CONTRIBUTION OF ARABS IN THE FIELD OF GEOGRAPHY

The followers of Prophet Mohammad made significant contributions in the field of geography from 8th to 13th century. The Arabs were the great contributors in the field of mathematical, physical and regional geography. Their achievements in climatology, oceanography, geomorphology, linear measurements, determination of cardinal points, limits of habitable world, sprawl of continents and oceans are highly appreciable.

The open mind and inquisitive nature of Arabs, the journeys during the pilgrimage and for trade and commerce and their marine adventures added to their geographic knowledge. Arabs, who were largely influenced by the Greek thinkers, adopted the Greek ideas about the shape and size of the earth. Arabs considered earth as the centre of the Universe, around which the seven planets revolve.

According to Arabs, the western limit of the habitable world was at the end of the Mediterranean Sea, the eastern at Sila (Japan), the northern in the land of Yajuj Majuj (Siberia) and the southern to the south of equator.

Arabs also made some valuable observations about the climate. Al-Balakhi gathered climatic data and information from Arab travellers and on the basis of that he prepared the first climatic atlas of the world entitled, Kitabul-Ashkal. Arabs were the first who put forward the idea of periodic nature of monsoon.

In fact, the word ‘monsoon’ has been derived from the Arabic word ‘mausam’ which means season. Al-Masudi, during his journey to India gave a detailed description of the Indian monsoons. Many local winds of Egypt, Arab, Algeria and Libya have also been described by the Arab geographers. In 985, Al-Maqdisi divided the world into fourteen climatic regions. He also presented the idea that the Southern Hemisphere is mostly an open ocean and most of the world’s land area is in the northern hemisphere.

Arabs also progressed tremendously in the field of human geography. Ibn-Khaldun wrote the monumental work Muqaddama a description of human society in six parts, viz.

(1) Civilisation, geography and anthropology

(2) Nomadic culture, comparison with sedentary culture, sociology and historical causes and consequences of the conflicts between two cultures

(3) Dynasties, kingdom etc.,
(4) Life in villages and cities, how cities should be organised

(5) Professions and means of livelihood

(6) Classification of sciences.

In the field of physical geography also Arabs contributed a lot. Al-Biruni in his book Kitab-al-Hind (Geography of India) recognised the significance of the rounded stones he found in the alluvial deposits, south of the Himalayas.

Ibn-Sina also keenly observed the work of the agents of denudation and weathering in the mountains and held that the mountain streams erode the slopes. He also noted the presence of fossils in the rocks in high mountains. The Arabs borrowed from the Greeks the division of the globe of the earth into five zones. The Torrid Zone, two frigid zones and two temperate zones.

The prime meridian of the Romans was also adopted by the Arabs for the calculation of time and latitudes. The phenomena of tides were also observed by the Arab navigators and scholars. They proved that the tides are caused by the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon.

