

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
AND CIVILIZATION
(ISTAC)

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN THE MUSLIM
AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES
AN EXAMINATION OF MALIK BENVABI'S
SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE
M.A. DEGREE

BY
SULAIMAN MOHAMMED HUSSEIN

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
MAY 1998



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
مَدِينَةُ بَنْدَرِ بَيْتِيْنِ اِسْلَامِيَّةٍ اِنْجَارَا بِنَجَسَا مَلَقِيَّةِنَا

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PREFACE

It was while taking a course at International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in the History of Greek Thought and the Rise of Scholariticism that this thesis took root. In the course, the elements of human structure were discussed, among which socio-cultural was one, the nature of culture and how it evolves into a civilization. As a student in the field of Islamic Civilization, this presented a fine opportunity to pursue my intrest in Malek Bennabi as one of the modern scholars who dealt with the problem of culture and civilization in the Muslim and Third World countries.

My objectives were to read through the body of his works and examine the scholarly legacy he left in his wake. The main incentive behind my intrest lies in an earlier intention to study one of his concepts. Consequently the developments at ISTAC Led me to work on his concept of culture.

I wish to express my immense gratitude and thanks to Prof. Dr. Alparslan Acikgenc, my supervisor who has been very sincere to me, given me full freedom of meeting him at my convenience, and who has indefatigably and patiently corrected this thesis chapter after chapter until the end. I owe him a debt of eternal gratitude for his perspectives, instruction, and advice which contributed tremendously to my thinking. Because of him I have achieved my endeavour to complete my thesis.

Specially, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Paul Lettinck at the Institute who has patiently read and edited my English and French. I am also grateful for his corrections and advice on my thesis.

I would like to sincerely thank the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in the person of its Founder-Director Prof. Dr. Sayed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, for giving me opportunity of studies in this blessed Institute. My

appreciation also goes to the Acting Deputy Director (Academic Affairs) Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, for his perpetual encouragement and moral support during the whole period of my studies at the Institute and more so during the days of writing this thesis. I would also like to thank Haji Ali bin Haji Ahmad and his colleagues in the ISTAC's library for their help in finding all the needed sources for my thesis

My thanks also to sister Norazimah binti Abdul Latiff for typing this thesis and all the members of staff in the administration especially Haji Mat Ali bin Mat Daud (Registrar) for their full cooperation.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my wife Ihsan El-Basha and my family who have patiently endured my endless education and who always look forward to seeing my achievements.

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INTRODUCTION

BENNABI MALEK

Bennabi Malek (1903 - 1973) was born in Constantine, a city in north east Algeria. He was an eminent scholar who received his primary and secondary education in Algeria. He left Algeria for Paris for further education, where he finally graduated as an electrical engineer in 1937, after spending more than thirty years of his life in Europe.

During those years of his studies, Bennabi grew more interested in the study of philosophy, sociology, and history than the major subjects he was formally studying in the school of Engineering.¹ He also acquired profound knowledge and experience of Western culture and civilization. As an intelligent scholar he benefited tremendously from his sojourn and education in the new environment in France, the environment of lively intellectuality and the center of a leading civilization.²

He was a prolific author on the themes of history, social philosophy and Islam.

His works were not acknowledged by readers in the Arab and Muslim world until thirty years ago. It was during the same period that his book *Vocation de l'Islam* was translated from French into Arabic by Sha'ban Barakāt and published by al-

¹ Bennabi, Malek, *Mémoires d'un Témoin du Siècle*, trans. Marwan Qanawati, *Mudkhakirāt Shāhidin lil Qarn*, vol. 1 and 2, (Damascus : Maktabat al-Fikr, 1970), 54.

