

COLLECTIVISM AND CLIMATE INFLUENCE: INTERPRETING INDONESIAN SOCIETY THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF IBN KHALDUN

Hafidz Iman, Mohamad Khusnial Muhtar, Ahmad Fatkhur Rohman

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of climate on the formation of social character in Indonesian society based on Ibn Khaldun's theory. In the Muqaddimah, Khaldun argues that hot and warm climates foster collectivism through environmental adaptation. This research employs a philosophical approach and literature analysis to examine the relevance of this theory within the context of Indonesia's tropical climate. The findings indicate that the collectivist character of Indonesian society, as seen in practices such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation), reflects an enduring adaptation to ecological challenges. The study also highlights how Indonesia's agrarian traditions and communal resilience are rooted in climatic necessity. However, the growing impact of globalization and modernity is contributing to a shift toward individualism, disrupting traditional communal patterns. This dynamic tension between collectivist values and individualist tendencies presents new socio-cultural challenges. Ultimately, this study underscores the continued relevance of Ibn Khaldun's environmental theory for interpreting Indonesia's socio-cultural transformations and opens avenues for future interdisciplinary research that bridges philosophy, sociology, and climate studies.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun; Climate; Collectivism; Indonesian society.

INTRODUCTION

In social discourse, there is a prevailing view that the physical environment—such as climate and weather—has a significant influence on human behavior and social structures. The environment is not merely a backdrop for human habitation but functions as a determining factor that shapes traits, habits, and patterns of social interaction (Nurfirdaus, 2019). This approach emphasizes how humans adapt to environmental conditions to survive and to construct civilizations that respond to the geographic challenges they face.

Ibn Khaldun, a prominent 14th-century Islamic philosopher and sociologist, stands as a pioneer in examining the relationship between physical environments and human behavior. In his seminal work *Muqaddimah*, Khaldun highlighted how environmental factors, particularly climate, affect the social dynamics of societies. He observed distinct differences in character and social structures between communities living in hot climates and those in temperate or even cold regions. His ideas laid the foundation for what later became known as environmental determinism in the development of human behavior.

According to Ibn Khaldun, climate not only affects the physical condition of individuals but also shapes psychological, social, and cultural traits. He hypothesized that societies in hot and arid regions, such as parts of Africa and the Middle East, tend to be collectivist. Emphasizing mutual cooperation and strong group solidarity becomes an adaptive strategy to confront harsh environmental conditions (Khaldun, 2004). In contrast, communities in temperate regions, such as Eastern Europe, tend to prioritize individualism, as the relative stability of the environment allows for more autonomous living. This perspective illustrates that climate is not merely a natural setting but also a formative agent of social values and behavior. From here, one may trace how Ibn Khaldun linked climatic conditions to the structure of society.

*Correspondance Author: hafidziman2000@mail.ugm.ac.id

Article History | Submitted: 10 December 2024 | Revised: 7 May 2025 | Accepted: 7 June, 2025 | Publish: 1 July 2025

HOW TO CITE (APA 6th Edition):

Iman, Hafidz., Muhtar, Mohamad Khusnial., Rohman, Ahmad Fatkhur. (2025). Collectivism and Climate Influence: Interpreting Indonesian Society Through the Perspective of Ibn Khaldun. *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam*. 9(1), page.47-58

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.30829/juspi.v9i1.22441>

In *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun divided the world into seven climatic zones and associated geographic conditions with the formation of social character. He posited that communities in temperate zones tend to exhibit well-organized social structures, emotional stability, and a greater receptivity to intellectual development. Conversely, societies in extreme climates—such as the hot southern regions—often develop strong group solidarity as a mechanism for survival (Khaldun, 2004). If Khaldun's view is to be considered universal, it becomes necessary to explore how his concept applies within the Indonesian context—a tropical archipelago with complex cultural dynamics and adaptive social patterns.

Indonesian society is known as one of the world's largest tropical communities, marked by remarkable cultural diversity and plural behavioral patterns. As an archipelagic nation situated along the equator, Indonesia experiences a distinctive tropical climate characterized by warm temperatures year-round, high humidity, and alternating wet and dry seasons. This geographical condition not only shapes the ecological landscape but also plays a significant role in the social, economic, and cultural lives of its people (Nurfajrina, 2023). In this context, understanding how climate influences character and social behavior is crucial to unveiling the secrets behind Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and dynamic societal patterns.

For the Indonesian people, climate plays a role beyond merely determining weather. Many scholars argue that climate contributes to shaping mindsets, behaviors, and modes of adaptation to the environment. Tropical societies are often associated with traits such as flexibility, friendliness, and a close relationship with nature. This is evident in the daily life of Indonesians, who tend to depend on agricultural produce and maintain traditions rich in communal values. According to Nasikun, Indonesian social structure is characterized by two unique features: (1) horizontally, it is marked by the existence of social units based on regional differences; (2) vertically, it reveals sharp distinctions between upper and lower social strata (Nasikun, 1993).

