Twentieth Century Muslims’ Thought and Their Influence on Sayyid Qutb’s Writings

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Abstract
This paper discusses the twentieth century Muslims’ thought and their influence on Sayyid Qutb’s socio-political writings. The discussion, besides giving a detailed account of Muslim figures like al-Aqquad, al-Banna and al-Maahidi and their socio-political influences on Qutb’s intellectual thinking, will examine how Qutb was influenced by these thinkers. Some of Qutb’s writings that demonstrated his intellectual and political world-view of the situation in contemporary Egyptian society will also be covered.

Keywords: Muslim thought, Sayyid Qutb, Islamic society

Introduction
This paper examines the intellectual environment inside and outside Egypt which influenced Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) to teach during his formative years and which resulted in profound changes in his intellectual and political outlook manifested in his writings. The discussion, besides giving a detailed account of Muslim figures like al-Aqquad, al-Banna and al-Maahidi and their socio-political influences on Qutb’s intellectual thinking, will examine some of Qutb’s writings that demonstrated his intellectual and political world-view of the situation in contemporary Egyptian society. There are, in fact, numerous well-known figures of the twentieth century whom Qutb clearly mentioned in many of his writings. This paper will, however, be limited to the above-mentioned intellectual figures, who regarded as having a strong influence on Qutb’s thought on literary views, socio-political issues and Islamic themes.

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In this regard, a descriptive analysis will be employed by examining those influential figures and their socio-political thought besides identifying some major themes which had an impact upon Qutb’s thought as manifested in his later writings. While al-Aqquq, the first man who exposed Qutb’s ideas, he also played a major role in the meaning of political struggles within the party besides critically analyzing the social and political conditions from literary perspectives, it was Hasan al-Banna who later changed Qutb’s secular lifestyle to one based on Islam, which he followed until his death in 1966. Qutb’s interest in participating in Islamic organization like al-Khilafa was also due to the personality of its founder, al-Banna. Al-Maadi’s influence on Qutb on the other hand, can only be traced to the early 1950s. Qutb’s exposure to al-Maadi’s ideas and his Islamic activism are clearly paramount when he began to use terms like jahiliyya, maajah and jihad.

Al-Aqquq and the Diwan School of Poetry

Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqquq (1899-1964) was one of the most important figures in the first half of the twentieth century. His importance stemmed from the fact that he was a famous Egyptian thinker, literary critic, modernist and outspoken journalist who participated in the political struggle from the 1920s to the early 1940s for independence from British rule. During those years, he joined the Wafd party under the leadership of Saif Zaghba and devoted his talents to the cause of the party. His support of the party ended with the death of Saif Zaghba, for he was disillusioned with the new party leader, Nahhaa Pasha, whom he considered more inclined to demagoguery than to democracy (Kepel, 1984).

Al-Aqquq’s early years in Aswan, where he was born, saw his exposure to Western language and culture. This was due to the many British communities living there and working on the construction of the Aswan Dam. The situation enabled him to keep in touch and gain access to English books and magazines. It also gave al-Aqquq the opportunity to learn English language and culture and gradually being influenced by English writers like Hazlitt, Coleridge, Macaulay, Arnold and Darwin (Taabah, 1977). Al-Aqquq distinguished himself from other Egyptian thinkers in that he firmly believed that reason and intellect should guide men’s actions. His tendencies were more towards secular ideas such as individualism and liberalism, which, from his viewpoint, could bring men intellectual and cultural liberty. Many of his writings clearly exemplified his thought, for he focused much on the significance of an individual and his social and political role. As an Egyptian thinker serving for a better life for the Egyptian nation, al-Aqquq saw European society as the ideal. This perhaps was the result of his long devotion to Western writing and literature during his early years at Aswan. In al-Aqquq’s view, the democratic system applied by Europe and the Western countries ought to be applied to Egyptian society because it would give individuals their freedom of right in the governmental system of the country and later bring the country towards material and intellectual development.
Al-Aq'ad wrote in al-Risalah in 1943 of his support of the democratic system: "[personally] support democracy because it protects the individual freedom and improve human life." (Tasbihah, 1977).

