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BARA′A: A STUDY OF SOME QURANIC PASSAGES

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Sūra IX opens with the proclamation of the bara′a. H. Grimme and R. Bell have suggested that it was proclaimed by Muhammad shortly before the conquest of Mecca. Its main object was the renunciation of the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya signed by Quraysh and Muḥammad in 6H/628. Bell pointed out that the announcement of the bara′a “preceded the resumption of hostilities with Mecca.” F. Buhl suggested that the opening passage of our sūra does not renounce but rather reaffirms all treaties made with Muḥammad’s allies. Similarly, J. Wansbrough recently advanced the view that the term bara′a is a “reflex of berit” (Hebrew: covenant). In his view, the whole passage “provided the locus probans for juridical theory on the scope of secular treaty relations.” The role of this passage is “similar to the role of legalistic and cultic elements in the formulation of the Hebrew covenant tradition.”

None of these views seem to accord with the evidence of Muslim sources. Grimme and Bell must be rejected in the light of the fact that Muḥammad, before the submission of Mecca, never announced the renunciation of the truce of al-Ḥudaybiyya. On the contrary, he rather tried to promote the impression that he stuck to it, in order to conceal his military preparations to take Mecca by surprise. The views of Buhl and Wansbrough cannot be accepted since they are based on a misinterpretation of the wording of our sūra.

In the present paper a scrutiny of the Quranic text as well as of the relevant ex-Quranic material is undertaken, in order to try and elucidate the true meaning of the bara′a.

1 Mohammed, Münster 1892, 1, 128 ff.
3 Art. cit., 238.
5 J. Wansbrough, Quranic studies, Oxford 1977, 11-12.

13
Verse 1 of sūra IX reads:

"barā'a from Allāh and His apostle (is given) to the mushrikūn with whom you (i.e., the Muslims) made treaties.

Verse 2 of our sūra is addressed directly to the mushrikūn:

And go about safely in the land for four months and know that you cannot frustrate Allāh, and that Allāh is about to humiliate the non-believers.

The term barā'a, which was translated by Bell as "renunciation", was correctly explained by Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 231H/844), as quoted in Lisān al-'Arab. He says that the barā'a of our verse is derived from barī'a in the sense of a'dhara and andhara (i.e., manifested an excuse, and gave warning). Therefore the barā'a here has the meaning of i'dhār and indhār. Lane translated this verse accordingly: "a manifestation of excuse, and a warning from God and his apostle."

The root b.r.' may indeed occur in close association with the root 'dh.r. Like a'dhara, barī'a may mean accomplishing of all that is required, end of one's responsibility, and hence one's being excused from any further
duties. Bar'a in this sense, when attached to ilā, like in our sura, means that one gives notice to somebody else, and warns him that one is about to repudiate all one's previous obligations. As soon as such a warning is given the duty is accomplished.

The meaning of the above two verses is therefore that Allāh and His apostle are hereby declared excused from all previous obligations with regard to all those mushrikūn who had treaties with the Muslims. These allied mushrikūn are given a four months notice to decide either to embrace Islam or to be “humiliated” by Allāh. In other words, the bar'a is a proclamation of the unilateral repudiation of all the treaties which Muḥammad signed with mushrikūn; these are to expire after a respite of four months. The immediate consequence of the repudiation of these treaties is that Muḥammad’s former allies are left with no protection whatsoever. Therefore, the bar'a in our sura is also explained as inqiṭā' al-īṣma.

This meaning of the bar'a was preserved in some exegetic traditions. A tradition traced back to Ibn 'Abbās says that “Allāh allotted four months to those who entered into alliance with His apostle, to go about safely wherever they liked...” A further tradition traced back to Ibn 'Abbās says that “Allāh fixed a period of four months for those who had had a treaty before the bar'a was delivered. He ordered them to go about safely for four months... Consequently, there was no (valid) treaty left for them, and no protection...” According to al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥīm (d. 105H/723), Muḥammad had made alliances before the bar'a with some people of the mushrikūn from Mecca and elsewhere. Thereafter the bar'a was given by Allāh “to everyone who made a treaty with you from among the mushrikūn. I hereby repudiate the pact between you and them, and allot them a period of four months... The Prophet was ordered to fight them at the end of this period till they embraced Islam...” Likewise, al-Suddī (d. 128H/745) explained that when the bar'a was announced, Muḥammad repudiated every treaty of the mushrikūn, and afterwards he made no more
alliances (with other mushrikūn). He allotted all of them their mudda (see below), “and go about safely in the land for four months...”\(^\text{18}\)

