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**METHOD
OF STUDYING CIVILIZATION
ACCORDING TO MALIK BENNABI**

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**A Thesis submitted to
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

- *My beloved parents*
- *My sisters and brothers*
- *My wife and son Fares*

ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted towards contributing to the integral understanding of Malik Bennabi's *integrative method* in studying the phenomenon of civilization as applied to the context of Islamic civilization. The present investigation has led to the conclusion that what Bennabi has contributed to contemporary Islamic thought is, above all, his multidimensional method of approaching the problems of civilization, or his integrative view of civilization. The thesis is an attempt to restore the sense of unity and integrality to his method that was fragmented and disjoined by some works of partial nature and approach. Indeed, it is crucial to re-examine his linkage method that integrates revealed morals and human experience in a comprehensive system of analysis. The present thesis is an attempt to bring to light the essence of his linkage method including, its theoretical framework, the tools of analysis and the application.

The first chapter deals with Bennabi's profile and social context taking into account his maturation process, involvement in the political and religious activities and his contribution to contemporary Islamic thought. Being acquainted with his living social context and maturation process, much greater significance is attached, in the second chapter to his theoretical framework which constitute the key conceptual foundation of his linkage method. In the course of the third chapter an attempt is made to study his analytical tools which are developed for the purpose of analyzing the phenomenon of civilization. These include a set of interrelated

and consistent concepts which function as a system of analysis. The latter, involves in the process of analysis several tools and ideas from different disciplines, such as religion, psychology, science of culture and personality, sociology of knowledge, epistemology, history, natural sciences etc. Additionally, the fourth chapter discusses the application of Bennabi's method in the study of the evolution of Islamic civilization, the causes for its decline and his project for its reconstruction. In the summary and conclusion, the thesis provides a general exposition on the characteristics of Bennabi's method as well as some comments and new directions for improvement.

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The present work, which I have attempted, has creditors of many people. I owe greatest debt to Malik Bennabi whose outstanding contribution to the Islamic thought lies at the heart of my research. It is really a good opportunity that I have been among the first to investigate thoroughly his method of approaching the phenomenon of civilization as applied to Islamic civilization. Thanking all of those who have, in one way or another, assisted me to complete the content and shape of this thesis. Among others who have been contributory to this work, I am greatly thankful to my supervisor Professor. Dr. Lutpi Ibrahim for his assistance and motivation. Indeed, his attention and time devoted to this work was of great help. I should always remember how he made himself available even without appointment and I also should confess that without his help many obstacles had stood in the way of completing this work, may Allah bless him for his efforts.

I am also indebted to my brother Tayb B. who provided me with a deeper insight and understanding of the multidimensional method that integrates religion, values and human sciences in one consistent system of analysis. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Fatim al-Zohra Sai⁹ for her worth observations and insights on the style of presenting this work. Very much gratitude and many thanks go to Dr. Muhamed Moussa who generously made me able to strive hardly to complete this work. From the very early stages of this dissertation I was surrounded by his

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This thesis is dedicated with gratitude to all members of my family; I should thank my parents, brothers and sisters for their patience, understanding and encouragement. Last, but not least I am grateful to my wife who devoted her time and attention to provide me with the necessary atmosphere to finish this work in its present shape and content. Finally, I hope that the mention of those names will express my sincere gratitude to every one of them and reveal my love for them.

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Transliteration system (Arabic Characters)

f	ف	a	أ
q	ق	b	ب
k	ك	t	ت
l	ل	th	ث
m	م	j	ج
n	ن	ḥ	ح
w	و	kh	خ
h	هـ	d	د
'	ء	dh	ذ
y	ي	r	ر
ṭ	ط	z	ز
al-	أل	s	س
		sh	ش
		ṣ	ص
		ḍ	ض
		t	ط
		ẓ	ظ
		ʿ	ع
		gh	غ

Long Vowels

أَي	a
و	u
ي	I

Short Vowels

—	a
—	u
—	I

Diphthongs

ز —	aw
ي —	ay
—	iyy
—	uw

Notice:

The Transliteration system is taken from the Encyclopedia of Islam with some changes to cope with the new modifications.

ABBREVIATIONS

H.	- Hijrah
(S.Ā.W.)	- Ṣalla- Īlah ^Ā alayh wa sallam
(S.W.T.)	- Subhanahu wa Ta ala
(S.O.S.)	- School of Oriental Studies.
(P.L.Q.)	- Parisian Latin Quarter
(M.S.A.)	- al-Maghrib Students Association
(A. P. P.)	- Algerian People's Party
(N. L. F.)	- National Liberation Front
(N. A. S.)	- North African Star
(A. M. S. S.)	- Association of Muslim Social Scientists
(I.I.I.T.)	- International Institute of Islamic Thought
(W.W.T.)	- World War Two
(N.S.A.)	- New Stone Age

INTRODUCTION

In an early sense, one may propose that studying the method of approaching the phenomenon of civilization is a fundamental question in the process of the individual and collective human development through out the course of history. In fact, the interest in the study of this method is justified by its vital role in the orientation of the spiritual, material, social and cultural capacities of the individual and society as well. Indeed, the efforts made in order to disentangle the methods and patterns which govern the march of civilization in history and society are regarded as an indicator for the human interest in studying the phenomenon of civilization.