In his literary career, al-Aq'ad was a man of vision. He believed that the real function of the poet was to serve as the intermediary between life and its people. Therefore, in his view, poetry and other literary works were not a form of entertainment but a faithful interpretation of life (Semah, 1974). He opposed neo-classical poetry and its protagonists such as Ahmad Shawqi (1869-1932) and several others who were considered static in their poetry. According to al-Aq'ad, the poetry of Ahma'c Shawqi and his associates did not have characteristics that could bring much benefit to the public and make sense to their minds. Their poetry focused more on describing and comparing things, such as likening the shape or colour of one object to another, without giving attention to the current issues and the poets' personal expression of them. "A true poet", al-Aq'ad added, "is not necessary to show what objects look like but to express his peculiar mode of perception and his attitude to life." (Semah, 1974).

Al-Aq'ad’s influence on Qubh’s intellectual development began in the early 1920s when the latter moved to Cairo to live with his uncle, Husayn. There, Qubh was introduced to al-Aq’ad, who was already famous in both poetry and criticism. According to Khalidi, there are several reasons for the increase in Qubh’s association with al-Aq’ad. Firstly, Qubh was living with his uncle, Husayn, who was already close friends with al-Aq’ad, for both were Wafadists and journalists. Secondly, Uncle Husayn’s residence itself was close to al-Aq’ad’s residence which enabled Qubh to visit al-Aq’ad frequently. Thirdly, al-Aq’ad’s personality and his talent in literary works and criticism attracted Qubh so much that he then began to admire al-Aq’ad and read his works (Khalidi, 1994).

Qubh’s association with al-Aq’ad also enabled him to read Western books on various subjects such as literature (including poetry), history, philosophy, psychology and education, since many of them were available in al-Aq’ad’s personal library. In addition, Qubh was a loyal reader of al-Aq’ad’s writings, judging by his enthusiasm in reading all the articles and books written by his mentor. Thus, al-Aq’ad’s secular ideas such as liberalism, individualism and modernism as reflected in his writings gradually influenced Qubh as he began to realize how reason and intellect could guide human action. Qubh’s father, at this development, when he stated that al-Aq’ad helped him to focus on the thought rather than the utterance (al-inaya bi fi-l-wilah mina-falafir) (Musallam, 1983). It was perhaps, during this stage that Qubh appeared to be greatly influenced by the Western way of thinking and became acquainted with its civilization. This can be seen from his later writings in which he mentioned Western writers like T.W. Arnold (1844–1936), Henri Bergson (1859–1914) and the English poet Thomas Hardy (1840–1928). In his novel Ashwak, for instance, Qubh used ideas like existentialism, scepticism and
liberalism, which indicated his Westernized endorses. As Haddad writes, Qutb's association with al-'Aq鲍d had exposed him to Western sources and made him "extremely interested in English literature and read avidly anything he could lay his hands on in translation" (Youssef Y. Haddad, 1983).

Al-'Aq鲍d's influence on Qutb's thought had also enabled the latter to realize the meaning of political struggle in the country in a true sense. Although the fact that Qutb's concern for social and political problems that had developed during his years in Musha, as described in Tijżn al-Qarṣah, it was al-'Aq鲍d who shaped and prepared Qutb to analyze critically the social and political situation in his country. Musallam noted this development, saying that when Qutb left Musha around 1921, "he was a highly literate and politically conscientious young man with a mission in life, which had been engraved in his consciousness from the age of ten" (Musallam, 1983).