However, a crucial question arises: to what extent is the relationship between climate and social structure universal, or is it merely a product of specific conditions? To what degree has the tropical climate influenced the formation of Indonesia's social structure and collective character from the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's thought? Are the collectivist behaviors and patterns of tropical societies simply an environmental adaptation, or do other factors play a role? How relevant is Ibn Khaldun's theory on the relationship between climate and society for understanding Indonesia's contemporary social challenges? This study is not only essential for understanding the past but also offers insights into addressing future social issues.

In the present context, the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's theory can be further explored to understand the impact of climatic differences on Indonesian society. Prolonged droughts and recurring heatwaves that affect parts of Indonesia significantly shape how people adapt to their environments and socialize with one another. Conversely, cooler and milder weather in mountainous and highland regions also influences local patterns of social interaction. This study aims to address these issues by linking Ibn Khaldun's classical theory with contemporary social phenomena (Ahmadie Toha, 1986).

Accordingly, this article seeks to analyze how Ibn Khaldun's theory on the influence of climate can help explain the socio-cultural characteristics of Indonesian society. Using a philosophical approach, this article not only re-examines Khaldun's ideas but also evaluates their relevance in understanding the dynamics of tropical societies in modern-day Indonesia. This study is expected to offer fresh insights into the relationship between humans, the environment, and social structures in the Indonesian geographical context, while also providing a philosophical reflection for addressing future societal challenges.

In the existing literature, numerous studies have examined Ibn Khaldun's ideas on the influence of climate on human character, particularly through his magnum opus, *Muqaddimah*. Ibn Khaldun asserted that climatic conditions affect human traits and behavior; societies in hot regions possess characteristics different from those in cooler regions. Nevertheless, most studies discussing this theory tend to be normative and descriptive, limited to conceptual exposition without direct

application to specific socio-cultural contexts. In the case of Indonesia, explicit application of the theory of climatic influence on societal character remains rare, especially within an interpretative framework that connects it to contemporary social dynamics. This opens up space to actualize Ibn Khaldun's classical theory in interpreting the realities of Indonesian society, which is marked by cultural complexity within a tropical climate.

On the other hand, research on collectivism and individualism within Indonesian society has been extensively developed in the fields of social psychology and cultural anthropology. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) found that Indonesian culture tends toward collectivism, where individual identity is strongly tied to group interests. Markus and Kitayama (1991) likewise showed that in collectivist cultures, self-formation occurs through deep attachment to group norms and social expectations. However, these studies have focused more on psychological and sociological aspects without engaging with classical philosophical frameworks such as Ibn Khaldun's. Moreover, few investigations have considered the shift from collectivist to individualist value orientations as a social phenomenon connected to environmental or climatic factors, particularly from the perspective of social philosophy.

Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun's concept of 'asabiyyah has been studied in various contexts, especially in relation to politics and ideology. Reni Agustin (2024), for instance, compared the concept of 'asabiyyah with the values of Pancasila, highlighting the contrast between exclusive group solidarity and national inclusivity. Tri Wahyuni Handayani (2011) examined the relevance of 'asabiyyah in relation to political participation within Indonesian society. However, both studies concentrate on the political and ideological domains rather than on everyday socio-cultural phenomena. Thus far, no research has yet offered an integrated analysis combining Ibn Khaldun's theory of climatic influence with his concept of 'asabiyyah to examine the shifting dynamics of collectivism and individualism in contemporary Indonesian society. This article, therefore, seeks to fill that research gap by providing a reflective philosophical analysis of the relationship between climate and the transformation of collectivist-individualist values in Indonesia through the lens of Ibn Khaldun's thought.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method employed in this study on Ibn Khaldun is library research, which focuses on the collection, examination, and analysis of various sources of literature as the primary data (Zed, 2008). This method was chosen due to its compatibility with the research objective: to explore and understand the dynamics of Indonesian society within a tropical climate in the context of contemporary life. The research process was carried out systematically through the following steps: literature collection, screening and selection using a philosophical approach, and finally, synthesis and recommendations (Zed, 2008). The following outlines these stages in greater detail.

The initial stage of this research involved collecting library data. In this phase, the researcher reviewed various reliable sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other academic documents relevant to the theme. The primary focus of the literature examined includes: Ibn Khaldun's thoughts on climatic theory, analysis of factors influencing human character, and efforts to contextualize his theory within Indonesia's climatic reality and evolving social dynamics. These sources were obtained through searches on digital platforms such as Google Scholar and Library Genesis, as well as print collections in local academic libraries. During this stage, the researcher downloaded and cataloged all potentially relevant references—historical, theoretical, and contextual.