Verse 3 of our sura contains another proclamation, the adhān, with which I have dealt elsewhere.\(^\text{19}\) Its main object was to announce the end of the pre-Islamic sacredness of the holy months, and to declare a total war against all non-Muslims in whatever time or territory. The adhān which refers to the non-Muslims as a whole, is complementary to the barā‘a which deals with just those non-Muslims who had made an alliance with the Prophet.

Verse 4 takes us back to the barā‘a. It reads:

\[
\text{إلا الذين عاهدتم من المشرقيين لم يقتصوكم شيئاً ولم يظاهروكم.}
\]

Except those mushrikūn with whom you made treaties, who thereafter have not come short in anything in regard to you, and have not supported anyone against you. As for them, respect their treaty till the end of their respite. God loves those who obey.

This exceptive sentence excludes the mushrikūn who had treaties with Muhammad from the general adhān of the preceding verse. It means that the protection of the holy months is withdrawn from all non-Muslims except from those who had treaties, provided that they remained inoffensive. The latter shall retain the protection provided by their treaties until the end of their respite, ilā muddatihim. The term mudda is derived from maddahu in the sense of “granted him a delay, or respite.”\(^\text{20}\) Mudda is, therefore, a respite during which any hostile acts against each of the parties involved are forbidden, or rather delayed.\(^\text{21}\) The mudda allotted to the inoffensive mushrikūn can only be the four months mentioned in verse 2. This is stated explicitly in a tradition traced back to Ibn ʿAbbās.\(^\text{22}\)

The whole passage concludes with verse 5:

\[
\text{فإذا انسلخ الأشهر الحرم فاقتنوا المشريكيين حيث وجدتموه وخلافهم}
\]

waḥṣiruham waqaḍuha hamm kall marṣud. Fان تابوا وأقاموا الصلاوة وأثنا الركعة فخُلِّقا سبيلاًهم. إنا الله غفور رحيم.

\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., X, 44.

\(^\text{19}\) See “The great pilgrimage of Muḥammad”, JSS, XXVII, 1982, 241 ff.

\(^\text{20}\) See Lane, op. cit., s.v., “m.d.d.”

\(^\text{21}\) Several muddas were agreed upon between Muḥammad and the mushrikūn. One such mudda was fixed in the well-known treaty of al-Hudaybiyya. Another mudda was established between Muḥammad and ʿUyayna b. Ḥiṣn. See al-Halabi, al-Sira al-Halabiyya, Cairo 1320H/1902, repr. Beirut n.d., II, 289 (reference from M. Lecker).

\(^\text{22}\) Abū Ḥayyān, op. cit., V, 8: wa’-anthu aydan: “ilā muddatihim” — ila l-arba‘atī l-ashhuri llati fī t-liyya.
And when the sacred months are over, kill the mushrikūn wherever you find them, and take them and surround them, and lie for them in wait in every spot. If they repent, and observe the salāt and pay the zakāt, then leave them alone. Allāh is forgiving, compassionate.

This verse indicates that the respite allotted to the allied mushrikūn is to expire by the end of the sacred months of the year in which the barā’a was proclaimed. This is quite conceivable in the light of the fact that the number of the sacred months in the Arab calendar is indeed four (Sūra IX/36). It follows that the sacred months of verse 5 must be identified with the four months of verse 2. A tradition to this effect is recorded by al-Ṭabarī on the authority of Mujāhid (d. 104H/722).