As a student of al-'Aq鲍d's school, Qutb became highly impressed by the personality and political thought of its leader. This included al-'Aq鲍d's outlook on the Western parliamentary system and his preference for democracy to any other ideologies like Marxism and communism. To al-'Aq鲍d, democracy as applied in the West gave an individual a full right in the government. Qutb also became impressed with al-'Aq鲍d's political role as such in the 1919-1922 revolution and his literary contribution to the nationalist struggle of that time, in which he aimed at implanting an awareness of nationalism in the minds of the Egyptians. Thus Qutb's years with al-'Aq鲍d opened his eyes and made him realize that, as a literary critic, he too had a role to play in finding solutions to the problems of the Egyptian social and political milieu. Following both his uncle and mentor, Qutb joined the Wafd party and became an active member. Qutb devoted himself to working for the party for almost twenty years, including writing poetry and essays for the party's newspaper, al-Rubah (Musallam, 1983). From the period spent at Dar al-Ilm to the middle of the 1940s, Qutb joined al-'Aq鲍d in literary battles against the latter's literary rivals such as al-Rafi`i and several others among the neo-classicists. Qutb's critical writings against al-Rafi`i appeared mainly in al-Risalah, where his method of criticism clearly relied on the thought of al-'Aq鲍d. Describing al-'Aq鲍d's influence on his thought in literary work, Qutb mentioned to al-Nadwi, who visited him in 1951, that:

There is no doubt that I am a disciple of al-'Aq鲍d both in literature and in literary style. It is to him that I owe my ability to think clearly, he stopped me from glutting al-Mafalidki and al-Rafi`i... Al-'Aq鲍d is a man of pure intellect; he will only examine a problem through reason and intellect, so I proceeded to quench my thirst at other springs nearer the spirit. I then took the trouble to study the poetry of Orientals such as Tagore; I used to believe moreover that someone like al-'Aq鲍d, with his great wisdom and personality, would not
submit to such necessities and confusions as the government and the authorities, but he reconciled himself to them (Uglya Haim, 1982).

In 1946, Qutb, however, distanced himself completely from ‘Aqad and his school. Besides ‘Aqad’s apparent tolerance of the government’s attitude towards social and political problems, Qutb’s distance from his mentor was also due to his greater interest in spiritual themes in poetry and other literary works. This, of course, differed from his mentor, ‘Aqad, who was still firmly convinced that reason and intellect alone could guide men’s action by ignoring spiritual values. Qutb admitted this new transformation in his literary career during his conversation with al-Nadwi:

‘Aqad is inclined towards using purely intellectual thought and does not approach specific issues or discuss them unless through intellect and reason alone. It was therefore my personal quest to find another mode of thinking which is closer to the spirit. (Soldhan, 1993)

At this point, Qutb’s latest interest might have been the result of his six years of work on a literary study of the Qur’an, beginning in 1939 and ending with the publication of his book, *al-Tawârîkh fî ‘l-l底蕴rān*, in 1945. This is because his separation from ‘Aqad began in 1946 and signified that his literary analysis of artistic imagery and portrayal in the Qur’an had provided him with a new direction in literary work: the search for spiritual values. According to Muaaflam (1983), “the Qur’an, more than any other single factor, was instrumental in leading Qutb out of the turbulences he experienced in his fruitless search for the infinite into a strong belief in the Islamic way of life.”

**Hamîr al-Banna and the Ikhwân al-Muslimîn**

Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) can be considered one of the important Muslim figures during the formative phase of Islamic resurgence in the modern Arab world in general and Egypt in particular. His ideas on and contribution to the debate of the Islamic revivalism in the 1920s, as Abu Rabi’ writes, “must be understood as that of a religious-minded and rising middle-class intellectual of the Third World labouring under the impact of cultural Westernization and political weakness at home.” (Abu Rabi’, 1996).