² For more detail of his whole life see Bennabi's autobiography, Bennabi, Malek, *Mémoires d'un Témoin du Siècle*, trans. Marwan Qanawati, *Mudkhakirāt Shāhidin lil Qarn*, vol. 1 and 2 (Damascus : Maktabat al-Fikr, 1970). This autobiography was written by Bennabi himself but according to Fawzia Barium, the author of *Malik Bennabi, His Life and Theory of Civilization*, "Bennabi uses the literary technique of telling his story through an Algerian alter ego named as Siddiq and is thereby able to address the reader from behind a veil. But it is transparent that Siddiq's autobiography is in fact that of Bennabi himself". p. 69

Maktabat al-'Asriyah. (Sydah-Beirut).³ This book was written in 1949 and published in 1954 "to synchronize with the outbreak of the Algerian revolution".⁴

Bennabi's books were not serially published in Arabic translation until the beginning of the year 1957, when his book *Les conditions de la renaissance*, Algiers 1947 (Conditions of Renaissance) emerged. In the same year it was translated by Umar Kāmil Misqāwī and Abdu al-Sabūr Shahīn. After this Arabic translations of his works started to be published in serialised form under the constant title of *Mushkilāt al-Hadārah* (problems of civilization).

He graduated from Paris as an electrical engineer in 1937, after spending more than thirty years of his life in Europe.

It is obvious that Bennabi has been neglected because he wrote in French, and because he was an individual thinker and not the ideologic of a movement. Some scholars who have not fully conceived his ideas even go as far as to state that he was influenced by Western ideas.

The French invasion of his country, Algeria, in the years 1830, 1840 and 1871 was met with a strong resistance movement under the leadership of al-Amīr 'Abdu al-Qādir,⁵ a famous devoted sheikh. Later in 1932, when the conception of a French Algeria confronted nationalist opposition, two groups of Algerian nationalist opposition played a pivotal role. One of these groups was the Association of Algerian scholars *Jam'yyat al-Ulama*.⁶ This group held a strong belief that a true national renaissance had to be based on genuine religious life and the Islamic identity of Algeria. The other group was Messali Hādġ's movement of Algerian workers based in Paris.⁷

³ Bennabi, Malek, *Mustaqbal al-Islām*, trans. Sha'ban Barakāt, *vocation de l'islam*. (Sydah - Beirut : Maktabat al-'Asriyah, 1954).

⁴ Bennabi, Malek, *Islam in History and society*, trans. Rashid, Asma, *Vocation de l'Islam*, (Islamabad : Islamic Research Institute, 1988), p. xiii

⁵ Al-Amir Abdul Qadir (1807-1883).

⁶ It was founded in 1931 and inspired by Abd. al-Hamid bin Badis (1889-1940).

⁷ Messali Hādġ was a speaker and organiser of the Movement, he was ex-military man in the November 1954 revolution in Algeria. He later became a tool of the French policy.

In 1954 when Algerian nationalism became an active and effective political force with the emergence of the revolution, most of the leaders of this revolution were very young as Albert Hourani states :

Who had received their training in the French army or professional schools, whose language of culture and political action was French, whose conceptions of political method and organization of government were derived from France, and whose ideas of social and economic organization were those of European radicalism.⁸

Bennabi who believed that a social system could rest only on moral foundations, had to be a serious contender with the above groups, because to his surprise the 'Ulamā were handing over the keys of social life to the elected members, simply because they had no experience of the means employed by colonialism in the ideological struggle.⁹

Bennabi combined the knowledge of Arabs, their thought, philosophy, and Islamic Arabic heritage with Western knowledge and thought which are rooted in Greek, Roman, and Christian Civilizations. He is a unique brand of Muslim thought which is at once profound, analytical, original and self critical yet committed to the ideals of Islam. His ideas and thought would have to be conceived within the context of the cruel French colonial dominance of Algeria, the painful experience of the Algerian revolution which followed it and the miseries of Muslim and Third World countries.

He lived through this period of colonial oppression and personally witnessed and experienced the traumatic as well as the rewarding aspects of colonial power and culture.

The uniqueness in Bennabi's experience of colonialism is that he neither succumbed to its brutality nor was he lured into a denial of self-identity. This integrity

⁸ Hourani, Albert, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798 - 1939* (London : Oxford University Press, 1967) 7.

⁹ Bennabi, Malek, *Islam in History and Society*, trans. Rashid Asma, *Vocation de l'Islam* (Islamabad : Islamic Research Institute, 1988) p. 13.

of mind and body appears to have given him a clear vision and a superb intellectual command to synthesize a vast array of ideas, both historical and contemporary.

