

## Idea of *Thaqâfah* and Culture in the Muslim and Western Conception

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**Abstract:** The essence and conception of the term *thaqafah* have 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 as yet unsolved by writers and scholars. Consequently, this had led to confusion in the usage and concept of *thaqâfah*, which is an Arabic term that conveys the concept of 'culture' in the Western sense. The linguistic and historical aspects of the terms *thaqâfah* and 'culture' will be discussed in this paper. Their linguistic origins, primary and secondary usage, as well as the development of their meanings overtime will be clarified, especially with regard to the concept of culture, which will make the general theme of this paper more comprehensible. These terms have importance in modern society and civilization. The changes in their usage 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 complete development and acquisition of new and important meanings. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development. Our main aim in this paper is therefore to focus on the problem of the concept of the term *thaqâfah*, how it was used in Islamic history, when it acquired its recent concept and the Western connotation as a social phenomenon and the reaction of the Muslim scholars to that acquisition.

**Key words:** *Thaqafah* • Culture • Civilization • Ta'adib • Concept

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### INTRODUCTION

The essence and conception of the term *thaqafah* have 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 as yet unsolved by writers and scholars. Consequently, this had led to confusion in the usage and concept of *thaqâfah*, which is an Arabic word that conveys the concept of 'culture' in the Western sense.

These terms have importance in modern society and civilization. The changes in their usage 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 complete 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]. Our main aim in this paper is

therefore to focus on the problem of the concept of the term *thaqâfah*, how it was used in Islamic history, when it acquired its recent concept and the Western connotation as a social phenomenon and the reaction of the Muslim scholars to that acquisition.

There are two terms which are equally important in meaning and concept to the term *thaqâfah* i.e. *madanîyyah* and *hadârah*. Their examination is, however, beyond the scope of this study. The definitions of culture and *thaqâfah* of both Western and Muslim scholars will be studied.

Our discussion is divided into three sections: first, we discuss the root and significance of culture and *thaqâfah*; second, we examine the usage of the term *thaqâfah* in the Arabic language as a social phenomenon, third and finally we evaluate the delimitations of culture and *thaqâfah*.

**Root and Significance of the Term Culture:** We commence our discussion 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, culture and

*thaqâfah*, have ultimately the same sociological concept in their secondary meanings, as we elucidate in the following discussion.

The original meaning of the term culture is derived from the Latin 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 different sense in Latin Christian literature as *cultura animi*, meaning culture of the soul [2].

In the seventeenth century it became a common practice to refer metaphorically to human development. This meaning in the eighteenth century developed into a more general term. In German, the word was first spelled as *cultur* and after some time, *Kultur*. It was used in works of speculative history from the second half of the eighteenth century. The usage of the word gained importance at that time and was used in the plural to indicate humanity being divided into a number of separate distinct cultures [33].

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 subsequent periods has not enhanced its clarity. The term culture is more elusive when attempting to encompass its meaning in words. At first, it came to mean in the beginning a general state of habit of the mind, which is closely related to the idea of human perfection, Later, it was used to refer to the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole, the general body of the arts. Recently, it has come to refer to an entire way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual.

In our search for the original and secondary meanings of the term culture, we have arrived at the conclusion that its counterpart *thaqâfah* in the Arabic language has a similar sense. The term *thaqâfah*, 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” [3,4] In the Qur’an, derivations of the word have been mentioned thrice with the meaning of ‘to encounter a war’ [5] or ‘to gain mastery over something’ [6] Ibn Manzur says that, *thaqifa shy’u*, means, ‘he learns something quickly’; he proceeds by saying that “*huwa gulamun laqinun thaqifun*,” means ‘he is an intelligent and skillful young man’, which means that he is certain in knowing what he needs [7].