Once the data were compiled, screening and selection of the literature were conducted to ensure the relevance, validity, and currency of the sources used. The selected literature was categorized into three main groups: 1). historical and conceptual studies related to climatic change (Nazhariyat al-Aqalim), 2). literature on individualism and collectivism, and, 3). studies examining social systems in Indonesia. Redundant, less credible, or irrelevant sources were eliminated to maintain analytical focus and ensure academic rigor.

The next stage involved philosophical analysis of the literature. At this point, the analysis was carried out by critically and comprehensively examining, identifying, comparing, and synthesizing findings from the selected sources (Baker & Zubair, 2020). The researcher first analyzed fundamental concepts such as changes in hot and cold climates, the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, and the social characteristics of Indonesian society. This was followed by contextualizing Indonesia's socio-geographic condition as a tropical country with consistently hot and humid weather throughout the year. This process involved critical interpretation of how collective traits in Indonesian society—such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) in rural areas, social bonding in religious rituals, and communal adaptation to wet and dry seasons—can be understood through Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework concerning the relationship between climate and social structure.

The final stage consisted of drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations. Based on the analytical findings, this study concludes that Ibn Khaldun's theory on the influence of climate on social character possesses strong conceptual relevance when contextualized within the life of Indonesian society in a tropical climate. The conclusion was drawn by examining the correlation between the theory of *al-aqalim* in the *Muqaddimah* and the manifestation of collectivism in local social practices such as *gotong royong*, rural solidarity, and community-based social relations. This conclusion is followed by recommendations for future research to adopt interdisciplinary approaches that combine social philosophy with empirical studies—such as anthropology and field sociology—to further examine the extent to which geographic and climatic factors influence collectivist patterns across different regions in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A Brief Overview of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun, whose full name is Waliuddin Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Khaldun al-Hadhrami, was born in Tunisia on the 1st of Ramadan in the year 732 AH, corresponding to May 27, 1332 CE. His ancestors came from a tribe in southern Arabia and were said to have migrated to Spain in the 8th century, inspired by the Islamic conquests and victories in the region. They settled in Comona, a small town in Spain, which became the first settlement of Ibn Khaldun's forebears (Raliby, 1978).

Ibn Khaldun was a thinker who made significant contributions to the understanding of the development of civilization, particularly within the framework of Islamic thought. His ideas, compiled in his magnum opus *Muqaddimah*, have served as an enduring source of inspiration for intellectuals across both the Islamic and Western worlds in laying the foundations of civilizational theory. British historian A.J. Toynbee even praised the *Muqaddimah* as a monumental and immensely valuable work. Likewise, the orientalist Franz Rosenthal, who studied and translated the *Muqaddimah*, noted that Ibn Khaldun was an extraordinary thinker—remarking that while many people may witness history, not all can write it as Khaldun did (Sumantri, 2020).

Growing up in a religious environment, Ibn Khaldun pursued intensive studies in Islamic discourse, literature, and law. He traveled extensively to countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, Algeria, and ultimately Egypt. These journeys were motivated by political instability and the intellectual tradition of seeking knowledge from esteemed scholars (*masyaikh*) scattered across various regions. From a young age, Ibn Khaldun demonstrated a keen interest in social, historical, and political discourse, and during his lifetime, he held several strategic positions, including that of Chief Justice.

His thought was greatly influenced by the cultural milieu of the Middle East and Islamic societies. Moreover, he paid close attention to the lives of Arab tribes, which he later synthesized into theoretical frameworks in sociology and the historical evolution of societies in the Middle East—insights that remain influential to this day. His seminal work, *al-'Ibar wa Diwan al-Mubtada' wa al-Khabar fi Ayyam al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar*, is an empirical historical analysis composed in several volumes. In the *Muqaddimah*—its introductory volume—Ibn Khaldun

introduced a distinct terminology for the study of social phenomena, presenting an in-depth exploration of various aspects of social structure and societal dynamics (Yatim, 1985).

In addition to Middle Eastern cultural influences, Khaldun's thinking was shaped by the ideas of earlier philosophers such as Aristotle and al-Farabi, both of whom also addressed the relationship between geography, environment, and human behavior. Aristotle, particularly in his *Politics*, argued that people in colder regions tend to be physically resilient but intellectually limited, whereas those in hotter regions are generally more intelligent but less enduring (Aristoteles, 2007). Al-Farabi expanded on this notion by emphasizing the environment's role in shaping culture and morality. Inspired by these thinkers, Ibn Khaldun developed a more holistic theory of environmental influence.

In his *Muqaddimah*, three major ideas stand out as particularly significant: 'Asabiyyah (social solidarity), Tabi'at al-'Umran (interaction between rural and urban populations), and Nazariyyat Atsar al-Aqalim (the influence of climate on human character). Among these, his theory on the effects of climate change is especially noteworthy, as it goes beyond merely observing how the environment affects physical conditions. It posits that social and psychological character is also formed by the ecological conditions in which people live. This concept remains highly relevant today, particularly in discussions of the prevalence of collectivist and individualist tendencies across various countries (Khaldun, 2004).

