

THESIS ABSTRACT

RELIGION AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION:

A STUDY ON THE THOUGHT OF MALIK BENNABI (1905-1973)

Religion is a significant theme in Malik Bennabi's thought (1905-73). Nevertheless, his efforts about religion was not only on aspects of Theology and Revealed Knowledge, but more so on social analytical aspects in giving broad meaning to Social Science; History, Social Psychology, and Social Phenomenology. The research from this thesis focuses on his thought about religion as a substantial part of human nature and its role in building civilization and its cycle, and in the evolving process of man's dynamic culture.

According to Malik Bennabi, religion is a substantial part of everyman and that religious belief is a universal phenomenon. This phenomenon has made it possible for sociological science to define man as "*homo religiosus*" (religious animal). He gives the opinion, too, that in the future religion would not only be without limits, but that it will go on forever as it is because knowledge will never be able to play its role on the levels of perfection.

In Malik Bennabi's theory, religion is a catalyst for all kinds of civilizations. In order to prove his theory, he gives an example of the history of the rise of great civilizations in the world, especially on Islamic civilization and

European civilization. Indeed, he also laid great interest and later made conclusions that "Communist civilization" which is anti-religion was also born from religious thought. Malik Bennabi also opines that the dynamic course of civilizational history is the biological process of relatedness between individuals in a community and religious thought within certain time frames. Based on the mode of the said biological relationships, he proposes that every civilization evolves within an environment that goes through three phases, namely; (i) pre-civilization phase; (ii) civilization phase which covers three phases as follows: spiritual phase; rational phase; and instinctual phase; and lastly, (iii) post-civilization. Based on these concepts about the civilizational cycle such as above-mentioned, he also opines that under whatever chaos of the Muslim world in the post-civilization phase and the weakness of reformation movements and modernism, the phenomenon of the shift of the centre of Islamic gravity from the Mediterranean basin to Asia had certainly transpired. Meanwhile, within the same time frame, Western civilization also had shifted to the instinctual phase or the point of destruction.

Under his theory about culture, Malik Bennabi declares that culture, as the core and sole of civilization, is a product of interaction between individuals with the "realm of things" and the "realm of ideas" within a certain specific time and space. Because of this, a certain culture possesses a place and characteristics, particularly innately appropriate to itself that bears certain personal norms and standards that are applied in certain communities in their attempts to evaluate or validate their realm of things and ideas. On the bases of the said concepts, he proposes that in order that a certain civilization could develop, a community

should not gather or imbibe unto itself whatever is extraneous of foreign cultures, because they carry values which are different from the local values. According to Malik Bennabi, within the capacities of developing dynamic cultures, two kinds of methodological reformation are needed: the negative reformation, which is the effort to cleanse a culture from whatever traditions and cultures that are weak and not dynamic and the positive reformation, which provides direction to evolving of dynamic cultures. According to him, the post-civilization phase of the Islamic community until now is still warped in negative cultural heritage and that colonisations by Western nations over the Islamic world is a phenomenon of “colonised capability”; having all the cultural conditions that gives rise for them to be eventually colonised. Under the cultural concept of Malik Bennabi, religion plays a significant role in developing cultural dynamism. According to him, religion also plays a role as a catalyst for important cultural features, aside from playing a role of providing moral principles; also aesthetic, logical endeavour and finally, technological.