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Modern Exegesis on Historical Narratives of the Qur'ān: The Case of ʿĀd and Thamūd according to Sayyid Quṭb in his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʿān*

By Al Makin

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Institute of Islamic Studies
McGill University
June 1999

To my father, I am not even on the half way there yet ...

Abstract

Author : Al Makin

Title : Modern Exegesis on Historical Narratives of the Qurʾān: The Case of ʿĀd and Thamūd according to Sayyid Quṭb in his *Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*

Department : Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University

Degree : Master of Arts

This thesis examines modern interpretation of historical narrative in the Qurʾān, taking as an example Sayyid Quṭb's exegesis of the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd in his *tafsīr, Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*. This is accomplished by surveying of ʿĀd and Thamūd prior to Quṭb to show how great the shift of interpretation is between classical and modern exegetes. Furthermore, close reading of *Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* is made in order to trace the significance of the two tales for Quṭb, as Quṭb's interpretation is not only a response to his predecessors but also to his contemporary milieu; which featured political, ideological and religious conflict. His experiences with the latter are reflected in his interpretation which follows the pattern of *jāhilīyah* versus Islam, ʿĀd versus Hūd, and Thamūd versus Ṣāliḥ. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, as prophets and callers to the truth, represent Quṭb himself, whereas ʿĀd and Thamūd, as challengers and evildoers, stand for his enemies; the West, its materialistic tendencies and the Egyptian government. In commenting on the *Ẓilāl's* hermeneutic, we will examine its systematization of the *sūrahs* and verses which contain these two tales as well as analyze Quṭb's argumentation, historical consciousness, hermeneutic, and personal judgement.

Résumé

Auteur : Al Makin

Titre : L'éxègese moderne sur le récit historique du Qurʾān: Le cas de ʿĀd et Thamūd selon Sayyid Quṭb dans son *Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*

Département : Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill

Diplôme : Maîtrise ès Arts

Ce mémoire examinera l'interprétation moderne du récit historique dans le Qurʾān, en prenant pour exemple l'exégèse Sayyid Quṭb des récits de ʿĀd et Thamūd dans son *tafsīr, Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān.* Ce qui sera atteint par un survol de ʿĀd et Thamūd précédant Quṭb afin de montrer l'importance du changement d'interprétaion entre les éxegètes classiques et modernes. De plus, une lecture approfondie du *Fi Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* retracera l'importance des deux récits pour Quṭb. En effet, l'interprétation de l'auteur est non seulement une réponse à ses prédécesseurs mais aussi à son milieu contemporain caractérisé par des conflits politiques, idéologiques et religieux. L'expérience de Quṭb avec l'aspect religieux se reflète dans son interprétation suivant le modèle *jāhilīyah* contre Islam, ʿĀd contre Hūd, and Thamūd contre Ṣāliḥ. Hūd et Ṣāliḥ, en tant que prophètes et évocateurs de la vérité, représentent Quṭb lui-même, alors que ʿĀd et Thamūd, en tant qu'adversaires et malfaiteurs, sont ses ennemis; c'est-à-dire l'Occident, son matérialisme et le gouvernement égyptien. Tout en commentant l'herméneutique du *Ẓilāl,* nous examinerons sa systématisation des *sūrahs* et des versets contenant ces deux récits et nous analyserons l'argumentation de Quṭb, sa conscience historique, son herméneutique ainsi que son jugement personnel.

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The System of Transliteration

The system of transliteration of Arabic words and names follows that of Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

ب =b	ذ =dh	ط =ṭ	ل =l
ت =t	ر =r	ظ =ẓ	م =m
ث =th	ز =z	ع =ʿ	ن =n
ج =j	س =s	غ =gh	ه =h
ح =ḥ	ش =sh	ف =f	و =w
خ =kh	ص =ṣ	ق =q	ي =y
د =d	ض =ḍ	ك =k	ء =ʾ

Short: ـَ =a; ـِ =i; ـُ =u

Long: ا =ā; ي =ī; و =ū

Diphthongs: أي =ay; أو =aw.

Long vowel with *tahsdīd*: for أيّ, and أوّ, *īya* and *ūwa* are employed.

In the case of taʾ marbūṭah (ة) h is written, and if it occurs within an *iḍāfah,* it is transliterated with *at.*

The *hamzah* (ء) occurring in the initial position is omitted.

Abbreviations

EI[1]: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 1st edition.

EI[2]: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* New Edition.

EMIW: *The Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World.* John L. Esposito, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

ER: *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. Mircea Eliade. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987.

GAL: *Geschichte des arabischen Litteratur.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937.

Introduction

The Qurʾān contains many narratives, some of them with parallels in Biblical stories and others not, the tales of ʿĀd and Thamūd being among the latter. According to the common classification of these narratives, we have three categories: (1) narratives of the prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*), which tell of 25 prophets and their people (ʿĀd and Thamūd being included in the latter); (2) narratives of extraordinary people in the era prior to revelation of whom it is not clearly understood whether or not they were prophets; for example, the *aṣḥāb al-kahf* (Q. 18) and *dhū al-qarnayn* (Q. 18); and (3) narratives which tell about events contemporary to Prophet Muḥammad; for example, the battle of Badr (Q. 3), Uḥud (Q. 3), Ḥunayn (Q. 7), Tabūk (Q. 7), and the night journey of Prophet Muḥammad (Q. 17).[1]

There have been many studies of these narratives written by both Muslim and Western scholars. Classical and modern Muslim scholars have explained them in books of *qiṣaṣ*,[2] *tārīkh*,[3] and *tafsīr*.[4] According to Wansbrough's typology of this kind, exegesis has a *haggadic* tendency,[5] such as in the explanation of ʿĀd and Thamūd, encountered in these works. Western scholars on the other hand usually adopt one of three approaches, generally speaking: (1) seeking parallels between these narratives and non-

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[1] ʿAbd Allāh Shiḥātah, *ʿUlūm al-Tafsīr* (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat al-Sharq, 1986) 107-8; T. M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, *Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qurʾān: Media Pokok dalam Menafsirkan al-Qurʾān* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1972)176-7.

[2] al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. Isaac Eisenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1922); al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ al-Musammā bi al-ʿArāʾis* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah, n.d.); Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Ṭuʿmah Ḥalabī (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1997);

[3] Ṭabārī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1979).

[4] Ṭabārī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1986-7); al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1957).

[5] See his *Quranic Studies: Sources and Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 122-48.

Qurʾānic sources, through comparison or derivation, an approach which is very common, especially when comparing Qurʾānic and Biblical characters, and which may be seen in the writings of Jacob Lasner,[6] Yoram Erder,[7] Marilyn R. Waldman[8] among others; (2) study of the narratives based solely on the Qurʾān itself, for example Mustansir Mir's examination of the characters in the story of Yūsūf in Q. 12;[9] and (3) study of narratives in the exegetical works, such as Anthony H. Johns' study of the figure of Ibrāhīm according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī[10] and those of Mūsā and Firʿawn in the commentary of Sayyid Quṭb.[11]

A number of scholars have studied Sayyid Quṭb's thought, particularly from the stand-point of his Islamic principles, fundamentalism, political activities, and *tafsīr*.[12] Where the latter is concerned, we may point to Olivier Carré's study of radicalism in Quṭb's *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*,[13] Ibrahim Abu Rabiʿ's discussion of some important points of

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[6] *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[7] See his "The Origin of the Name Idrīs in the Qurʾān: A Study of the Influence of Qumran Literature on Early Islam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (October 1990) 339-50.

[8] See her "New Apporaches to "Biblical" Materials in the Qurʾān," *The Muslim World* 75 (January 1985) 1-16.

[9] See his "The Qurʾanic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, and Characters," *The Muslim World* 76 (January 1986) 1-15.

[10] See his "Al-Rāzī's Treatment of the Qurʾānic Episodes Telling of Abraham and his Guests Qurʾānic Exegesis with a Human Face," *Institut Dominicain D'études Orientales du Caire, Mélanges (MIDEO)* 17 (1986): 81-114.

[11] See his "Let My People Go! Sayyid Quṭb and the Vocation of Moses," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 1 (December 1990) 143-70.

[12] Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Ahmad S. Moussali, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Thought of Sayyid Quṭb*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992); Adnan A. Musallam, "The Formative Stages of Sayyid Quṭb's Intellectual Career and His Emergence as an Islamic Dāʿiya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983); idem, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Quṭb's Literary and Spiritual Orientation, 1932-1938," *The Muslim World* 80 (July-October 1990): 177-89; idem, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice, 1945-1948" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4 (January 1993); Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," *Middle East Journal* 37 (1983); John Calvert, "Discourse, Community and Power: Sayyid Quṭb and the Islamic Movement in Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1993); William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[13] Olivier Carré, *Mystique et politique: lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Quṭb, frère musulman radical* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1984).

Ẓilāl,[14] Mhd. Syahnan's examination of the development of the text of *Ẓilāl* between its earlier and later editions.[15] However, there has been no attempt made at close reading of the *Ẓilāl* with particular attention to its treatment of Qurʾānic narrative; with the possible exception of Anthony H. Johns, certainly no one has investigated in depth Quṭb's treatment of ʿĀd and Thamūd, and their semiotic values for his thought. This thesis will attempt to fill this gap.

In this study my primary source will be the text of *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* of Sayyid Quṭb, and I will use the 1988 edition published in Beirut by Dār al-Shurūq. I will also compare the text with the main principles of Quṭb's thought as portrayed in his other works or discussed by other scholars. In terms of methodology, I will take a comparative approach, beside examining the *Ẓilāl* in the light of Quṭb other works or of those by other scholars, concentrating in particular on his treatment of the ʿĀd and Thamūd narratives. I will also look at my sources from the angle of hermeneutic;[16] the affinity between the historical situation of Quṭb and his exegetical text is maintained by observing his use of language. Furthermore, in examining the structure of the tale of ʿĀd and Thamūd as recounted in the *Ẓilāl*, the study will draw upon the semantic method of Toshihiko Izutsu[17] and the search for the meaning of symbolism advocated by Clifford Geertz.[18]

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[14] Ibrahim Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
[15] Mhd. Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qurʾān Exegesis in Earlier and Later Editions of His *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*: With Specific Reference to Selected Themes (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1997).
[16] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised ed. (New York: Continuum, 1997).
[17] See his *God and Man in the Qurʾān: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural Studies, 1964); idem, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966).
[18] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973).

The thesis is divided into five sections: an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter one will survey the references to ʿĀd and Thamūd in the Qurʾān and in the interpretations prior to Sayyid Quṭb, covering *qiṣaṣ, tārīkh,* classical and modern *tafsīr* literature, and also Western scholars' research. Chapter two will examine the significance of ʿĀd and Thamūd for Sayyid Quṭb; it will study the structure of his presentation and interpret his use of symbolism, and especially the affinity between time and space. Chapter three will examine Quṭb's hermeneutical approach in interpreting the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd, analyzing the structure of his *tafsīr* and showing how Quṭb arranges the *sūrah* and the verses which contain the tale of ʿĀd and Thamūd, and appraising and criticizing Quṭb's method in assigning meanings. Finally, a conclusion summarizes the main points of this study.

Chapter One

Interpretations of ʿĀd and Thamūd prior to Sayyid Quṭb

> The task of commentary can never, by definition, be completed.
>
> Michel Foucault.[1]

A. ʿĀd

1. In the Qurʾān

The existence of ʿĀd is confirmed by the Qurʾān, which mentions them twenty-four times.[2] ʿĀd disobeyed the Prophet Hūd's call, which brought retribution in the form of a devastating wind. They were destroyed in the end. According to the Qurʾān, ʿĀd were a nation renowned for their prosperity (Q. 7: 69 and 41: 15), who lived among sand dunes (*aḥqāf*) and built great structures (Q. 24: 128, 89: 6-7). Then Hūd was sent to them with a summons to obey God (Q. 11: 50), which ʿĀd betrayed (Q. 26: 123; 38: 12; 50: 13; 54: 18; 22: 42). They are described on more than one occasion as an arrogant people (Q. 11: 59, 50: 15). Finally, God sent them a wind (*ṣarṣar* or *ʿaqīm*) as punishment (Q. 51: 41; 69: 6). As can be seen from the above, the Qurʾān tells the story of ʿĀd in short, disjointed sections, often repeating individual elements for effect. Nowhere is the narrative given in its entirety all at once.

The simple references to be found in the Qurʾān raise some pertinent questions, among them the fundamental one of the existence of ʿĀd and their historicity. There are approaches to answering this question, which we may classify under three headings, generally speaking. The first is that of the classical exegetes, who tried to reconstruct the

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[1] In his *The Order of Things, an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 41.

myth of ʿĀd. This includes al-Ṭabarī's (838-923)[3] approach seen in both his *Tafsīr* and his *Tārīkh*.[4] Other examples of this methodology include *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1035), al-Kisāʾī,[5] Ibn Kathīr (1301-1373), etc. The second approach to the narrative is that of modern Western scholars. They sought to demythologize the story of ʿĀd, tracing its historical basis, and rejecting the irrational myths of the first approach. The third approach on the other hand consists in extracting the moral lessons and avoiding comment on all the details of the story. Modern Muslim scholars, especially exegetes, attempt this, following in the footsteps of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905), who insisted on returning to the essence of the Qurʾān and *Sunnah* and avoiding *isrāʾīliyāt*.[6] This was developed by other modern exegetes, such as Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), al-Marāghī(1881-1945), Bint al-Shāṭiʾ (1913-1998) and our figure, Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966).

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[2] This is confirmed by Bint al-Shāṭiʾ, see her *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1990) 143.

[3] See Andrew Rippin, "al-Ṭabarī," *ER* 14, 231-3; R. Paret, "al-Ṭabarī," *EI*[1], vol. 8, 578-9; Brockelmann, *GAL* 1, 142; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 38-45; Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) 3-4.

[4] See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1986-7); idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1979).

[5] I. Eisenberg who edited *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Kisāʾi in 1898 believed that the author of this book was Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh whom Hārun al-Rashīd (763-809) entrusted with the task of educating his two sons: al-Amīn (787-813) and al-Maʾmūn (786-833). However, T. Nagel is rather doubtful of this conclusion that, in fact, the one who was entrusted to do so by al-Rashīd was Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ḥamzah (737-805), one of seven famous Qurʾānic readers, so the author of the *Qiṣaṣ* is still an enigma. See, T. Nagel "al-Kisāʾī" in *EI*[2] , vol. 5, 176; al-Kisāʾī [Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, *sic!*], *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. Isaac Eisenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1922).

[6] This disputed term refers to a genre of narrative which originated from non-Qurʾānic sources, especially from the previous revealed books (*Tawrāt* and *Injīl*, and other Judeo-Christian traditions). The narratives are usually found in telling the stories related to the Prophets (*Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*). Two among the important transmitters of this kind of narratives were Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 652/4) and Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 728/32). See G. Vajda, "Isrāʾīliyāt" in *EI*[2], vol. 4, 212; G.H.A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969) 121-138; I. Goldziher," Isrāʾīliyyāt," *Revue des Études Juives* 44 (1902) 63-6; idem, *Madhāhib al-Tafsīr al-Islāmī*, trans. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār, 2 ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Iqraʾ, 1983) 111-2; Benhard Heller, "Légendes bibliques attributées à Kaʿb el-Ahbar," *Revue des Études Juives*, 69 (1919) 86-107; Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri I: Historical Texts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 36 and 59; idem, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qurʾānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) 8-9; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians* 131-2, n. 11; Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and Its Interpreters* 30-2.

2. Reconstructing the myths

In *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Kisāʾī and that of al-Thaʿlabī, the *Tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarī and especially *Qiṣaṣ* of Ibn Kathīr, we find in addition to traditions, frequent quotations from the Qurʾān relating to the story of ʿĀd. The verses are cited to strengthen the interpretation offered. Most classical exegeses take the same approach, although they more or less concentrate on the Qurʾān itself. Of the non-exegetical works, Ibn Kathīr's *Qiṣaṣ* relies the most on the Qurʾān, while still citing traditions and stories preserved by his predecessors.[7] The traditions and information on ʿĀd provided by *tārīkh* and *qiṣaṣ* works are later cited more or less in the classical exegetical works, among them those of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarsī (d.1153), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1209), and al-Zamakshari (1075-1144). For example, we find the same stories retold by al-Ṭabarsī in commenting on Q. 7: 65-72.[8] For this very reason we will present the story of ʿĀd recorded in the *qiṣaṣ* of al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisaʾī, Ibn Kathīr and the *tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarī.

The people of ʿĀd[9] were pagans who worshiped idols called Ṣamūd, Sandā, and al-Habā,[10] and were well-known for their strength and physical stature; it was said that

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[7] Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Ṭuʿmah Ḥalabī (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1997); idem, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Aẓīm*, ed. Khālid Muḥammad Muḥammad (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣrīyah, 1997). The feature of his *Qiṣaṣ* is designated the most Qurʾānic. For us, it is reasonable for he himself is among those who countered using *isrāʾīlīyāt*. See G. Vajda "Isrāʾīliyyāt" in *EI*^{2} 212; Henri Laoust "Ibn Kaṯīr Historien," *Arabica* 2 (1955) 75.

[8] al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1957) 92-9.

[9] We find ʿĀd's genealogy as follows: ʿĀd ibn Awṣ ibn Arām ibn Sām ibn Nūh. Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation, volume II, Prophet and Patriarchs*, trans. William M. Brinner (Albany: University of New York Press, 1987) 28; *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 216; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 101; al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiya al-Musammā bi al-ʿArāʾis* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah, n.d.) 34; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, 3rd ed. ([n.p.], Maktabat al-Qudsī, [n.d.]) 50.

[10] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī* 28; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 216; Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 101.

some even reached 70 or 100 *dhirāʿ* (cubits) in height. Hūd,[11] sent as a prophet to ʿĀd, was a member of the tribe.

Al-Kisāʾī provides the story of Hūd's birth. According to him, Hūd's father was Khulūd ibn Saʿd ibn ʿĀd. He was among the men who were placed by King Khuljān at the service of the three idols referred to above. A dream in which he saw a white chain coming out of his loins told him not to marry until the same dream occurred again and he was told whom he should wed. The second dream instructed him to marry his uncle's daughter, and he did so. The woman, then, conceived Hūd who was born on a Friḍāy.[12]

According to al-Kisāʾī, Hūd entered into his prophetic office at the age of forty. The story of his involvement with ʿĀd is given by al-Kisāʾī in some detail, for he mentions exact names, Hūd's actions and Hūd's miracles. When Hūd called his people to worship God, citing Q. 7: 65, a man called ʿUmar ibn Ahlā challenged him to describe the physical form of God. Hūd then explained the majesty of God, in confirmation of which al-Kisāʾī cites Q. 41: 15.[13] However, most of the people of ʿĀd betrayed him, even though Hūd spread the call to God for seventy long years. Ultimately, Hūd had to give up on the community.

According to al-Kisāʾī,[14] when the call to God was repeatedly defied by ʿĀd, Hūd prayed twenty *rakaʿahs* asking God for guidance respecting the people's deeds, and asking Him to punish them with drought and famine. God commanded him and all

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[11] Hūd ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rabāḥ ibn al-Khalūd ibn ʿĀd ibn Awṣ ibn Aram ibn Sām ibn Nūh, or ʿĀbir ibn Shalīkh ibn Arfakhshaḍ ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ. See also Al-Zamakhshārī, *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqawīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, n.d.) 68; Al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr* is called *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* or *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 12 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, [n.d.]) 155.

[12] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisāʾī*, trans. W.M. Thackston (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978) 109-10; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 103.

[13] This request for a description of God occurs in many stories like that of Ibrāhīm with Namrūd and Mūsā with Firʿawn.

[14] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 113; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 105-6.

believers to depart from the people. Therefore, God refused to send any rain to ʿĀd for four years.[15]

According to the tradition of the time, when there was no rain a delegation would be sent to Mecca to pray. ʿĀd's delegation consisted of seventy people. In Mecca, Bakr ibn Muʿāwīyah received them warmly, giving them two girls to sing to them and wine to drink. This led the delegation to forget its original intention of praying. Muʿāwīyah, as a host, realized this then reminded them indirectly.[16] Afterwards, they prayed, asking for rain, but it was useless, until God sent three clouds; white, red, and black, to destroy all of them except Hūd and his followers.[17]

According to al-Kisāʾī and al-Thaʿlabī, there was a man from Hadramawt who saw Hūd's grave in a cave in a high mountain, and he came to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (b. 600/1) and said that:

> I touched his body; it was Hūd. I looked at him and saw that his eyes were large and his eyebrows met. He had a wide forehead, an oval face, fine feet and a long beard. He had never known affliction. Over his head was a rock shaped like a board, on which were written three lines in Indian letters. The first of these said, "There is no god but God; Muḥammad is God's messenger." On the second was written, "God has commanded that none be worshipped but He: do good to your parents." And on the third was written, "I am Hūd ibn Khulūd ibn Saʿd ibn ʿĀd, God's apostle to the tribe of ʿĀd. I came to them with a message, and they denied me. God took them with the Barren Wind. After me shall come Ṣāliḥ ibn Kanūḥ, whose people shall be obstinate. The Great Cry shall take them, and they shall be left in their region lying on their breasts.[18]

Interestingly, there is a similar story about a grave, not that of Hūd, but of a king. In the time of Muʿāwīyah (d. 680), a man called ʿAbd Allāh ibn Khulābah found a grave with the image of a king, and an inscription stating:

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[15] See also al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ* 44.
[16] For the detail see Al-Ṭabarī, *The History* 30; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 218.
[17] For the details see Al-Ṭabarī, *The History* 37; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 223; Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 115; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 108.
[18] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 117; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 110; al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ* 45.

> I was the Master of Iram, city of golden pillars, the floors inlaid with pearls, the walls beset with diamonds. Hundreds of ships from every port called here to pay me tribute; monarchs of East and West arrived to pay me homage! One man, the Prophet Hūd, refused to bow before me. "I worship God alone!" Thus he, standing proudly. I did not heed God's word, so Allah struck me down.[19]

3. Demythologizing of ʿĀd

According to modern scholars, whatever information classical Muslim scholars provided in an attempt to interpret and expand the tale of ʿĀd is unreliable, consisting as it largely does of tales, myth, legend and irrational stories. This renders the existence of this tribe doubtful, and the data available in the classical texts unconvincing as to the place and time of ʿĀd. Western scholars who have examined the existence of ʿĀd have come to different conclusions regarding their historicity. On the one hand, some see ʿĀd as a historical phenomenon, and relate them to other more convincing sources. Others deny the possibility of their existence. An illustration of this position is the stance of F.R. Buhl. Another approach is that of Richard Bell, who acknowledges the phenomenon of ʿĀd in the Qurʾān, but states that its historicity is still doubtful.

One Western scholar who admits the existence of ʿĀd is Loth,[20] who was of the opinion that ʿĀd were a famous tribe of Iyād.[21] Sprenger[22] relates ʿĀd to the Oadites, who, according to Ptolemy, lived in northwest Arabia. He links the statement in Q. 89: 6-7 ("ʿĀd, Iram of the pillars [*iram dhāt al-ʿimād*],") to the well of Iram in Ḥismah. At the excavation of Jabal Ramm, a second-century Nabatean temple, located twenty-five miles

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[19] Jan Knappert, *Islamic Legends: Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985) 64. See also Quṭb al-Dīn Saʿīd ibn Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. Ghulām Riẓā ʿIrfānīyān (Tehran: Majmaʿ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmīyah, [n.d.]) 93-5.

[20] F. Buhl, "ʿĀd," *EI*^{2}, vol. 1, 169; Josef Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1926) 127.

