

BUSINESS IN THE 9TH CENTURY: AL-JAHIZ'S IDEAS IN THE BOOK *AT-TABSIRAH BI AT-TIJARAH*

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ABSTRACT - This research explores the economic theories and concepts presented in the book *At-Tabshrah bi at-Tijarah* (Vision of Trade) by the prominent Mu'tazilah thinker Amr bin Bahr al-Jahiz (d. 868 CE). This paper states that al-Jahiz was the first Muslim thinker to use the term *tijarah* (business) in a dedicated work. The book provides insight into several economic phenomena that were the subject of debate during al-Jahiz's lifetime. It also offers a comprehensive overview of the economic theories and concepts that were prevalent at the time, including those espoused by the Persians, the Ajam, and the Arabs. This paper uses a qualitative approach to examine the theories presented in *at-Tabshirah*. Other books that address similar themes are also consulted to facilitate comparison and enrichment of the study. In addition, figures and scholars who also discussed similar matters after al-Jahiz are considered. To emphasize the originality of al-Jahiz's economic theory, this paper presents modern economic theories whose principles are in line with al-Jahiz's economic thought. The book *at-Tabshirah* not only demonstrates the originality of Muslim economic theory, which developed several decades later but also offers an intriguing perspective on the economic and business phenomena that were of concern at that time.

Keywords: Al-Jahiz, Economic Theory, *at-Tabshirah bi at-Tijarah*

ABSTRAK – Penelitian ini menggali pemikiran ekonomi dan teorinya yang tertuang dalam kitab *at-Tabshrah bi at-Tijarah* (visi perdagangan) karya pemikir terkenal Mu'tazilah, Amr bin Bahr al-Jahiz (w. 868 M). Tulisan ini mengklaim bahwa al-Jahiz merupakan pemikir muslim pertama yang pertama kali menggunakan istilah *tijarah* (bisnis) dalam suatu buku khusus. Melalui buku tersebut, al-Jahiz memaparkan beberapa fenomena ekonomi yang menjadi wacana pada masanya, di samping menyusun beberapa teori dan pemikiran ekonomi yang dianut oleh banyak masyarakat dunia saat itu, seperti bangsa Persia, bangsa Ajam, dan bangsa Arab sendiri. Tulisan ini memakai metode kualitatif untuk menggali teori yang tersimpan dalam *at-Tabshirah*. Buku lain yang berkenaan dengan tema serupa juga dipakai sebagai pembanding dan memperkaya studi, di samping tokoh dan ulama yang juga membahas hal serupa setelah al-Jahiz. Untuk menegaskan orisinalitas teori ekonomi al-Jahiz, tulisan ini menampilkan teori ekonomi modern yang prinsipnya sejalan dengan pemikiran ekonomi al-Jahiz. Kitab *at-Tabshirah* bukan hanya memperlihatkan orisinalitas teori ekonomi muslim yang berkembang beberapa dekade setelahnya, tetapi juga menawarkan pembacaan yang menarik terkait fenomena pemikiran ekonomi dan bisnis yang menjadi perhatian saat itu.

Keyword: Al-Jahiz, teori ekonomi, *at-Tabshirah bi at-Tijarah*

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on a book written by Muslim scholars and scientists whose works have attracted the attention of both the Muslim world of modern scholarship and Western scholars, particularly when associated with the era of Muslim progress in the 9th and 10th centuries AD. Kitab *at-Tabshirah* is a book that contains some distinctive thoughts related to economics, consumer behavior, and business and economic phenomena that developed according to al-Jahiz's observations. This research posits that *at-Tabshirah* is the first book to use the term *at-tijarah* (business or commerce) as a special word to describe business activities and economic thinking that developed in the 9th century AD. The book *at-Tabshirah* precedes

books of economic thought written decades later, such as Ibn Abi Dunya's *Ishlah al-Mal*, Ibn Abi Dunya's *al-Ju'*, Yahya bin Umar's *Ahkam as-Suq*, al-Hats 'a'a *at-Tijarah* by al-Khallal, *Bayan al-Kasb* by at-Tirmidzi, *Masail as-Samasirah* by al-Ibani, *Siraj al-Muluk* by ath-Tharthusyi, *al-Isyarah ila Mahasin at-Tijarah* by ad-Dimasyqi, *al-Amwal al-Musytarikah* by Ibn Taymiyyah, and so on.