If we refer to modern dictionaries, *thaqifa* and *thaqafatan* 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 *thaqafah* as a social concept is to consult dictionaries, but the dictionaries available in our hands, both the old and modern ones, bear only the general meaning of the word [8]. This gives the impression that the meaning of *thaqafah* as a social concept came later into Islamic civilization. An examination of when the term was used as a new social concept, where it adopted the concept and what was the advantage of using it afresh follows.

#### **Usage of the Term *Thaqafah* as a Social Phenomenon in the Arabic Language:**

The usage of term *thaqafah* 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 European Renaissance in the sixteenth century. This can be deduced from the fact that the term is not found in the great Arabic lexicons to mean social concept [8]. If we refer, for example, to the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, we will see that term *thaqafah* is mentioned two or three times. For example, on page 991 of the *Muqaddimah* it is mentioned as (*thaqafah al-rumh*) and (*bi ta’lim al-thaqafah*). The word *thaqafah* in both sentences means ‘straightening of the spear’ [9]. It is also mentioned on page 474 as (*thaqfu atrafuha*) which means ‘fencing’ or ‘making a fence around something’ [9]. This proves that the term did not convey the meaning of a community concept or a social phenomenon in the context of Ibn Khaldun’s language. However, he in any case was regarded as the first reference for Arab social science in the Middle Ages. The word *thaqafah* was not used in the earlier periods of Islamic history despite the fact that the history of those periods depicts that Arab culture at that time was at its peak [8].

When Europe first made its intellectual contact with Arab countries, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during the time of the decline that engulfed the Muslim World, a wide exercise in translations took place whereby some Arabic words were used. The original meaning and style of those words were stripped from them to express the sense and concept of the Western terms while eliminating and replacing their Arabic meaning. The word *thaqafah* was one of those used to express the concept of culture, although the translation was not done by using the original senses of both terms, namely *thaqafah* and culture. Instead, they were given

circulative meaning acquired externally. Confusion arose as a result of the concept of culture being translated into Arabic by two terms that were neither synonyms nor were even close in meaning or in their root words; culture was sometimes translated as *thaqafah* and sometimes as *hadarah*.

The other aspect of this confusion in the usage of the term dates to between 1940 and the 1960, when Anglo-American and Marxist schools of social thought prevailed. During this time, Islamic thought was at odds with both schools:

*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 [9].*

Some scholars view that to make the concept of the term *thaqafah* equivalent to the concept of the term culture is an error, but there is no alternative. Hussain Mu'nis states:

*Today we use the term "thaqafah" 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 [2].*

The first scholar to use the term *thaqafah* in modern Arabic literature as an equivalent for the Western term 'culture' is Salamah Musah [10]. According to him, he plagiarized the term from Ibn Khaldun and was not the one who coined it, for he found Ibn Khaldun using the term *thaqafah* similarly to the term culture, which is commonly used in European literature. On this basis the definition of *thaqafah* in Islamic Civilization became synonymous with culture. However, our research points to the contrary. Ibn Khaldun's usage of the term *thaqafah* does not convey the meaning of a concept or social phenomenon, whether in Arabic or in European literature. Nevertheless, the Arabic term *thaqafah* is widely used, but its meanings and sense are same as those found in the Western concept of culture.

When using the term *thaqafah*, some Arab writers attempt to define it, but their definitions are not different from the Western word culture, which bears the notion of

acculturation and transculturation. This is contrary to the concept of *thaqafah* in the Arabic language, because one of the meanings of the term *thaqafah* concentrates on knowing what man needs is according to the conditions of his environment and society and not merely his skills and knowledge of the sciences. Ibn Manzur 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 to the concept of *thaqafah* to the kind of society in which a man lives and not other societies [7].

The term *thaqafah* has been defined in many ways by Muslim scholars and almost all these definitions bear the significance of liberating the concept of *thaqafah* in Islamic civilization from the Western concept. Bennabi states that the term *thaqafah* was found through *al-tawlid*, the procreation of words and has not yet acquire the necessary power of definition in order to qualify it as a science of a particular concept. Therefore, he says, 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 phenomenon.