Accordingly, it is worth noting that “the very *raison d’être* of collective human experience is civilization”¹which represents “an enterprise of creativity, innovation, and expansiveness both in time and space”² In fact, one should confess that the crucial matters that bear heavily on the study of civilization have to do with the quality and nature of the method used in dealing with its complicated issues.

¹Osman Bakar, Malik Bennabi’s Philosophy of Sciences, A paper presented at International Seminar On Malik Bennabi, 1st-4th September, organized by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IPT), (Malaysia: University Malaya: Berita Publishing, 1991), p. 2.

²Chandler Keith, *Beyond Civilization*, (United States of America: Rivendell Publishing Company, Inc, 1992), p. 32.

This is indeed, a vivid and most insightful matter of more interest and merit as well. Therefore, developing a comprehensive, epistemological and methodological system of approaching the problems of civilization is increasingly becoming the most challenging problem of our time. The reason behind this lies on the fact that “without a satisfactory definition or theory of civilization, it is impossible to develop analytical methods that are specifically applicable to history.”¹

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to claim that Malik Bennabi was one of the Muslim writers who devoted themselves to the study of the patterns governing the movement of human civilization in general and that of Islamic civilization in particular. Obviously, the most significant contribution of Bennabi is above all his method or what one may call his system of approaching the problems of civilization. Indeed, if there is one central theme that runs through the vein of all his works, it is the method of studying civilization. Therefore, a primary priority of emphasis in the present thesis is laid upon his method and its three main parts: the theoretical framework, the tools of analysis and the applications. The present thesis might find its *raison d'être* in his integrative method of approaching the problems of civilization. What is particularly impressive about his method is not only the new framework and tools of analysis, but also the ability to apply it in the study of certain problems faced by Islamic civilization. According to him, we should combine various disciplines in order to formulate the multidimensional system of approaching civilization.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Hence, this system should be constructed upon two crucial pillars; firstly the profound understanding of human psychology, sociology, culture and history. Secondly, the deep understanding of the position and function of religion and values in the development of human association.

Obviously, little is known about the method of Malik Bennabi in studying human civilization in general and Islamic civilization in particular. Being himself a mathematician with a genuine knowledge of human sciences and a profound understanding of the role of religion and values in the human life, he had a fair chance to introduce his method of studying civilization. Indeed, he exposed to our clear view his multidimensional method, which demands careful analysis and stands in need for implementation and evaluation in its theoretical framework, tools of analysis and applications. So much, and more, will be introduced in this thesis, anticipating the problem of the method of dealing with civilization according to Malik Bennabi.

Concerning the method used in the analysis, I follow library research taking into account various works of Bennabi and other works of the same concern. The thesis uses comparative analysis for the purpose of determining Bennabi's contribution to the Islamic intellectual movement. Accordingly, the main concentration will be on the conceptual and analytical approach, which demonstrates the different ideas, concepts and tools through treating their literal,

technical and conceptual indications. On the other hand, the scope of the present thesis excludes certain areas of Bennabi's thought, such as political, economic, social, ideological concepts. Another significant area, which is not touched in this thesis, is Bennabi's theory on the exegesis of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, the cultural and civilizational concepts that have other indications, rather than their methodological dimensions are excluded.

The main purpose of the present study is to make contribution to the thorough and systematic understanding of Bennabi's method in approaching the problems of civilization as well as to evaluate this method and examine its originality and effectiveness. The thesis aspires also towards contributing to the present Islamic intellectual process of constructing a comprehensive and original method, which could help in analyzing the problems of Islamic civilization. Furthermore, it demonstrates Bennabi's multidimensional method which integrates various disciplines in the study of civilization, such as psychology, sociology, social psychology, culture, religion, history and so on.

A survey of the literature and works on Bennabi reveals that the serious and in-depth researches are few and far from utilizing the first hand original material which is found in French language. Additionally, the present survey did not find any attempt, which is devoted mainly to the problem of method in Bennabi's thought.

This serious shortage may stand as a real justification for the present endeavour. However, a general picture can be drawn of the few works which are available.

1- *Malik Bennabi: His life and Theory of Civilization*, Doctoral thesis, Fawzia Bariun, (USA: University of Michigan, 1988). In her attempt Bariun examined the surroundings which influenced Bennabi's personality and thought. She also dealt with the question of his life and intellectual career. The main issue in that her work was his theory of civilization. In fact, Bariun was able to grasp the essence of his ideas about the issue of civilization. She touched many concepts pertinent to his sociological and historical thought. It is of merit to note that she did not treat the issue of method of studying civilization according to Malik Bennabi. Even though, she used some concepts and references related to method, she did not provide any comprehensive study that examines the theoretical framework, the tools of analysis and the applications of Bennabi's method of studying civilization.