To sum up, in the verses just quoted the Quran proclaims total war against all Muhammad’s non-Muslim allies, which meant that by the end of the sacred months, when the respite was over, they must embrace Islam. Ibn Zayd (d. 182H/798) as quoted by Ibn Wahb (d. 197H/812) says: “Allāh allotted to them (i.e., to the allies) a respite of four months, and announced Himself clear of all the rest of the mushrikūn. Then He ordered: ‘when these sacred months are over fight the mushrikūn wherever you find them.’”

The proclamation of the barā’a marks a fundamental change in Muhammad’s attitude towards non-Muslims. In previous stages he was quite willing to establish close alliances with non-Muslims, even though they did not accept his religion. Muhammad signed with them various treaties which stipulated mutual defence and military cooperation. These non-Muslim allies took an active part in Muhammad’s raids, and had their own share in the booty. Allied Arab polytheists used to get a share according to what had been agreed upon before the battle. Al-Zuhrī (d. 124H/742) relates that the Jews also used to participate in Muhammad’s expeditions, and their share in the booty was the same as that of the Muslims. The proclamation of the barā’a indicates that at a certain stage, Muhammad decided that all allies had to become full-scale Muslims. Islam was to substitute for the previous alliances as the sole basis for security and protection. Embracing Islam meant performance of salāt and especially payment of zakāt. Ahl al-kitāb, however, were exempted from becoming...
Muslims, provided that they paid the jizya which is mentioned in our very sura (verse 29).

When the barâ'a was proclaimed, all Quranic verses prescribing friendly relations with inoffensive non-Muslims were abrogated. Friendly relations with infidels, offensive and inoffensive alike, were forbidden. The only reward for the loyalty of the allied non-Muslims was a four months respite, after which they had to become full-scale Muslims.

One of these abrogated verses is II/190:

وقاتلوا في سبيل الله الذين يقاتلونكم ولا تعتدوا . إن الله لا يحب المعتدين .

Wage war in the way of Allâh (only) against those who wage war against you, and do not assail. Allâh does not like those who assail.

According to al-Rabî' b. Anas al-Bakrî (d. 139H/756), this was the first verse about war which was revealed to Muhammad in al-Madina. Thereby Muhammad used to fight only those who waged war against him, and refrained from attacking those who did not attack him. Such was his conduct till the barâ'a was revealed.29 Ibn Zayd as well related that the above verse was abrogated by the opening passage of Sûra IX.30 That was also the opinion of al-Hasan al- Başrî (d. 110H/728) who said that when this verse was abrogated, all non-Muslims were given a respite of four months. When that period was over (Allâh) made it lawful to shed the blood of all of them, those who had treaties as well as the others.31

Another abrogated verse is VIII/61:

وإن جنحوا للسلم فاجنحوا... 

And if they tend to peace, then tend to it...

Commenting on this verse, Qatâda (d. 118H/736) says: "...Each treaty mentioned in this as well as in other sûras, and each peace agreement which the Muslims had concluded with the mushrikûn in which they became allies, is abrogated by the barâ'a. (Allâh) ordered to fight them in any case till they say: ‘there is no God but Allâh’."32

Another verse which was abrogated by the barâ'a is IV/90:

فإن اعتزلوك فلزم يقاتلوكم وألقوا إليكم السلم فما جاء الله لكم عليهم سبيلًا.

29 al-Ṭabarî, Tafsîr, II, 110.
30 Loc. cit.
31 al-Khâzin, op. cit., II, 239.
32 al-Ṭabarî, Tafsîr, X, 24: ...wa-kullu 'ahdin kâna fi ḥadhîhi i-sûra'at wa-fî 'ghayrthâ wa-kullu sulhîn yuzâlîhû bihi l-muslimînâ T-mushrikînâ, yatawdâdîhûna bihi, fa-inna barâ'ata jâ'at bi-naskhi dâlîka; fa-umîra bi-qîâthîhim 'alâ kulli ḥallîn ḥattâ yaqûlû: 'lâ ilâha illâ llâhu'.
And if they keep away from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allâh has not given you the right to assail them.