**Perspectives on the Contributions of Arabs and Muslims to Geography**

As indicated by the above-mentioned verse in the Holy Quran, Allah taught Adam the names of all things and places even before Adam was ordered to dwell on earth (Quran: Sura II Derived from verses 31 & 36). That was surely the first piece of geographical knowledge to be passed on by the Lord to the father of the human race. In this respect geography is as old as the history of mankind on earth. Without some geographical knowledge first man would not have been able to move in his immediate surroundings to hunt and gather his food needs. People of ancient civilizations possessed enough geographic knowledge (Ahmed, 1947) which enabled them to explore new territories and tap new resources which were considered essential for their existence. The ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians and peoples of other ancient civilizations including the Greeks and Romans travelled far and wide, accumulating a lot of geographic information about foreign lands. In pre-Islamic Arabia the Bedouins, who wandered across the Arabian deserts in search of water and pasture for their animals and who were also active in trade because of the strategic position of their homeland, had to rely on their geographic knowledge so as to survive in the harsh desert environments. Some of this geographic heritage was portrayed in their poetry, indicating knowledge of trade routes, cloud and wind movements, landforms, water resources and place names. Intensive heating during the day in the Arabian deserts made the night the most favoured time for travel, and the clear night skies gave the Arabs an early interest in astronomy. The moon and the stars were used to
fix orientation in these vast barren deserts (Quran: Sura XVI, verse 16). With the rise and spread of Islam (7th. to 14th. century A.D.) Muslim geographic knowledge had increased considerably as a result of travel by various people for religious and economic reasons (Schoy, 1924; Al-Feel, 1979). Indeed, Islam as a religion has greatly encouraged the development of the sciences and highly respected researchers and scholars. Geography in particular has always been a special interest to the Muslims, as many religious rituals such as fasting and prayer required the appropriate knowledge of time and direction. As Muslims anywhere in the world have to face the Kaaba in Makkah five times a day to perform prayer, which is the second pillar of Islam, a sense of orientation is considered essential. This sense of time and direction had encouraged at an early stage the development and improvement of the relevant instruments for measurements. One of the earliest observatory stations was established by the Arabs in Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo. Another religious ritual, which has encouraged travel and the congregation of Muslims from all over the World in Makkah, is the Hajj or pilgrimage which takes place once every year. In addition to performing this religious ritual, Muslims consider Hajj as a great opportunity to meet and exchange goods and ideas. The Hajj congregation was of particular interest to geographers and travellers whose intention was to collect information about far-away countries. Moreover, the Holy Quran which was revealed to the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, more than fourteen centuries ago, the book which should be read and appreciated by every Muslim, is full of geographic signs including several facts about the earth and the universe (James & Martin, 1981). There are indications in the Holy Book about the law of gravity (Quran: Sura XIII, verse 2), the sphericity of earth and its movement (Quran: Sura VI verse 54; Sura XXVII, verse 88), and how the earth and the heavens were first created as one unit and then separated from each other and how the mountains were created to keep the isostatic balance between the major parts of the earth's crust (Quran: Sura XX, verses 30 and 31). There is also reference in the Quran to the fact that the universe has been expanding since its creation and that it might end up by contraction to its original form at the time of creation (Quran: Sura LI, verse 47; Sura XXI, verse 104). The previous citations from the Quran are a clear reference to what modern scientists call the 'Big Bang Theory' and the future of the universe (Trefil, 1983). In short, Islam is a religion that encourages learning and scientific research and the first verses of the Quran revealed to the prophet were about reading and writing. (Quran: Sura XCVI, verses 1-5). The second source of Islamic teaching, the Sunna or Prophet's Sayings, also emphasizes learning and the high role of scholars.
Al-Masudi

Al-Masudi was born in Baghdad towards the end of the 9th century, but the exact year of his birth is not known. He died in 956 at Fustat in Egypt. Al-Masudi was not only a geographer, but also a historian, a world-traveller and a prolific writer. He travelled far and wide in the countries of Asia and Africa, especially Persia, Transoxiana, Sham (Syria), Armenia, Azarbaijan, Caspian Sea, Volga region, Central Asia, India, Lanka, Qanbalu (Madagascar), Oman, southern parts of Arabia, Greek empire, Spain and Egypt. Besides enriching geography and history, Al-Masudi contributed to cosmology, meteorology, oceanography, study of landforms, astronomy, Islamic law, and the Arabic folklore.

As a writer, he had extremely diverse interests and an exceptional fecundity. His famous works are: (i) Kitab-Muraj-al-Dhahab, (ii) Kital-al-Tanbhwal-Ishraf, (iii) Kitab-Akhbar-al-Zaman (in 30 volumes), and (iv) Kitab-al-Ausat. Most of these works, except Kitab-Muraj-al-Dhahab (Golden Meadows), are lost.

Al-Masudi made an in-depth study of the Greek and Roman sources and gathered information through travels. He sought to overcome local and regional prejudices and visited numerous places to investigate the geographical reality and facts for himself and for his writings. He tried to describe the geographical reality as he saw it. Some of the major contributions made by Al-Masudi to the various branches of geography have been described below.

The Christians, during the Dark Age, tried to prove that the earth is flat, triangular, and rectangular, twice as long west and east as to north and south, which is surrounded by water on all sides.

The medieval European mind, clouded with religious fanaticism, was not prepared to accept the idea of sphericity. Al-Masudi had a clear conception of the sphericity of the earth. He believed that the surface of the sea is curved, since when a ship approached the land, the coast and the objects thereon gradually become more and more visible. He compared the merits and demerits of the earth being spherical instead of flat, saying that had it been flat, all lands would have remained eternally submerged under the sea.