Climate as a Social Determinant

The author aims to further clarify some of the fundamental distinctions between ethical-academic reasoning and ideological-theological-political discourse patterns or reasoning in this sub-chapter, drawing on the numerous prior explanations stated above. Between textual and contextual reasoning, between ideological-theocentric and philosophical-anthropocentric-academic reasoning, and between political reasoning and sensible politics, there are a number of significant distinctions between the two types of reasoning.

In his study of societal development—particularly concerning unity and cooperation—Ibn Khaldun identified several key factors, including religion, 'asabiyyah (group solidarity), lineage, geographical environment, and skin color. However, this article focuses on one central factor: the geographical environment, more specifically, the influence of climatic change.

In his work *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun classified the world's climate into seven distinct zones based on his geographical observations. These zones reflect significant variations in climatic conditions, ranging from the extreme heat of the southern regions to the sharp cold of the northern areas. He also identified regions with more balanced climates, where the difference between heat and cold does not reach extremes, thus producing moderate conditions (Khaldun, 2004). His observations emphasize the complex ways in which climatic characteristics affect human life and culture.

To grasp the complexity of the relationship between environment and human character according to Ibn Khaldun, one must examine his territorial classification. By dividing the world into seven zones, he outlined how geographic conditions deeply influence physical appearance, behavioral traits, and the social order of communities. According to Khaldun, the zones with the most extreme heat—Zones One and Two in the South—encompass countries on the African continent, particularly in the southern parts, such as Nigeria, Mali, and the region of Takrur (present-day South Sudan).

As Abdurrahman Kasdi explains, the influence of such climatic conditions extends beyond the physical domain; it also impacts the character and behavior of the people living in those regions (Kasdi, 2014). Ibn Khaldun believed that people residing in Zone One faced great difficulty in meeting basic needs, such as food and clothing, and that their homes were often made of clay with roofs constructed from tree leaves (Khaldun, 2004).

Residents of Zone Two, though still subject to intense heat, experienced less extreme conditions compared to those in Zone One. People living in Zone Two—such as parts of Egypt,

including Nubia and Aswan—encountered climates similar to Zone One but not as severe. These regions border Sudan, which contributes to Nubia's predominately hot climate. In this area, the Nile River plays a crucial role in sustaining agrarian life, reflecting the population's adaptation to hot climates. Nonetheless, resource scarcity continues to affect their collective labor patterns. In addition, many inhabitants raise livestock such as goats, cattle, bees, and silkworms for breeding and resource extraction (Ahmadie Toha, 1986).

Communities that depend on farming and animal husbandry are inevitably oriented toward deserts and vast grasslands, which enable their livestock to survive. The desert acts as an ecological buffer for their agrarian activities, creating a landscape that demands continual adaptation. These communities not only care for their livestock but also embody a symbiotic relationship between the survival of these animals and the fulfillment of communal needs in an open and harsh environment.

Ibn Khaldun further observed that people living in Zone Three exhibit physical and behavioral traits distinct from those in Zones One and Two in the southern regions. Zone Three enjoys a more moderate climate, with weather conditions that are generally more comfortable. This contrasts sharply with the extreme climates that shape the lifestyles and behavioral patterns of populations in hotter, more barren southern areas. According to Ibn Khaldun, inhabitants of Zone Three are described as having distinctive physical features, including lighter, sometimes reddish skin tones and striking blue eyes (Khaldun, 2004). Their temperaments and behaviors are also characterized as being more composed and peaceful.

Countries located in Zone Three include the regions of Dar'ah, Marrakesh, Sijilmasa, and Fez—all situated in Morocco. Additionally, Tunisia, Algeria, Ahwaz (a region in Iran), and parts of Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia also fall within this zone. This zone can be regarded as nearly perfect in terms of climate. Its mild weather strongly supports intellectual activity and learning. Not surprisingly, many thinkers and prominent Islamic scholars, including Ibn Khaldun himself, emerged from or studied in these areas.

For Ibn Khaldun, Zone Four represents the most ideal zone, possessing a balanced climate. He referred to it as *al-aqalim al-mu'taadilah*—regions with moderate and stable climatic conditions. According to him, the inhabitants of this zone are friendly, and their homes are better constructed and adorned with local handicrafts (Khaldun, 2004). The temperate and balanced climate stimulates intellectual development; indeed, the people from this zone are often recognized as experts in various fields of knowledge. The natural conditions of their environment support reflection and the pursuit of learning, contributing to a dignified and respectable demeanor.