According to 'Ikrima (d. 105H/723) and al-Hasan al- Başrî, this verse was abrogated by the first five verses of our surâ; Allâh “gave them four months to go about freely in the land, and abolished all that had been (concluded) previously.” According to Ibn Zayd, all that is stated in the above verse was abrogated by the order of jihâd. Allâh allotted to them four months to decide either to embrace Islam or to be subjected to jihâd. Another suspended verse is LX/8:

لا ينتهاكم الله عن الذين لم يقاتلوكم في الدين ولم يخرجوكم من دياركم أن تبروهم وت.quسوا إليهم . إن الله يحب المتقين.

God does not forbid that you be loyal and righteous towards those who did not fight you in religion and did not drive you out from your abode. God loves those who are righteous.

According to Ibn Zayd, this verse was abrogated when the Muslims were ordered to turn their swords against the mushrikûn. Allâh allotted them a respite of four months to choose between being slaughtered and embracing Islam.

A further abrogated verse is to be found in surâ IX, the very surâ of the barâ’a. this verse, 7, seems to be earlier than the barâ’a, although located after it.

Verse 7 reads:

 إلا الذين عاهدم عند المسجد الحرام ، فما استقاموا لكم . فاستقيموا لهم . إن الله يحب المتقين.

Except those with whom you have made a treaty near the sacred mosque (i.e., the Ka’ba). As long as they remain loyal to you, you have to remain loyal to them. Allâh loves those who obey.

According to Ibn Zayd, this verse refers to Quraysh. It was abrogated by the (four) months which were allotted to them. But they had embraced Islam long before the respite expired.

32 Ibid., V, 126.
33 Loc. cit.
34 Ibid., XXIII, 43.
35 See e.g., al-Suhaylî, al-Rawd al-unuf, ed. 'Abd al-Ra’ûf Sa’d, Cairo 1973, IV, 201: “The scholars of tafsîr say that the end of this sura was delivered before its beginning.” According to Mujâhid, the earliest verse of our sura is 25. See Mujâhid, Tafsîr, Isلامabad n.d., I, 275.
36 al-Tabari, Tafsîr, X, 59.
Inoffensive and allied mushrikūn were deprived not only of the protection of their treaties but also of the protection of the haram and the sacred months, which actually had been removed from all non-Muslims when the adhān was proclaimed (see above). Sūra II/191 reads:

การแสดง

ولا نقتلونهم عند المسجد الحرام حتى يقتلونكم فيه فإن قاتلوكم...

And do not fight them at the sacred mosque till they fight you there; if they fight you, then kill them.

Commenting on this verse, Qatada says: ‘Allāh ordered His prophet not to fight them near the sacred mosque, unless they were first to start fighting. Then Allāh abolished it through the verse: ‘And when the sacred months are over, kill the mushrikūn wherever you find them...’ Allāh ordered His prophet to fight them, by the end of the respite, in the hila‘ as well as in the haram and near the House, till they confess.”

Verse 5 of our sūra, which was adduced by Qatada in the tradition just quoted, is indeed most crucial. This verse is known as āyat al-sayf or āyat al-qitāl. According to al-Dāhkhāk, this verse repealed all sorts of pacts between Muḥammad and the mushrikūn as well as all contracts and all truce agreements.

III

The announcement of the barā‘a could have taken place only in a relatively late phase in Muḥammad’s career, when most of his military projects in the Meccan vicinity had already been accomplished. When Mecca was conquered in 8H/630, there were still some great objectives ahead of him: the expeditions to Ḥunayn and al-Ṭā‘if were yet to be made, as well as raids on the great tribes of Tamīm, Khath‘am, Kilāb and others.

Once these military projects had been accomplished, the importance of Muḥammad’s treaties with several pagan tribes of the Meccan vicinity was considerably reduced. Muḥammad was no longer dependent on the cooperation of these allies, and thus the way was finally open to terminate all treaties with those allied tribes who, under the protection of their treaties, still refrained from becoming full scale Muslims.

The immediate circumstances in which the barā‘a was announced can be deduced from some instructive reports preserved in Muslim sources. A

Ibid., II, 112.


