

IBN KHALDUN AND MACHIAVELLI:  
AN EXAMINATION OF PARADIGMS

by

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"Time wears us out . . . But He lasts and persists."

Ibn Khaldun, 1377

"I love my country more than my soul."

Niccolo Machiavelli, 1527

"Studying the thinkers of the past becomes essential for men living in an age of intellectual decline because it is the only practicable way in which they can recover a proper understanding of the fundamental problems."

Leo Strauss, 1952

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Ibn Khaldun, an Islamic political thinker living in the fourteenth century, and Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian political thinker of the fifteenth century, both chose to observe affairs objectively. Both men distinguished themselves from their scholastic contemporaries by treating social affairs within a frame of reference which emphasized actual, rather than ideal, behavior. However, there is an essential difference between the two men which influences how each, ultimately, perceived "everything political." Machiavelli rejected idealism for realism, whereas Ibn Khaldun acknowledged the validity and importance of both.<sup>1</sup>

Machiavelli considered "what ought to be" as an inappropriate and inadequate guide for conducting "business" in a world of "what is done." To Ibn Khaldun, "what ought to be" is as valid as "what is," and the two should never be separated if the quality which is prescribed in the ideal is to constitute the practical conduct of "business." This