This research draws upon several previous writings and studies that mention al-Jahiz's works, particularly his economic ideas and the book of *at-Tabshirah*. Authors such as Rifat al-Audhi have written about the Muslim intellectual heritage in the field of economics. In addition to al-Jahiz, al-Audhi discusses numerous Muslim economic thinkers, including Abu Yusuf, ash-Shibani, Abu Ubaid, Yahya bin Umar, al-Mawardi, Ibn Qayyim, Abdurrahman bin Umar, and others. Al-Audhi's discussion of al-Jahiz and *at-Tabshirah* revolves around economic interpretations supported by sharia law and comparisons with the economic ideas of other authors such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Khaldun, and others. Al-Audhi is not so interested in comparing it with modern economic thought and thinkers, especially in the discussion of *at-Tabshirah*. These names were collated, for example, by Rif'at al-'Audhi in his book *Min at-Turats al-Iqtishadi li al-Muslimin* (R. Al-Audhi, 1988) The name of al-Jahiz and his work, *at-Tabshirah* also appears in Zaid's writing (Ar-Rummani, 2001) which compiles 40 economic thinkers in Islam. Regrettably, the author does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the significance of al-Jahiz's work in the development of economic theory during the early centuries of Islam.

This research considers it important to compare al-Jahiz's thought with some modern economic theories and figures to emphasise the assumption of the originality of al-Jahiz's thought and the significance of his work amidst many other Muslim works and legacies in the field of economics. Through this comparison, this study assumes that *at-Tabshirah* is the first Muslim work to mention the term *at-tijarah* (business). The term *at-tijarah* in the tradition of Islamic economics was only widely developed a few decades after al-Jahiz as evidenced by the works of ad-Dimasyqi, for example. *At-Tabshirah* addresses the first theories of business and economics in classical Muslim scholarship and deals purely with pure economic phenomena and theory unaccompanied by explanations of the surrounding Shari'ah law. Consequently, *At-Tabshirah* represents the inaugural work on the discipline of economic theory, as the extant literature on economics was invariably intertwined with Shari'ah law and the subsequent legal precedents that emerged during that period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SUPPLY AND DEMAND THEORY IN AT-TABSHIRAH

In economic theory, the law of supply and demand is a theory that explains how prices are determined by the relationship between supply and demand. If the supply of a commodity

or service exceeds the demand for it, the price will decline, and vice versa. The celebrated British economist Sir Hurbert Douglas Henderson elucidated that the law of supply and demand, in conjunction with two additional laws, constitutes the fundamental tenets of general economic theory.

The relationship between supply and demand is a constant and continuous phenomenon. Al-Jahiz elucidates this relationship as follows (Al-Jahiz, 1994):

أَنَّ الموجود من كلِّ شيءٍ رخيصٌ بوجدانه، غالٍ بفقدانه إذا مسَّت الحاجة إليه

The price of any item will be relatively low if it is widely available. Furthermore, the item in question will be perceived as valuable when it is scarce and in high demand.

Al-Jahiz posits that the price of a commodity or service will increase if it is scarce when many people require it. Conversely, if commodities and services are abundant while demand decreases, their prices will decline. Al-Jahiz cites opinions on this law, including those of the Indians, who posit that if commodities are available in abundance, they will be inexpensive. Al-Jahiz cites an exception, which is the reason; where, as reason increases, commodities become expensive. In another narration, the word 'reason' reads 'adab'. Ats-Tsa'aliby, for example, quotes the governor of Khurasan during the time of Hisham bin Abdul Malik, Nashr bin Sayyar, as saying something similar. He said that "everything appears small and then becomes big, except calamity, which appears large at first but ultimately proves to be insignificant. Furthermore, when there are many items, the cost is minimal, except for 'adab,' which is expensive when there are many" (Ats-Tsa'alaby, 2001).

