

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## CHAPTER ONE

# MALIK BENNABI'S LIFE<sup>1</sup> AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO ISLAMIC THOUGHT

### INTRODUCTION

Obviously, a comprehensive study of the ideas and events in the historical context cannot be achieved properly without a careful study of the individual life of the author who produced those ideas and witnessed those events. In fact, it is necessary to know the circumstances and the general factors that led to the formulation of the entire experience of the author in a given social context. On the basis of such a study one may be able to explain many points and ideas of interest in his personality and thought as well. In the present study an attempt is made to scrutinize the life and surroundings which influenced Bennabi's personality and thought. After all, the intellectual process is in its major part the final product of a socio-economic and political-cultural reality that imposes itself in a given moment of the historical evolution of society. This living reality imprints its traces on the personalities and relations of its people. In this respect, Bennabi is no exception.

---

<sup>1</sup>There is a serious shortage in the sources related to the study of Bennabi's life. Apart from his own autobiography and few other articles and interviews done by his friends and students one could not descry any academic works which are verified and validated by historical and scientific evidences. Therefore, the main source will be his autobiography which includes many of his personal views and in which a careful examination of the information and ideas is made. Additionally, the researcher will benefit from the work of Fawzia Bariun on *Malik Bennabi: His life and Theory of Civilization*.

Several of his ideas as well as personal characters were the direct product of his own environment and reality. Being Algerian, Bennabi witnessed two important events of crucial impact on his maturation process and development. Firstly, during his era the Muslim world in general and Algeria in particular had faced a severe colonial movement which attempted to remould the entire Islamic personality and culture. In this respect, Algerian identity was passing through a deep colonial transforming process which aimed at detaching this part of Islamic world from its Islamic cultural components and roots. Secondly, parallel to this process there was another project of decolonization. The latter, reflected the serious efforts of Algerians in recalling their original identity and regaining their independence. Being detectable of the cited living context would assist in understanding the momentous components, which played a major role in the formulation of Bennabi's personality and thought as well. Therefore, the discussion in the present chapter will be divided into two integral parts, the first is meant to examine the crucial stages of his life<sup>1</sup> and contributions to Islamic thought. Whereas, the second will focus on the surroundings and factors which influenced his intellectual maturation process<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Zaki, *Malik Bennabi and the Problems of Civilization: A Critical Analytical Study*, First. Ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Şafwah, 1992), p.38.

<sup>2</sup>The present chapter appeared to be slightly long. The rational behind this lies on two main points. First, the need for thorough studies on Bennabi's personality and thought. Second, the need for an analytical study of the influence of socio-cultural and socio-political living context of Bennabi as well as his intellectual and social maturation process.

# I- BENNABI'S LIFE AND STUDIES

## A- Birth and Family

Malik Bennabi<sup>1</sup> wrote in his *Mudhakkirāt* that he was born in 1905<sup>2</sup> in Constantine, Algeria<sup>3</sup>. His father al-Ḥaj ʿUmar bin ʿAbd al-Qādir bin Muṣṭafā, was an employer of low class status at the colonial administration in Tebessa, Algeria and his mother was a seamstress. Having the responsibility of managing the affairs of the family, she used to take special care of her only son and other three daughters. Additionally, his family was consisted of other members whose influence on his personality was obvious, such as his grandmother al-Ḥājjah Bāyah and her daughter al-Ḥājjah Zulaykhah<sup>4</sup>. Bennabi, was between three and four years old when his grandmother died without even having the chance to recognize her. However, he reported that she indirectly impressed his personality throughout the anecdotes narrated by her daughter Zulaykhah.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>For further details see, Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Fahmi Jad an, *The Foundations of Development According to the Muslim Thinkers in the Modern Arab World*, Third Ed. (Egypt: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988), p. 602.

<sup>3</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn: al-Ṭīf wa al-Ṭālib*, Trans. Marwan Qannawati, Vol. 1, (Dimashq: Maktabat al-Fikr, 1969) & Vol. 2. Trans. Malik Bennabi, Second. Ed. (Dimashq: Maktabat al-Fikr, 1984), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

In spite of the colonial milieu and critical situation of his family, Bennabi had enjoyed an Islamic atmosphere and gained certain Islamic education. In this respect, his family is considered conservative, in the sense that, it kept control of Islamic values especially with the pressure caused by the Western way of life. As a matter of fact, during Bennabi's early stages of life, the colonial authorities were ruling Algeria through the regulations and laws which were decreed for the purpose of eliminating the Algerian identity as well as its religious personality and mind set. In fact, one may claim that, within this colonial environment the relation between French authorities and Algerians was reflecting the real picture of masters and slaves. Bennabi described the situation of his family in the following passage: "my father remained for a period of time in Tebessa<sup>1</sup> without any job....in this new environment, in an extremely poor family I knew my grandmother. I heard many of her revealing narration and stories. In fact, they were about the righteous deeds and their reward and bad deeds and their punishments. Indeed, these stories unconsciously formulated my personality. Throughout them I knew that benediction is on the top of Islamic values."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the above-mentioned atmosphere did affect his personality. By his account, his family was similar to a school that preserves Islamic values and provides self-protection against the destructive practices of the colonial authorities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ali al-Qurayshi, *al-Tagyir al-Ijtima'i inda Malik Bennabi*, (al-Qahirah: al-Zahrā' li al-Ilām al-'Arabī, 1989), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., pp. 18-19.

In line with this, it is worth noting that during this stage of his maturation process, Bennabi was influenced by certain events. The first event that left an indelible impression on Bennabi's personality was that of his grand uncle's death. The latter, adopted him whilst he was still a child. Bennabi considered him as his father whose influence and education reflected their keen relation. By the death of his grand uncle, Bennabi obliged to return back to his home land in Tebessa. In his view, that was due to the poor financial situation of his uncle's wife who was unable to cover his expenses after the death of her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Another influential event occurred when he was between six and seven years old. According to him, his grandfather sought the remaining properties of their family and left Algeria migrating to Tripoli with the first wave of migration which occurred in 1908 and overrun many Algerian cities, such as Constantine and Telemcen. Bennabi asserted that this collective migration reflected the strict refusal of the colonial policies. Indeed, it represented the first seeds of the coming political turbulence and problems that dominated the life of the natives.<sup>2</sup> Apparently, this event caused certain changes not only on Bennabi's family but also on the general conditions of Algerians. In relation to this event his grandfather left a heavy debt on Bennabi's father. The next influential element which left a positive impact on his personality was that of the narrations of his

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

aunt. Indeed, it is noteworthy that during that period Bennabi, as member of this Muslim family, was able to get some knowledge of Islamic virtues through the fables narrated by his aunt al-Ḥājja Zulaykhah. Bennabi's sensitive feeling and self-motivation helped him to understand the essence of those simple but influential meanings phrased in those popular stories. As a matter of fact, Bennabi stated that "in this regard I would like to add that this woman was very skillful in telling stories."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, she was my first school of education where my "conscience was formulated."<sup>2</sup> In fact, those narrations contain deep meaning that could influence the behavior of people and even change their attitudes. In fact, some of them are derived from the stories of the companions of Prophet (S.Ā.W.) and the pious personalities of Islamic history. Indeed, they left their impacts on our consciousness and serve as bridges that link people to each other. As a matter of fact, those fables were well known all over the countryside through the market places and in the popular celebrations.

The fourth event, which influenced Bennabi's personality, was the social, political and ethical changes that occurred along with the colonial intervention on the educational and economic affairs of the natives. Bennabi argues that every thing changed dramatically in the Algerian milieu. He aptly stated that in the social arena Islamic traditional framework was degenerating....the original values and

---

<sup>1</sup> Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 16.

virtues of natives started diminishing.... all those changes had, beside their social and ethical influence, another psychological effect....Indeed, the entire life of natives and particularly that of youth was weariness and tedium. Hence, every one was searching for ways to run far away from the country<sup>1</sup> It is clearly evident that the social structure of the Algerian community passed through a critical situation that influenced not only the social life but also the original virtues of the Muslim personality. In a broad sense, this environment which contained many strange and sometimes destructive elements, would be the social womb in which our author had spent his early childhood and adolescence stage. Many of his attitudes, characters and ideas were moulded within this context.

## **B- CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE**

As already mentioned, Bennabi expended an important portion of his childhood in the mentioned milieu. It was a severe but beneficial period that reflected his new process of the intellectual integration into the social life as he became, little by little, more aware of the surroundings. In relation to the event of the death of his uncle, Bennabi started his first journey from Constantine heading to Tebessa. According to him, this trip was the first experience in a new environment with its new features and faces. He described<sup>2</sup> this change stating that

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp.17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., pp. 38-39.

“perhaps what I missed from my previous habits and praxis in the city of Bey (Constantine), had augmented the impact of that environment in my soul. Indeed, I should confess that Constantine remained captivating my attention in all my years of childhood. However, I should also say that Tebessa became itself another focal point of my enchantment. It added to me another psychological aspect....in this environment I had spent the essential portion of my childhood.”<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that Bennabi was aware of the influence of these two settings; that of Constantine, which revealed to him the life of a city and linked his consciousness to the civilizational dimension of human nature. In addition to that of Tebessa, which revealed to him the life of a desert and attached his soul to the virtues and features of Bedouin milieu. To express it in a slightly different way, one may say that from the very early days of Bennabi’s integration in the social life, he encountered two different cultures. The colonial authorities brought the sedentary culture of Constantine with its complicated life as well as its civilizational visage. Indeed, it was for him, a window to observe the life and culture of the settlers and their materialistic civilization. Whereas, the Bedouin culture of Tebessa with its simple and traditional life directed his attention to the original virtues of the natives. This set of virtues traced back their roots to the first coming of Islam to North Africa in fifteen years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (S.Ā.W.).

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 20.

Notwithstanding, Bennabi's family was of a low social status class; he was able to gain little pre- school education, as did other children of his age. He had an important opportunity to join the traditional institutions of education and benefit from original features. For instance, he was enrolled in a private program that was given to students of his age. Bennabi argues that throughout their well-organized programs and activities, he was able to learn some customs and mores related to Islamic traditional life.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Bennabi also mentioned the role of the storytellers in his informal education. He stated "that in Tebessa there was<sup>2</sup> another popular face that impressed me. In the days of public market I enjoyed going there and listen to the storyteller<sup>3</sup> who was speaking about the heroic stories of Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the Mosque in general also had played a crucial role in his informal education. According to him, it was the place for speculation and worship. Hence, he used to observe declamations of the speakers as well as joined the programs and prayers, particularly during Friday prayer.<sup>5</sup> By his account, this was an opportunity to see the Muslims assembling to perform their duties as well as to see the social relations among them.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Fawzia Bariun, *Malik Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization*, First. Ed, (Malaysia: Budaya Ilmu Sdn. Bhd, 1993), p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>They may be called storytellers and they use to tell anecdotes in almost every occasion or situation, particularly on the days of markets or celebration. For further details, see. Shawqi Dayf, *Al-Fann wa al-Madhhabiyyah fī al-Nathr al-'Arabī*, (Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Ma rifah, 1965), pp. 74-76.

