Vol 13, Issue: 01 (S), 2026

ABAAD Journal

ISSN: 2353 – 0030
EISSN: 2602-697X

The Value of Time and Its Role in Building the Civilised Human Being in the Thought of Malik Ben Nabi

قيمة الوقت ودوره في بناء الإنسان الحضاري في فكر مالك بن نبي

Mohamed El Abed Hachelouf*
حشلوف محمد العابد
mohamedelabed.hachelouf@univ-alger2.dz

Philosophy

University of Algiers 2 - Abou EL Kacem Saâdallah - Algeria

Received: 18-03-2026	Accepted: 06-06-2026	Published: 10-06-2026

****

Abstract:

In this study, we seek, in general, to highlight the civilisational role of the factor of time in the thought of Malik Ben Nabi through the reform project that he adopted for the advancement of our Arab societies in particular and Islamic societies in general and for bringing them into the ranks of civilisation. He drew his ideas in this regard from the sacred religious texts (the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah) because Islam is the religion of time and timing. This is attested to by numerous Qur'anic verses and noble prophetic hadiths, as we shall see in detail throughout this study.

Keywords: Malik Ben Nabi; Islam; time; civilisation; renaissance; individual; society.

الملخص:

نسعى في هذه الدراسة، بشكل عام، إلى تسليط الضوء على الدور الحضاري لعامل الوقت في فكر مالك بن نبي، وذلك من خلال المشروع الإصلاحي الذي تبناه من أجل النهوض بمجتمعاتنا العربية على وجه الخصوص، والإسلامية بشكل عام، وإدخالها في مصاف الحضارة. وقد استمد أفكاره في هذا الصدد من النصوص الدينية المقدسة (القرآن الكريم والسنة النبوية الشريفة)؛ لأن الإسلام هو دين الوقت والتوقيت، وهو ما تشهد عليه العديد من الآيات القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية الشريفة، كما سنرى بالتفصيل عبر فصول هذه الدراسة.

* Corresponding author: mohamedelabed.hachelouf@univ-alger2.dz

الكلمات المفتاحية :مالك بن نبي؛ الإسلام؛ الوقت؛ الحضارة؛ النهضة؛ الفرد؛ المجتمع.

Introduction:

An observer of the history of human civilisations in general will find that numerous factors intersect and complement one another within their temporal and spatial frameworks. There is no disagreement that the factor of "time" or "temporality" is among the most important direct factors influencing the emergence of "civilisation". No civilisation known to human societies since the dawn of history can be found without the factor of "time" playing a principal role in its emergence. What is meant here by "time" as a factor in the emergence of "civilisation" is the human appreciation of the value of "time" and its civilisational dimension in the establishment of civilisation. Islamic civilisation was among the most appreciative of this, through its religious reference in the sacred text (the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah).

For this reason, no Arab Muslim thinker, regardless of his scholarly standing, can be found throughout history who did not derive his ideas and intellectual and scholarly positions from the teachings of the true Islamic religion. Among the most prominent of these was Malik Ben Nabi, who presented a reformist and revivalist project capable of elevating our Arab and Islamic societies to the ranks of civilisation, imbued with the Islamic civilisational heritage since the earliest indications of its emergence in history through the message of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

On this basis, in this research study, we first attempt to examine the most significant elements found in the Islamic heritage concerning the value of "time" in the sacred religious text (the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah), as well as in the intellectual and scholarly production of the righteous predecessors and the most prominent Islamic figures who called for the necessity of awareness of the civilisational dimension of time in general, in terms of their influence on our Arab Muslim thinker, Malik Ben Nabi, as an intellectual reference.

We will then explore how Malik Ben Nabi formulated this great Islamic civilisational heritage by highlighting the value of "time" as one of the factors of civilisational advancement within his reformist and revivalist project and adapting it to our Arab and Islamic societies in accordance with the requirements of our present time. Civilisation does not endure absolutely within the temporal sphere; rather, it proceeds according to a cycle across defined historical periods, beginning with the stage of emergence, then development and flourishing,

followed by decline and regression, as articulated by the Arab Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun. Hence, in the course of this study, we attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the most significant manifestations of the civilisational value of the factor of "time" in Islamic heritage in general, within the sacred religious text (the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah), and in the lives of the righteous predecessors?
- To what extent did these influence the thought of Malik Ben Nabi?
- How did the value of "time" and its civilisational dimension manifest in Malik Ben Nabi's reformist project?

