The Fall of Ottomans: A Khaldunian Study of Tariq Ali's *The Stone Woman*

Ahmad Saeed Iqbal

PhD Scholar, Department of English Literature
Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Muhammad Asif

Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature
Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Mazhar Hayat

Chairman, Department of English Literature
Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Ghulam Murtaza

Associate Professor, Department of English Literature
Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The Stone Woman is a complex story of the decline of the Ottomans and the rise of Christians in Europe. By abandoning the strong Turkish asabiyyah (social solidarity) and ignoring the prominent features of Islamic umran (civilisation), the Ottoman Empire fell, and the Christians gained power due to their advanced knowledge and strong social solidarity. As the fall of the Turks and the rise of the Christians occurred cyclically, the Cyclical Theory of the rise and fall of civilisations in Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah seems appropriate for the theoretical outline. It also explores how the Khaldunian concepts of *asabiyyah* and *umran* are related to Ali's alternative history of the Christian-Muslim relations. The research concludes that Turkey has remained the center of the East-West conflict. The Middle East's contemporary socio-political issues and ethnic strife originated in the Ottoman era.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Cyclic Theory, Ottoman Empire, *Asabiyyah*, Rise and Fall of Civilisations

Introduction

The present study explores the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Christian power in Europe in Tariq Ali's *The Stone Woman* (2000), the third fictional tale in his historical series *Islam Quintet*. Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the clash between the Christian and Muslim civilisations created a deep historico-cultural consciousness in both these civilisations, which is still prevalent in the form of problematic relations between Turkey and the European Union. The Christian and Muslim cultures underwent a cyclical pattern of rise and decline in Europe. Ali explores the historicity of this cultural clash through the fictional tale of an elite Turkish family in Istanbul. Our paper employs the theoretical perspective of Ibn Khaldun in his famous *Muqaddimah*[1] (Rosenthal's translated version, 1969). It focuses on his Cyclical Theory of the rise and fall of civilisations along with other related ideas like *asabiyyah*[2] (social solidarity) and *umran*[3] (civilisation). *The Stone Woman* is not a straightforward historical novel about the Ottomans' social and cultural decline; it is a critical reworking and the whole story is fictionalised through the memories of various female characters before a statue called the 'Stone Woman,' erected in the backyard of the palatial house of Yusuf Pasha. The poetics and the politics of Ali's historiography give him the freedom of choice to adapt the nature of his fictional persons and places. The key objective of this research is to scrutinise how far Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory of the rise and fall of civilisations communicates the decline of the Ottomans and the rise of Christians in Europe. It also explores how Ali's alternative history of the Christian-Muslim relations in *The Stone Woman* deconstructs the Eurocentric narrative of the Ottoman Empire and his fiction reveals the politics of the historico-cultural consciousness in Christian and Muslim civilisations within a postmodern multiperspectivism.

The family history of Yusuf Pasha, the royal minister of the Ottoman Sultan, is used as a metaphor for the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and Nilofer Pahsha, the narrator of the story, recollects this history and its relation to the

---

[1] Also known as the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun or Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena, is the introductory chapter or the first book of Ibn Khaldun's world history, the *Kitab ul-ibar* or Book of Lessons written in 1377. See Alatas, Syed Hussein 'The Development of an Autonomous Social Science Tradition in Asia: Problems and Prospects', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 30(1): 150–157, 2002.

[2] The most difficult and one of the most important Khaldunian terms in *Muqaddimah*, translated by many scholars in an array of expressions such as 'group feeling,' 'social solidarity,' 'group loyalty,' 'esprit de corps,' 'blood relationship' 'tribal consciousness,' 'partisanship,' and 'collective consciousness' etc. De Slane explains asabiyyah as 'esprit de corps,' and Frantz Rosenthal translates it as 'group feeling' or 'social solidarity,' which, according to Mahdi, Mohsin 1957 and Lacoste 1984, is the closest meaning to this term; it has nothing to do with the feelings of 'patriotism' or 'national awareness.'

[3] Also called "*Ilm al-Umran*" or the science of civilisation, a fundamental concept in *Muqaddimah* necessary for the human social organisation (al-ijtima al-insani). See Yahaya, Mahayudin Hj. The Science of Umran: Its Origin, Role, and Function. *The Journal of Middle East and North Africa Sciences*, 3(12), 17-22, 2017.

political turmoil in the country in an effective way. Nilofer points out that the Empire has failed to survive against European imperialism, and the Ottoman leadership has lost its Turkish *asabiyyah* and discarded the best parts of its Islamic civilisation. *The Stone Woman* is set in 1899 and describes the state of disturbance in the last stage of the most incredible Islamic Empire. It illustrates how the gradual loss of *asabiyyah* in Turkish civilisation and its indifference to the teachings of Islamic culture become the primary causes of the decline of such a vast empire. Through the character of the Baron as the voice of the novel, Ali mocks at the Ottoman Empire (Erol 240), which, in its last stage, behaves 'like a drunken prostitute, neither knowing nor caring who will take her next' (Ali 25). Ali narrates the historical and cultural decline of the 'Sick Man of Europe'[4] and wonders how such a mighty civilisation could have fallen which, by using the most advanced weapons of the times in 1453, captured Constantinople (Istanbul) from the Byzantines.

Ibn Khaldun and Postmodern Literature

Literary texts, especially postmodern historical novels about various civilisations and cultures, establish the area of study wherein Ibn Khaldun has remained, for the most part, marginal. Many books, research publications, symposia, and seminar discussions are available on Ibn Khaldun in various disciplines of social sciences. Still, there is no use of Khaldunian perspectives or theories on literary texts related to history and culture. There is an adequate number of texts available in contemporary literature on the history of both recent and ancient civilisations around the world that can be used to test the Cyclical Theory of Ibn Khaldun on the decline and rise of the empires and other correlated ideas in his *Muqaddimah* like *asabiyyah* (social solidarity) and *umran* (civilisation). Our paper, therefore, is an attempt to fill this gap as it systematically utilizes Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory of history and cultures in connection with the historiographic fiction of Tariq Ali's *The Stone Woman* in contemporary multi-perspectivism.