Al-Masudi also tried to determine limits of the oceans and continents and followed the Greek
tradition, taking Japan and the Eternal Islands as the eastern and western limits of the world, respectively. To determine the southern limit, he navigated up to Sofala and agreed with Al-Battani that the shape of Africa was approximately the same as we know it today.

Expressing his opinion about the Encircling Ocean, he stated that according to many authors the Encircling Ocean is the principal sea and that all other seas are derived from it; in the east it is connected with the China Sea. About the Arabian Sea, Al-Masudi considered it as the largest in the world. Moreover, he gives details regarding the location and size of the seven seas of the east. These seven seas were situated between the Arab states and China.

The Arab traders who were having trade relations with China had to cross the seven seas. The first of these seven seas was the Persian Gulf. The names of the seven seas were as under: (i) Sea of Persia, (ii) Larevy Sea, (iii) Sea of Herkend, (iv) Sea of Shelahet or of Kalabar, (v) Sea of Kedrenj, (vi) Sea of Senf, and (vii) Sea of Senjy.

The Sea of Persia comprised the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Makran. The Sea of Larevy stretched from the Delta of the Indus to the Cape Comorin. The third sea is that of Herkend (Hari Kund or Bay of Bengal). The Sea of Shelahet is the Sea of Malacca. The fifth sea Kedrenj or Kerdenj is on the eastern coast of the Peninsula of Malacca in the south of Gulf of Siam (Thailand). The sixth sea Sent corresponds to the coast of Vietnam (Cochin, China). The seventh and the last sea was that of Senjy, or the Sea of China which, according to Al-Masudi, stretched indefinitely towards the north and east.

During the period of Al-Masudi some important questions, like whether the Caspian Sea was connected with the northern ocean, or the Caspian Sea and Black Sea were interconnected, exercised the minds of many scholars. These controversies were coming down from the time of Hecataeas and Herodotus. Al-Masudi made independent observations and did not follow the Greeks and Romans blindly. After navigating he resolved that the Caspian Sea is not connected with any of the seas. He established that the Oxus flowed into the Aral Sea, which was mentioned for the first time.

Volga river was described by him as an active commercial highway. Al-Masudi gives to the Atlantic Ocean the name of Dark-Green Sea and was of the opinion that the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean are connected with each other.

One of the most important contributions of Al-Masudi lies in the field of physical geography. Modern ideas of geomorphology include both the comparative study of landforms and analytical study of processes involved in their formation. Landforms are visualized to pass
through a cycle of development from the youthful stage to maturity and finally to the old stage—the stage of peneplanation.

Al-Masudi appreciated the role of cycle of erosion and adjustment of streams to structure in the evolution of landforms when he says, “there is no place on the earth that is always covered with water, nor one that is always land, but a constant revolution takes place, effected by the rivers, which are always shifting, for places watered by rivers have a time of youth and decrepitude, like animals and plants with this reference that growth and decay in plants and animals manifest themselves in all parts at once so that they flourish and wither at the same time. But the earth grows and declines part by part”. Al-Masudi’s observations become all the more significant when it is considered that the role of rivers in the evolution of physical landscape has begun to receive adequate attention only during the last two hundred years or so.

Al-Masudi, who sailed in several seas, has described the weather conditions a voyager faced while sailing. About oceans, he showed acquittance with the different problems and theories current in his time, relating to shapes and limits of different seas. Regarding the Indian Ocean, he had a better idea than Ptolemy as Al-Masudi held that the Indian Ocean is connected with the Atlantic Ocean. He opined that salt in the seas and oceans comes from the land.

Al-Masudi tried to solve the problem concerning the exact source of the Nile river. He rejected the idea of Ptolemy that the Indus was connected with the Nile river. He described the source of the Nile in the mountains of Abyssinia.

Al-Masudi was one of the well-known climatologists of his time. He gave a good account of the periodic winds (monsoons) of the Herkend (Bay of Bengal). He has made interesting remarks about the utility of winds as a source of energy. He has given the example of the windmills that he found in the desert of Sajistan on the western frontier of India.

In the field of human geography, Al-Masudi tried to correlate man with environment. While describing the effect of environment on the mode of life and attitudes of people, Al-Masudi says: “The powers of the earth vary in their influence on man on account of three causes, viz., water, natural vegetation and topography.” In the land where water is abundant, humidity predominates in the humour of men and where water is absent dryness predominates; again in the land where vegetation is dense heat prevails, and if the region is devoid of natural vegetation, the reverse is the case.