1) The Religious Reference of the Value of "Time" in the Thought of Malik Ben Nabi:

1.1 Time in the Qur'an and the Sunnah:

Time is the most precious capital possessed by the human being. It has characteristics that render it more valuable than gold and more dangerous than a sharp sword; if it passes, it does not return, nor does it accept emptiness. If it is not filled with that which is beneficial, it will be filled with that which is not. Time is divided into small units that tempt a person to be lenient in neglecting them, namely, hours, minutes, and seconds; however, neglecting them neglects time itself. Many minutes have been decisive between life and death; many minutes have distinguished between illness and recovery, between safety and affliction, and between well-being and trial, and many minutes have differentiated between success and failure.[1] In this regard, the Proof of Islam, the eminent Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, states, "Your times are your life, and your life is your capital; upon it is your trade, and by it is your attainment of eternal bliss in the proximity of God, Exalted be He. Every breath of yours is a priceless jewel, for it has no substitute; if it passes, it does not return."[2]

Among the fundamental blessings, among their most exalted and most precious, is the blessing of time. Time is the span of life, the field of human existence, and the domain of his presence, continuity, benefit, and beneficence. The Holy Qur'an has indicated the greatness of this foundational blessing among other blessings and has alluded to its elevated status

[2] Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 1st ed., reviewed and corrected by Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Hadi et al. (Beirut: Dar al Minhaj for Publishing and Distribution, 2004), 120.

above others. Numerous verses have thus come to guide the value of "time", its lofty rank, and its profound effect. I cite here some noble verses in this regard. God, Exalted be He, says, bestowing favour upon His servants with this great blessing:

﴿ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَآتَاكُم مِّن كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴾

"Allah is He Who has created the heavens and the earth and sends down water (rain) from the sky, and thereby brought forth fruits as provision for you; and He has made the ships to be of service to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command; and He has made rivers (also) to be of service to you. In addition, He has made the sun and the moon, both constantly pursuing their courses, to be of service to you; and He has made the night and the day, to be of service to you. In addition, He gave you of all that you asked for, and if you count the Blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them. Verily! Man is indeed an extreme wrongdoer—a disbeliever (an extreme ingrate, denies Allah's Blessings by disbelief and by worshipping others beside Allah and by disobeying Allah and His Prophet Muhammad SAW)." [Ibrahim: 32–34][1]

Islam is the religion of time and timing. God, Exalted be He, swears by time, drawing attention to its value:

"واللَّيل إذا أدبر (32) والصبح إذا أسفر"(33)

By the night, as it retreats, and the morning, as it brightens. [Al-Muddathir: 32–33]

"واللَّيل إذا عسعس (17) والصبح إذا تنفس"(18)

By the night as it darkens, and the morning as it breathes. [At-Takwir: 17–18]

"فلا أقسم بالشفق (16) واللَّيل وما وسق"(17)

So I swear by the twilight, and the night and what it envelops. [Al-Inshiqaq: 16–17]

"والفجر (01) وليالٍ عشر"(02)

By the dawn and ten nights. [Al-Fajr: 01–02]

"والشمس وضحاها (01) والقمر إذا تلاها (02) والنهار إذا جلاها (03) واللَّيل إذا يغشاها"(04)

By the sun and its brightness, and the moon when it follows it, and the day when it reveals it, and the night when it covers it. [Ash-Shams: 01–04]

[1] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama' (Beirut: Dar al Basha'ir al Islamiyya for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1983), 29–30.

"واللَّيل إذا يغشى (01) والنهار إذا تَجَلَّى"(02)

By the night when it covers, and the day when it appears. [Al-Layl: 01–02]

"والضُحَى (01) وَاللَّيل إِذَا سَجَى"(02)

By the morning brightness, and the night when it grows still. [Ad-Duha: 01–02]

"والعَصْرِ"

By time.[1] [Al-'Asr: 01]

Thus, He, Glorified be He, has bestowed, among His most magnificent blessings, the blessing of night and day, which constitute the time about which we speak and within which we exist and through which this vast universe passes from the beginning of its beginning to the end of its end. He, Exalted be He, further affirmed this supreme favour in another verse:

﴿ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۖ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

"And He has subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon; and the stars are subjected by His Command. Surely, in this are proofs for people who understand." [An-Nahl: 12]

He indicated at the conclusion of the verse that these blessings contain profound signs for those who reason and reflect.[2]

Time is among the fundamental blessings that God has bestowed upon humankind. The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "There are two blessings in which many people are at loss: health and free time" (al-Bukhari: 6412).[3] Time is thus a great blessing and a significant endowment, the value and full benefit of which are realised only by the distinguished and rightly guided, as indicated by the wording of the noble hadith: "in which many people are at loss," signifying that those who benefit from it are few, while many are negligent and deprived.[4] It is a blessing whose value a person does not perceive except upon its loss; how many among us now say: if only time could return so that I might do such and such.[5]

[1] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187.