In recent years, Ibn Khaldun has achieved great public recognition. The Tunisian Community Center launched the first Ibn Khaldun Award in 2004 to recognise the research work of a Tunisian on Ibn Khaldun's theories of solidarity and kinship. In similar vein, the Atlas Economic Research Foundation USA initiated an Annual Essay Contest in Ibn Khaldun's memory and the Spanish

[4]This label is given to a nation located in some parts of Europe and experiencing a time of economic difficulty or impoverishment. Emperor Nicholas I of the Russian Empire is considered the first to have used the term "Sick Man" to describe the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th century. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, the term has been applied to other nations. See Badem, Candan. The" Ottoman Crimean War: (1853 - 1856). BRILL, 2010.

Government also celebrated the sixth hundred death anniversary of Ibn Khaldun by organising an exhibition at UN headquarters, New York. In 2007, Turkey founded a new Ibn Khaldun University in Istanbul with an emphasis on teaching history and social sciences. U.S. President Ronald Reagan also cited Ibn Khaldun in his new policies on economics, known as *Reaganomics*. Syed Farid al-Attas, a Malaysian social thinker and educator, has tried to recover the lost tradition of this Medieval Muslim thinker in his book *Applying Ibn Khaldun* and presents not only several effectual responses to Eurocentrism but also gives some alternative discourses in Asian social sciences. Therefore, it is time for a Neo-Khaldunian age, and correlating Ibn Khaldun's theories to postmodern historical works is relevant to studying contemporary civilisations and their rise and decline. However, such kind of reconstruction and application has generally not taken place in the field of literature because of the relative inattention to Ibn Khaldun as a theorist in literary research. Al-Attas suggests two main reasons for this inattention: one is the absence of the theoretical authority of the East or non-Western thinkers, and the other is the Eurocentric isolation from the scholarship of Islamic philosophy and tradition, with a few exceptions (al-Attas 1). Most of the writings and research works on Ibn Khaldun are mainly comprised of the biographical details of his life, general theories of history, economics, and state formation, and a few comparisons between Ibn Khaldun and Western social thinkers. Al-Attas believes that the Eurocentric approach in the study of social sciences continuously marginalises the existence of non-European sources of theories and concepts (2). Ibn Khaldun also remains marginal as a social thinker in literature, and the theoretical applications of his theories and ideas are absent in literary analysis, especially his cyclical views on history and civilisations and their relevance to practical historical situations. Therefore, the study of the rise and fall of states and the clash of major religions in the East and West have yet to gain an advantage from a systematic application of the Cyclical Theory of Ibn Khaldun.

Our study explains that the Khaldunian notions of history and sociology are relevant and applicable not only to the past but also to the contemporary situation of many Muslim countries worldwide. The history of the Ottoman Empire is one such example; the rise of the Turkish influence in recent international politics has brought back an academic interest in Western social thinkers, and many exceptional works have been published on the history and culture of this Islamic Empire and its relations with the West. Postmodern fiction has a great deal of attraction in the Ottoman Empire, and many recent novels on the history of the Ottoman Empire have gained eminence and recognition. Most

of the fiction of the Turkish Nobel Laureate, Orhan Pamuk, focuses on the decline of the Ottoman Empire and presents an alternative history of the Ottomans that has intrigued Europeans for centuries. Two of his significant works, *My Name is Red* and *The White Castle*, narrate the fictional history of the clash of the Ottoman Empire with its counterpart Europeans and its impact on the current situation of the Turkish identity in global politics. Pamuk's main themes in his novels are the question of Turkish identity, its cultural differences with the West, and the future possibilities of its global co-existence with the European gaze. *The White Castle* disrupts the one-way dynamics of the Eurocentric representation of the Middle Eastern cultures and questions the role of the Turk in the evolution of the image of Islam in contemporary literary discourse. Beyazıt H. Akman writes that Pamuk, in his article "Conquest or Fall?" written in 2003, questions whether what happened on May 29, 1453, is a 'conquest' or 'fall'; it is the 'Fall of Constantinople' for the Westerners and the 'Conquest of Istanbul' for the Easterners (Pamuk 61). He historicizes this dilemma and believes that the fall resulted from the factionalism or loss of Turkish *asabiyyah*, the denial of authentic Islamic culture, and the wrong perceptions of *Ulema* (religious clerics) towards European scientific knowledge.

Pamuk's Nobel Prize-winner novel, *My Name is Red* is a more complex and ambiguous fiction that narrates the decline of Islamic culture in the reign of Ottoman Sultan Murat III (1574-1595). Erdag Goknar takes this novel as a leitmotif covering four major areas: the Ottoman history in the European context, its impact on the modern Middle East, the Cultural Revolution of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and the legacy of the identity crisis in present-day Turkey (34). In one of his books, *Other Colours*, Pamuk also discusses the problem of Turkish identity between the East and the West and believes that everyone is sometimes a Westerner and sometimes an Easterner, or in fact, a constant combination of the two (359). Louis de Bernieres' *Birds Without Wings* is the tragic love story of a beautiful Christian girl Philothei and a young Muslim Ibrahim in a small fictional village of Eskibahce in South West Anatolia in the dying days of the Ottoman Empire. Using multiple narrators in his novel, Bernieres narrates the rise of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the over-zealous Turkish Nationalism and its impact on the characters' lives. Religious intolerance and the loss of social solidarity among various strata of Turkish society have severely affected the town's inhabitants, and they all unintentionally plunged into a critical situation that is out of their control. *A Place Called Armageddon: Constantinople 1453* by the Canadian writer and actor Chris Humphreys is a panoramic fiction of the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It retells the story of a group of characters caught up in that turbulent

time of Byzantine history. The Byzantine Empire was in its terminal decline before the siege of Constantinople, and the young Turkish Sultan Mehmet took it as his destiny to capture 'the Red Apple' (Constantinople) for the glory of Allah. Humphreys retells the story of the bloody clash between the Christian and Muslim civilisations and portrays the events of the greatest battle of history for one of the most critical strategic places in the world.

