



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC
IDEAS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH AND IBN
KHALDUN AND ITS RELEVANCE TO
CONVENTIONAL ECONOMIC THOUGHT**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of this study is to draw a parallel between the economic ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun then demonstrate the originality and relevance of their contribution to modern economic thought. To this end we have prefaced this problematic research with a number of vexed questions: why do Muslim scholars in general react differently for the same stimuli? Why do they apply different methodological approaches though they emerge from the same background as shown - as a sample - in the study of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun? Is our ample intellectual and jurisprudential legacy mainly confined to linguistic efforts and legalistic approaches? What is most striking and significant in the economic contributions of Ibn Tymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun? and all alike. Attempting these questions has evoked the major part of this research. This study abides by two stages methodology, namely, historical methodology and analytical comparative methodology. The former is necessitated by the sheer importance of tracing the general historical setting (environment) that inevitably influences any sort of scholarship. As for the latter method is to depict the focal demarcations between Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun's economic thought by following certain theoretical parameters. The major findings of his study show that the space-time factor along with educational background, family descent, personal character, job's experience, all have significant bearing in directing the intellectual products of both scholars under study. As a matter of fact, Ibn Taymiyyah concurs with Ibn Khaldun on a number of issues such as free play of market, functions of money, taxation, etc. However, there exist conspicuous discrepancies on other economic aspects that differ significantly between these two scholars, particularly, their method of inquiry and their views on the role of state in the economy and also the process of distribution and other related issues. Moreover, it has been attested in this research that both scholars were original thinkers and system builders and notwithstanding the lapses of centuries, their contribution still keeps up its vigour, relevance and modernity. For Ibn Taymiyyah his ideas of "just price" (competitive price), basic needs, self sufficiency and currency debasement make him in par with many modern economists who came after him few centuries ahead. As for Ibn Khaldun, his many insightful economic discussions like those elaborated on labour theory of value, taxation and economic growth has not only testify to his geniality but also to unquestionably accredit him with the title of being "the founding father of economics"

ملخص البحث

يدور محور هذا البحث حول تحليل و مقارنة الأفكار الاقتصادية بين الفقيه العلامة "ابن تيمية" و المؤرخ الاسلامي البارز "ابن خلدون"، لنبين بعدها مدى أصالة و مواكبة أعمالهما للفكر الاقتصادي المعاصر. من أجل هذا الغرض فقد حرص الباحث على أن تستهل هذه الدراسة بتحديد اشكالية البحث التي يمكن أن نوجزها في الأسئلة الآتية:

لماذا يكون لعلماء المسلمين ردود و مواقف مختلفة بالنسبة للظاهرة الاجتماعية و الاقتصادية الواحدة؟ لماذا يتعاملون بطرائق و مناهج متباينة رغم نشوئهم و نهلهم من معين واحد؟ هل صحيح أن موروثنا الفقهي و الفكري الضخم - لاسيما في المجال الاقتصادي- لا يعدو أن يكون سوى محاولات و مقاربات متفرقة ذات طابع أدبي و قانوني مجرد؟ ماهي أهم الاسهامات الاقتصادية ذات الاعتبار العلمية المتميزة التي تضمنتها كتابات كلاً من العلامة ابن تيمية و ابن خلدون؟ الخ.

فيما يخص المنهج المعتمد في هذه الدراسة فقد ارتأى الباحث استعمال المنهج التاريخي لإبراز أثر البعد الزمني و المكاني على تحديد طبيعة الأعمال الاقتصادية لهذين العالمين فضلاً عن المنهج التحليلي المقارن و ذلك للوقوف على أوجه الاتفاق و الاختلاف لأفكارهما الاقتصادية.