[2] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 30.

[3] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187.

[4] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 31.

[5] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187–188.

Al-Hakim narrated in *al-Mustadrak*, in the Book of *al-Raqa'iq* [4: 306], on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with them both, that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said to a man while admonishing him: "Take advantage of five before your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your occupation, and your life before your death." (Al-Hakim said: this hadith is authentic according to the conditions of al-Bukhari and Muslim, although they did not include it.)[1]

Islam firmly establishes in the believer the doctrine of the Last Day. Consider this expression: "Last Day", that is, a day in which the allotted span of time comes to an end. On that day, one is held accountable for one's time, how it was spent and how it was expended. The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The feet of a servant will not move on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about four matters: about his life and how he spent it, and about his youth and how he used it" (al-Tirmidhi: 2416).[2]

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, clarified that the temporal span of life is the basis of reckoning and accountability on the Day of Resurrection, and this serves as an explanation of the noble verse:

﴿ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

"Did you think that we had created you in play (without any purpose) and that you would not be brought back to us?" [Al-Mu'minun: 115]

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, explained in the two hadiths that the essence of life consists of knowledge and action, lawful and wholesome wealth in its acquisition and expenditure, bodily health, physical strength, and the vigour of youth.[3]

Time is God's proof against His servants. God, Exalted be He, says in reproach of those who squander their lives in what does not benefit them on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿ أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ ۖ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ﴾

"Did we not give you lives long enough, so that whosoever would receive admonition—could receive it? And the warner came to you. So taste you (the evil of your deeds). For the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.) there is no helper." [Fatir: 37]

[1] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 38.

[2] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.

[3] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 38.

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "God has removed the excuse of a person whose life He has extended until he reaches sixty years" (al-Bukhari: 6419). That is, He has cut off his excuse.[1]

The Noble Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, admonished us not to take pride in strength and prosperity, and directed us to seize the opportunities of gain in life before conditions of weakness, the adversities of days, and the vicissitudes of time befall us. The successful and prosperous one is he who hastens to confront these contingencies with righteous and productive action and sincere obedience; thus, he becomes among the distinguished in life and among the blessed after death. If one reflects upon the lives of the prophets, the righteous, the scholars, and the reformers, one finds that they followed this elevated Prophetic guidance.[2]

This is likewise found in the words of the Proof of Islam, Imam al-Ghazali, who states, "Your times should not be neglected such that you occupy yourself at each moment with whatever happens to occur in whatever manner it occurs. Rather, you ought to hold yourself accountable, organise your functions at your night and your day, and assign to each time a specific task that does not exceed it and is not shared with anything else. By this, the blessing of time becomes manifest. As for the one who leaves himself neglected and aimless, like cattle, not knowing how to receive each moment... most of his time passes wasted."[3]

From the two noble hadiths, it is understood that the cultivation of one's lifetime may take one or more of these forms, and this is observable in human life. Among people are those who turn to the pursuit of knowledge and learning, others to trade and the growth of wealth, and others to the care of the body and its strength. Our Noble Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, commanded that our knowledge be coupled with action so that benefit may be perfected and advantage attained. There is no good in a life spent in knowledge upon which nothing is built or which is not followed by action. The Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, also made clear that accountability concerning wealth revolves around its source and its expenditure so that we may be mindful of God in our

[1] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.

[2] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 39.

[3] Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120.

earnings and our spending. A Muslim's life should not be a relentless pursuit of wealth accumulation without regard for whether it is lawful or unlawful, nor should his expenditure be in disobedience to God, extravagance in wrongdoing, miserliness in goodness, and deprivation of rights.[1]

Islam teaches us that life has an appointed term, that is, a fixed span of time that diminishes with every breath that departs and with every heartbeat that strikes. When this term arrives, it can neither be delayed nor advanced:

﴿ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً ۖ وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ﴾

"And for every nation is a [specified] term. Therefore, when their time has come, they will not remain behind an hour, nor will they precede [it]." [Al-A'raf: 34]

﴿ وَلَن يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

"And Allah grants respite to none when his appointed time (death) comes. In addition, Allah is All-Aware of what you do."[2][Al-Munafiqun: 11]

Imam al-Ghazali further alerts and advises us in this regard: "Do not be like the foolish who rejoice each day in the increase of their wealth while their lives are diminishing. What good is there in wealth that increases while life decreases? Rejoice only in an increase of knowledge or action, for they are your two companions that will accompany you in the grave, where your family, your wealth, your children, and your friends will part from you."[3]

Islam teaches us the value of time by linking legal rulings to specific times and appointed terms. Acts of worship are time bound:

﴿إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا﴾

"Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times." [An-Nisa': 103]

﴿ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ﴾

"So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan, i.e., is present at his home), he must observe Saum (fasts) that month." [Al-Baqarah: 185]

﴿ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ ۖ﴾

Moreover, give it its due on the day of its harvest. [Al-An'am: 141]

[1] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 39.