Colin Falconer's *The Sultan's Harem* (2005) is set in the court of the Turkish Sultan, Suleyman the Magnificent, in 16th-century Constantinople and describes the secret affairs of the large *harem*[5] the Sultan, which is the domain of more than 300 beautiful women. It gives an alluring glimpse into an era when an empire could be managed not by the strength of its ruler but by the beauty of its women hidden behind the *harem's* walls. Similarly, *The Ottoman Quartet* by the famous Turkish writer and novelist Ahmet Altan is a beautiful collection of historiographic fiction which spans across fifty years of the Ottoman decline from the end of the 19th century to the rise of Kemal Ataturk after the First World War. Through the metafictional tales of his characters, Altan narrates the story of the disintegration of the magnificent Ottoman Empire and traces not only the social ups and downs of the time but also reflects on the sensual and emotional lives of the characters. *The Stone Woman* also explores the steady plunge of the Ottoman Empire through the collapse of a family; the pitiable condition of the 'Sick Man of Europe' closely resembles the sad predicament of the defeated or deceased characters in the family of Iskander Pasha.

Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory of History

Using Ibn Khaldun's well-known Cyclical Theory of the rise and fall of civilisations, this study also highlights the importance of two significant concepts of *asabiyyah* (solidarity) and *umran* (civilisation/society) in his *Muqaddimah* and their application to the current political and cultural turmoil in many Muslim countries which is also the direct outcome of the conflict of religious and social ideologies between the Islamic world and the West. Out of the five prominent historical cases of the rise and fall of Muslim civilisations in different geographical locations of the world in *Islam Quintet* (1992-2010), the third part, that is, *The Stone Woman*, has been selected to use the Khaldunian model with the potential possibility of devising a broad-spectrum standard theory on the decline and rise of the states. The meta-theoretical context of this study deals with the rise and fall of two major civilisations of the world, the Christian and the Muslims. At the

[5] A sacred, inviolable place reserved for the women of the house in a Muslim family. See Cartwright-Jones, Catherine "Harem." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Women*. 2013.

same time, the theoretical critique of the Eurocentric ideas about Muslim history and culture produces some counterarguments which are not widely accepted in mainstream academic circles, and are seldom put into practice in postmodern literature. The present study is based on the medieval notions of historiography and examines the cyclical history of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Christians in Europe. Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory of history and his ideas on the rise and fall of the dynasties in his famous *Muqaddimah* are used to explore the politics of historico-cultural consciousness in Ali's *The Stone Woman*. As the literary comprehension of *The Stone Woman* is closely related to cultural studies and history, Catherine Belsey's textual analysis method, outlined in *Research Methods for English Studies*, appears somewhat relevant. In chapter 9 of this book, "Textual Analysis as a Research Method," Belsey explains that textual analysis simply deals with the thorough interrogation of any written or visual text and comes across close to the work itself without making many presuppositions (160). Belsey recommends that textual analysis is the most relevant practice for all those texts that look to understand the cultural and historical context in their subject matter (171).

Ibn Khaldun believes that history moves in a cyclical pattern instead of moving in a linear mode. Power circulates among various regimes, and the rise and fall of the dynasties occur naturally, like the living organisms that are born and die within a specific timespan (Khaldun 136). In the same way, all empires are born, gain maturity and develop into advanced civilisations in due course of time. However, in the end, every dynasty or empire becomes weak when it loses its military power and social solidarity due to over-indulgence in luxury and rampant injustice. In the last stage of civilisation, people become accustomed to their rich and sophisticated sedentary culture, losing their initial bonding based on kinship or religious faith. Ibn Khaldun believes that the stability of a state depends on two key elements; the stronger *asabiyyah* (group solidarity or social cohesion) and a well-defined *umran* (spirit of the group or civilisation). He regards *asabiyyah* as one of the primary factors that can cause the rise and fall of a civilisation. *Asabiyyah* is a natural ability by which a human being protects his kin or blood relations from threat and dishonor (Khaldun 263). It is the force of *asabiyyah* which decides the fall of one empire and the rise of another with its weakness and strength, respectively.

The second important part of the Khaldunian theory is '*umran*,' translated as the 'spirit of a social group' or 'civilisation' by Rosenthal, while Muhsin Mahdi renders it as the 'culture' of a particular group. Ibn Khaldun says that the idea

of *umran* (civilisation) is formed when people set up a social organisation with mutual help and cooperation (Khaldun 45). This social organisation also produces the idea of leadership or royal authority, which controls a society and develops it. Ibn Khaldun discusses two types of *umran*: Badawa (the desert or uncivilised culture) and *Hadara* (the urban or civilised culture) (Khaldun 785). Every civilisation begins with the Bedouin culture and ends in a sedentary or urban culture (*Hadara*). However, the life span of every civilisation from *Badawa* to *Hadara* is about 120 years, equal to three or four human generations (Khaldun 370-373). The end of this life span comes at the stage of the sedentary culture when a civilisation becomes weak due to the loss of *asabiyyah* (solidarity) and injustice. Another civilisation then defeats this fragile civilisation with a stronger *asabiyyah* and better *umran*, and thus, the rise and fall of civilisations occur. This rise and fall is called the Khaldunian Cycle.[6]

As every text comprises of numerous writings which are mutually related to each other, including the relations of contestation (Belsey 176), *The Stone Woman* also comprises of a complex fictional tale about the contesting civilisations with two distinct cultures and religions. There is no final or one true meaning behind this text, and there cannot be an ultimate truth available for it. Therefore, the real significance of this research lies in its multi-perspective approach toward producing meanings that may provide suitable links between the past and present and help define the future. The main research objectives of this study are achieved by analyzing the selected passages from the text, and some vital points are focused on via the textual analysis of the novel in the ensuing two sections.