**Delimitations of Culture:** It is clear from the previous discussion that the term *thaqafah* 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 both Western and Islamic perspectives.

In 1952 Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kuckhon published a work entitled *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Their thorough search of anthropological literature up to that year provided them with 164 entries.

According to Western anthropology, the concept of culture has two main aspects. The first is the school, which adopted the ideas of the period of the Renaissance, which generally viewed it as a fruit of thought, a product of man as an individual. Hence, by definition, there is no culture without man and there is no man without culture [10]. 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 whole and not of the individual. The classic definition, which most sociological schools 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 [11].*

Taylor's view of culture is global. "Man" here means mankind and "that complex whole" means customs and capabilities of mankind; it does not mean the specific culture of any particular society.

Bronislaw Malinowski placed emphasis on culture as a functioning, active, efficient well-organized unity, which must be analyzed either in relation to the needs of the human organism or in relation to the environment, both man-made and natural [12]. 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, to a general state or habit of the 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 [13].*

As for those socialist countries where Marxist thought is imprinted upon all values, Yadnov, in his famous report presented to the conference of the communist party in Moscow in 1949, defined culture as something related to the group function, that is according to him it is a philosophy of society [8].

Since the concept of culture in Islamic civilization acquired the same Western perspective, some Muslim scholars directed their definitions towards its liberation from that concept of the West, by viewing it as "self-produced culture which is capable to be independent"[14] and should not detach nor detract from the notion of a cosmic one. According to them, the essence of culture is to return to the Muslim tradition, as well as to the Islamic ideology [15]. The starting point of it is the religion of Islam, for it is its sole base and is close to Muslims. It is always alive with its own unique spirit, faith and life.

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

*Culture is the total values and concepts which govern individual or society's behavior at a certain period of time in history, whether that period is long or not [16].*

Ahmad Shalabi, in his comprehensive work, defined culture as:

*A development in the theoretical thoughts and that includes a development in the laws and politics as well as encompassment of the important historical events and also a development in the conduct and the behavior [17].*

Since he was a sociologist, his views developed from analysis and synthesis and therefore, defined culture from different perspectives. According to his definition, culture is regarded either as a concept and an essential factor within the civilization, or as element related to behavior. He defined it in its general sense as:

*The total sum of ethical characteristics and social values attained by the individual since his birth. It is his primary resource within the social environment in which he acquires his habits and personality [8].*

This is a general definition of culture which demarcates the concept of culture. It is also a scope, which reflects a particular civilization within which man lives. In addition, this definition combines both a philosophy of the individual and of society. It also includes the given effort of both the individual and the society.

Malek Bennabi considered the necessity of integrating the two philosophies into one. In light of this definition, Bennabi's view emerged clearly, namely, that neither society nor the individual alone could produce genuine culture, as conceptualized by Western schools. Genuine culture, which is capable of playing its real role in any civilization, is that which combines the philosophy of both the individual and the society.

Knowledge, *ma'rifah*, is a part of culture that does not depart from the concept one way or another; there is a difference between the two aspects. For instance, the problem of arrogance, *al-takabbur*, which is an immoral aspect in a person's knowledge, is similar to that. Arrogance is not imbued in knowledge but in the cultural web that guards it because the problem of arrogance is bound to that of the time and place in which that person was raised. Culture is therefore not merely an endeavor from which to observe and learn. It is rather a striving to ensure that the moral, social and beneficent character of culture becomes manifest [14].

