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The Textualization of the Imazighen:
A Comparison of Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun

by

John Xavier Barrow

Under the Direction of Allen Fromherz, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Georgia State University

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ABSTRACT

This work compares the works of Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun and how they perceived the Imazighen (also known as Berbers) of North Africa in their own contexts. Pliny the Elder's Roman stoic values placed great importance on agriculture and urbanized life. While he described urbanized and Romanized Imazighen favorably, his portrayal of nomadic Imazighen in North Africa in his *Natural History* was often critical. Ibn Khaldun also knew of the destructive potential of nomads in many instances, but he also realized that they had the ability to renew and create new dynasties. *Kitab al-'Ibar* praises the health and tribal cohesion of the nomadic groups of North Africa, which in his theory of history, drive the cycle of urbanization and the rise and falls of dynasties. Both transmit underlying themes of African agency and traditional cultures that puncture through the various changes in the region.

INDEX WORDS: Pliny the Elder, Ibn Khaldun, Amazigh, Imazighen, Berbers, North Africa

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2024

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1 COMPARING SOURCES, COMPARING PERSPECTIVES

This thesis compares the works of the classical Latin writer Pliny the Elder and the fourteenth century Arabic historian Ibn Khaldun. More specifically, it strives to compare the author's works in terms of what they recorded about the Imazighen of North Africa in their respective contexts. Pliny and Ibn Khaldun were highly involved in the mechanics of empires and state building in their own ways, each both living, working, and writing in the region of North Africa and interacting on different levels with the North Africans themselves. Their writing is not only informed by the North Africans, but by their own unique experiences which cannot be said of other historic authors who created ethnographies, geographies, or histories. Although comparisons of ancient and medieval authors have been created, a direct comparison between these two authors on this subject has yet to be extrapolated. These authors are not necessarily unique in the historiography of North Africa, but offer interesting intersections about the North Africans, their place in relation to Empire, their contributions to civilization, and how they were often shoved into a loaded binary worldview of perceived savagery. By detailing the Imazighen textually, they are recorded as active agents of history, whether the authors are conscious of it or not.

1.1 Historical Context and Sources

Gaius Plinius Secundus was born in 23 or 24 CE in Novum Comum (now Como, Italy). Born into the equestrian class of an early Roman Empire expanded by Augustus and Tiberius Caesar, Pliny fulfilled his family's socio-economic role by rising in the ranks in his military career, serving as a procurator in various regions after years of military campaigns.¹ Starting In

¹ Ronald Syme. "Pliny the Procurator." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 73 (1969): 201–36. 205.

the mid 40's CE, he served throughout Germania, becoming a cavalry officer. It was during this time that he started an amicable relationship with the future emperor Titus, and began writing.² After a short retirement, the civil war and year of the Four Emperors gave Pliny new opportunities, and his ties with Titus provided him with closer appointments to the Flavian dynasty, which commenced with the resounding succession of Emperor Vespasian.³ Pliny was appointed procurator of various provinces including regions of Hispania, Africa, and Gaul. These positions, his travels, and access to various kinds of literature informed and inspired his writings.⁴ Pliny's last appointment was as commander of the fleet at Misenum, on the Bay of Naples, where in 79 CE he rushed into Pompeii after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius to rescue people and died there when he inhaled toxic fumes while recording the natural effects of the volcano.⁵ Pliny had written prolifically, including on histories, wars, orators, education, linguistics, and biographies by the time of his death at age 55.⁶

Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* or *Natural History* was conceived as a literary encyclopedia.⁷ He dedicated his work to Titus of the Flavian Dynasty, of which would usher in political stability and the Silver Age of Roman Literature, which blossomed after the odious emperor Nero.⁸ *Natural History* itself, may have been an attempt to preserve human knowledge from the destruction of suppressive rulers like Nero. Although Pliny was an aristocrat, he

² *Ibid.*, 205.

³ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴ Murphy, Trevor Morgan. *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 3.

⁵ French, Roger Kenneth and Frank Greenaway. *Science in the Early Roman Empire: Pliny the Elder, his Sources and Influence*. Totowa, N.J: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986. 9.

⁶ Murphy. *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 3.

⁷ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

presented his work as a practical source for the common Roman citizen and laborer.⁹ Whether Pliny really intended his work for the average layman to use or a way to leave his own legacy tied to the ruling Roman dynasty, the author has left very promising insight to the ancient frame of mind.

Abū Zayd ‘Abd ar-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Khaldun al-Hadrami was born May 27th, 1332 in Tunis, the capital of the Hafsid kingdom.¹⁰ Ibn Khaldun, as he is most often referred to, grew up in a politically divided North Africa, one that was recovering from the fallout of the two largest Amazigh caliphates in history: the Almoravids, who were taken over by the Almohads, which in turn were usurped and divided into smaller kingdoms by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹¹ Although Ibn Khaldun claimed that his family that were centered in North Africa and al-Andalus were a pure line from southeast Yemen, it is more likely that he had a mixture of local Amazigh background.¹² In the middle of the fourteenth century, Plague killed many around him, and wanting to gain experience he left Tunis with a patron, Ibn Tafragin, on his first military campaign.¹³ This would be the start of a long and complex life of politics, war, treachery, and redemption. By 1359, Ibn Khaldun had become a practical statesman for an aspiring leader and he rallied various tribes for the support of his new patron, Abu Salim, who successfully overthrew his rival in Fez.¹⁴ After imprisonment, from a usurper, he made his way to Grenada, again embroiled in violent politics and later returned to Marinid Morocco to serve

⁹ Carey, Sorchia. *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture: Art and Empire in the Natural History*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003. 15-16.

¹⁰ Robert Irwin. *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018. ix.

¹¹ Bennison. *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 2.

¹² Fromherz, Allen J. *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. 43.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

‘Abd al-’Aziz.¹⁵ While hiding from old enemies in a remote fortress in the mid 1370’s Ibn Khaldun started to write a history of the rise and fall of dynasties, which he would continue to add to over the course of his lifetime.¹⁶ In 1378 he returned to Tunis to work as an official before fleeing to Mamluk Egypt a few years later, where for the remainder of his years he acted mostly as a qadi or judge in Cairo. Ibn Khaldun would meet the famous Tamarlane during the siege of Damascus and continue to write histories and reflections.¹⁷ Ibn Khaldun passed away in Cairo on 17 March 1406 at the age of 73.

Ibn Khaldun’s most famous work, *Kitab al-’Ibar*, translated into English as *The Book of Lessons* or *The Book of Exemplaries*, which is a large history of both World History and the history of North African Arab and Amazigh dynasties¹⁸. As Ibn Khaldun himself states in his foreword of *Kitab al-’Ibar*, the work is divided into three books.¹⁹ The first portion of the work, *The Muqaddimah*, translated as “The Introduction” is the most well-known to scholars today due to its nature as a theoretical presentation describes the process of civilizations and dynasties scientifically looking for cyclical causes and effects that could be applied to what he saw in his own experiences all over North Africa.²⁰ As scholar and translator of the work Franz Rosenthal puts it, the *Muqaddimah* is different from many other medieval works as it “sharply outlines his own personal philosophy and provides insights into the workings of his mind.”²¹ The second book concerns world history from creation to the author’s own time through various other

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁷ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, x.

¹⁸ ‘Azīz Azmah. *Ibn Khaldūn, an Essay in Reinterpretation*. London: Cass, 1982. 9

¹⁹ Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History, Volume I*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1967. 11.

²⁰ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, x.

²¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, xxx.

civilizations such as Persian, Turks, and Byzantines. And the third book is the history of Amazigh dynasties in the Maghreb.

By comparing Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun's views on North Africa, its peoples' relation to Empire, we find not only obvious differences but parallels, ones that call into question how and why the authors differentiated between their subjects, philosophies, and sources over time. It is here, in the vertices of the Latin and Arabic writing that we do not lose an Amazigh ethnohistory through its textual representation but can begin to see the veiled underpinnings of it.

The main function of this work is to understand how the Imazighen were represented through textual means. More specifically, where did the Imazighen fit in the worldview of the ancient Roman and Medieval North African writer? The labels such as nomad, Berber, and pagan often betray themselves in descriptions of preconceived histories and societies and self-produce a more complicated and nuanced stance. The authors in question are separated temporally by thirteen centuries and spatially through different cultural contexts of the Mediterranean. Their views on empire in the world are different, but their textualizations of North Africa and North Africans as a case study of the philosophy of the natural world and distinctions of civilization are strikingly similar.

1.2 Historiography

The historiography of North Africa is not one linear history, but a series of various histories that overlap at different vertices. The historiography of the secondary sources are important not only to understand the region, but also by giving strong context to Pliny and Ibn Khaldun and their writings. This will also further demonstrate to the reader the certain ideas and themes that have pierced through the centuries. Described below are the historiographies of

North Africa in the context of the Roman hegemony as well as the historiography of the region after the arrival of Islam and its succeeding caliphates and kingdoms. Within these two fields is the converging historiography focusing on the Imazighen, with a particular theme of introspection of the ethnic group.

Now considered a classic, Franz Rosenthal pioneered much of the field of Islamic studies in the Middle Ages with his monumental 1970 work, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*. He states that much of Islamic philosophy and writing through history centered around the concept of *‘ilm*, a type of knowledge. Rosenthal declares that this has been a main driver of Islamic history as “there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *‘ilm*.”²² This driver of knowledge is not only the background as motivator, but in the forefront as those such as Ibn Khaldun to further understand their world.

Due to the large nature of Islamic North African history, many studies have focused on regions and dynasties. Such is with Maya Shatzmiller, whose 1982 work was later added onto and translated from French into English published as *The Berbers and the Islamic State: The Marīnid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco*. Shatzmiller showcases how the various forms of Amazigh-Islamic states were able to both manifest and alienate Arabic cultural elements in their state building when acculturation occurred over the centuries.²³

The Berbers in Arabic Literature by H.T. Norris in 1982 echoes Ephimphamus Wilson’s 1901 work as one of the very few selections of translations of Arabic texts into English focusing on North Africans. Norris claims that the work is intended to be neither historical nor an

²² Rosenthal, Franz. *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1970. 2.

²³ Shatzmiller, Maya. *The Berbers and the Islamic State : The Marīnid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999. xiii.

anthropological survey, but merely a presentation of the Imazighen through a selection of works representing four of the major groups.²⁴ Norris proposes that the pre-Islamic religions and their characteristics such as the marabouts, or holy men, turned Islam from the East into a more animistic type of mysticism that still runs deep in the Imazighen to this day. But, in providing newly translated medieval sources to the Anglophone World, Norris also shows that the lines between Amazigh and Arabs in North Africa are often blurred, as all elements of their culture are highly intermingled. Norris set his work apart as it did not concentrate on any one particular caliphate or kingdom as many other works of medieval North Africa did but spanned over many centuries across borders.