<sup>4</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

Indeed, all these virtues left their positive impacts on his personality and relations. The next traditional institution, which played an important role in his education, was that of the Qur'ānic school. Here he used to memorize<sup>1</sup> some chapters of the Qur'ān and perhaps little of interpretation. He spent there four years but he realized that no considerable progress was made. Therefore, and after a family discussion, he left the school.

Despite his family's diminutive financial capacities, Bennabi was able to further his education. As a matter of fact, he recalled once how his mother was unable to pay the fees for his teacher of the Qur'ān. Therefore, she was obliged to give her wooden bed instead of the monthly tuition.<sup>2</sup> Shortly before his departure from the Qur'ānic school, Bennabi was sent to the sole French school in his town that was specialized in teaching children of the natives. Having passed a test, Bennabi joined the third level and due to the methods of teaching as well as the advanced channels utilized in training the children he made an important progress. Bennabi also mentioned the special care of his beloved teacher Madam Bill.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, comparing his performance with the previous Qur'ānic school, Bennabi was satisfied with his efforts and results which made him the first among his classmates.

---

<sup>1</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., pp. 19-24.

<sup>3</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., pp. 73-74.

Indeed, this new environment was for him, as *an indigene* a rare occasion to be face to face with other European children as well as to watch closely their life style. He reported that it was “for the first time at this level, I found myself in a direct contact with European children and their style of life.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, this new milieu placed him face to face with the formal education of the settlers. In this respect, one may underline the progress made by Bennabi in learning French language. His interest in this language and its cultural context will allow him later on to deal profoundly with the sources and references of Western civilization. With these steps Bennabi started in Tebessa his first stage in the world of education.

According to him, this environment was similar “to a cultural center where the generation of the past and its elements met with the generation of the future and its ingredients. Really, within this milieu his personality was developing and combining these different elements.”<sup>2</sup> By the year 1914, and due to certain circumstances related to the World War One, Bennabi found himself obliged to return to Constantine to further his study. He traveled once again to the house of his grand-uncle’s wife.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 28.

Fortunately, at this time, he met two new members of his family, his grandfather who just arrived from Tripoli<sup>1</sup> and his uncle Mahmud. Accordingly, Bennabi was able to observe the new changes occurred in the traditional culture. By his account, many things had changed on parallel with the presence of the settlers and impact of the international events. The change in the cultural, economic and political life was obvious. Bennabi stated that "the echo of these alterations could be seen in the dresses, ideas, behaviors and attitudes of people. This was a new stage in his maturation process."<sup>2</sup>

The first step of his next social integration was his communication with his grandfather, who enlarged his understanding of the cultural life in Constantine as well as the affairs of Muslims in Tripoli.<sup>3</sup> Through these discussions, Bennabi was able to know the real characteristics of the colonial movement and its objectives in Algeria. However, after a short stay in this new environment, Bennabi did not make any considerable progress in his study. Perhaps this was due to the freedom given to him by his granduncle's wife.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, he was sent back to Tebessa in order to be under the direct supervision of his family.

---

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Abd al-Salam al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization According To Malik Bennabi*, (Tunis: Tripoli: Libya: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1982), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 35.

It is significant to note that during the mentioned period, Bennabi came into contact with European and American culture through the films presented in cinemas. A short reference was provided about his contact with these films and their influence on his way of approaching things. He mentioned that he was dazzled by the cinema and particularly by the first American film entitled "The Wonders of New York"<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he was able to encounter the important events during the World War One. Indeed, he was impressed by its daily news that stroke the minds and feelings of people. He was concerned with the internal and external political and economic turbulence<sup>2</sup> which influenced the life of Algerians in general and that of his family in particular. By his account, two important conclusions were dropped from this experience; firstly he stated "I had regrettably left Constantine....But I had carried with me one momentous benefit. I was able to classify things and ideas in my mind and soul."<sup>3</sup> It is so far clear that this early development helped him to understand the surroundings that influenced the life of people. Secondly, he was also able to know the nature of the changes that impressed him in both environments that of Constantine and that of Tebessa.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., pp 72-73.

He described this point stating that “in Tebessa, I observed things from the simple corner of nature, but in Constantine I used to see things from the corner of society and civilization paraphrasing in this expression an Islamic and European context.”<sup>1</sup> Sociologically speaking, this social awareness of the surroundings would enrich his social experience as well as provide for him an occasion to deal directly with both civilizations and cultures. The European civilization presented by the new Western colonial movement and its style of life as opposed to Islamic life and civilization reflected in the Muslim heritage and ways of approaching things. In Tebessa, Bennabi made some progress in his study. After few years, he was able to pass the examination of primary school and won a loan to further his study in secondary school. By the year 1918, Bennabi returned to Constantine for the purpose of continuing his study in the school of *Sīdī al-Jīlī* which prepare students for a period of one to two years before qualifying them to join the high school or the institute of teachers or the program of the assistant doctor.<sup>2</sup>

## C- LIFE AND STUDY IN CONSTANTINE

By the year 1918, Bennabi joined his new school in Constantine. During this period he joined two important programs, that of al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Majīd, who was a teacher of Islamic studies in the same school, and that of Mister Martin

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

who was his French teacher. Bennabi cited that “al-Shaykh Abd al-Majid and Mister Martin acquainted me with two different approaches, which will influence later on my intellectual career,”<sup>1</sup> the approach of the traditional Islamic studies and the approach of the modern sciences. Additionally, Bennabi attended courses of Arabic Grammar in the Mosque. During this time, he noted the impact of Mister Martin in his attitude toward learning. According to him, Martin enriched his students with new vocabulary and implanted the taste and art of reading on their souls. Bennabi stated that Martin “stamped in my soul the taste of reading....thus, he provided for me a chance to read every book of Jules Verne<sup>2</sup> Pierr Loti<sup>3</sup> and Claude Farrer<sup>4</sup> and *the Veil and sword*.”<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, those early readings formulated in his soul a sense of continuous learning. Indeed, during this period he read two other important books, that of John Dewey’s *How we think* and *the social history of humanity*.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he continued his readings of some classical works, such as some verses of the poetry of al-Jāhili, al-Amawī and al-Abbāsī.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Jules Verne (1828-1905). A writer of many stories.

<sup>3</sup>Pierr Loti (1850-1823). A French writer of stories.

<sup>4</sup>Claude Farrer (1859-1923). A French writer of stories.

<sup>5</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>John Dewey (1885-1952). A French writer of stories.

Besides poetry of the al-Mahjar School (Lebanese migrated to America), he read “Jabrān (1883-19310) and Abu Madi (1883-1957)...Ḥafīz Ibrāhīm (1872-1932) and al-Rūṣāfī (1875-1945). Among Arabic prose writer, Bennabi most enjoyed and admired Muṣṭafā al-Manfalūṭī (1872-1924).”<sup>1</sup>In addition to the works of Isabelle Eberhardt’s (1877-1904)<sup>2</sup> *The Warm Shadow of Islam*, Eugen Jung’s *Islam Between the Whale and the Bear* and al-Kawākibi’s *Umm-al-Qurā*.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he read two other books which had impressed him, *The Moral Decline of the Western Policy in the East* by Aḥmad Rida<sup>4</sup> and *Risālah al-Tawḥīd* by Muḥammad ‘Abduh. It is clear so far that these early readings had left their impacts not only on his way of thinking but also on his tendency and career as a Muslim thinker. They were similar to a bridge that attached his mind and soul with the generations of the past as well as helping him to understand his social context. On the other hand, and in his cultural orientation, his uncle Mahmud helped him to study several subjects, such as music and some other arts and esthetics. In fact, all these factors had contributed to his education and opened for him the new ways which enriched his experience and impressed his personality.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>She was a Russian ancestry and born in Geneva. She converted to Islam, married an Algerian and learned Arabic language.

<sup>3</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup>Aḥmad Rida (1859-1930). A writer born in Istanbul.

<sup>5</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 49.

By 1921\1922 Bennabi joined a high school called (Lycee Franco-Musuliman) for the first time as a resident student. Indeed, this stage was another important period in his education. In fact, he noted that this period was very significant because it allowed him to follow the changes that emerged in the post World War One. According to him, it was the period of international awakening and struggle against the settlers. During this period he met many students from various parts of Algeria, in addition to European students. He came into contact with some students of <sup>ع</sup>Abd al-Ḥamid Binbādis, the chief exponent of the Islamic movement of reform in Algeria during that time.

In 1925, Bennabi graduated with a high school certificate and in the same year, he planned to visit France for the purpose of securing his post- graduation future as well as to discover the world that he only read in the books. Together with his friend, they left for France for few days visit, eventually, this was his first trip outside Algeria. However, their visit did not last long due to certain financial problems as well as to the lack of experience. Back in Tebessa in 1925, Bennabi tried to find a job, which could secure his own expenses and assist his family. After several failed attempts, Bennabi decided to work as a judicial assistant in the Islamic court, but he was shocked by regulations which that impose strict rules on administrative positions before the age of twenty-two. Having received this negative response, he attempted to write applications to companies in Africa and

even that in France. Unfortunately, there was no reply, which made him undecided about his career. He described his feelings in this revealing passage:

*"I was obliged to remain jobless among the members of my family....I was unable to find a job because of my age. However, it was sad to learn that other members of Jewish community of Tebessa handling convenient jobs without any conditions."*<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, all these colonial policies, which disqualified the natives from getting their rights, were enlarging Bennabi's understanding of the Algerian situation and preparing him for a new career in his life. Few months later, Bennabi received an official letter from the judge of Tebessa offering him a job as an official employer in the court of Aflou in the region of Oran (western Algeria). In 1927, Bennabi joined his new post and spent almost one year. Eventually, this stage of his development was also important, it was a social experience that brought him face to face with the real life of the natives. He stated that "Aflou was similar to a school where I learnt to know the virtues of the natives whose personality was still intact. Certainly, this feature was familiar in other parts of Algeria before the intervention of the settlers."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 173.

In this new environment he spent his spare time in reading magazines<sup>1</sup> and discussing issues of reform with his friends. He reported that he was “the first one who brought the first issue of the magazine of *al-Shihab*<sup>2</sup> published by the reformists movement in Constantine.”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he attempted to awaken the natives and direct their attention to the danger of the settlers.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, his ideas helped many people to understand little by little the policies of the settlers in Algeria. In 1928, Bennabi returned to Tebessa after spending few days in Constantine where he attempted to meet Binbādis<sup>5</sup> who was advocating the idea of reform. After completing the period of his vacation, he was transferred from Afrou to another place. Due to certain problems pertinent to the new conditions of his work he resigned, the event, which obliged him to ask for another Job.<sup>6</sup> In his quest for a new job, Bennabi returned to Tebessa where he started a business with one of his family members and a third partner, unfortunately, the project was unsuccessful due to the effect of the economic crisis of 1929. This was the event that will convince him to continue his study in France.

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Qurayshi, *al-Taghīr*, Op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 183.

Fortunately, Bennabi's family decided to send him to France to further his graduate studies.<sup>1</sup>

## D- LIFE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE

In September 1930, Bennabi decided to join the School of Oriental Studies In France. During the period of his waiting for the examination of admission, he visited the Museum of Arts and Industries. According to him, this was the first direct contact with the fascinating material aspects of European civilization.