Bennabi was greatly influenced by two major thinkers who preceded him in the study of Muslim and world civilization : Abdu al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun¹⁰ and Arnold Toynbee.¹¹ He has been compared to Allama Muhammad Iqbal,¹² but according to Asma Rashid he is probably "the first social philosopher produced by the Muslim world since the times of Ibn Khaldūn".¹³

Mohammad Abdu's¹⁴ ideas influenced Bennabi greatly specially in his concerns in education, which was the main element of Mohammad Abdu's renaissance, because culture was the foundation of the Renaissance. However, Bennabi did not view culture as an accumulation of education and information, but as a theory in behaviour.

Mohammad Abdu's ideas spread in Algeria through his book, *Risālat al-Tawhid*¹⁵ which was the primary reference for scholars and teachers in various educational institutions. The book was later translated into French and became available to French-educated Algerians. Bennabi personally came across the translation in a bookshop and stated that the book helped to focus and to direct his thinking.¹⁶

The Approach of This Study Towards Bennabi's Thought

The concept of culture has been one of the vast problems studied by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. This means that culture in itself is broad enough to

¹⁰ Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the great Arab historian and sociologist born in Tunis.

¹¹ Arnold Toynbee (1889-1979) was a British historian who served as a scholar and professor of history at Cambridge University.

¹² Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was a well-known Indian scholar, Poet, and Philosopher.

¹³ Bennabi, Malek, *Islam in History and Society*, trans. Rashid, Asma, *Vocation de l'Islam* (Islamabad : Islamic Research Institute, 1988), p. 1.

¹⁴ Mohammad Abdun (1830-1876) Egyptian writer, theologian, and reformist.

¹⁵ See Sheikh, Mohammad Abduh, *Al-'A'amāl al-Kāmilah*, edited by Mohammad 'Amarah, (Cairo : Dar al-Shurūq, 1993).

¹⁶ Barium, Fawzia, *Malek Bennabi, His Life and Theory of Civilization*, (Kuala Lumpur : Muslim Youth Movement, 1993), 43.

encompass all species of spiritual life in human beings, no matter whether this life is intellectual, religious or ethical.

In Western anthropology and social science, the concept of culture according to Geertz is :

Around which the whole discipline of anthropology arose, and whose domination that discipline has been increasingly concerned to limit, specify, focus, and contain.¹⁷

If that is the case with Western social science and anthropology in the study of the concept of culture, how then is the case with Muslim social science especially during the period, 1940 to 1960? This question can only be answered by investigating the historical and intellectual context within which Bennabi dealt with the concept of culture.

Umar Misqāwi¹⁸ in his introduction to Bennabi's book *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*¹⁹ states that the thoughts and approach of Bennabi regarding culture can be viewed through the background of the intellectual environment which was dominant during the periods mentioned. During this period two main streams dominated the intellectual scene concerning matters related to the study and analysis of social phenomena. The first main stream consists of the various western liberal schools which were inclined toward the Anglo-American schools, and the second main stream was represented by the Marxist school of thought.²⁰

The state of Muslim thought was not at its best during this period for it was in a serious struggle between those two schools. It devoted all its time to protecting Muslim ideas and traditions from the onslaught of their liberal and Marxist contenders. For this

¹⁷ Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of cultures, Selected Essays* (New York : Basic Books Inc., 1973) 4.

¹⁸ Umar Misqawi, is a chief editor of Bennabi's works in Arabic.

¹⁹ Bennabi Malek, *Le problème de la culture*, trans. Abdul Sabur Shahin, *Mushkilah al-Thaqafah*, (Damascus : Dar al-Fikr, 1984).

²⁰ For more details see, El-Mesawie, T. Mohammad, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society, An Investigation into the sociological Thought of Malik Bennabi*, unpublished manuscript (Kuala Lumpur . . .), also see, Misqawi's Introduction to Bennabi's *Mushkilat al-Thaqafah*, (Damascus : Dar al-Fikr, 1984) 8.

reason Muslim thought could not develop a systematic approach, an adequate method, and careful examination in the study of social phenomena along with the formulation of the needed concepts and categories of analysis. Culture as a main social phenomenon was not properly studied and Muslim scholars only referred to culture in general terms to indicate the vast indefinite number of intellectual activities.