The most complete work about the history of the Imazighen as a people through everchanging time is *The Berbers* co-authored by Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress in 1996. The work focuses on tracing what they call the binomial trait of “free” and “noble” strongly identified with the Imazighen and their autonym and how this concept has carried over the centuries and given them their sense of identity.²⁵ Fentress, an archaeologist by trade and Brett, a historian of Medieval Islam combined their skills to holistically capture the history of a specific people across the whole region of North Africa, which had not been done before. In this way, the authors reposition the Imazighen as the center of North African history which has been often overshadowed by its conquerors.

Although the study of indigenous North Africa in the ancient and medieval context has been relatively recent, the study of Rome and the Arabs in North Africa has had a longer history in the Anglophone world. A major theme throughout this scholarship has concerned borders,

²⁴ Norris, H. T. *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*. London: Longman, 1982. x.

²⁵ Brett, Micheal and Elizabeth Fentress. *The Berbers*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996. 6.

assimilation, and transformed landscapes. *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis* by Robert Broughton in 1929 still inspires scholars to write against the traditional narrative that the natives of North Africa were less civilized and changed drastically by the Roman conquest, economy, and society. Broughton argued that North Africa never became fully Roman. To emphasize this type of acculturation, David Cherry examines in his work, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa* the thousands of epitaphs found in the frontier zone that commemorate the intermarriage of romanized and un-romanized populations to supplement the lack of written sources on the subject.²⁶ Susan Raven first published her work, *Rome in Africa*, in 1969 detailing how both the Roman Republic and later Empire both interacted and changed the landscape of the region, focusing on the growing agriculture after changing dominant polities.²⁷

One of the few to highlight specific ancient Amazigh authors is Duane Roller, who published the first comprehensive work on Juba II, known as an exemplary literary king. *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene* not only examines the cultural context of these two client monarchs, but Roller utilizes the few remaining fragments of Juba II's work to showcase how important his scholarship was, as it gave natural philosophers and geographers the most information on the Sub-Mediterranean World.²⁸

More recent strides have taken place due to the influential effects of both postcolonial and subaltern studies. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* by Erich S. Gruen is an attempt to recontextualize commonly conceived views of the ancient peoples written about by writers from dominant empires through a post-colonial perspective.²⁹ Gruen's work sought to reconcile the

²⁶ Cherry, David. *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. ix.

²⁷ Raven, Susan. *Rome in Africa*. London: Routledge, 1992. 1.

²⁸ Roller, Duane W. *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: Royal Scholarship on Rome's African Frontier*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 163.

²⁹ Gruen, Erich S. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2011. 3.

notion that Othering was not a way to foil distinct peoples and therefore create superiority but was a process of nuanced and complex opinions.

One of the most comprehensive works responding to much of the modern debate in how scholarship views racism, sexism, and elitism in studying the classics comes from David Mattingly, who composed over four decades of his life's archaeological field work in his 2023 *Between Sahara and Sea: Africa in the Roman Empire*. This work set to challenge the traditional views of the ruling Romans and their indigenous North African counterparts, that have been so often orientalized since the colonial era of the French and Italians in North Africa.³⁰

In some ways the continuation of this recent historiography inspired by postcolonialism and subaltern studies takes an odd turn, such as Ramzi Rouighi's work; *Inventing the Berbers*, which aims to show that the concept of a homogenous term for the people of North Africa was invented only after the Arab Conquest of the seventh and eighth centuries CE.³¹ This text in particular has spurred some material that hotly debated Rouighi's thesis and the ramifications of his words by authors like Fazia Aïtel and Nabil Boudraa. The author of this thesis is in many ways responding to these newer twists in the historiography while complementing the earlier works in the historiography. A major point of this writing is to commence a comparison of two authors who have not yet been directly compared before in an academic space, and in doing so can bring insight to a certain type of written intersection of philosophy and ethnography that is produced when these authors contribute to the history of North Africa.

This thesis understands North Africa through the convergence of these two distinct historiographies through comparative non-fictional literature. By comparing both the

³⁰Mattingly, David J. *Between Sahara and Sea: Africa in the Roman Empire*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023. xix.

³¹Rouighi, Ramzi. *Inventing the Berbers: History and Ideology in the Maghrib*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. 2.

philosophies of both authors, a more critical view of how and why they perceived the Imazighen both in similar fashions and differently can be more clearly achieved. This type of methodology combined with the mixed historiography is emphasized but is still a part of the larger notion of comparative literature between the two subjects. Christopher Norris has stated that literature is synonymous with critique.³² With that in mind, the author takes the responsibility of understanding the primary sources in question not as historical fact, but pieces of literature set within a historical context. Thus, the critique of the Imazighen and its elements is not a reality, but a representation. One that is given textually and responded to textually, such as this thesis. The major works being analyzed will also be supplemented by other authors such as Herodotus, who was a major source for Pliny the Elder. His *Histories*, as well as Sallust's *Jugurthine War* can fill in the gaps of certain historical phenomena to which Pliny merely alludes. Finally, it will be noted that the word Berber will be used interchangeably with Amazigh, whereas the pluralized Berbers is synonymous with Imazighen.

1.3 Chapters

This thesis contains five chapters. The first serves as an introduction, putting the sources and authors into their own context while presenting the set up to comparison and ensuing arguments. The three middle chapters serve as the main material for the arguments. Each chapter analyzes parallels of each author and their contemporaries. Chapter 2 focuses on how Pliny the Elder viewed North Africa and the nuances of the Imazighen in the Roman world view. This includes the Roman's version of the ethnogenesis of the Imazighen, defining traits that were marked in his encyclopedia, and their legacy that extended from the Roman Republic era to

³²Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2002. xii.

Pliny's contemporary time of the early Roman Empire. Pliny's sources, style, and approach to writing will be examined as his repertoire has elements of Greek and Roman conventions.

Chapter 3 extracts how Ibn Khaldun conceptualized the Imazighen in his works, which was often derived from his experience with various North African kingdoms. Besides his recordings of the Imazighen and their cultural characteristics such as pre-Islamic customs, it dissects some of his views on nomadism, their stages towards civilization, which included his analysis of *asabiyyah*, or the social cohesion of the tribe. A short portion will highlight Ibn Khaldun's sources and medieval Arabic framework which were influenced by a background Islamic philosophy with aspects of Hellenistic thought.

Chapter 4 directly compares Pliny the Elder to Ibn Khaldun. Their views on the Imazighen's relation to nomadism, the rise of urbanized peoples, and empire and its luxurious trappings show not only the differences that occurred in the millenia between the two authors, but can also highlight similar veins of thought that may have persisted about the North Africans. Their methodologies are briefly cross examined to further produce comparisons as well as some aspects of their legacies today.

And lastly, the conclusion finalizes the analysis by adding a shortened clarified summary of each authors' legacies and as well as provide ideas for any possible future research. It will summarize the overarching thesis in a brief manner by captivating the works and thoughts of Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun on North Africa.

2 ENCYCLOPEDIA IN THE ROME OF VESPASIAN

2.1 The Methodology of Pliny's *Natural History*

Pliny the Elder boasts that his *Natural History* contains 20,000 facts which have been divided into 36 volumes, all of which has been informed by 100 other authors.³³ His nephew, Pliny the Younger provided insight into how Pliny the Elder's could achieve this. When not on official duty, Pliny the Elder would have one servant to his left and one to his right. One would read from a text and the other would write down what Pliny thought was noteworthy.³⁴ Although traditionally viewed as an encyclopedia with abundant facts and yet no true underlying pustulation, modern scholarship has pushed back on the archaic claim of the *Natural History* lacking both argument and style. Thomas Leahan writes: "Further examination reveals that the primary structural units of the text are not sets of books ordered according to a poorly conceived or improperly executed *linear* plan...but rather sets of books arranged within an *annular* or *ring-like* structure, in which the sequence of subjects engenders a circle by doubling back at the start of the second half of the text."³⁵ This ring-like structure harkens back to the style of one of Pliny's largest influences and sources: Herodotus. Herodotus, also largely influenced by Homer, would create a standardization of ethnography in the ancient Mediterranean world, which was a mixture of geography and history.³⁶

The distinct philosophy of Pliny the Elder is stoicism with a mixed standard of Roman virtues.³⁷ More specifically, his belief in *simplicity* and *rustica*. *Rustica* is the notion that a life

³³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 16.

³⁴ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 3.

³⁵ Leahan, *Pliny's Defense of Empire*, 10.

³⁶ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 77.

³⁷ Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture*, 15.

should be rooted in nature, avoiding the degeneracies of luxury and decadence.³⁸ Pliny's sources inform him and affirm his worldview, namely that information is received through bureaucratic documents (such as lists of colonies), conquests that expand the Roman borders, or expeditions that go into the unknown.³⁹ This is exemplary in his first portion of book Five of his *Natural History* in describing the geography and ethnography of the continent of Africa, which he called Libya. Pliny recounts a story about the Greek historian Polybius, who was a witness and wrote about the Punic Wars. He states that the Greek was ordered by the Roman commander Scipio Amemilianus who sent him along the coast of the Atlantic "for the purpose of making a voyage of discovery in that part of the world."⁴⁰ Similarly Pliny details the story of consul Suetonis Paulinus, who crossed the Atlas Mountains of Mauritania, and went some distance after, who recorded altitudes and examples of the local flora.⁴¹

But it cannot be understated that Pliny himself was informed by locals of North Africa. In writing about a portion of African geography he states, "The natives, however, inform us that on the coast 150 miles from the Saltee is the River Asana," Pliny continues about the inhabited mountains, "the Diris range - that is agreed to be the native name for the Atlas."⁴² Here Pliny exhibits both the original name of the mountains, the Diris, and that much of the geography is provided by locals who are explaining the information to the Romans.

As for the argument, much of Pliny's *Natural History* comes down to the underlying defense of an empire, more acutely, the Roman Empire. As Murphy points out the ancient authors' blatant central point of organization: "It is Rome. Rome is the place to which everything

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁹ Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture*, 36-35.

⁴⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 225.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 229.

flows, where everything is present for the having, where the value of the good things of all countries is unequivocally established.”⁴³ The further from Rome, the less civilized the world is. The frontiers of Rome’s borders, especially in North Africa separated Roman citizens from the bizarre world of barbarians and oddities.⁴⁴ Even Pliny is not immune to these thoughts and divulges into the peoples that live deeper into the Libyan continent.

In his description of Africa, the further inland from the Roman occupied coastal region, the stranger the peoples become. With some distance Pliny recalls, “The Atlas tribe have fallen below the level of human civilization, if we can believe what is said; for they do not address one another by any names... and when they are asleep they do not dream like the rest of mankind.”⁴⁵ These peoples are mixed in with creatures who are not found readily inside any Roman border: “In the middle of the desert some place the Atlas tribe, and next to them the half Goat-Pans and the Blemmyae and Gamphasantes, and Satyrs and Strapofoots.”⁴⁶ The further from Rome, the more opportunity there is for uncharted and wild peoples who have yet to be tamed through civilization. The limits of knowledge, more specifically geographic knowledge, are the limits of empire.⁴⁷

Pliny is not an absolutist when it came to defending the empire due to a mixture of his own stoic beliefs and the practicality of his patronage from the Flavian Emperors. Pliny the Elder was distinctly critical of Nero, which was encouraged by Flavian propaganda to emphasize the benefits of their own regime.⁴⁸ Nero was a prime example of how the empire could erode people

⁴³ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder’s Natural History*, 20.