He started thinking on the aesthetic and artistic perspectives of that civilization which generated these wonderful products and objects. However, It was for him very difficult to combine between this materialistic civilization and the European colonial conscience. Moreover, he visited the office of the Parisian Branch of the Christian Youth Organization<sup>2</sup> and used to ask about its vision and programs. After long discussions, he decided to join the organization and contribute to its activities. As Muslim among other members whose belief was different, he felt anxious and spent a hard time before his final integration in this atmosphere. By his account, this moment represented the first moral and ethical

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Qurayshi, *al-Taghīr*, Op. cit., p. 34.

test, which challenged him in this new milieu.<sup>1</sup> Within this religious context, Bennabi was acquainted with many new ideas about Christianity as well as other issues of general concern, such as colonization. As a matter of fact, many activities and programs of the organization had impressed his spiritual life. According to him, his spiritual formation was integrated and his conscience was opened to the new problems which will dominate all his life.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the organization played a crucial role, not only in the moral feeding of his thought but also in opening for him the gate of a better understanding of the original roots of European civilization. To put in a slightly distinct way, Bennabi stated that the reason for his quick integration and understanding of the new values of western civilization was in its major part due to the important role of some programs of the organization. In fact, he used to visit the family compasses and to observe the simple life of people. These visits<sup>3</sup> assisted him to discover the essence of European life from within the Western context as such which was not manifested in the savage colonial massacre of the Algerians.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 42.

By his account, the organization put him face to face with the spiritual and moral dimension that he missed totally in the colonial frame.<sup>1</sup> Whereas, Bennabi was integrating, little by little in this new atmosphere, the School convoked him to sit for the examination of admission. According to him, his performance was acceptable, however, he was informed that he failed. In line with this, the director of the School explained to him that his endeavours to join the School are aimless. In this respect, Bennabi concluded that the “admittance in the School of The Oriental Studies does not expose, for an Algerian Muslim, to a scientific criterion but rather to a political standard.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it was a shock that abolished his hope in furthering his study in the field of oriental studies.<sup>3</sup> However, he was convinced by one of his friends from the organization to continue his study in sciences; subsequently, he joined the institute of electrical Engineering. In fact, this was the second event in France that influenced his personality and method of thinking. He was able in this new institute to acquaint himself with the scientific methodology and to understand Western civilization through the gate of sciences. The matter of the fact is that, Bennabi used to contact the Western civilization through two ways; that of sciences and that of religion. He described his view stating that “I commenced, in the new school, my works with a deep belief similar to that of a man who wanted to join a new religion.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.216.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Jafā iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 60.

This period was not only preparing me to join the school of electrical engineering, but also transformed radically my intellectual tendency. It breathed in my soul the love of knowledge. Indeed, the books of the father Morro did not only open for me the door of the new school, but also opened for me the gate of a new world where every thing was subjected to the exact standards of quantity and quality. Man in this view is seen through the standards of accuracy and observation....Indeed, I encountered once more the Western civilization through the gate of sciences, after I contacted it through the Chapter of the Christian Youth Organization.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after his registration, Bennabi started thinking in various matters related to his objectives and plans as a Muslim student from a colonized country. He became little by little aware of the Algerian problem in particular and that of the Muslim world in general. He was carrying the feeling of a man who shoulders all the sins and offenders of the society which searches to get rid of its misery and distress. He reported that he was to that society similar to a ram of ransoms feeling the ponderous of the responsibilities and the work needed to achieve the redress of the society through his study. Therefore, he stated "I intended to acquire knowledge ardently similar to some one who sees every thing, in his country, of ignorance and all sorts of degeneration and nobody could be the ram of ransom without thinking in any way that he is the savior who is sent to

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirat*, Op. cit., p. 219.

them....this was my feeling since I joined the new School”<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that the situation of the Islamic world and its critical state of decline and colonization had touched his heart. It was this feeling that led him to study the problems of Islamic civilization and to transfer his career to the study of the cultural and social affairs of the Islamic world.

On the other hand, Bennabi met one of his Algerian friends whose impact was profound on his intellectual career. That was Hammudah Bin al-Sā<sup>ḥ</sup>ī, a brilliant student of philosophy who joined the courses of Louis Massignon<sup>2</sup> In fact, the political, social, cultural and religious thought of Bennabi was enriched throughout the long series of discussions with his friend. Indeed, as Bennabi confessed, Bin al-Sā<sup>ḥ</sup>ī<sup>3</sup> was his teacher in the social and philosophical analysis of the civilizational problems. He described his feeling towards his friend saying:

“I am greatly indebted to Bin al-Sā<sup>ḥ</sup>ī in my career as a specialized author on the affairs of the Islamic World.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Massignon (1883-1962), a French orientalist. He was a specialist of mysticism and he taught in the Egyptian University in 1913 the subject of (the history of philosophical terminology).

<sup>3</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 236.

Another important event in Bennabi life during his stay in France was his marriage to a French lady who embraced Islam and named herself Khadijah. Indeed, she was another factor that provided for him a chance to see western civilization from another angle. Throughout the facilities provided by his wife, Bennabi was able to concentrate on his study and construct new relations with the new society and environment. Having entered the family life, Bennabi found a golden opportunity to discover the West from the roots of the life of the countryman and civilized man as well. In fact, his wife was acquainted with the characteristics of French society in particular and that of Western people in general. In this respect, one may admit that many of his ideas concerning civilization and culture were influenced by the impressions left by his wife. Indeed, she motivated him to study, evaluate and respond to the spirit of the social and cultural aspects of life in France.

As a matter of fact, Bennabi and Khadijah had no children, something that encouraged his family's attempts to persuade him to marry again. He was apparently, faithful to his wife; yet we found that he left her in France in the fifties, when he went to Egypt as a political refugee. "It seems that Bennabi was compelled to leave France after being imprisoned; and because his wife was suffering from a sever rheumatoid arthritis, he had to leave her in France something which must have been hard to him. He continued corresponding with her, and providing her with financial support when he secured his political asylum

in Egypt. When she died in the early seventies, Bennabi was informed by a painful telegram."<sup>1</sup>

It is so far obvious from the above discussion, that all these institutions; that of the Christian organization, that of the Engineering School and that of the new family had directed his attention towards the study of Western civilization in general and French life in particular. In line with this, Bennabi involved again in thinking on the problems of his society. It was during that period where Bennabi came into contact with the Parisian Latin Quarter, the place that renewed his liaison with the seething situation of Algeria and the Islamic world. It was within this frame where the idea of reform and revolution against the settlers took its way to the soul of the new generations of the Muslim youth in France and other parts of Algeria. It was a place where students from North Africa and other parts of the Muslim world met and discussed the issues of the renaissance. Many Algerian politicians and intellectuals contributed to the awareness of Algerians through the programs of this Quarter. Bennabi reported that, in this place he used to spread the ideas of reform, al-Wahabiyyah<sup>2</sup> and al-Maghribiyyah unity. According to him, all these names "reflected one single theme i.e., Islam."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in this

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>It is worth noting that Bennabi's support to this movement did not mean his involvement in its activities or adaptation of its vision. Rather, it was only viewed as one of the movements of the renaissance.

<sup>3</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 228.

Quarter<sup>1</sup> he strengthened his relation with the situation of his people. He reported that there was between him and his country a "strong moral and spiritual relation. Bennabi, continued demonstrating his ideas regarding reform, nationality and speaking openly against the settlers."<sup>2</sup> In line with this, he also involved in many other political and social activities, as we shall see. For instance, he joined the activities of al-Maghrib Students Association in Paris.

By 1932, he visited his family in Algeria, it was an important occasion to observe the movement of reform spreading its ideas in several parts of the countryside. He felt for the first time that his country due to the activities of the reformists started regaining its awareness. For instance, in his homeland he witnessed the construction of a school and a Mosque, in addition to the renovation of the Islamic youth club. He reported that many things had changed due to the force of the reform idea. In the same year, he returned back to France and during this time he refused to accept the invitation of the well-known orientalist; Professor Louis Massignon. According to him, this face represented the intellectual side of the colonial movement. In fact, Massignon was the government counselor for Islamic affairs. Due to this fact, Bennabi decided to ignore him, however, this decision would cost him and his family in Algeria trouble for a period of time. On the other hand, Bennabi was an active member in the Latin

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Qurayshi, *al-Tagyir*, Op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 226.

Quarter. Due to his efforts, lectures, articles and relations, he was known among the North African students as the Leader of al-Maghribiyyah unity. In addition, he attempted to establish the relation between the Christian organization and the association of al-Maghrib students in the Parisian Latin Quarter. Additionally, he constructed relations with many students from other colonized countries, such as China and Vietnam as well as European and Jew students. In fact, all these contacts were enriching his experience and influencing his personality and way of thinking on the issues of the colonized countries. Moreover, during this period, he met Mahatma Ghandi (1869-1948) who visited Paris in 1932 and delivered a talk on the issue of colonization in the Latin Quarter. In 1934, he received the striking news of the death of his mother and by the year 1935, he graduated as an electrical engineer. During this period he attempted to travel to al-Ṭaif or al-Ḥijaz in order to contact the reformists of his time. As a matter of fact, he was concerned with the idea of al-Wahhabiyyah<sup>1</sup> and he considered it as an original appeal to Islamic society. On the other hand, he was planning to travel to Egypt to further his study at al-Azhar University as well as Afghanistan or Italy. Unfortunately, all his attempts and plans were unsuccessful. By the year 1939, he returned to Algeria, but due to certain economic problems related to the (W. W.T.), he left for France once again. He reported on 22 September 1939 he said:

---

<sup>1</sup>It is an Islamic movement founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). He is considered as an Islamic reformist whose central objective was to call people to go back to the original teaching of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

*Oh impious land! you dispense the  
foreigners and you bequeath your progeny to  
crave. I will never recur to you if you do not  
regain your liberty. <sup>1</sup>*

In his return to France, he commenced his intellectual career as an author on the affairs of Islamic World and problems of civilization . During this period, he contacted "many researchers, thinkers, journalists and orientalisists"<sup>2</sup> in order to open the dialogue on the issues of civilization and culture. In addition, he worked as a journalist in the magazine entitled *Le mond* and started writing his books, as we shall see.

## **E- LIFE AND ACTIVITIES IN EGYPT**

By the year 1956, Bennabi traveled to Egypt as a political refugee. This exile was another station in his life and intellectual career. Several reasons were behind his trip to Egypt. Firstly, he was, ever since his enrollment in his study in France, attempting to find out a place for establishing intellectual relations with other scholars who could share with him the mission of reform. Secondly, he thought that Egypt represents one of the important centers of knowledge and intellectual activities in the Muslim world.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup>Anwar al-Jundi, *Thought and Contemporary Culture In North Africa*, (al-Qahirah: al-Dar Al-Qaumiyyah li al-Tiba ah wa al-Nashr, 1965), p. 67.