Born in the provincial town of al-Mahmudiyya, the district of Rasheeda, al-Banna started his early education at the village’s religious school, al-Kutub. At the age of twelve he began studying at the Madrasa al-Nuzamiyya before attending the Primary Teachers’ Training School at Damanhour. In 1923, he moved to Cairo to complete his studies in education at Dar al-Umm’s teachers’ college. In 1927, after graduating from Dar al-Umm, al-Banna began his career as a government teacher in Isma’iliyah province (Shadi,
During his years at Dar al-‘Ulum in Cairo, al-Banna appears to have been greatly influenced by the ideas of Muslim modernists such as Muhammad ‘Abdul and Rashid Rafa, especially their exposure to the dangers of Westernization to Muslim society (Selma Hotman, 1987). In describing al-Banna’s life at Dar al-‘Ulum, Mitchell writes that it enabled him to see “the danger of ‘educated youth’ from the Islamic way of life” (Mitchell, 1998). This new phenomenon facing the Egyptians and the youth in particular was due to two main reasons: an imitation of the Western way of life and culture on the one side and the lack of the ‘ulama’s role in implanting Islamic awareness in society on the other. The situation worsened when there were publicized views of Western educated figures like Tahar Hassanein, Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Salama Musa, who saw a religious life to mean backwardness and opposition to a modern civilization (Shadi, 1994).

The continuing social problems facing the country had also forced al-Banna to feel disillusioned with the ‘ulama’ of al-Azhar, who, from his viewpoint, should also be held responsible for all the contemporary problems facing Muslim society. In this regard, they seemed to care more about their personal welfare than promoting the general well-being of the Egyptian Muslims, who were in need of spiritual guidance (Shadi, 1994). There were also among the ‘ulama’ those who chose to co-operate with the current government, considering that such a policy was for the social, political and economic benefit of the Egyptians. As ‘Abu Rabi’ notes, these Muslim religious authorities “had allied themselves with the colonists, and this situation wreaked havoc in the world of Islam... This alliance with the exploiters is just a reflection of their choice of selfish interests and worldly ambition over the welfare of the country and the nation” (‘Abu Rabi’, 1996).

These developments gradually created doubts and suspicion in the mind of al-Banna about the efficacy of the Azhar to offer even the necessary remedies to the afflicted Muslims. He therefore decided that it was the time to act and establish a new organization capable of meeting the demands of contemporary life. In 1929, al-Banna began to play an active part in the social life of the local community. He gave religious lectures in mosques and schools, explaining to the local community about the existing problems facing the Muslim Ummah and later asking them to return to Islam as the way of life. During this time, he also became aware of foreign infiltration, such as the British military camp and the Suez Canal Company that was wholly owned by foreigners (Mitchell, 1998). The very practice of these foreigners, in his view, drove Muslim people away from Islam and colonized their minds with the Western way of life. This could be considered among the major factors that led al-Banna to establish the Wilayat al-Muslim in 1928, with the aim of instilling the truth, propagating Islam as a faith and an ideology and disseminating Islamic knowledge throughout Muslim society.

In 1932, al-Banna, who was now the supreme leader of the Wilayat, moved to
Cairo, where his personality and religious commitment attracted both lower and middle class people. His message was that Islam was both a religion and a universal faith with a strong sense of ideological mission. In a short time, as Botman points out, al-Banna successfully developed a political organization that posed a great challenge to the secular government and directly opposed Western standards of behaviour (Botman, 1987). From the 1930s to the 1940s the Ikhwan was particularly strong. Besides taking part in demonstrations and protests against the occupying authority, the Ikhwan also joined the Arab forces in the war between the Palestinians and the Israelis. However, the strength and popularity of the Ikhwan during these years were very much due to the personality of its leader, al-Banna. The assassination of al-Banna in 1949 sent the organization underground for several years (Botman, 1987).