For the chronology of these expeditions see al-Wāqidī, op. cit., I, 6-7.
passage in al-Rāzī\textsuperscript{41} and al-Khāzīn\textsuperscript{42} reads:

It is related that when the Prophet set out to the raid on Tabūk and the munafiqin stayed behind and spread bad rumours, the polytheists started breaking their treaty, therefore the apostle of Allāh repudiated their treaty.\textsuperscript{43}

Not less instructive is the way in which al-Suddī interpreted the barā'a. He says that verse 4 of our sûra refers to Banū Ḍamra and Banū Mudlij; they were two clans from Banū Kināna. They were Muḥammad's allies in ghazwat al-‘usra ( = Tabūk). The phrase “fa-atimmū ilayhim ‘ahdahum ilā muddatihim” refers to their respite which you (i.e., the Muslims) allotted to them (“ajaluhumu lādhi sharāṭum lahum”). Al-Suddī concludes his interpretation with the statement that from that time onwards, the prophet made no more treaties with anybody.\textsuperscript{44}

The conclusion to be drawn from the passages just quoted is that the barā'a was announced as a result of some events connected with Muḥammad's expedition to Tabūk. Among those allies whose treaties were then terminated were the tribes of Ḍamra and Mudlij. These tribes had special relations with Muḥammad. Watt's \textit{Muḥammad at Medina} contains a passage about these two tribes:

In the first year or two after the Hijrah Muḥammad's chief aim must have been to gain friends, so that, when he and his followers went on expeditions, they could move about freely without fear of being molested. On an expedition in 623/2 he is said to have made a treaty with Mudlij\textsuperscript{45} and Ḍamrah.\textsuperscript{46} These two parts of Kinānah were presumably disaffected towards the Meccans, and therefore ready to undertake not to attack the Muslims. They may also have helped Muḥammad by passing on information.\textsuperscript{47}

These tribes were quite eager to maintain their treaties. During the expedition of Badr al-mi‘ād (4H/626) the representative of Ḍamra who had signed the treaty with Muḥammad reaffirmed his adherence to it, in order to ensure the protection of his tribe against Muḥammad's attack.\textsuperscript{48}
Members of Damra took part in Muhammad's expeditions to Mecca, Ḥunayn, and Tabūk. The loyalty of these tribes to Muhammad was demonstrated particularly shortly before the conquest of Mecca, when Khuzā'ā, Muhammad's allies, were attacked by Banū Bakr. It is reported that Mudlij refrained from taking part in this attack, thus remaining faithful to the truce of al-Ḥudaybiyya. The text of Muhammad's treaty with Damra has been preserved by Ibn Sa'd. It is mainly a defence agreement providing for military cooperation, signed for an unlimited time, with no traces of any religious obligations. The agreement applied to those members of Damra who were "loyal and obedient (to the terms of the treaty)".

The above-quoted passages about Tabūk indicate that about the time of this expedition, Muhammad repudiated the treaties of the above-mentioned allies. The reason for this decisive step can be deduced from the reports about this expedition. Tabūk is located on the Syrian border, and Muhammad's raid on it which is dated to 9H/631, seems to have been one of the first far reaching raids on foreign forces outside Arabia. In this case the intention was to fight the Byzantines. Large passages in sūra IX are devoted to this expedition. In these passages mention is made of those who "stayed behind" and of those who tried to excuse themselves from coming to Tabūk (see especially verses 38-39; 42 ff; 81 ff; 90 ff; 117 ff). These were various groups from al-Madīna as well as from Arab tribes from its vicinity. Verse 90 speaks of A'rāb who are labeled as mu'adhdirūn, i.e. those who try to excuse themselves. According to Mujāhid and Ibn 'Abbās, they were a group from the clan of Ghifar, and the Prophet did not accept their excuse. Ghifar is a great sub-division of Damra; it is also mentioned alongside Juḥayna, Aslām and Ashjā' in the interpretations of verse 101.