Thirdly, Egypt was the first "Arab county to denounce the French occupation of Algeria. Naser and his government had openly supported the Algerian rebellion since its first stage, and Egypt, therefore, became the refuge of the Algerian nationalists."<sup>1</sup> One may admit that this period was for him a chance to speculate on the problems of the Muslim world and human civilization as well. During this time, he published few of his works that played an important role on the Algerian awakening and also made him known to the Egyptian intellectual movement. He published his book: *S.O.S Algeria* which was translated into Arabic in 1957 under the title of *Al-Najdah li al-Jazā'ir*. In addition, Bennabi published his book *Afro-Asiatism* which was translated into Arabic as well as he managed to translate other works, such as *The Conditions of The Renaissance, Islam In History and Society, The Qur'anic Phenomenon and Speculations on the Arab Society*. Additionally, he established in Egypt an intellectual circle, which captivated the attention of many scholars and thinkers of his time. It was similar to a center for debate that allowed him to explain his approach and method of thinking. Due to his intellectual activities, he was nominated as a "counselor for Islamic conference in Egypt and he participated in many seminars and conferences. In addition, he participated in the meetings of the Islamic research academy. During his stay in Cairo he was able to improve his spoken and written Arabic

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p.90.

language.”<sup>1</sup> In 1959, he visited other countries, such as Syria and Lebanon where he met some other scholars and opened the dialogue with other intellectuals. Furthermore, he delivered talks in the cultural centers and Universities. It was for him an occasion to present his ideas to the Arab world. Moreover, “he participated in many seminars in Cairo, al-Hijaz, Kuwait and Tripoli.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, this period of his life was full of intellectual activities and contributions to the Algerian awakening and reform in particular. During this period he published other books and translated some others into Arabic as well as wrote his book the *Ideological Conflict in the Colonized Countries* in Arabic language.

## F- RETURN TO ALGERIA

Having spent a couple of years in Egypt, Bennabi, after one year of the liberation of his country, decided to return back home. In 1963, he arrived in Algeria with an intention to advocate the ideas of the renaissance among Algerians. Actually, one of the reasons behind his stay in Cairo after the liberation of his country was because, as al-Ba thi cited: “his conflict with Bin Bella (The first leader of Algeria after independence).”<sup>3</sup> After his arrival, he continued his

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibrahim al Ba thi, *Contemporary Muslim Personalities*, Vol. 2, (al-Qahirah, Dar al-Sha b), p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>Anwar al-Jundi, *Ālām al-Qarn al-Rābi‘ al-Hijrī: A lam al-Da‘wah wa al-Fikr*, Vol.1, (al-Qahirah: Makfābat al-Anjlū al-Miṣriyyah), pp. 144-145.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Ba thi, *Contemporary Islamic*, Op. cit., p. 191.

intellectual activities through delivering lectures and spreading his ideas and method of thinking. In 1965, he was appointed as the Director of Higher Studies in the Ministry of National Education and was relatively “close to the Algerian leadership, who called upon him several times for consultation.”<sup>1</sup> In 1967, Bennabi resigned from his post in order to concentrate on the intellectual activities. During this period, he organized an intellectual circle for the purpose of opening dialogue with scholars, intellectuals and young students. Participants were from many countries, such as “the Arabian Maghrib, France and Italy.”<sup>2</sup> Sometimes later the circle was transferred into the well known “International Islamic Conference” held every year in Algeria. By the year 1971, he went for pilgrimage with his Algerian wife and three daughters. In this occasion “Bennabi traveled for about seven months, in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia. He met with friends and students, possibly anticipating<sup>3</sup> that this would be his last outside Algeria. In Lebanon, he registered a legal document in the court of Tripoli in which he gave his friend, <sup>ع</sup>Umar Misiqāwī, total authority over his books in the event of his death.”<sup>4</sup> One year later, Bennabi died in October 1973. He was 68 years old and left a rich intellectual wealth which stands for examination and evaluation.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Zaki, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., pp. 235-306.

<sup>4</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 101.

## **II- BENNABI'S PERSONALITY AND THOUGHT: AN OVERVIEW ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT**

After being acquainted with the stages of the development of Bennabi's life and intellectual career, it is worth accentuating the social context, which played an important role in the formulation of his personality and thought as well. Living in various cultures and varying in different phases of development, Bennabi was influenced by several factors and events that left their traces not only in his personality but also in his thought and way of thinking. It is of merit to examine these effectual elements which will help us to explain many points of interest in his works. In fact, there were several factors that inscribed his life and thought. However, in the present element an attempt is made to underline the most important points which influence his life.

### **A- THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

It is appropriate that an attempt should be made to account for the political, economic and social changes that occurred during Bennabi's period. As a

matter of fact, Bennabi himself provided certain important information about these changes and their impact on his personality and thought. Indeed, in various sections of his *Mudhakkirāt*, he attempted to underline the dramatic changes which occurred in Algeria during his time. These changes reflected the critical moments of the development of the Algerian personality and history. In fact, there was a remolding communal cultural process that aspired towards creating a French personality and culture within the Algerian cultural world. Indeed, "Bennabi lived through this period of colonial oppression and personally experienced the traumatic as well as the rewarding aspects of colonial power and culture."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Bennabi was able to draw a vivid picture of this process.

To delineate the nature and importance of these changes in political, economic and social structure, it is significant to sketch the general picture of that living social context. Apparently, Bennabi cited in his *Mudhakkirāt*, that Algeria in the pre-colonial era had enjoyed a prolific state of development. In fact, life and culture of the natives, with whom he spent his childhood and adolescence stages, was original and Islamic in nature. The people had enjoyed an original religious milieu, political stability, economic progress, cultural creativity and social harmony. As a matter of fact, Algeria retained a political freedom and sovereignty over its territories. This sovereignty could be seen in various forms; such as the

---

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Kamal Hassan, Reflections On Some of The Ideas and Thoughts of Malik Bennabi, A paper presented at International Seminar On Malik Bennabi, 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> September, Institute of Advanced Studies (IPT), (University Malaya: Berita Publishing, 1991), p. 2.

treaties and conventions signed with the European States in general and France in particular.

Bennabi remarked the importance of those original features of the society and their role in protecting the essence of the Algerian identity. By his account, those features played a leading role in the education of the generations. On the other hand, the major Algerian races (Arabs and Berbers) were co-existing in harmony and full cooperation under the guidance of Islam<sup>1</sup> For instance, in the domain of education, Algeria knew an efficacious development. As a matter of fact, almost every Algerian was able to read and to write. General Valze mentioned that "all Algerians know how to read and to write. There were two schools in each village."<sup>2</sup> In addition to the self-efforts made by the natives to provide education. "In every district the natives were willingly managing to teach their children the Qur'an, prophetic tradition and Arabic language."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, "primary and secondary education flourished in Algeria."<sup>4</sup> Many other data and numbers reflected the growth of education and culture, for instance, "there were in the capital Algiers 2920 houses, 148 public fountains and schools for boys and

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., pp. 235-306.

<sup>2</sup>Nevill Barbour, *A Survey of North West Africa: The Maghrib*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) p. 239.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Assli Masam, *Algeria and The Crusades Expeditions*, First Ed. (Bayrut: Dar al-Nafa is, 1980), p. 165.

<sup>4</sup>Alf Andrew Heggoy, Arab Education In Colonial Algeria, *Journal of African Studies*, VII, second edition, Summer 1975, p. 149.

girls.”<sup>1</sup> Specifically, “Constantine was renowned for both material and intellectual activities, with 35 mosque, 7 school and 90 Qur’ānic schools teaching some 1350 boys.”<sup>2</sup> Telemcen was another important place of education. “It contains 50 Qur’ānic schools and 2 schools”<sup>3</sup> However, during the colonial era this state of development was changed. Various modifications occurred, on parallel with the intervention of the colonialists in the Algerian politics and society. In fact, the colonial intervention in the affairs of the natives led to the deformation of the society, politics, education and economics. As a matter of fact, this transposing process reflected the real intention and reasons for the entire colonial movement in Algeria. Eventually, French settlement in Algeria was not a mere coincidence as some scholars and historians had claimed<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, it was a systematic and institutionalized process. In fact, the religious, geographical, political, economic, educational high standard of Algeria during that period played a crucial role in the European settlement. As a matter of fact, 132 years of colonization could dramatically reveal the French intention and will of annihilating the Algerian culture and personality as well.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Jeynell Morel, *Algeria, The Topography and History, Political, Social and Natural of French Algeria*, (London: Nathaniel Cooke, Milford House, Strand, 1845), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Alsa M. Harik, *The Civilization Mission of France In Algeria The Schooling of A Native Population, In The politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya*, (Ohio State Center for International Studies: Africa Program, Athens, Ohio, 1984), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians*, trans. Alan C.M Ross, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> See, Bourdieu, *A Survey of North Africa*, Op. cit., p. 213 & Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 23.

A very systematic plan for disfiguring its cultural originality was ready-made and implemented by French intelligentsia and military troops. This negative transforming process passed through three integral stages, firstly the conquest and resistance stage (1830 to 1871), it was featured by a continuous conflict between the invaders and the natives who demonstrated a deep commitment to the local tradition and culture. During this period, the settlers were faced with "a fierce and sustained native resistance that took nearly two decades to overcome."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "the French invasion of Algeria was met with a strong resistance movement."<sup>2</sup> In the course of this stage the colonial policy was directed towards establishing a stable administration which could assist in the process of confiscating the Muslim lands and properties. These policies contributed to the demoralization of the natives and disorganization of the social structure. An observer has noted that "such land policies (reached) for the heart of society because they (contributed) to the dislocation of the whole series of relations and practices of production and property rights that (were) the basis of social life."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, an organized plan was ready-made to depopulate Algerian inhabitants through pushing them to migrate or leave their properties and in the same time elevate the rate of the settlers and their possessions and properties.

---

<sup>1</sup>John P. Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized*, (Colorado, Wertview press, Boulder, 1986), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Kamal Hassan, *Reflections*, Op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Gilson, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society In The Modern Arab World*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 145.

Bennabi underlined the dangerous effect of migration on the Algerian life and culture. By his account, "this movement of migration reflected the total refusal of natives to co-exist with the settlers. This rejection was the first seed of the coming instability in the political arena"<sup>1</sup> Besides, these social changes, the French Second Republic declared that Algeria is a part of France. To visualize this policy several instruments were applied, among them, the policy of assimilation, blood shed massacre, haphazard confiscation of lands, spreading of illnesses and ignorance, sever conditions of life, malnutrition and lack of food and huge migration of people outside of the country. As a matter of fact, "hunger was the grimmest reality in Algeria through most of the colonization period."<sup>2</sup>

In the second stage, the colonial authorities continued their transposing policies. However, from the part of the natives there was an attitude of silence and unwillingly submission. During this period, one may underline the fact that "Muslim population had been reduced from just 3 million in 1830 to just over two million forty years later. Algeria was pacified, but its population had been figuratively drawn and quartered. For the next half century the country was to be a land of silence for the Muslims politically, economically and socially."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Morell, *Algeria The Topography*, Op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

In fact, this situation indicates clearly the colonial project. As a matter of fact, the settlers instead of thinking of removing this grievous hardship which caused harm and temper to people, they imposed a new law entitled "code de L'indigene" (a law enforced only upon the natives). Essentially, this code was framed to demarcate the boundaries and range of activities of the natives, "its forty-one unconscionable provisions include: an Algerian Muslim was forbidden to speak against France and its government; Algerians were prohibited from keeping stray animals for more than twenty-four hours; natives were not allowed to become schoolteachers without proper authorization nor were they permitted to travel from one place to another without a visaed permit."<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the natives were obliged to pay taxes; such as *Impots* Arabs, head taxes, harvest taxes and herd taxes. Moreover, "there was also a series of compulsory labor obligations, such as fire watches in forests, grasshopper drives, official transport and public service taxes."<sup>2</sup> In line with this, hard punishments were ready-made in the case of deranging the implementation of these regulations. On the other hand, the French plan was directed towards Christianizing the natives. An author has noted that there was a systematic scheme for "fortifying the