The influence of al-Banna and his Ikhwan on Qutb’s Islamic thought was considerable, especially in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. This was the period when Qutb changed his career from that of a literary man into a committed Muslim writer and thinker who devoted the rest of his life to Islam in his writings and direct participation in the Ikhwan. More importantly, Qutb also changed his secular lifestyle to one based on Islam, which he followed till his death in 1966. There are many similarities between al-Banna and Qutb. Both were born in 1906, both grew up in religious families, graduated from Dar al-Ulum, served as government teachers in their early careers, and devoted their lives to Islam till their tragic deaths. Al-Banna was assassinated in 1949 and Qutb was executed in 1966 (Shadi, 1994). The difference between both figures is that Qutb’s commitment to Islam began in the late 1940s. This means that he was still immersed in the world of literature, defending his mentor al-Aqaid against other literary figures, whereas al-Banna had already established and was participating in various Islamic reform societies such as the Society for the Prevention of the Forbidden (Ummayyat Maar al-muharramaat). It was the personality of al-Banna and the Ikhwan that contributed to Qutb’seneration to Islam. This can be seen from Qutb’s dedication in his first Islamic work, al-Adala:

To the youth to whom I see in my fantasy coming to restore this religion anew like when it first began... fighting for the cause of Allah by killing and by getting killed. Believing is the bottom of their hearts that the glory belongs to Allah, to His Prophet and to the believers... To those youths whom I do not dread for a moment will be revived by the strong spirit of Islam from past generations to future generations in the very near future (Qutb, 1949).

Though writers like Khalidi and Muallem have the view that the dedication was not for Ikhwan members because Qutb was still taking an independent path during 1948, it could still be regarded as a hint of his interest in joining
the organization. This is because in the years before leaving for America, Qutb had become disillusioned with the existing political parties, which, in his opinion, lacked a constructive policy, aimed at the realization of social justice and the rejuvenation of Egyptian society. In 1945, for example, Qutb wrote in al-Risala that the Egyptian people were in need of new parties having a constructive mentality and more concern for correcting the unequal distribution of wealth through educational policies (Ma‘arif, 1995). Therefore his mention of “youngsters” struggling for the sake of God should be seen as his new Islamic tendency and his pride in an Islamic organization promoting the reform of society on the basis of Islam. That was why after its publication in April 1949, al-‘Adala was immediately confiscated by the authorities, believing that the book was dedicated to the ikhwān, which, at that time, was extremely vigorous in its activities against the government (Khalidi, 1994).

Although Qutb never met al-Banna, he did follow the news of al-Banna’s activities with the ikhwān. Moreover, Qutb’s ideas, which appeared in al-‘Adala, were in many ways similar to those which had been argued by al-Banna and the ikhwān from the 1930s to the 1940s. That was why, upon reading al-‘Adala, al-Banna stated: “These are our ideas and there is no doubt that its author is one of us” (Shadi‘, 1994). Qutb’s official association with the ikhwān began in 1951 after his return from America. In this regard, al-Banna’s personality and his assassination were among the major factors that led him to devote himself to the organization. Upon hearing of al-Banna’s death in 1949, Qutb, who was receiving medical treatment for a health problem in a San Francisco hospital, noticed that the hospital staff were overjoyed at the news. This experience propelled him in a new direction in his career: he had to cooperate with the ikhwān and to cooperate with them with the aim of realizing his ideas of social justice. The appearance of the second edition of al-‘Adala in 1951 indicated clearly Qutb’s close association with the ikhwān, for he had changed his dedication to read:

To the youngsters whom I used to see in my fantasy coming but have found them in real life existing, serving for Allah with their progressions and their love, believing profoundly that glory belongs to Allah and to His Prophet and to the believers (Qutb, 1951).

Qutb’s orientation to the ikhwān should also be examined within the context of the social and political development of Egyptian society. The conjoint social problems in Egypt coupled with the failure of the existing political parties to solve them led Qutb to return to Islam as he did in al-‘Adala. In this regard, Qutb found the ikhwān had characteristics similar to those which he wished to promote in correcting the social and economic disparity of Egyptian society. As Tripp wrote:

The ikhwān’s activism, both in the Palestine war and in
the attacks on British military installations in the Suez Canal Zone, clearly impressed Sayyid Qutb and led him to believe that the Muslim Brotherhood combined the virtues that he was to extol in later writings (Tripp, 1994).