Ibn Khaldun and the rise and fall of the Ottomans

Ibn Khaldun explains five historical stages of sovereign power. The salient features of each of these stages can be used to understand the different phases of the decline and rise of the Ottoman Empire. He says that every dynasty starts as a Bedouin or uncivilised culture (*Badawa*) and invades the urban cultures with the help of a strong *Asabiyyah* (solidarity) among its members. The Ottomans also began their journey the same way; their first generations were nomads of a tribe named *Kayi*.[7] They established their first state in northwest Anatolia, where the Seljuks[8] granted them lands near the Byzantine Empire (Inalcik 10). They had

---

[6] The cyclical mechanism of rising and declining polities in Ibn Khaldun's thought. See Chapra 2015, Nduka 1998.

[7] One of the 11th-century tribes of the Oghuz Turkic people. The founder of the Ottoman Empire, Osman I, was considered a descendant of this tribe. See Findley, Carter V. *The Turks in World History*. Oxford UP, 2005; Shaw, Stanford J., and Ezel K. Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Cambridge UP, 1977.

[8] Also spelled Seljuq, the ruling military family of the Oghuz Turkic tribes that invaded southwestern Asia in the 11th century and eventually founded an empire. See Matringe, Denis, and Kate Fleet. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam:*

no experience in state-building, but they had their traditions and folk literature. The Baron in *The Stone Woman* also points out that the Ertogruls[9] have always preferred acknowledging their humble background. The Ottoman Sultans feel proud and confident that the Ertogruls are the only genuine hereditary ruling family in the history of their great Empire (28).

Ali, however, problematises this historical discourse when Memed, one of Orhan's uncles, tells Orhan and other family members that the founding leader of their family did not descend from an Arab tribe of the Prophet. Still, it was an Albanian named Enver whose job was to clean the heaps of horse dung that had accumulated on the edges of an Ottoman military encampment (27). The second stage of the Ottoman Empire was the personalisation of its power from 1453 to 1512. This period of the Ottomans started after Mehmet II conquered Constantinople and united the lands in Europe and Anatolia. Ali appreciates the will of Sultan Mehmet, who wanted to take the city the Byzantines called Constantinople. He was a visionary leader who believed that if the Turks wanted to be a power in Europe and beyond the Bosporus, they had to take Constantinople. Mehmed the Great was sure of this, and his fortitude produced such a strong *asabiyyah* in every soldier that "mothers told their sons to go and fight for the honor of their faith" (Ali 41). In this stage, the Ottoman rulers tried to become absolute monarchs with absolute power and wanted only to see their kin as their potential leaders.

The third stage of the Ottoman Empire was the period of its growth and expansion (1512-1579), also called the time of leisure and tranquility when the Ottoman Sultans enjoyed their full royal authority. In this time there were significant achievements in architecture, literature, science, and arts. Leaders used military power to make their enemies afraid. They took decisions by themselves, focused on the problems of their subjects, and spent money for the public (Khaldun 380). It was an interim period between *hadara* and *badawa*, and the Ottomans defeated their enemies while the empire became incredibly wealthy and prosperous. People achieved luxury and were civilised but did not lose martial power. The time of Suleyman I can be defined as a magnificent century in economic development, justice, expansion, and trade, mainly in arts and cultures.

Following the death of Suleyman the Magnificent, the Ottoman Empire descended into a period of stagnation (1579-1730).[10] The Empire stretched to its maximum

Three. 2009.

[9] Belong to the Oghuz Turkic tribe of Ertugrul Gazi, a 13th-century bey who was the father of Osman I. See Akgunduz, Ahmed, and Said Ozturk. Ottoman History - Misperceptions and Truths. IUR Press, 2011.

[10] See Önder, Murat; Ulasan, Fatih. *Adam Academy Journal of Social Science*; Ankara Vol. 8, Iss. 2, (2018): 231-266.

length and breadth, and the sultans became less talented and active in wars. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun writes,

> Every dynasty can obtain a certain amount of land and cannot have more. Every state should send representatives coming from its state to the lands which were conquered because these lands need protection, and taxes should be collected. When they do not have any person to send, it means that the state has reached its natural borders. (354)

The Ottoman Empire also started to deteriorate as it reached its natural borders. The Ottoman Empire had attained its maximum area; it then started deteriorating when Selim II (known as Selim the Drunk or Selim the Sot) became the 11th Sultan of the Empire. Ali mocks the Ottoman Sultan when Salman asks Petrossian (the major-domo or chief steward of the Pasha family) about the truth of a family story about Selim the Sot. It was said that Selim II drank so much wine that "he became incapable of performing his main function as a man" (44). Ali further narrated the scene in his chamber when he summoned one of his wives in the following words "he used to be hoisted upwards by silken cords, and while he was held thus by the eunuchs, young boys with delicate hands would fondle him between the legs so that he felt some sensation while a healthy, blindfolded janissary was brought in naked (p. 44). The loyal soldier then impregnated the delighted princess with tightly shut eyes, and all this time, "Allah's representative on earth, in a drunken stupor, would see the happiness on the face of his wife and hear her delighted squeals" (44). Thus, the Ottomans lost the empire's foundation values and got lazy. The Tulip period[11] (1718-30) is an excellent example of this stage's lavish lifestyle and point of view of the Ottomans.