⁴⁴ Cherry, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, 24.

⁴⁵ Pliny, *Natural History*, 251.

⁴⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, 251.

⁴⁷ Carey, *Pliny’s Catalogue of Culture*, 39.

⁴⁸ French and Greenaway, *Pliny the Elder, his Sources and Influence*, 6.

and destroy the virtues of simplicity, as Pliny believed that many become corrupted by decadence, the opposite of *rustica*, a strong Roman value, through the luxury that the empire brought in. As Trevor Murphy explains, “The orality of consumption and the value of luxurious goods are recurrent themes of the *Natural History*, and questions of value and economy unite different ethnographies of the distant East - for Pliny’s book, pre-eminently the home of Luxury.”⁴⁹ The indulges of infamous Romans such as Caligula and Nero are sharply contrasted with the romanticized versions of Augustus and Vespasian.

The critique does not stop at luxury, as Pliny does not mince words with the third Roman emperor Caligula and how he handled affairs with Rome’s allies the Mauritians. When the author starts naming countries that make up the continent of Libya, he states that Mauretania “which down to the time of the emperor Caligula were kingdoms, but by his cruelty were divided into two provinces.”⁵⁰ Here we see Pliny both condemn the Roman emperor and defend the client king in a passing reference to an event without much clarification. It is not the split that was cruel but the acquisition that was. This note on Caligula’s cruelty refers to his assassination of the region's last king, Ptolemy of Mauretania, son of the Numidian prince Juba II and Kleopatra Selene. Although Ptolemy was seen as a weak king opposite of his own father, Caligula’s choice for assassination and absorption of this last portion of North Africa is still debated, but comes down to jealousy over the Ptolemy's wealth or the young prince’s alleged connection to anti-Caligulian conspirators.⁵¹ Pliny may have viewed this event as an affront to Rome’s allies, the Numidians, who were well respected by the Romans since the Punic Wars or see the event as a stain on the legacy of Juba II, who was revered as a good king and

⁴⁹ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder’s Natural History*, 95.

⁵⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 219.

⁵¹ Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene*, 254.

intellectual.⁵² As Duane Roller writes: “Juba II’s ancestors had scholarly inclinations. From as early as the second century BC the Numidians court was known as an intellectual center and Juba’s grandfather Hiempsal seems to have been a historian.”⁵³ These Numidian kings were well respected by the Romans.

While in North Africa, Pliny the Elder may have been able to use his position to access the Punic books that Tacitus claims to have used in his *Jugurthine War* as a source on the history and area of the region. It is not explicitly stated. But, scholars recognize that Pliny used North African sources. He utilized the writings of the Numidian prince Juba II extensively.⁵⁴ Duane Roller, who has created the only extended biography of Juba II, has stated that Pliny essentially mined the romanized Amazigh scholar king’s work: “Of the approximately 100 known fragments of Juba’s works, nearly half of them come from the *Natural History*.”⁵⁵ Even though Juba’s manuscripts were in Greek, he was a Romanized adopted son of Julio-Claudian, writing on topics such as the geography of Africa in his much lost work *Libyka*, and even translating Punic works for his own research.⁵⁶ The layers here exemplify the textual invagination of knowledge, a constant feedback loop of information that is written, translated, cited, and reworked by authors of various African and non-African backgrounds and perspectives.

2.2 Libyan Origins

In a passing description, Pliny mentions a connection to a famous Homeric story while describing a section of coastal land, “At the end of this Gulf was once the Coast of Lotus Eaters,

⁵² *Ibid.*, 254-255.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 166, 177.

the people called by some the Machroae.”⁵⁷ This passage lacks the description of the lotus fruit and wine that is made by the lotus eaters by Herodotus, but still harkens to the strong influences that Greek thought had on Pliny’s framework.⁵⁸

Homer mentions Libya in his *Odyssey* when Odysseus recalls that dairy is plenty in the lands of Libya: “There neither master nor shepherd has any lack of cheese or of meat or of sweet milk, but the flocks ever yield milk to the milking the year through.”⁵⁹ In the context of Homer, Libya may have been viewed as a land of bountiful resources, not yet hewed by large empires and their wars. The motif of dairy, often linked to nomadism, is continued by the infamous Herodotus, writing hundreds of years later. Herodotus writes that throughout much of Libya: “The Libyans are nomads who eat meat and drink milk.”⁶⁰ Herodotus may be inferring that they eat dairy and milk due to their perceived nomadic lifestyle (even though he writes later certain Libyan groups are farmers, builders, and cultivators). Upon listing the various Libyan peoples, he divides the pastoralists and agriculturalists on a geographical scale; as those west of the River Triton use plows, whereas those East of the river up to the border of Egypt do not.⁶¹

Scholar Murphy has shown that Pliny is consistent in his treatment of people outside the borders of Rome. They write: “It is true that the *Natural History* has no taste for praising barbarians. The accounts of primitives show little patience for their faults and the encyclopedia is not much inclined to idealize them.”⁶² In Pliny’s view, *barbarism* was synonymous with *nomadism*.

⁵⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, 239.

⁵⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 214-215.

⁵⁹ Homer. *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, PH.D. in two volumes*. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1919. Book IV, lines 84-87.

⁶⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 217.

⁶¹ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians in Roman North Africa*, 15.

⁶² Murphy, *Pliny the Elder’s Natural History*, 103.

Nomadism is a constant theme throughout the history of North Africa. Many ancient and Medieval writers used the basis of the Aristotelian scale from savage to agriculture to label how civilized a person or group of people were. The Imazighen did not escape this label, but have had a uniquely tied theme throughout the centuries; that is their defining qualities of mobile diet; namely - goat eating and milk drinking. Classicist Brent Shaw has written that the perspective of the pastoral nomad found diffused throughout ancient Hellenistic and Roman works was a concrete Mediterranean ideology to create polarized taxonomy opposite of sedentary peoples who were viewed as more civilized due to their practice of agriculture.⁶³ This model was categorized by Aristotle as he developed the concept into a system of five modes of substance in his work, *Politika*, moving from more primordial to more civilized; pastoralism, banditry, fishing, wild economy, and farming.⁶⁴

This type of nomenclature rolls into ethnography as a type of literary convention, one in which the ancient genre is strongly regulated, but still pliable.⁶⁵ Pliny's own utilization of this Aristotelian attach a certain amount of morality to the subjects based on how civilized or savage they are, often giving a more negative view of those who seem more fantastical or less understood: "The Garamantes do not practice marriage but live with their women promiscuously."⁶⁶ Sexual practices are often a frequent concern in ancient ethnographies. Marital mores as well as food consumption were used by Pliny to distinguish civilized and uncivilized peoples. Pliny reports that during the expedition of Suetonis Paulianus, the Roman commander claimed that on the south side of the Atlas mountains after a black desert that there are forests:

⁶³ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians in Roman North Africa*, 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁶⁵ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 79.

⁶⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, 251.

“with every kind of elephant and snake, and are inhabited by a tribe called Canarii, owing to the fact that they have their diet in common with the canine race and share with it the flesh of wild animals.”⁶⁷ Their lack of Roman and stoic virtues are what dehumanize these reported peoples.

As Murphy explains Pliny’s concern on characterizes the “wild” peoples of the African continent, “The *Natural History* is deeply interested in man as a moral creature, and its ethnographies are rhetorical elaborations of this interest, which work out the implications of moral problems that preoccupied the roman imagination.”⁶⁸ The habits, whether through marital or dietary practices, reflect the morals and therefore can succinctly calculate how decently human are a group of people.

Pliny wrote ethnographic narrations on various peoples of Africa but does not give the reader an explicit explanation for the origins of the Imazighen. Where or who they came from is not expressed in any great lengths. But there are slivers of information gleaned through close reading of his work. Pliny does mention a particular cultural phenomenon that nuances the ethnogenesis of the Numidians, one of the most powerful established ancient Amazigh states.⁶⁹ He states briefly about the region of Numidia in the following: “The Greeks called it Metagonitis, and they named its people the Nomads, from their custom of frequently changing their pasturage, carrying their *mapalia*, that is their homes, about the country on waggons.”⁷⁰ In this description Pliny shows the reader that the word Numidian comes from the word nomad, an exonym from the Greeks referring to the Numidians’ wandering lifestyle. He also includes the word *mapalia*. The word *mapalia* can mean hut or cottage when translated from Latin into

⁶⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, 229.

⁶⁸ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder’s Natural History*, 95.

⁶⁹ Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 24-25.

⁷⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 235.

English, but this would not do justice to the context of what Pliny is describing. We must go back to one of Pliny's other sources, Sallust.

Sallust writes in more detail about the origin of the Numidians and their *mapalia* in his 1st century BCE work, *The War with Jugurtha*, which centers around Rome's War with the Numidian usurper in the 2nd century BCE.⁷¹ Sallust writes that after the death of Hercules in Spain, the hero's own army dispersed within Africa: "The Medes, Persians and Armenians crossed by ships into Africa ... and these employed as huts the inverted hulls of their ships."⁷² Sallust explains that the band of Easterners who followed the hero on his journey made their ship hulls into domiciles because there was no available wood to use. The author goes on to say that the Persians gradually intermarried with a local Amazigh tribe, the Gaetulians. He states that by traveling constantly to find good soil, they ended up calling themselves Nomads, wherein the Greek and Latinized version became Numidian. Even though Sallust does not give a date of when this happens, he claims that the direct link from Hercules' army is there: "Still, even to the present day, the dwellings of the rustic Numidians, which they call mapalia, are oblong shelters with curved sides, like the hulls of ships."⁷³ In Sallust's frame of mind, this rational evidence provides the origin of the Numidians. He does not mention the Armenians again, but Sallust goes on to state that the native Libyans renamed the Medes into Mauri, or Moors.⁷⁴

As noted, Pliny used Sallust as a source for the origins of various Imazighen peoples and even borrowed Sallust's lines. By borrowing from Sallust without further remark, Pliny was showing the larger Roman framework that was common, as he did not challenge or negate any of

⁷¹ Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 42-43.

⁷² Sallust. *The War with Catiline; The War with Jugurtha*. Edited by John T. Ramsey. Translated by John Carew Rolfe. Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 2013. 208.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 209.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

Sallust's claims. Why Pliny would not include the much more fanciful and charming story of Hercules' Eastern army disbanding in Africa to form the Numidians is unknown. Pliny himself may not have believed it (as he remarks that the story of Anteaues' palace and the Guardians of the Golden Apples are: "marvelous legends...told by the old writers."⁷⁵) but he does use part of the story later in his last paragraph on the subject of Africa. Describing another native African group he writes: "The Pharusi, originally a Persian people, are said to have accompanied Hercules on his journey to the Ladies of the West."⁷⁶ Again we see some distance between Pliny and the story, using the passive tense, "are said to" highlight the uncertainties of the story given by others. He does not mention hull-like houses or any nomadic living style of the Pharusi, nor that they were originally a band of military professionals. For Pliny, the Pharusi are not connected to the Numidians, and being a less substantial group than the well-respected Numidians, the Pharusi may have been a suitable people for Pliny to relieve the Hercules story as to place less emphasis on any type of Greek hegemony, cultural or otherwise, as he himself was a practitioner of pro-Roman philosophies.