[21] Irfan Shahîd found that Iyād was one of the tribes with the Byzantine empire in the fifth century; in the sixth century this tribe settled in Emesa (Syria) and in *arḍ al-Rūm* (Anatolia). See *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1989) 273-4.

east of ʿAqabah, an inscription was found referring to a place called *ʾ-r-m*. Sprenger sees a connection here with the Iram of ʿĀd, which in Ptolemy is referred as Aramaua.[23] Philip K. Hitti describes this tribe, formerly of Ḥaḍramawt, as extinct (*baʾidah*), since this term is used by al-Ṭabarī and other classical Muslim scholars. However, Hitti does not provide any evidence of ʿĀd's existence.[24]

These opinions, on the other hand, did not convince Wellhausen or F.R. Buhl. Wellhausen flatly denies Ad's existence, stating that they were only a mythical nation. For Wellhausen, the name ʿĀd [ancient time] is a noun form of ʿĀdī [adj. very ancient]. The common expression of *min al-ʿād* [die alte Zeit: since the time of ʿĀd], has since then been misinterpreted as referring to a particular nation. Buhl supports this conclusion, saying that the interpretation of ʿĀd of the Qurʾān goes too far, and is not related to the text. The provision of genealogies and locations, and the identification of *aram* with *iram*, whether by Muslim or non-Muslim scholars, are unreasonable in his eyes.[25]

4. Returning the Tale to its Qurʾānic Context

Muḥammad ʿAbduh, [26] as a reformist and a rationalist scholar, relied on the tools of Western logic in examining this narrative. The following principle is expressed

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[22] A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad* 1 (Berlin: Nocolai'sche, 1861) 504-18; idem, *Die Alte geographie Arabiens* (Bern: Druck von Heinrich Korber, 1875) 199.
[23] F. Buhl, "ʿĀd" 169.
[24] Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, 8th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1964) 31-2.
[25] F. Buhl, "ʿĀd," 169; Josef Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* 127.
[26] For Muḥammad ʿAbduh's biography, see Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1931), especially in vol. 1; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) 130-60; Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (Los Angeles: University of Californisa Press, 1966); Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*: "The narratives (in the Qurʾān) indeed are aimed at giving examples and moral lessons."[27] For this reason he avoids giving further details and makes the story as simple as possible. In his interpretation of Q. 89: 6,[28] he informs us that ʿĀd were "a race of *bāʾidah* (extinct) or *ʿāribah* (distinct) Arabs." Although he provides a genealogy of ʿĀd, he insists that, whether the genealogy is true or not, the most important thing is that the tribe was well known to the Arabs.[29] Most likely basing himself on previous interpreters, he tells us that the ʿĀd inhabited Aḥqāf and Ḥaḍramawt. For him, ʿĀd served as a symbol of strength and greatness, having built a great city with high houses, and represented an example of a people who perished for their iniquitous deeds.[30] ʿAbduh explicitly refuses to go into any more detail about ʿĀd, unlike previous interpreters.

ʿAbduh's influence on *tafsīr* was considerable, especially in freeing the interpretation of the Qurʾān from dependence on outside sources, such as *isrāʾīliyāt*. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā in *Tafsīr al-Manār* (Q. 1-12), a *tafsīr* also associated with his teacher ʿAbduh,[31] deals with ʿĀd on a number of occasions. In interpreting Q. 7: 64-71, for example *Tafsīr al-Manār*, unlike *Tafsīr Juz ʿAmm* written solely by ʿAbduh, provides few details regarding the story of Hūd and ʿĀd, and still relies on traditions, such as the

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[27] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Durūs min al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm, 1980) 29.

[28] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Tafsīr Al-Qurān al-Karīm, Juzʾ ʿAmma* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyah, n.d.) 78; Al Makin, "Two Approaches [Muḥammad ʿAbduh's and Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's] to the Historical Narratives of the Qurʾān: The Case of ʿĀd, Thamūd, and Pharaoh, in Q. 89: 6-10," Presented at Concordia University's conference, Montreal, May 12, 1999.

[29] "ʿĀd was a tribe of *ʿaribah* or *bāʿidah* Arabs, [we find their genealogy] as follows: ibn ʿAws ibn Iram ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ. Whether this genealogy is true or not, the most important thing is that this race is well known by the name of ʿĀd." Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* 79.

[30] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* 79.

[31] According to Brocklemann ʿAbduh wrote *Tafsīr al-Manār* until Q. 4: 125, for Adams until Q. 12: 107 and for al-Dhahabī until Q. 9: 101. See Carl Brocklemann, *GAL*, Sup. 3, 320-2; Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* 199; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1961) 243. For a more comprehensive discussion about *Tafsīr al-Manār* see McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians* 78-85.

one which mentions that ʿĀd dwelled in Hadramawt, another containing their idols' names, and finally one which declares that Hūd from the tribe of Khulūd, was the first man to speak Arabic. *Tafsīr al-Manār* also describes the physical appearance of Khulūd tribe members, noting for instance that they wore long beards. Hūd's grave is in Ḥaḍramawt.[32]

Another modern commentator who discusses the story of ʿĀd is al-Marāghī. In interpreting Q. 7: 6-72, he relies on a tradition mentioning the names of the idols worshipped by ʿĀd, the tribe of Khulūd, and also the dwelling-place of ʿĀd in the sand dunes between Oman and Ḥaḍramawt. Nevertheless, he relies more on logic and he places greater stress on the implicit moral lesson. For example, instead of repeating the long genealogy of ʿĀd and Hūd when interpreting the passage "Hūd, a brother of ʿĀd," he interprets "brother" to mean of similar race, such as the custom of Arabs to call one another, "O brother Arab."[33] Al-Marāghī follows ʿAbduh's lead in tryng to simplify the story and in extracting the moral lessons from the tale.

Muḥammad ʿIzzat Darwazah (1888-1984) stresses that the Qurʾān does not function as a historical record, but that it uses stories "to draw a moral, to illustrate a point, to sharpen the focus of attention, and to reinforce the basic message."[34] To go into further detail or even to find similarity between the Qurʾānic and Biblical stories, for him, is irrelevant.[35]

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[32] Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Ḥakīm* [*Tafsīr al-Manār*], vol. 8 (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣubayḥ wa Awlādih, 1954) 495-6.

[33] Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, vol. 8 (Cairo: Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādih, n.d.) 192-3.

[34] Ismail K. Poonawala, "Muḥammad Izzat Darwaza's Principle of Modern Exegesis: A Contribution toward Quranic Hermeneutics" in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, *Approaches to the Qurʾān* (London: Routledge, 1993) 231.

[35] See Muḥammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qurʾān al-Majīd* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣrīyah, [n.d.])166-85.

Another modern scholar who is more or less in this position is Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalāf Allāh who cites Q. 45: 21-18, explaining that this ʿĀd story is a kind of example to the people of Mecca at the time of Muḥammad, warning them to contemplate how terrible punishment has been visited in the past on evildoers. This function as a warning for them not to repeat the same deeds.[36] Whether it is a fictional or historical phenomenon, it is evident that this story should also be viewed from the angle of literary beauty, art and moral lesson.

Another exegete in the tradition of ʿAbduh is ʿAʾishah ʿAbd al-Raḥmān known as Bint al-Shāṭiʾ.[37] Her fundamental rule was to interpret the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān. In the case of ʿĀd, Bint Shāṭiʾ re-examined ʿĀd in the light of the Qurʾān itself, disregarding outside sources. For example, in interpreting Q. 89: 6-8,[38] she clearly refutes her predecessors such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhshārī, and al-Rāzī, and rejects the details given by historical works or in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* works. Bint al-Shāṭiʾ, in dealing with ʿĀd, cross-references and compares the verses of the Qurʾān which mention ʿĀd. From her findings, she concludes that nowhere in the Qurʾān does it say anything of their genealogy, strength, or ability at building towers. It only states that ʿĀd existed in the time of Hūd, and that they betrayed him.

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[36] Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalāf Allāh, *al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣ fi al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1950-1) 138-9.

[37] On her life and works, see Muḥammad Amin, "A Study of Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Exegesis," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1992) 6-23; Ṭāhir Ṭanāḥī, "Bint al-Shāṭiʾ," *al-Hilāl* 59 (1951): 26-7; C. Kooij, "Bint al-Shāṭiʾ: A Suitable Case for Biography?" in Ibrahim A. El-Sheykh, C. Aart van de Koppel and Rudolph Peters, eds., *The Challenge of the Middle East* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Institute for Modern Near Eastern Studies, 1982) 67-72. And for more on Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's hermeneutic see, Issa J. Boullata, "Modern Qurʾān Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Method," *The Muslim World*, 64 (1974); idem, "Poetry Citation as Interpretive Illustration in the Qurʾān Exegesis: Masaʾil Nafiʿ ibn al-Azraq," in Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little, eds., Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991) 27-40; Sahiron Syamsuddin, "An Examination of Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Method of Interpreting the Qurʾān (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1998).

B. Thamūd

1. In the Qurʾān

Thamūd are mentioned in the Qurʾān 26 times.[39] Thamūd were, like ʿĀd, the subject of traditional Arabic tales, and are not therefore mentioned in the Bible.[40] They are depicted as evildoers who opposed the prophet Ṣāliḥ and rejected his call to one God (Q. 7: 73; 11: 61; 27: 45). The story emphasizes the stubbornness of Thamūd in refusing to accept the call of Ṣāliḥ and even challenging this Prophet to produce a miracle from God. In response God sent a she-camel as a test of their patience, a test that they failed. God's specific command was to share water with the she-camel. Instead, they hamstrung and slaughtered it (Q. 91: 12; 11: 64; 38: 187). The fate of this tribe was similar to that of ʿĀd, who perished by a *ṣayḥaḥ* (lit., a scream, perhaps a thunderbolt or earthquake) sent from God (Q. 11: 68; 69: 5, etc). Thus, Thamūd were among the peoples recorded as having been punished in the Qurʾān.

It is just as difficult to obtain the complete story in the case of Thamūd as it is in that of ʿĀd. This is due to the simplistic descriptions in the Qurʾān and to the fact that verses dealing with Thamūd are scattered in many different *sūrahs* and *āyahs*. This demands many different approaches to interpreting the story. We will present here three such approaches offered by classical Muslim, modern Western, and modern Muslim scholars.

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[38] See her, *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī* 1, 138-9; Al Makin, "Two Approaches to the Historical Narratives."
[39] Bint Shāṭiʾ, *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī* 1, 146.
[40] See al-Ṭabarī's confirmation, *The History* 46; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* 232; Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958) 119-21; al-Najjār, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 49.

2. Reconstructing the Myths

As in the case of ʿĀd, we find exact names and places, extraordinary events, and detailed information on the miraculous acts of a prophet in connection with Thamūd in *qiṣaṣ* and *tārīkh* works. Their mention of particular traditions in these works later influenced classical exegetes in their interpretions of the verses of the Qurʾān concerning Thamūd. We find some exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Zamakhshārī, al-Ṭabarsī, etc., citing more or less these *qiṣaṣ* and *tārīkh* works.

According to al-Kisāʾī, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn Kathīr, as well as many other classical scholars, Thamūd[41] were a great tribe. Al-Kisāʾī says that they lived in al-Ḥijr between Ḥijāz and Syria, and near Wadī al-Qurā. Their high level of civilization is stressed by al-Kisāʾī who says that their houses were carved out of the mountains (each a hundred cubits long and deep) and covered with iron plates and riveted with brass nails.[42] Under a king called Jandaʿ ibn ʿAmr ibn al-Qayl,[43] worshipped a huge idol, surrounded by many other idols. Ṣāliḥ's father, Kanūḥ ibn ʿUbayd, was consecrated to serve the idol.[44] Once, when the people had gathered to worship the idol, an extraordinary and miraculous event is said to have occurred: Ṣāliḥ's seed moved in his father's loins and emitted a blinding light.[45] A voice read out the words of Q. 34: 49, Kanūḥ bowed to the

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[41] Al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhshārī give an account of the genealogy of Thamūd as follows: Thamūd ibn ʿĀbir ibn Iram ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ. See al-Zamakhshārī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, 70; al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ* vol. 12, 161; al-Najjār, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 58.

[42] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 118; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 110; al-Ṭabarī, *The History* 42; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 227.

[43] Or Jandaʿ ibn ʿAmr ibn Jawās; see al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 47.

[44] It was said that he is ʿUbayd ibn ʿĀsif ibn Masīkh ibn ʿUbayd ibn Ḥāḍir ibn Thamūd ibn Ḥāḍir ibn Aram ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ or ʿĀsif ibn Kamāshij ibn Iram ibn Thamūd ibn Ḥāḍir ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ. See Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ* 120; al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 46; al-Rāwandī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 95.

[45] Stetkevych observes the symbolical similarities between Ṣāliḥ's story and that of Muḥammad recorded in the *sīrah* of Ibn Hishām. In both cases a light shone forth during their mothers' conceiving, then disappeared when both were born. See Jaroslov Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 117, note 6; Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, eds. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Shiblī, vol. 1 (Beirut:

great idol, which then said, "O Kanūḥ, in your loins is a prophet. The earth is illuminated by the light of your seed." The idol toppled over on its face and its crown fell to the ground. The king Janda^{c} heard of this, and ordered someone to kill Kanūḥ, but the plan failed when the would-be killer was struck blind. God furthermore ordered an angel to take Kanūḥ away to sleep in Wādi al-Ashjār,[46] where he slept for a hundred years.

Kanūḥ awoke when his wife Rawm[47] finally found him. Rawm was guided by a raven. Convinced that her husband still lived, she traveled with the bird and found Kanūḥ. After their union, Rawm conceived Ṣāliḥ. Kanūḥ died before Rawm returned to al-Ḥijr. Ṣāliḥ was born on a Friḍāy of *^{c}Ashūrā$^{\flat}$* (month of *Muḥarram*).

When Ṣāliḥ was forty, God sent Jibrīl to appoint him as a prophet, and to call Thamūd to worship God and abandon their idols. After a hundred years of trying to convince this people, during all of which time they still defied him, he escaped to a cave and slept for forty years. Afterwards, Ṣāliḥ returned to call his people but the rest of Thamūd remained unbelievers, and even challenged Ṣāliḥ to produce a very specific type of she-camel as a miracle.[48]

According to al-Kisā$^{\flat}$ī, after Ṣāliḥ's performance of two *raka$^{\flat}$ah*s of prayer,[49] the rock began to shake and tremble. The birth of the she-camel[50] from the rock was like the

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Dār ibn Kathīr, [n.d.]) 158. Another significant parallel is that both Muḥammad's father ^{c}Abd Allāh and Ṣāliḥ's father Kanūḥ died before both were born.

[46] There is a parallel between the stories of Kanūḥ and the companions of the cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*) in Q. 18: 9-26. See Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden* 117, note 7.

[47] Her name was also said Raghua, see Knappert, *Islamic Legends* 67.

[48] Al-Kisā$^{\flat}$ī, *The Tales* 118-22; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā$^{\flat}$* 113-4; Knappert, *Islamic Legends* 69. Ibn Kathīr reports that after God sent the she-camel to them, there were many believers, including Janda^{c} ibn ^{c}Amr ibn Muḥallah ibn Labīd ibn Jawās. There were also many demands as to what kind of she-camel was needed, recalling to the account of the *baqarah* (cow) in Q. 2, and the demanded impossible requests made by the Banū Isrā$^{\flat}$īl of Mūsā that led to so much trouble.

[49] See also al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ*, vol. 12, 162. Ibn Kathīr also confirms the prayer of Ṣāliḥ but does not mention two *raka^{c}ah*s, see Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ* 126.

baby from his mother, but was surrounded by miraculous events, such as the sounds of thunder and birds gathering around her, and Jibrīl's rubbing of her belly to deliver an identical kid. Al-Ṭabarī and especially al-Kisāʾī, while citing Q. 26: 155, add the further detail that the she-camel was to drink water from the well on one day, while on the alternate day it was the people's turn. On the days when it was the she-camel's turn, the people were to drink her milk. Al-Kisāʾī reported that the milk irritated unbelievers but nourished believers, while al-Ṭabarī informs us that the people broke this arrangement by hamstringing the animal and keeping her away from the well so that she could not drink from it.

There was a woman of Thamūd named Ṣadūqah bint al-Muḥayyā[51] who agreed to marry Muṣaddiʿ ibn Muḥarrij on the condition that he slay the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ. The same was the case with ʿUnayzah bint ʿUmayrah[52] who went to Qidār ibn Sālif,[53] and told him that she would let him marry her daughter on the condition that he kill the she-camel. Qidar and Muṣaddiʿ[54] formed a conspiracy with seven other men. Al-Kisāʾī gives this account in commenting on Q. 27: 48. The nine people were together responsible for slaying the she-camel.[55]

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[50] The she-camel was also called Bint al-Thābitah (daughter of steadfast); see Knappert, *Islamic Legends* 69.

[51] Ṣadūqah bint al-Muḥayyā ibn Zuhayr ibn al-Mukhtār, see Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ* 127. She was also called Sadūfah, see Knappert, *Islamic Legends* 71. Al-Thaʿlabī calls her Ṣadūq bint al-Muhayyā ibn Mahr, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 48.

[52] ʿUnayzah bint Ghunaym ibn Mujlāz, see Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ* 127, or ʿUnayzah bint Ghanīm ibn Mukhallad (with her nickname Umm Ghanām), see al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 48.

[53] Ibn Kathīr gives a more complete genealogy of Qidār, he is Qidār ibn Sālif ibn Jundaʿ, see Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ* 127. He was also called Ibn Qudayrah, see Knappert, *Islamic Legends* 71.

[54] He is Muṣaddiʿ ibn Muḥarrij; see al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 49.

[55] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 124-5; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 117-8; it is also said that Qidār and Muṣaddiʿ got drunk before killing the she-camel; see al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 49. According to al-Thaʿlabī, the day of killing was Wednesday, on Thursday their faces became yellow, Friḍāy red, and Saturday black, while Sunday marked the beginning of the "scream"; see al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ* 50. Al-Ṭabarī gives a different account of the killers of the she-camel. There were two *shaykhs*, one with a son and another a daughter. These two married, and had a son who was later to lead the conspiracy with other eight unrepentant evildoers to kill the she-camel. This extraordinary son, as al-Ṭabarī describes him grew so fast and strong

According to al-Kisāʾī, the first day after the killing saw the blood of the she-camel bubble up from every place. Next, the faces of people changed to yellow. Rather than make them regret their sin, it merely encouraged them to accuse Ṣāliḥ of shortening their lives. They even threatened to kill Ṣāliḥ himself. When the nine evildoers were killed mysteriously, the rest of Thamūd supposed that Ṣāliḥ was responsible. They chased Ṣāliḥ into his mosque in order to kill him, but they failed to find him. The next punishment was that their faces turned red. Finally, on the third day their faces became as black as coal. On the fourth day, Jibrīl commanded Mālik to send sparks from beneath the earth to destroy the houses and palaces of Thamūd. Then, Jibrīl himself spread his wrathful wings to destroy Thamūd's dwellings. Jibrīl screamed, and there appeared black clouds that changed to fire. Finally, by the seventh day, everything had been reduced to ashes. Ṣāliḥ and his followers were saved by God and went to Palestine, where his grave is said to be located.[56]

3. Demythologyzing Thamūd[57]

Western scholars have concentrated on verifying the historicity of Thamūd, just as they have ʿĀd's, especially by tracing the parallels between modern findings and Thamūd's depiction in the Qurʾān and in the classical Islamic literature. Some have tried to identify the Qurʾānic Thamūd with a race known to Ptolemy and Pliny, as Thamudaei

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that it was no surprise that he was chosen as a leader. Al-Ṭabarī, *The History* 42-3; *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 229.

[56] Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales* 124-6; idem, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 119. Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Thaʿlabī mention that Ṣāliḥ died at Mecca; see Al-Ṭabarī, *The History* 47; idem, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 1, 232; al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* 50.

[57] The title of this section echoes that of Stetkevych in his *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 57.

or Thamudenes who dwelled in Domatha and Hegra.[58] These two places are approximately located in Dumat al-Jandal in Jawf and al-Ḥijr between Ḥijāz and al-ʿAlā.[59] Among the most recent scholars to have studied this is Jaroslov Stetkevych. His intention in looking at Thamūd is not only in order to trace their historicity but to discover their symbolic meaning from a mythological perspective. His demythologizing of Thamūd is helpful in distinguishing reality from fancy in the tale, for he successfully identifies its relationship with historical reality. The relationship between the Ḥijr of Thamūd and Petra of the Nabateans[60] is also discussed. The tragedy of the killing of the she-camel which caused the destruction of the people of Ḥijr as punishment from God, recorded as myth, has a parallel with the fall of the attested historical Petra. After the Caravan Empire collapsed, a process of bedouinization also took place in the area of al-Ḥijr. With the fall of Petra and the sovereignty of Rome (A.D. 106), Thamūd became part of the Roman Empire. However, the process of mythologizing of the tragedy of killing the she-camel of Thamūd has almost nothing to do with the fall of Petra, except that it may represent an attempt to record the real Thamūd as a myth. Myth, while based in reality, is different from that reality.[61]

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[58] For Thamudenes who lived in Domatha and Hegra, see also A. Kammerer, *Petra et la Nabatène* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929) 529. Kammerer also shows four inscriptions called Médaïn Salih in his *Petra et la Nabatène: Atlas* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1930)143-5.

[59] See H. H. Brāu, "Thamūd," *EI*[1], vol. 4: 2, 736.

[60] For the basic history of Petra see A. Kammerer, *Pétra et la Nabatène*; Sir Alexander Kennedy, *Petra: its History and Monuments* (London: Country Life, 1925); Nelson Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins: The Story of the Nabatean* (New York: Strauss and Giroux, 1965); Peter J. Parr, "A Sequence of Pottery from Petra," in *Near Eastern Arhaelogy in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, ed. James A. Sanders (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970) 348-9.

[61] Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 66-7. He also cites some important sources among them Alfred von Kraemer. Kraemer says that the Petra of Thamūd fell due to war, not to punishment by God as told by the Qurʾān; see his *Über die südarabische Sage* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866) 17-9; about Thamūd's economy, see M. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, trans. D. and T. Talbot Rice (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932) 50. However, there was a tribe called the Banū Ṣālih who wandered in Mt. Sinai and Egypt, according to Irfān Shahīd. It is possible that they were the remnants of Thamūd. See *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984) 385.

4. Returning the tale to its Qurʾānic Context

The case of Thamūd in modern exegesis is not so very different from that of ʿĀd. Modern exegesis in treating Thamūd attempts to deconstruct the myth in classical literature and, in response to the Western logical approach, is a synthesis, reconciling the Qurʾān and logic. Muḥammad ʿAbduh's consistency in using Thamūd as a lesson for Muslims of today is interesting. Following his principle of emphasizing the moral significance of the story, he provides a very brief and logical interpretation, as he does with ʿĀd. In commenting on Q. 89: 9,[62] ʿAbduh states that this tribe included many *baʾidah* Arabs. For him, however, the question of correctness of the genealogy provided by his predecessors for Thamūd is not important, since Thamūd were a well-known Arab tribe like ʿĀd.[63] Far more significant was the tradition that Thamūd possessed strong physiques and minds, since they had the ability to build rock houses in valleys and dams for agricultural purposes. This indicates that Thamūd were as well-developed as ʿĀd.

Rashīd Riḍā comments on Thamūd in his *Tafsīr al-Manār* when discussing Q. 11: 60, 96, 7: 72, 9: 71. In reference to Q. 7: 72 especially, there is discussion of the genealogy of Thamūd and Ṣāliḥ, [64] whereas in his interpretation of Q. 11: 61-3, it is mentioned that Ṣāliḥ was the second prophet of Arabia. But, as always it is stressed that

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[62] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Tafsīr Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* 79.

[63] "Thamūd was a tribe of *baʿidah* Arabs descended from Kathīr (called Jāthir in the Tawrāt) ibn Aram ibn Sām. Iram is known as Ārām in the Torah. Whether or not the genealogy is correct, the most important thing was that this tribe is known to Arabs including the fact that they lived in Ḥijr between Syria and Ḥijāz."

[64] Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 8, 501.

the ultimate purpose of mentioning such a fact is to extract the lesson, and nothing more.[65]

Al-Marāghī, although obviously influenced by ʿAbduh in that he tries to extract the lesson behind the tale of Thamūd, still provides the genealogy of Thamūd in his interpretation of Q. 7: 73-9.[66] However, he stops short of providing any extraordinary tales relating to Thamūd, details on the story of the she-camel and any extraordinary events relating to this narrative, something that al-Ṭabarī and other classical exegetes did, thus, avoiding details and emphasizing the moral—and therefore Qurʾānic—sense of the tale appears to be the trend.

Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's concern to make the Qurʾān speak for itself on Thamūd represents one of her many important contributions to modern exegesis. As she does in the case of the ʿĀd, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ relies on the other verses of the Qurʾān for explanation, allowing no other details external to the Qurʾān to be considered. Moreover, she rejects information furnished by previous interpreters. One such interpreter held that Thamūd was a strong race of men who built 1700 rock houses in the valley where they dwelled, while another claimed that they built a dam by which they redirected water in that valley. For Bint Shāṭiʾ, Thamūd were simply an Arab *baʾidah* tribe, as ʿAbduh said, who lived at the time of Ṣāliḥ, after ʿĀd's generation.[67]

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[65] Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 12, 120-1. We have neglected to mention Darwazah and Khalāf Allāh among the modern exegetes discussed in this section simply because there is consideralbe similarity between their treatment of Thamūd and the situation involving ʿĀd.
[66] Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 8, 197.
[67] ʿĀʾishah ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī* 1, 143-4.

C. The Search for Significance in the Exegetical Context

Every generation, indeed even every person, has a unique interpretation of the Qurʾān. Given various interpretations of ʿĀd and Thamūd offered by different scholars depending on their time and location, we may well understand Gadamer's statement that:

> Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it *is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history.*[68] [italics mine]

Also in looking at the many interpretations offered by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, classical and modern, we may raise the question, as Stetkevych does, "Whose point of a view is thus represented?"[69] The likely answer is that they represent their own time and place, which is "co-determined also by the [or their] historical situation." In other words, interpretation represents at least the interpreter himself, his own generation, class, society, etc. This includes his world view, mode of thought, language, level of culture and civilization, and even tradition. Muslim scholars of classical times, modern Western scholars, and modern Muslim exegetes all represent their own times. They offer interpretations that differ even as they base themselves on different points of view, different times and different places. The key to understanding these differences is the historical situation bridging the reader and the text. Since then, the interpretation is very significant for each interpreter for it expresses his own historical situation wnich

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[68] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised ed. (New York: Continuum, 1997) 296.
[69] Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 58.

differs from others. This leads us to the question of what significance the tale of ʿĀd and Thamūd holds for each individual.

