

MODULE I-EVOLUTION OF HISTORY AS A DISCIPLINE

TOPIC- IBN KHALDUN-MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

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I SEMESTER BA HISTORY

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ARAB HISTORIOGRAPHY

- ▣ The Arabs were the link between Greeco-Roman historiography
- ▣ Arab historiography leaned much on Greek traditions which were rooted in rationality
- ▣ The Arabs made a substantial contribution to historiography
- ▣ They built an empire spreading over three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa
- ▣ The Arabs made chiefly three contributions to history
- ▣ 1. Meticulous scrutiny of the sources they used, for which they developed a special technique called 'isnad' which comprised a chain of authorities through which the information percolated to the later period
- ▣ 2. Their travel accounts which are delightful in nature, informative in substance, and graphic in description based on their personal observation
- ▣ They had a passion for travel and recording their experiences on paper

- ▣ They produced great philosophers of history such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun
- ▣ Ibn Khaldun laid the foundation of the science of culture
- ▣ He brought out very clearly the factors that favored the genesis of a culture, and classified them under four heads, namely material needs, political institutions, moral equipment and the fixation of the human goal
- ▣ Interest the Arabs took to establish the authenticity of the sources
- ▣ History was definitely established as an independent branch of the science of tradition

IBN KHALDUN

- ❑ The most celebrated historian of the medieval period was Ibn Khaldun(A.D 1332-1406)
- ❑ What Thucydides is to Greece, and Tacitus to Rome, Ibn Khaldun is to the Arab world
- ❑ He inaugurated a new school of thought which comes very close to the positivist school of thought in certain respects
- ❑ The great work by which he is known is his 'Universal History', The first book of which deals with the influence of civilization on man
- ❑ The most outstanding part of his work is his introduction, Prolegomena, wherein he as explained the nature of historical facts, their relationships, trends and problems
- ❑ This introduction is so deep and comprehensive that it revolutionized historical thought, and Ibn Khaldun appears to be the first sociologist of the world, and not Auguste Comte

- ❑ The greatest contribution of Ibn Khaldun is his analysis of the science of history which he equates with the science of culture, and properties and behavior of men in order to draw universal conclusion
- ❑ Ibn Khaldun felt that history is not merely the study of events but also their relations among themselves, their meaning and value
- ❑ The new science he envisaged emphasized certain problems
- ❑ First was the influence of environment on social life. Such factors as climate, Vegetation, Fertility and the ways in which men earn their living will have a profound effect on historical events
- ❑ Secondly, he traces the origin and development of society through the ages and examines the impact of the past on the present
- ❑ Thirdly, he lays great emphasis on psychological desires which determines social habits
- ❑ A short autobiography-Al-Tariff also becomes a part of the work

- Science of culture, according to Ibn Khaldun is the mixture of all these three branches of knowledge –knowledge of the truth, the ability for practical actions and perfection of things
- On the question of the genesis of a culture, Khaldun has four causes to explain, namely the material cause, formal, efficient and final causes
- **MATERIAL CAUSE:** He means all the physical factors such as food, Shelter, soil, vegetation, climate and all other material needs
- **FORMAL CAUSE:** Instrument through which culture actually takes shape. In this case he regards the state as the formal cause, which is responsible for bringing into being a culture
- **EFFICIENT CAUSE:** An abstract idea, like the soul in a body and he regards solidarity, harmony, moderation and Justice as efficient causes necessary for the growth of a culture

- ❑ **FINAL CAUSE:** Idea of common goodness
- ❑ In other words he holds economic factors as a material cause, Political factors as formal cause, social factors as an efficient cause and ethical or philosophical factors as the final cause
- ❑ Ibn Khaldun believes that it is in the nature of every culture to undergo a change. Necessity forces these changes to occur
- ❑ There are three kinds of necessities, natural necessity, absolute necessity and necessity under compulsion
- ❑ Ibn Khaldun integrates the science of history with traditional political philosophy, which like medicine or navigation is a skill to guide humanity
- ❑ He believes that physical, geographical, biological, psychological and social factors determine the character and development of a culture

- ❑ His is not the traditional expository technique which views the facts of history, but an extremely critical, analytical and argumentative method
- ❑ Ibn Khaldun's study is remarkable for the critical interpretation
- ❑ He is at once a historian, political theorist, an economist, a sociologist and a philosopher, so original that only the word 'genius' can describe him
- ❑ He was the first person to conceive the idea of writing universal history
- ❑ He started writing an introduction or prolegomena 'Mukkhadama' which grew in to an enormous size of more than 300 pages in which he discussed the science of culture