Further, speaking of the selection of sites of human habitation, he emphasized the importance of the nature of the surrounding country, elevations and depressions; nearness to mountains
and seas and lastly the nature of the soil. While dilating upon the character of the nomads of Arabia, Al-Masudi has observed that it is desirable for affluent people to go round the world. The nomads pondered over the problem of making their houses in cities and came to the conclusion that life in city changed man’s character, dissuaded him from moving round, diminished his courage and suppressed his urge for progress. It was for these reasons that the Arabs preferred life in the open countryside where the air was pure and free from pollution. The Arabs are, therefore, marked by strength of resolution, wisdom and physical fitness. They are distinguished in acts of charity and possess intelligence of a high order, for these qualities are generated by a pure and clean environment.

The influence of environment on man can be appreciated from the following lines in which Al-Masudi stated: “As for the northern quarter, which is farther away from the sun, in the extreme north, and which is the abode of Saqaliba (the Slavs), the Afranja (Franks) and the neighbouring races, and where the influence of the sun is rather alleviated and the region abounds in cold, moisture and snow, the people are characterized by good physique, rude behaviour, slow wit, harsh tongue, white complexion, thick flesh, blue eyes, thin skin, curly and red hairs.” All these characteristics are found due to the predominance of moisture in their lands and their cold nature does not encourage firmness of religious belief. Those living farther north are characterized by dullness of mind, harsh behaviour and barbarism.

These characteristics increase proportionately as we proceed farther north. He vividly examined the impact of environment on the physical and intellectual properties of man and cited the example of the Turks. In his opinion, the Turks who emigrated to India lost their national characteristics and acquired new characteristics suited to the new environment. Further evidence of his conception of adaptation to environment is found in his observations of animals and plants, who adopt the natural colour of the physical environment in which they dwell or grow.

Al-Masudi contributed appreciably to the field of regional geography also. He gave a fairly reliable account of Al-Sham (Syria), Persia, Central Asia, Georgia, Mesopotamia and the countries he travelled.

About Sham (Syria), Al-Masudi writes that this country is hilly and the abode of clouds, winds, mists and heavy rains, where trees are numerous and rivers are perennial.

On the basis of language, he divided the habitable world into seven nationalities: (i) Persians, (ii) Chaldaeans (Arabs), (iii) Greeks, (iv) Egyptians and Libyans, (v) Turks, (vi) Hindus, and
(vii) Chinese.

In brief, Al-Masudi was such a geographer who examined the real document of geography, i.e., earth and compared the knowledge he acquired from books with the actual conditions on the ground.

Al-Mas'udi, the "Herodotus of the Arabs"

The ranks of Arab writers, foremost among the medieval world's geographers, are full of adventurers who wrote about their journeys in travel memoirs. Works such as the Rihla of Ibn Battuta combine travelogue with analysis of local characteristics and customs. Yet few of these writers would qualify as scientific geographers in the modern sense—few, that is, aside from al-Mas'udi, author of numerous works on history and geography, the most famous of which is known in the West as The Meadows of Gold. In this, a universal history covering the period from the world's creation to his own time, al-Mas'udi gained a reputation as a historian on the order of the greatest among his profession: hence his title as "Herodotus of the Arabs."

Al-Biruni and his Contributions to Astronomy

On September 4, 973, Muslim scholar Al-Biruni was born. He is regarded as one of the greatest scholars of the medieval Islamic era and was well versed in physics, mathematics, astronomy, and natural sciences, and also distinguished himself as a historian, chronologist and linguist. He is referred to as the founder of Indology for his remarkable description of early 11th-century India.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was born in Khwarazm now better known as Karakalpakstan. It is believed that Biruni started his studies at early age under the famous astronomer and mathematician Abu Nasr Mansur and he was probably engaged in his own scientific work starting from the age of 17. By 995, al-Biruni had written several short works including his Cartography, a work on map projections. Also, al-Biruni managed to describe his own projection of a hemisphere onto a plane. However, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni’s quiet life came to an end with the unrest in the Islamic world during the end of the 10th century and beginning of the 11th century. Due to several civil wars, al-Biruni fled, but his exact destination is not clear to this day. He may have gone to Rayy, near today’s city of Tehran, but most likely lived in poverty
at that time. Clear is however, that the astronomer al-Khujandī discussed his observations and methods with al-Biruni, who managed to point out several of al-Khujandī’s errors.