In studying these differences of interpretation, the dialectical process underlying them also emerges, since besides speaking for a specific time and place, they also respond to previous generations. Taking as our model the interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamūd, the following dialectical process may be observed. Al-Ṭabarī and other classical scholars read the incomplete ʿĀd and Thamūd narrative in the Qurʾān, then supply more complete versions. To do so, they had to consult other sources, such as *isrāʾīlīyāt*-myths. This was responded to by modern Western scholars who claimed that the former presented merely legends, myths and irrational material. For Western scholars, these were insufficient evidence for ʿĀd's existence and the historicity of Thamūd. These scholars, influenced by their civilizational values of logic and science, traced the historical background of these tribes by searching for any parallel in the sources. These two approaches are synthesized in the methodologies of modern Muslim exegetes, such as ʿAbduh, Izzat Darwazah, Rashīd Riḍā and Bint al-Shāṭiʾ. For they are critical of both classical Muslim scholarship and the use of modern Western logic. In their eyes, classical Muslim scholars offered merely *isrāʾīlīyāt*, while Western scholars showed a concern for the historicity of narrative, their concern was with the issue of whether or not the myths originated in the Qurʾān. In other words, the question of whether information was Qurʾānic or not is very much stressed.[70] Their project was to

[70] Rashīd Riḍā is particularly critical of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār for having transmitted *isrāʾīlīyāt* tales in a number of traditions; making the reliability of this *rāwī* doubtful. See his debate with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jumjumānī recorded by Juynboll, which later was continued by Abū Rayyāh. In short, Rashīd Riḍā defends his point of view rejecting *isrāʾīlīyāt* elements; see Juynboll, *The Atuthenticity of the Tradition Literature* 121-138.

cleanse the interpretation of the Qurʾān from outside elements, the culmination of this being Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's call to return the narrative of ʿĀd and Thamūd to the Qurʾān itself.

However, it may be countered that to interpret the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd by tracing their historicity, as most modern Western scholars do, is to deny their significance, especially if at the same time we ignore the information provided by classical Muslim exegetes or fail to take it into account, as modern Muslim exegetes do out of desire to purge stories of *isrāʾīliyāt* and non-Qurʾānic elements. By simplifying the tales, we lose much of the essential meaning of these myths for classical exegetes. Of course, it is true that much of this material is difficult to accept as correct historical information. The basic difference is that:

> Myth is a narrative of origins, taking place in a primordial time, a time other than that of everyday reality; history is a narrative of recent events, extending progressively to include events that are further in the past but that are, nonetheless, situated in human time.[71]

Nonetheless, myth becomes "paradigmatic for the society in which that myth is operative."[72] Accordingly, we will lose sight of the significance of ʿĀd and Thamūd as a myth for al-Ṭabarī and other classical Muslim scholars, should we ignore them. We will in fact lose the bridge connecting the reader and the text. What was the historical motivation that drove al-Ṭabarī and others to retell the stories and mythologize them. Moreover, the answer to the question "Whose point of view is thus represented?" is impossible. By ignoring what al-Ṭabarī, al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisāʾī and others say, data is lost, especially their representation of their own time and society. We may find other meanings behind what the myths say. Stetkevych's research into the meaning of the myth of Thamūd, for example, shows that the story of the she-camel of Thamūd has a

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[71] Paul Ricoeur, "Myth and History," in *ER*, vol. 10, 273; Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 13.

parallel in the theory of totem and taboo of the classical Arabs. For the she-camel had a very important role in their everyday life, such that it would have been taboo to kill or even to hamstring this animal. As a result, the destruction of the Ḥijr of Thamūd may be seen as the consequence of breaking a taboo.[73] Also, as Suzanne Stetkevych observes, the slaying of a camel is also found in the story of the war between the tribes of Bakr and Taghlīb during the pre-Islamic era.[74]

Unlike Stetkevych, who compares the myth of Thamūd with stories contained in the *Golden Bough* of Frazier[75] and in the epic of Gilgamesh,[76] we will restrict ourselves to a comparison between Thamūd and ʿĀd. In so doing, one may be able to discover what it was that they represented for the Arabs. Most classical Muslim scholars whether exegetes or authors of *qiṣaṣ* works, provide genealogies for the characters in their respective versions of ʿĀd and Thamūd stories. This establishes a paternal linkage, extending for into the past, and providing a solid tradition. As with many other stories

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[72] Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster, 1992) 123; also quoted by Stetkevych in his *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 17.

[73] Stetkevych is also concerned with the role of the camel in Arabic pre-Islamic poetry and how the camel comes to have more than one thousand names; see his, "Name and Epithet: The Philology and Semiotics of Animal Nomenclature in Early Arabic Poetry" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, 2 (1986) 112-25. See also Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych's interpretation of the slaying of the she-camel by Thamūd, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993) 28-29; Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 133. It is quite reasonable that the she-camel served as a totem, for "the sacrilege produces death automatically" as the destruction of Thamūd occurred. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965) 150-1; Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Vintage Book, 1946) 39.

[74] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak* 207-10; J. Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 7. It starts with the slaying of a she-camel called Basūs of Bakr and goes to describe the revenge by the slaying of Kulayb of Taghlīb. The consequence of these slayings was that "the bloody fratricidal animosity continued for forty years."

[75] Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Ware: Wodsworth, 1993).

[76] For the story of the heroic Sumerian figure Gilgamseh who slays the monstrous dragon, see, for instance, Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Epic of Gilgamesh and Its Sumerian Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 64 (1994) 7-23; Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965); Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition*; Benjamin Caleb Ray, "The Gilgamesh Epic: Myth and Meaning," in Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger, eds., *Myth and Method* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996) 300-26.

in the *qiṣaṣ*, almost all characters have a paternal genealogy extending back from the sons of Adam to Muḥammad.[77] Also, we encounter frequent attempts at assigning numbers or quantities, the most common of these being three, seven, forty, seventy and hundred. These numbers appear frequently in these two tales. God did not send rain to ʿĀd for three years. The number of people in the Ad's delegation was seventy, while the known names were seven. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ were both appointed by God as His messenger at the age of forty. The physical height of ʿĀd members reached seventy *dhirāʿ*s. Kanūḥ slept in the cave for a hundred years, and Ṣāliḥ for forty. The number of evildoers among Thamūd was seven, before the addition of Qidār ibn Sālif and Maṣaddaʿ ibn Muḥarrij who made it nine. The length of time separating of the killing the she-camel from the punishment meted out to Thamūd was three days, the same number as the colors that appeared on the faces of Thamūd members, and the same number of cloud colors (red, white and black) that presaged ʿĀd's destruction.

There are many more similarities just in comparing the tales of ʿĀd and Thamūd. The major ones are that both Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are prophets of God, and that in the *qiṣaṣ* of al-Kisāʾī especially, Jibrīl is always presented as a mediator not only of revelation (*waḥy*) but also of the destruction of both ʿĀd and Thamūd. Other similarities include God's intervention in the lives of both tribes, the stubbornness of both tribes, God's miracles performed through His prophets, the persistence of both tribes in disbelief, and finally the fact that they suffered extraordinary punishments.[78] There are also parallels

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[77] Al-Kisāʾī, al-Thaʿlabī and Ibn Kathīr all cover the stories of the prophets from Adam to ʿĪsa in their *qiṣaṣ*, while the Prophet Muḥammad's life is recorded in *sīrah* works such as that of Ibn Hishām. The most complete version is al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* telling from the creation of the world and Adam and continues through to his own time. For one thing, note the similarity in which they present the genealogy of the characters.

[78] Extraordinary events are the most important component of both tales and myths, including good and evil figures, punishment and supernatural victory of the truth. Also sacred places, like the mosque of Ṣāliḥ, the

between these two tales and the other tales in the *qiṣaṣ*, and even the *sīrah* of the Prophet Muḥammad. The pattern of the victory of prophets over deniers of truth is seen throughout the stories in *qiṣaṣ* and *sīrah* works. Thus, in the tale of Thamūd, Ṣāliḥ seems to represent the Prophet Muḥammad himself,[79] as does Hūd.

In the classical tradition, typified by al-Thaʿlabī, the complete version of the stories is stressed. Although the legends of ʿĀd and Thamūd are purely Arabic and are not derived from Jewish-Christian tradition,[80] later developments of the complete version made contact with outside sources unavoidable.[81] One example of this is the fact that the names in the genealogy of the characters are familiar from Biblical tradition, as ʿAbduh himself admits in his *Tafsīr* of *Juz ʿAmma*. In commenting on Q. 89: 6-10, he explains that the tribe of Kāthir mentioned as one of the ancestors of ʿĀd are the Jāthir of the Old Testament, just as the Iram are the Ārām of the Old Testament.[82]

Representations of certain classes in the myth may also be recognized. For example, at the end of the story of ʿĀd there is contradictory information about a mysterious grave. This was claimed to be both that of Hūd and of King Shaddād.[83] The time factor is also contradictory, although not widely so, with one being placed in the time of ʿAlī and the other in that of Muʿāwiyah. Although the two contradict each other,

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mountain and cave of Kamūḥ are clear characteristics and style of myth. See, Kees W. Bolle "Myth: an Overview" in *ER*, vol. 10, 264-5; Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper Torchbooks,) 5-8.

[79] Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* 33 and especially 124.

[80] Most prophets' names in Islam, as well as their stories, have parallels with *Haggada* of Jewish tradition; see Benhard Heller, "The Relation of the Aggada to Islamic Legends" *The Moslem World*, 24 (1934) 281-6; idem, "Légendes Bibliques" 86-107.

[81] This is expressed in such words as the following: "[The] reciprocal influence of the Aggada upon Islam naturally finds its origin later, just as does the influence of the Aggada upon the Church." See Heller, "The Relation" 281. One attempt at comparing the figure in Islamic tradition and that of Judaism is by Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); Yoram Erder, "The Origin of the Name of Idrīs in the Qurʾān: A Study of the Influence of Qumran Literature on Early Islam" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (Ocoter 1990) 339-50.

[82] Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* 79.

they also have parallel aspects. Both quotations above (on page 5-6) contain the statement of the unity of God, Islam, the prophethood of Muḥammad, the fate of evildoers and the victory of truth, namely, the prophet Hūd. Both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah lived in Islamic times, and both societies were under Islamic governments. Thus they might also represent the political sovereignty of Islam.[84]

While the existence of ʿĀd may be discounted on account of the absence of material evidence (as F. R. Buhl and Wellhausen point out), the belief that ʿĀd existed cannot be ignored. At the time of the Prophet, at least, the story of ʿĀd, as al-Ṭabarī and others reported it, was well known. It is impossible to claim, therefore, that the ʿĀd motif only appeared for the first time when the Qurʾān was revealed. The Qurʾān, after all, responded to the circumstances of the time and place of the revelation in assigning them another meaning, a religious one. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Kisāʾī and others took the text of the Qurʾān, and by reenacting and re-interpreting it, uncovered the identity of ʿĀd. This action involved a complex process. Their interpretation also reflects their respective times and places. Our task is not to raise the question "what is true?" but "what have societies, civilizations, communities found necessary to point to and preserve as centrally valid for their entire existence?"[85]

Given the immensity of such a task, we will restrict ourselves to the significance these stories held for Sayyid Quṭb alone. Sayyid Quṭb, living his own time and place,

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[83] For more on Shaddād see, for instance, A. P. Caussin de Perceval, *Essai sur l'Histoire des Arabes* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Difot Frères, 1847) 14-6.

[84] We may speculate on whether the story is true. It is very likely that a man saw the grave, but he could not read the inscription since it was not in Arabic, but in Indian, which in this instance stands for a foreign language of some kind. Thus, from his perspective he speculated that the letters read "so and so." His speculation on the letter suggests representation of his "historical situation," on Islam.

[85] Bolle, "Myth: An Overview" 262-3. " it [myth] expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality...it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom." See Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 20.

also had the right to interpret the ʿĀd and Thamūd narratives in the Qurʾān, not only as a response to the interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamud by his predecessors, but also as a reflection of his own personal experience. Thus, our task will be to relate these narratives to Quṭb's life, and to seek out the significance of ʿĀd and Thamūd for Quṭb. There is a reciprocal connection between reading his treatment of these narratives in Quṭb's *tafsīr, Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān,* and to reading his life. This is justified by Kenneth Cragg, who states that "His *whole biography* can be seen as a reading of the Qurʾān, a commentary given in a personality."[86] [italics mine]

D. Connecting the Narratives to Quṭb's Life

I became a newborn in 1951.

Sayyid Qutb.[87]

1. A Brief Sketch of Quṭb's Life

Much has been written over the years, telling of the tragic, unique and inspiring life of Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn al-Shādhilī.[88] For this reason, this chapter will

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[86] Kenneth Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Qurʾān* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985) 70.

[87] Quoted from ʿĀdil Ḥamūdah, *Sayyid Quṭb* 100; according to Hamūdah this sentence was omitted by Quṭb in his *Limādha Aʿdamūnī* in 1965.

[88] See Quṭb's autobiography, *Ṭifl min al-Qaryah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥikmah, [n.d.]); Muḥammad Tawfiq Barakāt, Sayyid Quṭb, *Khulāṣat Ḥayātih wa Minhājuh fi al-Ḥarakah, al-Naqd al-Muwajjah Ilayh* (Beirut: Dār al-Daʿwah, 1977); ʿĀdil Hamūdah, *Sayyid Quṭb, Min al-Qaryah ilā al-Mishnaqah: Taḥqīq Waqāʿiqī,* 3rd ed. (Cairo: Sīnā li-al-Nashr, 1990); ʿAbd al-Bāqī Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Sayyid Quṭb: Ḥayātuh wa Adābuh* (Cairo: Dār al-Wafā, 1986); Shahrough Ahkhavi, "Quṭb, Sayyid," in *EMIW* 400-4; Ahmad S. Moussali, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Thought of Sayyid Quṭb,* 2nd ed. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992); Mhd. Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qurʾān Exegesis in Earlier and Later Editions of His *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*: With Specific Reference to Selected Themes (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1997) 7-15; Adnan A. Musallam, "The Formative Stages of Sayyid Quṭb's Intellectual Career and His Emergence as an Islamic Dāʿiya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983); idem, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Quṭb's Literary and Spiritual Orientation, 1932-1938," *The Muslim World* 80 (July-October 1990): 177-89; idem, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice, 1945-1948" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4 (January 1993) 56; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," *Middle East Journal* 37 (1983): 14-29; John Calvert, "Discourse, Community and Power: Sayyid Quṭb and the Islamic Movement in Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1993); Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: al-Shāhid al-Ḥayy* (Amman: Maktab al-Aqṣā, 1981); William E.

confine itself to presenting a very brief summary of his career. This journalist, poet, literary critic, ideologue of the *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (Muslim Brethern), revolutionary, Egyptian Muslim martyr, and last but not least, Qurʾānic exegete, was born in 1906 in the village of Mūshā, located on the west bank of the Nile in the district of Asyūt, 235 miles south of Cairo. He died as a martyr on December 29, 1966, executed by the Egyptian government.

Quṭb, a prolific writer, produced about 39 books in addition to scores of articles, according to Moussalli's list. Many of these works have been translated and studied by others.[89] In his earlier works Quṭb dealt with literary studies, including poetry, fiction, and literary criticism (written between 1933-1948). After 1948, however, Quṭb shifted from literature to general analysis of political and social issues, viewing these from the angle of Islam. This colored his next phase of writing. *Al-ʿAdalah al-Ijtimāʿiyah fī al-Islām,* may represent this new interest. Finally, in his late intellectual phase, Quṭb adopted radical Islamic fundamentalism. This was between 1949 and 1966. Quṭb's most controversial work expressing this late radicalism and fundamentalism is *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq.* Of his three major works on the Qurʾān, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qurʾān, Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah,* and his magnum opus *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān,* the first two were written during his early period, and therefore reflect a more literary approach to the subject. *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān,* on the other hand, was a product of his later career.

Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996); M. M. Siddiqui, "An Outline of Sayyed Qut'bs Life," in the translation of Quṭb's *Islam and Universal Peace*, (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1977) ix-xii;, Jane I. Smith, *An Historical and Semantic Study of the Term 'Islam' as Seen in a Sequence of Qurʾān Commentaries* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975) 204-5.

[89] For a list and brief review of each book see Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 44-55. Calvert found Quṭb's 18 articles in *al-Risālah* (1938-51), and many more in other journals such as *Ṣaḥīfat Dār al-ʿUlūm* (1939), *al-Muslimūn* (1951-4), and *al-Muqtaṭaf* (1939); see Calvert's "Discourse, Community and Power" 226.

His career as an ideologue began when he joined the Wafd party in 1942. However, the most interesting experience in Quṭb's life, and one which was later on to influence his view of the West, was his stay in the United States from 1948 to 1950, during which period he witnessed Western civilization at first hand. On his return from the United States he took a position as adviser to the ministry of education. Three years later, he took the momentous step of joining the Muslim Brethren, a move which was to cost him much, and which led to repeated stays in jail. After the weekly *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* was banned in 1954, the organization was dissolved too, and Quṭb was jailed until 1964 along with many of his colleagues from the Muslim Brethren. Only eight months after Quṭb's release he was re-arrested together with a number of other Ikhwān members and his brother and two sisters. The court passed a death sentence on Quṭb in 1966, which was eventually implemented despite calls for mercy.

2. Two Opposite Poles

Quṭb's discourse is not a simple affair: Quṭb's intellectual development and the various complicated influences in his life make it difficult to reduce it to a formula. However, his fundamentalism, radicalism and critical attitude are evident, and have been noted by many scholars. Musallam remarks that from an early age Quṭb was very critical of his environment, in all its intellectual dimensions, including literature, politics, religious tradition, and Qurʾānic studies.[90]

[90] Musallam, *Formative Stages* 87-111; Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) 58.

His *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*[91] (where he discusses the narrative of ʿĀd and Thamūd) is the fullest synthesis of Quṭb's intellectual perspective, having been written after his visit to the United States, and much of it even during his traumatic imprisonment. In short, the work was completed after his re-birth as quoted in our epigraph above.

It is not my purpose to try to simplify Quṭb's radicalism and oppositional stance, especially as these are expressed in his finest work, *Ẓilāl*. However, it is a fact that the bulk of the latter was completed during his prison days, an environment which clearly contributed to his psychological perspective while writing. Moussalli describes some of the treatment he had to endure in the following passage:

> It is reported that when military officers entered Quṭb's house to arrest him, he was running a high fever. He was handcuffed and taken on foot. Due to extreme agony he was fainting and falling on the ground. Whenever he regained consciousness the words *Allah Akbar* (God is most Great) and *lillāh al-Ḥamd* (Praise be to God), the slogans of the Muslim Brethren, would pass his lips. When he was sent to the military jail he came across Hamzah Basyuni, commander of the jail, at the gate and officers of the Intelligence Police. No sooner had he stepped into the jail, than the jail staff beat and abused him for two hours. A trained military dog was let loose at him, which, holding his thigh with its jaws, dragged him back and forth. After this initial chastisement he was taken to a cell where he was continuously interrogated for seven hours. On May 3rd, 1955 he was admitted to a military hospital, suffering from chest ailment, cardiac weakness, and arthritis and various other diseases.[92]

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[91] The history of writing *Fī Ẓilāl* is explained in Calvert's dissertation and retold in Syahnan's thesis, see Calvert, " Discourse, Community and Power" 193; Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's" 38-9. It was in February 1952 that Quṭb's interpretation first appeared in *al-Muslimūn*, and it continued for seven issues. The first published version of *Fī Ẓilāl* was brought out by Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah li ʿĪsā al-Ḥalabī in 1952-4, and consisted of sixteen volumes. Quṭb then wrote two more volumes in prison in 1954, then twelve more in his second incarceration. The thirty volumes were then published in 1959, and reprinted with revisions of the first thirteen volumes in 1961. See also Yūsuf al-ʿAẓm, *Raʿīd al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Muʿāṣir: al-Shāhid Sayyid Quṭb, Ḥayātuh wa Madrasatuh was Āthāruh* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalām, 1980) 251; Barakāt, *Sayyid Quṭb* 15 and 19. *Fī Ẓilāl* was published again by Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah (30 vols. in 10), and then a revised edition by Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī in 1971 30 vols. in 8. It was published again by Dār al-Shurūq in 6 vols. in 1973-4. This thesis will use the last mentioned edition of 6 vols. reprinted by Dār al-Shurūq in 1988.

[92] Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 34 and 62 footnote 44; Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb* 145-7; Carré, "Le combat pour Dieu et l'état islamique chez Sayyid Qotb," *Revue française de science politique* 33 (1983) 681; Calvert, "Discourse, Community" 198; Kepel Gilles, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 28-9; Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's" 14.

This severe experience could not have helped but increase Quṭb's radical criticism of Egyptian society and especially its government at the most mature stage of his intellectual life.[93] He characterized this set of conditions in his *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq,* as being that of an age of ignorance (*jāhilīyah*).[94]

Hence, *Ẓilāl* represents the culmination of Quṭb's intellectual journey in literature, politics, criticism of Western civilization and his environment, and his re-discovery of the Qurʾān. Whether we designate him as a poet, literary critic, ideologue, journalist, or even Qurʾānic exegete, *Ẓilāl* is representative of all these stages. We can find all these dimensions in this finest of his works. It is nevertheless mostly a testament to the radicalism of his later years. Shepard observes, in describing Quṭb's ideological shift, that Quṭb was a Muslim secularist in the 1930s, then proponent of moderate radical Islamism in the late 1940s, and finally moved to extreme radical Islamism in the last stage of his life.[95] Yvonne Haddad also recognizes this increasing radicalism on the part of Quṭb after 1950. According to her, in this period Quṭb was much influenced by the radical writings of Muḥammad Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss), (b. 1900-1993) and Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī (1903-1979).[96] In the political arena, Quṭb's radicalism is shown by his joining the Muslim Brethren, an organization which was in direct conflict with Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's (1918-1970) regime. This radicalism was preserved in his works, especially *Ẓilāl,* where Quṭb expresses his dissatisfaction. Since the narratives of ʿĀd

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[93] Ibrahim M. Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins* 168; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* 25-30.
[94] Sayyid Quṭb, *Maʿālim fi al-Ṭarīq*, 12th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988) 21; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of the Development of Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 179.
[95] William Shepard, "The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Quṭb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Editions of 'Social Justice'," *Die Welt des Islams*, 32 (1992) 20.
[96] Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue" 70.

and Thamūd are discussed in the *Ẓilāl*, these conditions inevitably affected his commentary on them.

Thus, Quṭb's radicalism was both theoretical and practical, whether in the political arena or in his writings, and both were related to each other. Therefore, the relation between text and context, between the reality of Quṭb's life and what he himself preserved in his own writing, cannot be ignored. His everyday experience was transferred into his writings. Quṭb's text symbolizes his own journey towards the truth. *Ẓilāl*, and of course its stance on ʿĀd and Thamūd narratives, is a witness to and an expression of Quṭb's traumatic experiences. His language, style, and words are evocative of his life history, especially his prison experiences.

The evolution of Quṭb's literary critical perspective has been sketched by Musallam. In his literary criticism, beginning in the 1940s, Musallam estimates, Quṭb's critiques began to take on a moral dimension. Quṭb, for example, expressed his opposition to singing and public bathing. This was to lead to denunciations of Western civilization and all its attributes, especially its philosophy and ethical trends, its various ideological expressions including materialism, Marxism, capitalism, imperialism, communism, socialism, secularism, and even Arab or Egyptian cooperation with the West.[97] Quṭb even attacked France for its suppression of nationalism in Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Algeria. He also criticized Britain for its imposition of a Wafdist cabinet on the Egyptian king by force of arms in February 1945. Later, his visit to the United States led to a culmination in his opposition towards the United States and Western

[97] This stance is found throughout Quṭb's work, for instance in his books *Maʿālim*, *al-ʿAdālah*, *This Religion of Islam* (Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1974); *Islam, The Religion of the Future* (Delhi: Markzi Maktaba Islami, 1974), etc.

civilization, generally speaking.[98]Quṭb's opposition to Zionism, as pointed out by John Calvert,[99] and its goal of creating an independent Jewish state in Palestine, was another theme. He attacked the United States, especially over President Truman's support for Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1946. Quṭb's opposition to the president of Egypt, Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir is also worth noting. The difference between them was over their competing visions of the nation, with Quṭb wanting an Islamic state, and President Jamāl ʿAbd Nāṣir a secular one. This later on caused bitter enmity between them, and led to the accusation of Quṭb and Muslim Brethren of forming a conspiracy to kill the president. Quṭb's denunciation of the July 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement on behalf of the Muslim Brethren meant direct defiance of Nāṣir. Accused of terrorism and of trying to overthrow the government, Quṭb and his colleagues were thrown into jail.[100]

All of this trenchant criticism, especially of the political and ideological variety, may be seen as representing the negative pole of Quṭb's thought; the positive one, on the other hand, lies in his concept of a true and ideal Islam. This dichotomy may be formulated as *jāhilīyah* versus Islam, as righteousness versus evil. His physical suffering while in prison, when he was engaged in finishing his *Ẓilāl*, may have sharpened these two poles, making him more critical or inclined towards the negative one. Therefore, the two poles of this dichotomy do not include every phase of Quṭb's life, but they do

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[98] Musallam, "The Formative Stages" 154-65; idem, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice" 68-9. For Quṭb's attitude toward America presented in his *Fī Ẓilāl*, see Anthony H. Johns, "Let My People Go! Sayyid Quṭb and the vocation of Moses," *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 1 (1990) 146-7; For Quṭb's rejection of the West and its attributes, see Yvonne Y. Haddad, "The Qurʾānic Justification of an Islamic Revolution: The View of Sayyid Quṭb," *The Middle East Journal, 37* (Winter 1983): 14-29; Ibrahim M. Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins* 120-37.