---

<sup>1</sup>Morell, *Algeria The Topography*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent Confer, *France and Algeria: The Problem of Civil and Political Reform, 1870-1920*, (Syracuse Press, 1966), p. 22.

catholicity of the Muslim institution. It did so in complementary way.”<sup>1</sup> Despite of all these endeavours of savage obliteration against the people, the Algerians were able to preserve their personality and identity, as we shall discuss. Subsequently, the society plunged into the third stage of its strive and confrontation with the colonial authorities. The third stage started from 1919 till 1962, during this period, many changes in various aspects of the natives’ life took place. The settlers had constructed thousands of institutions and centers for the purpose of securing their needs and services. For instance, schools, hospitals, markets, churches, museums and other economic, social educational and public welfare institutions were constructed. On the contrary, the natives were running totally in a different situation. As a matter of fact, there was a process of destroying the Mosques, closing the schools, diminishing of hospitals, eliminating the Islamic culture and Arabic language from the official institutions. Obviously, this policy was basically aspiring towards “exercising full authority over the colony of Algeria, and to stand against the natives trying to gain equality.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the case of the religious teaching and education the regulations were very sever. “Even though religion was considered -theoretically- a free matter; the religious education was almost unacceptable....Therefore the Qur’anic schools were limited and *al- Zāwiyah*<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Grunebaum , Gustave E. von, *Modern Islam: The Search For Cultural Identity*, (New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1964), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Harik, *The Civilization Mission*, Op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>It was an organizational body in the traditional society. Its role was directed towards dealing with the political, educational and economic affairs of the people.

were controlled.”<sup>1</sup> The matter of the truth, was as Mustafa Lachraf stated in the following passage:

*“Education in Algeria was limited, during the first three decades or more of occupation, to the children of the notables....he quoted one of the highest French functionaries, Eugene Formestroux, who wrote ‘we have neglected the natives’ education, until it deteriorated to a level far lower than that which existed before the conquest.”*<sup>2</sup>

In a nutshell, while the Algerian community was disintegrating, the French community was developing and dominating. Pierre Bourdieu described this situation in a revealing passage. He stated that “the two societies were placed in a relation superior to inferior, and separated by institutions or by spontaneous self-defense. The European society, a minority exercising the right of a majority in the social, economic and political spheres, is attempting, through racist ideology, to transform these privileges into law.”<sup>3</sup> Little by little this dichotomy in the culture and social structure led to the displacement of the natives. Subsequently, their social position and role was gradually belittled.

---

<sup>1</sup>Sharel Robeer Ajiroll, *Contemporary History of Algeria*, Trans. Aisa Asfor, (Bayrut: Paris: Manshurat Awidat, 1982), p.106.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Bourdieu, *The Algerians*, Op. cit., p. 133.

## B- THE ALGERIAN AWAKENING

There is no doubt that the above-mentioned changes had influenced Bennabi's personality and thought. However, still much importance is attached to the influence of another element, that is the impact of the Algerian awakening manifested in its intellectual response to the colonial process. Eventually, Bennabi reported that this Algerian awakening was one of the crucial factors that led to the process of decolonization. Being conscious of the changes, he seemed to be close to the movement of reform in its educational, political and social dimensions. He described how the movement of awakening had impressed him through its vision and activities. He mentioned several factors, which contributed, effectively in the development of his personality and thought as we shall discuss.

Firstly, according to him Islam was the dynamic context, which preserved the Algerian personality and culture from its total disintegration. Islam was the cementing force, which protected the identity and heritage of the people. In spite of the French will to dissolve and pulverize the culture, history and society, Islam was able to organize the capacities and efforts of Algerians to get rid of its influence. Bennabi argues that Islam stood as a *sui generis* factor against all endeavours of deIslamizing the people and devaluing the culture. John Entelis has aptly pointed out that "the powerful appeal of Islam, which throughout the

centuries had provided individual Algerians with a sense of collective identity, was mobilized anew in the 1920s and 1930s as an instrument for cultural assertiveness and nationalist self-worth.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, as Bennabi put it Islam was “the sole idea which was qualified to liberate the Islamic world from its crisis.”<sup>2</sup>

The second factor conducing in his awakening was the external events which influenced the internal affairs of the natives. For instance, the World War One had changed the international socio-political order and provided new grounds for the colonized countries to strive for independence. During this war Paris had obliged all able-men from Algeria and other colonies to defend France against its enemies. “Nearly 200,000 Algerian Muslims served France loyally during the war and about 25,000 lost their lives.”<sup>3</sup> This event introduced to the Algerians a new example of the bad intention of the French authorities. They witnessed another example of buffaloing their rights, it was one of the distressful shocks which awakened many Algerians and reactivated them in order to relieve the obfuscate and mist from their mind and culture. The third element contributed to the Algerian awakening in general and that of Bennabi in particular was the emergence of an intellectual elite with a great promise to the Algerian matter. It was a group of educated elite with a nationalistic and Islamic background and

---

<sup>1</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 35.

identity. It was in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s where the Algerian educated elite played a crucial role in the development of their situation.

In spite of all kinds of differences and variations in the visions, approaches and instruments used for change, the agreement was made among these elite about the general objective of their movement. It was agreed that the Algerians, whatsoever their differences and trends, should strive in order to regain their independence and freedom. In this respect, Bennabi aptly perceived that the leaders of reform "were accorded upon one important point. It was the will of movement in order to reform the Algerian society."<sup>1</sup>

The fourth factor contributed to the natives revival was that of the Algerian *Emigrees*. Many of them migrated individually and collectively to Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, France and other places. For instance, "by 1923, there were about 70,000 Algerian workers employed in France's major cities. Many of these laborers experienced severe hardship common to poorly paid workers in industrial countries. The workers' economic and social grievances quickly gave way to political demands."<sup>2</sup> This movement of migration gained, on one hand, support and experience for the Algerians and on the other hand, it gave an international reputation to the Algerian problem. It

---

<sup>1</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Enelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 36.

connected intellectually and ideologically the Algerian society with other parts of the Islamic world. As a matter of fact, many Algerian scholars and elite had graduated from the higher institutions of education in many Islamic countries. Bariun argues that "it was during the first two decades of this century that a number of graduates from several Arab educational centers began to return to Algeria"<sup>1</sup>Moreover, many of them benefited from the ideas of the renaissance, which were spread by the famous reformists of that time. Al-Qurayshi pointed out that this movement of migration had benefited the Algerian matter in the social and political arena. Indeed, it had strengthened the feeling of freedom and independence in the soul of Algerians.<sup>2</sup>

## C- THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS

The Algerian politicians and scholars realized, by the turn of the century, that the effective interaction and cooperation among the natives was one of the important factors of success of the common struggle against the settlers. This interaction led to the emergence of a strong national media and press, which played an important role in the Algerian awakening. Indeed, "Algerian intellectuals felt the need for an indigenous Algerian press."<sup>3</sup> This would facilitate the

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Qurayshi, *Al-Tagyir*, Op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 44.

implementation of the ideas and plans of the renaissance. Several attempts had emerged to respond to the needs and requirements of the movement of reform. As a matter of fact, an important bilingual press had been developing since the early years of the twentieth century. "Dabbouz mentions a number of early newspapers as Kawāḳib Afriqiya of Maḥmūd Kaḥḥūl in 1907, the short-lived al-Jazā'ir of ʿUmar Rāsim in 1908, and al-Faruq of ʿUmar Ibn Qaddūr in 1913."<sup>1</sup> Amīr Khālīd (1875-1936)<sup>2</sup> edited a very significant bilingual French -Arabic newspaper entitled al-Iqdam. Furthermore, "between 1926 and 1938 Abū al-Yaqāzan published eight newspapers, all of which defended Islam and the right of Algeria and Morocco to develop their own identity."<sup>3</sup> More than this, one of the systematic plan of the national press was established by the association of the Algerian Muslim Scholars. The Association in its projects issued some publications; such as al- Sunnah issued in 1933, al-Shariʿah lived for few days and suspended, Al-Ṣirāṭ al-Sawīy (1933-1934), al-Bāsaʿir the first (1935-1939) and al-Bāsaʿir the second (1947-1956). In fact, those newspapers were behind the sound movement of awakening during that period. Moreover, some other types of cultural and educational activities had been appearing continuously. For example, publishing books, establishing associations, constructing schools, building Mosques, organizing seminars and promoting

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> He is the grand son of the well known national hero, Amir Abd al-Qadir. He was born in Damascus and educated in Syria and France as well. He had contributed politically and militarily to the Algerian matter.

<sup>3</sup> Baruin, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 46.

political parties and groups. Indeed, all those attempts had motivated and activated the movement of the renaissance of the Algerians.

#### **D- BENNABI'S INVOLVEMENT ON THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

Searching in Bennabi profile shows his concern on the political and religious activities in various stages of his development. Certainly, he was not an official member in any of the intellectual associations or political organizations, but it was obvious that he contributed to the development of their activities. Historically speaking, there were three important trends that could be assigned as the driving-force behind the political, social and religious movement that advocated the ideas of the renaissance in its total picture. The radical anti- colonial nationalism, liberal assimilationism and Islamic reformism.

## 1- RADICAL ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONALISM

One of the important political parties in the Algerian movement of liberation was The North African Star<sup>1</sup>; its chief exponent was Messali Hāj. The party was the result of continuous struggle of the groups of peasants and proletariats who worked under the domination of the settlers. Its appeal to the people aimed at the total liberation and defend of "the material, moral and social interests of North African Muslim workers."<sup>2</sup> The organization was dissolved after a period of time and its leader was imprisoned for his anti-colonial activities. In 1935, he was released and after a period of self-exile in Switzerland he contacted the well-known intellectual Shakib Arsalan, whose writings on the matters of nationalism<sup>3</sup> and Arabism had influenced Messali. In his debate with Arsalan, he was persuaded to adopt a more revolutionary approach, instead of his old Marxism. In his return to Algeria, he founded a new party named (A.P.P). It was more nationalistic with an attempt to fuse the social values with Islamic teachings. It was "concerned on Islam not only for itself but also as a means of mobilizing the

---

<sup>1</sup>It was called *L'étoile nord-Africain* and established in Paris in 1926. The chief exponent of this trend was Messali Haj (1898-1977). He was born in Telemcen, an old Islamic town. He married a French woman who was of Marxist doctrine. He joined the School of the Oriental Languages in Paris and he studied in the University of Bordeaux. See, W. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership*, (M.I.T Press, 1969), p. 38. See, Joan Gillespie, *Algeria, Rebellion and Revolution*, (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>For further details regarding his view of the renaissance see, Arsalan Shakib, *Our Decline and Its Causes*, Sixth Ed. Trans. M. A. Shakoor, (Pakistan: Kashmiri Bazar Lahore, 1976). pp. 1-129.

proletariat and other traditional strata in the collective struggle for independence of Algeria.”<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, in order to understand Messali's position and reputation in the Algerian history he should be viewed in light of later development of the philosophy of his party. Cleveland noticed that: “there was a significant transformation in Messali's national perspective from militant socialism to militant Islam.”<sup>2</sup> Historically, it is significant to underline the role of this party in the growth of the Algerian affair in general and that of the workers in particular. The achievements made by this party cannot be belittled. However, the party was dissolved because of certain causes. Entelis provides a general picture of the development of the party in the following passage:

*“The combination of all these factors- an inarticulate ideology, a cult of personality readership, organizational split between overt and covert operations, political divisions involving Messali and the centralists, and the growing impatience of a revolutionary generation more predisposed to using force and violence made the conventional political discourse within the French constitutional framework outdated and irrelevant.”*<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>William Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and The Complain for Islamic Nationalism*, (University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 48.