Bennabi himself did not conceal his conviction that he had something to augment in the study of culture in a way that transcended the prevailing concepts both at the methodological and substantive levels.²¹

The concept of culture in Bennabi's thoughts is important and worthwhile to study because his thoughts about this subject produced a new point of view. Even the borrowed terminologies formed by Western liberal thought and Marxist thought did not get accustomed to this new point of view. Thus he did not examine the concept of culture as a concept whose historical and social peculiarity is confined to a limited time and place. To him this way of examining culture would surely create difficulties in relating this theoretical notion to the political problems which evoke the concern of the world in general and the countries faced with cultural problems in particular.²²

The search for ways and means of reconstructing and purifying the culture of the Muslim and Third World countries was Bennabi's prime target, as far as colonialism, freedom, ideas, peace, backwardness and lack of efficacy are concerned as a result of the problem of culture.

It therefore, he considered the position of the African-Asian countries which had adopted the spirit of the Bandung conference under the idea of (*al-Hiyād al-Ijābi*) the positive neutrality, in their international policy.²³

²¹ Bennabi, Malek, *Le Probleme de la Culture*, trans. Abdul Sabur Shahin, *Mushkilat al-Thaqafah*, (Damascus : Dar al-Fikr, 1984), p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 16

²³ *Ibid.*, 16.

These countries had imbued their policy and economy with that spirit. If that is the case, they should therefore direct their cultural ideas toward the same spirit, this means that their culture should also be integrated with the ideas of the spirit of the conference.

Bennabi's aim of regenerating the culture of Muslim and Third World countries came during the first half of this century. It was at a crucial time when many countries gained their freedom from colonial powers. He realised that the social situation in those countries at the level of development and growth shared similar fundamental elements, namely ethics, ideas, aesthetics, practical logic, technique, and knowledge for the regeneration and purification of culture.

It is the purpose of this study to examine Bennabi's concept of culture and how he treated it within the scope of Islamic civilization. For the term *thaqāfah* in Arabic language, like the concept of culture which it is supposed to express, seems now to be more generally accepted and used than understood and appreciated. This is because the term was not used in the earlier periods of Islamic history. Nevertheless the history of that period indicates that Arab culture was at that time at its peak.

My main purpose is to describe and analyse the two terms, namely culture and *thaqāfah*, and to give an account to their historical formation because, I have perceived in the history of these terms in their structure of meanings a very wide and general aspect of society and civilization. A substantial account will be given on the Arabic term *thaqāfah* to know when and how it was used as a social concept. This will be followed by definitions of culture in both Muslim and Western sense.

I shall try to examine these definitions by making clear the two main aspects of Western anthropology regarding the concept of culture as well as how Bennabi views these aspects within the Muslim and Third World countries. While I am clarifying the difference between *thaqāfah* (culture) and *tarbiyah* (education), the issue of social

education will also be discussed in this context. I will examine the above issues in my first chapter.

In chapter two I will concentrate on analysing the elements of culture proposed by Bennabi as an educational project of culture in the Muslim and Third World countries. These elements are, moral constitution, (*al-dustūr al-khulqī*) aesthetic sense (*al-dhawq al-jamālī*), practical logic (*al-mantiq al-'amali*) and technique (*al-sinā'ah*). The aim of these elements as components of culture and their role in reconstructing the Muslim and Third World culture will be studied in detail from Bennabi's perspective. I only on occasional exceptions will concentrate on particular thinkers and their views regarding the elements and I will try to understand and value them.

My third chapter will discuss Bennabi's general efforts in solving the problem of culture, the role of culture in the society, as well as how a civilization is born out of a certain culture. Finally, in my conclusion a summary of my discussions and analysis will be presented. I will put forward my own perspective regarding the concept of culture.

CHAPTER ONE

THE IDEA OF THAQĀFAH AND CULTURE

The essence of the term *thaqāfah* and its concept has been a problematic issue in Islamic civilization since Ibn Khaldun's works. The chief reason is that, this term has a linguistic and historical complexity which is not yet solved by writers and scholars. Consequently this has led to confusion in the usage and the concept of *thaqāfah* which is Arabic, but conveys the concept of *culture* in the Western sense.

The linguistic and historical aspects of the two terms, namely *thaqāfah* and *culture*, will be discussed in this chapter, to clarify their origins, primary and secondary usage, as well as the development of their meanings through the centuries. As far as the concept of culture is concern, such explanatory discussion of those terms will help greatly in making the general theme of this thesis more comprehensible.