[2] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.

[3] Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120–121.

﴿الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ﴾

Pilgrimage (hajj) occurs during well-known months. [Al-Baqarah: 197]

﴿ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهِلَّةِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ﴾

"They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) about the new moons. Say: These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage." [Al-Baqarah: 189]

The sacrifice must be performed before sunset on the third day; the rulings of travel are conditioned upon not residing for four days; wiping over leather socks, according to the majority, is limited to one day and one night for the resident and three days for the traveler.[1]

Imam al-Ghazali also affirms this precious value of time, saying, "When the sun begins to yellow... strive to return to the mosque before sunset and occupy yourself with glorification and seeking forgiveness, for the virtue of this time is like that before sunrise. God, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا﴾

"and glorify the praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun, and before its setting," [Ta Ha: 130]

...And let the sun set upon you while you are engaged in seeking forgiveness."[2]

Many rulings of personal status are also time-bound: breastfeeding is for two complete years; the waiting period is three menstrual cycles or four months and ten days; the 'aqiqah is on the seventh day, or the following seventh, or the one thereafter. Jurists also devote a chapter to time-bound contracts, such as debts, leases, sharecropping, and treaties. Legal theorists divide obligations into time-bound and nontime-bound, and the time-bound into extended and restricted, upon which they establish priorities of compliance, saying that this is the obligation of the time, meaning that it does not admit delay, and so forth.[3]

1.2 Time in the Lives of the Righteous Predecessors

Our righteous predecessors recognised the value of time. They utilised it in the best manner, to the extent that one who read their biographies might imagine that they lived longer than

[1] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188–189.

[2] Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120.

[3] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189.

their actual lifespans did, especially in the field of knowledge.[1] The righteous predecessors, and those who followed their path among later generations, were the most diligent of people in making use of time and filling it with goodness, whether among their scholars or their devotees. They competed with the hours and hastened through the moments, out of their keenness for time and their concern that none of it should be wasted.[2]

- Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi said, "The heaviest hour upon me is the hour in which I eat."
- Abu Yusuf al-Qadi, the companion of Abu Hanifah, discussed a legal matter while in the throes of death, and he passed away.
- Al-Tabari authored works in various sciences and wrote more than 300,000 pages, as if he were a publishing and printing house.
- Al-Juwayni, Imam al-Haramayn, ate and slept out of necessity, not habit.
- Ibn 'Aqil would soften dry bread with water to shorten the time spent eating.
- Ibn al-Jawzi would sharpen pens, cut paper, and arrange notebooks when idle visitors came to him.
- Ibn Taymiyyah, elderly individuals, would have books read to him even when he entered the lavatory.
- Al-Hafiz al-Mundhiri would not leave the school for condolences or celebrations.
- Al-Nawawi would study twelve lessons a day and died at the age of forty-five, leaving behind a body of writings that would take a lifetime to read.
- 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis brought about a great scientific and cultural renaissance and died at the age of fifty.[3]

If God wills good for a servant, He aids him with time and makes his time supportive of him; if He wills ill for him, He makes his time against him and frustrates him through it. Whenever he intends to prepare for progress, time does not assist him, whereas when his soul inclines to rest, time raises him and supports him.

Al-Shafi'i, may God be pleased with him, said: "I accompanied the Sufis and gained from them nothing but two statements: one of them is their saying, 'Time is like a sword: if you do

[1] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189.

[2] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 46.

[3] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189–190.

not cut it, it will cut you'; and the other statement: 'Occupy your soul, otherwise it will occupy you with falsehood.'"

The noble Companion 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, said: "I have never regretted anything as much as I regret a day whose sun has set, in which my lifespan has decreased and my deeds have not increased."[1]

The righteous Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, may God be pleased with him, said: "Indeed, night and day work upon you, so work within them." The eminent Successor al-Hasan al-Basri, may God be pleased with him, said: "O son of Adam, you are but days; whenever a day passes, a part of you passes away." It is also found in the *Diwan* attributed to our master 'Ali, may God be pleased with him:

Your life is breaths that are counted; whenever
A breath passes, and a part of it is diminished.
You awaken in deficiency and end the day likewise;
Have you no intellect by which you perceive this loss?
That which gives you life brings you death each hour,
and drives you onwards, a driver who does not jest with you.[2]

In our glorious history, those in their thirties were scholars, warriors, martinople, military commanders, politicians, and statesmen: Usamah ibn Zayd led the army of the Muslims at the age of twenty; Imam Malik ibn Anas issued legal opinions upon qualification at the age of twenty; Muhammad al-Fatih conquered Constantinople at the age of twenty-four; Emir 'Abd al-Qadir was pledged as commander of the army at the age of twenty-four and established the modern Algerian state at the age of thirty-five. Those in their twenties and thirties ignited our blessed revolution, and this was only due to their effective use of their time and their lives.