An ancient reader may have high expectations for hearing about Hercules' activities on the continent of Africa, as it was there that he wrestled the Libyan giant, Antaeus. Pliny does mention the giant's role in African geography stating: "Beyond the Straits of Gibraltar there were once the towns of Lissa and Cotte; but at the present day there is only Tangier, which was originally founded by Antaeus."⁷⁷ Antaeus is briefly mentioned as establishing a city, yet is not yet linked explicitly to being a common ancestor of any group.⁷⁸ Pliny does not extinguish an

⁷⁵ Pliny, *Natural History*, 221.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 219. The original Latin text uses "columnas Herculis."

⁷⁸ A common trope of the Greek and Roman writers is to replace the names of foreign deities with their own names, known as *interpretatio graeca*. This may be the case in this instance, for Hercules has been often seen as the cognate of Melqart, a Phoenician deity, and so Antaeus may have also been changed from another native deity.

Antaeus progenitor story, possibly leaving room for the reader's imagination. While Sallust claims that the Numidians themselves called their own people the Numidians, Pliny is adamant that the word Numidian itself was an exonym given to these people by the Greeks. It is possible that due to Pliny's distrust of the Greeks and their sources that he did not want to believe or consider the Hercules story, as it may have been a slight approval of Greek culture and storytelling, something it seems that Sallust was not afraid to mention. Whatever the situation, both Sallust and Pliny mention the Gauetilians throughout their text, as a people of Africa different from the others who had migrated into the continent. Sallust's writing implies that this ethnogenesis is not a Roman or Greek perversion, but rather, an ethnohistory, retold from the natives themselves. On his own source for the story, Sallust writes: "I shall relate it just as it was expounded to me from the Punic books, which according to tradition were King Hiempsal's."⁷⁹ Hiempsal was a Numidian King, and a relative of the scholar-prince, Juba II.⁸⁰ Whether the Punic Books mentioned here were written by Hiempsal himself or simply owned by the king after the destruction of Carthage during the Third Punic War is up for debate.⁸¹ But, what this does show is that the languages in the region used together in close proximity, such as Punic, was used not only for oral political and economic communication, but as a textual source for subjects like history. Sallust further states that he read the Punic books himself - or that the information was at least given to him, and that the story is how "the dwellers in that land believe the circumstances to be."⁸² Thus, we can find an indigenous perspective through the amazing intertextual layers of Sallust citing from these Punic books from which the unknown authors

⁷⁹ Sallust, *The War with Jugurtha*, 207.

⁸⁰ Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene*, 68.

⁸¹ Gruen, Erich S. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2011, 272.

⁸² Sallust. *The War with Jugurtha*, 207.

were reporting what the natives themselves have said about their own origin. This is a unique circumstance if true, as there have been no Punic books found. But the information is known to the Roman authors only through the conquest of Rome. Pliny writes that in the region surrounding Carthage “The inhabitants of Byzacium are called Libyphoenicians.”⁸³ This would suggest that the Phoenicians and native Africans in the area mingled to become Libyco-Phoenician and shared common cultural elements, such as language.⁸⁴

David Cherry has pointed out that children from marriages between Romans and North Africans were becoming more and more commonplace by the time of Julius Caesar's African War in the 1st Century BCE.⁸⁵ David Mattingly goes further by saying, that by the time of Augustus Caesar, “The region was extremely mixed ethnically and culturally; it was polyglot and diverse, with intense regional and communal characteristics.”⁸⁶ If the above circumstances that both Sallust and Pliny record are reliable, then it is not out of the question to think that both Punic and Tamazight bodies of knowledge were reproduced into an indigenous literary culture before the destruction of Carthage itself. Thus both Sallust and Pliny were just two of many ancient authors who played a part in transmitting the indigenous peoples’ ethnohistories.

Pliny does not give us names of the specific cults or rituals that the Imazighen practiced, but the various native religious activities and beliefs are scattered throughout his writing. Pliny writes about a certain Amazigh tribe and their religious practice prescribed to them: “The Augilae only worship the powers of the lower world.”⁸⁷ Pliny may be indicating that the Augilae worship a deity that would equate to a Pluto or Hades figure, forming a main religious cult or

⁸³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 237.

⁸⁴ Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 41.

⁸⁵ Cherry, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, 103.

⁸⁶ Mattingly, *Africa in the Roman Empire*, 112-113.

⁸⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, 252-253.

patron around it; this could be what archaeologist Elizabeth Fentress calls an indigenous cult of the dead which sanctified their deceased ancestors.⁸⁸ From this one line that Pliny extends, it is easy to imagine the various interpretations about this ancient religion that are often left to speculation. Pliny does mention vague and generic types of creatures in the desert that may bring us some further insight: “In the middle of the desert some place the Atlas tribe, and next to them the half-animal Goat-Pans and Blemmyae and Gamphasantes and Satyrs and Strapfoots.”⁸⁹

The supposed ‘race’ of the Atlas tribe is unknown (Pliny miscopied it from Herodotus⁹⁰), but it is possible that these Goat-Pans and Satyrs were the latinization of a native African folklore. This is done constantly in the Hellenistic and Greek texts, as it would make the subject more relatable to their own audience. What the original names or descriptions of these creatures from African folklore are currently unknown. Herodotus is very face-forward about the method of the Hellenization of indigenous culture, writing about a religious festival of the female Machlyan Libyans: “The girls insist that they are observing the ancestral rites of their own indigenous goddess, who we call Athena.”⁹¹ Herodotus does not provide any version of the name that would be close to its original endonym. This mode of writing demands the question of why the ancient historian does not record specific names of indigenous deities, as in other parts of his work, Herodotus has given what he claims are Libyan words. For example, on recording a process of harvesting in his last paragraph on the subject of Libya, Herodotus claims that the Libyans call a bountiful middle region of the coast the “bounis.”⁹² Bounis may be an ancient Greek transcription of a Libyan word or a corrupted translation. Pliny, like Herodotus, has

⁸⁸ Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 34-35.

⁸⁹ Pliny. *Natural History*, 251.

⁹⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 216.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 219.

written down the Latinized version of many Amazigh people and places that may have stemmed from their own endonyms. Therefore, it is very possible that the names of Amazigh deities, holidays, and traditions were known and spoken by those who interacted with the region, such as the Roman equestrians, but the translation or simplification was done when these Greco-Roman authors started writing their histories for an audience not firmly familiar with the intricate aspects of these native Africans.

Pliny was very much opposed to magic due to his stoic philosophy, but this did not stop him from recording religious phenomena supposedly happening or the common supernatural abilities of others.⁹³ He writes from a source, two Romans paradoxographers, who have reported that: “There are families in the same part of Africa that practise sorcery, whose praises cause meadows to dry up, trees to wither and infants to perish.”⁹⁴ Pliny distances himself by showing the reader that this story was reported by two other people, with Pliny never claiming that these statements are true or have any credence, but just enough interest to record it.⁹⁵ Pliny compares this type of abusive sorcery and magic with the evil eye, a very common belief in the Mediterranean. Pliny writes that people born with two pupils can “bewitch with a glance and who kill those they stare at for a longer time, especially with a look of anger, and that their evil eye is most felt by adults.”⁹⁶ Pliny does not exactly explain how or why the gaze can kill, or the root of its power, only that it does indeed cause harm. By Pliny not explaining the evil eye any further, this belief was widely held by various peoples across the Mediterranean, as the author

⁹³ Beagon, Mary. *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1992. 105.

⁹⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, 517.

⁹⁵ Nuño, Antón Alvar. “Ocular Pathologies and the Evil Eye in the Early Roman Principate.” *Numen* 59, no. 4 (2012): 295–321. 299.

⁹⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, 517.

would be wasting his time explaining it to people who already are so familiar with a commonly held belief.

The further from Rome, the more opportunity that a group of people could be more readily labeled as civilized as their social norms do not quite align with Pliny the Elder's ideal and standard of the Roman Empire. Dark magic, promiscuity, and a reluctance to submit to agriculture are all reflected in the stereotypes of nomadic peoples. North Africans are no exceptions, but also display what Pliny believes are the virtuous paths that mimic his vision of civilization.

3 IBN KHALDUN AND CYCLES OF HISTORY IN NORTH AFRICA

3.1 The Foundations of the *Kitab al-Ibar*

Unlike Pliny, Ibn Khaldun had the benefit of using works from the preceding centuries from various regions and historical contexts which included the massive archives of Christian and Muslim centered authors. Ibn Khaldun relied heavily on early Christian sources such as the Roman Christian priest and chronicler and pupil of St. Augustine, Paulus Orosius (fifth century) as well as the Melkite patriarch Eucytius, the Greek John Chrysomastas, and Epiphanas, a Coptic bishop of Cyrus.⁹⁷ He utilized the sources of Ibn ar-Rahib (d. 1282), and Ibn Musabbihi (d. 1030), both Christians of the east. Not only did Ibn Khaldun cite the Tuarat, or the Torah, such as his description of doubting the numbers Moses' army, but he used apocryphal works such as "Book of Jacob."⁹⁸ He also used Jewish chroniclers like Yusuf ibn Kuryun.⁹⁹

But the most influential source that inspired how Ibn Khaldun approached both writing history and critiquing historiography may have been the tenth century historian and geographer, al-Mas'udi. al-Mas'udi was not an armchair historian, but much of his writings were informed by his travels and experiences, just like Ibn Khaldun. Al-Mas'udi wrote histories of non-Arab peoples and kingdoms on a much larger scale in which Ibn Khaldun admired, and would mirror in his second section of his *Kitab al-Ibar*, showcasing a world history of earth's major civilizations from creation to his present day.¹⁰⁰ But Ibn Khaldun also critiqued al-Mas'udi, showing academic distance in his remarks. For example, telling the reader cynically that the older Arabic scholar believed that Moses' army had 600,000 men in ancient times, Ibn Khaldun

⁹⁷ Fischel, "Ibn Khaldūn's Use of Historical Sources," 112.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰⁰ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 10-11.

himself was in disbelief after cross examining this against other statistics, such as Nebuchadnezzar's army who defeated the Israelites with only a portion of Moses' numbers.¹⁰¹ Inspired by both previous authors and his own contemporary events, Ibn Khaldun states that after destruction, such as the black plague, there was also renewal. This renewal had to be accounted for: "Therefore, there is need at this time that someone should systematically set down the situation of the world among all regions and races, as well as the customs and sectarian beliefs that have changed for their adherents, doing for this age what al-Mas'udi did for his."¹⁰² Ibn Khaldun used, honored, and surpassed al-Mas'udi by updating himself in the line of global historiography.