These terms have importance in modern society and civilization. The changes in their use and meaning at this time indicate a general change in our ways of thinking and living, as well as in the ways we manage our social, political and economic institutions. The term *culture* in the Western sense is already known by its complex development and acquisition of new and important meanings. As Raymond Williams, points out culture "is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English

language. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development."¹ My main aim in this chapter is therefore to focus on the problem of the concept of the term *thaqāfah*, how it was used in the Islamic history, when it acquired its recent concept as a social phenomenon, why it acquired the Western connotation and the reaction of the muslim scholars to that acquisition. I shall not hesitate to mention that there are two terms which are equally important in meaning and concept to the term *thaqāfah* i.e. *madaniyyah* and *haḍārah*. However I shall not attempt to discuss them in this chapter, as I would be deviating from my focus. The definitions of *culture* and *thaqāfah* of both Western and Muslim scholars will be studied, with a focus on Malik Bennabi's definitions and its analysis.

Our discussion then is divided into three sections. In the first place, I shall discuss the root and significance of *culture* and *thaqāfah*; Secondly, I will examine the usage of the term *thaqāfah* in Arabic language as a social phenomenon, and finally I will try to evaluate the definitions of *culture* and *thaqāfah*.

A. The root and significance of the two terms.

I will begin my discussion here with the meaning of the term *culture* in English as well as its broad sense in the Western milieu. This is because the two terms, namely *culture* and *thaqāfah*, have ultimately the same sociological concept in their secondary meanings, as will be elucidated in the following discussion.

The original meaning of the term *culture* is derived from Latin, from the word *cultura* which means "cultivation of the soil, art or practice of cultivating and manner or method of cultivating. It also acquired a secondary meaning in philosophy. For example it was used in a transferred sense in Latin Christian literature as *cultura*

¹ Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), P. 76.

animi, meaning culture of the soul with philosophy or learning in general.²

In the seventeenth century it became a common term to refer metaphorically to human development. This metaphorical meaning of the term in the eighteenth century developed into even general term. In German the word was first spelt as *cultur* and after some time, *Kultur*. The term was used in works of speculative history from the second half of the eighteenth century and crucially started to be used in the plural in the sense of humanity being divided into a number of separate distinct cultures.³

The history of the word *culture* after it was used metaphorically as a social phenomenon of human training and development in the society depicts that the word is indeterminate. Its extended usage in the subsequent period has not enhanced its clarity. The culture is more elusive in attempting to encompass its meaning in words. It came to mean first a general state of habit of the mind which is closely related to the idea of human perfection. Then the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole, the general body of the arts, and later in the recent century a whole way of life material, intellectual, and spiritual.⁴

In my search for the original, and secondary meaning of the term *culture*, I have arrived to the conclusion that its counterpart *thaqāfah* in Arabic language has a similar sense. The term *thaqāfah* whose root word is *thaqifa* was also stripped of its literal meanings and the broad meaning of a social phenomenon was given to it, to be similar in meaning with the term *culture*, in its Western connotation. The root meaning of the word *thaqifa* is "to be skillful, clever, smart, and sagacious."⁵ In the Qur'an derivations of the word have been mentioned thrice with the meaning of the encounter

² Mu'nis, Hussein, *al-Haḍārah* (Kuwait: Zāt al-Salāsīl, 1994), 369.

³ Barnard, Alan Spencer, Jonathan, *Encyclopaedia of Social & Cultural Anthropology*, "culture", (London : Routledge, 1996), 136.

⁴ Williams, Raymond, *Culture & Society*, (London : The Hogarth Press, 1990), 151.

⁵ Majma' al-Lughat al-'Arabia, *al-Mu'jam al-wasit*, vol. 1 (Cairo : 1972), 98; see also, Wajdi, Mohammed Farid, "*thaqifa*" *Dāirat Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-Ishrin*, vol. 2, 3rd. ed. (Beirut : Dar al-Mā'arafa, 1971), 757.

a war⁶ or to gain mastery over something.⁷ Ibn Manzūr says that, *thaqifa shy'u*, means quick in learning he proceeds saying that "*huwa gulāmun laqinun thaqfun*," means he is intelligent and skillful, which means that he is certain in knowing what he needs.⁸

If we refer to the modern dictionaries, *thaqifa*, *thaqāfatan* give the same meaning which is to become intelligent and skillful Bennabi states that, the first idea that strikes one's mind about the broad meaning of the term *thaqāfah* as a social concept is to consult dictionaries, but the dictionaries available in our hands, both the old and the modern ones give only the general meaning of the word.⁹ This gives the impression that the meaning of *thaqāfah* as a social concept came later into Islamic civilization.

