

IBN KHALDŪN ON THE FATE OF ISLAMIC SCIENCE
AFTER THE 11th CENTURY

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Recent studies in the history of Islamic science illustrate that Islam's contributions were richer and more profound than was previously thought. In their attempt to provide answers to what happened to Islamic science after the eleventh century, historians and scholars construct a simplified model that describes all branches of Islamic science in terms of failure. In this article, Ibn Khaldūn's analysis of the fate of Islamic science will be examined to show his insightful understanding of, and the failure of scholars in, understanding what happened.

Keywords: Islamic science; Ibn Khaldūn; golden age of Islamic science; decline theory; handmaiden approach to history of science.

Dominant Understanding: the Decline Theory

The enterprise of science in Islamic civilization is often periodized into a golden age followed by decline.¹ The golden age is considered to have come into existence through a gigantic endeavor to acquire and translate the ancient sciences of the Greeks between the eighth and ninth centuries. The translations era was followed by two centuries of splendid original thinking and contributions, and is known as the "golden age" of Islamic science. This so-called "golden age" is supposed to have lasted from the end of the ninth to the end of the eleventh century. The era after this

1. George Saliba, *Al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-'Ilmi: Nash'atuhu Wa Ta'awuruhu* (Beirut: Balamand University, 1998).

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