Bennabi made it clear that culture is a theory in education, *tarbiyah* and therefore is related to behavior *suluk*, rather than to knowledge, *ma'rifah* and information, *ta'lim* [8]. Based on this he defined culture as:

*The social atmosphere that includes external elements, such as measures, tunes and motions and internal elements, such as tastes customs and traditions [18].*

Culture in that sense is a general atmosphere which imprints itself upon the lifestyle of a particular society as well as the behavior of its individuals, giving it a distinct character. Bennabi believed that man's behavior is subsumed in the concept of culture and that it is a result of the environment in which the personality of an individual is shaped. Thus, it is not strange to observe a particular environment of a certain society differ from that of other societies within a nation. Regarding the significance of culture in education, Bennabi viewed that it was not a specific knowledge for a certain class of people, but that it was a constitution of thoughts of different categories of society. In its general sense, then, it includes one network of life which brings educated and uneducated people together. In this context, he likened the role of culture to that of blood nourishing the human body and stated:

*Culture is that blood in the body of a society, that nourishes its civilization, carries out the thoughts of the best people as well as common people [8].*

This definition is referred to a culture that belongs to a civilization, because not all cultures belong to a civilization. It further declared that culture is a collection of ideal products of people, which shaped and molded in these people throughout their history. Hence, history cannot exist without culture and people who lose their culture inherently lose their history. He described culture as:

*Culture is bulk in itself that includes customs of same kind, close ingenuities, integrative traditions, proportionate tastes and resembled sentiments [19].*

The individual is therefore regarded as a social cell; he acquires his human personality by crystallization of the cultural characteristics of his society. This implies that all that takes place in cultural, philosophical, sociological and political thought in European societies is a natural and regional result of historical factors as well as social conditioning in Europe. Therefore, to implement all this into societies having different historical and social conditions is impossible.

Social education is also a parallel development of culture. Bennabi views it as a method that guides the evolution of society. It emanates from the sciences of history, sociology and psychology. Among these three sciences priority is given to the science of history, because a history of a certain people or society reflects the model of the relationship network and, the system of activities of that people. For example, Muslim society in the present day extracts its activities from the previous history of Muslim societies. Thus, for a society to construct a social education system, it should possess clear and specific ideas of its model's relationships and reflections which would organize that society's ability to vitalize the individual and the society [19,20]. Religion plays an important role in the vitality of social education because religion actualizes its activities and creates a spiritual network in it. That spiritual network connects the society to the faith in God and gives it the opportunity to carry out its common activities.

The first and foremost objective in the process of social education is to change the individual's behavior. This is one of the main elements of culture because this leads to the whole change in society. Bennabi called it a self-change, of which God the Almighty says: "Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves"[21].

He therefore summarized social education into one word which is culture. For him it is a useless and meaningless word, unless social education is necessarily included in its components and unless social education is given the opportunity to carry out its duty in changing individual behavior.

Throughout these discussions and definitions of *thaqafah*, one is able to conclude that *tarbiyah* (education) is a part of *thaqafah* (culture), without which a genuine culture cannot be established. However, there is a vast difference in meaning between the two terms. Also, it has been observed that the meanings of the term *thaqafah* are skillful, smart clever, as well as to straighten something. However, is the usage of the term *thaqafah* for *tarbiya* or *ta'lim* (education) in recent practice correct? Is the term *tarbiyah* adequate and precise in meaning to refer to education in the Islamic sense?

Regarding the first question, the term *thaqafah* in recent times has been mistakenly used as an equivalent for *tarbiyah*. For example, Butrus al-Bustani explains the meaning of *thaqafah al-walad* as 'taught him, amended him and refined him' [22]. Anthony Salmone also admitted new meanings and explained the word as 'educated' and

'trained' [23]. A.L. Tibawi mentioned this confusing and erratic usage of the term while explaining the meaning of *thaqafah* in contemporary Arabic. He quoted many examples, one of which is from Taha Hussain's book "*Mustaqbal al-thaqafah fi misr*" (The Future of Culture in Egypt).