The last stage of the Ottoman Empire was the period of its decline and dissolution (1730-1922). It is also known as the era of waste and squandering as the leaders swiftly spent their forebears' fortune and lived a luxurious and corrupt life. The fourth period's destructive features worsened and continued until its downfall. Ibn Khaldun insists that the decline comes with administrative, economic, military, and spiritual erosions. Bernard Lewis also states that the Ottoman government, its leaders, and the military are responsible for this decline. Still, we should not forget the affection of moral, social, and cultural erosion. At the last stage of their Empire, the Ottomans recognised the advancement of the Christian civilisation in Europe, especially in science and technology, and gradually acknowledged their superiority. Firstly, the decline of the Ottoman

[11] *Turkish Lâle Devri*, a relatively peaceful period in Ottoman history that derives its name from the tulip craze among the Ottoman court society; it began from the Treaty of Passarowitz on 21 July 1718 to the Patrona Halil Revolt on 28 September 1730. See Salzmann, Ariel. "The Age of Tulips: Confluence and Conflict in Early Modern Consumer Culture (1550-1730)". *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire*, 1550-1922. Suny Press, 2000.

armed forces' defeats in wars and the loss of territories forced the Ottomans to make reforms. Ibn Khaldun says losers always imitate the winner's lifestyle, traditions, and dresses (Khaldun 325-326). Because of that, the Ottomans carried out reforms.

However, to Ibn Khaldun, even if the leaders did try to carry out reforms and rehabilitations to preempt their downfall, it is a natural process and cannot be controlled (Khaldun 596-597). After Abdulhamid II[12], the empire started losing several lands in a short span of time. Ibn Khaldun says that when a state loses land, it gets smaller, and the center is finally invaded. However, even if the state has many lands, it loses its center, and other lands cannot save its integrity. For instance, when a heart stops, the other organs cannot survive (Khaldun 355). The same situation can be seen in the Ottoman Empire. In 1918, the Allied Forces invaded Istanbul with the help of their naval ships and controlled the whole country. Losing royal authority in Istanbul led to a chaotic gap, and every group with modest solidarity tried to fill it. At the same time, Mustafa Kemal Pasha took over at the end and established the modern nation-state of Turkey in 1923.

The Stone Woman: A Tale of the Rise and fall of Ottoman Empire

The Stone Woman is a complex postmodern fiction in which Ali, through the memories and myths of an elite Turkish family, narrates the history of the decline of the Ottomans and the rise of the Christians in Europe. Ali believes that 'myths always overpower truth in family histories' (1), and Nilofer, after an enforced absence from home, returns to her father's palatial mansion and wants to know the truth about the exile of one of her great forefathers, Yusuf Pasha. The novel bears its title from a marble statue that stands in an almond orchard behind the house. It looks like a woman, but its face is hidden. Zeynep says that it is either a local pagan goddess or the first carved image of Mariam, the mother of Jesus (Ali 3). The family is unsure about her identity, so she becomes the Stone Woman (Ali 4). Since their childhood, all the family members used to confide in her, asked her intimate questions, and imagined that she replied (4). Nilofer discovers that all the women of her family, including the female servants, reveal their secrets to this statue. Thus, Ali has turned a marble statue into a repository of all the secrets and hidden pain for the female characters of the family which otherwise remain unseen and unheard.

There were too many stories available in the family history of Sikandar Pasha, the head of the Pasha family, regarding the exile of Yusuf Pasha. Ali narrates

---

[12] The last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 31 August 1876 to 27 April 1909. See Overy, Richard. J. *The Times Complete History of the World*. Collins, 2010.

the reasons for the Ottoman rulers' and Sultans' downfall through these family sagas. One such circulated tale was that, being a faithful vizier of the Sultan, Yusuf Pasha, one day in a strange mood, told the story of the rise and fall of the Persian Empire to the Sultan. The Great Persian Empire appeared invincible and dominated the world five hundred years before Christ, under the leadership of Cyrus the Great[13], who was proclaimed King of Kings in Babylon (Ali 7). However, the heirs of Cyrus, two hundred years later, had become the pawns of eunuchs and women and their indulgence in luxury and injustice to their people brought the Empire's downfall. Most of the governors (satraps) of the Empire had become disloyal, and the officials were corrupt, callous, and inefficient (Ali 7). The fall of the Persians gave rise to the Greeks, who gained their influence through strong solidarity among their ranks. Ali believes that it was long before the birth of Alexander that the route of his conquest had already been built (8). Yusuf Pasha told the Sultan that the Greeks, without warning, attacked the Persian Empire with only ten thousand soldiers and slew the Persians. "Nothing stood in their way. And soon people began to realise that if only ten thousand soldiers could do this, rulers and leaders were unnecessary" (8).

The Sultan did not like Yusuf Pasha's story and stormed out of the room. The Sultan had taken the story as an ill-omened reference to the Ottoman Empire (Ali 8) and ignored the eternal law that nothing was eternal. Yusuf Pasha was punished very lightly and exiled from Istanbul forever. According to another story circulated in the family, Yusuf Pasha had fallen in love with the Sultan's favorite white slave, and they had been caught while copulating. According to this version, the slave was executed on the spot, and Yusuf Pasha was whipped in public and sent away to live out the rest of his life in disgrace. Nilofer believes that no single narrative can explain the fall of the Ottoman rulers from their grace, and perhaps nobody knows the real reason, and all the existing versions are false (Ali 9). Similarly, the arrogant behavior and mannerism of Iskander Pasha, the head of the family, are merely the display of a Turkish aristocrat (Ali 11). Before the family discussion about the empire's fall, he suffers a stroke and becomes paralyzed.

The whole family begins to assemble in the mansion to see the 'sick man' of the Pasha house. The paralysis of Iskander Pasha became a symbol of the decline of the Ottoman Empire which was also becoming the 'Sick Man of Europe' day by day. In one of their family discussions, the Baron, who is a spokesman for Ali in the novel, makes such sarcastic remarks to Memed, the brother of Iskander

---

[13] Cyrus II of Persia (c. 600–530 BC), commonly known as Cyrus the Great or Cyrus the Elder. He was the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, the first Persian Empire. See M. A. Dandamaev "Cyrus II," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

Pasha, that "your Ottoman Empire is like a drunken prostitute, lying with her legs wide open, neither knowing nor caring who will take her next," while they are on their second bottle of champagne (Ali 24). The Baron believes that whenever he visits the family of Iskander Pasha, he feels lost and disconnected from the real world, as all the family members live in a world of dreams and comfort. The real world, according to the Baron, "is the world of ants and the only way to survive in this world is to become like ants" (24). The future of the Ottomans depended on their hard labor, but they resisted and indulged in luxury and comforts. The Ottomans assumed that their homeland Turkey was the real world, and in this way, they could keep the Europeans at bay. "But for how long, it could be so Memed?" The Baron asks, "Your Empire is so bankrupt that you can no longer even afford to buy time as you have done for nearly three hundred years" (Ali 25).