[99] See John Calvert, "Radical Islamism and the Jews: The View of Sayyid Quṭb," in Leonard Jay Greenspoon and Bryan F. Le Beau, eds., *Representations of Jews through the Ages* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1996) 220.

[100] See for example Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 136-7; Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 32-4; Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb, al-Shāhid al-Ḥayy* 143.

accurately portray Quṭb's late career. Although this dichotomy only concerns Quṭb's late life, it cannot be separated completely from his earlier phases.

The relation between two poles in the reality of Egyptian political life and what Quṭb expressed must be noted. The classification of these poles in *Ẓilāl* represents not only the Muslim Brethren vis-à-vis the Egyptian regime but also Quṭb's view on the conditions surrounding him. The Muslim Brethren's position with respect to the Egyptian regime was one which brought them into mutual opposition. Thus, the opposition occupied the positive pole and the ruling class the negative one, since this was viewed from a Quṭbian angle. The dichotomy was colored by political factors, and by a complicated conflict of interests. Hasan Hanafi points this out, remarking especially on the dichotomy of positive and negative in real political life:

> After that time [1956], the Brethren became an underground movement, living in Egypt as a persecuted community. A prison psyche began to develop and to impose itself on their minds. Their deep motivation was a hatred of reality, a need to revenge what nationalism, Arabism, socialism, secularism, and all that Nasser and the Baʿth party stood for. It was a desire to destroy everything and to build anew, a rejection of the other, a refusal of dialogue, a denial of all compromises, etc. All this had culminated in Sayyid Quṭb Signs on the Road (*Maʿālim fī al-Ṭāriq*). The vanguard, the elite, the new generations of the Prophet's companions were destined to inherit and rule the whole world. The actual world was a world of disbelief, a *jāhilīyah* world which had to be destroyed completely and totally in order to build a new world of belief where everyone could live and practice his own faith. *This division of the world into white and black, good and evil, right and wrong, belief and disbelief, pure and impure made the Brethren mind highly Manichaean.* They lived in permanent internal and external war. Sayyid Quṭb paid for it in his life in 1965....Even the socialist trend in Quṭb's thought had disappeared.[101] [emphasis mine]

Besides Quṭb's criticism of Egyptian society and the regime in power in his day, his attack on the West is another illustration of his opposition. This took the form of a

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[101] Hasan Hanafi, "The Relevance of the Islamic Alternative in Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 4 (1982) 60-1; also quoted by Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins* 216.

dichotomy, in Quṭb's eyes, between Islam, on the one hand, and both communism and capitalism, on the other,[102] a distinguishing between Islamic and Western values. Quṭb's disagreement with Western values focuses on its foundations in materialism, which he saw as contradicting Islam's more spiritual and transcendental basis. This basic doctrine was expressed in his early shift from secularism to the topic of Islamic social justice, expressed in his *al-ʿAdālah al-Ijtimāʿiyah*. Quṭb's opposition to the West focused also on its imperialism, which oppressed Islamic countries. From this, Quṭb moved on to attack its other attributes, including philosophy, ethical trends and other values. Quṭb even vilified any compromise with the West, his denunciation of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian treaty being a particular case in point. This attack on Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1939) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh for their use of Western methods to analyze Islam was more ideological in nature.[103]

Islamic society versus *Jāhilī* society is a simplified expression of the two opposite poles. The positive pole was represented by himself, the Muslim Brethren, his family and his supporters, the negative one by his opponents, who included all those who favored Western over Islamic culture, and especially the Egyptian regime, which tried to silence him. This general outline is well known, but a sharper classification as Quṭb's model and structure of his thought, of what lay at the basis of these distinctions has not yet been attempted. This can be at least partially achieved through a close reading of his exposition of the ʿAd and Thamūd paradigm in *Ẓilāl*. These two poles, drawn large in

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[102] Musallam, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice" 68.

[103] For a more thorough account see Shahrough Akhavi, "Sayyid Quṭb: the Poverty of Philosophy and Vindication of Islamic Tradition," *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East*, ed., Şerif Mardin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 136; Boullata, *Trends and Issues* 59; Quṭb, *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa Muqawwamātuh* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah, 1962) 15; idem, *al-ʿAdālah al-Ijtimāʿiyah fī al-Islām*, 9th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1983).

Quṭb's real life, are expressed in sharper focus in his exegesis of ʿĀd and Thamūd in *Ẓilāl,* where he expresses views that are as much a reaction to the world around him as they are an observation on scriptural truth.

Chapter Two

The Significance of ʿĀd and Thamūd for Sayyid Quṭb

> If we want to understand [a text], we will try to make his [the author's] arguments even stronger.
>
> Hans-Georg Gadamer.[1]

A. ʿĀd

1. ʿĀd in Time and Space

The tale of ʿĀd, for Sayyid Quṭb, is part of the complex history of the human race recorded in the Qurʾān. This narrative illustrates the historical formula of the "struggle for guidance against error, righteousness against evil, honorable messengers against Satan, waged by *al-Jinn* and human beings...."[2] It carries even greater weight by virtue of the fact that ʿĀd had an actual historical role, for Quṭb assigns them a particular time and place.

Quṭb begins by linking ʿĀd with the Prophet Nūḥ, unlike al-Ṭabarī, al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisāʾī, or Ibn Kathīr[3] who linked the long genealogy of ʿĀd to Nūḥ. In his introductory comments on Q. 7: 65, he says:

> Indeed, the tribe of ʿĀd were the descendants of Nūḥ and the people whom he rescued in his ship. It is said that they were thirteen in number...There is no doubt that the children of believers in the ship embraced the religion of Nūḥ (peace be upon him)—namely "Islam"—and that they worshipped only one God, for them there was no other god...[4]

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[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised ed. (New York: Continuum, 1997) 292.
[2] Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988) vol. 3, 1304.
[3] See our discussion about them in Chapter One.
[4] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 3, 1310. See also his comment on Q. 11: 50-60, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 4, 1895.

Basing himself on the same verse, Quṭb then describe the close relationship that existed between ʿĀd and the Prophet Hūd. The verse itself mentions that Hūd was brother to ʿĀd. This is supported by Q. 46: 21.[5] Quṭb then explains that this relationship was due to Hūd's collaboration with ʿĀd in various caravans, where a strong bond formed between the participants. This was all part of the caravan tradition of members offering support and advice.

Quṭb tries to fix a location for ʿĀd on a number of other occasions. Simply following his predecessor exegetes, either classical or modern, in his commentary on Q. 11: 50 and 7: 65, he states that this tribe lived in a region of sandhills (*aḥqāf* sing. *ḥaqf*) in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula.[6] In analyzing Q. 26: 123, Quṭb reiterates that ʿĀd were settled among the sandhills in the vicinity of the mountain of Ramal near Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen.[7] He also repeats these details when dealing with Q. 46: 21,[8] as well as Q. 29: 38.[9]

Quṭb affirms that ʿĀd had attained a high level of civilization. In explaining Q. 26: 128-9, Quṭb states:

> "Built ye on every high place a monument for vain delight?" (128).[10] The "high place" is everything high in the earth. In fact, ʿĀd built lofty structures, so as to allow people to view the horizon. This is because they were arrogant and wanted to show off their ability, eminence and wealth. To do so is fruitless.... "And seek ye out strongholds, that haply ye may last for ever" (129).[11] ʿĀd already enjoyed an outstanding material civilization, as was mentioned previously. They were able to construct factories and build high palaces. However, they thought that

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[5] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3266.
[6] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 4, 1895.
[7] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 2609.
[8] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3266.
[9] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 2735.
[10] The translation is by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Dorset Press, [n.d.]) 269.
[11] Trans. by Pickthall, *The Meaning* 269.

> these factories and whatever they made, including structures, were enough to protect them from death, terrible weather, or an enemy's attack.[12]

Quṭb's explanation of the devastation (*tadmīr*) of ʿĀd has important consequences for his later interpretation, although his concern is more with the theological context and less with the destruction from an historical angle. Quṭb explains that ʿĀd were struck down by a wind in the midst of a storm (*ʿāṣif*), as stated in Q. 14: 18. [13] Instead of giving the number of days, color of clouds, or any other extraordinary events provided by *tārīkh, qiṣaṣ* or classical *tafsīr* literature, Quṭb says that before the calamity occurred, the temperature was very high. Then, when heavy rains began to fall, raising clouds of steam, the heat dissipated and ʿĀd were overjoyed. They left their dwellings supposing that they would find water, and even they joked, saying, "Here is a cloud bringing us rain" (Q. 46: 24).[14] The result of this overconfidence is revealed in the next verse of the *sūrah*, "Nay, but it is that which ye did seek to hasten..." The wind is described as "a wind wherein [there lies] a painful torment [*ramīm*]."[15] In his interpretation of Q. 51: 41, Quṭb mentions that the wind is called *ʿaqīm* because it brings death and destruction, not life.[16]

Quṭb approaches the phenomenon of the wind which destroyed ʿĀd from a theological angle. Wind is a natural phenomenon. For Quṭb, this wind was ordered by God, and had a spirit like any living thing. This is based on the belief that everything in the world has a spirit and a living aspect. All existence in the world is living. Everything recognizes its Lord, including the wind, *ṣarṣar* (Q. 41: 16). The wind obeys God's

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[12] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 2609-10.
[13] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 4, 2094.
[14] Trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 360.
[15] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3267. Trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 360.
[16] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3384.

command to devastate ʿĀd.[17] "The wind is power, one of the powers of nature, one of the armies of God." The wind always accords with the law of God (*sunnat Allāh*) which He predetermines. Wind will act if God commands, as in the case of ʿĀd. It overturns and destroys exactly as God wills it.[18]

Quṭb also explains the meaning of the wind that destroyed ʿĀd in metaphorical terms. In Q. 14: 18, the wind is not only the real wind: it also represents the useless deeds of ʿĀd. "Deeds which are not based on the principle of faith, with no strong connection to the Resurrector of deeds [God]....are as useless as the blowing wind--powerless and disorganized." Their man-made structures were of no help to them when they were in trouble. What we learn from the actions of unbelievers is that their conduct is fruitless. Nothing that they build is based on faith in God.[19]

It is clear from our discussion about classical haggadic exegesis in Chapter One, that Quṭb offers different interpretations. Quṭb does not deal with any genealogy, extraordinary tales, myths or legends. However, ʿĀd's symbolic significance to the modern context is in his eyes the more important aspect. In his description of the civilization of ʿĀd (Q. 26: 128-9), Quṭb expresses by proxy his critical attitude toward the West. The greatness of ʿĀd is matched in Quṭb's eyes by the dominance of Western civilization, especially in the area of industry. This comes across especially in his interpretation of Q. 26: 129, where he dwells on the fact that ʿĀd "were vain in their material strength." One might almost assume that he was describing modern materialism.[20] In commenting on Q. 14: 18, furthermore Quṭb portrays ʿĀd's ambition to

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[17] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3267.
[18] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3384.
[19] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 4, 2094.
[20] A number of works discuss Quṭb's criticism of the West, especially for its materialism. See, for instance, Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York

build lofty structures, which are useless since they are not based on the principles of faith, again using the story as a means to express condemnation of Western civilization.

2. ʿĀd as Symbol[21]

Toshihiko Izutsu's method of classifying the vocabulary of the Qurʾān takes into account two important poles in the Qurʾān: positive and negative.[22] Likewise, and especially in view of Quṭb's treatment of ʿĀd, we may classify Quṭbian discourse into two main lexical poles: negative versus positive, *shirk* (polytheism) versus *tawḥīd* (unitarianism),[23] and *jāhilīyah* (ignorance) versus Islam.[24] ʿĀd is thus portrayed as the

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Press, 1990) 59; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982) 90-5; idem, "The Qurʾānic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: the View of Sayyid Quṭb," *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 37 (winter 1983) 24-8; Adnan A. Musallam, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Quṭb's Literary and Spiritual Orientation, 1932-8," *The Muslim World*, vol. 80 (October-July 1990) 184-7; idem, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice, 1945-1948," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 4 (January 1993) 68-9; Shahrough Akhavi, "Sayyid Quṭb: The Poverty of Philosophy and the Vindication of Islamic Tradition," in Şerif Mardin, ed., *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 134-8; Adnan A. Musallam, "The Formative Stages of Sayyid Quṭb's Intellectual Career and His Emergence as an Islamic Daʿiya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983); 156-65; Ibrahim Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins Origins of Islamic Resurence in the Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 120-37.

[21] We use the term "symbols" based on Clifford Geertz's theory. We position the tale of ʿĀd and Thamūd as symbols for Sayyid Quṭb, "or at least symbolic elements, because they are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs." Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural Sytem," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973) 91.

[22] See the application of this method in his *God and Man in the Qurʾān: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural Studies, 1964); *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966); *The Concept of Belief in Islāmic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistics Studies, 1965).

[23] See the discussion of Quṭb's understanding of the first most important concept after *tawḥīd* in his *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa Muqawwimātuh*, 8th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1965) 22; Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 70-94.

[24] The *jāhilīyah*, especially modern *jāhilīyah*, is the second most important concept in *tawḥīd*, according to Quṭb. We find references to it in his other books, for instance, *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq*, 12th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988) 20-1. This concept shows the influence of Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī, according to a number of writers; see Boullata, *Trends and Issues* 58; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam, Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 23; Moussalli, *Radical Islamic*, 126-7; Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Ciritique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 177-81; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Indeologue of Islamic Revival," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 85; Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, trans. by Jon Rothchild, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 47-52; Muḥammad ʿImārah, *Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1987)

opposite of Hūd. ʿĀd's deeds represent the negatives pole, whereas Hūd's call to God is expressive of the positive one. ʿĀd's deeds are conveyed through a group of words which represent negative values: *jāhilīyah, jabbār, mutakabbir, ṭāghūt, maʿṣiyah, ẓulm, shayṭān, kadhib, shirk, juḥūd,* and their related derived forms. On the other hand, only positive words are used to describe Hūd: *tawḥīd, daʿwah, tadhakkur, tadabbur, dīn, Islām, ʿalīm, naṣīḥah,* and their related derived forms.

A comparison of Izutsu's lexical definition of these words with those of Quṭb's descriptions of ʿĀd versus Hūd and Islam versus *jāhilīyah,* respectively, shows many differences. Izutsu deals with the words by classifying them according to their meaning in the pre-Qurʾānic, Qurʾānic and post-Qurʾānic eras. Quṭb, on the other hand, assigns these words new meanings based on his contemporary experience. The basic two poles remain similar. Both schemes feature positive versus negative values, or Islamic values versus *jāhilī* values. However, each concept is used differently, according to its temporality. Quṭb's concern with the modern context is revealed in his use of *ṭāghūt,* for example, which implies materialism, communism, colonialism and other enemies of Quṭb and Islam as a whole. By contrast, Izutsu elaborates the meaning of *īmān* and *iḥsān,* for instance, in the time of the Qurʾān's revelation.

First, Quṭb locates ʿĀd's conduct on the pole of evil, as opposed to the virtuous pole of Hūd's call. The former were ignorant and ʿ*umy* (blind) when faced with the messenger of God, i.e., Hūd who brought *tawḥīd* and Islam to them. Throughout Quṭb's interpretation of this confrontation, he always describes the battle as being between the two opposing tendencies, between Islam and *jāhilīyah,* between Hūd and ʿĀd.

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75. Besides the concept of *jāhilīyah*, Mawdūdī's influence on Quṭb includes his view of Islam and the state, see Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī, *al-Tafsīr al-Siyāsī li al-Islām: Fī Mirʾāt Kitābāt al-Ustādh Abī al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī wa al-Shāhid Sayyid Quṭb* (Sharja: al-Markaz al-ʿArabī li al-Kitāb, 1991).

Secondly, Quṭb refers to ʿĀd's disobedience of God and Hūd, His messenger, as constituting *maʿṣīyah*, or a return to *jāhilīyah*. *Jāhilīyah* and the other terms used to designate it are, in effect, directly opposed to Islam and its related concepts. In Quṭbian discourse about ʿĀd, Islam represents the original and innate character (*fiṭrah*) of a human being.[25] The origin of Islam is found within oneself. However, human beings are apt to neglect their origin, thanks to the temptation of Satan, and they choose ignorance and similar negative values. Using the language of Darwinian evolution,[26] Quṭb reconstructs the history of *tawḥīd* in the history of humanity,

> A believing race of the descendants of Adam returned to *jāhilīyah* as their previous generations did.... Originally, the generation of descendants of Adam who had lived on the earth were born of believers and lived according to Islam like their ancestors. Due to Satan's temptation, they turned away from their religion, to hold the *jāhilīyah*. This is what Nūḥ (peace be upon him) faced, when he came to save believers and destroy the rest of them who were unbelievers. They will never occupy the earth again, as Nūḥ prayed to God. Hence, some races of the descendants of Nūḥ lived according to Islam...the temptation of Satan led them to return again to *jāhilīyah*. ʿĀd and Thamūd were a *jāhilīyah* race, ...[27]

In Q. 7: 65, Quṭb argues that ʿĀd cooperated with Satan, who indulged their lust and love for possessions, hegemony and the comfortable life. They preferred lust to the law of God (*sharīʿah*).[28]

ʿĀd were accused of being polytheists (*mushrīkūn*) for deifying created things. This is, of course, the opposite of *tawḥīd*. *Shirk* in Q. 11: 51, is described not only as affecting the matter of ritual, but as having a much broader meaning. It includes *ittibāʿ*,

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[25] *Fiṭrah* is a key concept in Islam according to Quṭb, see his *This Religion of Islam* (*Hādha 'd-din)[sic]* (Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1974)50, 55; *Hadhā al-Dīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1962). See also, for example, Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 36 and 86.
[26] Ibrahim Abu Rabi, *Intellectual Origins* 97.
[27] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1895.
[28] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 3, 1310.

or obeying a certain *ḥākimīyah* (rulership).[29] Thus, to obey the rulership of God is essentially *ʿibādah*. In a broader sense it even relates to *al-dīn* (religion). When Prophet Muḥammad was once asked by a Companion about the meaning of *ʿibādah*, he said that it did not consist in mere ritual. He interpreted *ʿibādah* in broader terms to mean the act of "following" and he gave, as an example, ʿUday ibn Ḥātim, the Jews[30] and Christians who follow their monks and priests, in the sense of performing *ʿibādah* to other than God. "They prohibit what God allows and allow what God prohibits." For Quṭb, *ʿibādah* means to serve the only God. Its inclusive (*shāmīlah*) character is in respect of "following" only God. It has to do with every matter of worldly life and the hereafter. As Quṭb points out, the root word "*ʿAbd* means to be humble and to submit." According to him, the Meccans who were addressed thus were not meant only to perform rituals, but to submit everything to God and to withdraw their submission from everything besides God.[31]

In the modern context, Quṭb returns to the concept of *ʿibādah* by way of ideology. He argues that to be a polytheist is to follow a certain ideology, such as communism, materialism or other Western tendencies. Quṭb describes these tendencies as false lords. These lords are considered to function as real gods, and are regarded as having the same characteristics as God in that they possess knowledge, power, and determination. Quṭb gives the example of people who sacralize music—such as drums,

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[29] For more about this *ḥākimīyah*, one of Quṭb's principal ideas, see Mhd. Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qurʾān Exegesis in Earlier and Later Editions of his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* with Specific Reference to Selected Themes," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1993); Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 149-51; Binder, *Islamic Liberalism*, 175-77; Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb" 89.

[30] For more about Quṭb's attitude toward Jews, see his *Maʿrakatunā maʿa al-Yahūd* being discussed in Ronald L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987); John Calvert, "Radical Islamism and the Jews: The View of Sayyid Quṭb," in Leonard Jay Greenspoon and Bryan F. Le Beau, eds., *Representations of the Jews trough the Ages* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1996) 213-29.

[31] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1902.

the saxophone, and other instruments.[32] To play them is a form of worship. These instruments are seen as holy and serve a key religious function in the eyes of their followers.[33] This is how Quṭb tries to place ʿĀd's story within a modern context and to include modern Western traits in the character of the latter.[34]

ʿĀd disobeyed God and His messenger through their ignorant deeds— as well as by tyranny, arrogance, impudence, and iniquity. When one such messenger, Hūd, gave them warning, ʿĀd called him a fool, especially condemning his statement that they were lacking in piety (*taqwā*) towards God. ʿĀd were so bold as to say to Hūd "Lo! We surely see thee in foolishness, and lo! we deem thee of the liars" (Q. 7: 66).[35] Hud replied to these accusations, saying, "O my people; There is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the Worlds"(7: 67).[36] ʿĀd refused to acknowledge their own impudence, just as they denied having gone astray. In doing so, ʿĀd became *jāhilī*,[37] and positioned themselves on the negative pole opposite the positive pole which Hūd occupied.

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[32] See also Adnan A. Musallam, "The Formative Stages" 158.
[33] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1897.
[34] That this ideology is anti-Western is clear, as is the fact that he maintains a fundamentalist position on Islam. For a discussion of the term fundamentalism see, for example, Abdel Azim Ramadan, "Fundamentalist Influence in Egypt: The Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Takfīr* Groups," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appely, eds., *Fundamentalism Observed*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 152-60; Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Quṭb*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992) 126-40 and 213-30 passim. However, Calvert disagrees with the use of 'fundamentalism' in Islam and prefers to use Islamism, in order to avoid the ambiguity of its use by Protestants and Roman Catholics, see his "Discourse, Community and Power" 1.
[35] Trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 126.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 3, 1311.

3. ʿĀd as Quraysh

In Quṭbian discourse, the two opposite poles, recognizable in the story of ʿĀd have a parallel in Muḥammad's time. Hūd versus Ād symbolizes Muḥammad versus Quraysh. This is apparent from Quṭb's discussion of Q. 38: 12-6, where the struggle between Hūd and ʿĀd is referred to as having a bearing on the situation of Muḥammad *vis-à-vis* the unbelieving Meccan Quraysh.[38] Quṭb, in the light of Q. 22: 42, comments:

> It is a pattern repeated in all prophethoods, prior to the last one [Muḥammad's], that when messengers came with signs (*āyāhs*) the liars rejected them. What happened to the Prophet [Muḥammad]--blessings and peace be upon him--is nothing new, [even] when polytheists denied him. The consequence [of their denying] is well-known, the rule is just repeated: "If they deny thee (Muḥammad), even so the folk of Noah, and (the tribes of) ʿĀd and Thamūd, before thee, denied (Our messengers)" (Q. 22: 42).[39]

Quṭb emphasizes the unity of the prophetic office in accordance with his principle that Islam is fully integrated (*shūmūl*). For him, belief in the messages of all God's messengers are collectively *tawḥīd*. This *tawḥīd* is directed against *shirk*. Hūd's struggle is therefore the same as Muḥammad's--Islam versus ignorance, *tawḥīd* versus *shirk*. All prophecies are one and linked with each other, as is evident from, for example, his explanation of Q. 50: 13.[40] Likewise, the challenges to prophecy, in different times and places, are the same too. Therefore, with respect to Q. 25: 38, for example, ʿĀd's dismissal of Hūd means disavowing all the messengers of God together,[41] because the messengers came with the same essential mission, i.e., to make known the *tawḥīd* of

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[38] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 3014.
[39] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2429; trans. of Q. 22: 42 by Pickthall, *The Meaning* 245.
[40] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3361.
[41] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 2563

God and of Islam.[42] This meant obeying the messenger and denying the tyrants and exploiters (Q. 22: 42).[43]

In Q. 46: 25[44] and 38: 12[45] Quṭb alludes to the brotherhood of the people of ʿĀd, just as it was mentioned earlier that Hūd was ʿĀd's brother. This, he claims, also fits the situation of the Prophet Muḥammad, who was Quraysh's brother. Thus, Quṭb in these verses draws a parallel between the situations of Muḥammad and Hūd, on the one hand, and ʿĀd and Quraysh on the other. One can therefore conclude that in Qutbian discourse the Hūd versus Ād model appeared for a second time as Muḥammad versus Quraysh.