Tibawi stated that, "throughout the book, culture, *thaqafah* is often used where the word education, *tarbiyah*, is clearly the right one" [24]. In page 259 of the book Tibawi quoted Taha Hussain as saying in connection with the teaching of foreign languages in Egypt, that after the end of British control, Arabic became the language of culture "*asbahat al-lughah al-'Arabiyah, lughat al-thaqafah*" and means by that the language of education [25]. Tibawi's solution to the problem, after studying this confusion of the erratic usage of the term *thaqafah* from all angles, was to ascribe the error and the confusion to a well-known fault of Arabic dictionaries. His reason is that, if a person tries to find the meaning of one term, he discovers that the term is explained by the other so-called *muradif* synonym, thus *ta'lim* would mean *thaqafah* and *thaqafah* would mean *tahdhib* and so on [26]. He saw that an individual scholar cannot solve the problem of the term *thaqafah* or offer any suggestion for its usage and therefore laid the responsibility on the shoulders of Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad as the right authorities in academia for rescuing the term from its recent erroneous.

As for the second of whether the term *tarbiyah* is adequate and precise enough to mean education in the Islamic sense, it is relevant to this discussion because it helps us to understand why this term inaccurately reflects the Islamic concept of education.

*Tarbiyah* is the term in the Arabic language which connotes education, in the Western sense. Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-Arab* collected the form *tarbiyah* from the roots *raba* and *rabba*. *Al-Asma'i* reported that those two root words convey the same meaning. Al-Jawhari explained that the word *tarbiyah* which includes some of the other forms mentioned by Al-Asma'i, gives the meanings of 'to feed, nourish and nurture and this encompasses all the things that grow, for example children, plants, animals and like [7].

In *al-Mu'jam al-wasit*, *raba* means 'to increase and grow'. For example, *raba al-mal* means an increase in money and *raba al-faras* means a horse became inflated from running. *Rabaa* also gives the meaning of 'to increase, to nourish', or to make a thing grow'. For example, *rabba fakiha* means 'he made the fruit grow'[4].

In the *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, *tarbiyah* means, 'education, upbringing, teaching, instruction, pedagogy, breeding and raising of animals' [25]. The term is used for human beings as in *tarbiyah al-afal*, baby education whereas for animals the term *tarbiyah al-dajaj*, 'chicken farming' is used, likewise for plant cultivation the term *tarbiyat al-nabatat*, is used.

Through this elaboration of the term *tarbiyah*, it is clear that the Arabic term for education was coined precisely after its Western counterpart because they both encompass in their meanings the cultivation of human beings, animals and plants. With this in view, some Muslim scholars assert that the term *tarbiyah* is neither appropriate nor adequate to convey the concept of education in the Islamic sense. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is one Muslim scholar and thinker who expresses concern over selecting appropriate terms to illustrate meanings so that they are conceived in the context of the Islamic intellectual and religious tradition. He states:

*Error in the selection and application of terms employed for cultural, religious and spiritual concepts invariably leads to confusion in knowledge, in theory and in practice* [26].

Al-Attas argues that the term *tarbiyah* is both imprecise and incorrect in connoting the term education in the Islamic sense, because the term *tarbiyah* as it is comprehended and used in the sense of 'education' is only a recent term; it did not exist in any of the great Arabic lexicons [27].

Indeed the term *tarbiyah* as it is now used is not found in several of the great Arabic lexicons like *Lisan al-Arab* of Ibn Manzur, *Kitab al-'Ain* of al-Khalil al-Farahidi, *Taj al-Arus* of al-Zubaydi and the like.