Regrettably, a man in his thirties, except for those upon whom God has mercy, remains engaged in amusement and play. At thirty, he has no project and no concern other than football and its news:[3] "In the Islamic world, we know something called 'time', yet it is a time

[1] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 47.

[2] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 47–50.

[3] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 190–191.

that ends in nothingness, because we do not grasp its meaning nor its precise division. We do not appreciate the value of its units hour, minute, and second, and we have not yet understood the concept of 'time' that is closely connected with history, even though an Arab Muslim astronomer, Abu al-Hasan al-Marrakushi, is considered the first to have grasped this idea, which is closely related to the advancement of material science in our age."[1]

Thus, human time is, in reality, his life; it is the substance of his eternal existence either in abiding bliss or in a life of hardship within painful torment. It passes more swiftly than clouds do. Whatever of one's time is for God and by God constitutes his true life and lifespan; all else is not counted as part of his life, even if he lives long within it, for he lives the life of beasts. If he spends his time in heedlessness, desire, and vain hopes and the best of what he spends it in is sleep and idleness, then his death is better for him than his life. If the servant, while in prayer, has nothing of it except what he comprehends of it, then he has nothing of his life except what was for God and by God, Exalted be He.[2]

2) The Role of "Time" in Building States and Civilisations and Determining Their Place in History According to Malik Ben Nabi:

With respect to models of states and civilisations, at their forefront stands the first Islamic state established by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. He was sent at the age of forty and passed away at the age of sixty-three, leaving behind a state that would soon, through its message, encompass the entire world. In twenty-three years, the Arabian Peninsula was completely transformed. Afterward came the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, which lasted thirty years; before it had ended, the entire Arabian Peninsula had been opened, along with Egypt, the Levant, Iraq, Persia, Sind, and Africa, not to mention its political, economic, social, and civilisational achievements.[3]

Malik Ben Nabi considered that "Time is an ancient river that has traversed the world since eternity. It passes through cities, nourishing their activity with its eternal energy or lulling their slumber with the song of hours that pass in vain. It flows equally across the land of every person and within the domain of every individual, overflowing with inexhaustible daily hours; however, in one context, it becomes a 'wealth', and in another, it turns into

[1] Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, trans. Umar Kamil Musqawi (Damascus: Dar al Fikr for Printing, Distribution and Publishing, 1986), 140.

[2] Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 46.

[3] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.

nothingness. It passes through life and pours into history those values that have been bestowed upon it by what has been accomplished within it."[1]

In the contemporary world, we observe states that have risen after their decline and awakened after their slumber within the span of ten or twenty years: Europe after its bloody internal wars and Japan after Hiroshima, the two Koreas, Malaysia, Singapore, and Turkey, states that achieved a civilisational take-off within a short period. There is no magical secret behind this except for trust, responsibility, and a firm will.[2] It is a state of rescue and maximum mobilisation that sharpens determination and drives careful regard for "time" and its optimal utilisation.[3]

For this reason, Malik Ben Nabi establishes an organic connection between the significance of societies, nations, and civilisations and the significance of "time", explaining this by stating the following: "To give our subject a logical definition, it must be linked to the factor of time, in such a way that we determine for this factor its psychological and social significance. From this perspective, society becomes the group that continually changes its social characteristics through the production of means of change, with awareness of the goal it seeks to achieve through this change."[4]

We are often told that fifty years in the life of nations is like five minutes in the life of individuals, as a form of excuse that they are insufficient to achieve development, progress, and emergence from this shameful backwardness in which we have remained entangled since independence. However, fifty years are indeed sufficient to build a state from nothing. However, where is responsibility, where is will, and where is sincerity in word and action?[5]

Thus, "time" (temps) is the activity of the human being in relation to time, for time itself is a quantity shared by all living beings, minutes, hours, days, etc., whereas "time" (as duration) is achievement within that time. The extent of accomplishment measures human effectiveness

[1] Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 139.

[2] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.