In his view, this climatic balance has a positive effect on intelligence, technological advancement, and even public morality. As a result, these societies are known for their dignity and wisdom in both behavior and social interactions (Khaldun, 2004). This Zone Four—often referred to today as the “ideal zone”—fosters an environment that allows its inhabitants to grow holistically, balancing both physical and spiritual needs. The countries within this ideal zone are largely located in southern Europe but also include parts of Africa and Asia, such as Andalusia and Cordoba in Spain, Istanbul in Turkey, Greece, portions of Greater Syria (Tartus), and a small part of Iran.

The farther north a region lies, the colder its climate becomes. Conversely, the farther south, the hotter it tends to be. This geographical positioning is what makes Zone Four ideal—it lies between the two climatic extremes. Countries within Zone Five experience relatively colder temperatures, though not as extreme as Zones Six and Seven. While Zone Four includes parts of Southern Europe, Zone Five encompasses regions of Western Europe such as France, areas in Italy (Rome and Venice), parts of Germany, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

Eastern and Northern Europe, described by Ibn Khaldun as Zones Six and Seven, are characterized by extreme cold. His observations of these regions demonstrate how environmental conditions shape the social character and lifestyle of their inhabitants. Countries such as Norway, Denmark, Lithuania, and parts of Russia that fall within these zones often experience harsh cold climates (Khaldun, 2004).

In Ibn Khaldun's view, southern regions with hot climates tend to emphasize tribal solidarity. Their collective and social spirit is heightened by several factors, including 'asabiyyah (group solidarity), the necessity of rural living that compels individuals to engage in social life, the demands of trade, and the need for cooperation in maintaining their dwellings (Raliby, 1978).

To reinforce this idea, Ibn Khaldun affirms in his *Muqaddimah* that it is human nature to live within society, declaring that (al-Insan Madaniyun Bithobi'atihi) (Khaldun, 2004). For him, social life is a necessary condition for the development of civilization. This concept is central to his work, as he closely observed human behavior and its climatic determinants.

The collective spirit that Khaldun described is especially evident in Zones One, Two, and the southern parts of Zone Three. He argued that human effort alone is insufficient to secure daily sustenance in hot climates; people must work together to gather and store staple foods. Furthermore, most food requires additional preparation such as grinding and cooking, processes that demand cooperation.

Performing all these tasks individually, according to Khaldun, is virtually impossible. Thus, reliance on others becomes a necessity. With mutual dependency comes a spirit of collaboration and assistance (at-ta'awun bayna al-nās), which enables individuals to meet their daily needs. Therefore, social life becomes essential in hot-climate societies—without collectivism, human existence would be incomplete (Khaldun, 2004).

Challenging environmental conditions push these communities to rely on each other for survival. Access to food and other natural resources requires cooperation and social engagement. Additionally, the culture of kinship and tribal affiliation—part of the Middle Eastern sociocultural heritage—has long cultivated values of solidarity. Ibn Khaldun termed this spirit of cohesion 'asabiyyah, or social solidarity.

Besides geographical factors, religion also plays a role in shaping collectivist behavior. Rosenthal, in his book *The Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, affirms that religion is a highly significant factor in fostering collectivism according to Khaldun. For him, religion unites people across ethnic and tribal lines and eliminates jealousy and suspicion within society. As Rosenthal translates:

"Only by God's help in establishing His religion do individual desires come together in agreement to press their claims, and hearts become united...religious colouring does away with mutual jealousy and envy among people who share in a group feeling (assabiyya) and causes concentration upon the truth. When people (by the help of religion) come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object one of common accord. The members of the dynasty they attack may be many times as numerous as they. But their purposes differ" (Rosenthal, 2005).

Examining Contemporary Indonesian Society from the Perspective of Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's magnum opus emphasizes the influence of climate as a social determinant that shapes the characteristics and behavior of societies. According to him, physical environments—especially climate—affect patterns of thinking, social structures, and the way of life of particular communities. The Indonesian archipelago, dominated by warm and temperate climates, provides a relevant context for understanding how its people build social solidarity and develop adaptive interaction patterns in response to geographical and climatic conditions. The warm-to-hot climate directly influences Indonesia's agrarian lifestyles and work culture, aligning with Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework.

Such climatic conditions contribute to the formation of communities that are resilient, semi-nomadic, and dependent on communal structures for survival due to the agrarian nature of their societies (Arif, 2015). People must face environmental challenges such as seasonal changes, irrigation needs, and natural disasters like floods and droughts. These conditions have fostered a social character marked by endurance and a strong work ethic in confronting nature's unpredictability. In this regard, values of togetherness and collective labor are not merely

functional aspects of daily life but have become deeply embedded in Indonesia's ideological and historical foundation.