One of the leading causes of the empire's decline was that the Ottoman Sultans created and destroyed Viziers (28). In contrast, the Ertogruls had always preferred their ministers and courtiers to acknowledge their modest backgrounds. They were the only true hereditary ruling family in the Ottoman Empire's history, and it gave the Sultans a feeling of stability and self-confidence. However, the later Sultans lost this *asabiyyah* of lineage based on the idea of kinship and considered themselves all mighty and strong. Sultan Abdulhamid II (1842–1918) knew this as the last Sultan to effectively control the fracturing state. When the Baron accompanied him to Berlin on an official tour, he asked: "Do you think I will be the last Caliph of Islam?" The Baron smiled without replying (28).

Petrossian tells about the glory days of the Ottoman Empire to Salman, who insists that the borders between fiction and history have become blurred. He recalls the golden days of Memed the Conqueror when he finally decided to take Constantinople from the Byzantines because he knew that without Constantinople, their Empire would be one-eyed. The Ottomans could never know what lay beyond the Bosporus (41). The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 marked the end of the Byzantine Empire, which lasted for about 1500 years and dated back to 27 BC. Ali believes that the fall of Constantinople was a turning point in the history of Christian-Muslim relations and marked the divide between Europe and Asia Minor. The Christian response to the fall of Constantinople brought about the articulation of Europe as a political community. The intense hatred of Christians towards Muslims brought about the articulation of Europeans and Europe (Delanty 242). Thus, anti-Muslim sentiments generated by the historical and cultural clashes played a vital role in transforming Western Christians into Europeans. The Europeans capitalised on anti-Muslim ideas, and the 'Turks' acted

as a bridge between medieval and modern attitudes toward the East and Islam (Bisaha 9). The European slogan of 'chasing the Turk out of Europe' emanated out of the crusades and Europe became a community fighting to cleanse its territory of the Turks.

Christendom became an archaic word, and Europe became the common *terra firma* of Christianity against every external enemy. The idea of a United Europe resulted from the historical, religious, and cultural clashes between the Christian and Muslim civilisations and became a comprehensive ideology after World War II (Delanty and Rumford 285). This led to a permanent crusade by cultivating and circulating anti-Muslim sentiments and ideas. However, the alliances of a European power with Turkey were not unusual, and sometimes the balance of power within Europe was a matter of greater concern than the war against the Turks. But it is also true that most of the European Allies continued to measure the Turk by conventional standards and kept making plans for the partition of Turkey "to drive out of Europe the Ottoman Empire, which is decidedly alien to Western civilisation" (Gaillard 44). The deep animosity toward Muslims has remained ever-present in Europe and voiced in different political languages across different historical periods. Even today, Turkey cannot be regarded as a candidate for becoming an EU member. This is simply because the EU is a European project, and the historical spirit of the Crusades has, in recent times, resurfaced in Europe, most clearly in the war against Bosnia.

The Baron believed that the Ottoman rulers were so delighted with their military successes that they failed to observe their limitations and criticised the role of the Circle of Equity or the Circle of Justice[14], which was the most critical theoretical underpinning of Ottoman rule. The Ottomans designed it not to solve the problems of the masses but to make an impact on them, a fact which Ali is echoing in Khaldunian words:

> No sovereign authority without an army. No army without wealth. No wealth without loyal subjects. No loyal subjects without justice. No justice without harmony on earth. No harmony without a state. No state without law. No enforcement of law without sovereign authority. No sovereign authority without a Sultan or Caliph. (Ali 54)

The Baron found another fatal flaw in the Circle, that is, the *Devshirme System*[15]. It was an ambitious plan, and the Baron again referred to the warnings of the great historian Ibn Khaldun that "it was dangerous to expect a group without common

[14] The term was first coined by the sixteenth-century Ottoman writer Kinalizade and used to describe the state-societal relationships in the pre-modern era of the Ottoman Empire. See Darling, Linda T. *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization.* Routledge, 2012.
[15] Usually translated as "child levy" or "blood tax," was the Ottoman practice of forcibly recruiting soldiers and bureaucrats from among the children of their Balkan Christian subjects. See Mariscotti, Cathlyn. "The Modern Middle East: A History." *History: Reviews of New Books*, 2005, pp. 117-176.

ties of kinship or solidarity or class to remain loyal to the sovereign authority" (Egbert 1). The Baron blamed the Ottomans, who "took babies from all over the Empire and created a caste of soldiers and administrators through long years of training and education. The state-owned them, but they began to believe that they owned the state and sometimes that they were the state" (Egbert 1). A common training, the Baron believed, was "fine for the production of French chefs, but not for creating a strong state" (Ali 54). The Baron told the family that these Janissaries[16], the soldiers and top bureaucrats in the Ottoman Empire, had no property or hereditary rights. To expect them to remain selfless and pure would merely be a utopian ideal, but naturally, they acquired wealth and developed close ties to wealthy families. The Baron then directly addressed Iskander Pasha, saying: "Your Circle of Equity becomes a descent to chaos, a circle of self-delusion, an inferno. Without solidarity and stable institutions, old empires crumble. New ones take their place (55). The Baron added, "You have lost both the war and the battle for survival. Memed the Conqueror wanted to make Istanbul the new Rome. He succeeded too well. The Ottomans have mimicked its decline and fall in a remarkable fashion" (55).

