', 2011), 17.

the late 1970s to study Bennabi's shari'a and translate it into Arabic to allow it to be read by Arab Islamists within the movement. It is also possible that he wanted Bennabi's ideas to be read by Islamists in *Mashriq* who are critical of the Tunisian Islamic movement's open commitment to democracy.

He spent two whole years working hard to absorb all he could from the relevant references. Even with his imprisonment, he was still justified—thanks to the sympathy and tolerance shown by some prison guards - to bring in the books and reference materials he requested. He carried out several projects, one of which was reviewing the translation of a book on women by Roger Garaudy, which had inspired him – along with his experiences in Sudan not long before that—to write a treatise on women's rights and the status of women in the movement. Islam. Garaudy's book in Arabic carries the title *Fi-Sabil Irtiqa 'al-Mar'ah* (Towards the Dignification of Women) (This book was translated by *Jalal al-Matrah* and published in Tunisia. The original work, allegedly in French, cannot be found impressed and no details on it are given in the Arabic edition). The more important project, however, was his translation of a small treatise written by Malik Bennabi entitled *Al-Islam Wad-Dimuqratiyah* (Islam and democracy) and initiated the project to compile his most important work, *Al-Hurriyat al-'Ammah Fid-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah* (public liberties in an Islamic state). Some of Ghannouchi's writings while serving his prison sentence include his translation of the Tetrakis of Bennabi, published under the pen name Mu'adh as-Sabir (published in 1983 by Dar ar-Rayah in Tunisia under the title *Al-Islam Wad-Dimuqratiyah*. Ghannouchi. assisted in the translation of this book by an-Nuri, his colleague in prison). Publications using this pen name include a treatise on Palestine entitled *Al-Qadiyah al-Falastiniyah 'Ala Muftaraq Tariq* (Palestinian Issues at the Crossroads) and an article criticizing the Iranian regime under Khomeyni.²⁵

Ghannouchi expresses the desire for freedom with a rational political plan, which is based on the philosophy and understanding of Islamic rationalism as described by Azzam S. Tamimi: “the significance of Ghannouchi also emanates from the facts that, unlike other Islamic thinkers who espouse the democratic cause, he is both a thinker and a leader of an Islamic movement. He is a credible authority within Islamic circles at the global level. His thoughts are in no way restricted to an intellectual debate at a time when the Islamic movement has emerged as a major political power in the Muslim world, and when power-sharing or power-taking experiments are in process. Ghannouchi is unprecedented within Islamic intellectual circles in his theory that civil society is an Islamic concept and that religion consolidates civil society whereas secularism, especially the model imported to the Muslim world under the guidance of modernization, weakens it”.²⁶ Ghannouchi's interest was also born out of the fact that, unlike other Islamic thinkers who supported the struggle for democracy, he was also a thinker and leader of the Islamic movement. He is an authoritative authority in Islamic circles on a global level. His thinking was by no means confined to intellectual debates at a time when the Islamic movement had emerged as a major political power in the Islamic world, and when power-sharing or power-taking experiences were in

²⁵ Ghannouchi Rachid, *Adh-Dhikra ath-Thalitha Liharakat al-Ittijah al-Islami* (Kenang-kenangan ulangtahun ketiga MTI (Islamic Tendency Movement), Carthage, 6 Jun, 1984).

²⁶ Azzam S. Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 215.

progress. Ghannouchi is matchless in Islamic intellectual circles in his theory that civil society is an Islamic concept and that religion reinforces civil society while secularism, especially the model imported into the Islamic world under the guise of modernization, weakens it.

He was the first Islamic thinker to tackle the issues challenging the transition to democracy in the Arab world in the way Azzam S. Tamimi has analyzed in his book *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat Within Islamism*. He began to develop this thesis following the seizure of power against democracy in Algeria in 1992, less than two years after the failure of the democratic experience in his own country, Tunisia. Rachid Ghannouchi's interests lie in the high standards of his political discourse, which is unique in its bold attempt to renew and introduce new dimensions in contemporary Islamic thought. The impact of his ideological and intellectual performance has far transcended Tunisian borders. His contribution to modern Islamic thought lies in his understanding of both traditional Islamic literature and modern Western concepts and in his strong belief in the theory of parallels between Islam and Western thought in terms of the royal system, human rights, and civil liberties.

After successfully translating *Bennabi Ad-Dimuqratiyah fil-Islam* (Democracy in Islam), Ghannouchi decided to write a book on freedom. Published in 1993, *Al-Hurriyah al-'Ammah fid-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah* (General Freedom in an Islamic State), is considered one of the most important works in the discourse of Islamic political thought at the time. In this book, Ghannouchi sees democracy as an impression of a long historical evolution. He argued that the Europeans benefited from Islamic civilization by framing a fresh enlightened conception of social values which resulted in the rise of liberal democracy. In other words, democracy is the Western version of *Islamic shura* (consensus). Islamic leaders after the era of Caliph Rasyidun have hung up on the practice of *syura* in the election of leaders. This hanging continued until the modern age when other nations overcame Muslims in acknowledging freedom of speech and maintaining political freedom. Metaphorically, when the *shura* tree wilts in Islamic lands due to lack of steel, its seeds bloom, ie. during the Renaissance season, in European soils where the tree of democracy took root and flourished.