Al-Mawdudi and the Jama'at al-Islami Movement

Abū'l-A'la al-Mawdūdī (1903-1979), the founder of the Jama'at al-Islami movement in Pakistan, was another important figure of the twentieth-century Islamic renaissance. His ideas about Islam, in addition to his political participation in the creation of Pakistan, had attracted attention outside the Indian sub-continent, especially in other Muslim countries.

Coming from a religious family, al-Mawdūdī began his early education with his father, who was known for his strictness as bringing up his children and his opposition to Western culture and education. After the death of his father, al-Mawdūdī joined his brother in journalism in 1918. This year witnessed the beginnings of the National Movement in India, which encouraged al-Mawdūdī to take part in the nationalist struggle against British penetration (Riaz Ahmad, 1964).

From 1924, he served as editor of several journals such as the weekly Tij and al-Jam'a for about ten years before turning to devote himself to Islamic issues and the Muslim Ummah in particular (Adams, 1983). It was during the editorship of the al-Jam'a that a great change took place in him as a result of an incident in 1926. Swami Shankhacand, a leader of the Shuddhi (an extremist Hindu revivalist movement) was assassinated by a Muslim. In describing the incident, Adam writes:

> The murder provoked a great public outcry, and criticisms of Islam and the Muslims began to appear in the public press. There were accusations that Islam relies upon the sword for its propagation, charges of bloodthirstiness, and repugnance of the old slander that Islam promises Paradise to those who kill an unbeliever (Adam, 1985).

Al-Mawdūdī answered these criticisms in the columns of al-Jam'a. He also produced a series of articles on Islam's view on war, which were published as a book entitled al-Shahid: l'Islam in 1930 (Adam, 1983).

From this time on, al-Mawdūdī seems to have devoted himself to a deeper study of Islamic theology. He produced later another book on theology entitled Towards Understanding Islam (Ahmad Riaz, 1969). This book was received with great acclaim from Muslims outside the Indian sub-continent when it was translated into Arabic and circulated along with other works by al-Mawdūdī. In this regard, al-Tikhan al-Muslimīn of Egypt played an
important role in its translation and circulation for the use of fellow Muslims. Al-Mawdudi's decision to write seriously on Islamic issues was also motivated by his feeling of responsibility to expose the nature of jahiliyya surrounding Muslim society at that time and all the evil that it contained in the realm of Western influences. In his opinion, Islam was a strong weapon against the danger. Therefore he found that it was necessary to provide a clear explanation to his fellow Muslims of the basics of Islamic theology, such as 'ajada and 'umma (faith). At this stage his efforts were aimed primarily at the political community or the ruling elite, not at the person in the street. 

This was due to his belief that practical social change was impossible unless the theoretical views held by the leadership were changed first. Thus, al-Mawdudi's teaching was to correct the erroneous ways of thinking among the Muslim upper classes who had been much seduced by jahiliyya. In his book Towards Understanding Islam, for instance, al-Mawdudi emphasized the significance of faith in God to keep Muslims away from jahiliyya elements:

"It is the knowledge of the attributes of God, which enables man to cultivate in him the noblest of human qualities and to fashion his life in virtue and godliness. If a man does not know that there is One and only One God who is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Sustainer of the Universe, he may fall a prey to false gods, and offer his homage to them to indulge their fancies. But if he knows the divine attributes of infinite conceptions of God, there is not the least possibility of his falling a prey to this illusion (Mawdudi, 1980)."