Not only were earlier Abrahamic religious canon a major part of the foundation of Ibn Khaldun's writing, also important were the specific branches of Islamic thought such as the jurisprudence school of Malikism and Sufism, both spread across North Africa by the Almoravid and Almohad caliphates in earlier centuries.¹⁰³ He was heavily influenced by the Maliki scholars he studied as a young man such as the theologian Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, whom he quotes throughout the *Muqaddimah*, both as a source and a citation to critique. When writing about discerning the truth of the genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphate, Ibn Khaldun did not agree with his predecessor in the debate: "It is strange that Judge Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, the great speculative theologian, was inclined to credit this unacceptable view... and upheld this weak opinion."¹⁰⁴ As scholar Allen Fromherz has highlighted in his work, Sufism, an Islamic practice of obtaining a personal relationship with God, has often been understated in its influence on Ibn

¹⁰¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 16-17.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰³ Bennis, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 228.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 43.

Khaldun's work. But it must be understood that the philosopher himself wrote a treatise of Sufism, which during his time was preoccupied by the mysticism of cyclical natures.¹⁰⁵ These cyclical natures, no doubt, had a strong influence in Ibn Khaldun's own thought logic which based his methodology.

Where a major shift occurs is Ibn Khaldun's personal preferences of what he was writing, more specifically, in that he often favored writing in detail about pre-Islamic religious aspects of North Africa as compared to the genealogies of North Africans themselves.¹⁰⁶ As noted by scholars like Fischel, stepping outside of the confines of Arabic and Islamic history (in which much is centered around Muhammed and his succession) by following the likes of al-Mas'udi, Ibn Khaldun was able to focus on non-Islamic civilizations and elements.¹⁰⁷

3.2 Pre-Islamic Traditions, Post-Islamic Framework

Aware of the many pre-Islamic traditions found in North Africa during his own time even after Arabic hegemony, Ibn Khaldun also recorded his observations on the evil eye and magic in North Africa.¹⁰⁸ In his *Muqadimmah*, Ibn Khaldun explained that even though magic and sorcery is forbidden because it can cause harm and makes practitioners turn their attention away from God, it is still commonly practiced in the region.¹⁰⁹ Ibn Khaldun explains more on this phenomena. He proposes that the evil eye usually stems from jealousy.¹¹⁰ When a jealous man is envious of an owner, instead of stealing property from the owner, "He prefers to destroy

¹⁰⁵ Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ Fischel, "Ibn Khaldūn's Use of Historical Sources," 119.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Khaldun, *Histoire des Berbères*, 183.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 156.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

him.”¹¹¹ Ibn Khaldun proposes that the evil eye is a natural ability one is born with and cannot be learned.¹¹² Ibn Khaldun explains the destructive phenomena of the secret sorcerers called ba`aj or “rippers” found only in the Maghrib: “They point at a garment or a piece of leather , and it is torn to shreds.”¹¹³ Such powerful magic may make a cynical reader doubt the authenticity of this practice. Ibn Khaldun does not shy away from how he came to know this underground practice hiding from the authorities as he writes: “I have met a number of them and witnessed their kind of magical practice. They informed me that they practice devotions and exercises.”¹¹⁴ These rippers write their devotions on pieces of paper which adds to the allusion of certain native traditional bodies of knowledge utilized in a literary medium which survived through the dominance of Islam.¹¹⁵ Just like the latinization of various religious elements, the djinn that Ibn Khaldun associates with the ba`aj may have been a pre-Islamic spirit or being that was simply submerged into an Islamic category. Ibn Khaldun gives the reader only one practical reason why the djinn-associated rippers of the Maghrib use this sorcery to tear open animals: “In that way, they frighten the owners of animals into giving them some (animal) they can spare.”¹¹⁶ Ibn Khaldun may be pointing to a practical type of sorcery that, not unlike alchemy, benefits the user with a substantial or desired sustenance in which the successful magician can indulge.

On other pre-Islamic aspects, for example, Yves Modéran has noted that Ibn Khaldun writes about the Lagautan or Luwata migration throughout the fourth to seventh centuries, which is not mentioned in any earlier sources.¹¹⁷ These Amazigh peoples may have been overlooked by

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 170.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹⁷ Modéran, “Mythe et Histoire Aux Derniers Temps de l’Afrique Antique,” 321.

other Arabic writing chroniclers, as they existed before the spread of Islam in North Africa and so were not seen as pertinent in connection to the First Caliphate as others were. Scholars on Medieval North Africa such as Irwin, Brett, and Bennison have all claimed that unlike the modern stance that the ethno-linguistic group of the Imazighen peoples is one large umbrella grouping, they did not see themselves as belonging to one larger kinship in the premodern period.¹¹⁸ Even though there is this claim by these scholars, the Arabic view was rather different.

In Ibn Khaldun's context, placing the Imazighen into one larger kinship derived from a common ancestor was the norm in Arabic literature. He spends a considerable amount of time in his work, *The History of the Berbers*, chronicling the genealogies and legends of the Imazighen, describing all the possible known origins of the Imazighen from various Arabic writers' perspectives.¹¹⁹ Some popular explanations came through the knowledge of the Old Testament. Ibn Khaldun quotes a certain Ali Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jorjani, writing what he has told of an interesting explanation of the Imazighen's origin: "I know no other opinion that is closer to the truth than the hypothesis according to which that they would be the children of Goliath."¹²⁰ Ibn Khaldun reports simply of al-Jorjani's hypothesis, in which Goliath is the common ancestor of the Imazighen. In this case, the concept of North African founder through the Libyan giant Antaeus may have been sculpted to fit the infamous Philistine giant, both of whom were viewed as formidable foes to legendary heroes. To explain the hypothesis better, Ibn Khaldun summarizes the ninth century Persian historian from Tabaristan, al-Tabari, who postulated that: "The Berbers are a mixture of Canaanites and Amalekites who spread out into diverse countries

¹¹⁸ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 54. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 9-10. Cherry, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 13.

¹²⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *Histoire des Berbères*, 175.

after Goliath was killed.”¹²¹ These regions included the Maghreb, and they settled in the region as they were the enemies of the Isrealites and were pushed out from the Holy Land. According to al-Jorjani, the descendants of these Canaanites and Amalekites eventually became the people whom the Arabs called Berbers.

Another popular Old Testament hypothesis is that the Imazighen are descendants of another notable figure. Ibn Khaldun writes: “The Berbers, according to another opinion, descend from Ham, son of Noah.”¹²² For this hypothesis, Ibn Khaldun provides various genealogies that have been developed to show how many different scholars and writers have explained the connection between the Biblical Ham and the Imazighen. Ibn Khaldun is critical, and claims that the previous stories are not the most accurate. He provides his own hypothesis. “Now , the real fact, the one that dispenses us from all other theories is this: the Berbers are the children of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah... Their ancestor was named Mazigh; their brothers were the Gergesenes, the Philistines, son of Casluhim, son of Mizraim, son of Ham, who were their parents. The king of their homeland bore the title of Goliath.”¹²³ Ibn Khaldun converges two hypotheses from the Old Testament perspective that is shown beforehand, and the other from the Ancient Hellenistic line. Although the word Mazigh or a variation of its spelling does not appear in the Bible, Ibn Khaldun cleverly and seamlessly fits it into a Biblical lineage. He does not entirely discredit the Old Testament hypotheses, just the writers who may have misinterpreted it. He uses his own hypothesis as a way to tie the Imazighen origin story of migration back to the framework of Monotheism, compared to older pagan stories such as Sallust’ s Hercules tale. Ibn Khaldun uses the Old Testament as a base, as his readers would have put more credence into the

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 176.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 184.

Holy books of the Bible and the Quran than older pagan Greek or Roman stories; then he connects this base to the the persuasive element of the Mazigh from the Greco-Roman world to converge the two most convincing arguments. The elusive ancestor of the Imazighen that Ibn Khaldun mentions, Mazigh, appears in much older histories and texts, and more considered having a strong association with the word Amazigh itself by scholars like Gabriel Camps.¹²⁴

Even though Ibn Khaldun wrote about traditional styles of sorcery as a warning to the reader, he was adamant about the health and the traditional lifestyle of nomadic peoples in North Africa. In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun dissects the concepts of the body's humors, and states that excess moisture from too much food can distort the body's normal balance and proportions, "The result is stupidity, carelessness, and a general intemperance."¹²⁵ This is due to the thought that moisture would swell the brain and dull its functions. Those who have abundant food are people who live in temperate zones as the climate permits it. But, Ibn Khaldun explains, those who live in climates that do not produce abundant foods such as the Sanhaja Imazighen, the Yemeni Hijaz, and the Sudanese live more stringently, "They are mostly found restricted to milk, which is for them a very good substitute for wheat."¹²⁶ Because they exist in harsher living conditions, the lifestyle sharpens their senses: "Their complexions are clever, their bodies cleaner, their figures more perfect and better, their characters less intemperate, and their minds keener as far as knowledge and perception are concerned."¹²⁷ The author goes on to say that it is the region which causes this change explaining that groups within a larger family, such as the Imazighen, can experience a this type of climate driven affect; "This is the case with those Berbers who have plenty of seasonings and wheat, as compared with those who lead a frugal life

¹²⁴ Camps, Gabriel. *Les Berbères: Mémoire et Identité*. France: Babel, 2007. 39.

¹²⁵ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 178.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 177.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 178.

and are restricted to barley or durra, such as the Masmudah Berbers and the inhabitants of as-Sus and the Ghumarah. The Latter are superior both intellectually and physically.”¹²⁸ Ibn Khaldun confidently states that certain types of foods have a reflective type of quality in the people that eat them, for example, those who eat camel meat and drink camel milk become “patient, persevering, and able to carry loads, as is the case with camels.”¹²⁹ The quality of life of nomadic peoples and those living in harsh conditions in North Africa, for Ibn Khaldun, made them the perfect primordial being, the clean slate where change can start from.

This lifestyle was very important in Ibn Khaldun’s underlying cycle of history. In his view, the rise and fall of political states was driven by the concept of 'asabiyyah. 'Asabiyyah is often translated as social cohesion or social solidarity.¹³⁰ 'Asabiyyah served as the base for the stages or life cycle of dynasties and civilization. Guided civilization was the goal of nomadic peoples and their spurred on by their social cohesion, as Ibn Khaldun writes, “It is evident that royale authority is the goal of group feeling.”¹³¹ Royal authority could then lead the group to create or further civilization. A leader may found a dynasty and win *mulk* or kingship, which starts the beginning of the end of 'asabiyyah.¹³²

'Asabiyyah was strong in nomadic groups, but it is not necessarily based on sheer consanguineal relationships. Nor was religion was not a permanent factor in 'asabiyyah. For example, there were an interesting number of Imaizghen from various cultural backgrounds over the centuries who used the claim of Mahdi (the Islamic deliverer of justice on Earth that commences the end times) to usher in a political change.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 179.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 183-184.

¹³⁰ Baali, *Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, 43.

¹³¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 286.