لقد خلصنا في هذا البحث بأن العامل الزمني و البيئي إلى جانب نمط التحصيل العلمي و النسب الأسري و المزاج و الطابع الشخصي و التجارب المهنية لها كلها بصمات واضحة في توجيه و صياغة الفكر الاقتصادي لدى ابن تيمية و ابن خلدون. كما تفيد نتائج هذه الدراسة بأن ابن خلدون يتفق مع ابن تيمية في عدد من الأفكار الاقتصادية خصوصاً فيما يتعلق بالسوق الحرّة و وظائف النقود و الضرائب، لكن يوجد هناك بالمقابل تباين واضح في وجهات نظر هذين الرجلين لاسيما في مناهج البحث المعتمدة و تدخل الدولة في النشاط الاقتصادي و وظيفة التوزيع و غيرها من القضايا الاقتصادية. لقد أثبتت هذه الدراسة بأن اسهامات ابن تيمية و ابن خلدون في المجال الاقتصادي كانت و لا تزال قيّمة و جدّ مركزة شكلاً و مضموناً، حتى أن جزءاً كبيراً منها ليوافق الكشوف

و النظريات الاقتصادية الحديثة إن لم نقل أن لها بعض السبق في عدد منها. فأراء ابن تيمية مثلا في "السعر العادل" (السعر التنافسي) و الحاجات الأساسية و الاكتفاء الذاتي تجعله في مقام كثير من الاقتصاديين المعاصرين الذين خلفوه بقرون عدة. كما أن التحليل الاقتصادي الخلدوني الحاذق خصوصا فيما يتعلق بنظرية القيمة-العمل و التحليل المالي و كذا دراسة عوامل النمو الاقتصادي (تطور العمران) لا تجعله مجرد اقتصادي بارع بل و ترشحه - دون تكلف أو تعسف- لأن يكون بالأحرى مؤسس علم الاقتصاد.

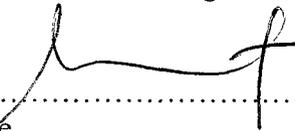
APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a research paper for the degree of Master of Economics .


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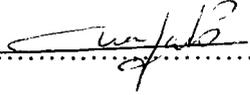
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research paper is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

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Signature  Date 01/02/2001

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RULES FOR TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC

Letters of the Alphabet

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization
ا	ل	ل	ا	omit
ب	ب	ب	ب	b
ت	ت	ت	ت	t
ث	ث	ث	ث	th
ج	ج	ج	ج	j
ح	ح	ح	ح	h
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh
د	د	د	د	d
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	dh
ر	ر	ر	ر	r
ز	ز	ز	ز	z
س	س	س	س	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh
ص	ص	ص	ص	ṣ
ض	ض	ض	ض	d
ط	ط	ط	ط	t
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	z
ع	ع	ع	ع	' (ayn)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh
ف	ف	ف	ف	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	q
ك	ك	ك	ك	k
ل	ل	ل	ل	l
م	م	م	م	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n
ه	ه	ه, هـ	ه, هـ	h
و	و	و	و	w
ي	ي	ي	ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

ā	a	ā	ā	ā	ā
ū	u	ū	ū	ū	aw
ī	i	ī	ī	ī	ay

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of study:

Given the generally known literature on the topic, it will not be an overstatement to say that apparently there is no such prototype version of this topic treated before in the Islamic economic agenda. However, I don't claim- in this pursuit- that the current survey is primarily a new frontier whose original ideas and contents are being just explored. In fact, there are massive works - produced especially by orientalist- that deal with Ibn Khaldūn's system of thought including his economic contribution to the extent that I feel very presumptuous to add a single item to the growing list of works focusing on Ibn Khaldūn. Likewise, materials on Ibn Taymiyyah's thought -especially in Arabic- are ever rampant, however his economic contribution is scantily documented. More specifically, comparative studies as a critical approach are generally neglected in the literature on Islamic economics. Moreover, the history of Islamic economic thought was not yet accorded the serious interest on Islamic economic analysis until recently. Consequently, comprehensive works of this nature are hardly found. Nevertheless, there are some remarkable attempts in this regard. For instance, M.N Siddiqui's survey: *Recent Works in History of Economic Thinking in Islam* (1992) and M.A. Jinydel's dissertation: *Manāhij al-Bāhithīn fī al-Iqtisād al-Islāmī* -1985- (Scholars' approaches in Islamic economics), which is very comprehensive work that embraces a whole range of Muslim scholars who have a distinctive grasp on economic dealing. The time span used in this survey (Jinydel book) is broadly periodstretched from the early days of prophetic society (from the time of the prophet including the four pious caliphs) and continuing up to