49 Ibid., II, 799, 820.
50 Ibid., III, 896.
51 Ibid., III, 990.
52 E.g., ibid., II, 783.
54 "alā man barra minhum wa-ittaqti", the verb ittaqi, like barra, denotes faithfulness to oaths and treaties. See Quran, III/76: "man awfū bi-'ahdīhi wa-ittaqti". See further M.M. Bravmann, The spiritual background of early Islam, Leiden 1972, 117. Watt's translation of this clause ("for whoever of them is just and pious") seems to be erroneous.
55 For this expedition see for instance, Buhl, op. cit., 322 ff.
which speaks of the ārāb who were munāfīqūn.⁵⁷ Some members of Ghifār as well as of their confederates from Aslam, were actually absent from Tabūk, and Muḥammad expressed his dismay at their absence.⁵⁸

It seems that the reluctance to come to Tabūk, as well as the actual absence of some of Muḥammad's best allies, brought about his decision to repudiate their treaties through the bard'a. Allied mushrikūn were to become full-scale Muslims. As such they would have to submit to Muḥammad's authority in all respects, and supply warriors, whenever demanded to do so, to all expeditions in whatever territories. In a way, the proclamation of the bard'a may be regarded as a preparation for a new phase in the Muslim expansion, far beyond the surroundings of Mecca and al-Madīna. The bard'a was intended to tighten the relations of all groups with the Muslim umma, and concentrate all these forces for the new goals of Islam.

Another remarkable interpretation of the bard'a is that of Mujāhid. Commenting on verse 4 he says: “Banū Mudlij and Khuzā'īa had a treaty, and this is referred to in the verse 'and complete their treaty up to the end of their respite.'”⁵⁹ Hence it is clear that among those to whom a respite of four months was allotted, was also the tribe of Khuzā'ã. This is corroborated in the interpretation of Muqāṭīl (d. 150H/767) of verse 1. He says that the mushrikūn (to whom the bard'a was given) were of three tribes: Khuzā'ã, Mudlij and Khuzayma.⁶⁰ The name of Khuzā'ã recurs also in some interpretations of Quran XL/8 which, as seen above, was abrogated by the bard'a. According to Ibn 'Abbās, the two Muqāṭīls (i.e., Ibn Sulaymān and Ibn Hayyān), and al-Kalbī (d. 146H/763), the abrogated verse refers to Khuzā'ã. “They had made a treaty with the Prophet in which they undertook not to fight him and not to drive him out. The Prophet was ordered to be loyal till the end of the time of their respite.”⁶¹

See al-Zamakhshārī, op. cit., II, 211; al-Ṭabarṣī, op. cit., XI, 130; al-Qūṭūbī, op. cit., VIII, 240; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 271. And see also R.B. Serjeant, “The Sunna Jāmi‘ah” BSOAS, XLI (1978) p. 12. These tribes are mentioned also among the mukhallaftūn of al-Ḥudaybiyya. See e.g., al-Wāqīdī, op. cit., II, 574, 619; see also the commentaries on sūra XLVIII/11-16. On the other hand, the tribes of Ghifār, Aslam, Muzayya, Juḥayna and Ashja' are mentioned also in laudatory traditions ascribed to the Prophet, which might indicate that in other cases the Prophet had every reason to be satisfied with the conduct of these tribes. For these traditions see al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Cairo 1958, IV, 220 ff.; Muslim, Sahīh, Cairo 1334H/1915, VII, 176 ff.


Abū Ḥayyān, op. cit., V, 5. Khuzayma, like Mudlij and Ḏāmra, is a clan of Banū Bakr of Ḳiḥānā. See e.g., al-Ṭabarṣī, op. cit., X, 20; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 212. It is sometimes written Jadhīma, instead of Khuzayma. See e.g., al-Ṭabarṣī, Tafsīr, X, 58.