The writings of al-Jahiz, in particular those of a jurist, tend to examine the legal implications of this theory. The law of supply and demand is intimately connected to the fluctuations in the price of a commodity or service. In the classical jurisprudential tradition, price increases are regarded as an economic phenomenon resulting from certain behaviors that have legal consequences. In classical jurisprudence, the cause of rising prices is attributed to the hoarding of goods by individuals to sell them at a later date. In jurisprudence, this is referred to as ihtikar, which translates as hoarding. This act is prohibited by the Quranic principle that property should not circulate exclusively among certain individuals and should not be accessible and enjoyed by the general public. In practice, ihtikar is defined by the Shafiiyah school of thought as the act of purchasing a food item during a period of scarcity and then withholding it from those who require it, to resell it at a higher price when demand is greater (As-Sayyid, 2016)

Al-Jahiz's economic thinking on the laws of supply and demand only developed later in a more complete manner in the hands of Ibn Taymiyyah al-Harrani ad-Dimasqi (d. 728 AH/1328 CE), a renowned Hanbali scholar from Damascus, Syria. Just as previous jurists linked economic principles to the Shari'ah law that implies them, Ibn Taymiyyah discussed the concepts of supply and demand in terms of the Shari'ah law that surrounds them. When discussing the reasons why prices become expensive and cheap, Ibn Taymiyyah said that the

phenomenon of al-ghala (inflation) is caused by high prices of goods. When the price is low, goods are sold cheaply. For Ibn Taymiyyah, this economic phenomenon cannot be without a cause. He said that one of the causes could be human injustice. On the other hand, the low price of goods is also due to human kindness. The analysis of injustice in the increase in the price of goods may refer to the behavior of ihtikar (hoarding) which is deliberately done by some people to attract profits. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyyah also recognized another cause that goes back purely to the market mechanism, namely the law of supply and demand. Ibn Taymiyyah said that the rise and fall of a price is sometimes caused by whether or not a good is available in the market. If the need for the goods increases but the goods are not found much then the price will be high. Likewise, if the demand for the goods increases but the goods are not found, the price will be high.

In contrast to Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Jahiz concentrated on pure economic theory, without subsequently discussing the implications of religious law. Conversely, al-Jahiz introduced an economic concept that represented an exception to the law of supply and demand, namely what he termed al-‘aql. The meaning of this exception is not entirely clear. The intellect in question could refer to science and human talent that is not subject to the general law of demand. For al-Jahiz, it seems that reason is part of scarcity goods, or ‘rare goods’ that are not subject to the law of supply. Alternatively, the concept of ‘reason’ that al-Jahiz excludes could be interpreted as economic rent. In general, economic rent refers to the situation where the amount of money earned exceeds the amount needed. Economic rent usually occurs with goods or services that are exclusive. Here, value plays an important role in pricing. This concept is most clearly elucidated by Adam Smith, the renowned economist. In his theory of value, the price of a good is relative. Smith posited that the meaning of “value” is the “specialty” of a good that motivates people to expend resources to obtain it. For Smith, value can be understood as both “utility” and “exchangeability.” (Smith, 1937).

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR THEORY IN AT-TABSHIRAH

In his work, Al-Jahiz presents a message that is directly relevant to consumer behavior. This message can be summarised as the importance of focusing on needs rather than wants. In his writings, Al-Jahiz states:

لا تشتروا ما ليس لكم إليه حاجة فيوشك أن تبيعوا ما لا تستغنون عنه

It is prudent to refrain from purchasing items that are not necessary, as this may result in the sale of items that are not necessary.