The Baron has rightly pointed out the causes of the decline in the Ottoman Empire and proved its fall as analogous to the fall of the Roman Empire. The Ottomans followed the same line of descent that the Romans once adopted in their society, establishing the Khaldunian notion of the rise and fall of the dynasties as a cyclic process. While a scholarly discussion was going on in a family meeting, there were rounds of champagne and the characters were seen to be ignoring their moral decline. Here, Ali deconstructs his characters' ideology and highlights the vanity and narcissism of the ruling elite in 19th-century Istanbul. The Baron, in doldrums, told Memed that he was seriously discussing the future of their Empire. In one of the sessions of Committee of Union and Progress, a Turkish general spoke about this dilemma:

> Our tendency is always to boast. We constantly look backward and say to ourselves: we, who once were nothing, built a great Empire for the glory of Islam. Our children are constantly being taught of our victories, and it is true, there were many in the past, but our failure to understand our decline is why we are now at an impasse. (Ali 178)

However, Halil Pasha believed that the Turks' failure to take Vienna in 1683 was the turning point in Ottoman history. As a result, the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 was signed, and the Ottomans gave Hungary to the Habsburgs

---

[16] Lit. "new soldiers." They were members of the elite corps made up through the *Devshirme* system that formed the Ottoman Sultan's loyal troops and the first modern standing army in Europe. See Gabor Agoston "Janissaries" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE. Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2017.

and retreated to Belgrade. Again in 1774, it was the Ottoman imbecility that gave the Russians the power to protect the interests of the Christian subjects in the Ottoman Empire (Ali 179). Halil pointed out some defeats to the Committee followed in 1792, 1799, 1812, and 1829 when the Ottomans lost Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro, and the Austrians even took away Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ali 179). Due to these ongoing military engagements with the Christian West, the Ottomans became tired and weak.

Moreover, the French and English navies sent their ships to the outskirts of Istanbul and threatened the Ottoman Sultans with punishments unless they followed their dictates. Halil Pasha believed that this was the end of this Empire, and the Ottomans should have acted them to limit the scale of the disaster (Ali 179). The Ottoman Empire was failing to counter the emerging power of the rapidly developing Europe, and Halil Inalcik believes that "the fundamental institutions of the Classical Ottoman Empire disintegrated under the impact of a new Europe and the Ottomans were unable to adapt themselves to the changed conditions" (68). The Ottomans were inward-looking and did not feel the need to learn from European ideas and technology. The Baron also rightly thundered, "It is we who are ignorant. We await enlightenment" (Ali 88), and Hassan Baba also endorsed the Baron when he noted that it was this dullness and inertia that had killed the Empire and retarded its development (Ali 95).

At the end of the novel, the Baron, however, consoles the Pashas that "Old empires fall and new ones take their place, Nilofer. You are lucky. You will have friends in both" (257). Memed believed Germany would rise in Europe and Berlin would be 'the heart of a new Empire' (257). Baron disagreed with him and thought that the British, French, and Russians would not permit the birth of this empire (257). He says,

> Germany is a state no longer. The Ottoman Empire is a state no longer. Italy was a state no longer. A new state was necessary to move forward. Machiavelli's prince is the state. What he sees is a split and divided country, permanently vulnerable to attack by foreign powers. (Ali 133)

He believes that "replacing the robe and the turban[17] with the stambouline[18] and the fez[19] may have been symbolic" (Ali 177), but such egalitarian reforms could not help a declining state. Here, Ali also raises some serious questions about the history of early Islamic civilisation and believes that the Prophet Muhammad and his followers could never make "such rapid progress if the Roman Empire had not been in a state of terminal decline" and that the Muslim armies had never taken

[17] From Persian, 'dulband' is headwear based on cloth winding.
[18] A long coat for formal occasions, worn by officials in the Ottoman Empire.
[19] Also called tarboosh in Persian, a short cylindrical hat, usually red and sometimes with a tassel attached to the top. It became a symbol of the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century.

Spain with a few thousand soldiers if Rome had still been mighty (178). According to Khaldunian notions, history works in a cyclic mode; Ali also assumes that what the early Muslim civilisation had gained in the past was now being taken away from them as they began to decay. Ali calls it "the way of the world" (178). The Christian civilisations of Britain and France were ahead of the Islamic culture, just as the Muslims had once been ahead of the Romans and the Byzantines. Therefore, there would be only chaos in the Empire when the Sultan fell.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the division of the Arab territory immediately after the First World War profoundly affected the Middle East's contemporary history. The secret treaty between the United Kingdom and France in 1916, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement[20] or Asia Minor Agreement, defined the mutually agreed sphere of influence and control in an eventual division of the Ottoman Empire. James Barr writes that "the line in the sand" drawn by the two diplomats—Mark Sykes and Francois Picot—on a map of the region went from point A in Acre (Northern District of Israel) to the second point K in Kirkuk (Iraq). The area north of this line, including modern-day Syria and Lebanon, was given to France, and areas south of the line became zones of British influence, including the provinces of Basra, Baghdad, Transjordan, and Palestine. The centenary of this agreement in 2016 generated great interest among the media concerning its long-term effects on the geopolitics of the Middle East. The contract is frequently cited as having created "artificial borders" in the Middle East without regard for ethnic or sectarian characteristics. This colonial carve-up ignored all local identities and political preferences, and two colonial powers arbitrarily determined the borders in the Middle East. In 2014, ISIS in Iraq announced that one of its global Islamic missions was to reverse the Sykes-Picot Agreement's effects and build a united Islamic State (Philip). The recent clash of civilisations in the Middle East originated in the secret conformity between two major Christian powers in the past: Great Britain and France. The current civil wars in Syria and Iraq, the conflict between Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, and the Jewish-Muslim conflict in Palestine all have their origins in the Ottoman era.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun's cyclic process of the rise and fall of dynasties and the various stages of state formation are relevant to different phases of the history of the Ottoman Empire, which lasted for 624 years (1299-1923). The long period of the Ottoman

---

[20] See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East,* Henry Holt, 1989.