¹³² Dale, “Ibn Khaldun: The Last Greek and the First Annaliste Historian,” 438.

Early in the history of Islam in North Africa, sometime in the mid-eighth century, the mysterious Salih ibn Tarif, the son of the founder of the Barghawata kingdom in western Morocco, declared himself the awaited Mahdi.¹³³ Furthermore, he revealed a new Quran to his son and grandson, written in his dialect of Tamazight in 80 chapters, which revealed new laws the Barghawatas would live by including to fast in a different month than Ramadan and pray 10 times a day, which in turn were enforced with military might.¹³⁴ The Barghawata Quran is only known through Arabic sources and has not survived in any known medium. In the early 900's, local Kutuma Imazighen dissatisfied with the Fatimid caliphate founder and Mahdi claimant, Abd Allah al-Mahdi Billah, appointed their own Mahdi claimant, a young man named Kadii ibn Mu'arik al-Mawati.¹³⁵ Even though a new scripture was written, no specifics are known, and the anti-Mahdi did not last long, being quashed in battle soon after.¹³⁶

Ibn Tumart is the last example of a self-proclaimed Amazigh Mahdi whose religious motivation mixed with a strong understanding of traditional North African society stirred the Masmuda Imazighen tribes of the Atlas mountains and after his death around 1130 eventually conquer the Almoravids and start the Almohad Caliphate.¹³⁷ His theology was compiled by a close companion and titled, *A'azz ma Yutlab*, translated as *The Greatest Object of Desire*, in which Ibn Tumart tried to create a stricter and more pure form of Islam unique to him and his followers.¹³⁸ Even after the fall of the Almohads and their own disavowment from his prophetic claims, Ibn Khaldun remarked in his writings centuries later the reverence to Ibn Tumart in that

¹³³ Allaoua Amara. "Texte Méconnu Sur Deux Groupes Hérétiques Du Maghreb Médiéval." *Arabica* 52, no. 3 (2005): 348–72. 364.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹³⁵ Heinz Helm, *The Empire of the Mahdi*, 172.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹³⁷ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 6.

¹³⁸ Bennisson, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 246.

western region was still profound.¹³⁹ Roman Loimeier has compiled that these cases of proclaimed Mahdi along with other religious-social movements in the region were characterized by three tropes; the religious legitimization of rebellion against unjust rule, the role of outsiders as religious and political leaders, and the changing in center-periphery relations.¹⁴⁰ To contrast, these Amazigh Mahdi claimants were not officials in a recognized state before their revelations. Scholar Allaoua Amara has reflected those religious cases of Islamic zeal from within the Imazighen, such as the Barghawata, were done not to throw off Islamic or Arabic influence, but to reinvent Islamic tradition in a Berber bold, to reassert and affirm a type of North African or regional identity.¹⁴¹

But this religious aspect was not a core component of the engine of Ibn Khaldun's cycle of history. After the swift rise of the religiously motivated Almohad Empire, the scholar Fromherz has showed that the successor states; the Hafsids, Marinids, and Zayyanids were based on tribal connections and traditions of power, not original senses of ideology and zealous religion like the Almohads.¹⁴² And so, the larger dynasties collapsed and the smaller states continued the cycle, in Ibn Khaldun's eyes.

Even though civilization gave benefits like education and religious infrastructure, spreading the righteous path, it also fell into the debauchery of luxury, which for Ibn Khaldun, corrupts and weakens the once tough nomads.¹⁴³ Within three or four generations conquering tribesmen lost much of their 'asabiyyah and became civilized. Quoting from the book of Exodus, Ibn Khaldun proposes why a dynasty has a limited time frame: "In the Torah, there is the

¹³⁹ Fromherz, *The Almohads*, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa*, 36.

¹⁴¹ Amara, "Texte Méconnu Sur Deux Groupes Hérétiques Du Maghreb Médiéval," 365.

¹⁴² Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 12.

¹⁴³ Baali, *Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, 87.

following passage: ‘God, your Lord, is powerful and jealous, visiting the sins of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth (generations).’ This shows that four generations in one lineage are the limit in extent of ancestral prestige.”¹⁴⁴ Ibn Khaldun, much like in his introduction, brings the core cause back to God, who is ultimately responsible for these dynastic vicissitudes. The negative effects of sedentary lifestyles of living in cities includes sexual debauchery caused by too much food and drink: “This is followed by diversification of the pleasures of sex through various ways of intercourse, such as adultery and homosexuality. This leads to the destruction of the (human) species.”¹⁴⁵ With less population and confused heritages, all of this eventually adds to a civilization becoming ripe for invasion and ruin, ending an old dynasty and starting a new one.

Faud Baali summarizes Ibn Khaldun’s cycle of decline into six stages. First, the weakening of religious influence. Second, Luxury, at first beneficial, eventually softens the rulers. Third, The rulers rely on outside groups, often unrelated to the ruler’s ‘asabiyyah. Fourth, Others start to control and seclude the state. Fifth, Tyranny. And Sixth, Political and economic instability.¹⁴⁶ The Imaizghen were not immune to this rise and fall. An old group falters, and a new group takes command. The tribal ‘asabiyyah was both the source of and downfall of civilization.¹⁴⁷

The ‘asabiyyah is found in the nomadic peoples of North Africa who inspired much of Ibn Khaldun’s writing, including the *Kitab al-’Ibar*. Nomads were healthy and strong, sharp and disciplined. While aiming for kingship to have royal authority over an urbanized area or polity,

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 2*, 295.

¹⁴⁶ Baali, *Ibn Khaldun’s Sociological Thought*, 59-62.

¹⁴⁷ Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 128.

they slowly lost balance. A region in constant flux. Ibn Khaldun had seen many changes in power throughout the Medieval era of North Africa but gave great attention to cultural traditions that linked strongly to a specific regional identity. For him, his methodology and new advances to both what he called philosophy and historiography could not be possible without the various Imazighen peoples he interacted with, both in his own life and in the sources that he read.

4 VIEWS IN CONTESTION

4.1 Squaring the Historical Subjects

An obvious distinction between Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun is how their context shaped their methodology. They did have similar approaches in using their sources. Pliny, for example, even though naming works of other authors, often uses general language and vague pronouns as to who said or wrote what.¹⁴⁸ Rosenthal has stated that Ibn Khaldun's own work also has varying reliability as a historical source, from exact quotes to his own memory and allusions.¹⁴⁹ Ibn Khaldun had much more time and events to write about as Islam gave the Imazighen religious and social justification for state building after the collapse of foreign powers. While Pliny only named a handful of specific Imazighen rulers such as Massinissa, Juba II, and Ptolemy, Ibn Khaldun compiled dozens if not hundreds of specific Amazigh figures throughout the centuries. For Pliny, the North Africans were tied to Rome not through a religious prophet but through the extensions of Empire. Pliny does not deny that the nomads have religion, such as worshiping deities of the underworld, but his world was not shaped in the same way that religions like Christianity and Islam that gave to new rising and shifting powers. Much of Ibn Khaldun's writing had to be tied back to Islam. For example, even though Ibn Khaldun states that urbanization will weaken a people, he hints that true religion can be dispersed from institutions within cities like mosques to help guild people rightly.¹⁵⁰ To solidify this thought further, he ended his work with the culmination of the caliphate because it was supposed to be the ideal form of government.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture*, 37.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, lxx.

¹⁵⁰ Baalli, *Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, 90.

¹⁵¹ Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 7.

Modern interpretations argue that the ancients did not view encyclopedia as a literary genre as it is understood currently.¹⁵² And so to be able to recontextualize Pliny's own intentions by both understanding his historicity and the secondary scholarship around his work that dissects it, one comes closer to realizing that Pliny's own work was just as complex and layered as Ibn Khaldun's, even if he did not present a forward-facing theory. Ibn Khaldun affirmed that his own work of history should be viewed as a subfield of philosophy due to its nature of trying to understand certain truths: "(History,) therefore, is firmly rooted in philosophy. It deserves to be accounted a branch of philosophy."¹⁵³ Even though Pliny had reflections of philosophy in his work, he did not set out to make Natural History a scientific model like Ibn Khaldun. And unlike Pliny, Ibn Khaldun did not believe in the progress of human history.¹⁵⁴ But, much like Pliny's stoic belief in *rustica*, Ibn Khaldun's milieu of African Maliki and Sufism gave him an aversion to the false splendors of the world and gravitated towards idealizing the abstinence from pleasure.¹⁵⁵

Ibn Khaldun thought of history as a problem or riddle to be clarified.¹⁵⁶ Because of this, he compares authors and their facts, such as names, dates, and places for cross examination. This may be more strenuous than Pliny, whom although, sometimes copied and pasted others' works, did distance himself from his sources such as the Roman equestrians fielding reports from the African continent. Pliny evokes the legacy of Herodotus, Homer and other poets through both his style of ring narration and foundational base of ethnography, which also brought with it some fantastical elements. There is no absolute way of knowing if Pliny believed in the various mythic

¹⁵² Doody, Aude. "Pliny's 'Natural History: Enkuklios Paideia' and the Ancient Encyclopedia." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 1. 3.

¹⁵³ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 122.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁵⁶ Fischel, "Ibn Khaldūn's Use of Historical Sources," 118.

beasts of regional folklore he mentions, but what scholars have characterized through each work dissecting Pliny is that the further from Rome, the more opportunities for captivating stories. While Pliny may have very well arranged many of his subjects in his encyclopedia on the basis of contrasts and antitheses, he was early in any fields that could transform historiography in any significant way.¹⁵⁷ The scholar Stephen Frederic Dale has lamented that what makes Ibn Khaldun more scientific from other foundational authors such as the ancient Greek authors, like Herodotus, were more concerned with the “particulars” of history, describing in great narrative detail events that were built up over decades whereas Ibn Khaldun was labeling what he saw as patterns in history, turning it into more of a science.¹⁵⁸

Both Pliny and Ibn Khaldun were adamant that a byproduct of their work was to pass down knowledge, albeit in different ways. Pliny had a strong distaste for those who kept information secret due to pride, especially when it came to medicine, and strived to make his own knowledge and the knowledge he obtained from others both propagated and public for the better of society at large.¹⁵⁹ Ibn Khaldun wrote in the introduction of his *Muqaddimah* that not only was his work an exhaustive history of the world, but “a vessel for philosophy, a receptacle for historical knowledge.”¹⁶⁰ The preservation of this vessel was just as important as what it carried.

Both authors believed that their own works would preserve the knowledge that peoples had perpetuated over time, but could be just as easily lost. Much of these works are not philosophical or political in nature, but anthropological and ethnographic. It cannot be

¹⁵⁷ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ Dale, “Ibn Khaldun: The Last Greek and the First Annaliste Historian,” 440.