4. ʿĀd as a Contemporary Phenomenon

After discussing ʿĀd as a real and historical tribe and then again in their manifestation as symbolic of the Meccan Quraysh, we find that ʿĀd's characteristics apply also to modern times. The opposition represented by the Ād versus the Hūd model had a contemporary significance for Quṭb, who may have seen ʿĀd as representing his enemies and Hūd as standing for himself. Thus, the battle between ʿĀd and Hūd symbolizes Quṭb's battle with his opponents. He perpetuated this conflict and brought it into his own era. It was in accordance with Quṭb's principle of *thabāt* (stability), that time and place did not limit the ʿĀdian pattern.

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[42] This might include Quṭb's concept of *shumūlīyah* (inclusiveness), an important Islamic concept for him. See Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 109; William Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) xxxviii, 24-26-7. In his book Shepard translates and analyzes Quṭb's *al-ʿAdālah al-Ijtimāʿīyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1983), also translated by John B. Hardie as *Social Justice of Islam* (New York: Octagon Books, 1980). See also Quṭb's *Fī al-Tārikh: Fikrah wa Manhaj* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1974) 22.
[43] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 4. 2429.
[44] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 6, 3265-6.
[45] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* vol. 5, 3014.

Quṭb's application of the ʿĀdian paradigm to modern conditions can be seen for instance in his description of ʿĀd's choice to follow tyrants, exploiters, and iniquitous rulers, rather than Prophet Hūd's call to *tawḥīd*.

> "And such were ʿĀd. They denied the revelations of their Lord and flouted His messengers and followed the command of every froward potentate" (11: 59).[46] This is disobedience to the command of messengers and choosing to follow iniquitous exploiters! Islam consists in obeying the command of messengers--for it is God's command--and to disobey the command of iniquitous exploiters. This is the difference between the way of *jāhilīyah* and Islam, *kufr* (infidelity) and *īmān* (faith)...[with respect to] every prophethood and messenger. It is obvious that the call of *tawḥīd* means to reject the lordship of anyone other than God, to disregard the hegemony of tyrants. It is to attain the level of humanity and liberation. To follow the tyrants is sin, *shirk*, *kufr*, meriting perdition in this world and the hereafter. God created human beings to be free from any lordship of created things, [to actuate] perpetual liberation from exploiters, such as leaders or politicians. [To free from any worship other than of God] is [a path] of human dignity and a secure way [of life]. It is possible for men to lose their dignity by accepting the lordship of creatures other than God.[47]

Quṭb injects more meaning into *shirk* and *kufr* in view of the Egyptian political context. *Shirk* and *kufr* are two important words which are found on the negative pole. They appear here to mean Quṭb's enemies. For him this meant some of the Egyptian people, who embodied the model of *jāhilīyah* versus Islam. The people of Egypt, representing ʿĀd, follow the lordship of individuals other than God, here defined as tyrants and exploiters. Exploiters and tyrants appear to represent for him Western colonialism, including the British, French and American varieties.[48] The ruler-politician-leader symbolizes on the other hand the Egyptian government, more specifically Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir. In other words, it is apparent that ʿĀd served as a symbol for Quṭb in projecting his political and ideological ideas, in stating his opposition to Nāṣir, in

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[46] Trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 169.
[47] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1901.
[48] Musallam, *The Formative Stages* 161-171.

struggling against colonialism and imperialism, and in expressing his hatred for the West. These symbols contribute to his reading of the ʿĀd narrative.

In Q. 9: 70 Quṭb describes another trait of ʿĀd's which symbolizes the modern context. ʿĀd enjoyed an easy life, seldom engaging in contemplation, abusing their power, and learning no lessons from the past, since in this verse ʿĀd are mentioned together with their predecessors, the people of Nūḥ. The generation that followed ʿĀd, the people of Madyan and the people of Ibrāhīm, are also mentioned for good measure. ʿĀd were misguided in their deeds, particularly because they were tempted by their own strength and failed to remember God. "Their comfortable life made them blind." The lessons of the past were therefore useless to them. They closed their eyes and did not contemplate the norms set by God which no one can alter.[49] Their comfortable lifestyle distracted them from meditating on the destruction of stronger generations preceding them and on the collapse of tyrant-exploiters. This is pure forgetfulness (*ghaflah*), ignorance, and blindness.[50]

The comfortable life, in Quṭb's time, meant the material welfare provided by Western countries, while the strength of ʿĀd likely symbolized the hegemony of Egypt's rulers. This is may be meant to represent both Western countries and the Egyptian government. However, the lack of meditating refers more likely to the West, which Quṭb perceived as having no spiritual dimension, and where the emphasis was perceived to be on the material values. Hence, in this passage ʿĀd represents Western materialism. This is reinforced by Quṭb's further attack on materialism in another passage of his interpretation, this time at Q. 14: 18: "Those who base themselves on a materialism called

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[49] This includes Quṭb's important doctrine of *thabāt* (stability). See *his Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī* 72, 83; Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* xxxiv; Moussalli, *Radical Islam* 94; Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue" 75.
[50] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 3, 1674-5.

"scientific method" are liars... science does not agree with reality because it destroys the future of innate nature and destroys human relations—[these people] are called blind by the Qurʾān."[51]

The modern Hūd seems to be Quṭb's projection of himself. In other words, Hūd versus ʿĀd, in the modern context, becomes Quṭb versus the Egyptian and Western governments.

In his account of Hūd, Quṭb describes his most important task as being to call his people to God--namely, *tawḥīd*. Hūd's task was not easy, being that of one man striving against all those who figured as members of ʿĀd. As Quṭb explains:

> People may be astonished to see how boldly a single man can face a community in deep error. Due to ignorance they believe [the claim of] those [false] lords that the call to one God is in error! It is amazing that only one man faces those people who hold firmly to the opinion of their lords...People may be astonished at the courage of a single man striving against people in such deep error. But this astonishment disappears when they know the causes [of his courage].... It is faith, confidence, and optimism. To believe in God, to have confidence in His promises and to be optimist about His victory...The heart is filled with solid faith, without even the slightest doubt when God promises victory. For it is in both his hands, within himself; the promise is not for an unseen future, it is present in reality clearly in his eyes and heart.[52]

The call to God, represented by Hūd, is Quṭb's ideal imagery. Hūd is the brave and single courageous man who felt no doubt as he faced a community deep in error. He is a tranquil man filled with faith, fearing nothing, even the exploiters, since these are merely God's creatures. There is no strength except through God, including an exploiter's energy. Hūd also has *istiqāmah* (persistence).[53] Seemingly, these were Quṭb's traits as well, since Quṭb did not fear facing his enemies, e.g., the Egyptian government, and he endured many years in jail. He even refused to ask ʿAbd al-Nāṣir for pardon

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[51] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2095.
[52] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1899.
[53] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1899.

while in prison.[54] He felt strong and was fearless with God on his side. He refused all cooperation with the enemy.

Quṭb depicts the hard struggle between the prophet Hūd and his people, ʿĀd, which symbolizes the contemporary struggle against Western colonialism, and also the struggle against the Egyptian government. Just as Hūd, faced alone a people who were strong and powerful, so Quṭb alone opposed the Egyptian government which unfairly imposed hegemony. Hūd stood for Quṭb himself, and other *aṣḥāb al-daʿwah* (missionaries), while ʿĀd represented Western colonialism, the Egyptian government and the people who cooperated with them.[55]

Quṭb's most important aim in relating the tale of ʿĀd versus Hūd is to develop what might be called a theology of "liberation" (*barāʾah*).[56] Quṭb points to the distinction between truth and evil, Islam and ignorance, Hūd and ʿĀd, symbolized in himself and his enemies. Hūd's task was to liberate people from tyrants, to distinguish between the people of Islam and ignorance, and to cleanse the earth of polytheists, exploiters, the iniquitous, and all other expressions of *jāhilī* values. It is true that suffering has religious meaning[57] and that Quṭb's suffering in the form of political oppression and especially during his prison days, relates to this concept of liberation. Liberation implies not only to the split of Hūd from ʿĀd or the righteous from the evil ones, but also symbolically represents the liberation of himself from suffering during his prison days and political oppression by the Egyptian government.

In Q. 11: 50, Quṭb depicts the split between Hūd and ʿĀd as follows:

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[54] M. M. Siddiqui, "An Outline of Sayyed Quṭb's Life," in his translation of Sayyid Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace* ([n.p.]: American Trust Publications, 1977) xii.
[55] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4,1675.
[56] *Barāʾah* is an important concept in his scheme; see his *Maʿālim* 83; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb" 81-3.

> The call of the messenger begins when the unity of one community, the messenger and his people, is bound by unity of family, blood, descent, and humanity everywhere on earth.... The call ends with their splitting into two different basic communities....Islamic and *mushrīk* ...there is a large gap between both...Through this, and based on this separation, God's promise is fulfilled with the victory of the believers and the destruction of the polytheists.[58]

Hūd's responsibility ended with the coming of a demolishing wind, which annihilated the unbelievers. After the disaster, those who had served the messenger and obeyed his advice were saved, while those who did not follow him but chose to support exploiters and unbelievers perished.

The idea of liberation is also found in Q. 11: 50, where Quṭb stresses that the liberation he is referring to is freedom from any polytheism. Interpreting part of Q. 11: 54, Quṭb paraphrases it, emphasizing that Hūd seemed to achieve this for himself since he said, "Indeed I bear witness to my liberation from the polytheists who associate God with others. You all witness my liberation and this is evidence for you: that I am a liberator from anyone who associates God with others."[59]

The key to liberating Hūd from ʿĀd, *tawḥīd* from the polytheists, Islam from *jāhilīyah*, Quṭb from his enemies, and the positive pole from the negative one, himself from suffering and oppression, lies in independence. Once liberated, each is forever free of its former opponents. This is especially clear in the case of Islam, which has to free itself of dependence on its opposite--tyrants, exploiters, and oppressors. Quṭb's illustration in Q. 14: 13-4 makes it apparent that ignorance and Islam can never coincide and are never in agreement. In fact, an ignorant society never allows Islam to grow and develop as it should. The two are essentially in conflict. An ignorant society never grants safety to Islam. An ignorant people is never satisfied with its mission, and will always

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[57] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural Sytem" 98.

try to exploit Islam, hoping to melt into a society which will never allow Muslims to become independent. The principal mission of such people is to develop its ignorance. Anyone who works within an ignorant society must merge with it, cooperate with it, and develop and help that society to become more ignorant, not more Islamic. There is no benefit or advantage at all in working with this kind of society. That is why the prophet Hūd came to separate the two tendencies. He made it clear which was Islam and which ignorance. This separation was realized when God punished ʿĀd's ignorance through a destructive wind. Afterwards, Muslim society remained with its own values. Muslims clearly distinguish between the Islamic *minhāj*,[60] faith, and rules and those of an ignorant society.[61]

Quṭb's search for a national and an Islamic identity was an important theme in his work. For him, an Islamic identity and nationhood, free of foreign (especially Western) values, was essential. In his day, in fact, there was a trend towards "Easternism," a trend to confront the Western hegemony and to support the notion that Eastern countries are not inferior to Western ones. In response to this, Quṭb, however saw Islam as being unable to cooperate with anything but Islam itself. This meant independence in every aspect of life; in practical terms it meant refusing the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 7 July 1954.[62] Quṭb's rejection of total integration on the practical level is reflected in his unwillingness to compromise with ʿAbd al-Nāṣir or the Ministry

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[58] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1896.
[59] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1899.
[60] Quṭb uses *minhāj* (system or program) often throughout his works, see William E. Shepard, "Islam as a 'System' in the Later Writings of Sayyid Quṭb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (1989) 31-50; Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 42; Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb" 25.
[61] This doctrine is discussed in Quṭb's *ʿAdālah*. See Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* 105-7, and its introduction xlii-xlvii; Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2093.
[62] M. M. Siddiqui, "An Outline of Sayyed Quṭb's" x; for his anti-British stance see also Musallam, "The Formative Stages" 163-5.

of Education, which ultimately led to his resignation from it.[63] This act was symbolized by Hūd's decision to quit ʿĀd.

B. Thamūd

1. Thamūd in Time and Space

As in the case of ʿĀd, Quṭb explains that Thamūd were the people of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ, and that Ṣāliḥ may well have been brother to Thamūd. In Q. 11: 61-8 Quṭb comments that Thamūd were descended from "Muslims" who had been saved by Nūḥ from destruction. Their ancestors were therefore originally "Muslims." After a time, however, their descendants were tempted by Satan to return to ignorance and polytheism.[64]

According to Quṭb, Thamūd were widely dispersed throughout the Ḥijāz. In commenting on Q. 11: 61, for instance, Quṭb says that Thamūd lived in the north of the Arabian Peninsula, between Tabūk and Medina.[65] In interpreting Q. 69: 4-5[66] and especially Q. 26: 141, Quṭb adds that Thamūd's habitations, which were built of stone (*ḥajar*), were located between the Ḥijāz and Syria. The Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions saw the vestiges of these structures on their way to fight the battle of Tabūk.[67] In his analysis of Q. 54: 23 he informs us that Thamūd were a tribe as strong as ʿĀd. ʿĀd inhabited the southern region of the Arabian Peninsula, while Thamūd lived in the north.[68] In Q. 29: 38 Quṭb repeats that Thamūd lived in stone buildings in the

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[63] Ibrahim Abu Rabiʿ, "Intellectual Origins" 102; Mousalli, *Radical Islam* 42.
[64] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1909.
[65] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1895.
[66] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3678.
[67] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5: 2611.
[68] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3432.

north of the Arabian Peninsula, located in wādī al-Qurā.[69] In Q. 89: 9, Quṭb explains that Thamūd built columned structures, cut the valley rock for their palaces, and dug into the mountains for their houses.[70]

Their caravan trade allowed Thamūd to attain comfortable life (*rizq)* from God. Unfortunately, they denied *tawḥīd,* as mentioned in Q. 11: 61.[71] Their civilizational achievements were, however, comparable to those of ʿĀd.[72] In spite of their contempt for others.

> They lived with the comforts of life and [in opposition to] their brother Ṣāliḥ who reminded them [of God's blessings]. However, they lived in forgetfulness (*ghaflah*), failing to consider the one who gives these [benefits], not thinking of the source of these comforts, not-thanking the one who grants their easy life. Their messenger reminded them to contemplate these truths. Knowing the cost of prosperity should have made them afraid of losing.[73]

This civilization met the same fate as that of ʿĀd. ʿĀd was destroyed by a dreadful wind, Thamūd by a mysterious scream (*ṣayḥah*). After committing some ignorant deeds, the peak of which was their slaughter of a she-camel, God visited this fate on them.

Quṭb refers to the mysterious scream in his interpretation of Q. 9: 71.[74] God's wrath visited upon Thamūd is most fully depicted in Q. 91: 11, however, where it is described as the sound of a scream. In spite of describing the scream as an extraordinary event or punishment given by al-Kisāʾī, al-Ṭabarī, or al-Thaʿlabī, Quṭb simply states that

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[69] The Arabs saw the remnants since they traveled to many surrounding areas, as it is claimed by the Qurʾān, "for their taming (We cause) the caravans to set forth in winter and summer (Q. 106: 2)." Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2735; For 106: 2 trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 451.
[70] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3904.
[71] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1895.
[72] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3432.
[73] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2611.
[74] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1674.

it is an expression of the devastation of Thamūd.[75] Explaining the nature of this phenomenon in connection with Q. 51: 43-4, Quṭb claims that the screaming refers to a thunderbolt. This thunderbolt came three days after the killing of the she-camel, and was done according to His *sunnah*. Quṭb refers to the thunderbolt as "one of the armies of God."[76] Furthermore, Quṭb theorizes the possibility that the thunder and the scream may have occurred at the same time, or that the scream was an effect of the thunder. The Qurʾān 54: 31 mentions one scream, which was sufficient to devastate the tribe.[77]

In Quṭb's reading of the contemporary context, the high level of civilization, attained by Thamūd, recalls that of the West, as does that of ʿĀd. Quṭb's critique of their prosperity, won at the cost of their spiritual development is also familiar. Quṭb's emphasis on the columned structures built by Thamūd is further evidence of the parallel which he attempts to draw with the West.

2. Thamūd as Symbol

Using Izutzu's semantic method, we can see the paradigms of Ṣāliḥ and Thamūd as being not very different from that of Hūd and ʿĀd. We can classify this pairing according to two opposite poles, just as we did for ʿĀd. ʿĀd versus Hūd model is similar to that of Thamūd versus Ṣāliḥ, in that both ʿĀd and Thamūd occupy the negative pole, whereas Hūd and Ṣālih are on the positive one. Hence, Ṣāliḥ represents Islam and Thamūd ignorance. This distinction is reinforced by the fact that Quṭb employs only positive words to describe Ṣāliḥ's action: *Islam, tawḥīd, daʿwah, īmān, waḥy, rasūl, nabīy, ṭāʿah, duʿaʾ, hudā, naṣīḥah, shukr,* etc. On the other hand, Thamūd

[75] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3918.
[76] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3384.

is identified with such negative terms as *jāhilī, shirk, fasād, ṭughyān, ẓulm, qatl, ʿaqr, juḥūd, kufr, inkār, ghaflah, takabbur, khurāfāt,* etc.

Of all Thamūd's faults, it is their ignorance that earns them identification with the negative pole, as Quṭb states in his interpretation of Q. 7: 73-9. Quṭb depicts here the conflict between vice and virtue, between falsehood and the truth. This is represented by the model of the struggle of Thamūd and Ṣāliḥ.[78] Quṭb repeatedly refers to the ignorance of Thamūd, particularly in his remarks on Q. 11: 61-8[79] and especially Q. 9: 73, where Thamūd is said to have been as ignorant as ʿĀd.

One of the practices of Thamūd which bred ignorance was their adherence to polytheism. This goes against the innate nature of human beings, whose original faith is *tawḥīd,* according to Quṭb.[80] Thus, Thamūd had originally recognized *tawḥīd,* but had since deviated from their origins. Thamūd thus denied both their original faith and their own nature, since the human soul is created in *tawḥīd,* as Quṭb comments in discussing Q. 14: 9.[81] Thamūd failed to listen to the call to return to their original nature, their original faith. Thamūd never tried to open their hearts, showing only arrogance in believing themselves self-sufficient. "They supposed that they created everything by themselves. In fact, they were not eternal. They did not obtain the comforts of life by themselves..." They would never be self-sufficient even in terms of material things.[82]

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[77] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3433. In Q. 69: 4-5, the scream is referred to as *ṭāghiyah*. This new term may have been substituted for *ṣayḥah* in Q. 69 when it tells of the day of *qiyāmah*. Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3678.
[78] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 3, 1312.
[79] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1895.
[80] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2611.
[81] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2090. See the similar discussion of Quṭb's concept of *fiṭrah* in Moussalli, *Radical Islam* 87-94. Quṭb repeats many times in the course of relating this story the two important principles of *tawḥīd* in his eyes, i.e., to worship one God and to admit God's lordliness in every matter. These two points of *tawḥīd* are universal, apply to all times and are essential to success in this world. Quṭb then, derives these two principles from the tale of Thamūd and Ṣāliḥ, and argues that they have inspired every aspect of Islam (Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4. 1910).
[82] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4. 1910.

Commenting on Q. 11: 61-8,[83] and especially Q. 11: 61, Quṭb gives examples of Thamūd's practice of *shirk*. Thamūd opted to believe in what their ancestors had practiced instead of following Ṣāliḥ's call to believe in God. Thamūd's stubborn adherence to their ancestors' beliefs was so firmly held that it was an obstacle to accepting the evident truth of *tawḥīd*.[84]

On the other hand, Ṣāliḥ was chosen by God for a special calling. Quṭb describes Ṣāliḥ's personality as follows. According to him, Ṣāliḥ had a clean heart which allowed him finally to learn the truth of God's proof. His clean heart was a light to reality, as he is portrayed in Q. 11: 61-8.[85] A messenger, according to Q. 26: 154, is a man like any other. But he is different from other humans in some respects. He is chosen for his excellence by God and charged with the task of reminding all humans to return to light and guidance. A messenger's duty is to give news from heaven about the unseen world, the world that cannot be perceived by ordinary human beings. He is given the ability to communicate with the world above. In spite of being so exalted he still sleeps, marries, walks, and performs other human functions. Ṣāliḥ embodied all this.[86]

In Q. 27: 45 Quṭb focuses on Ṣāliḥ's call to *tawḥīd*, his primary concern: "We send for Thamūd their brother Ṣāliḥ to worship God." Quṭb then points to the universality of *tawḥīd*:

> This principle is passed down by prophecy from heaven to earth for every generation and every messenger. Those who hold to their faith, generation after generation, trust in God. Those who deny this truth, lie. Until now, this formula has been endlessly, in various forms....[87]

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[83] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1909.
[84] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1907.
[85] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1909.
[86] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2612.
[87] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2644. In his interpretation of Q. 11: 60-8 (*Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1909) and 26: 141 (*Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2611), Quṭb repeats this message. This implies the two principles, *thabāt* and *shumūl*, see Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* xxxiv, xxxviii; Moussalli, *Radical Islam* 94, 107.

On the other hand, the challenge of the call to *tawḥīd* awaits every generation. People constantly deny their messenger, like Thamūd did. The pattern remains the same even though the methods are different.[88]

The most important aspect of Thamūd versus Ṣāliḥ the tale is the tragedy of the slaughter of the she-camel. When Thamūd demanded proof of Ṣāliḥ's prophethood (Q. 26: 155-7.),[89] God sent the she-camel. However, the tribe mistreated this divine gift.

Sending the she-camel to Thamūd was significant in two ways. First it was a trial, and second a *fitnah*. Ṣāliḥ taught them that they had to be patient in bearing the trials sent by God; otherwise, *fitnah* would result. They had to demonstrate sufficient patience, for example, to share their water with the she-camel. However, some of them who had wicked hearts, caused much destruction. It is said that one of them even became drunk and that he was responsible for killing the she-camel. In killing the she-camel they failed God's trial and the *fitnah* followed (Q. 54: 27).[90]

Quṭb offers three possible interpretations of Q. 51: 43, concerning Thamūd's slaughter of the she-camel. One interpretation is that only three days after God had sent the beast, Thamūd killed it. The second is that they killed it three days after Ṣāliḥ had warned them. The third is that only three days after they killed the she-camel, God sent the mysterious scream to destroy them.[91]

Killing the she-camel meant Thamūd had rejected the prophecy of Ṣāliḥ, as pointed out in other verses, like Q. 91: 11-5[92] and 26: 153.[93] Thus, Thamūd were in

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[88] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2644.
[89] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2612.
[90] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3432-3.
[91] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3384.
[92] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3919.

ṭughyān (in deep error), an example of this being their killing of the she-camel. Ṣāliḥ had performed his duty in giving his call. Ṣāliḥ asked them to share their water with the she-camel, allotting one day for them and another for the she-camel. They rejected Ṣāliḥ's advice and killed the animal. For Quṭb, although only a portion of Thamūd's membership participated in killing the animal, the whole community had to suffer the consequences.[94] To those who would object that this action contradicted the idea of individual responsibility, Quṭb argued that as individuals they had neglected the important task of being a community, of advising and giving advice to each other.[95]

In Q. 11: 60 Quṭb alludes to the fact that the Qur'ān does not mention any details, such as what kind of she-camel the beast was, nor its character. This she-camel was merely one of the signs of God. The Qurʾān simply says that the she-camel was a sign of God (*āyah*). Therefore, she had to have been special.[96]

> "Lo! this is the camel of Allāh, a token unto you;..."(7: 73).[97] The context is to show the call and the consequences of believing and denying. There is no mention of the details of the miracle; rather, it is intended to show the consequence after the call. It is not mentioned in detail what kind of she-camel it is, it is merely a proof from God [to prove Ṣāliḥ's prophethood]. The beast brought His sign. Simply, it is an uncommon camel, for it was born from something-uncommon [rock?]. The she-camel is an explanation of God [for Thamūd], the real truth is only known by Him. It functions to show the truthfulness of His messenger...We are supposed not to add anything that is not mentioned in [the Qurʾān itself]—[we have to be content] not to provide any further detail...[98]

Quṭb stresses that the reader must be content with the information provided regarding the she-camel, and not seek out alternative explanations—such as anecdotes from

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[93] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2612.
[94] This includes the *jamāʿah* principle, a concept of Quṭb's mentioned in his *ʿAdālah*; see the translation by Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* 68-83; Boullata, *Trends and Issues* 61; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb" 87-8.
[95] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3919.
[96] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3919.
[97] Trans. Pickthall, *The Meaning* 127.
[98] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 3, 1313.

isrāʾīlīyāt tales, as previous interpreters had done. In short, Thamūd injured the she-camel simply out of wickedness. In fact, based on Q. 11: 60 we can assume from the Qurʾān itself that they probably slaughtered the animal with a sword.