In the course of Indonesian history, President Soekarno once proclaimed that the five principles of Pancasila could be condensed into a single core idea—Ekasila, which manifests in the spirit of gotong royong (mutual cooperation). Gotong royong is a hallmark of Indonesian society that unites people from Sabang to Merauke. It is an undeniable part of the nation's historical heritage. Indonesia itself is an embodiment of collectivism—a form of nationalism that binds its people. Every element of the nation and each citizen must continuously recognize that Indonesia represents unity in diversity, known as *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Sihombing, 2009).

Further supporting this view, Clifford Geertz, in his seminal ethnographic work, argued that the practice of gotong royong among farming communities—especially collective work during planting and harvest seasons—is not merely a cultural tradition but an adaptive response to ecological and demographic pressures. In what he termed pooling labor, such collective work becomes a social strategy for sustaining local economies amid stagnating productivity and increasing population density within a rigid agrarian structure (Geertz, 1963).

With its vast ethnic diversity reflecting the multifaceted character and soul of the Indonesian nation, the country continues to build harmony through collective unity and mutual consensus. This ongoing process of nation-building is not grounded in a dichotomy of majority versus minority but rather in the unifying power of collectivism (Lumintang S, 2009). The spirit of collectivism in Indonesia is evident in several core elements that underpin its social and structural relationships.

The first element is community, defined as groups of people engaging in social interactions across various dimensions of life. In this context, the community includes all Indonesian citizens who are interlinked within the broader social and cultural fabric of the nation. The second element is consensus, which functions as a guiding principle for social and civic life. Finally, the third element is shared goals, or collective aspirations that serve as a unifying vision (Rahmat Khairul et al., 2020). Indonesia's national goals, as articulated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, include protecting all its people and territory, advancing general welfare, and contributing to global peace and justice based on freedom, harmony, and social justice. These goals reflect a unified vision of building a prosperous and harmonious nation (Suhardin, 2012).

Therefore, the collectivist solidarity of Indonesian society is particularly evident in rural areas, where communities must work together to safeguard rice crops and other agricultural products, largely due to the constantly changing climatic conditions. This resonates with what Ibn Khaldun described in his *Muqaddimah*: rural societies (*badawi*) tend to prioritize cooperation and mutual assistance in cultivating and protecting their agricultural yields. For instance, harvesting rice requires collaboration within a group or community through collective labor, as people understand that managing and organizing large rice fields cannot be accomplished by one or two individuals alone. Prolonged seasons of rain or drought also instill resilience and adaptability in these communities, enabling them to endure and respond effectively to climatic fluctuations.

Eko Handoyo also discusses the lifestyle patterns of paddy and dry-field farmers, noting that these agricultural communities tend to settle in clusters and establish their dwellings close to their fields. This mirrors Ibn Khaldun's description of *badawi* communities, who emphasize group solidarity and collectivism (Handoyo, 2015). However, there is a subtle yet notable distinction between Ibn Khaldun's portrayal of Arab *badawi* and the context of Indonesian rural society: while *badawi* communities in the Arabian Peninsula are largely nomadic, rural communities in Indonesia are sedentary.

Collectivist culture is deeply rooted and dominant across Asia, but this paper particularly highlights Southeast Asia, of which Indonesia is a part. Indonesia, as one of the Southeast Asian nations, exhibits highly developed collectivist practices. Geertz, in his work *The Religion of Java*, elaborates on this by exploring the role of religion in society. Drawing on Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*,

he emphasizes how “rituals” serve to reinforce traditional social bonds among individuals (Clifford Geertz, 2017)

Geertz specifically focuses on religious rituals in Javanese rural communities, where social and religious events, such as selamatan (communal thanksgiving ceremonies) or collective prayers after funerals, involve the active participation of others. These ritual activities strengthen traditional social ties among individuals. Moreover, such rituals underscore how the social structure of a group is reinforced and preserved through the ritualistic symbolization of the social values that underpin that structure (Geertz, 1992).

A Critical Reflection of Ibn Khaldun’s Thought in the Indonesian Context

Ibn Khaldun classified societies into two main categories: simple or rural societies (*al-‘umrān al-badawī*) and advanced, urbanized societies (*al-‘umrān al-ḥaḍarī*) (Nadawi, 1987). In analyzing these two broad societal types, Ibn Khaldun grounded his framework on the principle that society is an entity in constant transformation—from a state of simplicity to increasing complexity (Faghirzadeh, 1982).

In line with this, Javanese philosopher Ki Ageng Suryomentaram argued that collectivist perspectives tend to be associated with communities in the “East,” emphasizing the essential nature of humans as social beings. He stated:

“Humans are of a kind whose way of life is group-based, much like bees. In a group, individuals give and receive benefits from one another. This mutual exchange is called gotong royong or communal life. The manner in which these benefits are exchanged can be seen in this way: for instance, a blacksmith’s work is nothing but striking metal, yet he eats rice, even though he does not plant it. This is only possible because of mutual benefit-sharing between the farmer and the blacksmith.”