Al-Jahiz appears to advocate for prudent financial management, particularly in the context of meeting essential needs on both the individual and national levels. In a more contemporary economic analysis, it appears that al-Jahiz’s ideas are directed toward consumer

behavior that is characterized by a lack of forethought and a tendency to act on impulse or impulsive buying behavior. Impulse buying, also known as spontaneous buying, refers to the behavior of a buyer who makes a poorly planned decision to purchase a product, good, or service. This behavior is particularly prevalent when purchasing items that are not genuinely required. From a psychological perspective, spontaneous purchases are considered “unplanned purchases,” which are ultimately a form of emotional experience for an individual. As previously noted by numerous authors (Al, 2016), this behavior is characterized by a lack of rational consideration of alternatives or consequences.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative research method with a historical approach. This approach is employed because the research is directed at the systematic investigation of documents and other sources to produce precise and accurate explanations and interpretations of past events (Djamal, 2015)

The primary data source in the research is the book *At-Tabshirah bi At-Tijarah* by Al Jahiz, which serves to confirm the authenticity of al-Jahiz’s economic theory by presenting modern economic theories that are in principle in line with al-Jahiz’s economic thought. The book *At-Tabshirah* demonstrates the authenticity of Muslim economic theories that developed decades later and provides an interesting insight into the phenomena of economic and business thought that were the focus of attention at the time.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

AL-JAHIZ AND HIS TIME

Al-Jahiz is the nickname of the full name Amr bin Bahr, or Abu Uthman. Al-Jahiz was born in Basra and Baghdad, around the beginning of 150 A.H. He died in his hometown in 255 A.H. during the caliphate of al-Mu’taz at the age of 90 (Al-Himawi, 1977). Al-Jahiz was born and raised in Basra, a city that witnessed significant intellectual and cultural growth during his lifetime. This environment fostered a passion for learning in al-Jahiz, who was interested in a wide range of subjects, including literature, linguistics, philosophy, tafsir, and fiqh. Al-Jahiz’s later ideological rival, Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi, described al-Jahiz’s work as *bad at-tashanif*, meaning "outstanding" (Husain, Abdul Basith Abdurazzaq., and al-Izii, 2014). In his biography of the Mu’tazilah, al-Murtadha included al-Jahiz in the seventh *halaqah* (rank) in the line of Mu’tazilah figures. To describe the knowledge possessed by al-Jahiz, al-Murtadha quoted Ibn Yazdadz, who said that al-Jahiz was among those who managed to gather all the sciences. He

was proficient in the field of kalam, folklore, religious fatwas, Arabic language, the science of interpretation of the Qur'an, as well as the ancient history of the Arabs. Additionally, he had linguistic fluency. The depth of insight possessed by al-Jahiz cannot be separated from the diverse background of the teachers he met and learned his knowledge from, including Abu Ubaidah, al-Ashma'i, and Abu Zaid al-Anshari in the science of language and literature, al-Akhfasy in Arabic grammatical science (nahwu), and Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Sayyar an-Nazzham in the science of Arabic.

Al-Jahiz was among the scientists and scholars who produced a substantial corpus of written works. In his *al-Fihrist*, Ibn an-Nadim cites Abu Hafan as stating that there are only three individuals who are passionate about books and knowledge: al-Jahiz, al-Fath bin Khaqan, and Ismail bin Ishaq al-Qadhi. Among the books that al-Jahiz wrote were *Nazh al-Quran*, *al-Masail fi al-Quran*, *Kitab al-Hayawan*, *al-Bayan wa at-Tabyin*, *Rasail al-Jahiz*, and so on. Scholars such as Abdul Aziz al-Atiq posit that al-Jahiz's oeuvre encompassed approximately 360 books across various disciplines, although the majority of these works have been lost or their whereabouts remain unknown (Al-Atiq, 1972).