Since we have come to the conclusion that the term *thaqāfah* as a social concept is something new in Islamic civilization by virtue of what has emerged in the previous discussion of the term, it is now necessary to examine the essential part of the term. This part is, when the term was used in its new social concept, where it adopted the concept, and the advantage of using the new concept.

B. The Usage of the Term *Thaqāfah* in the Arabic Language as a Social Concept.

The literal meanings of the term *thaqāfah* as we have seen were : skill, cleverness, sagacity, encounter in a battle, mastery and intelligence. It is important to note that the various derivations from the word *thaqifa* did not convey the sense of

⁶ *Sūrah*, 2 : 191 and *Sūrah*, 33 : 61.

⁷ *Sūrah*, 8 : 57.

⁸ Al-Afriqī, Jamaluddin Mohammed bin Mukram Ibn Manzār, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 9 1st. ed. (Beirūt : Dār Sādir, 1957), 19.

⁹ Bennabi, Malek, *Le probleme de la culture*, trans. Abdul-Sabūr shāhin, *Mushkilat al-thaqāfah*, 4th ed. (Damascus : Dār al-Fikr, 1984), p. 19

social concept.

The usage of the term *thaqāfah* with its broad meaning as a concept or a social phenomenon is a modern idea which came from the West during the period of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century when Europe burst into great literary works, of art, literature and thought.¹⁰

The cogent evidence is, that the term is not found in the great Arabic lexicons by the meaning of a social concept. And if we refer for example to *al-Mukaddimah of Ibn Khaldūn* we see that the term *thaqāfah* is mentioned twice or thrice. For example in page 991 of *al-Muqaddimah* it is mentioned in the sentences as (*thaqāfah al-rumh*) and (*bi ta'lim al-thaqāfah*) the word *thaqāfah* in both sentences means straightening of the spear,¹¹ it is also mentioned in page 474 as (*thaqfu atrāfuhā*) which means fencing or making a fence around something.¹² This proves that the term did not convey the meaning of a community concept or a social phenomenon in the context of Ibn Khaldūn's language. However Ibn Khaldūn in any case was regarded as the first reference for Arab social science in the Middle Ages. Besides, the word *thaqāfah* was not used in the earlier periods of Islamic history because there is no trace of the word in the literature, and official language of that period nor in their administrative language. In spite of this the history of those periods indicated that Arab culture at that time was at its peak.¹³

When Europe started its intellectual contact with Arab countries, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth century during the time of decline that engulfed the muslim world, a wide movement of translations took place and some Arabic words were selected. The original meaning and the style of those words were stripped from them

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 25

¹¹ Al-Magrabi, Abdu-al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh al-'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 5, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Libnān, 1959), p. 991

¹² Ibid, vol. 7, p. 474.

¹³ Bennabi, Malek, *Le problème de la culture*, trans. Abdul Sabūr Shāhin, *Mushkilat al-thaqāfah*, 4th ed. (Damascus : Dar al-Fikr, 1984), 20.

to express the sense and concept of the western terms and, to drive away the Arabic meaning and replace it entirely. The word *thaqāfah* was one of those words used to express the concept of *culture*, although the translation was not done by using the original senses of both terms namely *thaqāfah* and *culture*, instead the terms were given circulative meaning they acquired externally. After the translation of the term *culture* into Arabic, it created confusion. The concept of *culture* was translated into Arabic by two terms which were not synonyms nor even close in meaning or in their root words from where they were extracted because *culture* was sometimes translated as *thaqāfah* and sometimes as *hadārah*.