He further emphasized:

“For human life to be sustainable, it must be lived within a community. If someone lives in isolation—without interaction with others—they would perish, because they cannot fulfill their own life needs.” (Suryomentaram, 1974).

Meanwhile, Huijbers placed emphasis on the individual. He argued that the existence of society depends on the coexistential relationships between individuals. Based on the thoughts of both thinkers, it can be concluded that the essential element of social life is the human being, as both an individual and a social creature. From these two fundamental aspects arise two corresponding worldviews: individualism and collectivism (Huijbers, 1986).

Today, Indonesian society is grappling with ideological and cultural tensions arising from the clash between traditional and modern segments of society. Traditional communities tend to resist the influence of foreign cultures, especially those from the West. Sociologically, society is undergoing rapid social change due to globalization, which has led to disorientation, displacement, and alienation—particularly among certain segments of the population—conditions that foster social unrest (Syaefudin, 2007).

Historically, modern societies emerged amidst the currents of social disintegration—a process that gave rise to disintegrative tendencies within the structure of modern nation-states. Although various economic and cultural institutions are rooted in local traditions, modern society continues to evolve under the influence of disintegrative norms. It is therefore not an exaggeration to claim that modern society is a product of the laws of disintegration—existing alongside religion but also generating new forms of disintegration across multiple dimensions of life.

In the Indonesian context, the forces of globalization have accelerated this process. One of its most visible effects is the growing prevalence of individualism in social life. Gradually but steadily, the collective aspect that once defined Indonesian society is beginning to fade. According to Arif, individualism refers to the process of human individuation—as autonomous entities separated from one another (Arif, 2015). Moreover, in capitalist societies, individualism has become

a dominant ideology—viewed as a corrosive belief system that fundamentally opposes collective and traditional forms of existence (Bryan, 2012).

These changes demonstrate that the forces of globalization and modernity do not merely affect economic and technological domains, but also seek to reshape the structure of social consciousness. Individual responses to rights and personal existence are becoming increasingly prominent, leading to heightened sensitivity toward others' behaviors in shared social spaces. In this regard, we begin to observe a dimension that Ibn Khaldun's theory does not fully address: that while climate and geography can shape collective solidarity, the forces of contemporary globalization may erode deeply rooted collectivist tendencies within societies.

However, recent developments in environmental sociology reveal the complexity of this phenomenon. Douarin and Hinks, in their cross-cultural study, show that not all forms of individualism are atomistic in nature. They distinguish between egoistic individualism—which tends to undermine social cohesion—and universalistic individualism, which can, in fact, foster collective action for the common good, such as in environmental activism (Douarin & Hinks, 2024). This insight expands the analytical framework of Ibn Khaldun by suggesting that in modern societies, solidarity may emerge from responsible individual awareness, not solely from traditional communal bonds.

Ibn Khaldun's notion of climate-influenced collectivism offers a compelling foundation for understanding the social dynamics of communities, including those in Indonesia. Yet, in the modern context, this theory faces significant challenges from the realities of globalization and the rising dominance of individualism. The collective spirit that once characterized traditional societies is gradually being diminished by rapid social transformations, resulting in cultural disorientation and ideological conflict (Arif, 2015).

Émile Durkheim, through his concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity, also offers an implicit critique of Ibn Khaldun's position that climate acts as a primary determinant of collectivism (Durkheim, 1984). Durkheim argued that social solidarity is more closely tied to the level of social complexity than to physical environmental factors. Mechanical solidarity, for instance, arises in simpler societies with minimal division of labor, where shared values and homogeneity of functions bind individuals collectively.

In contrast, organic solidarity emerges in more complex societies, where specialized divisions of labor create interdependence among individuals. In this context, the collectivism observed by Khaldun in Middle Eastern societies may be more accurately interpreted as a form of mechanical solidarity rooted in relatively simple social structures, rather than solely as a consequence of a hot climate. Thus, Durkheim's framework extends Khaldun's analysis by demonstrating that patterns of collectivism and individualism are more profoundly shaped by the degree of social differentiation and structural dynamics than by geography alone.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the influence of climate on the social character of communities, as articulated by Ibn Khaldun. In the Indonesian context—characterized by a tropical climate—collectivist traits are strongly evident in traditions such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and collective labor. These findings affirm the relevance of Khaldun's theory for understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of Indonesian society. However, modernity and globalization pose new challenges by shifting social patterns from collectivism toward individualism. This transition creates a tension between traditional values rooted in communal solidarity and modern values centered on individual autonomy. Therefore, adaptive social strategies are needed to maintain a balance between deeply rooted local values and the demands of modernization.

By integrating Ibn Khaldun's classical theory with contemporary phenomena, this study offers a comprehensive framework for interpreting social dynamics in Indonesia. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of social policies that preserve collective traditions while accommodating and responding to changing times. The study also serves as a philosophical

reflection on the necessity of preserving the nation's collective identity amidst the pressures of globalization.