Al-Jahiz lived in the city of Basra, which was under the domain of the Abbasids. Since 173 AH, when Harun came to power, the city had been relatively quiet and rarely disturbed by the political turmoil that was common elsewhere. During Harun's tenure, Basra became one of the largest Islamic cities and a hub for prominent scholars. Basra became the pinnacle of Islamic sciences, encompassing both *naqli* (religious) and *aqli* (rational) disciplines. Basra reached its zenith during the reign of al-Ma'mun, the son of Harun, who ascended to the throne in 198 A.H. During his tenure, the number of scholars in Basra reached 700, while the number of students reached 11,000. It is rumored that the works of the scholars of Basrah over 20 years amounted to more than 200,000 works. It is reported that al-Mamun received these books transported to him in three large ships and that he subsequently placed them in his library in Baghdad (Al-A'zhami, n.d.). In addition to Jahiz, Basra was the career of two other eminent poets, linguists, and writers: Khalid B. Shafwan at-Tamimi al-Bashri (d. 145 AH/762 CE) and Khalil b. Ahmad al-Bashri (known as al-Farahidi) (w. 173H/786 M).

In addition to being a hub of intellectual activity, Basra also served as a major transit point for business operations, contributing significantly to the Abbasid Empire's economic prosperity. Basra constituted a significant conduit for commercial and economic activities originating from the Arabian Gulf and destined for other Islamic regions. It can be argued that sea trade in the early Abbasid period was inextricably linked to the role of the important harbor in Basra. Furthermore, the canals and rivers of Basrah facilitated the integration of business activities with those of the city of Baghdad. At that time, the port of Basra became one of the most significant ports in the world. At the time of Harun al-Rashid, Basra was ranked the second most important city in the Islamic world, after Baghdad. Basra was known as the gateway to Baghdad. The Tigris (Dajlah) river flows from it. From Basra, a vast array of commodities from across the globe were imported, akin to the ports of Marseille in France,

Geneva in Italy, and Leith in Britain. Basra is even rumored to have surpassed these world ports because it was the center of caravans coming from all corners of the world, both east and west. Consequently, Basra served as a nexus of global culture, becoming a hub for interactions between Arabs and non-Arabs (Sa'id al-Afghani, 1973). Classical travelers such as Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani cited Ibn al-Ahtam al-Bashri in their accounts of Basra, noting that the most distant people seeking sustenance were those from Basra and Khuz. Upon entering the most distant towns of Farganah or Sus, one will encounter either Basrites or Khuzites (Al-Hamadani, 1996).

Al-Jahiz's interest in the economic aspects of Basra was influenced by the city's demographic and resource wealth. At the time, Basra was experiencing a period of economic prosperity. He observed the variety of commodities available in the Mirbad Basrah market and the shops therein, which were sourced from a multitude of regions. Through his direct observation of Basrah's economic activities, al-Jahiz wrote a special book to describe the commodities circulating in his city, including precious stones, gold, silver, gems, jewelry, perfume, and so on. These commodities were predominantly sourced from trading cities in India or Persia. However, al-Jahiz was able to provide detailed descriptions of them due to his first-hand observations. Basra was known as the "Dome of Islam" and the "Treasure of the Arabs," as recounted by Abu Sa'id as-Sam'ani (An-Nawawi, n.d.).

THE BOOK OF AT-TABSHIRAH AND AL-JAHIZ'S ECONOMIC IDEAS

In the Arab-Islamic intellectual tradition, works on business, trade, and economics in general began to emerge following the intellectual ferment that emerged in the major Islamic cities of the 9th century CE. In earlier times, works on financial systems and economic governance were more concerned with sharia and fiqh law. Some works on this aspect were written by juristic scholars who discussed economics from the perspective of sharia, such as those written by Abu Hanifah's disciple Abu Yusuf (d. 182 AH/798 CE) in his book *al-Kharaj*, or al-Hasan ash-Shibani (d. 189 AH/804 CE) in *al-Kasb*. A few decades later, al-Jahiz embarked on a new direction in economics that was no longer centered on the point of view of sharia, but on the general theories of the trade and economic world of the Arabs at that time. Al-Jahiz's work contains *ushul al-iqtishad*, or economic theories that discuss economic phenomena independently. These theories are separate from the general book of sharia.