[3] Issam Muhammad Ali Adwan, Mushkilat al 'Alam al Islami wa Mu'alajatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi (Algeria: al Asala for Publishing and Distribution, 2019), 85.

[4] Malik Ben Nabi, Milad Mujtama', trans. Abd al Sabur Shahin, 3rd ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1986), 17.

[5] Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.

within a given time in any field, whether material or intellectual. From this perspective, "time" may be considered life itself, insofar as it represents the movement of the human being in history.[1]

Malik Ben Nabi holds that defining the concept of "time" determines the meanings of "influence" and "production," which are the very meanings of life we lack. It is therefore necessary to attend to time intensively to compensate for our delay. To this end, Ben Nabi proposed teaching the child, the woman, and the man to allocate half an hour daily to a specific task.[2] He states on this pivotal point: "If each individual were to dedicate this portion of his day to carrying out an organised and effective task, he would, by the end of the year, possess an immense total of working hours in the service of Islamic life in all its intellectual, moral, artistic, economic, and domestic forms. This 'half hour' would practically establish the idea of time in the Islamic mind, that is, in the way of life within society and in the behavior of its individuals. If time is utilised in this manner so that it is neither wasted nor passes idly through our field, then the quantity of our intellectual, manual, and spiritual harvest will increase. This is civilisation."[3]

It is therefore of utmost importance to draw attention to an issue that is among the most critical challenges facing attempts at advancement in the Islamic world and whose neglect may have consequences capable of determining the nation's fate for multiple generations. It is the issue of defining the nature of the historical stage in which the nation lives, as a nation that has completed its civilisational cycle and withdrawn from fulfilling its historical function, that justifies its existence and the continuation of that existence. Therefore, Muslims are in urgent need of formulating a clear vision that determines for them the nature of the civilisational stage in which they exist and, consequently, their position in history if they are to return to history after having exited it and remaining on its margins.[4]

Revivalist objectives cannot be achieved except for that human being who has freed himself from the residues of the past and preserved his psychological balance in the face of the

[1] al Bashir Qallati, Ma Ba'd Malik Ben Nabi: Nahwa Tajdid al Khitab al Hadari fi Muwajahat Tahaddiyat al Qarn al Wahid wa al 'Ishrin (Algeria: al Asala Publishing Company, 2019), 80.

[2] Issam Muhammad Ali Adwan, Mushkilat al 'Alam al Islami, 85.

[3] Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 141.

[4] Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi al Tarbawi, 1st ed. (Algeria: Algerian Lebanese Company, 2009), 250.

remarkable achievements of contemporary civilisation; that is, the individual who has come to know himself and has benefited from the experiences carried within his heritage extending across centuries and who has also succeeded in liberating himself from the various negative elements that he has absorbed intellectually and behaviourally through this heritage, which has been subjected to distortion and obliteration during periods of decline.[1]

Accordingly, Malik Ben Nabi identifies a set of practical methods for achieving this "psychological balance" between the residues of the past and the achievements of contemporary Western civilisation, which are not in harmony with the culture of our Arab and Islamic societies, through the following:

"1. That he should know himself.

2. That he should know others, neither exalting himself above them nor ignoring them. Here, a well-known problem must be resolved: Muslims often show little interest in understanding others' inner worlds. It is not permissible for a Muslim to be ignorant of what is within others or to elevate himself above them or claim superiority over them on the pretext that he is destined for Paradise and honour.

3. In the third condition, he must make himself known to others, but in an appealing manner, in the form that has undergone all processes of change after purification and refinement from all residues of susceptibility to colonisation, backwardness, and forms of decline... He must first undertake this purification in order to present to others an acceptable and appealing image, as a model among the human examples shaped by Islam..."[2]

At that point, he becomes aware that he possesses, within his culture and in his heritage, certain elements now approached with a rational mindset that rejects both glorification and denial, elements needed by humanity. He thus proceeds to introduce himself to others by presenting those higher moral and spiritual values that have become rare, if not absent, in the marketplaces of Western civilisation.[3]

---

[1] Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 1st ed. (Algeria: Dar Qurtuba for Publishing and Distribution, 2009), 165.

[2] Malik Ben Nabi, Dawr al Muslim wa Risalatuhu fi al Thulth al Akhir min al Qarn al 'Ishrin, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr for Printing, Distribution and Publishing, 1991), 60–61.

[3] Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 166.