The main theme in Ghannouchi's thought is democracy parallels Islam, and Muslims must incorporate it in their political thinking to institutionalize the concept of *shura* (negotiation). Ghannouchi emphasized that more importantly, the basic democratic values that emerged during the time of the Prophet (s) and *al-Khilafah ar-Rasyidah* (the Guided Caliph) were implemented based on principles, and not on models. He argued that the hostility of some Islamists towards democracy was due to a shallow understanding of the character of Islam and also to the historical development of Muslim approaches to dealing with the issue of the kingdom. He put forward the idea that Islam includes *faraghat* (space) or fields that are left to humans to fulfill according to the needs and demands of time and place.²⁷

To solidify his ideas, Ghannouchi exposed the history of the Battle of *Badr*, the first battle in Islamic history. The Prophet (s) directed his army to seize a position that would leave the position of the cistern between them and the enemy forces. A friend named *al-Habbab ibn-Munzir* (rad) asked whether this game was a revelation from God or still in the *ar-ra'iy wal-harb wal-makidah* environment (opinions and war strategies). The Prophet (saw) replied that he was

²⁷ Harun Nasution, *Islam rasional: gagasan dan pemikiran* (Mizan, 1995).

only relying on *ijtihad*. The friend, who is an experienced war commander, suggested that the policy of taking this location was not the best and strategic step, and it was better to place military forces in front of the cistern so that the enemy could not penetrate the passage to the water's edge. The Prophet (s) agreed and the Companion's plan was implemented.

The fact that Ghannouchi wants to point out is that the Islamic built structure, which was left by the Prophet (s), has been perfect in the basic lines and component structures related to *ad-deen* (religion). Apart from that, the Companions (rad) did not hesitate to respond to the second area of *faragh* (space), where they could also offer *ijtihad* if and when necessary, either while with the Prophet (s) or after the death of His Majesty (Saw) Which means, the component structures that touch on *as-siyāsi* are left for later generations to frame and refine.

Ghannouchi's main interests were to emphasize the need for democracy, to prove his parallels with Islam, and to analyze the obstacles that hindered his success in the Islamic world. However, democracy has its enemies, both locally and internationally; and many obstacles that will hinder its progress. Ghannouchi wants to emphasize that the struggle against external barriers to democracy in the Islamic world is as important as the struggle to overcome internal barriers through education, rereading Islamic history, and restoring *ijtihad*.

Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) was also impressed by the rational school of thought raised by Ibn Khaldun in his magnum opus *al-Muqaddimah*. Asad is an interpreter, diplomat, journalist, writer, and translator who actively carries the message of change, and brings to life a fresh intellectual heritage and scholarly tradition. He spearheaded the revival of *ijtihad* and defended Ibn Khaldun's rational ideas in *al-Muqaddimah*. This rational understanding is expressed clearly in his masterpiece *The Message of The Qur'an*: "Every Qur'anic verse or statement is directed to reason and therefore must be comprehensible. can be understood], and "The spirit of the Qur'ān could not be correctly understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, losing sight of its original purport and meaning. In actual fact, we are bent to become intellectual prisoners of others who were themselves prisoners of the past and had little to contribute to the resurgence of Islam in the modern world." The spirit of the Qur'an cannot be fully understood if we read it only in the context of its subsequent ideological development, regardless of its original purpose and meaning. In actual fact, we have become bound and captives of the intellect to others who have also been held captive by loose thinking and have little to contribute to the rise of Islam in the modern world.

The Message of The Qur'an puts forward the concept and philosophy of rational thought that tries to answer the demands of the times realistically with a complete and authentic view. "Each era demands a new approach to the Qur'an for the simple reason that the Qur'an was revealed for all ages. It is our duty to seek deeper meaning in the Qur'an to increase our knowledge and experience. The Qur'an wants your intellectual power to be always active and tries to approach the divine message. God Himself dedicated this book to those who think." His precise interpretation and the authenticity of the ideas he conveyed gave rise to his critical and ideal thinking about history, philosophy, and Islamic jurisprudence. His interpretation is based on blasphemy against classical and contemporary texts and works of exegesis that he has extensively referenced, such as the commentaries of Al-Tabari, Al-

Zamakhshari, Ibn Hazm, Al-Razi, Al-Baidawi, Abi Su'ud, Al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Al-Suyuti, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida.

