Bennabi placed the Muslim world in the pre-civilized stage where it struggles to enter a new civilizing process. He interpreted the movement of civilization through various levels of analysis for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic process of civilization in history. His concepts of the cycle, the three stages, and the three ages are a multi-level analysis of one phenomenon.

The development of society in its civilizing process is recorded qualitatively and quantitatively, Bennabi said, in its social relations network, which indicates the stages of society in the course of its history. He argued that any civilizing process commences before its three realms develop. The formation of the realm of persons is a precondition for the formulation of the social relations network. Society then functions while the realms of ideas and objects are still simple. The realm of persons then changes and integrates in the new order of relations. The social relations network starts to work while the other two realms of ideas and objects are still immature.

The realm of ideas plays the role of social protector while strongly linked with the social relations network. A society undertakes reconstruction, which is impossible without the social relations network. The realm of ideas alone cannot justify the development or decadence of a civilization. Rather, it must integrate with the social relations network. The history of a society is nothing more than the history of the network of its social relations created in the beginning by a religious idea.

Chapter Four
The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The Internal-Social Dimension

Using Ritzer's definition of the internal-social dimension, this chapter focuses on the impact of these factors on Bennabi's approach. Bennabi's biographical sketch is sparse, and his autobiography covers the period from his birth in 1905 until 1939. Limited sources covering the rest of his life are supplemented by his books, his contemporaries' writings, and in historical records of his era.

Malek Bennabi was born in 1905 to a poor family in east Algeria. The Islamic environment that formed his personality also protected Algerian Muslims amid colonial pressure on their culture and civilization.

His grandmother's "devout stories were formulating unconsciously my personality and throughout them I knew that benediction is in the zenith of the Islamic values and ethics."

Under French rule, he witnessed a collective migration of many native families, including his own relatives, from Algeria to eastern Arab countries. This protest to colonial rule dramatically changed Algeria's social and economic structure. The traditional Islamic environment degenerated, traditional life disintegrated, and a collective existence was in danger. Bennabi realized the importance of social relationships at the micro-level of the family and the macro-level of society.

In Bennabi's community, the *zāwiyah*, a traditional institution, played a crucial role in preserving Islamic teachings after the decline of Muslim civilization, as did education and formal Arabic literature. Storytellers preserved popular culture, while the mosque and *madrasah* also played a crucial role in Bennabi's education. He learned Arabic grammar, literature, poetry, jurisprudence, and theology.

In his first book, Bennabi reinterpreted the Qur'an's main themes and elaborated his theories in different social and cultural fields. His central thesis on religion guided his analysis of its essence and role in any civilizing process. For Bennabi, religion is imprinted in the order of the universe as a law that characterizes the human spirit. Bennabi discovered Islam in its universal perspective when later he met many Muslim thinkers and activists in France. He considered Islam a religion, way of life, social generator, culture, and civilization.

The educational problem in the Muslim world was a core problem that concerned Bennabi. Vision, methodology, means, and function were lacking, especially in Algeria under oppressive colonial rule. Two educational systems instilled in his mind and soul a search for reasons in the decadence of the traditional system and the advance of the modern (French and Western) system of education.

While the former was in a terrible state, the latter was expanding. It enjoyed developed methodologies and a clear vision and gained the protection of the colonial regime. Yet its secularized vision and westernizing mission contradicted the Muslim civilizational framework, a dichotomy that occupied Bennabi's attention throughout his life and career.

Bennabi observed and recorded the changes occurring in life and thought in European and Muslim Algerian environments. These two contexts influenced his concepts regarding the man of nature and the man of civilization. He experienced new trends of thought in Muslim intellectual circles. The ʿUlamā' movement was unprecedented in Algerian society in approach and method concerning society's reforms.

Bennabi's background as a citizen of a colonized Algeria, student in two educational systems, and contact with European colonizers shaped his ideas about the colonized and the colonizer and the concept of "colonizability" as a tool to analyze the psychological situation of today's Muslims.

Bennabi's knowledge of European thought raised his intellectual and political awareness, and his interest shifted from engineering to philosophy and the social sciences, and subsequently to Muslim reformist thought, the decolonization movement, and revival efforts in Algeria and the Muslim world. He realized the importance of the ʿUlamā' movement in Algeria and propagated the ideas of iṣlāḥ (reform), and Maghrib (North Africa) unity. Bennabi was impressed by the ʿUlamā's reformist movement for a free and independent Algerian society until they gave up social leadership to politicians. He believed the importance of educational and cultural activities over political activism.

As a political refugee in Egypt, Bennabi established connections with intellectuals and traditional institutions, influencing Arab intellectuals to focus on issues of civilizing renewal and renaissance in the Muslim Ummah. Bennabi died in Algiers in 1971, leaving the legacy of the greatest Muslim thinker Algeria has ever produced in modern times.

Bennabi's connections were determined by Mu in its internal social dimension. He believed in teamwork and strong links with intellectuals of the Muslim and the developing world to solve complicated matters of underdevelopment. His strongest links were with the reformist movement in the Muslim world represented by the ʿUlamā'.

Bennabi's loyalty to Islam and admiration of Ibn Khaldūn framed his analysis of the inferiority complex of Muslim intellectuals towards Western culture. He said that intellectuals of traditional culture (ʿUlamā') could not accomplish their important mission in history due to the framework of the al-Muwaḥḥid era. The ʿUlamā' focused on the

purity and preservation of Islamic teachings, and cared about changing souls and mindsets from their post-*al-Muwaḥḥid* culture to a new culture.

Bennabi was influenced by some early Muslim scholars and writers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Khaldūn, and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and considered himself a product of that chain of reformers. After his experience in other Arab countries he broadened his analysis to include other religious ideas, and examined the various explanations of the social phenomena and the role of religion in historical change.

Chapter Five
The Roots of Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: The External-Social Dimension

According to the metatheorizing approach, external social factors focus on the macro level analysis and address the objective aspects. They look to the institutions and the historical roots of thought. These factors mark a dimension of *Mu* that shifts to the macro level to look at the larger society and its impact on the development of theorization. The external social dimension emphasizes the relationship between the theorizing process and various institutions, structures of society, and other social activities that have direct or indirect relationship with the development of the approach or theory.

Bennabi aimed to resolve the problems of Muslim civilization in the context of colonization and decolonization using sociology to understand the larger socio-historical context. Bennabi believed colonialism was part of the whole civilizational agenda of the West, and needed a civilizational response from within.

The Western sciences of anthropology, archaeology, and sociology helped ensure its claimed civilizational mission to civilize the indigenous, the barbaric, and the primitive. Such terms were used to denote colonized peoples and civilizations. It followed the dichotomy of distinction between it and others, imposing expansion and dominance through alien standards. It divided people and fragmented Muslim countries along ethnic and linguistic lines, endangering if not destroying the unity of the Ummah.