In fact, what interests us in the project of this party is Bennabi's involvement in its activities. As it was mentioned above, he was not an official member of the party, however, he did involve in certain activities during his stay in France. He met with Messali and observed closely his charter and vision. Being in touch with the movement, Bennabi concluded that Messali's way of approaching the Algerian problem and his attitude towards the people was not appropriate and it may destroy the hope of the people. An observer has expressed Bennabi's view in the following passage:

*Bennabi saw with consternation his own country's drift toward noisy demonstrations....He looked upon it as barren and harmful for it drove unschooled minds to indulge in imaginary struggle and dramatic heroics....Far from accelerating the march of the people towards the revolution, the political parties actually delayed it till after the war. Indeed, Bennabi believed Messali was responsible for many of the pitfalls faced by the country after its independence.*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Islam In History and Society*, Trans. Asma Rachid, (Malaysia: Berita Studies in Contemporary Thought, 1993), pp. 12-13. See also Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 246.

## 2- LIBERAL ASSIMILATIONISTS

The second important party in the political arena was that of the liberal Assimilationist.<sup>1</sup> It was one of the Algerian voices against the French policy of slaving the natives. The main objective of this party was "to secure equality for Muslims, thereby giving them a better chance to participate in all aspects of French metropolitan society."<sup>2</sup> However, the party did not ask for the total independence, but attempted to raise the voice of the natives and their representation in the election. It focused on the idea of assimilation into the French society.

The above-mentioned movement was practically represented in the personality of Abbas Ferhat, an example of a westernized Algerian intellectual. "The earliest organizational manifestation of this tendency was found in the Movement of Young Algerians that brought together, in the early 1900s, a small group of well-educated, middle class *evolees* (civilized man), working toward Franco-Algerian equality. This orientation took more concert shape in 1934 when *evolee* representatives in elected Algerian bodies, including Abbas, formed the

---

<sup>1</sup>The idea of this party was represented in the personality and work of Ferhat Abbas. He was born in Constantine in 1899. He was a westernized middle class Evolué (Civilized). He went to a French high school in Constantine and then to the University of Algiers following his military service in the French Army during World War I. He divorced his Muslim wife and married a divorced Pied- Noir (French woman). See Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, p.37.

Federation *des Elus* (Federation of Elected Muslims)".<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Entelis has noticed that "this group argues for Muslim integration into French society-including full citizenship without having to enunciate one's personal status as a Muslim. Among other objectives were representation in the French parliament, administrative equality in which Muslims could exercise real power, equality in military and civil service, and the suppression of discriminatory legislation directed against Muslims."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, one of the crucial concepts in the ideology of the party was the concept of rejection of the Algerian nation. In other words, the tendency of annihilating the Algerian identity and history. This idea was best demonstrated in the approach of Ferhat Abbas who wrote an article published in 1936 in his periodical, *Entente*, in which he rejected the existence of an Algerian nation in history. The article was entitled, *France, That's Myself*. He stated "had I discovered the Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist and I would not blush as if I had committed a crime.....However, I will not die for the Algerian nation, because it does not exist. I have not found it. I have examined History, I questioned the living and the dead, I visited cemeteries; nobody spoke to me about it. I then turned to the Qur'an and I sought for solitary verse forbidding a Muslim from integrating himself with a non-Muslim nation. I did not find that either. One

---

<sup>1</sup> See, Entelis, *Algeria*, pp. 37.38.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

can not build on the wind.”<sup>1</sup> This view was not generally accepted, neither by the French authorities nor by the Algerian people. As a matter of fact, this tendency was one of the important factors, which led the organization to its degeneration. The chairman of the Association of the Algerian Scholars Binbadis had strictly refused this proposal. He published an article in his newspaper *al-Shihāb* stating that "history had taught us that the Muslim people of Algeria were created like all the others. They have their history, illustrated by noble deeds; they have their religious unity and their language; they have their culture, their customs, and their habits with all that is good and bad in them. This Muslim population is not France; it can not be France, it does not want to be France.....It does not seek to incorporate itself in France.”<sup>2</sup> In line with this, Bennabi was also following the activities of this party. In fact, he was piqued because of the concept of assimilation introduced by the party. He said in his *Mudhakkirāt* "I read the article...It exasperated me. Undoubtedly it was also a harmful shock for the entire country”<sup>3</sup> Responding to this provocative statement, Bennabi wrote an article, which reflected his wholehearted feeling. Unfortunately, the article was not published due to certain political and ideological reasons.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962*, (England: Middlesex, penguin Book, 1977), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Gallagher, *The United State and North Africa: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361.

### 3- THE ASSOCIATION OF THE ALGERIAN CLERGY

It is obvious that the above mentioned parties reflected the liberal and the social dimension of the Algerian national movement. Whereas, the Association of the Algerian clergy represented the religious side of the movement. The idea of the Association traced back its roots to the year 1913. During that time Benbadis (1889- 1940)<sup>1</sup> met al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi<sup>2</sup> in al- Madinah to discuss the issue of reform in Algerian. This discussion resulted in the establishment of the Association on 1931. The Latter aimed at providing an educational framework for the cultural, social and political construction of the Algerian society. The philosophy of the Association and its strategy was well demonstrated in the following statement of Benbādīs:

*"The critical situation of Muslims cannot be reformed unless their scholars are reformed....their scholars cannot be reformed unless their education is reformed....and their education cannot be reformed unless it traces back its origin and*

---

<sup>1</sup>He is Abd al-Hamid Benbādīs son of Mohammed. He was born in 1889 in Constantine, Algeria of Berber origin. His Family was well grounded in knowledge. In thirteen years old he memorized the Qur'ān. By the year 1908 he traveled to Tunisia to further his studies at al-Zaytuna Mosque University. In 1912 he graduated with a higher religious degree. He was nominated as the leader of the Association till his death on April, 1940. He was well grounded in Arabic and religious sciences.

<sup>2</sup>He was born in Constantine and studied in Algeria, Egypt, Mecca and al-Madinah. He was one of the well known Algerian reformists. He was one of the founders of the Association of the Algerian clergy. He was also the successor of Benbādīs in leading the association. Furthermore, he was elected as a member in the Arabic Academy in both Cairo and Damascus.

*roots to the teaching of the Prophet and his guidance."*<sup>1</sup>

It is so far clear in the body of the above passage that the entire philosophy of the association was founded on the basis of the Islamic teachings. It was aspiring towards "providing a warmer religious experience than is to be found in an austere mosque, a world where divine, or supernatural power reaches down to the people through faith-healers, midwives and sellers of charms so that people respond by worshipping, meditating or just dancing round tombs, shrines, relics, or rocks"<sup>2</sup>

Entelis has described this role in the following paragraph:

*"The scholars' affirmation of Islamic religion and Arabic language had greater impact upon other Algerian nationalists than other groups. Although Benbadis was concerned with the problem of Islam, his contribution to the development of nationalist opposition increased the importance of Islam as part of Algerian identity."*<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See, Benbādīs, *al-Shihāb*, vol. 11, October 1934, Algeria, pp. 481, 483.

<sup>2</sup>Wilfred Knapp, *North West Africa: A Political and Economic Survey*, Third. ed. (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, Op. cit., p. 45.

It is reasonable and far from any kind of exaggeration to say that the project of the Association was directed towards constructing man himself in his personality and way of thinking. All their activities, plans and works were pointed to achieve this end. In line with this, Bennabi was convinced by the vision of the Association. However, he differed with them in few matters related to the strategies and ways of approaching the problems.

In a particular case, Bennabi criticized the association for being involved in the political fanfare of 1936. Bennabi "had hailed the holding of the Algerian Muslim Congress in June 1936, for they he regarded it as the greatest victory scored by the people over itself and over the forces that were determined to keep it in the mud. However, instead of guarding this victory and continuing the struggle on the native soil, it was decided to transfer it to the land of the adversary, where it dissipated its force in empty fanfare."<sup>1</sup> At the final analysis one should admit that all those groups had consciously contributed to the Algerian awakening and liberation as well. The above mentioned parties paved the way for the emergence of a new generation of revolutionaries who were against the settlers. This movement was called (F.L.N) and it was behind the Algerian revolution of liberation in 1954, it took the revolutionary approach against the French rule.

---

<sup>1</sup>Asma Rashid, in introduction to Malik Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, pp. 14-15.

The party believed that independence and liberation of the country could be achieved through military struggle. Its vision was that "national independence was the primary condition for Muslim Algerians both to regain their honor and to advance socially and economically, and that violence was the only way that the French colonial system could be destroyed in Algeria."<sup>1</sup> By the year 1954 the party directed the efforts and activities of the society towards the revolution of liberation which was achieved by 1962.

#### **E- BENNABI'S VIEW ON THE ALGERIAN PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION**

One may admit that this was a general exposition on the social living context which influenced Bennabi's personality and thought in certain stages of his maturation process. Indeed, he was concerned with the issues of reform and colonization. According to him, the process of decolonization was a heavy responsibility that required deep understanding of the crisis and the ways of approaching it. To attain an understanding of his view on the national movement of decolonization, it is worth determining the basic concepts which he utilized to deal with the issue.

---

<sup>1</sup>William B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954-1968*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), p. 93.

Firstly, Bennabi is of the view that the process of colonization itself reflected an echo and a result of the susceptibility and sentence of the Muslim society to accept other cultures and ideologies. In other words, Bennabi "believed that the root-cause of the malaise which immobilized the Muslim Ummah and perpetuated its stagnation was to be found within the culture of the Muslims themselves."<sup>1</sup> Bennabi coined a term to explain the state of weakness and humiliation in the Muslim culture and personality. He used the term "Al-Qābiliyyah li al-Istī'mār"<sup>2</sup> to denote the psychological and intellectual state that leads to the spirit of imitation and adaptation of the ideas and ideologies of others without taking into consideration one's personality and identity. This concept reflected the self-weakness in the Muslim consciousness. It is a weakness that stemmed from the inner of the Muslim who accepted unconsciously and consciously the intervention of the settlers in his internal and personal affairs. Bennabi described this psychological situation stating that colonization is not a mere work of some politicians, but it is resulted from the human soul itself which accepted the domination and servility of the settlers.

---

<sup>1</sup>Kamal Hassan, *Reflections*, Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Bariun writes that "colonisability" means: "the Muslims failure to scientifically define goals and means to renaissance, and the tendency to accumulation of material commodities" Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 171. As a matter of fact, what Bariun mentions here is not colonisability per se but its results and manifestations. Therefore, colonisability is the concept used by Bennabi to explain the nature of the crisis of the Muslim personality and culture. It is the state of susceptibility and readiness of the Muslim mind, soul, culture to be colonized and dominated by others as well as it reflects the loss of all sorts of creativity and efficacy.