His interpretation of the text of the Qur'an shows his complete understanding of the *khittah* and legal messages and ideals of sharia expressed in the Qur'an. His commentary gives an important emphasis on elevating universal Islamic values and explaining its basic *fikrah* which is inclusive and rational and outlines the broad *maqasid* thoughts and understandings expressed in the Qur'an. The idea of radical renewal is clearly demonstrated in the interpretation and exposition of the verses of the Qur'an which he interprets allegorically and in the context of the origin of revelation by enlivening reality (*waqi'*) and its development in history.

His description shows an attempt at a critical and rational interpretation. He embraces the widespread discussion of laws and schools of thought that maintains the power of rational argument and *fikrah* and promotes the principles of *maqasid* and *maslahah*: "Islam must be put forward without any fanaticism. Without any emphasis, we are the only ones who follow the path of guidance, and others get lost. Simplicity in all its forms is a basic requirement in Islam."²⁸

Asad initiated the principle of moderate Islam with extensive interpretation based on convincing scientific evidence. His interpretation is a commentary on the best of the Koran with precise explanations that are embraced and formulated from the views of the *mufassir* and *fuqaha* who are conclusive. He has made a significant contribution in promoting a critical understanding of Islam and restoring an impressive scholarly tradition. The strength of his interpretation of The Message of the Qur'an is its basic understanding of the rational aspirations of Islam and the principles of wisdom and freedom. He formulated the basic understanding and essence of *maqasid* which was worked on from the views and spirit of the Qur'an. The Message of the Qur'an formulates a significant meaning from the linguistic, idiomatic, and hermeneutic discussions of the Qur'an which deepens the understanding of the allegorical impressions of its verses for people who think (*li qawm yatafakkarun*).

The important criteria shown in The Message of the Qur'an are its emphasis on the efforts of *ijtihad* and *istinbat* and *takwil*, its deepening of historical, philosophical, and ethical values, its rejection of the history of *Israiliyyat*, its meaningful comments on the proposed interpretation, hadith, theology and *fikah*, and extensive references to books of classical and modern commentary, as well as their formulation of legal and philosophical theories, and the cultivation of the main themes of each surah. The main points of discussion are moral ideas, rationality and renewal, and discussions about the history philosophy, and significant background of each surah (*asbab al-nuzul*).

The enlightenment brought from Muhammad Asad's commentary has sparked a widespread understanding of reform in the Islamic world which was impressed by the modern idealism initiated by *Tafsir al-Manar* by Shaykh Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida who were impressed by the rational and scientific understanding and the pan Islamism movement of Sayyid Jamal. al-Din al-Afghani.²⁹ This movement has influenced and inspired

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (New Era Publications, 1980).

the revival of rational ideas and meaningful *nahdah* struggles in the Islamic world. The aspirations of Islam expressed by Muhammad Asad deserve to be fought for and widely mobilized to raise and continue the reform ideals that he set out to elevate the power of intellectual power and *ijtihad*.

In his other writings "Islam at the Crossroads", Muhammad Asad emphasizes the rationality and social role of hadith in people's lives. Judging from his writings, we are sure that we are aware of the strong emphasis he placed on Muslims to adhere to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The "Sunnah," he emphasizes, "is the key to understanding the rise of Islam more than thirteen centuries ago; and why shouldn't it be the key to understanding our backwardness today?" But later he wrote: "This does not mean that Muslims should distance themselves from voices that come from outside. One can at all times receive new, positive influences from foreign visitors without necessarily getting rid of one's own."³⁰

Asad continues: "An example of this type is the European Renaissance. We have seen how prepared Europe is to accept Arab influence in the content and method of learning. But he never adhered to the outward framework and spirit of Arab culture, and never sacrificed his intellectual independence and aesthetic independence. He used Arab influence only as fertilizer for his own land, just as the Arabs had used Hellenistic influence in their time. "In both cases, the *natijah* is spiritual enrichment, new, vigorous growth of a genuine civilization, full of self-confidence and pride in itself. No civilization can develop, or even exist, having lost this pride and connection with its own past."³¹

CONCLUSION

From the brief discussion above, it is clear that the rationalist view of Ibn Khaldun's view on the important Islamic thinkers of this century, namely Malek Bennabi, Rashid Ghannouchi, and Muhammad Asad, is clear. The rational thought that was fought for to elevate the power of *akliyah* and *ijtihad* has brought significant changes in reviving the rational principles and intellectual traditions of Islam in the Middle Ages. The broad framework of rational and critical understanding initiated by Ibn Khaldun, and re-emerged by Malek Bennabi, Rashid Ghannouchi, and Muhammad Asad has contributed to a significant change in the modern society of thought which gave birth to idealism and strong ideals of change to raise and present a framework of thought. dynamic and sparked a rational and critical view of Islam. This understanding of rationalism continues to be echoed as the ideal foundation and basis for thinking that is a priority in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence which celebrates *maqasid* principles, scientific values, *maslahah* principles, and an open and rational understanding of religion.

³⁰ Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (The Other Press, 1999).

³¹ Asad, 31.

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