the end of modern age- roughly to the past decade-. Another work, which is not less significant than the former attempt is Aslam Haneef's book: Contemporary Islamic Economic Thought (1995). Although the latter work focuses on the thought of contemporary scholars only, it still, however gears students and researchers with a firm command over the due methodology of comparative studies. After all, A.Azim Islah's work: The Economic Concept of Ibn Taymiyyah, has been by far very instrumental to my current pursuit, in that he assigns one section of his book to discuss the differences between Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Taymiyyah's economic thought in a more systematic and coherent way. However, Islahi's endeavor, from the point of view of this research, is certainly brief and corollary requires further elaboration.

As is evident from the title of this study, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldūn's economic achievements are entitled to have a modern significance. In this respect, only few materials have addressed the issue such as: *al-Siyāsah wa al-Iqtisād Inda Ibn Khaldūn*: (politics and economics within Ibn Khaldūn's perception) which is written by Salāḥ Basyunī, A.Azim Islahi's his previous book, Battah Abdella: Ibn Khaldūn's principles of political economy, Henri Laoust -The eminent French writer-: *Essaies Sur la Pensee d'Ibn Taymiyyah*, Abul Hassan M.Sadeq's: Introduction to The Islamic Economic Thought, and a few others as listed in the bibliography attached to this review.

In a nutshell, the present study was not directly inspired from the preceding works, but rather it is drawn upon the original sources and serious reflection on processing the existing works.

Justification of study:

The scope of this study has been exclusively narrowed down to survey two Islamic scholars only, namely, Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328-) who was born in Syria, and where he spent most of his time, and Ibn Khaldūn (1337-1406), the *maghribi* scholar who lived in north Africa and died in Egypt. This specific selection among wide range of the past Muslim scholars is mainly warranted by the following reasons:

- Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Taymiyyah have made very significant contribution to economic thought, which still remains relevant to history and practice of modern economics.

- Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldūn were living almost in the same era and both of them had to deal with similar political and socio-economic environment.

- These two scholars have different methods of research due to their distinctly different training and background.

- Because their lifetime coincides with the end of medieval age and the start of new era, which appears to be the watershed between Islamic civilization (represented by *Abassid* then *Mamluk* and *Andalusia* states) and western rejuvenation, their ideas would entail more accuracy and significance.

- The works of Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Taymiyyah in term of their length and volume can be bracketed in the category of scholars like al-Ghazālī, Abū 'Ubaid, Ibn Hazam and al-Maqrizī.

- We focus on Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldūn simply because they are unique. They are not camp followers nor just idea bearers but rather path breakers & system builders, as will be shown in this study. Ibn khaldun's prolegomena (*al-Muqaddimah*) is regarded, as new science while Ibn taymiyyah's works has been very conducive in the rise of revivalist movement in the Islamic world.

Importance of study:

History of economic thought as a momentous component of economic analysis is by far most important, and a person who falls short of recognizing the importance of historical development risks the danger of ending up with a truncated findings and partial conclusions. Thus, each subject matter of economics is squarely a unique process within a particular time-space frame. After all, an economist himself is a product of his own and all preceding time.

Such historical retrospect if properly studied would be an appropriate endeavor to discover the roots of contemporary economic thought. In particular, such study of the history of Islamic economic thought would provide a genuine understanding and remove any ambiguity that might mystify the pure and pristine concepts and practices that evolved in the Islamic civilization.

In fact little has been done to explore our own ample intellectual heritage especially when it comes to the economic ideas. Conversely, western scholarship, on the other hand, came out of dark ages and engineered the rise of the west by rediscovering its historical roots starting with ancient Greek scholars and followed later by Adam Smith and Ricardo and others, all of whom are being major contributors of ideas that contributed to western resurgence. Likewise, the seeds of our renaissance, too, must come within and reflect our internal structure and history of our thought and civilization.