For this reason, "The issue in this context relates to the extent of efficiency rather than the correctness of ideas. If I were in China, the Soviet Union, or the West, what advice would I offer them? If it were a civilised society, I would say to it: preserve your civilisation and safeguard it, for if your civilisation is lost, your preservation in life is lost. As for the Islamic society, I would say to it: rebuild your civilisation, for civilisation is the effectiveness of the civilisational will within the civilisational capacity to provide social guarantees."[1]

If this understanding and awareness are secured, it then becomes possible to determine the point of departure for resuming a serious historical movement aimed at rebuilding the civilisation that has fallen, continuing the journey that has been interrupted, and reassuming the historical function that has been suspended. Perhaps the need to raise this issue lies in the fact that one of the most significant manifestations of the crisis of the Muslim intellect is its inability to determine the starting point for the project of initiating the desired new civilisational cycle. As Malik Ben Nabi states,[2] "Perhaps our greatest deviation and our turning away from the path of history is that we are ignorant of the point from which we must begin our history. Perhaps the greatest mistake of leaders is that they omit this social observation from their calculations. From here begins the catastrophe, and our train departs from its track, proceeding blindly. This is no wonder, for the catastrophes of history that divert a people from its path are not exceptional... Thus, no one is permitted to devise solutions and methodologies while neglecting the position and status of his nation; rather, his ideas, emotions, words, and actions must be in harmony with the requirements of the stage in which his nation exists."[3]

On this basis, it becomes unreasonable for anyone to propose solutions to the problems of the nation outside the framework of insightful awareness and correct understanding of the nature of the historical stage through which the nation is passing, given that history has a sequence, that civilisation has cycles and that each civilisational cycle passes through stages from the "precivilisation" stage to the "civilisation" stage, which comprises three major historical phases, and then to the "postcivilisation" stage. Each stage has its own characteristics and requirements. Otherwise, inauthentic solutions that cannot determine

[1] Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 2005), 70.

[2] Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 250.

[3] Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 47.

their position within this sequence of historical stages are not secure from failure, and it becomes difficult to expect them to succeed in achieving the desired reform.[1]

Thus, if the Muslim understands these factors, he will be able to adapt to his reality and offer a qualitative contribution to human civilisation. However, if he acts without knowledge or awareness of the laws governing the universe in general and history and the human self in particular, he will not move beyond his current position if he indeed manages to preserve his existence. When the Muslim attains balance and becomes conscious of himself, he will realise that he is the bearer of a divine message and is required to convey it to others among humankind. However, his current level of civilisation does not allow him to fulfil this role easily. For this to be realised:[2] "The Muslim must first contribute to building his society so that he may speak to others as an equal. Today, the Muslim does not speak as an equal; rather, he speaks as a marginalised individual, heard only by a few whom God has endowed with great intellects, while others do not listen to him."[3]

It may be useful to emphasise the importance of what Malik Ben Nabi called for, as it represents an appeal to observe the principle of authenticity in thought and reflection when dealing with the problems of society, the human being, and civilisation in the Islamic world, particularly when we recognise that every nation possesses its own cultural and civilisational specificities. Therefore, confronting these specificities is a harbinger of the failure of revivalist efforts, regardless of the sincerity of their proponents, because every nation operates within its own historical context. The problem we address within the context of Western civilisation differs in its mode of consideration from the problems raised in Islamic civilisation.[4]

There exists a disparity at the civilisational level, both materially and in terms of effectiveness:[5] "If the Muslim is required to convey the message, how can he do so while he is at a level below those to whom he seeks to convey it? He cannot do so. Therefore, we must first build a society that is commensurate with the universality of the message, and then with

[1] Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 251.

[2] Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.

[3] Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 69.

[4] Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 251–252.

[5] Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.

the level of the people to whom we convey it."[1] We cannot convey our message to those who believe or imagine that we are inferior to them in all respects, for this perception of inferiority will prevent us from delivering our message, which expresses our true essence. This perception cannot be removed from the minds of others except by elevating our society to the level of civilisation:[2] "A person cannot irrigate a thirsty land while standing upon water. Thus, we must be objective and speak with simplicity, speaking in the language of science, for science is the interpretation of things. When we say this, it is not out of narrowness or difficulty; rather, we place matters within their scientific logic. We cannot guide others unless we are, at the very least, at their social level; otherwise, how will they accept from us guidance, direction, and care, while in their view not in ours, we are inferior to them? Therefore, we must at least be at their level."[3]

For this reason, determining one's position in history to identify the point of departure constitutes a decisive juncture that must be taken into account in any attempt at advancement aimed at building or rebuilding and at resuming the nation's historical function.[4]

Thus, the conclusion that may be drawn and that which Malik Ben Nabi arrived at regarding the civilisational value of time within his reformist project is as follows:

"Civilisational product = human being + soil + time."[5]

Conclusion:

From what has been discussed, we may conclude that "time" is akin to a rare and precious pearl, both in its essence as a concept and in its existential value. Therefore, this value must be recognised by both the general public and the elite; it must be understood as a comprehensive cultural awareness within society and not confined to a select group within universities and academic centers, as many Arab and Islamic societies assume. "Society" as a whole is a single entity that encompasses all its classes, despite their differences and cultural diversity. This is what Malik Ben Nabi emphasised in constructing his reformist and revivalist project aimed at guiding our Arab and Islamic societies towards the path of civilisation.