Empire was extended by making some proper decisions at the right time and maintaining strong Turkish *asabiyyah* and Islamic *Umran* by some unusual leaders. The fictional story of *The Stone Woman* presents the rise of Christians in Europe and the fall of the Ottomans through the memories and myth of an elite Turkish family in Istanbul. Losing the Turkish *asabiyyah* and the best traits of Islamic culture, the Ottomans fell in the last stage of their *Umran*; while keeping a solid unity and religious fervor against the Turks, the Christians gained power in Europe and established themselves as a political community. All reasons for the Pasha family's decline metaphorically coincide with the fall of the great empire. Ali explains that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 marked the divide between the Christian West and the Islamic East, and it allowed the Ottomans to rise in mainland Europe. However, the Christian response to the fall of Constantinople brought about the articulation of Europe as a political community. The anti-Muslim sentiments and ideas played a crucial role in the formation and verbalisation of Europeans, and the historic slogan of 'chasing the Turk out of Europe' still appears to be alive in the historical and cultural consciousness of the Europeans. Turkey has not yet been given membership in the European Union. It has always remained the center of the East-West conflict, and *The Stone Woman* not only explores the dilemma of the Turkish identity but also subverts the Eurocentric concept of 'East is East, West is West' and expresses the notion that let the East not be the East and West be the West. This study concludes that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent division of Arab territory immediately after the First World War profoundly affected the Middle East's recent history. The recent clash of civilisations in the Middle East originated in the secret conformity between two major Christian powers in the past: Great Britain and France. The current civil wars in Syria and Iraq, the conflict between Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, and the Jewish-Muslim conflict in Palestine all have their origins in the Ottoman era.

Works Cited

Agoston, Gabor. "Janissaries" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Vol. 2. Brill Publishers, 2017.

Akgunduz, Ahmed, and Said Ozturk. *Ottoman History—Misperceptions and Truths*. IUR Press, 2011.

Akman, Beyazit H. "Orientalism In Orhan Pamuk's White Castle." *bilig*, no. 87, 30 Oct. 2018, pp. 59-82, dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/bilig/is

sue/42422/513431>. Accessed 24 Dec. 2022.

Alatas, Syed H. "The Development of an Autonomous Social Science Tradition in Asia: Problems and Prospects." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2002, pp. 150-157.

Ali, Tariq. *The Stone Woman*. Verso, 2000.

Altan, Ahmet. *Like a Sword Wound*. Europa Editions, 2018.

Badem, Candan. *The Ottoman Crimean War: (1853 - 1856)*. BRILL, 2010.

Barr, James. *A Line in the Sand: The Anglo-French Struggle For The Middle East 1914-1948*. National Geographic Books, 2013.

Bernières, Louis D. *Birds Without Wings*. Random House, 2011.

Bisaha, Nancy. *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Darling, Linda T. *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice From Mesopotamia to Globalization*. Routledge, 2013.

Delanty, Gerard, and Chris Rumford. *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*. Psychology P, 2005.

Egbert, Cynthia. "Cynthia Egbert's Reviews > The Stone Woman". *Goodreads*. N.d. https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/81223259?book_show_action=true&from_review_page=1. Accessed on: 15 December' 22.

Erol, Sibel. "The Stone Woman by Tariq Ali." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2001, pp. 340-342.

Falconer, Colin. *The Sultan's Harem*. Three Rivers Press, 2005.

Findley, Carter V. *The Turks in World History*. Oxford UP, 2005.

Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*. Henry Holt, 1989.

Gaillard, Gaston. *The Turks and Europe*. Good Press, 2021.

Griffin, Gabriele. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh UP, 2013.

Göknar, Erdag. "Orhan Pamuk and the Ottoman Theme." *World Literature Today*, vol. 80, no. 6, 2006, p. 34.

Humphreys, Chris. *A Place Called Armageddon: The Epic Battle of Constantinople, 1453*. Hachette UK, 2011.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 2003.

Inalcık, Halil. The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600. Aristide d Caratzas Pub, 1989.

Khaldun, Ibn, et al. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Bollingen

Foundation, 1969.

Kosinski, Jerzy. *Being There*. Bantam, 1985.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. 1961.

Mahdi, Muhsin. *Ibn Khaldûn's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture*. Routledge, 2017.

Mariscotti, Cathlyn. "The Modern Middle East: A History." History: *Reviews of New Books*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2005, pp. 117-117.

Matringe, Denis, and Kate Fleet. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Three*. 2009. 2015.

Overy, R. J. *The Times Complete History of the World*. Collins, 2010.

Pamuk, Orhan. *My Name Is Red*. Everyman Paperback Classics, 2010.

---. *Other Colours: Essays and a Story*. Faber & Faber, 2007.

---. *The White Castle*. Vintage, 2010.

Phillips, David L. "Extremists in Iraq need a history lesson." *CNBC*, 8 July 2014, www.cnbc.com/2014/07/08/what-isis-can-learn-from-historyiraqmiddle-eastcommentary.html.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage, 1979.

Salzmann, Ariel. "The Age of Tulips: Confluence and Conflict in Early Modern Consumer Culture (1550-1730)". *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922. Suny Press, 2000*. State University of New York, 2000.

Shaw, Stanford J., and Ezel K. Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975*. Cambridge UP, 1977.

Yahaya, Mahayudin H. "The Science of Umran: Its Origin, Role and Function." *The Journal of Middle East and North Africa Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 12, 2017, pp. 17-22.

Önder, Murat, and Fatih Ulasan. "Ibn Khaldun's Cyclical Theory on the rise and fall of Sovereign Powers: The Case of Ottoman Empire." *ADAM AKADEMI Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2018, pp. 271-307.