He further argues that people cannot liberate themselves from the settlers and their troops unless they free their souls from the inner-grips and forces, which formulated the spirit of colonisability. It is this weakness which paved the way for the settlers to dominate over the life and affairs of the people.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Bennabi was of the view that "the battle against Colonialism must be fought not only on the political and military fronts but also on the ideological front, and as a first step, one must try to comprehend the twin phenomenon of colonisability and colonialism."<sup>2</sup>

It is so far clear that colonisability is a pre-condition for colonization. In other words, the later, was not only the work of the settlers but also the susceptibility of the colonized people themselves. Therefore, any attempt to solve the problem of colonization should, in the first step, address the issue colonisability. However, it worth is noting that this psycho-cultural spirit is of individual and social impact. Therefore, one should be aware of the means and channels of curing this problem. A prominent Muslim scholar from the Malay Muslim world has aptly noted that "the curative process or the 'colonisability' of the individual and the colonisability of the socio-political and economic systems are not necessarily the same."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Shurūṭ*, Op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Asma Rashid, Op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Kamal Hassan, *Reflections*, Op. cit., p. 13.

This important remark would imply that there can be two types of colonisability, the individual and the social one. Hence, the issue of colonisability should be addressed taking into account these two levels, the fact which requires a comprehensive or linkage method. In fact, this is what Bennabi's has developed and utilized to analyze the problem of Islamic civilization and society. Secondly, Bennabi emphasized the originality of the Algerian movement of awakening. He argues that this movement, even all kinds of external influence, had preserved its Algerian nature and reflected the struggle of the people against all kinds of annihilation. According to him, there was a trend which attempted to trace back the origin and roots of the Algerian movement of awakening to some eastern sources; such as that of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī<sup>1</sup> undermining its local nature and originality. In fact, the Algerian movement of reform, and maybe this fact was true in all other movements in the Muslim world, was characterized by its continuity and originality.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Bennabi asserted that any evaluation of the political movement in the Muslim society should focus on ethics and values. He reported, in his *Memoirs* that his political approach is based on the fact that the social system cannot be established properly in the absence of an ethical system<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, this is a crucial

---

<sup>1</sup>Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897), a Muslim reformist who contributed to the regeneration of Islamic renaissance. He died under house arrest in Istanbul.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 305.

element in any evaluation because ethics also happens to be at the very core of the civilizational mission of Islam”<sup>1</sup> Having applied these principles, Bennabi classified the political trends within the movement of reform. By his account, it is right that the national movement had noble objectives, but it had not any plan for action and it did not limit its means and instruments. Therefore, it was sometimes developing in a sense that negatively influences its originality.<sup>2</sup> In his analysis, Bennabi discussed the nature of the problems that occurred during the colonial era and determined their impacts on the Algerian society and on the Muslim culture and personality. Firstly Bennabi underlined the role of Amīr Khalid in the Algerian awakening. According to him, “Amīr Khalid was an important personality, who played a crucial role in the Algerian history, not because he was the grandson of the great Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir but because he represented the voice of the Algerians.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout the magazine of *al-Iqdām*, Bennabi was able to follow his ideas and contributions. In this regard, he stated that “*al-Iqdām* had put in my mind the precise political limitations. It pictured for us the dramatic tragedy and crisis faced by the Algerian laborers....It disgraced and strongly condemned the colonial administration and its miscarriage of the people.

---

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Towards Actualizing Islamic Ethical and Educational Principles In Malaysian Society: Some Critical Observations*, First Ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Al-Hikmah Sdn. Bhd., 1996), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 376.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

In fact, the rates and data regarding the confiscated lands and the numbers of the Algerians who were not receiving education was astonishing. Additionally, this magazine opened our mind to understand the colonial policy.”<sup>1</sup> More than this, Amīr Khalid continued his efforts and activities against the French rule in Algeria in all phases of his struggle. Bennabi instanced that he established, with some other Algerians who will betray him later on, the association of NAS and he published a magazine called “The Nation”. Secondly, regarding his view on the political movement, Bennabi stated that our politicians, even all their important efforts, were unaware of the real problem of the Muslim world. He noticed that the spirit of selfishness and demagoguery dominated some Algerian elite. For instance, he noted that by the year 1932 the star of Messali appeared in France as one of the Algerian politicians of that time. Bennabi believed that the interference of Messali on the Algerian affair has led to certain fatal problems after the independence of the country.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Bennabi was mindful of the role and importance of the reformists and their movement. He considered that this movement which was represented by the Algerian Muslim scholars was the closest movement to the heart and soul of the Algerians. Because their method was based on the Qur’ānic principle related to the change of the self as a prior condition for the change of society. He “thought that the movement of scholars remained in the precedence of the Algerian awakening and they were one of its dynamic

---

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 264.

factors.”<sup>1</sup>That is to say, the role of the scholars was influential on the Algerian personality. Their vision and philosophy of reform influenced Bennabi himself. In summation this was the living context in which the maturation process of Bennabi took place. In fact, through this general exposition one may observe the real factors and circumstances, which played an influential role in the orientation of his thought and intellectual direction. “His ideas and thought would have to be understood within the context of the cruel French colonial domination of Algeria, the agonising experience of the Algerian revolution which followed it and the misery of the third world countries generally and the Muslim world in particular in facing the multi-dimensional challenges of post- independence existence.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt*, Op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Kamal Hassan, *Reflections*, Op. cit., p. 2.

### **III- BENNABI'S CONTRIBUTION TO ISLAMIC THOUGHT**

The intellectual and social profile of Bennabi demonstrated earlier provided us an important insight on his experience and career as a Muslim thinker. However, it is worth introducing another valuable contribution to contemporary Islamic thought, namely his intellectual works consisting of several books and articles. Indeed, this contribution had covered a very important and sensitive range of issues and concepts that includes various aspects of Islamic civilization, culture and society. In fact, Bennabi's contribution to Islamic thought falls under a very interesting concept i.e., 'The Problems of Civilization'.

Bennabi deemed it appropriate to consider civilization as the basic unit of analysis, instead of other partial problems; such as political, economic and social matters. According to him, it is worth studying our problems on the basis of a civilizational vision and method that could help in understanding the different aspects of the problems. Rather than having a partial approach. Indeed, "Bennabi's works presents us with a complexity of thought in which various levels of psychological, sociological, cultural, economic and political analysis both overlap and converge in one focal theme, i.e. civilization as a primary unit of social

analysis”<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that this civilizational frame of reference represents one of his “perceptions of the problems of underdevelopment, of individuals as well as societies, as essentially a civilizational issue above all else. This is the theme that runs through most of his works and unifies them.”<sup>2</sup> Having considered civilization as the essential unit of analysis, one may classify his works on the basis of this criterion. In the context of the next element an attempt is made to mention his contributions as well as to classify them.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society: An Investigation Into The Sociological Thought of Malik Bennabi*, Unpublished master thesis, International Islamic University. Malaysia, 1994, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Kamal Hassan, *Reflections*, Op. cit., p. 6.

## A- BENNABI'S INTELLECTUAL WORKS

In fact, Bennabi wrote many books and published several articles in various issues and topics. A list of his published books is given bellow:

N.	TITLE OF BOOK	YEAR OF WRITING\ PUBLICAT ION	PLACE OF PUBLICATION
1	<i>Al- zāhirah al-Qur'āniyya</i>	1946\ n.d.	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
2	<i>Labbaik (A story)</i>	1947\ n.d.	Not found
3	<i>Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah</i>	1948\ 1979	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
4	<i>Wijhat al-Ālam al-Islāmī</i>	1954\ 1979	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
5	<i>Al-Fikrah al-Afriqiyya al-Asiyawiyya fī Daw' i Mu'tamar Bandung</i>	1956\ 1981	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
6	<i>Ḥadīth fī al-Binā' al-Jadīd</i>	1957\ n.d	Bayrūt\ al-Maktabat al-Āsriyyah
7	<i>Al-Najdah li al-Jazā'ir</i>	1957\ n.d.	Not found
8	<i>Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah</i>	1959\ 1984	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
9	<i>Al-Širā' al-Fikrī fī al-Bilād al-Mustāmarah</i>	1960\ 1978	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
10	<i>Fikrāt Kumanwilth Islāmī</i>	1960\ 1971	al-Qahirah\ Maktabat Āmmār

N.	TITLE OF BOOK	YEAR OF WRITING\ PUBLICATION	PLACE OF PUBLICATION
11	<i>Ta'ammulāt fī al-Mujtamā' al-ʿArabī</i>	1961\1985	Dimashq\Dār al-Fikr
12	<i>Fī Mahāb al-Maʿrakah</i>	1961\1972	Dimashq\Dār al-Fikr
13	<i>Mīlād Mujtamā': shabkat al-ʿAlāqāt al-Ijtimāʿiyyah</i>	1962\1985	Dimashq\Dār al-Fikr
14	<i>ʿĀfāq Jazāʾiriyyah</i>	1964\1971	al-Qahirah\Maktābat ʿĀmmār
15	<i>Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn (Vol. 1).</i>	1965\1969	Dimashq\Maktābat al-fikr
16	<i>Intāj al-Mustashriqīn wa ʾĀthāruhū fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī</i>	1969\1970	al-Qahirah\Maktābat ʿĀmmār
17	<i>Mudhakkirāt Shāhid li al-Qarn (Vol. 2)</i>	1970\1970	Dimashq\Maktābat al-Fikr
18	<i>Mushkilat al-Afkār fī al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī</i>	1971\1971	al-Qahirah\Maktābat ʿĀmmār
19	<i>Al-Muslim fī ʿĀlam al-Iqtisād</i>	1972\1979	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr
20	<i>Dawr al-Muslim wa Risālatuhū fī al-Thuluth al-Akhīr Min al-Qarn al-Ishrīn</i>	1972\1978	Dimashq\ Dār-al-fikr
21	<i>Bayna al-Rashād wa al-Tayh</i>	1973\1978	Dimashq\Dār al-Fikr

N.	TITLE OF BOOK	YEAR OF WRITING\ PUBLICAT ION	PLACE OF PUBLICATION
22	<i>Qadāyā Kubrā</i>	\1991	Dimashq\Dār al-Fikr
23	<i>Min Ajl al- Taghyīr</i>	\1996	Dimashq\ Dār al-Fikr

**List of Bennabi's Books**

Furthermore, there are few other unpublished works, such as:

- 1- The Third volume of *Mudhakkirāt in Arabic*
- 2- Meetings of Damascus (several Lectures delivered in Damascus).
- 3- Meetings of thinking (several lectures delivered in his house in 1967).
- 4- The Second Volume of birth of a society.<sup>1</sup> In addition to his review of some classical works, such as *The Algerian Step, comments on al-Ṭabarī's history* and *Ibn Khaldūn's introduction*. Additionally, few of his works are translated into Persian, Urdu, and Turkish languages<sup>2</sup> and Malay language.