As a scientific discipline, economics is a relatively new science that is not widely recognized in the classical Islamic intellectual heritage, particularly in its modern terms and terminology. In general, economic principles are alluded to sporadically in the Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, as well as some of the earliest writings on financial governance systems in early Islamic history. From the outset, the books of fiqh were replete with discussions on the system of economic transactions from a Shari'ah perspective. Before al-Jahiz, discussions of economics were invariably linked to Islamic principles and Sharia law. If al-Jahiz's ideas can be considered 'economic thought', then earlier economic ideas fall under the term 'Islamic

economics’, which encompasses in-depth studies either aimed at uncovering the economic principles brought by Islam or the explanations of Islamic scholars regarding the economic practices and solutions of their time (Al-Fanjari, 2010). It can be concluded that Islamic economics, or ‘economic fiqh’, cannot be separated from the laws of fiqh. This implies that the principles of sharia remain robust in the economic domain, both in theory and in practice. The term “economy” in the context of Islamic economics encompasses all activities related to the acquisition, distribution, and growth of wealth (Ath-Thariqi, 2009).

It was only through the work of al-Jahiz that the Muslim intellectual community came to recognize a further development in the field of economic jurisprudence. This development moved away from the study of the principles of Sharia and the laws surrounding it and instead focused on the rational elaboration of economic phenomena into theories that could be developed from them. In contrast to the more practical approach of ‘economic jurisprudence’, economic thinking is more likely to rely on the rational theorization of economic problems. Here, reason becomes a significant point of differentiation from ‘economic jurisprudence’, as economic thought diverges from pure rational thought that is not directly related to Sharia law (R. as-S. Al-Audhi, 1997). (In his book *At-Tabshirah bi at-Tijarah*, al-Jahiz set out his thoughts on economics, the business world of his time, and human behavior in the context of economic circumstances. Al-Jahiz observed that human behavior was inextricably linked to economic life. The name of this book is mentioned by the 5th century H historian Abu Manshur at-Tsa’alibi an-Naisaburi in *Tsimar al-Qulub fi al-Mudhaf wa al-Mansub* (Ats-Tsa’alaby, n.d.) when discussing the commodity of woolen cloth.

In general, the book of *at-Tabshirah* discusses all aspects related to *at-tijarah* (trade, business, or commerce). The term *at-tijarah* itself means an attempt to acquire property through a system of exchange, to make a profit through the exchange of goods or services. *Tijarah* can take place between two or more parties. *Tijara* is an activity that mediates between sellers and consumers. In the Qur'anic tradition, the term *tijarah* refers to all buying and selling activities as described in the 29th verse of *Surah an-Nisa*. Looking at the discussion in *at-Tabshirah*, al-Jahiz divides several reports into chapters, which are sorted as follows:

- A. Articles on gold and silver
- B. Articles on the value and characteristics of gems
- C. Articles on scents and perfumes
- D. Articles on foreign goods coming from abroad (Basra)
- E. Articles on hunting
- F. The chapter that al-Jahiz calls “bab maker” (another chapter)

This research traces al-Jahiz’s ideas in several major chapters that are considered important to illustrate the economic concepts or thoughts he wrote, as well as the economic

phenomena that occurred at the time. Other chapters or articles in the at-tabshirah are not fully explained in this paper because they do not directly address the purpose of this research.