It is generally argued that the medieval age¹(476-1453) is deemed as gloomy period associated with a sheer intellectual stagnation that stamped every aspect of life. However, and fairly speaking, this position is rather peculiar to the western experience only, because during this period due to the generalization of this uniquely western experience of stagnation, a comprehensive episode of history was left out totally. It is because of this, medieval time has no record of such massive worthy works which is in virtually not dated backward beyond 17 century, although Muslim's writings in the economic issues were abundant and highly significant either in content or style which have hailed a marked impression by an outstanding Muslim and western scholars as well. As Udovitch concluded:

"Some of the institutions, practices and concepts already fully developed in the Islamic legal sources of the late eight century –by European chronology-did not emerge in Europe until several centuries later."²

Thus our major task in this research is just to fill up this mysterious historical gap and hence bring to light the economic thinking of great Islamic thinkers of antiquated time like Abū Yūcuf, Yahyā Ibn A'dam, al-Ghazālī, Nāṣiruddīn al-Tūsī, Ibn al-'Arabī, al-Māwardī, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Khaldūn, al-Maqrizī and all alike.

Problem of study:

Islamic economics as a subset of the whole Islamic teaching is based on a certain doctrinal foundations that eventually portray the core philosophical underpinning of Islamic economic system. As such, Islamic economists are bound to

¹ This period is conventionally demarcated from the fifth century (476), which marks the resounding collapse of Roman Empire until the fifteenth century (1453) when the city of Constantinople (Turkey) had been fallen at the hand of Ottomans.

²Abraham L,Udovitch, Partnership and profit in medieval Islam Princeton, Princeton University press, 1970.p.261.

follow this central economic scheme which is the root of this intellectual enterprise. Therefore, it seems obvious that scholars from the early days of Islam unanimously agree on this fundamental framework which is primarily derived from the holy *Qur'ān* and the paramount prophetic Tradition (*Sunnah*). However, in the area of business dealings and economics as a whole, which falls under the rubric of *Mu'āmalāt* (i.e. Transaction or dealing), a very considerable margin is left open for intellectual speculation and scholastic reflect. That is, unlike theology (*Aqīdah*) and worship (*Ibadah*), the realm of economy is not legally ruled by decisive or definite laws, which eventually –as in theology and worship- leave no room for reasoning and innovation (*Ijtihād*). As a result, colossal differences will not be an exception in the Islamic economics' debate and it will not be unlikely that even hot polemics may arise among economists and scholars though their main theoretical guidelines are founded on the same ideological platform. In this context, a number of inquiries will be inexorably casted in the Islamic economics agenda. As such the following questions are being forwarded: to what extent Muslim scholars-especially our predecessors- may differ on a one particular matter? Why do they react differently for the same stimuli i.e. problems faced by their own community? Why do Muslim economists and scholars apply different methodological approaches though they emerge from the same background? What is the impact of space-time factor in molding one's vision and directing his intellectual engagement? Attempting to answer these questions has more or less evoked a significant part of this research³.

³It appears that the foregoing inquiries may also apply to the western economic thought. However, in Islamic scholarship the term “difference” and its implications have been inadequately and even prejudicially approached. In this regard, some scholars fervently advocate the blind imitation and admonish against any sort of difference (i.e. innovation), which is thereby viewed as unorthodox

It is certainly contended- by most secular economists- that the writings of past Muslim scholars are barely incisive, pretending that they are vague and superficial in nature and ultimately their works cannot go beyond the realm of ethic and theology to which economics is just a subsequent topic. Moreover, Islamic economic literature is wrongly and prejudicially perceived as one of the legalistic and linguistic based approaches, which are by far not more than creedal statements. It is thus imperative for serious scholars to objectively analyze the pertinent facts and then evaluates them in the light of these allegations in order to ascertain the truth of the matter. In this respect, one can even question the significance and relevance of our economic legacy, which may be voiced in the following questions: is our ample intellectual and jurisprudential legacy mainly confined to linguistic efforts and legalistic approaches? What are the most striking –i.e. foremost leading and significant ideas- in our past scholars’ economic contribution? How relevant are their economic ideas to the contemporary economic thought? How far Muslim scholars’ works would assist and precipitate the intellectual upsurge of modern economic thought? , etc.