## **B- CLASSIFICATION OF BENNABI'S WORKS**

It is worth classifying his works on the basis of the concept of civilization as the basic unit of analysis of the problems of Islamic society. Taking into account this point his works can be classified into the following categories or dimensions:

<sup>1</sup> Al-Jafā iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

**\* First Category: Autobiography and social Context of his study of civilization**

1- The memoirs of A Century's Witness.

**\* Second Category: The Framework and Paradigm for Approaching the Problems of Civilization**

1- The Qur'ānic Phenomenon.

2- The Problem of Ideas In The Muslim World.

3- Birth of A Society: Social Relations network.

4- The Problem of Culture.

5- Muslim in the Realm of Economics.

6- The Role of The Muslim and His Message In The Last Third of The Twentieth Century.

**\* Third Category: Diagnosis of the Crisis of Islamic Civilization**

1- Islam in History and Society.

2- The Intellectual Conflict In Colonized Countries.

3- In the Whirlwind of the Battle.

4- The Work of the Orientalists and Its Impact On the Muslim Thought.

5- Between Clear Direction and Aimless Wandering.

**\* Fourth Category: Projects for the Reconstruction of Civilization**

1- The Conditions of The Renaissance.

2- The Afro-Asiatism

3- Discourse On the New Construction.

- 4- S.O.S Algeria.
- 5- The Idea of An Islamic Commonwealth.
- 6- Speculations on the Arabic Society.
- 7- Algerian Perspectives.
- 8- Toward the Change. Indeed, one should admit the fact that this division is not sharp and final. In fact, one may find in the books classified under one category many reference to the ideas given under another one. Therefore, we base this classification on the general topic which runs through the vein of each book regardless of the various reference that may be found referring to other topics or concepts found in details in another book. On the other hand, it is significant to say that every book of Bennabi may contain several ideas and references that run through the vein of several topics and concepts; such as culture, civilization, ethics, politics, colonization, colonisibility, world view, economics, Qur'ānic phenomenon, conditions of the renaissance, vocation of the Islamic world, revolution, birth of a society, man, ideas, orientalism, method, reform, vision and mission of the Islamic society.

# **I- OBSERVATIONS ON BENNABI'S PERSONALITY AND THOUGHT**

Bringing around, in the second chapter of the present work, a general picture of Bennabi's personality and contributions to contemporary Islamic thought would assist in determining his position and role in the entire movement of contemporary renaissance. It is appreciable to examine at what extent is Bennabi's personality and thought conceived by Muslim scholars and writers. As a matter of fact, the views on his thought vary from one author to another depending on the background and angle of analysis. Surveying the opinions on Bennabi's thought and personality shows that there are different tendencies. However, the manifold tendencies are the political-ideological view and the critical scientific view.

With regard to the first view, one may include many opinions that fall under the political or ideological trend. Its basic foundation is vested in an emotional reaction which hides certain political motivations and objectives. According to this view, Bennabi, in his forced exile to Egypt as a political refugee, was led to establish certain relations with the political authorities whose intention was to disfigure the picture of Islamic movement and isolate it from the social and political arena, particularly at the time of Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir. In other words,

Bennabi, had inadvertently strengthened the secular and anti- Islamic authorities whose view of Islam and its implementation was unfavorable. More than this, the political and religious sensitive context during the colonial era had prepared an atmosphere of an ideological conflict that led some authors to jump to the conclusion that Bennabi was supporting in his writings and views the political authorities against the Islamic movement.

On the other hand, some other authors are of the view that Bennabi was adjoined to the circle of the westernized Muslim intellectuals. As a Muslim writer who spent many years in France, Bennabi was considered as a French writer who converted to Islam. As a matter of fact, during his stay in Cairo as a political refugee and when the Arabic translation of his book *The Conditions of the Renaissance* was published, an article was written in *al-Ūrwat al-Wuthqā* to review one of Bennabi's books under the title of *Mustaqbal al-Islam*. In this article a reference was given underlining Bennabi's name as a "French author, who resided in North Africa and converted to Islam and defended it strongly."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, this kind of classification played an important role in distorting Bennabi's reputation and thought in certain intellectual circles. Indeed, such a

---

<sup>1</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Al-Širāʿ al-Fikrī fī al-Bilād al-Mustaʿmārah*, (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), p. 52.

misinformation was deliberated, aimed at damaging his reputation in Egypt<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, one may introduce an example of this ideological view in the writings of Ghāzī al-Tawbah. In his book *Contemporary Islamic thought: Study and Evaluation*, Ghazi attempted to evaluate some contemporary works of the Muslim scholars including Bennabi. "The objectives of Ghāzī al-Tawbah to Bennabi's view appears more personal than objective...The most provocative issue to al-Tawbah was Bennabi's view and connection with the Egyptian governmental authorities, from which al-Tawbah, as a Muslim Brother, was barred. He criticized Bennabi's description of the Egyptian coup as the beginning of the construction of the Muslim world...and quoted him on other occasion as having favored Jamāl Abd al-Nāṣir and his revolution. Al-Tawbah went so far as to claim that Bennabi had written only in French and had known no Arabic until he came to Egypt in 1956."<sup>2</sup>

Appraising Bennabi's personality and thought in this diminishing manner reflected the ideological tendency of some scholars who intended to belittle and derogate the general reputation of Bennabi. The deficiency of this view in general and the view of al-Tawbah in particular is seen in the following points. Firstly, It is clear through the different chapters of al-Tawbah's work that he was emotionally defending the ideas of his movement. As a member of the brethren movement

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op., cit., p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

established by Hassan al-Banna, al-Tawbah appeared to be more subjective. It is almost evident that he was influenced by the existing context which reflected the struggle of the movement against the Egyptian authorities. This situation made his view on the Muslim scholars who attempted to examine the situation objectively unfounded and sometimes unjustified. For instance, he criticized harshly many reformists, but when he analyzed al-Banna's personality and views, he was unable to provide an objective judgment. "When he came to one of those personalities he did not implement his critical method. It was the personality of al-Banna...he did not give any comment or remark...thus, this book is a study and evaluation of all personalities except that of al-Banna."<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, he found it useful to celebrate and eulogize him without any question or review. Indeed, this approach of evaluation lacked the scientific objectivity and the sound evidential analysis. In fact, the matter is not a mere attempt to manufacture evidences to show the shortcomings of this author and the accomplishments of another one. Rather, it is after all a matter of evaluating objectively the Muslim thinkers in order to benefit from their positive contributions and to avoid their negative influence on Islamic thought. Indeed, the attempt of al-Tawbah was beneficial in certain of its aspects; such as providing important historical information about some Muslim scholars. However, one should mention that it was prejudicial in other aspects; such as belittling certain

---

<sup>1</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, p. 94.

important ideas which can be of great value. Secondly, al-Tawbah did not criticize Bannabi's personality and thought on the basis of a thorough and deep reading of all his works and ideas. The matter of the fact is that, he focused only on few of Bannabi's political writings and response to the challenges which faced the Muslim society during his stay in Egypt. His main concentration was on the following books: *afro-Asiatisme*, *Speculations on the Arabic society*, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*<sup>1</sup>, *The Idea of an Islamic Commonwealth and Algerian Perspectives*. In fact, one should note that the nature of those books was protective and mainly defending the position of the Islamic view. Defensive, in the sense that Bannabi attempted to direct the Muslim activities towards self-assessment of the situation and use of original sources of the Muslim society to overcome the problems of decline.

Additionally, the context of those books were of civilizational, political and ideological nature and dealt with certain problems. However, al-Tawbah dealt only with certain immediate responses of Bannabi in certain hot issues. In other words, he did not examine his method and vision. In fact, al-Tawbah was not objective because he did not look comprehensively at the entire thought of Bannabi in order to differentiate between the deep and original foundations of Bannabi's thought and his actual responses to the situations. Furthermore, al-Tawbah was selective in his approach. It is obvious that he quoted Bannabi's ideas in the places which

---

<sup>1</sup>It is evident that al-Tawbah was very selective in his approach.

supported his arguments and he left many other ideas which can help him in providing an objective evaluation of the author. More than this, al-Tawbah did not recall the living context of Bennabi's views and ideas, the fact which made his evaluation appeared to be subjective.

Thirdly, al-Tawbah did not mention the latest views of Bennabi's on the same issues which he discussed. In other words, he did not follow the development of Bennabi's ideas and views from one period to another. For example, Bennabi in his latest works had revised many of his previous ideas and views concerning events, people and concepts. Those revisions could be seen in the following books: *Birth of a society*, *The Problem of ideas in the Muslim world*, *Muslim in the realm of economics*, *the Role and message of the Muslim in the last third of the Twentieth century*.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there are what one may call the critical constructive view. It focuses on the objective demonstration of Bennabi's thought and personality. According to this view Bennabi represents a model of a thinker who acquainted himself with the tools of a universal view of civilization. His thought resulted from a deep speculation on the Qur'ān and the human experience. He is fully aware of the nature of the social reality. Bennabi possesses throughout these features a unique character which distinct him from other scholars.

---

<sup>1</sup>Saying this does not mean that Bennabi is free from mistakes and weaknesses. Rather, it is a call for an objective evaluation of his personality and works.

Throughout his understanding of the process of the renaissance, Bennabi appeared to be a system builder. He benefited from various tools provided by several human sciences. Additionally, he looked at the issues of Muslim society in a comprehensive way. Indeed, he was able to analyze the social phenomenon taking into consideration its spiritual and material dimensions.<sup>1</sup> A contemporary Muslim Malay scholar has aptly drawn a picture of Bennabi's position in contemporary Islamic thought stating that:

*"Having a universal mind characteristics of the traditional (classical) Muslim thinkers like al-Kindī, al-Farābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazzālī, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn, Malik Bennabi could never have become a specialist in the modern sense of the scholar who knows a lot of about very, very few things. In an age when formally trained scientists and engineers generally seldom venture beyond the narrow confines of their fields of specialization, Malik Bennabi was a distinguished exception. In Islamic intellectual culture of the golden era, Bennabi's universal intellectual tendencies would, of course, have been the norm rather than an exception."*<sup>2</sup>

Actually, this constructive view would help the researchers to objectively examine Bennabi's thought and personality. Throughout introducing Bennabi as an Islamic thinker as well as analyzing his thought in its methodological and

---

<sup>1</sup>Wajih Kawtharānī, *Risālat al-Jihād*, Monthly Journal, (Libya: 1990), p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Osman Bakar, *Malik Bennabi's Philosophy of Sciences*, Op. cit., p. 1.

epistemological aspects, the reader may find many points of interest and benefit in his personality. Indeed, within the context of this view many efforts were made to evaluate Bennabi's thought and personality.

As a matter of fact, one may include few important studies and works which reflected mature attempts; such as the works presented on the "International seminar on Malik Bennabi" which was held in Malaysia and organized by University Malay and other institutions, the work of Fawzia Bariun on: *Malik Bennabi: His life and Theory of Civilization*, the work of Ali al-Qurayshi: *Social Change according to Malik Bennabi* and the work of Sulayman al-Khatib on: *Philosophy of Civilization According to Malik Bennabi*. Indeed, contemporary Islamic intellectual movement should reexamine Bennabi's thought particularly his method of analysis. Certainly, there will be shortcomings and weaknesses in his method, but one should find out a way to benefit from his ideas and tools of analysis.