¹⁵⁹ Laehn, *Pliny's Defense of Empire*, 75 - 76.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 12.

understated, that the rowers of the vessels of knowledge are not only the authors, but the written subjects who, without much credit, so very often inform them. Anthony Khaldis writing about this very subject states: “Ethnographers, beginning with Herodotus, have emerged as admirers of many aspects of barbarian culture, as authentic transmitters of barbarian points of view, and, crucially, as subtle (or even outspoken) critics of their own societies and dominant paradigms, moral and conceptual.”¹⁶¹ The primary source texts contain the *mise en abyme* of knowledge, perspective, and agency from the indigenous peoples themselves which seeps through in both of the authors’ writing at times in the forefront and at other times in the background. Pliny affirms that when others refuse to share their knowledge, it is one of the greatest shames.¹⁶² Pliny would have praised Juba II for his curious nature and spreading of knowledge, in works such as his *Libyka*, unlike other rulers, whose pride made them safeguard knowledge.

Explaining to his readers that trying to define the nature of God and divide various vices and virtues into deities to intervene in human affairs were marks of human weakness, the First Century Roman author Pliny the Elder supposed another ideology to live by in a weary age: “For mortal to aid mortal - this is god; and this is the road to eternal glory: by this road went our Roman chieftains, by this road now proceeds with heavenward step, escorted by his children, the greatest ruler of all time, His Majesty Vespasian, coming to the succour of an exhausted world.”¹⁶³ By helping others, the spirit of an infinite God is exhibited from within frail humans, who through war have destroyed much of their own people and environment. They make up an exhausted world, controlled by one too many Caligulas and Neroes, saved by the author’s patron Vespasian and his Flavian Dynasty. Pliny the Elder may have viewed his publication of the

¹⁶¹ Kaldellis, Anthony. *Ethnography after Antiquity : Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 11.

¹⁶² Laehn, *Pliny's Defense of Empire*, 76.

¹⁶³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 181.

Natural History, an encyclopedia of the observable world, to help others, that is, by preserving knowledge so that one may better understand the world for their own benefit. For Pliny, the Roman Empire had passed its apex of glory. The Roman world had been ravaged by the tumultuous year of the Four Emperors, ending in Vespasians favor, who was praised by authors, believing that he brought back a glimmer of the former glory of Rome before the suppressive reign of the infamous Nero.

Modern authors such as Mary Beagon and Thomas Laehn have emphasized Pliny the Elder's unique positions within his Roman stoic background. Mary Beagon describes how Pliny offers his view on the relationship between nature and humankind as the reverse of expected Roman philosophical norms, using his descriptions of how certain plants were cultivated by man with much thought, in a way that nature could not intend.¹⁶⁴ This in turn, does not necessarily showcase a predestined purpose for man. Laehn posits that Pliny regularly also rejected ancient ideas of fortune and destiny, as he directly declined astrological notions of fate and deification of Fortune.¹⁶⁵ This lack of fate would place more agency on individuals and societies as makers of their own experience. In brief, individuals who made up society controlled their own destiny.

Ibn Khaldun may not have agreed with Pliny. He states that causes are made in ascending order, until "They reach the Causer of causes, Him who brings them into existence and creates them, Praised be He, there is no God but Him."¹⁶⁶ This asserts that God's divine intervention was the throughline of causation. Describing the underlying pessimism of Ibn Khaldun and his contemporaries, Irwin states: "The Arab historians had no belief in the progress of humanity.

¹⁶⁴ Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 65-66.

¹⁶⁵ Laehn, *Pliny's Defense of Empire*, 47-48.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 3*, 34.

Instead, they waited for God to declare the End of Time.”¹⁶⁷ This places Ibn Khaldun more properly in his own context. As Briton Busch describes this approach, Ibn Khaldun’s belief in divine intervention can be boiled down into two categories: “That which stems from the divine, and that which stems from the being of the divine.”¹⁶⁸ Either way, this creative bifurcation is sent from and continues to strive to return to the one Creator. This places the agency less on the individual human, and more upon the idea that society was a predictable stage in a cycle or pattern which God had seeded.

4.2 Nomadism at Odds

Modern scholars on North Africa such as Irwin, Bennisson, and Cherry have proposed that many premodern Imazighen did not consider themselves as belonging into one large family or kinship.¹⁶⁹ Even if this were the case, many of their counterparts have given an ethnogenesis of the Imazighen that often posits them as descends from one specific progenitor. The Greeks, Romans, and Arabs all gave foundational myths to make the North Africans fit better into their world view, in which they are often descendants from a legendary leader or a group of heroic voyagers. This concept of the voyager ties in strongly with the nomadic lifestyle of many North Africans. Ibn Khaldun did not view the difference between nomadic peoples and urbanized peoples as having an entrenched division; both had their own modes of civilization.¹⁷⁰ But, there is no doubt that while Pliny disliked many aspects of North Africans, Ibn Khaldun was full of praise.

¹⁶⁷ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Busch, “Divine Intervention in the ‘Muqaddimah’ of Ibn Khaldūn,” 327.

¹⁶⁹ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 54. Bennisson, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 9-10. Cherry, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, 10.

¹⁷⁰ Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun*, 159.

Ibn Khaldun mentions the nomadic diet many times in his *Muqaddimah*; “They are mostly found restricted to milk, which is for them a very good substitute for wheat.”¹⁷¹ Wheat, of course, is the signifier of a more urbanized population. Ibn Khaldun refers to nomadic peoples who survive on milk, but specifically goat milk.¹⁷² There is a long echo that the lands of Africa provide sustenance, whether through its soil or animals, in this case the goat and their dairy has been a feature in writings about North Africa for a long time. Due to romanticizing the nomadic lifestyle, the philosopher never admitted that people could die of hunger, showcasing how he underplayed negative aspects of nomadic living.¹⁷³

Pliny the Elder reserves his distaste for un-urbanized diets on the continent of Africa, like the flesh eaters who are compared to canines.¹⁷⁴ For the Roman apologist, good does not come from this lifestyle. But, in Ibn Khaldun’s work, this diet was key to a healthy and sharp body and mind. Without it, much of his cycles of history could not happen, as peoples who took over dying dynasties would not have the fortitude to do so without this lifestyle. Interestingly enough, Ibn Khaldun is closer to the thought logic of Herodotus who also wrote about the great health of the African peoples. Herodotus states that because Libyan peoples cauterize the veins on their head, thus preventing humors from descending into the body and misbalancing their health. He writes: “They say of themselves that it is because of this practice that they are the healthiest of all people we know about - whether because of this, I can’t say with certainty, but healthy they are.”¹⁷⁵ Health and the people of Africa are trope that may be attributed to their lifestyle, in which both authors imply was conditional, being lost if the specific causes were changed.

¹⁷¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 1*, 177.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 275-276.

¹⁷³ Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, 44.

¹⁷⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, 229.

¹⁷⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 217.

Of course, there are negative traits that are tied to North Africa and their ways of life. Maliciousness and magic in the region go hand in hand, something parallel between Ibn Khaldun and Pliny's own frame of mind. Practitioners of this dark magic are negatively portrayed, but in the historical record are the protectors of the traditional belief systems, ones that predate the hegemonic powers of Rome and the Arabic caliphates. In Pliny's own context, there were Roman laws that prosecuted the use of certain magic, as it was seen as a possible threat to both individual and public health.¹⁷⁶ In Pliny's work, the undercurrent of his discussions of knowledge, from medicine to art, is to provide beneficial information to people, Roman citizens or not. In Ibn Khaldun's work, magic is seen as a dangerous instrument of violence that could be used improperly if so desired. His writings on magic were a way to condemn it as outside of the permissible practices of Islam, but it also transfers the knowledge of the forbidden practice by bringing it to attention.

Pliny the Elder thought of nomads as more or less savages, often with sub-human morals that stagnated them from progressing to a true agrarian civilization. Although at times he is more ambiguous. On describing the unique aspect of the Asbytaes, Macae, Amantes peoples he writes, "They build their houses of block of salt quarried out of their mountains like stone,"¹⁷⁷ and when describing that the Autoles peoples live "Where fruits of all kinds spring up of their own accord with such luxuriance that pleasure never lacks satisfaction."¹⁷⁸ Pliny gives no nudge towards nuancing these antodects as a negative aspect from these people's environment or a positive compliment of the ingenuity of their needs or happenstance. Pliny also does not necessarily give a label to each specific group as nomadic or settled. Beyond that, he brushes

¹⁷⁶ Veltri, "The Rabbis and Pliny the Elder," 86.

¹⁷⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, 243.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

over any definitions of tribes and their societal structures, which contrasts strongly with Ibn Khaldun.¹⁷⁹ Ibn Khaldun thought of the pastoral nomad as a primal force, whose ‘*asabiyyah*’ or tribal cohesion, enabled them to start and develop the transition of a state.¹⁸⁰

A strong undercurrent for both writers is the relationship between nomads and urban dwellers. Pliny the Elder’s worldview is dominated by the force of the Roman Empire, a complex yet cohesive institution that seeks to promote and reaffirm the supremacy of Rome through its infrastructure, including agricultural production, prosperous trade, and public building projects. The Flavian dynasty starting with Emperor Vespasian built sprawling and formidable architecture, including the Colosseum. Vespasian’s own palace, The Temple of Peace, reflected the reach, control, and flaunting of Roman dominance. As Elizabeth Pollard has demonstrated, by exhibiting a large array of foreign and exotic plants in its garden, which were cataloged by Pliny, the Temple of Peace represented the monumental power Rome had over its conquered domains.¹⁸¹ It has been suggested by authors such as Susan Raven, that Rome was responsible for the major urbanization throughout North Africa. She describes the heavy aspirations as follows: “The inhabitants of Roman north-west Africa eagerly followed their new masters’ example: their towns were built of stone, and embellished with handsome and often grandiose temples, forums, market places and and public bathes.”¹⁸² This urbanization is a part of the larger process of Romanization, which included implementation from the demand of agriculture to fuel the Empire. Other scholars like David Cherry have posited that ancient authors during this era believed that urbanization was indeed Romanization, a just cause to help serve the

¹⁷⁹ Smith, “What Happened to the Ancient Libyans?” 481.

¹⁸⁰ Shaw, “The ancient Mediterranean ideology of the pastoral nomad,” 8.

¹⁸¹ Pollard, Elizabeth Ann. “Pliny’s Natural History and the Flavian Templum Pacis: Botanical Imperialism in First-Century C. E. Rome.” *Journal of World History* 20, no. 3 (2009): 309–38. 312.

¹⁸² Raven, *Rome in Africa*, 103.

interests of the North Africans.¹⁸³ But newer archaeological findings and interpretations, especially those by David Mattingly, have pushed back against this traditional view. Mattingly speaks of this type of Romanization as literary deceit, as he shows that decades of field work and research have shown that “It is apparent that both *Qart Hadasht* and Rome encountered a well developed agricultural landscape in North Tunisia, North Algeria, and northern Morocco, based around numerous towns, hamlets, and fortified settlements.”¹⁸⁴ The Imazighen were implementing agriculture and urbanized cities all throughout northern Africa before the Phoenician, Greek, and Roman settlers.