In the following years, al-Biruni probably traveled around often, and historians managed to determine some dates and places through the astronomical events he described. He went back to his homeland probably around 1004 and its ruler Abu’s’l Abbas Ma’mun provided great support for al-Biruni’s scientific work. For instance, the scientist was able to build an instrument at Jurjaniyya to observe solar meridian transits and he made 15 such observations with the instrument between 7 June 1016 and 7 December 1016. Unfortunately for al-Biruni, the political events took its toll once more. Al-Biruni had to leave the region, probably as prisoners, after their ruler had been executed. It is assumed that he was supported to do some scientific work even though he suffered great hardships. In 1018, he was probably in Kabul for some time and even though he had no access to any accurate instruments, the scientist managed to observe an eclipse of the sun. While being a prisoner of Mahmud, al-Biruni made an excursion to India and published his famous work ‘India, which covered many aspects of the country including its religion and cast system, and science. Apparently, al-Biruni even studied the original studied Indian literature and translated a few texts into Arabic. With Mahmud’s death, his son Mas’ud turned out to treat al-Biruni better and he was now free to travel and to his research as he pleased to.

Another major work by al-Biruni is known as ‘Shadows’ which he is believed to have written in 1021 and e.g. contains work on the Arabic nomenclature of shade and shadows. The book turned out to be an important source for the history of mathematics, astronomy, and physics. The work also gived a decent overview of al-Biruni’s abilities and contributions to mathematics and astronomy, as he wrote about theoretical and practical arithmetic as well as the summation of series, combinatorial analysis, and much more.

**Ibn e Khaldun**

“When civilization [population] increases, the available labor again increases. In turn, luxury again increases in correspondence with the increasing profit, and the customs and needs of luxury increase. Crafts are created to obtain luxury products. The value realized from them increases, and, as a result, profits are again multiplied in the town. Production there is thriving even more than before. And so it goes with the second and third increase. All the additional labour serves luxury and wealth, in contrast to the original labor that served the necessity of life”.
In these words Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE) addressed the issue of economic growth in his influential book Al-Muqaddima (The Introduction [to history]). Ibn Khaldun’s reflection on the economy, the sociology, and the material aspects of human civilisation is well known to scholars, but was, until recently, long forgotten in the history of economic thought. The originality of his contribution is nowadays appreciated by all the experts of Islamic studies and those who reconstructed the pre-modern history of social sciences.

As Ibrahim M. Oweiss says in his essay Ibn Khaldun the Father of Economics, Ibn Khaldun “laid down the foundations of different fields of knowledge, in particular the science of civilization (al-‘umran). His significant contributions to economics, however, should place him in the history of economic thought as a major forerunner, if not the “father,” of economics, a title which has been given to Adam Smith, whose great works were published some three hundred and seventy years after Ibn Khaldun’s death. Not only did Ibn Khaldun plant the germinating seeds of classical economics, whether in production, supply, or cost, but he also pioneered in consumption, demand, and utility, the cornerstones of modern economic theory.

“Before Ibn Khaldun, Plato and his contemporary Xenophon presented, probably for the first time in writing, a crude account of the specialization and division of labour. On a non-theoretical level, the ancient Egyptians used the techniques of specialization, particularly in the era of the eighteenth dynasty, in order to save time and to produce more work per hour. Following Plato, Aristotle proposed a definition of economics and considered the use of money in his analysis of exchange. His example of the use of a shoe for wear and for its use in exchange was later presented by Adam Smith as the value in use and the value in exchange. Another aspect of economic thought before Ibn Khaldun was that of the Scholastics and of the Canonites [Canon lawyers], who proposed placing economics within the framework of laws based on religious and moral perceptions for the good of all human beings. Therefore all economic activities were to be undertaken in accordance with such laws.