The other aspect of this confusion in the usage of the term refers back to the years 1940s through to the 1960s of the twentieth century, when the matters related to the analysis of social phenomenon were dominated by Anglo-American and Marxist schools.¹⁴ During this time Islamic thought was at odds with both two schools, it can be said that :

It was mainly characterized by an apologetic drive striving to defend Islamic ideas and tradition against the onslaught of their liberal and marxist despisers. As such, it fell short of developing systematic approaches and adequate methods in the study of social phenomenon.¹⁵

Some scholars think that the usage of the term *thaqāfah* as equivalent to the term *culture* is a mistake, but there is no alternative, for Hussain Mu'nis states :

Today we use the term "*thaqāfah*" in the equivalent meaning to the western term "culture" but the meanings of the two terms do not correspond to each other and the usage in itself is a common mistake which has taken its final stage and cannot be corrected.¹⁶

The first scholar who used the term *thaqāfah* in modern Arabic literature as an equivalent for western term 'culture' is Salāmah Mūsah.¹⁷ According to him he

¹⁴ El-Mesawie T. Mohammad, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society, An Investigation into the sociological Thought of Malik Bennabi*. (Kuala Lumpur . . .), 102.

¹⁵ Ibid, 102.

¹⁶ Mu'nis, Hussein, *Al-Hadārah*, (Kuwait : Zātal-Salāsīl, 1994), 385.

¹⁷ Arif, Nasr Mohammad, *al-Hadārah, al-Thaqāfah, al-Madaniyah*, 2d. ed. (Riyādh : al-Sār al-Ālamīyah, lil kitāb al-Islāmī, 1995) 27. Salāmah Musah was born in Egypt in 1881 and died in

plagiarized the term from Ibn Khaldūn and was not the one who coined it, for he found Ibn Khaldūn using the term *thaqāfah* similarly to the term *culture* which is commonly used in the European literature. On this basis the definition of *thaqāfah* in the Islamic civilization became the Western definition. However, the result of our research was to the contrary of Salamah Musah's claim. Ibn Khaldūn usage of the term *thaqāfah* does not convey the meaning of a concept or social phenomenon, whether in the Arabic or European literature. Nevertheless the Arabic term *thaqāfah* is widely used but its meanings and sense are the same as the Western concept of culture.

Some Arab writers when using the concept of *thaqāfah* attempt to define it, but their definitions are not different from Western concept of culture which bears among its concepts the notion of acculturation and transculturation of cultures. This is contrary to the concept of *thaqāfah* in Arabic language, because *thaqāfah* in one of its meanings centralizes on knowing what man needs according to the conditions of his environment and society and not merely skills and knowledge of the sciences. Ibn Manzūr makes it clear in the meaning of the term that it is to have a certain knowledge of what one needs and that it relates the concept of *thaqāfah* to the kind of the society in which man lives and not to the other society.¹⁸

The term *thaqāfah* has been defined in many ways by Muslim scholars and almost all these definitions bear the significance of liberating the concept of *thaqāfah* in the Islamic civilization from the western concept. But as Bennabi states, the term *thaqāfah* was found through *al-tawlid* the procreation of words and has not yet acquired the necessary power of definition in order to qualify it as a science of a particular concept and therefore it is in need of a foreign term namely *culture* to help define its broad meaning as well as to serve its true purpose as a social concept or

1958. He was a prominent scholar who played a pivotal role in changing the stream of culture in the Arab world. He also called up for the simplification of the classical Arabic and the usage of the colloquial Arabic.

¹⁸ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* vol. 9 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār Sādir; 1957) 31.

phenomenon.¹⁹

C. Definitions of Culture

It is clear in the previous discussion that the term *thaqāfah* in Islamic civilization still needs the English term *culture*, to help it define itself as a concept or a social phenomenon. On this basis the term *culture* will be used in these definitions to express its social concept in both Western and Islamic perspectives.

It is the nature of any definition that it selects certain aspects of the total concept for which the term stands and stresses these at the expense of the other aspects. With this in view, the definitions which shall be mentioned here should not be taken to encompass all the aspects of culture as a social concept but it should be meant to serve as a specific purpose of this essay, because the definitions of culture are numerous. In 1952 Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kuckhon published a work entitled : *Culture - A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, and their thorough search of anthropological literature up to that year provided them with 164 definitions of culture. This is a clear evidence that all definitions of culture cannot be enumerated in this work.