2- *Mushkilat al-Ḥaḍarh 'inda Malik Bennabi*, Muhammad Abdul Salam al-Jafairi. This book discusses the contributions of the Islamic thought before the era of Bennabi as well as the meaning of civilization and its problems according to Bennabi. In fact, the book attempts to examine the possibility of benefiting from Bennabi's thought in our present situation. However, there is no direct analysis of the issue of method of studying civilization. He mentioned few ideas about the method but there is no study of its framework, tools and applications.

3- *Al-Tagyīr al-Ijtima' 'inda Malik Bennabi*, Ali al-Qurayshi. In his attempt al-Qurayshi introduced the situation of the Islamic world in general and that of Algeria

in particular during the time of Bennabi. He also studied Bennabi's theory of social change including his view of civilization and culture. Additionally, he provided an evaluation of Bennabi's theory of social change. It is obvious that this attempt was able to touch many important concepts and ideas of Bennabi's method of studying civilization. However, we should note that it lacks the consistency and comprehensiveness. There is no systematic analysis of the method in its framework, tools an application which makes the reader unable to grasp the essence of Bennabi's method and its effectiveness.

4- Falsafat al-Ḥaḍarh inda Malik Bennabi, Sulayman al-Khatib. In this book, the author introduced Bennabi's philosophy of civilization. He commenced with his life, personality, contributions and social context. A comprehensive attempt was made to cover almost the entire concepts related to Bennabi's view of civilization and culture. Indeed, we should confess that this attempt was mature and covering many issues of Bennabi's thought. However, the matter of the truth is that Al-Khatib's work lacks also the in depth study of the method. It did not treat one single issue in-depth, rather it touches many ideas and concepts. In fact, Al-Khatib's approach cannot assist in discovering the entire system of thought that runs through the vein of Bennabi's work. Certainly, his work introduces the ideas but it did not provide an approach of dealing with the issue of the method of studying civilization in its three main rocks; Framework, tools of analysis and application.

The organization of the thesis is as follows: The introduction deals with the problem, scope, objectives, literature review, organization of the thesis and problems anticipated. The first chapter is devoted to examine Bennabi's biography and his scholarly accomplishments. Additionally, it comprises the surroundings, which influenced his personality and thought as well as his contribution to the contemporary Islamic thought. On the other hand, this chapter contains some observations on Bennabi's personality and thought. In the second chapter, one edges nearer to our main concern of his method; starting with the theoretical framework that runs through the vein of all his works. It examines the central question posed throughout his intellectual career as well as the general vision adopted in treating the phenomenon of civilization. Additionally, this chapter comprises some observations and comments on his theoretical framework. In the course of the third chapter, an attempt is made to enlarge our understanding of the analytical tools and to construct the body of the method. It includes some tools derived from various disciplines. Furthermore, this chapter contains some observations and comments on Bennabi's tools of analysis. The fourth chapter deals with the implementation of Bennabi's method in studying the evolution of the Islamic civilization per se. It is an attempt to test as well as to verify the practical capacities and effectiveness of his framework and analytical tools in approaching the real problems of decline and reconstruction of Islamic civilization. It concentrates on the phases of its psychosocial and historical-cultural evolution. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates certain solutions that can reform it, taking into consideration

the cultural and educational dimensions. This chapter also contains some observations and comments on Bennabi's evaluation of the development of Islamic civilization. In the conclusion an attempt is made to summarize and evaluate the outcome of the entire study. It includes the general characteristics of Bennabi's method, such as its multidimensionality, originality, creativity, comprehensiveness and being critical and realistic. Furthermore, the conclusion comprises some suggestions that can improve Bennabi's method in studying civilization.

In the course of this analysis, many problems and difficulties have posed certain burden on my side. However, the researcher would focus on two major problems in which serious and careful considerations were taken. Firstly, the type of sources and references utilized in this study. In fact, the research is mainly based on the close examination of the French works of Bennabi, followed by the Arabic and few available English translations. In fact, the exercise of translation is very difficult because of two reasons; firstly the concepts and terms which he utilizes and repeats frequently have multidimensional connotations. Many of them are related to different disciplines; such as history, sociology, psychology, culture and philosophy. Secondly, there is a difficulty in finding suitable translations for these terms and concepts. Therefore, in many cases the researcher writes the term in English attached to its transliteration to avoid any kind of confusion or bias. Another difficulty that bears heavily on this research is the multidimensional and integrative method. In this respect, the researcher deals with various disciplines and

approaches, which make the work more demanding. However, an attempt is made to avoid any kind of bias by following the indications and meanings of the concepts and terms throughout the entire works of Bennabi. In fact, research is made to disentangle every reference to his ideas not only within his works but also in any other works that can provide assistance. Therefore, the reader would note that in the study of every concept, the researcher attempts to refer to the different places and contexts in which this concept may be used. However, the researcher acknowledges that any bias that may flow from this work is inevitable. Therefore, one lets Bennabi whenever the context allowed it speak for himself. In addition, I tried to keep my paraphrasing down and size the number of quotations in order to provide a chance for the reader to examine the originality and effectiveness of Bennabi's ideas.