Nevertheless the killing and torturing of the she-camel is a medium for Quṭb to condemn symbolically the Egyptian government's arrest of members of the Muslim Brethren and especially the point that this action, like the killing of the she-camel, would lead to a *fitnah*. We could assume, accordingly, based on Quṭb's discourse, that there is a direct parallel between the arrest and killing of his compatriots and the decision of Thamūd to kill the beast for which they had been made responsible.

3. Thamūd as Quraysh

The model of Ṣalīḥ versus Thamūd symbolizes as well the struggle of Muḥammad against Quraysh, just as the Hūd versus ʿĀd model does. Thus, we can see the same basic similarities between Thamūd and Quraysh in Quṭb's discourse. Thamūd is a manifestation of Quraysh, for both committed *jāhilī* deeds. By the same token, Muḥammad, maintaining the oneness of prophecy, is represented by Ṣālih.

We can find a number of similarities between Quraysh and Thamūd in *Fī Ẓilāl*. In Quṭb's interpretation of Q. 27: 45-7, for example, the stubbornness of Thamūd, who prefer to endure the punishment of God rather than accept His guidance is the same as that demonstrated by Quraysh. Quṭb then explains to some extent Thamūd's recalcitrance. When the Prophet Ṣāliḥ came to remind them of God's message, Thamūd answered him with defiance, saying "O God, if Ṣāliḥ brought the truth from You, shower us with stones," instead of, "Oh God if Ṣāliḥ brought the truth from You, guide

us to faith and the righteous way."[99] In Q. 17: 59, Quṭb points out that Thamūd's stubborn attitude is similar to that of Quraysh when Prophet Muḥammad informed them about his *isrāʾ* (night journey). The Meccan Quraysh refused to believe him and even demanded that he produce a miracle as evidence. The result of their demands was the same, for both Thamūd and Quraysh remained unconvinced although the miracle had been performed. Some Meccan Muslims even apostatized after the *isrāʾ*. In this way the *isrāʾ* did not prove the prophethood of Muḥammad for Quraysh, but became a source of *fitnah*, as did the she-camel.[100]

In interpreting Q. 22: 42[101] and Q. 11: 62 Quṭb compares the rejection of *tawḥīd* by both Thamūd and Quraysh. Quraysh ignored the truth of Muḥammad, just as Thamūd did with Ṣāliḥ. Quraysh accused Muḥammad of being a soothsayer and a fabricator of the Qurʾān. Both Thamūd and Quraysh forgot their innate nature in *tawḥīd*. "They are the same tale, repeated many times in history."[102] They are alike in having asked for a proof.

> Then we find a people who faced the miracle which they had asked for, accepting not with faith and belief, but rejecting and slaughtering the she-camel! The polytheist Arabs asked Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) for a miracle, similar to miracles prior to them, to have faith. They were the people of Ṣāliḥ who had gotten the miracle that they asked for. This did not have any effect on them. Faith does not need miracles. The call is to be contemplated by the heart and the mind. But, *jāhilīyah* had mastered their minds and hearts!!![103]

Both denied the miracles offered them, Thamūd by slaughtering the she-camel, and Quraysh by rejecting the truth of the *isrāʾ* and the Qurʾān.

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[99] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2644.
[100] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2237.
[101] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2429-30.
[102] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1908. This includes Quṭb's principle of *thabāt* (stability), see Moussalli, *Radical Islam* 94; Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* xxxiv.
[103] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1909.

Quṭb reemphasizes the similarity between Thamūd and Quraysh based on Q. 22: 42, he explains the continuity of the same problem: the challenges and fate of the two tribes, and the missions of the Prophets sent to them. Muḥammad merely continued what had already been brought by Ṣāliḥ.[104] In commenting on Q. 26: 141, Quṭb links both tales by mentioning that Muḥammad himself witnessed the vestiges of Thamūd when he and the Muslims went to fight at Tabūk.[105] Quṭb says that the question "do you know" in Q. 89: 6 is addressed to Quraysh, who knew of the history of the ruins, in order to show them what awaited exploiters and polytheists who went against the call of one of their own kin.[106]In commenting on Q. 38: 16, Quṭb shows how Thamūd and Quraysh shared the same character in that they both invited punishment, refused to believe in the promises of God and denied His grace (*raḥmah*).[107]

4. Thamūd as Contemporary Phenomenon

One illustration of Quṭb reading of the contemporary situation is his interpretation of Q. 27: 47. In this passage he examines the shirk inherent in Thamūd's *jāhilīyah*. Thamūd practiced *khurāfāt* and believed in omens (*ṭīrah*). Whenever they faced a problem, they consulted omens to foretell the future. They did this especially when they had felt doubt, and they accepted whatever the omen indicated. For example, if the object (a bird) turned from left to right they rejoiced and considered the problem solved. When the omen moved from right to left, they supposed that a problem might occur. According to Quṭb this irrational practice of seeking an omen indicates that they cannot deny the need of their soul for metaphysical guidance. They practiced

[104] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2429.
[105] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2611.
[106] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 6, 3903.

unconsciously the metaphysical action beyond the real and seen world. Another evidence of the need for the metaphysical world is that people who do not believe in the unseen world because they think it cannot be treated by science, still believe in unlucky numbers, such as number thirteen, or bad fortune like a black cat crossing one's path.[108] The above passage indicates Quṭb's criticism of his society, the practice of seeking omen, especially among the Egyptian people. Western people, too, who disbelieve in religion, still hold to these practices. Thus, both are contemporary Thamūd.

The contemporary Thamūd is manifested in another of Quṭb's symbols, namely, the conspiracy to kill Ṣāliḥ. It is evident in his interpretation of Q. 27: 48:

> The nine groups have evil hearts willing destruction. They never desire *iṣlāḥ* (reform). They opposed Ṣāliḥ's call with their arguments, even swearing with each other to do something. What is surprising is that they swear by God with this evil deed, kill Ṣāliḥ and his family.[109]

In Q. 17: 59 Quṭb describes this contemporary Thamūd as *ẓālim* for their other destructive deeds.[110] *Ẓālim* has a broader meaning beyond killing. Thus, this contemporary Thamūd, besides conspiring to kill Ṣāliḥ, performs other evil deeds as well. Speaking of killing, there are two killings in the Thamūd tale. First is the slaughter of the she-camel and second the conspiracy to kill Ṣāliḥ. Both the conspiracy and the slaughter, in Q. 91: 11, are *ṭughyān*.

The important tragedy in this tale is killing (*ʿaqr* and *qatl*). These key words have a function in Quṭb's symbolization. One is in the slaughter of the she-camel committed by Thamūd. This, in Quṭb's real life, symbolizes the Egyptian government's oppression

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[107] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 3014.
[108] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2645.
[109] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 5, 2645-6.
[110] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 2237.

of the Muslim Brethren.[111] Thamūd represents the Egyptian government, whereas the she-camel the Muslim Brethren. The key word linking both is the action of slaughtering, as Quṭb always stresses, for both the Egyptian government and Thamūd have blood on their hands. Both slaughtering the she-camel and abusing the Muslim Brethren members have led to *fitnah*. The Muslim Brethren, as a fundamentalist organization, were committed to Islam, and this of course was because they considered themselves "defenders of God."[112] The same thing happened to the she-camel, for it was from God, and functioned to prove Ṣāliḥ's prophethood. Another parallel is that both the Egyptian government and Thamūd failed the trial of God, for not being patient, and for killing the object finally.

Quṭb is manifested in Ṣāliḥ. For both perform the call of God. Quṭb came with the Muslim Brethren and Ṣāliḥ with the she-camel to prove their truth from God. Their people were against them. The key point is that for both Ṣāliḥ and Quṭb, a conspiracy was hatched to kill them.

In the *qiṣaṣ, tārīkh* or classical *tafsīr* literature, we find that in the myth, legend or tale of the she-camel, its murder or hamstringing caused the destruction of Thamūd's city of Ḥijr, since the she-camel functioned as a totemic animal. There is a prohibition to kill or even hamstring the totemic animal, according to Durkheim, Freud, or Stetkevych.[113] However, Thamūd did that which occasioned their punishment from

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[111] For the torture of Quṭb and his colleagues during their imprisonment, see our discussion in Chapter One, and for further details see for instance, Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism* 28-9; Carré, "Le Combat pour Dieu et l'Etat islamique chez Sayyid Qoṭb, l'inspirateur du radicalisme actuel" *Revue Française de science politique* 33 (1988) 681; Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: al-Shāhid al-Ḥayy* (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1981) 145-7.

[112] This echoes the title of Bruce B. Lawrence's *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[113] Jaroslov Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 133; Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965) 150-1; Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblance*

God. Quṭb, on the other hand, sought for myth[114] to express his ideological and religious experience. In this case he found that to hamstring the Muslim Brethren is as sinful as to hamstring the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ. However, Thamūd, as the breaker of taboo, was finally destroyed by God, whereas Quṭb and his followers, as proclaimers of the truth, were defeated by Nāṣir's government even finally hanged.

between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Vintage Book, 1946) 39.

[114] Calvert, "Discourse, Cummunity and Power" 225. He may be in agreement with Raphael Patai's saying that myth "must be judged as means of acting upon the present." See Patai's *Myth and Modern Man* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972) 2-3. Also, Ninian Smart observes that seeking for myth in awakening modern nationalism is common, especially in order to gain power to face the oppressors. See his "Religion, Myth and Nationalism" in Peter H. Merkl and Ninian Smart, eds., *Religions and Politics in the Modern World* (New York: New York University Press, 1983) 15-23. This also may fit Quṭb's oppressed condition and seeking for a myth with which to overcome, at least symbolically, his more powerful enemies.

Chapter Three

Commenting on Quṭb's Hermeneutic

> There is more work in interpreting interpretations than in interpreting things, and more books about books than on any other subject; we do nothing but write with glosses on one another.
>
> Michel Foucault.[1]

Having explored in the previous chapter the factual basis and symbolic value given to ʿĀd and Thamūd by Sayyid Quṭb, in this chapter we focus on the hermeneutical approach that he takes in analyzing the Qurʾān's treatment of the subject. To accomplish this we will present, deconstruct and appraise Quṭb's hermeneutic respecting ʿĀd and Thamūd.

A. The Features of ʿĀd and Thamūd in the *Ẓilāl*

Generally speaking, Quṭb's system in commenting on ʿĀd and Thamūd applies to the whole of the *Ẓilāl*, since his treatment of this theme is not very different from his treatment of others in its pages. While discussions of ʿĀd and Thamūd are often confined to particular sections of some works like the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisāʾī, Ibn Kathīr, and sections of al-Ṭabarī's histories, Quṭb's treatment of ʿĀd and Thamūd follows in the footsteps of other conventional exegetes, both classical and modern, such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarsī, Rashīd Riḍā, al-Maraghī, and Bint al-

[1] See his *The Order of Things, an Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 40.

Shāṭiʾ. Thus, like his fellow exegetes he discusses ʿĀd and Thamūd as they happen to appear in the textual sequence of the *sūrahs* and verses.

The general structure of Quṭb's *tafsīr* has a bearing on his interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamūd. Let us take for example his treatment of Q. 11: 50-68, whose *miḥwar* or *mawḍūʿ* (pivot or central thesis) is these very two tales. Quṭb begins by presenting the text of these verses in a group. This group, moreover, he subdivides into several smaller ones (*ashwāṭ*).[2] For instance, Q. 11: 50-68 is divided as follows: 50-57, 58-60, 61-65, and finally 66-68. This method is a common feature throughout the *Ẓilāl*. Another example is the long group of Q. 41: 1-36, which he further divides as follows: 1-8, 9-12, 13-25, 26-28, 29-32, and 33-36.

After presenting the text, Quṭb supplies a brief introductory paragraph establishing its connection to the previous verses. Then, he offers a summary of the general meaning of Q. 11: 50-68, introducing at this point the theme of ʿĀd and Thamūd. This approach is reminiscent of *al-ḥujjah* (argumentation) of al-Ṭabarsī and al-Marāghī's *al-maʿnā al-jumalī* (general meaning). After this we encounter the more conventional method of interpretation wherein the verses are enclosed in brackets followed by the text of the commentary. Quṭb adds one more explanation regarding his opinion on the

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[2] The concept of the unity of theme in the *sūrahs* of the Qurʾān was not discovered by Sayyid Quṭb, rather it has been addressed by many exegetes prior to him. Mustansir Mir discusses it in his "The Sūra as a Unity: a Twentieth Century Development in Qurʾān Exegesis" in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, eds. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993) 211-24; idem, *Coherence in the Qurʾān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tabbur-i Qurʾān* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986). In his article he shows that the idea is not new, for it is found in early *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* such as those of al-Suyūṭī (*al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, 3rd ed. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1985) and al-Zarkashī (*al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1988). Mir finds, however, that some recent exegetes pay particular attention to the concept, including Ashraf ʿAli Thanavī (*Bayān al-Qurʾān*), Izzat Darwazah (*al-Tafsīr al-Ḥadīth*), Ṭabaṭabāʾī (*al-Mīzan fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*) and many others. Almost all of them defend the idea that each *sūrah* has general themes (*miḥwar* [Quṭb], *gharaḍ* [Ṭabaṭabāʾī], *rabṭ* [Thanavī]). This lends coherency (*irtibāṭ*) to each verse in the *sūrah*. However, Mir notes "it is remarkable that there is hardly any evidence that, in holding this view, some of the exegetes have been influenced by others. Rather it is almost certain that each one of them arrived at the view independently" ("The Sura as a Unity" 217).

ʿĀd, in this section, relating the tribe to contemporary situation. In adding this section, Quṭb's *tafsīr* is distinguished from all others, for although he had already given an explanation of the relationship between ʿĀd and contemporary issues in the previous section, this section serves to strengthen his previous arguments. He then proceeds to an interpretation of Thamūd in the same way.

Comparing these features in the *Ẓilāl* to those found in other exegetical works is interesting. Indeed, while there is much that is unique about Quṭb's organization of his material, we find that he resembles other exegetes in his overall approach. Thus, we find that al-Ṭabarī appears to have followed the same pattern of interspersing commentary within the sectioned text of the Qurʾān.[3] Both classical and modern interpreters commonly use this system. Quṭb himself employs this method as mentioned above. Among classical exegetes, the most distinguished *tafsīr* in terms of systematization is that of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[4] He gives his extensive comments which he arranges under the headings: "The first problem (*al-masʾalah al-ūlā*)," "The second problem (*al-masʾalah al-thānī*)," and so forth. The immense details of his work make it possible for him to comment at length on a particular matter, and then offer solutions.[5] Al-Ṭabarsī[6] on the other hand begins each of his commentary units with the selected text of the Qurʾān,

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[3] For more about al-Ṭabarī's method, see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 24-45; idem, "Qurʾānic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr," in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 47-54; Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) 3-4; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1986-7).

[4] Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, [n.d.]).

[5] For instance see his treatment of Ibrāhīm and Free will issues, in Anthony H. Johns in his "Al-Rāzī's Treatment of the Qurʾānic Episodes Telling of Abraham and his Guests: Qurʾānic Exegesis with a Human Face," *Institut Dominicain D'études Orientales du Caire Mélanges (MIDEO)* 17 (1986): 81-114; Al Makin, "Free Will Issues in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's and al-Zamakshari's Interpretations of Verses 17: 15 and 28: 59 of the Qurʾān: A Comparison," a paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association of North America meeting, Chicago, December 5 1998.

followed by *al-ḥujjah* (argumentation), *al-lughah* (language), *al-iʿrāb* (grammar), and finally *al-maʿnā* (meaning). He includes portions of Qurʾānic text again in the *maʿnā* section. In presenting the story of ʿĀd and Thamūd, he gives a special heading, *qiṣṣat Hūd* and *qiṣṣat Ṣāliḥ*. However, the modernist exegete ʿAbduh in his *Tafsīr Juzʾ ʿAmma* employs the more conventional system of al-Ṭabarī, simply including the Qurʾānic text bracketed within his commentary. ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā[7] adopt on the other hand the following arrangement in their *Tafsīr al-Manār* when dealing with ʿĀd and Thamūd: these sections are headed with the titles *qiṣṣat Hūd ʿalayh al-salām* and *qiṣṣat Ṣāliḥ ʿalayh al-salām*. After which there is a short summary, telling the general tale of ʿĀd or Thamūd. This is then supplemented by additional commentary in the more usual arrangement. Among the modern exegetes, the *tafsīr* of al-Marāghī[8] is the most systematic of all, and shows some similarity to that of al-Ṭabarsī. He presents first of all the text of the Qurʾān, which is then followed by *tafsīr al-mufradāt* (explanation of the vocabulary), *al-maʿnā al-jumlī* (the overall meaning), and *al-īḍāḥ* (clarification). In the latter section al-Marāghī returns to the conventional method of citing bracketed verses inside the text of the commentary. Al-Marāghī's *tafsīr* has similarities with Rida's with that of al-Ṭabarsī, in the sense that there is a special title given for the certain narratives, for instance *qiṣṣat Ṣāliḥ* and *qiṣṣat Hūd*.

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[6] Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and its Interpreters* 6-7; al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-Bayānī fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1957).

[7] For more discussion on the method of exegesis adopted by ʿAbduh/Rida's *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s see, Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians* 78-85; Jacques Jomier, *Le commentaire coranique du Manār: tendances modernes de l'exegèsè coranique en Egypte;* Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) 111; Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Ḥakīm* [*Tafsīr al-Manār*] (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣubayḥ wa Awlāduh, 1954).

[8] Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (Cairo: Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādih, n.d.).

The arrangement of Quṭb's *tafsīr* is therefore a kind of synthesis of the attempts made by al-Ṭabarsī, ʿAbduh/Riḍā in their *Tafsīr al-Manār*, and al-Marāghī. The most obvious resemblance is in Quṭb's introductory paragraph, which is similar to *al-ḥujjah* in al-Ṭabarsī's text, *al-maʿnā al-jumalī* in al-Maraghī's, and the introductory paragraph to each section of ʿAbduh's and Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Likewise, the explanatory section is similar to that found in the works of ʿAbduh, al-Maraghī (*al-īdāḥ*), and al-Ṭabarsī (*al-maʿnā*). The most obvious difference on the other hand is the fact that Quṭb never adds titles to each section of the discussion of ʿĀd and Thamūd, which al-Marāghī, ʿAbduh/Riḍā, and al-Ṭabarsī do.

B. Unity of the Message

Quṭb's treatment of ʿĀd and Thamūd is restricted in the part they play in the Qur'ān, hence, gathering his material, he draws upon many other verses of the Qurʾān located in different *sūrahs*. Underlying this practice is the doctrine of the unity of the message of the Qurʾān in Quṭb's hermeneutic. What Quṭb does in his *Ẓilāl* is different from what he attempted in two earlier works, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fi al Qurʾān* and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah*, in respect to the basic grouping of verses, even though in terms of size neither of the latter can be compared to the immensity of his *Ẓilāl*. Parts of the *Taṣwīr* were first published in 1939,[9] the *Mashāhid* in 1947.[10] In these two works Quṭb

[9] This appeared in *al-Muqtaṭaf* 94, 2 (February 1939): 206-22; Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qurʾān: Iʿjāz and Related Topics," in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation* 150, note. 38; Adnan A. Mussallam, "The Formative Stages of Sayyid Quṭb's Intellectual Career and His Emergence as an Islamic Daʿiyah, 1906-1952 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983) 130; Mhd. Syahnan, "A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qurʾān Exegesis in Earlier and Later Editions of his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1997) 31; Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al Fannī fi al-Qurʾān*, 14th ed. (Beirut: Dār Shurūq, 1993).

[10] Musallam, "The Formative Stages" 144; Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qurʾān" 150; Sayyid Quṭb, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qurʾān*, 7th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1981).

collects verses which touch on the same themes, then he comments on them, focusing in particular on the relation between their artistic beauty and religious import. For example in his *al-Taṣwīr,* he tries at pre-point to explain various narratives in support of his argument about the Qurʾān's aim in presenting them. One reason proposed by Quṭb is that the tales serve to strengthen the truth of the revelation of Prophet Muḥammad. According to him, Muḥammad's illiteracy preserved him from reading any other scriptures, which meant that he must have received these narratives as revelation from God. Quṭb cites Q. 12: 1-3 and other related passages.[11] Likewise, in his *Mashāhid,* Quṭb collects verses which discuss the Day of Resurrection, then comments upon them. He presents material from some 80 *sūrahs* of the Qurʾān choosing only those verses which discuss various aspects of the doctrine of the resurrection.

On the other hand, Quṭb, in dealing with ʿĀd and Thamūd in his *Ẓilāl,* chooses not to employ the thematic approach, and thus does not collect references to these two topics in a particular chapter or section, as he does in his *Mashāhid.* However, this is simply because he follows conventional exegesis in this case, giving his interpretation sequentially *sūrah* by *sūrah* and verse by verse, as he does in the rest of *Ẓilāl.* Thus, Quṭb's interpretation of the narratives of ʿĀd and Thamūd in the Qurʾān must be sought in the scattered references to them and according to the sequence in which they occur in scripture. In following this conventional method, Quṭb cannot avoid one of the main stylistic weaknesses of his predecessors, namely, redundancy, since he tends to repeat the same interpretation in different places. Quṭb is in fact quite repetitive in expressing his emotional, poetic, and sometimes long-winded argument concerning ʿĀd and Thamūd.

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[11] Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al Fannī* 145.

Nonetheless, the unity of the message of the Qurʾān, which Quṭb links with the doctrine of artistic portrayal, is interesting. In his *Taṣwīr* he devotes his discussion to this artistic imagery. Quṭb views the Qurʾān as having two complementary aspects: artistic expression and religious doctrine. The Qurʾānic style is united by its harmony and integral form. This renders the Qurʾān a *siḥr* (charm) to anyone who reads or listens to it; an aspect related to the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qurʾān, as Boullata points out in his article.[12] Before going any further in describing this unity, Quṭb's definition of imagery and artistry is worth noting. He states:

> We want to widen the meaning of imagery, to know the peak of imagery in the Qurʾān. It is a pictorial representation of color, movement, imagination, as well as with tone in personification. It is manifested in characteristic, dialogue, sound of sentence, rhythm of expression, music of discourse, showing of personification after personification, tested by eyes and ears, sensory perception and imagination, mind and consciousness.[13]

Hence, the unity of the message of the Qurʾān as expressed by Quṭb in his *Ẓilāl* is essentially based on these considerations. Quṭb relates one verse to another based on sensual dramatization, dialogue, imagery, tone, musical discourse, rhythm, and other artistic aspects. In Quṭb's discussion of ʿĀd and Thamūd in his *Ẓilāl* this approach is particularly evident in the way he presents the beauty of these two narratives. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference in Quṭb's treatment of the narrative of ʿĀd and Thamūd in his *Ẓilāl* and in his two earlier works *al-Taṣwīr* and *Mashāhid*: in the former, we find an abundance of political, social, or ideological themes, whereas in the latter two Quṭb is much more concerned with poetic expression as such.

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[12] Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qurʾān" 34-5; Encik Othman Bin Muhamed, "Pendekatan Sayyid Quṭb dalam Tafsiran Qurʾān" in Mohd. Asin Dollah and Zakariya Stapa, *al-Qurʾān dalam Beberapa Perspektif* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1992) 106-8.

[13] Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al Fannī* 37; Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qurʾān" 151.

Quṭb sees the themes of ʿĀd and Thamūd as forming an integral part of the Qurʾān. While subordinate to the overall themes of each *sūrah* of the Qurʾān, the ʿĀd and Thamūd narratives are integral to their *sūrah*'s context. These connections are based on themes, style, dramatization, tone, color, and rhythm. Quṭ thereby rejects the notion that any one part of the Qurʾān is independent of the rest.[14]

These therefore were some of the considerations that persuaded Quṭb to divide the *sūrahs* into groups of verses. The ʿĀd and Thamūd themes fall into these groups, some of them standing alone as dealing uniquely with one or the other narrative, but most of them just subordinate to the main theme of their group. The groupings in which ʿĀd and Thamūd figure are scattered throughout the *Ẓilāl* as follows:

Q. 7: 59-93: 59-63 (Nūḥ), 65-72 (ʿĀd), 73-79 (Thamūd), 80-84 (Lūṭ), 85-87 (Shuʿayb), 88-93 (Shuʿayb).	34 verses
Q. 9: 42-92: 42-48, 49-52, 53-57, 58-60, 61-66, 67-70 (67-69: hypocrisy, 70: ʿĀd-Thamūd), 71-72, 73-74, 75-78, 79-80, 81-85, 86-89, 90, 91-92.	50 verses
Q. 11: 50-68: 50-57 (ʿĀd), 58-60 (their destruction), 61-65 (Thamūd), 66-68 (their destruction).	18 verses
Q. 14: 1-27: 1-8, 9-14 (9: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd), 13-14, 15-17, 19-20, 21-22, 23, 24-27.	27 verses
Q. 17: 58-72: 58-60 (punishment, 59: Thamūd), 61-65, 66-69, 70-72.	14 verses

[14] Yūsuf al-ʿAẓm, *Rāʿid al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Muʿāṣir: al-Shāhid Sayyid Quṭb, Ḥayātuh wa Madrasatuh wa Āthāruh* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1980) 265. Furthermore, Quṭb's doctrine is also counter-argument to Richard Bell's assumption. For Bell relates this interchange of themes to the chronology of the revelation. His theory holds that each verse within a given *sūrah* has a different theme which may be revealed at different times from the others. See his *The Qurʾān Translated with Critical Re-arrangement of Surahs* (Edinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1960) and *A Commentary on the Qurʾān* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

Q. 22: 42-57: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd (42). 15 verses
42-48 (42: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd, 43: Ibrāhīm, Lūṭ, 44: Madyān, Mūsā), 49-51, 52-54, 55-57.