The above concerns are the main focus of this study.

Scope and objectives:

In the current research we have narrowed down the scope of this study to the comparative analysis of the economic ideas of two Muslim scholars only: namely, Ibn Taymiyah (1263-1328 C.E/ 661-728 A.H) and Ibn Khaldūn (1337-1406 C.E/ 732-801 A.H).

heresy. Other scholars opine that differences must converge to a minimum Few others remain cautious

Ibn Khaldūn is the most brilliant Muslim thinker who had eclipsed all his contemporaries whether are philosophers, historians, sociologists or economists⁴. His prolegomena (al-Muqadimah), represents the most comprehensive synthesis in the human sciences of his time through which his political perceptions and economic opinions are figured. Although Ibn Khaldūn has been considered as a pioneer in many social disciplines, this study, however, will focus on his economic ideas that deal with a wide range of topics such as: labor theory of value, dualism economy, exchange and market forces, government and economic activity, cycle theory of state and other issues that fall in the area of macro-economics today.

Ibn Taymiyyah is a leading Muslim scholar and pure jurist with a very strong religious background. In literature he is referred to as master scholar (*Sheikh al-Islam*), a well-deserved title that recognizes his scholarship. Ibn Taymiyyah, like Ibn Khaldūn is a versatile genius too, as he was also concerned with a wide range of issues, which were significant for the society, and his deep thought and incisive analysis of those issues led him to write voluminous books on different subjects of Islamic thought and practice. Ibn Taymiyyah was a jurist and was focused on issues requiring legalistic understanding and opinions. Yet the economic aspects of mundane life could not escape his attention and he, with the precision of a social scientist developed a systematic analysis of the issues dealing with: pricing, market mechanism, supply and demand forces, market distortion and their effects on

and keep away from raising uncommon issues

⁴ This does not mean that Ibn khaldun had fully eclipsed Ibn Taymiyyah, otherwise it would seem inappropriate to pass such powerful finite statement right at the outset of this scientific inquiry. Such comparative ranking is rather applicable in a few disciplines, particularly, history, sociology and economics. By contrast, in the fields of legal jurisprudence, *Qur'an* exegesis and sciences of *hadith*, Ibn Taymiyyah's works were more pronounced. (See Firzly George: Ibn khaldun - socio-economic study university of Utah, Phd, 1973 pp 2-9)

consumers and producers and various aspects of public finance. Beside the book of *al-Hisbah fī al-Islām* (public duties/inspection in Islam), which remains as main economic contribution of Ibn Taymiyyah in the field of Islamic social studies, there are other considerable works written by him such as: *al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyah fī ‘Aḥwāl al-Rā’ wa al-Ra‘īyah* (Private and public law in Islam), *al-Mazālim al-Mushtarakah* (common claims), *al-‘Amwāl al-Sultāniyyah* (public finance), and a number of passages relevant to economics which he has written under the discussion of various legal topics in his voluminous book: *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwī* (the whole legal statements of Ibn Taymiyyah). All these works are the chief sources that reflect Ibn Taymiyyah's understanding of various economic issues.

It may clearly seem that Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Taymiyyah's approaches are quite different. The nature of the former's inquiry, which is basically positive approach, is best described as economic sociology. The latter's inquiry known as normative economics, which is more or less close to Islamic political economy.⁵ However in the largely normative economics of Ibn Taymiyyah, there do exist some insights into positive economics (e.g. his view on the price factor and market mechanism).

This research focuses mainly on the foremost leading economic ideas addressed commonly by both scholars. Nevertheless, a socio-political setting is sometimes an intrinsic part of the general framework, which is essentially required for such type of analysis.