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Abstract Only – Work in Progress

“An Egyptian Muslim in America:
Sayyid Qutb’s Travel Writings”

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The Egyptian writer, teacher, and civil servant Sayyid Qutb (b. 1906) traveled to the United States from November 1948 to August 1950. This paper will study the observations on American culture and society that Qutb recorded in a series of, as yet, untranslated Arabic articles compiled as “The America That I Have Seen” (al-Amrika al-lati Raituha; reprinted in ed. ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, Jiddah, Dar al-Wafa’, 1987). With the exception of two short articles by John Calvert (1987, 2001), scholarly work on Qutb in English has given short shrift to the actual activities and thoughts occupying Qutb in this twenty-two month period. And yet it is the travels of Qutb to New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, as well as the places where he studied (Washington DC, Palo Alto, California, Greeley, and Colorado) and what he experienced and felt in these places that offers insight - perhaps greater insight than any of the writings he produced while in Egypt - into his personal identity as a Muslim. In concluding, the paper will employ this study of Qutb’s observations and commentary to revisit and evaluate the account given by the preponderance of Qutb scholars, who maintain that whatever it was that Sayyid Qutb saw while “in the West,” that is, on this - *his only* - trip abroad, transformed him from the moderate Islamist of *Social Justice in Islam (al-‘Adalat al-Ijtima‘iyyah fi’l-Islam*, published 1949) to the theorist of jihad famous from his late work *Milestones on the Road (Mu‘alim fi’l-Tariq*, published 1964).