According to al-Attas, education in the Islamic sense refers specifically only to man and not to other species like animals, plants and the like. Therefore the term *tarbiyah* is unsuitable to denote education in the Islamic sense [28]. He continues to explain that the content of education is knowledge; something that education transmits into man. Knowledge, '*ilm*', as it has been applied in Islam, encompasses the totality of life: spiritual, intellectual, religious, cultural, individual and social [28]. Al-attas believes that the key concept in education is knowledge for the purpose of seeking knowledge. That purpose, according to the Islamic perspective, is to inculcate goodness in man as man and as individual. He states:

*The end of education in Islam is to produce a good man and not as in the case of Western civilization to produce a good citizen [7].*

Al-attas elaborates that the correct and precise term for education is *ta'dib*. This is derived from the root word *adab* with its different forms of the past tense *adaba*, *addaba* and *ta'addaba*. The *addaba* form from which *ta'dib* is derived, according to Ibn Manzur, is synonymous to '*allama*, which means 'to teach, or instruct'. Al-Zajjaj attributed it to Allah's manner of teaching His prophet [28]. In *Taj al-Arus*, *adab* means 'to learn how to nurture or train your soul and to learn good character' [7].

*Adab* also refers to the noble and human tendency of the character that manifest itself through the conduct of life and social intercourse. The metaphorical use of the term, which is parallel to this practical designation, is the knowledge that leads to an intellectual culture of higher degree and enables a more refined social intercourse.

In the pre-Islamic period, the active participle of the past tense of the term *adib* meant: the host or anyone invited to a banquet [29]. In early Islam the meanings of the term *adab* were 'good words, behavior or conduct' [30].

*Ta'dib* the gerund of *addaba*, which means 'to refine, educate, discipline', is mentioned in an authentic *hadith*. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said:

*No fun save in three: man's ta'dib of his horse, his playing with his wife and the shooting of the bow".*

In this *hadith ta'dib* is used in its general sense meaning 'to tame'. For example, what requires training to engender good behavior are childrens, slaves, horses, etc. No matter what the etymological meanings of the term *adab* was in early Islam. Gabrieli, in his article on *adab* in the Encyclopedia of Islam said: "The etymology of the word put forward by Vollers and Nallino agrees with this earliest meanings: (Stemed from the verb *addaba* which means to invite), both considered that the plural *adab* was formed from *da'b* ("custom or habit") and that the singular *adab* was subsequently derived from this plural" [31] In the 'Abbasid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods, the meaning of the term in early Islam, namely words, behavior or conduct or good behavior, had evolved to what the 'Abbasid thinkers called: '*adab al-nafs*' (*adab* of the soul) and '*adab al-dars*'. (*adab* of study). The *adab* of the soul here is our concern because it is the

origin of the *adab* of study. Al-Harith defined it as: "What one has to do and how one should become in one's behavior, character, action and speech [32].

As for the usage of the term in the modern period, especially within the concept of *adab* of the soul, there exist terms like *al-adab al-'amah*, (general *adab*) which means "collection of rules and principles pertaining to the protection of sound moral values and the preservation of family cohesion, from what affects the structure of the society and its goodness" [33]. *Shurtat al-Adab*, the police of *Adab* which is like a squad in the police department whose duty is to protect society from immoral behavior. Similarly the term refers to *majlis al-ta'dib*, is a board in educational institutions. It is a disciplinary board whose task is to punish those who infringe upon the rules of the institutions [34]. In current Arabic the term *adab* means 'lawful behavior ad conduct'. Basically, the meanings of *adab* therefore are culture, refinement, good breeding, good manners social graces, humanity, belle-ttres and morality, while *ta'dib* means discipline, punishment and chastisement [27].

The usage of the term *adab* and its original pre-Islamic conception makes the term *ta'dib* correct and precise for connoting education. This is because it includes in its meanings all the concepts of education in the Islamic sense, by virtue that it has referred to man throughout its usage. Thus al- Attas says that *ta'dib* includes within its conceptual structure the three important elements of education, which are, knowledge (*'ilm*) instruction, (*ta'lim*) and good breeding, (*tarbiyah*). Therefore there is no need to refer to the concept of education in Islam as *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, *ta'dib* all together [29]. Consequently, he translates the *hadith* of the Holy Prophet, upon whom be peace, who said: "*Addabani rabbi fa ahsana ta'dibi*" as "My Lord educated me and so made my education most excellent".