ORIGIN OF MARKET COMMODITIES

In his work *At-Tabshirah*, al-Jahiz compiled several groupings of commodities that were traded and sold in the market. The types of commodities discussed by al-Jahiz help to trace the origin of these commodities and how they arrived in the markets of Islamic countries. Al-Jahiz's writings on commodity groupings also shed light on the type of business that was popular in Islamic countries in the second and third centuries of the Hijrah. Some goods were traded internationally and entered Muslim markets, including clothing, cotton, rose water, Yasmin juice, and types of liquor originating in Persia. From al-Ahwaz and its neighboring regions, commodities such as sugar, dates, silk-covered clothes, castanets, and musical instruments circulated in Mirbad. Armenia and Azerbaijan imported a variety of goods, including woolen hooks, thin and soft carpets, home furnishings, and other items. Al-Jahiz mentions almost all the major cities under Islamic rule as places of origin for commodities in his time, in addition to those mentioned earlier. These include cities in the Arabian Peninsula, Berber territories in the Islamic Maghrib (present-day Morocco), Yemen, Egypt, and the Khazar lands. In addition to the aforementioned cities, al-Jahiz also mentions Khawarizm, Samarkand, Balkh, Merv, Jorjan, Ray, Amad, Isfahan, Kirman, Nissibin, Persia, Fasa, Oman, Maisan, Ahwaz, Sus, Mosul, Helwan, and numerous others. This evidence demonstrates that Muslim countries were the economic centers of the world, and thus explains how, in the 9th, and 10th centuries and afterward, the Islamic world became the world's largest economy.

Al-Jahiz mentions three non-Muslim majority countries from which unique goods originated: India, China (modern-day China), and the land of the Romans (Constantinople). India was the largest exporter of animals at the time. Al-Jahiz wrote that some wild and large animals were imported from India, such as tigers, lions, and elephants, including tiger skins, and so on (Al-Jahiz, 1994). *At-Tsa'aliby* adds that India is a country that has many animals that are not found in other countries, such as gajar, karkadan, tiger, parrot, peacock, Indian chicken, red yakut, elephant tusks, pepper, cloves, nutmeg and other spices. India is also the producer of the finest oud and swords, the quality of which is often proverbial. *Ats-Tsa'aliby* says that if a sword is made in India or molded in Yemen, it should not come loose (*Ats-Tsa'aliby*, 2001). China, an Islamic country knew luxurious home furnishings such as large vessels, red roses, silk, paper, pens, woolen cloth, cinnamon, and so on. While Constantinople became the land of suppliers of goods such as silver containers, gold containers, imperial pure dinars, female slaves, padlock keys, irrigation engineers, land experts, marble architects, and so on (Al-Jahiz, 1994).

Al-Jahiz's account provides a detailed account of how Iraq, particularly the port of Basra and its markets, became a hub for the circulation of goods and commodities from major cities around the world. In addition to describing the types and origins of these goods, al-Jahiz

also provides insights into their quality. If this had been the case in Basra, likely, the great Islamic cities of Baghdad, Cairo, Isfahan, and others would have been even more magnificent and lively. The goods also provide insight into the extent of the economy of the Muslim world at that time. Baghdad was likely filled with magnificent buildings, its people lived a high lifestyle and had luxurious facilities and commodities. The scholar at-Tabshirah commented on this phenomenon. According to al-Jahiz, the opulent and costly commodities in Basra were procured and commissioned by the affluent to gratify their penchant for a lavish lifestyle, to fulfill the demands of their consorts, to construct their palaces, or to adorn their wives.

GOLD AND SILVER IN THE VIEW OF AL-JAHIZ

Gold and silver were the preferred means of transaction in Muslim societies at that time, particularly in the Islamic power city of Baghdad and other major metropolitan cities such as Basrah, Kufa, Samarra and others. The circulation of gold (dinar) as currency commenced in the second half of the third-century Hijrah and continued to expand at a faster rate than silver (dirham) at the beginning of the fourth-century Hijrah (Ramidh, 2014). It should be noted that there were other mining goods in circulation at the time, including bronze, copper, and iron. However, al-Jahiz's writings focus on gold and silver for two reasons. Firstly, they are the most valuable mining goods on Earth. Secondly, they are the main means of economic and business exchange. In his work at-Tabshirah, al-Jahiz provides a detailed account of the various types of gold that determine its quality. For al-Jahiz, it was of significant importance for businessmen and economic actors at that time to be aware of the characteristics of gold, as knowledge of these characteristics could minimize fraud and maximize wealth. From al-Jahiz's explanation, it appears that in the past, attempts were made to create gold through chemical processes, but these were not particularly successful. Al-Jahiz commences his discourse on gold by enumerating the defining characteristics of high-quality gold. He states:

يستحبّ من الذهب سبيكه و غير سبيكه

Gold can be classified as either native or non-native (al-Jahiz, h. 10).

The term "sick gold" is used to describe a specific form of gold that is cast or molded into a specific shape, primarily into gold bars. In the context of gold, the principal methods of producing gold are either through molding or pouring. The process of pouring or casting is initiated when the metal has reached a sufficient temperature for melting and is then poured into a mold (qalib) while still in a liquid state. The term "sabik" is used to describe gold in the form of lumps, ingots, or poured bars. The process of producing sabik gold is typically referred to as casting. The term 'sabik' is also defined as 'shabba' The term 'sabik' is also synonymous with 'shabba' which denotes the pouring of molten gold into a mold, thereby creating a specific shape (Al-Khathib, 2000).

Additionally, al-Jahiz provides a detailed description of the color of quality gold, which he compares to an extinguished fire, an intense light, and a burning sulfur (Al-Jahiz, 1994). In this context, the term “smoldering” is used to describe a blackish-red color. In light of these considerations, it can be surmised that al-Jahiz regarded good gold as exhibiting a reddish hue. Al-Jahiz's perspective appears to diverge from the prevailing understanding at the time, which regarded good and pure gold as yellow. The yellow color (al-ashfa) was even designated as a term for gold. The reddish color of gold allows other elements that are high in percentage, such as copper and others, to be incorporated. Al-Jahiz may hold this view because red gold is denser than yellow gold due to the copper element present in it (Husain, Abdul Basith Abdurazzaq., and al-Izii, 2014).

Al-Jahiz asserts that the purest form of gold is the most valuable, and he refers to this as al-‘iqyan. Similarly, he considers pure silver to be the most valuable form of metal, and he refers to this as al-lajin (Al-Jahiz, 1994). The term ‘iqyan’ is used to describe pure gold or gold that has not been alloyed with other elements such as stones. Iqyan gold is defined as gold that is extracted from the mine in its natural state, without being mixed with other elements such as stones. It is typically found in the form of grains or waves. This type of gold is highly slippery and can be transported over long distances through the flow of rivers (Husain, Abdul Basith Abdurazzaq., and al-Izii, 2014). About silver, al-Jahiz posited that the optimal quality of silver is al-lajin. The meaning of al-lajin is not entirely clear, although it is known that al-lajin is another name for silver (Husain, Abdul Basith Abdurazzaq., and al-Izii, 2014). Az-Zamakhshari notes that al-lujain (tasygir form) is a term used to describe the dirham or silver that has been forged, thereby becoming a form of currency similar to the dirham.

CONCLUSION

The Kitab at-Tabshirah is one of the few surviving examples of Muslim intellectual legacy that first discussed the economic phenomena that developed in the 9th century. Al-Jahiz not only described the commodities or merchandise traded in the world at that time but also quoted some economic thoughts and business behavior that he considered ideal. The Kitab at-Tabshirah is also the only oldest extant text to mention the term or word at-tijarah (business/commerce). This term was subsequently developed more fully by later writers such as ats-Tsa’aliby, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyyah, and others. This demonstrates that al-Jahiz is an economic scientist and theorist who belongs to the early generation of Muslim scholars. Some of al-Jahiz’s economic ideas not only demonstrated the originality of Muslim economic thought but also served as the foundation for the subsequent development of economic thought. It is conceivable that the economic theories developed in the West several centuries later are indebted to the Muslim economic ideas that emerged centuries earlier.

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