“Ibn Khaldun was cognizant of these ideas, including the one relating to religious and moral perceptions. The relationship between moral and religious principles on one hand and good government on the other is effectively expounded in his citation and discussion of Tahir Ibn
al-Husayn’s (775-822 CE) famous letter to his son ‘Abdallah, who ruled Khurasan with his descendants until 872 CE. From the rudimentary thoughts of Tahir, he developed a theory of taxation which has affected modern economic thought and even economic policies in the United States and elsewhere”.

In the following section, we focus on Ibn Khaldun’s contribution to economic thought. We publish contributions by recognized scholars who endeavoured recently to give Ibn Khaldun long overdue credit by placing him properly within the history of economic thought. Some of the contributions were published in the proceedings of an academic meeting organised in Spain in 2006: Encuentro internacional sobre tradición y modernidad en el pensamiento económico árabe-musulmán: “La contribución de Ibn Jaldún” (Madrid, 3-5 November 2006), whilst others previously were published on www.MuslimHeritage.com.

**Ibn Khaldun: His Life and Works**

Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun, the well known historian and thinker from Muslim 14th-century North Africa, is considered a forerunner of original theories in social sciences and philosophy of history, as well as the author of original views in economics, prefiguring modern contributions. In the following detailed and documented article, Muhammad Hozien outlines the bio-bibliography of Ibn Khaldun and presents insights into his theories, especially by comparing his analysis with that of Thucydides, and by characterizing Ibn Khaldun’s view on science and philosophy.

**Ibn Khaldun and the Rise and Fall of Empires**

The 14th-century historiographer and historian Abu Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun, a brilliant scholar and thinker, is now viewed as a founder of modern historiography, sociology and economics. Living in one of humankind’s most turbulent centuries, he observed at first hand, or participated in, such decisive events as the birth of new states, the disintegration of the Muslim Al-Andalus and the Christian re-conquest, the Hundred Years’ War, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the decline of Byzantium and the epidemic of the Black Death. Considered by modern critics as the thinker who conceived and created a philosophy of history that was undoubtedly one of the greatest works ever created by a man of intelligence, so ground breaking were his ideas, and so far ahead of his time, that his writings are taken as a lens through which to view not only his own time but the relations between Europe and the Muslim world in our own time as well.
The Economic Theory of Ibn Khaldun and the Rise and Fall of Nations

The economic theory of Ibn Khaldun and the rise and fall of nations, Selim Cafer Karatas, Ibn Khaldun on economics, the state theory, specialisation and economic surplus, supply and demand, monetary policy, Ibn Khaldun’s Thought in Microeconomics: Dynamics of Labor, Demand-supply and Prices

In this article on Ibn Khaldun’s thought in microeconomics, Cecep Maskanul Hakim analyses several central concepts and theories, from the dynamics of labor to the complex question of demand-supply and prices. Another aspect of the analysis regarding the role of government in the economy is the macroeconomy and monetary theory. Finally, the article addresses and answers some of the recent critiques to Ibn Khaldun’s theory. fixed prices, property rights, Ibn Khaldun’s theory of the rise and fall of nations.

Ibn Khaldun’s Theory of Taxation and its Relevance Today

Ibn Khaldun’s theory of taxation has been considered one of his most important contributions to economic thought. In the Muqaddimah, he relates the theory of taxation to government expenditure and argues for low tax rates so that the incentive to work is not killed and taxes are paid happily. According to him, at the beginning of a dynasty, taxation yields a large revenue from small assessment, but at the end of a dynasty, taxation yields a small revenue from large assessment. The effect of taxation on incentives and productivity is so clearly visualized by Ibn Khaldun that he seems to have grasped the concept of optimum taxation. He also analyzed the effect of government expenditure on the economy. He advocates a policy of wise and productive public expenditure. Because of these economic insights, Ibn Khaldun has been considered as the forerunner of modern recommendations that high tax rates shrink the tax base because they reduce the economic activity. This paper aims at an analytical study of this theory by presenting empirical evidence that may support and strengthen the Khaldunian theory of taxation and examines its practicality and relevance today.

Ibn Khaldun and Adam Smith: Contributions to Theory of Division of Labour and Modern Economic Thought

The contributions of Ibn Khaldun to the development of economic thought have gone largely unnoticed in the academic realm of Western nations, this despite recent research focusing on Khaldun’s magnum opus, The Muqaddimah. In this paper, we examine the similarities between The Muqaddimah and Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations, particularly as they discuss the benefits of a system of specialization and trade and the role of markets and price systems.