The question of the future of the Muslim minority in the Indian sub-continent after independence was another important factor which led al-Mawdudi to change his direction of thought to Muslim welfare. He became aware of a great danger awaiting the Muslim community, owing to a clear stance from the Indian National Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, which declared that all Indians would soon constitute a single nation, regardless of their race, culture, and religion, and that the future government of India would be both democratic and secular (Adam, 1985). At this time, al-Mawdudi saw a grand attempt by the Congress to destroy the Muslims' identity and their sense of nationality. The adoption of a secular government would, in his view, discriminate against the minority religious groups, especially Muslims, and the government itself would favour the Hindus, who were the religion of the majority. With the aim of protecting Muslim interests, al-Mawdudi, along with his close friends, founded the Jam'at-i Islami in August 1941. He was elected as the first leader and served the Jam'at until 1972. This movement was supported by Muslim activists and notable 'ulama' of the Indian continent such as Sayyid Abu'l-Haram 'Ali al-Naqdi and some others (Tripp, 1994). The period from the late 1950s to the early 1960s saw al-Mawdudi producing articles and essays aimed at propagating his ideas on Islamic issues and political matters. Besides al-Ibadh fi 'Asr al-Islam and Towards Understanding Islam, al-Mawdudi wrote Tarjuman al-Qur'an (1932) and
Tafhlm al-Qur'an (1972). These works were regarded as very important by many Muslim scholars inside and outside India. They have since been translated into other languages such as English and Arabic and circulated, with other works of al-Mawdudi.

Quib’s interest in al-Mawdudi’s Islamic thought can be traced to the early 1950s, when many of the latter’s scholarly works were translated into languages of both the Islamic and the Western worlds. Moreover, being a new member of the Ikhwan enabled Quib to gain access to al-Mawdudi’s works, since the Ikhwan, as we noted earlier, had played an important part in translating and circulating the latter’s ideas. Among al-Mawdudi’s major works which had been translated from Urdu and English into Arabic were Jihad in Islam, Islam and Antisemitism and The Principle of Islamic Government. In 1951, al-Nadwi, a disciple and close friend of al-Mawdudi, published a book in Arabic entitled What Did The World Lose Due to the Decline of Islam? The book expounded eloquently al-Mawdudi’s thought and his views on modern jahiliyya doctrine. Quib’s exposure to al-Mawdudi’s ideas and his Islamic activism was also increased by al-Nadwi’s visit to him in the same year. It was a great moment for Quib for he found that many of al-Mawdudi’s ideas were in parallel with the objectives for which he was struggling. In other words, the visit had a strong impact on Quib’s political thought when both found their ideas to be in close affinity” (Stray, 1985).

Many of Quib’s works written in the 1950s quoted al-Mawdudi’s Islamic ideas and terms such as jahiliyya, ma’naw and jihad. Quib’s discussion of the sovereignty of God in Mussaqhal li jadda al-din (Islam: The Religion of the Future), for instance, referred to al-Mawdudi’s work, The Four Terminologies in the Qur’an. Quib’s other work which quoted al-Mawdudi’s ideas at length was f/ Jilal al-Qur’an. In this Quranic commentary the concepts of jahiliyya and hadj were widely used by Quib in his analysis of contemporary society. In his view, Egyptian society lived in a new jahiliyya—the jahiliyya of Arab-nationalism as represented by the Nasserite regime. Its laws, morals and behaviour were based on jahili concepts and were not compatible with Islamic Quib went further and declared that jahiliyya was facing not only the Egyptians but also the whole Muslim umma where their ways of life were built on the laws laid down by their own fellow men (Quib, 1992).

Quib’s concept of jahiliyya and its usage seemed to depart a little from that of al-Mawdudi’s concept of jahiliyya. Perhaps the different environments of these two figures was the reason for their different understanding and application of the concept. Mawdudi’s definition of jahiliyya mainly referred to the way of life and thought of the ruling classes, those leaders of Muslim India, and not the person in the street. Furthermore, in al-Mawdudi’s view, there were two categories of jahiliyya: pure jahiliyya and mixed jahiliyya. Pure jahiliyya rejected God completely, whereas mixed jahiliyya referred to those who associated religion with infidelity and did not rule by God’s order. Quib, on the other hand, claimed that the whole world was living a
jahilli society, which was pure jahiliyyah. Despite some existing difference of terms, the influence of al-Maududi and the Jammat al-Islami upon Qutb’s Islamic thought of the 1950s was paramount. Both had the same aims in their struggle, that is, the return to Islam as the way of life: socially, politically and economically.