Nonetheless, this research has several limitations. It focuses solely on the Indonesian social context without conducting comparative analysis with other regions that possess different climatic characteristics. Future studies may expand upon this work through comparative analyses to assess the extent to which climate influences collectivism and individualism across diverse cultures. Additionally, this study has not yet explored the impact of urbanization and technological advancement on social patterns. Further investigation into these aspects would enhance our understanding of social dynamics in the modern era.

REFERENCES

- Arif Mohammad., (2015), *Individualisme Global Di Indonesia (Studi Tentang Gaya Hidup Individualis Masyarakat Indonesia di Era Global)*, Kediri: STAIN Kediri Press.
- Aristoteles, t.N., (2007), *La Politica (politik)*, Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Bakker Anton & Zubair Charis. (2020). *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Dawood, N. J., (1987), *The Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun: An Introduction to History*.
- Douarin, Elodie. Hinks Tim. (2024). Individualism, universalism and climate change. *Journal of Institutional Economics*. Vol.20
- Durkheim, Emile., (1984), *The Division of Labour in Society*, London: McMillan Press.
- Faghirzadeh, S., (1982), *Sociology of Sociology*, Tehran: The Soroush Press.
- Geertz Clifford. (1963). *Agricultural Involution: The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Geertz, Clifford., (1992), *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, Terj. Budi Santoso, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.
- Geertz, Clifford., (2017), *The Religion of Java*, Chicago: Chicago Press.
- Handoyo, Eko., (2015), *Studi Masyarakat Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Huijbers, Theo ., (1986), *Manusia merungkan Dirinya*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.
- Kasdi Abdurrahman. (2014). Pemikiran Ibnu Khaldun dalam Perspektif Sosiologi dan Filsafat Sejarah. *Jurnal fikrah* Vol 2 No.1.
- Khaldun, Ibn (2005), diterjemahkan oleh Ahmadie Thoha, *Muqaddimah*, Cet. V, Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus.
- Khaldun, Ibnu., (2004), *Tarikh Ibnu Khaldun (Muqoddimah)*, Tarkhrij Hadits oleh Abdullah Mohammed Darwish, Jilid 1, Damaskus: Dar ye'rab.
- Lumintang, S., (2009), *Re-Indonesiasi Bangsa*, Batu: Multimedia YPPIL.
- Nadwi, S.S., (1987), *Ibn Khaldun and Primitive Culture*, Al-Ilm.
- Nurfajrina Azkia. (2023). DetikEdu. <https://www.detik.com/edu/detikpedia/d-7028389/ini-pengaruh-iklim-terhadap-keragaman-sosial-budaya-di-indonesia> Diakses pada hari Selasa 6 Mei 2025 Pukul 20.54.
- Nurfirdaus Nunu. (2019). Studi Tentang Pembentukan Kebiasaan Dan Perilaku Sosial Siswa (Studi Kasus Di Sdn 1 Windujanten). *Jurnal Lensa Pendas*, Vol.4 No.1.
- Rahmat, Khairul et al. (2020). Kolektivitas Sebagai Sistem Nilai Pancasila Dalam Perkembangan Lingkungan Strategis Di Indonesia: Suatu Studi Reflektif. *Jurnal Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. Vol.7 No.2
- Raliby, Osman., (1978), *Ibnu Khaldun tentang Masyarakat dan Negara*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.

- Rosenthal Franz. (2005). *The Muqaddimah – An Introduction to History by Ibn Khaldun*. New Jersey: Princeton.
- Saumantri, Theguh., Abdillah., (2020), Teori Ashabiyah Ibnu Khaldun Sebagai Model Perkembangan Peradaban Manusia, *Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam (Tamaddun)*, Vol.8.
- Sihombing, L. , (2009), Hakikat Kolektivitas dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa Indonesia, *Jurnal Amanat Agung*, Vol. 5, No (2).
- Suhardin, Yohanes., (2012), Peranan Negara dan Hukum dalam Memberantas Kemiskinan dengan Mewujudkan Kesejahteraan Umum, *Jurnal Hukum dan Pembangunan*, Vol 42, No (2).
- Suryomentaram, Ki Ageng .,(1974), *Filsafat Rasa Hidup*, Jakarta: Idayu.
- Syaefudin, Asep ., (2007), *Merukunkan Umat Beragama*, Jakarta: Grafindo Khazanah Ilmu.
- Turner, S. Bryan., (2012), *Relasi Agama dan Teori Sosial Kontemporer*, Jogjakarta: IRCiSoD.
- Yatim, Badri ., (1985), *Ibnu Khaldun: Riwayat dan Karyanya*, Jakarta: Grafiti Pers.
- Zed (2008). *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*. Yogyakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.