The concept of culture according to Western anthropology has two main aspects. The first is the school which adopted the ideas and concepts of the period of the Renaissance which generally viewed culture as a fruit of thought which means a product of man as an individual. Hence, by definition there is no culture without man and there is no man without culture.²⁰

¹⁹ Bennabi, Malek, *Le probleme de la culture*, trans. Abdul Sabūr Shāhin, *Mushkilar al-thaqāfah*, 4th ed. (Damascus = Dar al-Fikr, 1984), 25

²⁰ White, Leslie a. with Beth, Dillingham, *The Concept of Culture*, 1st. ed. (U.S.A. : Burgess publishing company : 1973), 9.

The second concept belongs to the Marxist school, which held the idea that culture is the fruit of a society, and therefore it is a philosophy of the society as a whole and not of the individual alone.

The classic definition which most sociological definitions have followed was stated by Edward B. Tylor :

That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.²¹

Tylor's definition of culture is global. Man in his definition means mankind and "that complex whole" means customs and capabilities of mankind, it does not mean the specific culture or any particular society.

Bronislaw Malinowski placed emphasis on culture as a functioning, active, efficient well-organized unity, which must be analysed either, in relation to the needs of the human organism or in relation to the environment, both man-made and natural.²² However, the concept of culture acquired its modern sense during the period of the Industrial Revolution. As a result, it came to refer, in the Western literature of the period a general state or habit of mind, closely related to the idea of human perfection. Matthew Arnold states that culture has its origin in the love of perfection. He says :

It is a study of perfection. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good.²³

As for the socialist countries where Marxist thoughts are imprinted on all values, Yadnov in his famous report which he presented at the conference of the communist party in Moscow ten years ago, * defined culture as something related to

²¹ Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture*, vol. 1 (New York : Brentano's press : 1924), 1.

²² Sills, David L., *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vil. 3, (USA : crowell collier & macmillan; Inc. 1968), 528.

²³ Arnold, Mathew, *Culture and Anarchy*, 2d. ed. (England : Theomrus press : 1994), 8.

* The period ten years ago was mentioned during the time Bennabi was writing this book in 1959.

the group function. Therefore culture according to him is a philosophy of society.²⁴

This clarification of the Western view regarding the concept of culture, opened the way to explore further into some muslim scholar's conception of culture. An emphasis would be placed on Bennabi's definitions of culture as well as his views. In addition, these definitions are compared with previous western definitions and views.

As the concept of culture in Islamic civilization acquired the same Western concept, some Muslim scholars directed their definitions towards the liberation of Muslim concept of culture by defining original culture as "self-produced culture which is capable of being independent,"²⁵ and that it is not detached from other cultures nor does it detract from the notion of cosmic culture. And to return to the self-produced or the essence of culture is to return to the Muslim culture as well as to the Islamic ideology.²⁶ The starting point of Muslim culture is the Islamic essence itself, because it is the unique essence that is close to Muslims among the essences, the unique culture which is still alive, and the unique spirit, faith, and life in the society.

As far as behaviour is concerned as one of the main cultural elements which needs to be purified in the Muslim culture, some Muslim scholars include the element of behaviour their definitions of culture stating that :

culture is the total values and concepts which govern individual or society's behaviour at a certain period of time in the history, either that period lasts long or not.²⁷

Ahmad Shalabi in his comprehensive work defined culture as :

It is a development in the theoretical thoughts and that includes a development in the laws and politics as well as encompassment of

²⁴ Bennabi, Malke, *Le problème de la culture*, trans. Abdul Sabur Shâhin, mushkilat al-thaqâfah, 4th ed. (Damascus = Dar al-Fikr, 1984) 73

²⁵ *Al-thaqâfah, wal-Muthâqaf fi al-watani al-Arabi*, "an introduction" written by Riyâd Kassim, 1st. ed. (Beirût : Markaz Dirâsât al-wahdah al-Arabiyyah: 1992), 11.

²⁶ Ali, Shari'ati, *Al-'Awada il al-Zât*, trans, Ibrahim al-Dusûki shita' 1st ed. (Cairo : Al-Zahra' lil A'lâm al-Arabi : 1986), 36.

²⁷ Awad Yussif Nûr, *al-Mu'qawimât al-Islamiyah lil thaqâfah al-Arabiyyah*, (Beirût : Dar al-Qalam), 5-6.