4. 3 Destruction From Within

But even for Pliny’s mindset, there is a balance between the glorious empire and the inviting pitfalls of consuming its spoils. Pliny alludes to luxurious things such as in his description of the region of Numidia he states that they produce not only wild beasts, possibly for furs and fighting, but a unique type of stone from the region, Numidian marble.¹⁸⁵ The word *luxuria* is in over 60 passages in *Natural History*.¹⁸⁶ As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill describes, luxury for the Romans is a holdover from their predecessors: “The Greek East is identified as the continuing source of progressive moral decline.”¹⁸⁷ Wallace-Hadrill has argued that this antithesis of luxury against the natural world is the underlying heart of Pliny’s work, one which also creates a very anti-Greek worldview.¹⁸⁸ In short, Pliny believed that an undeniable feature of

¹⁸³ Cherry, *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Mattingly, *Africa in the Roman Empire*, 167.

¹⁸⁵ Pliny, *Natural History*, 235.

¹⁸⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. “Pliny the Elder and Man’s Unnatural History.” *Greece & Rome* 37, no. 1 (1990): 80–96. 86.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

conquering other peoples, is to be inwardly conquered by the non-Roman goods and ideas that flow into the Empire more easily; the absorption of other cultures has weakened the integrity of Rome.¹⁸⁹ There has been a strong case to argue that the *Natural History* is also a warning for the intended reader, the workers and farmers of Rome, to be aware of the luxuries that flow into the Empire. The Empire's boundaries absorb both peoples and nature, but squeeze out desired goods that spoil the virtues of the Romans. By writing down his encyclopedia, Pliny can then help his reader stay on the path of *rustica*.

For Ibn Khaldun, there is also this sense of paradox or a type of civilizational ouroboros, which reflects his whole theory of civilization; there is no breakage from one end to the other, but an ongoing turn table of events that continuously rotate. Utilizing the example of sexual debauchery aiding the downfall of civilization he concludes, "It shows that the goal of civilization is sedentary culture and luxury."¹⁹⁰ Both agree that a distant byproduct of urbanized areas are both highly demanded goods and activities that stray from the more barren beginnings of nomads and farmers.

Even though Ibn Khaldun states that royal dynasties existed before cities and towns (which are a byproduct of their authority), Pliny does not necessarily dive into the political organizations of nomadic peoples in Africa, presuming that they existed before large city centers.¹⁹¹ For example, in his listings of various Imazighen peoples such as the Gaetulians and Garamantians, he does not even elude to a kingship or any sort of royal lineages/authority. He does mention wars between the Libyans themselves which did not involve the Romans; The Moors (from whom it takes its name of Mauritania), by many writers called the the Maurusii,

¹⁸⁹ Murphy, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, 24.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah Volume 2*, 296.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

were formally the leading race, but they have been thinned by wars and are now reduced to a few families.”¹⁹² He goes on to say that others groups had a similar fate, “The next race to this is the Masaelyi, but this has been wiped out in a similar manner.”¹⁹³ The description of Libyan wars and the waning powers of groups and kingdoms is a small gimmer onto a lost history of this period.

To reflect on both author’s methodology and description of the Imazighen, it may suffice to put their philosophies of agency into a quick hypothetical practice; for example, why did the Numidian Empire fall? For Pliny, it may have been the error and weakness in the greed of the individuals such as Jugurtha and the Romans senators that would cause Rome to react and start the eventual breakdown and later Roman takeover.¹⁹⁴ For Ibn Khaldun, even though he may agreed that luxury and greed played a role in the downwards spiral by being a byproduct of the core nomadic traditions eroding, he might have said that the ultimate fall of Numidia in the time of Julius Caesar’s civil war falls in line with how long a dynasty usually lasts. It was from Julius Caesar around 150 years since Massinissa established the first united Numidian dynasty, and so the dissolution of that Amazigh kingdom was simply one of many that followed his pattern of rise and fall.

¹⁹² Pliny, *Natural History*, 231.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁹⁴ Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 43.

5 LEGACY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Revolving Reputations

Pliny the Elder's work would see great transformations of usage over the course of history. The First Century Roman's *Natural History* was used by authors on their own encyclopedias for roughly two centuries after his death.¹⁹⁵ Some early Christian church fathers such as St. Jerome and Bede cited and praised Pliny the Elder's work.¹⁹⁶ The *Natural History* was used heavily in Medieval and Renaissance astronomy, which spanned hundreds of years, often referred to as "Plinian astrology."¹⁹⁷ In the 19th century, German lead academics dropped Pliny as a historically reliable source, leaving him on the wayside for decades to come.¹⁹⁸ Because of the nature of Pliny the Elder's writing, he has traditionally been viewed in Latin Language classes as a poor example of Latin grammar and syntax.¹⁹⁹ Disregarding his prose, the content of the *Natural History* has seen a revitalization, mostly in scholars of ancient art and culture. There have been numerous works using the *Natural History* as a primary source for historical contexts of peoples and regions, serving only as cross examination, as if to say he does not have much to add to the conversation. Since the 1980's, serious work has gone into unfolding and laying out his sources that were so often hidden.²⁰⁰ Shortly after this development, Pliny's work has been used extensively to further understand ancient art and culture, but also in pinpointing the work's first century Roman Imperial mindset and the biography of the author himself. Authors like Mary Beagon have forewarned those utilizing Pliny's encyclopedia stating

¹⁹⁵ Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 22.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹⁷ French and Greenaway, *Pliny the Elder, his Sources and Influence*, 197.

¹⁹⁸ Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ French and Greenaway, *Pliny the Elder, his Sources and Influence*, 20.

²⁰⁰ Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture*, 11.

that the work is “An unwieldy mass of raw material, with varying estimates of its reliability.”²⁰¹ The encyclopedia is so large that many topics can just as easily be covered as they can be misunderstood.

Ibn Khaldun may be one of the most written about medieval Arabic writing scholars, with decades of undying praise for his developments in world history, historiography, and the metaphysics of everything in between.²⁰² In more recent scholarship, he may be is sometimes seen as over analyzed and often misplaced for his context. Fuad Baali writes that there are four types of modern analysis on Ibn Khaldun’s work: First, the glorification of Ibn Khaldun’s work as genius. Second, the negation of his work as any meaningful contribution. Third, the non judgemental encyclopedic view. And fourth, the invented claims in which Ibn Khaldun had never made.²⁰³

Even though some modern day praise of Ibn Khaldun makes him an extraordinary figure in desolate times, Fischel emphasizes that Ibn Khaldun was adding to the rich collection of Arabic writing philosophers, who drew from earlier sources to examine and be critical of early tests. Fischel states: “This oversight might be due to the generally held but erroneous view that Ibn Khaldun had no precursors in regard to his socio-philosophical ideas and that his major sources were his own experiences and the reflection on them, and the abstraction of his acquaintance with the contemporary scene of the Arab and Berber dynasties.”²⁰⁴ And as Fischel argues, it is not what sources he uses, but how he uses them that Ibn Khaldun stands out from his contemporaries. He also suggests that Ibn Khaldun also was subtly supporting a method of

²⁰¹ Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 24.

²⁰² Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun*, ix.

²⁰³ Baali, *Ibn Khaldun’s Sociological Thought*, ix.

²⁰⁴ Fischel, “Ibn Khaldūn’s Use of Historical Sources,” 110.

comparative religions as his work, focusing on non-Arab and non-Islamic peoples for the sake of understanding socio-historical concepts.²⁰⁵ For Fischel, Ibn Khaldun was innovative enough to push the envelope of interlocking fields.

A basic definition of history is ‘change over time.’ Ironically, due to Ibn Khaldun’s method of cycles, he focused his work on changes on a modularized scale, which overlooked the long-lasting impacts of various dynasties that differentiated themselves. Aziz al-Azmeh states that for continuity to transcend the bounds of the state, a mode of explanations required which transcends the the linear time of pure succession: “Distinction between states in the History, however it is expressed in terms of difference, not change.”²⁰⁶ Ibn Khaldun may highlight the differences of rulers and families from each specific dynasty, but his own framework of cyclic nature downplayed the change that the dynasties caused besides the death and rebirth of new dynasties. Amira Bennison has posited that Ibn Khaldun’s theory of ‘asabiyyah is problematic due to the nature of the relationship of tribe and empire, which often had other critical factors, such as the ruling elites assimilating foreign influences and the vital control of trade.²⁰⁷ In further placing Ibn Khaldun in his time in relationship to how history was written, al-Azmeh writes that “Ibn Khaldun’s History does not improve on the imprecision that characterizes Arab historiographic terminology.”²⁰⁸ Whether Ibn Khaldun is over appreciated, there is no doubt that he has left us a rich and complex work to be more than thankful for.

The basis of this thesis is to compare the main works of Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun and their intersection of North Africa and its inhabitants. It would be fair to reflect upon these

²⁰⁵ Fischel, “Ibn Khaldūn’s Use of Historical Sources,” 110.

²⁰⁶ Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun*, 25.

²⁰⁷ Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 8.

²⁰⁸ Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun*, 43.

two authors with the simple words of David Mattingly: “The idea of the dichotomy between ‘civilized Romans’ and ‘barbarous Libyans’ is something that is strongly present in Greco-Roman sources on North Africa (with echoes also in Arabic narratives).”²⁰⁹ The textualization of the Imazighen is just that, an idea; a literary device that was not the reality of the lived experiences of a wide spectrum of North Africans in both the Ancient and Medieval period. Traces of Hellenistic thought are found in both the Roman and Arabic primary sources, albeit with different conclusions of how sedentary and nomadic North Africans fit into the authors’ worldviews and drove much of the methodology of the authors examined in this thesis.

The next steps of research from this thesis would be to shift the perspective by looking under the layers of textualization to further understand and analyze the Imazighen in these different historical contexts. This can not be done with literature alone, and must be square against archaeology, but also the living archives of the people of North Africa and the various core elements of identity that have been transmitted over time, such as language and surviving elements of traditional cultural.

Pliny and Ibn Khaldun have an obvious gap in the historical social context in which they wrote, which greatly affected the framework of how they placed peoples such as the Imazighen into their philosophies. For example, they give their explanations of ethnogenesis on varying gradients, with Pliny being more subtle and Ibn Khaldun being much more forthright on this topic, both of whom rely on migration narratives derived from older stories. These authors extoll the similar notion of the dangers of what they deem as sorcery; a dark magic that can cause great harm. This portrayal of magic provides insight into their set of morals and values based in higher institutions. For Pliny, the institutions of the Roman Empire maintained a Latin moral code, even

²⁰⁹ Mattingly, *Africa in the Roman Empire*, 120.

if the emperors were not always upholding it. For Ibn Khaldun, his ideas reflected the influence of Maliki Islam. The largest overlap these two authors exhibit is in their description of the relationship between nomads and city dwellers. Although they had different thoughts about the nature of nomadic peoples and how urbanism affected humans, the dichotomy was no doubt one of the strongest philosophical notions that was a part of their foundational methodology. Pliny the Elder and Ibn Khaldun provide clear and distinctive textual representations of the Imazighen in their respective eras. These two views of the Imazighen not only differentiate these African peoples from other societies in the pre-modern world, but they also transmit a layered textuality of indigenous agency in a highly globalized history.

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