[1] Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 69–70.

[2] Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.

[3] Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 70.

[4] Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 252.

[5] Malik Ben Nabi, Milad Mujtama', 29.

From this perspective, a form of social awareness emerges among society's members. The process of building civilisation, as we have seen throughout this study, is not contingent solely upon material factors; rather, it is founded upon a set of religious and moral values and principles that transcend all that is material, among which the factor of "time" is undoubtedly central. It is this factor that makes us aware of our position within our civilisational cycle and its progression throughout history.

If we reflect upon Western civilisation, considering that it is currently in the development stage and flourishing within its civilisational cycle, we find that it emphasises respect for "time" across all its institutions, economic enterprises, and various educational centres, as well as within the thought of its scholars and leading figures across all fields of knowledge.

What, then, of us Muslims, who are more deserving of civilisation and refinement, given our forebears who forged the glories of Islamic civilisation and inscribed its name in golden letters within the civilisational record? Our predecessors valued "time" and recognised its weight and existential significance, following the teachings of our noble Islamic religion as expressed in the sacred religious text (the Holy Qur'an) and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah.

Endnotes:

1. Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 1st ed., reviewed and corrected by Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Hadi et al. (Beirut: Dar al Minhaj for Publishing and Distribution, 2004), 120.
2. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama' (Beirut: Dar al Basha'ir al Islamiyya for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1983), 29–30.
3. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187.
4. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 30.
5. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187.
6. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 31.
7. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 187–188.
8. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 38.
9. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.
10. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 38.
11. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.
12. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 39.
13. Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120.
14. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 39.

15. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188.
16. Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120–121.
17. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 188–189.
18. Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Ghazali, Bidayat al Hidaya, 120.
19. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189.
20. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189.
21. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 46.
22. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 189–190.
23. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 47.
24. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 47–50.
25. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 190–191.
26. Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, trans. Umar Kamil Musqawi (Damascus: Dar al Fikr for Printing, Distribution and Publishing, 1986), 140.
27. Salman ibn Abd al Fattah Abu Ghudda, Qimat al Zaman 'inda al 'Ulama', 46.
28. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.
29. Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 139.
30. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.
31. Issam Muhammad Ali Adwan, Mushkilat al 'Alam al Islami wa Mu'alajatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi (Algeria: al Asala for Publishing and Distribution, 2019), 85.
32. Malik Ben Nabi, Milad Mujtama', trans. Abd al Sabur Shahin, 3rd ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1986), 17.
33. Muhammad Hindo, al Qiyam al Hadariyya wa Atharuha fi Bina' al Umam, 191.
34. al Bashir Qallati, Ma Ba'd Malik Ben Nabi: Nahwa Tajdid al Khitab al Hadari fi Muwajahat Tahaddiyat al Qarn al Wahid wa al 'Ishrin (Algeria: al Asala Publishing Company, 2019), 80.
35. Issam Muhammad Ali Adwan, Mushkilat al 'Alam al Islami, 85.
36. Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 141.
37. Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi al Tarbawi, 1st ed. (Algeria: Algerian Lebanese Company, 2009), 250.
38. Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 1st ed. (Algeria: Dar Qurtuba for Publishing and Distribution, 2009), 165.
39. Malik Ben Nabi, Dawr al Muslim wa Risalatuhu fi al Thulth al Akhir min al Qarn al 'Ishrin, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr for Printing, Distribution and Publishing, 1991), 60–61.
40. Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 166.
41. Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 2005), 70.
42. Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 250.
43. Malik Ben Nabi, Shurut al Nahda, 47.
44. Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru' Bina' Insan al Hadara, 251.
45. Muhammad Atif, Mu'awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.

46. Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 69.
47. Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru‘ Bina’ Insan al Hadara, 251–252.
48. Muhammad Atif, Mu‘awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.
49. Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 69–70.
50. Muhammad Atif, Mu‘awwiqat al Nahda wa Muqawwimatuha fi Fikr Malik Ben Nabi, 168.
51. Malik Ben Nabi, Majalis Dimashq, 70.
52. Umar al Naqib, Muqawwimat Mashru‘ Bina’ Insan al Hadara, 252.
53. Malik Ben Nabi, Milad Mujtama‘, 29.