Q. 25: 21-44: ʿĀd,Thamūd (38). 23 verses
21-29, 30-34, 35-40 (Mūsā, Nūḥ 38: ʿĀd, Thamūd, Aṣḥāb al-Rass), 41-44.

Q. 26: 123-139: ʿĀd. 16 verses
123-135 (ʿĀd), 136-140 (their destruction)

Q. 26: 141-159: Thamūd. 18 verses
141-152 (Thamūd), 153-154 (their challenge to Ṣāliḥ), 155-159 (their destruction)

Q. 27: 45-53: (Thamūd all) 9 verses
45-47, 48-49, 50-53

Q. 29: 14-54: 40 verses
14-15, 16-18, 19-23, 14-25, 26-27, 28-30, 31-32 (Ibrāhīm), 33-35 (Lūṭ), 36-37 (Madyan), 38 (ʿĀd, Thamūd), 39-40 (Qārūn, Firʿawn), 41-43, 44-45.

Q.38: 1-16: 16 verses
No grouping. (12: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Firʿawn, 13: Thamūd, Lūṭ, Aṣḥāb al-Aykah).

Q. 40: 21-55: 34 verses
21-25, 26-34 (31: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd), 35-37, 38-40, 41-46, 47-52, 53-55. (all about Mūsā)

Q. 41: 1-36: 36 verses
1-8, 9-12, 13-25 (13-18: ʿĀd-Thamūd), 26-28, 29-32, 33-36.

Q. 46: 21-28: 7 verses
21-23 (ʿĀd), 24-25 (destruction), 26 (place), 27-28 (destruction).

Q. 50: 1-45: 45 verses
1-11, 12-35 (12: Nūḥ, Aṣḥāb al-Rass, 13: ʿĀd, Firʿawn, Lūṭ, 14: Aṣḥāb al-ʿAykah, Qawm Tubbaʿ). 36-37, 38-45.

Q. 51: 1-60: 60 verses

1-6, 7-9, 10-14, 15-23, 24-34 (Ibrāhīm), 35-37,
38-40 (Mūsā), 41-42 (ʿĀd), 43-45 (Thamūd),
46 (Nūḥ), 47-51, 52-55, 56-8, 59-60.

Q. 53: 1-62: 62 verses
1-18, 19-28, 29-32, 33-62 (50: ʿĀd, 51: Thamūd,
52: Nūḥ, 53: Muʾtafikah).

Q. 54: 1-55: 55 verses
1-8, 9-17 (Nūḥ), 18-22 (ʿĀd), 23-32 (Thamūd),
33-40 (Lūṭ), 41-42 (Firʿawn), 43-53, 45-55.

Q. 69: 1-21: 21 verses
1-12 (4-8: ʿĀd, Thamūd, 9-12: Firʿawn, Muʾtafikah),
13-18, 19-52.

Q. 89: 1-30: 30 verses
1-14 (6-8: ʿĀd, 9: Thamūd, 10-11: Firʿawn), 15-30.

Q. 91: 1-15: 15 verses
1-15 (10-15: Thamūd).[15]

The verses concerning ʿĀd and Thamūd are an integral part of each grouping. Quṭb insists on the links between the verses. Those dealing with ʿĀd and Thamūd are not independent from the central theme of the *sūrah*, but are connected to the verses before or after. Quṭb tries to link the verses of ʿĀd and Thamūd with the rest of the verses within a sūrah. For example, in Q. 11: 50-68, as he begins to comment on ʿĀd and Thamūd, in the introduction paragraph he connects these verses with the previous story of Nūḥ in the preceding verses, as follows:

> The people of Nūḥ have disappeared from history; most of them were liars to be destroyed by the wind and buried by history. They were far removed from the *raḥmah* (mercifulness) of God, [while the rest of them who] were believers occupied the earth in accordance with the norms of God "the rewards for *muttaqīn*." The promise of God to Nūḥ was "O Noah! Go thou down (from the mountain) with peace from Us and blessings upon thee and some nations (that will spring) from those with thee. (There will be other) nations unto whom We shall give enjoyment a long while and then a painful doom from Us will overtake

[15] The numbering of the verses is based on that found in the *Ẓilāl* itself.

> them (11: 48)."[16] As time went on so did history, and the promise of God was fulfilled. When ʿĀd, who were descendants of Nūḥ, and spread in the country—after them Thamūd—they deserved to be included in the words of God, "nations unto whom We shall give enjoyment a long while and then a painful doom from Us will overtake them (Q. 11: 48)."[17]

The interconnection of the verses and stories within the Qurʾān is emphasized by Quṭb. The linking of all figures and characters is evident from the following introductory comment on Q.11: 69-73:

> The context [of these verses] lies in the history of successors of Nūḥ, the nations who deserved to be blessed and those who deserved to be punished... the story of Ibrāhīm, who deserved to be blessed, whereas in the story of the people of Lūṭ they receive punishment. In both stories of Ibrāhīm and Lūṭ, the promise of God comes true, as it is said: "O Noah! Go thou down (from the mountain) with peace from Us and blessings upon thee and some nations (that will spring) from those with thee. (There will be other) nations unto whom We shall give enjoyment a long while and then a painful doom from Us will overtake them" (11: 48). The blessings for Ibrāhīm and the rewards for his descendents, were for Isḥāq and his offspring the prophets of Banū Isrāʾīl, and for Ismaʿīl and his offspring from whom later born the seal of Prophets [Muḥammad].[18]

Quṭb is not the only exegete who favored this technique of grouping. It is also employed by both classical and modern exegetes when trying to relate each verse within a *sūrah* to the one before or after in order to establish their connection to each other. Mustansir Mir has observed in his article on the doctrine of the unity of the verses in each *sūrah* that since of the latter has a central theme, it is important to connect one verse to another within that *sūrah*. Mir was of course concerned with the central theme of each *sūrah*, whereas we detect a common theme involving ʿĀd and Thamūd scattered throughout the Qurʾān. How Quṭb groups the verses dealing with this subject is instructive, particularly when compared to similar attempts at organizing them on the part of other commentators.

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[16] Trans. Marmaduke Pictkthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation* (New York, Dorset Press, [n.d.]) 169.
[17] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1895.

The clearest grouping of the verses on ʿĀd and Thamūd in classical exegesis may be found in Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr*:[19]

Q. 7: 65-69: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 7: 70-72: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 7: 73-78: Thamūd	5 verses
Q. 7: 79: Thamūd	1 verse
Q. 9: 70: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd, Ibrāhīm, Madyan	1 verse
Q. 11: 50-52: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 11: 53-56: ʿĀd	3 verses
Q. 11: 57-60: ʿĀd	3 verses
Q. 11: 61: Thamūd	1 verse
Q. 11: 62-63: Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 11: 64-68: Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 14: 9: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd	1 verse
Q. 17: 59: Thamūd	1 verse
Q. 22: 42-46: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 25: 35-40: Mūsa, Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd (38)	5 verses
Q. 26: 123-135: ʿĀd	12 verses
Q. 26: 141-145: Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 27: 45-47: Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 29: 38-40: ʿĀd, Thamūd (38)	2 verses
Q. 40: 30-35: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd (31)	5 verses
Q. 41: 13-18: ʿĀd, Thamūd	5 verses
Q. 46: 21-25: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 46: 26-28: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 50: 12-15: ʿĀd, Thamūd (12-13)	3 verses
Q. 51: 38-46: ʿĀd, Thamūd (41-45)	8 verses
Q. 53: 42-55: ʿĀd, Thamūd (50-51)	13 verses
Q. 54: 18-22: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 54: 23-32: Thamūd	9 verses
Q. 69: 69: 1-12: Ad, Thamud	12 verses
Q. 89: 1-14: ʿĀd, Thamūd (6-9)	14 verses
Q. 91: 11-15: Thamūd[20]	4 verses

Al-Ṭabarsī on the other hand groups them as follows:

Q. 7: 72-78: ʿĀd, Thamūd	6 verses
Q. 9: 67-70: ʿĀd, Thamūd	3 verses
Q. 11: 50-60: ʿĀd	10 verses
Q. 14: 7-10: ʿĀd, Thamūd	3 verses

[18] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl*, vol. 4, 1911.

[19] For more on Ibn Kathīr, see McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians 74-6*; idem, "Qurʾānic Hermeneutics" 54-62; Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and its Interpreters* 4; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Aẓīm*, ed. Khālid Muḥammad Muḥammad (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Aṣrīyah, 1997).

[20] The numbering of the verses is based on the *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr itself.

Q. 17: 58-60: Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 22: 41-45: ʿĀd, Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 25: 32-40: ʿĀd, Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 26: 141-159: ʿĀd, Thamūd	18 verses
Q. 27: 45-53: Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 29: 36-40: Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 38: 11-20: ʿĀd, Thamūd	9 verses
Q. 40: 31-35: ʿĀd, Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 41: 11-15: ʿĀd, Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 46: 21-25: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 46: 26-30: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 50: 12-20: ʿĀd, Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 51: 38-46: ʿĀd, Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 53: 42-62: ʿĀd, Thamūd	20 verses
Q. 54: 11-21: ʿĀd	10 verses
Q. 54: 23-31: Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 69: 1-10: ʿĀd, Thamūd	10 verses
Q. 89: 1-30: ʿĀd, Thamūd	30 verses
Q. 91: 1-15: Thamūd[21]	15 verses

The practice of grouping and dividing verses of the Qurʾān into sections is found also in modern exegesis, such as in the commentaries of Rashīd Riḍā/ʿAbduh and of al-Marāghī. Previous to this, however, ʿAbduh commentaries had not bothered to do the same. Thus, in interpreting ʿĀd and Thamūd in Q. 89: 6-9 ʿAbduh simply treats these along with other verses from Q. 89 in the normal way, i.e., quoting the text and providing a running commentary. In Riḍā's/ʿAbduh's *Tafsīr al-Manār*, on the other hand, we find grouping of verses, based on theme, especially in the case of ʿĀd and Thamūd. Unfortunately, because this *tafsīr* extends only up to Q. 12, we have only a few examples from which to draw a comparison:

Q. 7: 64-71: ʿĀd	7 verses
Q. 7: 72-78: Thamūd	6 verses
Q. 9: 68-70: Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd, Ibrāhīm, Muʾtafikat (Q. 70)	2 verses
Q. 11: 50-52: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 11: 53-57: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 11: 58-60: ʿĀd	2 verses

[21] The numbering of the verses is based on the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarsī itself.

Q. 11: 61-63: Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 11: 64-66: Thamūd[22]	2 verses

Al-Marāghī for his part offers another arrangement, grouping the verses of the Qurʾān concerning ʿĀd and Thamūd as follows:

Q. 7: 65-72: ʿĀd	7 verses
Q. 7: 73-79: Thamūd	6 verses
Q. 9: 68-70: ʿĀd, Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 11: 50-52: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 11: 53-57: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 11: 58-60: ʿĀd	2 verses
Q. 11: 61-63: Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 11: 64-68: Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 14: 9-12: ʿĀd, Thamūd	3 verses
Q. 17: 56-60: Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 22: 42-46: ʿĀd, Thamūd	4 verses
Q. 25: 38-40: ʿĀd, Thamūd	2 verses
Q. 26: 123-140: ʿĀd	17 verses
Q. 26: 141-159: Thamūd	18 verses
Q. 27: 45-53: Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 29: 38: Thamūd	1 verse
Q. 38: 12-15: ʿĀd, Thamūd	3 verses
Q. 40: 30-35: ʿĀd, Thamūd	5 verses
Q. 41: 12-18: ʿĀd, Thamūd	6 verses
Q. 46: 21-28: ʿĀd	7 verses
Q. 50: 12-15: ʿĀd, Thamūd	3 verses
Q. 51: 38-46: ʿĀd, Thamūd	8 verses
Q. 53: 33-54: ʿĀd, Thamūd	21 verses
Q. 54: 18-22: ʿĀd	4 verses
Q. 54: 23-32: Thamūd	9 verses
Q. 69: 1-12: ʿĀd, Thamūd	12 verses
Q. 89: 6-32: ʿĀd, Thamūd	26 verses
Q. 91: 11-15: Thamūd[23]	4 verses

When we compare the grouping of verses of ʿĀd and Thamūd in the *Ẓilāl* of Quṭb with those of other exegetes listed above, it is obvious that Quṭb's divisions are the largest in terms of the sheer number of verses included, ranging from 7 to 62, depending on the group. By contrast, the fewest verses in any given group are given by Ibn Kathīr,

[22] The numbering of the verses is based on *Tafsīr al-Manār* itself.

who sometimes includes only a single verse in his grouping. Al-Ṭabarsī's selection is in many respects similar to that of al-Marāghī, although in some cases the former mixes the narrative of ʿĀd and Thamūd with other themes due to the many verses found, for example in Q. 89 or 91. The most systematic in terms of topic is probably al-Maraghī's, as he is quite consistent in grouping verses according to the theme of ʿĀd and Thamūd and in not mixing these with other topics. Ibn Kathīr's selections are also minimal, as are Riḍā's; another similarity between the two is that they often treat ʿĀd and Thamūd separately, confining the applicable verses for each in a discrete group, as in the case of Q. 11. This at least appears to be the case, given that Rashīd Riḍā does not cover the whole Qurʾān.

Moreover, based on the above comparisons, one may conclude that Quṭb's approach was unlike those of the other exegetes, whose own approaches varied considerably. The uniqueness of Quṭb's grouping of verses lies in the fact that he divides each of these into smaller groups. We cannot find this system of division in any of the works of previous exegetes. In so doing, he makes up for the weakness of his predecessors' groupings where each smaller group of verses appears disconnected from the group before or after it. This is due to the different themes of each group of verses. This may be illustrated by the example of Q. 54: 1-55, consisting of 55 verses, which he further divides as follows: 1-8, 9-17 (Nūḥ), 18-22 (ʿĀd), 23-32 (Thamūd), 33-40 (Lūṭ), 41-42 (Firʿawn), 43-53, 45-55. Quṭb shows in this way that the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd are closely connected to those of Nūḥ, Lūṭ, and Firʿawn. This certainly contrasts with the practice of Ibn al-Kathīr, al-Ṭabarsī or al-Maraghī, each of whom places stories in smaller, different groups. In separating the discussion of Nūḥ, ʿĀd, Thamūd, Lūṭ, and

[23] The numbering of the verses is based on the *tafsīr* of al-Marāghī itself.

Fir'awn, they fail to show the coherency and interconnectedness of the verses in the *sūrah*. Quṭb's broader groupings allow him to show the relationship of the verses in a *sūrah* without confusing the themes by making indiscriminate selections. In al-Ṭabarsī's grouping, for instance, we find a large group of verses touching on various themes, but Quṭb refines these by re-dividing them. For example in Q. 53: 42-62 (20 verses), al-Ṭabarsī seems to mix the verses of ʿĀd and Thamūd with other topics, whereas Quṭb expands the grouping (Q. 53: 1-62: i.e., 62 verses) but re-divides it as follows: 1-18, 19-28, 29-32, 33-62 (50: ʿĀd, 51: Thamūd). Hence, the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd are treated as integral to the theme of these verses.

However, there is a point of similarity among all the exegetes, including Quṭb, in that their grouping of the verses is based on their own analysis, not on any tradition, Prophetic or otherwise. They also base the connections between each verse on thematical considerations.

There are, however, some weaknesses apparent in Quṭb's method. For example, once he is convinced of the central theme of a group of verses, Quṭb dissolves his interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamūd in that theme. In the case of certain groups of verses, such as Q. 11: 50-68, the central theme is ʿĀd and Thamūd, and so throughout this interpretation of these verses he focuses on this very theme. However, in other cases, where the central theme appears not to be ʿĀd or Thamūd, and their appearance may be attributed to the support they lend to the main point being marked, Quṭb sometimes neglects to comment. For example, Quṭb passes over in silence on the story of ʿĀd and Thamūd mentioned in Q. 14: 13-17, since he wants instead to discuss the overall theme of Q. 14: 1-36, namely, the might of God and natural phenomena. He believes that Q. 14: 1-36 represents a unity, and that the account of ʿĀd and Thamūd in verses 13-17 is

incidental to this, since the narratives merely serve as examples of generations previously destroyed for ignoring the signs contained in natural phenomena. Quṭb therefore does not extract any information of ʿĀd and Thamūd from Q. 14: 13-17 although it contains worthwhile information.[24]

One can also see a difference between Quṭb's grouping of verses in the earlier *sūrahs*, where fewer verses are involved and greater thematic consistency maintained, and the later *sūrahs*, where the groups are larger and have a greater variety of topics covered. Thus we find that the groups analyzed in Q. 7 to 27 (with the exception of Q. 9) contain fewer verses on average. Whereas in *sūrahs* Q. 29 to 91 (except for Q. 46) the quantities are greater. We may speculate that when he began writing of *Ẓilāl*, Quṭb was more systematic and that over time he became less so. We find particularly haphazard groupings in the last *sūrahs* especially in Q. 50 to 91, where Quṭb begins the grouping from verse number 1 and ends with verse number 15 to 60.

C. Positioning Quṭb

Quṭb's position as heir to the interpreters of ʿĀd and Thamūd is that of a modernist exegete. Following the rationalization and demythologization of ʿĀd and Thamūd by the West and then its synthesis by Muḥammad ʿAbduh and his successors (as we discussed in Chapter One), Quṭb takes a similar critical approach, yet differing from other modern commentators in many respects. Thus, while he agrees with ʿAbduh's decision to discard all *isrāʾīlīyāt* and detailed description (so often encountered in classical *tafsīr*, as we discussed in Chapter One), Quṭb stresses in turn the moral lesson contained in these narratives, in addition to their semiotic content.

[24] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl* 5, 3103-31.

Quṭb successfully accomplishes two important tasks. First, in continuation of ʿAbduh's approach, he deconstructs the classical position and discards any extra-Qurʾānic sources; and second, he discovers the moral lessons and the significance of ʿĀd and Thamūd for his own time and particularly in the modern Egyptian context. By highlighting the ʿĀd and Thamūd narratives, he analyzes the moral state of contemporary society, dividing it in terms of such Qurʾānic designations as ʿĀd, Thamūd, *Jāhilīyah*, and *shirk* on the one hand, representing its negative pole or tendency, and as Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Islam and *tawḥīd*, on the other, emphasizing the positive. In this way he completes ʿAbduh's mission of finding the Qurʾān's moral significance for today's world. Moreover, he sets an example that is followed to different extents by Bint al-Shāṭiʾ, for instance, who insisted on allowing the Qurʾān to speak for itself, and by Izzat Darwazah, who wished to disconnect the link between Qurʾānic and Biblical narrative.[25]

In the end everything comes down to Quṭb's sources, which, based on our analysis, were of three kinds. First, there is, of course, the Qurʾān itself. Mahmoud Ayoub for one has stated that "the author [Quṭb] is careful not to depart from the Qurʾān in interpreting it," all the while making "a conscious effort to remain within the purview of the Qurʾān."[26] Second, there is the interpretation of Quṭb's predecessors, among the exegetes, whom Quṭb by no means abandons entirely, whether classical or modern. This type of source comes into play especially when he tries to situate ʿĀd and Thamūd in terms of time and place. This may be seen in his locating ʿĀd in Aḥqāf, near Ḥaḍrmawt, and Thamūd in Ḥijr, between the Ḥijāz and Syria. Significantly, though, Quṭb does not

[25] See our discussion in chapter one.
[26] Mahmoud M. *Ayoub, The Qurʾān and its Interpreters* 7.

add anything new in this case. His most important debt to ʿAbduh and his supporters, and to such as Rashīd Riḍā and al-Marāghī, is in the principle of moral teaching. The third and final source is Quṭb's own experience in religious, ideological, and political life, which led to his introducing the contemporary situation into narratives. Thus, his experience in everything from literary criticism, political activism, the Muslim Brethren, even his living in the United States, as well as his anti-Western ideology and his suffering in prison contributed his reading of the Qurʾānic verses dealing with ʿĀd and Thamūd. In other words, we may say that his own life-experience provided one of the main sources for his interpretation of these narratives.

When we juxtapose Quṭb's interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamūd and that of Western scholars, it becomes immediately apparent that he is not responding to Western findings about ʿĀd and Thamūd. He acknowledges neither Western skepticism regarding the existence of ʿĀd nor Western scholarship on the evidence of Nabateans inscriptions related to Thamūd, which we mentioned in Chapter One. Whether this was due to stubbornness or ignorance, it is difficult to say; all that is certain is that there is a disconnection between Quṭb's interpretation and Western findings on this topic.

In consequence of this, Quṭb limits himself to seeing ʿĀd and Thamūd from the perspective of the Qurʾānic text literally. This results in his achieving a certain consistency in his use of sources. On the other hand, he is inconsistent in his interpretation of data, stating for instance that both ʿĀd and Thamūd were historical phenomena, when in fact does not have the historical evidence to back up this claim. At the same time his insistence that it is unnecessary to go into the details of the tales is an

obstacle to further investigation of the historical reality of ʿĀd and Thamūd. This is a perfect example, in fact, of what Boullata calls Quṭb's "ahistoric" approach.[27]

In addition to Quṭb's lack of historical perspective in his *tafsīr* on ʿĀd and Thamūd, it can also be said that, if we apply Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory in interpreting the text,[28] Quṭb misses one essential step. This is to discover the history of the text. Quṭb's emphasis is on another step, i.e., that of interpreting the text pragmatically in accordance with the present condition. It is true that the interpretation may be different from the original text, indeed; it may not even be necessary to return to the original meaning, as Gadamer states.[29] But Quṭb's moral lessons and his interest in applying these tales to his own situation and time seem to concentrate only literally on the text. This results in a break with the historicity of the past text and the data outside it, both of which are necessary for understanding such a text and context.

Quṭb's disregard of the historical context of ʿĀd and Thamūd and his reliance merely on the Qurʾān as his only source have two important consequences. First, the enigma of the circumstance when the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd were retold by the Qurʾān is not uncovered, in which we may raise some questions and consider a probability. Concerning the time of revelation of ʿĀd and Thamūd, what is the

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[27] Boullata designates Quṭb's thinking as ahistoric, in the sense that he embraces self-constructed monolithic dogmatism and persists in applying his own thought, not tolerating pluralism, disregarding the effects of place and time. In agreement with Boullata, we may also view him as ahistoric in his failing to prove the historicity of ʿĀd and Thamūd. See Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) 62.

[28] We simplify Rahman's hermeneutical theory to two important aspects: presenting the historical text of the past and finding its affinity to the present condition. Although Rahman's theory is originally for the purpose of studying legal texts, we are right to apply it in treating narrative texts for both are texts of the Qurʾān. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity, Transformation of Islamic Intellectualism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982) 6; Tamara Sonn, "Fazlur Rahman's Islamic Methodology" *Muslim World*, vol. 18 (1991) 212-30; Richard C. Martin, "Understanding the Qurʾān in Text and Context," *History of Religions*, vol. 21 (1982) 362-4; Amhar Rasyid, "Some Qurʾanic Legal Texts in the Context of Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutical Method" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1994) 35-7.

significance of retelling the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd? They are not simply offering a moral lesson, but they also contain ideological meaning, as they do for Quṭb himself (we discussed in the Second Chapter). In attempting to fix their time of revelation, for example, Izzat Darwazah[30] theorizes that the tales must have at least been known to the original audience of the Qurʾān and circulated among them after they had been revealed. To what extent the popular version of the narratives differed from the Qurʾānic one, and thus to what extent the Qurʾān changes the tales, by adding or reducing material, is of course of great interest, but it goes beyond Quṭb's interpretation in his *Ẓilāl.*

Second, Quṭb's almost exclusive reliance on the Qurʾān in his interpretation and his rejection of much of what is preserved by classical interpreters such as al-Kisāʾī, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Thaʿlabī, means that Quṭb loses significant data. Al-Ṭabarī and other Muslim scholars discuss ʿĀd and Thamūd in their historical, exegetical and *qiṣaṣ* works, where they offer fuller versions. This is far from being a question of whether they recorded the information correctly or not, but rather one of what it tells us of the popular understanding of ʿĀd and Thamūd in their time. Moreover, for the purpose of further investigation, the data preserved by al-Ṭabarī and others is important in itself and ought not to be discarded or judged in the light of modern rationalism. From this perspective, finding new meaning for classical exegesis is one solution, rather than blaming it for containing *isrāʾīlīyāt* and non-Qurʾānic materials. For these materials represent their age, so that to judge their rationality based on modern logic is irrelevant

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[29] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1997) 140.