An analysis of the Twentieth Century Muslims’ Thought

From the above discussion, it is clear that al-Aqqad, al-Banna and al-Maududi had a strong influence on Qutb’s socio-political thought manifested in his later writings. Al-Aqqad considered the first man who introduced Qutb on the importance of using science and intellect in analyzing social and political issues. Perhaps, al-Aqqad’s long exposure to the Western writings has enabled him and his disciple Qutb, to be more critical and analytical in interpreting social and political issues concerning his country. This stage therefore became preparatory for Qutb before officially participating in the Islamic organization like al-Ikhwan in the early 1950s. The second stage of Qutb’s career was very much influenced by al-Banna when Qutb did follow news about al-Banna’s activities with the Ikhwan till his death.

The Western’s overjoying at the news of al-Banna’s assassination exposed Qutb the real culprit and how hypocrite the Western people were towards the Muslim world. In addition to the development, the Ikhwan organization had characteristics similar to those which Qutb tended to promote in solving the social and political problems facing his country. Therefore, al-Banna’s influence in many ways was much related to the need for Qutb to participate in an organized group like the Ikhwan itself as part of his mission to solve the existing social and political problems from Islamic perspectives. Al-Maududi’s struggle together with Jamaat, the establishment of Pakistani movements had further convinced Qutb on the need for well-structured Islamic organization to achieve the desired goal. In this regard, it seemed that al-Maududi’s works on the need for Jihad, the establishment of Islamic government and abolishing the so-called modern jahiliyyah were more attractive to Qutb as he later used similar terms like jihad, jahiliyyah and wastahaj in his writings. Therefore, it was the idea and influence of al-Banna and al-Maududi which were more parallel with the objectives Qutb was struggling compared to that of al-Aqqad’s idea.

Qutb’s joining the Ikhwan, and his continuous effort to propagate Islamic ideology through his writing clearly demonstrated such the claim.

Conclusion

The formative phases of Qutb’s life saw the development of his intellectual career and emergence as one of the important Muslim figures of the twentieth century. Throughout more years Qutb’s background, including his upbringing, education and the socio-political conditions of Egyptian
society, were responsible for shaping his cultural and intellectual orientation. In addition, the intellectual environment during his years in Cairo was also exceptional, for Qutb appears to have been gradually influenced by names like al-'Aqaq, al-Banna and al-Maududi, who contributed to shaping Qutb's critical basis of thought and his outlook on the social and political situation of his country. More importantly, the personality of al-Banna and his struggle under the banner of the Ikhwan, which was attempting to present Islam as a comprehensive way of life to the Egyptians, had convinced Qutb of the importance of taking part in Islamic activities to deal with the current problems facing his society. Qutb's joining the Ikhwan in 1951 was a meaningful moment in his Islamic activism; it enabled him to play a direct role in the political struggle in the country by an organized Islamic group. In addition, his association with the Ikhwan enabled Qutb to read al-Maududi's works, which had a strong influence upon his thoughts and crystallized his understanding of Islam as he became in fully understood concept of jihad, manhaj and al-nuranta al-Islami in a true sense. Qutb's role in the Ikhwan's struggle also proved his sincerity in his calling people to Islam when he began by himself to reform his society, even though this eventually cost him his life. Out of those three Muslim figures of the twentieth century, al-Banna and al-Maududi considered he has had a great influence on Qutb's Islamic thought since their ideas were more parallel with the objectives Qutb was struggling compared to that of al-'Aqaq's idea. Qutb's continuous efforts to propagate Islamic ideology through his writings such as Metalsam fī al Tariq and Fi Zikhl al-Qurun clearly demonstrated such the claim.

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