It is obvious from this discussion of the origins of terms *thaqadah* and *tarbiyah* that Islamic civilization faces an intricate problem in some of its educational terminologies. Often there has been a selection and application of terms that does not convey Islamic concepts. This has led to the creation of confusion in defining exact Islamic concepts, theories and practices. Sometimes one term is given more than three meanings, or worse, bears a concept that is completely contrary to Islam. This is a result of blindly translating and applying Western terms to Arabic ones without paying attention to the consequences relating to Islamic concepts. The issue is not whether this term is better than the other, but the

selection of a single, correct and precise term which takes into consideration the embodiment of essential Islamic elements in their conceptual structure and not merely their meanings in the Arabic language.

The responsibility for and authority over the selection or translation of terms should not be assigned to certain academics, as stated by Tibawi, but to Muslim scholars and thinkers who can select or coin terms that correctly define the concepts and theories according to Islam.

### CONCLUSION

In this paper the origin as well as the significance of the terms culture and *thaqafah* have been discussed. The discussion covers mainly the development concerning the usage of the two terms, from both their literal meaning as well as their technical sense as a social concept. Regarding the literal sense of the term *thaqafah* in particular, the derivations of the root word of the term have been traced in the Qur'an, as well as in the great Arabic lexicons. It is, however, revealed that their term and its counterpart 'culture' share a common phenomenon with regard to their usage; that is, both terms were stripped of the literal sense and used as a social concept.

An additional examination has been made of the usage of the term *thaqafah* as a social concept because it acquired a modern Western usage. The term *thaqafah* was not used in Islamic history in this perspective, nor in *al-Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, who is regarded as the first reference for Arab social science during the Middle Ages. The views of Malek Bennabi and the other scholars are mentioned to support the evidence.

Malek Bennabi acknowledged the new Western concept in the term *thaqafah* and the confusion it created in the definition of the social concept of culture in Islamic civilization. We have come to the conclusion that the term *thaqafah* after it had acquired the new social concept, is still in dire need of the Western definition of 'culture' to help it define its broad meaning and serve its purpose as a concept or social phenomenon.

The definitions of culture in the Western concept have been discussed. In these definitions, the two main Western concepts of culture have prevailed in the discussion. The first belongs to the school which adopted the ideas of the Renaissance. It viewed culture as a fruit of thought produced by man. Therefore, culture is related to the individual. The second concept belongs to the

Marxist school which conceived culture as the fruit of a society as a whole and not the individual alone.

Bennabi's definitions of culture are different. For him a genuine culture can be produced only by the combination of both the individual and the society. Neither society nor the individual alone can produce culture as Western schools view it. Behavior becomes, in Bennabi's definitions, as one of the main cultural elements because in his view, culture is not a collection of thoughts but a theory of behavior. Therefore, in order for Muslim culture to be genuinely established, Muslim behavior needs to be purified.

Bennabi compared the concept of culture with that of education. He considered education as a factor that develops with culture and stated the difference between them. The recent usage of culture, *thaqafah* to refer to education, *tarbiyah*, has been wrongly approved under the assumption that *thaqafah* and *tarbiyah* are synonymous in the Arabic language, which they are not.

This brought our discussion to include the inappropriate usage of *tarbiyah* to mean education because it does not bear the real meaning of education in the Islamic concept. The latter is best described by the term *ta'dib*. The term *ta'dib* after it has been traced in Islamic history and Arabic lexicons is viewed to be appropriate and precise for education in the Islamic sense. Conclusive evidence of this is clear from Bennabi's differentiation between *thaqafah* and *tarbiyah*. Culture, in his view, is not an exclusive knowledge for a particular class of people, but belongs to both the educated and the uneducated in a society. Culture encompasses ideas of the elite as well as the common people. All these ideas can harmoniously function in one direction towards similar attempts to unify purposes and proportionate tastes.

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