[30] See his *Al-Qurʾān al-Majīd* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣrīyah, [n.d.])166-85.

and reductionist; to treat their description of ʿĀd and Thamūd as a myth on the other hand is a much more reasonable solution.

Quṭb often takes issue with classical scholars accusing them of injecting non-Qurʾānic materials into their interpretation of the narrative of ʿĀd and Thamūd, and insisting that the Qurʾān alone be appealed to. However, while it is true that al-Ṭabarī and other classical scholars inject non-Qurʾānic myths into their analysis of ʿĀd and Thamūd, it is also the case that Quṭb himself applies new, non-Qurʾānic sources, particularly in the form of his own experience in his Egyptian contemporary context. On the one hand, Quṭb rejects the mythical interpretation favored by his predecessors, but on the other he creates new material of his own with regard to ʿĀd and Thamūd. There is little to choose from in trying to determine which approach is the more Qurʾān-based.

Abu Rabiʿ describes Quṭb as "constantly shift[ing] from the theological to the ideological or from the doctrinal to the world of realpolitik in his Qurʾānic exegesis."[31] He is right in saying that. In terms of their exegetical method, Quṭb's predecessors indiscriminately mixed legends, myths, and tales, whereas modern exegetes have tended to discard these myths and instead extract the moral lesson from the narrative. In his own way Quṭb brings these tales into his own life, and gives them practical significance. However, just as classical exegetes mythologized the narratives, Western scholars demythologized them, and modern exegetes rationalized them, Quṭb seems to have tried to theologize his ideological beliefs and political experience. In classical exegesis, the tendency to sacralize ʿĀd and Thamūd is more pronounced, consisting as it does in emphasis on extraordinary events and miracles; nevertheless, Quṭb is no less

[31] Abu Rabi, *Intellectual Origins* 214.

committed to sacralizing and mythologizing his political ideology, which he achieves by highlighting the dichotomy between Islam and *jāhilīyah*.

D. Triangular Argument

Using Clifford Geertz's theory "model of" and "model for" reality,[32] we showed in Chapter Two that the model of ʿĀd versus Hūd and of Thamūd versus Ṣāliḥ stand for symbols in Quṭb's thought. This is evident if we look at Quṭb's point of view in seeing historical conflict phenomena and his contemporary situation. Thus, the models also represent Quṭb's world view[33] and the order of reality. According to Quṭb, the latter always follows this pattern: ʿĀd-Hūd, Thamūd-Ṣāliḥ, negative-positive, evildoers-virtues, challengers-prophets. As we pointed out earlier, by employing Toshihiko Izutsu's theory,[34] Quṭb's concept of positive and negative poles sets ʿĀd, Thamūd, Quraysh, Nasserism, the West on the negative side, along with challengers of their prophets, evildoers, committing *jāhilī* deeds, *mushrikūn*, and other related terms. On the positive side we find Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Muḥammad, Quṭb himself, the Muslim Brethren and other Islamist defenders of positive values, such as prophets, Islam, *tawḥīd*, and other related terms.

In seeing the pattern of the two tendencies, positive and negative, we can relate this to the problem of suffering. His suffering in real life, due to the oppression of both the Egyptian government and Western colonialism, produced in Quṭb the concept of evil. The concept of evil, ʿĀd and Thamūd, appeared together with its opposition, being

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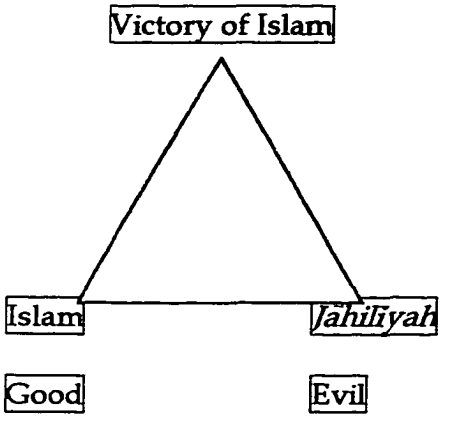
[32] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Princeton: HarperCollins Publishers, 1973) 93.

[33] For more account on ethos and world view according to Geertz, see his "Ethos, World View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*; idem, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

Hūd and Ṣāliḥ. This concept functions as a vehicle and a model for Quṭb to express the oppression of the powerful Egyptian government and the West. Following the analysis of both Foucault and Sangren, Quṭb can be seen as an agent and producer of power through his interpretation of the narrative.[35] This power is important, for him at least, to face the powerful Egyptian government who oppressed and jailed him. Therefore, the correspondence of Quṭb's ideological and religious experience is clear. Thus, it follows Geertz's theory that both ideological and religious experience are part of "cultural system" and they can be identified through finding their significance from interpreting symbolical meaning.[36]

Quṭb's formula can be illustrated by means of triangles, in which opposing theories of good and evil form the angles at its base and the victor in this struggle forms the apex. The pattern repeated in history and scripture was supposed to repeat itself once again in Quṭb own encounter with the forces of ignorance.



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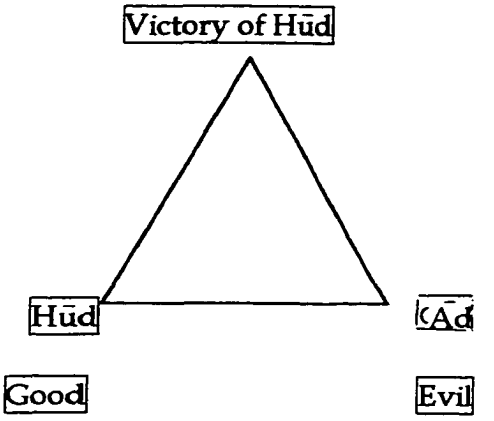

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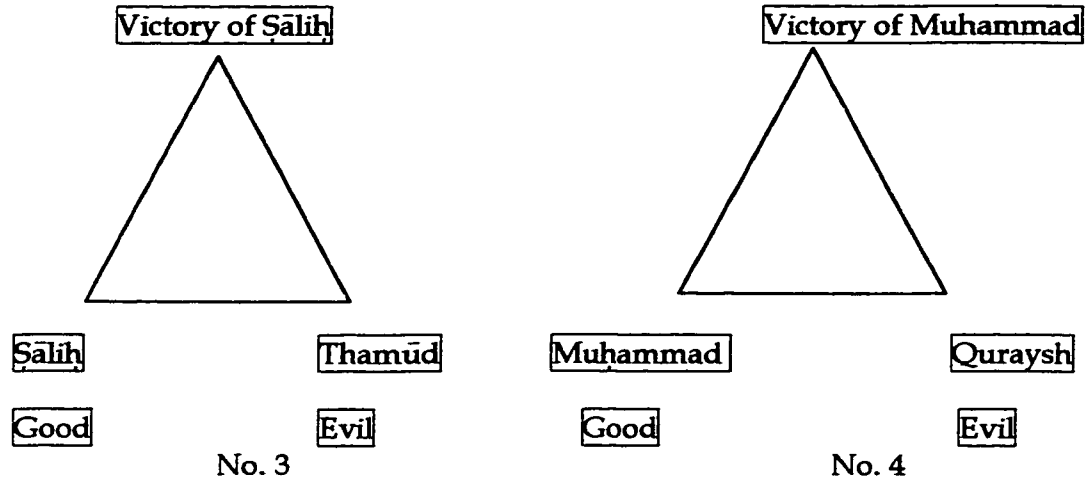
[34] See our discussion in Chapter Two page 44-5.
[35] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 29, Steven P. Sangren, ""Power" against Ideology: A Critique of Faucoultian Usage," *Cultural Anthropology* 10 (1995) 22.



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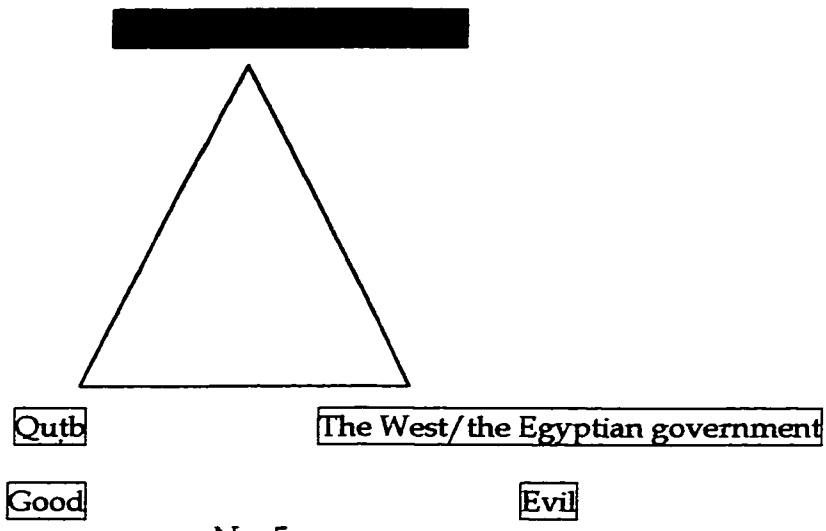

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Looking at each of these triangles in turn we can observe the following. In the first the basic formula is that Islam is opposed to *Jāhiliyah,* a confrontation which always ends with the victory of Islam. In the second, ʿĀd challenges Hūd, their prophet, but they are destroyed instead by a wind (*ṣarṣar* or *ʿaqīm*). Thamūd disobeys Ṣāliḥ, killing the she-camel sent as proof from God, which leads to Ṣāliḥ's victory and Thamūd's destruction by a divine "scream" (*ṣayḥah*). In the fourth Muhammad struggles against Quraysh and wins out at the end. Finally, in the fifth triangle we see the pattern of Quṭb as defender

[36] Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" 87-125; idem, "Ideology as Cultural System" in his *The*

of the truth and positive values opposing the West and the Egyptian government, who represent all that is wrong in the world. However, the apex of the fifth triangle differs from the others in that no clear victory can be described. Whether Quṭb saw his victory as imminent or as having to be bought with his own life, is difficult to say. Yet the fact is that Nāṣir is in a position of power.

Quṭb contributes, it must be admitted, almost nothing to our knowledge of the historical ʿĀd and Thamūd, limiting himself instead to a simple description of the period and geographical location of these tribes. Nor does he break new ground in drawing a parallel between the ʿĀd/Hūd, Thamūd/Ṣāliḥ and Quraysh/Muḥammad paradigms, for this had been anticipated by al-Ṭabarī, al-Thaʿlabi, al-Kisāʾī, for example, in their *qiṣaṣ* works, a point we made in Chapter One. There we saw how classical authors were struck by the fact that Hūd and Ṣāliḥ were chosen by God as prophets at the age of forty, as was Muḥammad. Ṣāliḥ's father passed away before his birthday, as did Muḥammad's. The name of Hūd's father was ʿAbd Allāh, the same as that of Muḥammad. The situations of ʿĀd and Thamūd at the time of the revelation of their prophets were the same as the situation of Quraysh in that they worshipped certain idols and surrounded themselves with many others (see our discussion in Chapter One). In the modern exegesis, attempts to link the story of ʿĀd to Muḥammad's era are also found. Khalāf Allāh[37] suggests that the story of ʿĀd is a warning for Quraysh not repeat the same deeds. Any stubbornness on their part would also be punished as was that of the ʿĀd. Quṭb merely expressed all these points triangular paradigms, wherein he uses

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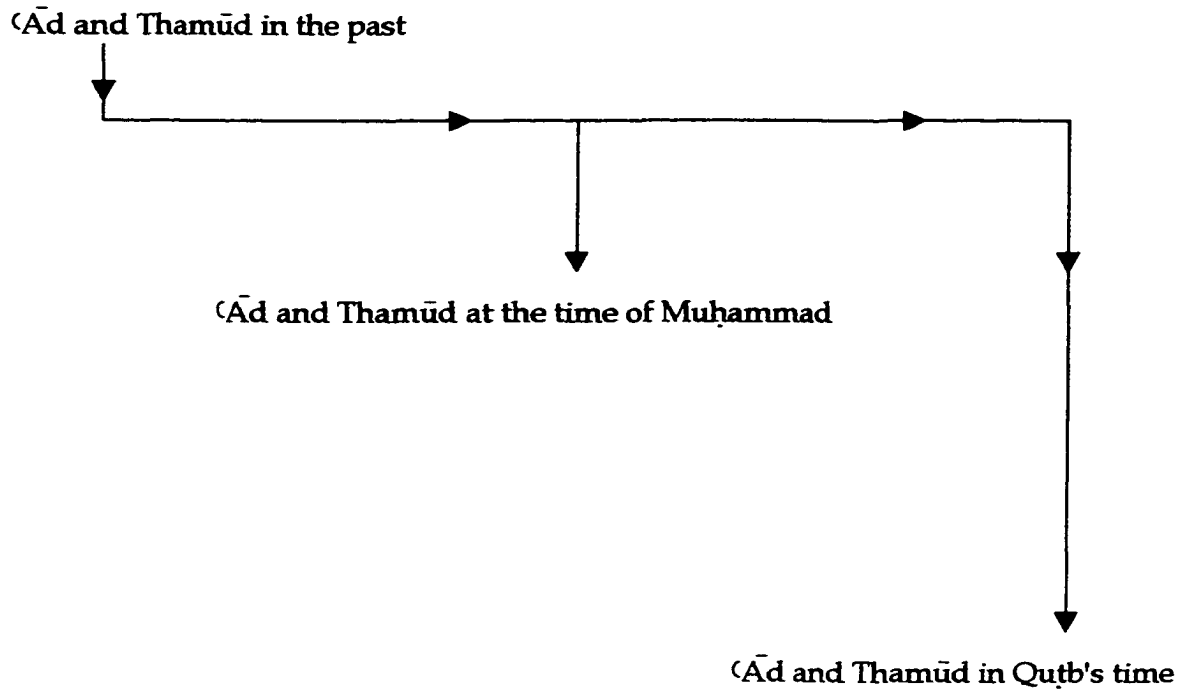
Interpretation of Cultures 193-233.

[37] See his *Al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fi al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1950-1) 138-9.

ʿĀd and Thamūd as media for expressing his attitude towards contemporary issues. In other words, the contemporary ʿĀd and Thamūd have a contemporary role in *Ẓilāl*.

We may describe the emphasis that Quṭb places on ʿĀd and Thamūd in the three paradigms of remote past, mediate past and present in a diagram as follows:



Quṭb employs the same method, approach, style, rhetoric and even comments in most of the instances when he addresses ʿĀd and Thamūd. Therefore, it is reasonable to describe Quṭb as repetitive and often redundant in his interpretation of both tales. Since the tales seem identical, he repeats some arguments for both narratives. Leonard Binder notes that this is almost to be expected since his writing style is repetitive and emotional,[38] and contains seemingly contradictory and inconsistent statements. Nevertheless, we have pointed out that Quṭb's style in interpreting the Qurʾān is poetic

and stresses its artistic aspects. His writing is not for an academic audience but for the common Egyptian people. In the light of this consideration it is understandable that Quṭb should stress the literary and artistic aspects of the text rather than its merely factual aspects. This, however, does not obviate the monotony of his presentation. Nor does it reduce the repetitiveness that characterizes his presentation of the material on ʿĀd and Thamūd. While it is noticeable that he devotes more attention to the former of the two tribes, it is also clear that his remarks on ʿĀd are meant to serve for Thamūd as well.

The fact that both ʿĀd and Thamūd were products of the age of *jāhilīyah* was significant for Quṭb's concept of a contemporary *jāhilīyah*.[39] In fact, what emerges from a reading of Quṭb is not confined to either the past or the present. Quṭb himself states:

> *Jāhilīyah* is not a period in time. It is a condition that is repeated every time. It is a condition that is repeated every time society veers from the Islamic way whether in the past, the present or the future.[40]

Boullata rightly concludes that, for Quṭb, *jāhilīyah*:

> ....ceases to be only a past, historical period of ignorance of God before Islam and becomes, in pejorative usage, a human condition, a state of mind, a quality of society, a way of life whereby the Islamic system in any age or land is ignored and whereby human beings, even if they call themselves 'Muslim', deviate from the Islamic way prescribed by the Qurʾān and the Prophet's teachings.[41]

Jāhilīyah transcends time and space. *Jāhilīyah* existed even before the time of pre-Islamic Quraysh. Thus, we have three different expressions of *jāhilīyah* over time. The first of

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[38]See Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism* 171, 175; Moussalli, *Radical Islamic* 40-2.
[39] Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* 179; Ibrāhīm M. Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins* 180, for stating that "in his evaluation of the meaning and historical implications of *jāhilīyah* in the *Ẓilāl*, Quṭb refers to the spread of political and social division, the ascendance of the tribal and regional mentality, and the prevalence of social and moral malaise in modern Muslim societies"; Kenneth Cragg, *Pen and Faith* 59-61; John Calvert, "Discourse, Community and Power: Sayyid Quṭb and the Islamic Movement in Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1993) 207.
[40] Sayyid Quṭb, *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭārīq* 224; trans. Yvonne Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb" 87.
[41] Boullata, *Trends and Issues* 58.

these predated considerably the coming of Islam; this was the era of ʿĀd and Thamūd. The second is manifested in the behavior of Quraysh just prior to Islam, which furnishes us with our common understanding of the term. The last is modern *jāhilīyah,* the version which Quṭb scholars usually focus on, represented by the West and the Egyptian government in the time of Quṭb. Thus Quṭb's model of ʿĀd and Thamud becomes "in pejorative usage, a human condition, a state of mind, a quality of society, a way of life," and can therefore be applied at each stage in the continued existence of *jāhilīyah*: in pre-Quraysh, Quraysh, and modern periods. The close link between ʿĀd-Thamūd and *jāhilīyah* renders them interchangeable: ʿĀd and Thamūd were *jāhilī,* while conversely anyone who behaves in a *jāhilī* manner is ʿĀd and Thamūd.

Thus Quṭb widens the Islamic concept of ʿĀd and Thamūd, making its abstract enough that it can be applied in theory to anyone evil, fitting a certain definition of *jāhilī.* At the same time, however, he is too free in applying the term. Thus, he uses it to designate not only the West and the Egyptian government (i.e., Nasserism) but is trapped into applying it to all his enemies, real and perceived, and into judging others by his own standards. Quṭb therefore ultimately gives in too easily to the practice of *takfīr,* as did the Kharijites of old.[42]

Kenneth Cragg has described the *Ẓilāl* as "a commentary given in a personality."[43] It is evident that Quṭb's retelling of the story of ʿĀd versus Hūd and of Thamūd versus Ṣāliḥ is largely a self projection vis-à-vis his political environment, as we pointed out above in the Chapter Two. Quṭb tries to tell us of his own experiences through the tales of ʿĀd and Thamūd: his opposition to the West and its cultural

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[42] Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* 110; Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism* 172 and 185.
[43] Kenneth Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Qurʾān* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985) 70.

tendencies, his antagonism towards ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, and his ideological stance as a prominent member of Muslim Brethren. Since his account of ʿĀd and Thamūd is personal, his interpretation may be relevant for him first of all, for his time and location. However, it may be irrelevant to others with different experiences. But then, all *tafsīr* reflects in some ways the experience of its writer, which in itself is a contribution to our overall knowledge of the Qurʾān.

Conclusion

The simplistic, enigmatic style of the Qurʾān in referring to the tales of ʿĀd and Thamūd casts doubt on the very existence and historicity of ʿĀd and Thamūd, irrespective of the value of the narrative and its role in religious teaching. To fill this gap classical *haggadic* exegesis, offered a more complete version of ʿĀd and Thamūd legends, as may be seen in al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* and *tārīkh*, or in *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Kisāʾī, or al-Thaʿlabī. This often involved relying on *isrāʾīlīyāt* transmissions. On the other hand, from the Western scholarship perspective, the importance of ʿĀd and Thamūd lies not in what role these play in the Qurʾān, but in how they might confirm research or excavations which point to the existence of actual tribes bearing these names.

For modern Muslim exegetes, therefore, dedicated to defending the truth of the Qurʾān, the aim of the scripture in telling of ʿĀd and Thamūd consists in no other purpose than to extract a moral lesson. They offer their interpretation by simplifying, rationalizing, and demythologizing, the latter concerned in particular with discarding the non-Qurʾānic materials—myth, legend and extraordinary tales provided by classical exegetes. However, to understand ʿĀd and Thamūd in this way, is to depreciate the *qiṣaṣ* recorded by al-Ṭabarī, al-Kisāʾī, al-Thaʿlabī, Ibn Kathīr, and many others. To judge myth based on "what is true" is inappropriate and leads to reductionism. For our task is not to judge the myths with the tools of modern logic but to find a way to understand them, to show the significance of the myths for the tellers.

Based on our analysis in this thesis, we find that the two narratives have a clear significance for Sayyid Quṭb. In our close reading of *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*, by connecting

ʿĀd and Thamūd to Quṭb not only as the heir of previous interpreters, but also as a man who occupied time and space, we find that the two tales serve for Quṭb as a response to the modern situation surrounding him. Quṭb uses the two tales to express himself vis-à-vis his environment; thus the affinity among many aspects; political suffering, ideological conflict, and religious experiences can be traced by reading his interpretation of the two narratives. Thus, the model of the narratives is operative and they become symbols for Quṭb. We have seen the triangular model which represents Quṭb's world view and the order of reality according to him: negative versus positive, and ending with the victory of positive—Hūd in the case of ʿĀd, Ṣālih in the case of Thamūd, Muḥammad in his confrontation with Quraysh. This may be extended to include Quṭb himself in his encounter with the negative forces of his age: Nasserism and Westernism; materialism; communism; etc. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ function as a projection and a representation of Quṭb himself, and ʿĀd and Thamūd as his enemies. Interestingly, Quṭb's concept of liberation as the outcome of the story of ʿĀd versus Hūd not only implies the liberation of righteousness from evil, Islam from *jāhilīyah* and Hūd from ʿĀd, but also Quṭb himself from his suffering at the hands of his more powerful enemies—the Egyptian government and Western imperialism. Also, in the case of the hamstringing and slaying of the she-camel by Thamūd (a rebellious act against prophet Ṣāliḥ) represents symbolically the oppression and torture of the Muslim Brethren by Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's regime. Quṭb's assumption of the role of Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, and his designation of his enemies as Thamūd and ʿĀd, gave Quṭb the moral strength he needed to face the more powerful Egyptian government and Western hegemony. Therefore, we find that the paradigm of ʿĀd and Thamūd in Quṭb's triangle ends with the victory of positive pole. This model embodied for Quṭb the ideological and political conflict raging

in the Egyptian context; nevertheless, in contrast to the victory for Hūd and Ṣāliḥ or even Muḥammad, Quṭb and other members of the Muslim Brethren were politically defeated by Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, jailed and even ultimately hanged.

In evaluating the structure of Quṭb's *Ẓilāl*, we find that he follows the conventional structure of *tafsīr*, interpreting the verses of ʿĀd and Thamūd based on the sequence of the *sūrah* and verses. Thus, the interpretation of the two tales is to be found scattered in different passages of the Qurʾān. However, Quṭb offers another systematization, namely groupings of verses within each *sūrah*, arranged thematically. This idea is found in the *tafsīrs* of his predecessor's particularly those of Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarsī, ʿAbduh's/Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār*, and al-Marāghī. Sayyid Quṭb follows this trend. However, Quṭb is unique in his groupings, which consist of a large number of verses which is then divided again into smaller groups. In doing so, the connection of each verse, theme, large group and smaller group within *sūrah* is emphasized, and with the help of aesthetic principles, he tries to connect verses to one another. Therefore, he offers a solution to counter the idea of disunity of the verses of the Qurʾān, although in some cases Quṭb is not entirely successful in applying this idea, due to his lack of consistency and systematization.

Nevertheless, Quṭb sought a new dimension to the interpretation of ʿĀd and Thamūd by assigning new meanings and systems to familiar structures. He follows ʿAbduh's lead in discarding non-Qurʾanic materials, e.g. *isrāʾilīyāt* myths, and goes a step further in trying to extract moral lessons in accordance with the contemporary context. At the cost of the historicity and original meaning of the two tales, Quṭb proved they belong not only to the past or to the world in theory, but are a part of practical daily life, they are as operative as his famous concept of *jāhilīyah*. Thus, in widening the

meaning of the two tales, he identifies certain contemporary people as ʿĀd and Thamūd, a perspective that leads to subjective and personal judgement. Although Quṭb agrees in theory with ʿAbduh's advice, to discard non-Qurʾānic material, such as *isrāʾīlīyāt* myths, in practice he recreates another kind of non-Qurʾānic material in interpreting ʿĀd and Thamūd, namely, his ideological and political experience. Hence, Quṭb in turn sacralizes, theologizes, and mythologizes the latter.

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