Abū Ḥayyān, op. cit., V, 5. Khuzayma, like Mudlij and Ḏāmra, is a clan of Banū Bakr of Ḳiḥānā. See e.g., al-Ṭabarṣī, op. cit., X, 20; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 212. It is sometimes written Jadhīma, instead of Khuzayma. See e.g., al-Ṭabarṣī, Tafsīr, X, 58.

al-Rāzī, XXIX, 304: ...wa-hum Khuzā'ã, kānī 'āhādī i-rasīla (s) 'alā an lā yuqādīluhu wa-lā yuqrījūhu, fa-umira al-rasīlu 'alayhi l-salāmu bi-l-bīrri wa-l-wafā'î ilā muddati ajālihim.
The nature of the relations between Khuza’a and Muḥammad can be gauged from the following statement of al-ʾWaqqīḍī: “They (i.e., Khuza’a) were Muḥammad’s confidential advisers in the Tiḥāma (i.e., the vicinity of Mecca and al-Madīna), some of them being Muslims, others being (just) allied, and they did not hide from him anything happening in the Tiḥāma.”\(^\text{62}\) The alliance between Khuza’a and Muḥammad was based on an ancient treaty which was said to have been made between Khuza’a and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥammad’s grandfather. In this treaty both parties had undertaken to support each other for ever. The document of the treaty had been signed in Dār al-nadwa and was kept in the Ka’ba.\(^\text{63}\) This very document was brought by Khuza’a to Muḥammad at al-Ḥudaybiyya, and Muḥammad ratified it.\(^\text{64}\) When Khuza’a, who joined the truce of al-Ḥudaybiyya as Muḥammad’s allies, were attacked by Bakr, shortly before the submission of Mecca, a representative of Khuza’a came to al-Madīna and asked for Muḥammad’s support in accordance with the ancient treaty of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.\(^\text{65}\) That Muḥammad was greatly interested in bringing all the sections of Khuza’a into Islam, not being content with the already existing treaty of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, is indicated in a letter he wrote to Budayl Ibn Warqa’, Khuza’a’s chief, who dwelt in Mecca. In this letter, Muḥammad made clear to Budayl that he had never violated their covenant and urged him and his tribe to become muḥājirūn. He stressed that Khuza’a were the most honourable and closest to him in blood relations of all the people of the Tiḥāma.\(^\text{66}\) Al-ʾWaqqīḍī, although stating that already after al-Ḥudaybiyya (6H/628) all members of Khuza’a embraced Islam,\(^\text{67}\) reports at the same time that the letter to Budayl was written as late as Jumādā I-īkhir, 8H/630, which means that shortly before the conquest of Mecca, large sections of Khuza’a were still regarded as mushrīkin, hence the letter urging them to embrace Islam.\(^\text{68}\) According to al-Zuhrī, Budayl

\(^{62}\) al-ʾWaqqīḍī, op. cit., II, 593, 730; Ibn Ḥishām, op. cit., III, 326. On Khuza’a see further M. J. Kister, s.v. “Khuza’a”, EI (new ed.).


\(^{65}\) E.g., Ibn Ḥishām, op. cit., IV, 36; al-ʾWaqqīḍī, op. cit., II, 789; Ibn Saʿd, op. cit., IV, 294; al-Ḥalābī, op. cit., I, 353.


\(^{67}\) al-ʾWaqqīḍī, op. cit., II, 749.

\(^{68}\) See also Ibn Saʿd, op. cit., IV, 294: katāba ʾūlayhi i-nabiyyu (ṣ) wa-ilā Bushr b. Sufyān yadd ʾuhumā ʾī l-islām.
himself embraced Islam only on the submission of Mecca. The above traditions about the barā’a lead to the conclusion that quite a considerable time after Mecca had been conquered, at least some sections of Khuzā’ were still mushrikūn, to whom the barā’a was finally given.

IV

The proclamation of the barā’a is recorded in the Quran in close association with the adhān (verse 3). This brought about the creation of numerous traditions relating that both the barā’a and the adhān were announced on one and the same occasion, i.e., on yawm al-ḥajj al-akbar, which is mentioned in the Quran as the time for the adhān. The respite of four months was counted from that ḥajj onwards. In a separate paper I have tried to show that al-ḥajj al-akbar stands for Muḥammad’s farewell pilgrimage (10H/632). Some traditions dealing with the proclamation of the adhān during that pilgrimage, mention also the barā’a. The šahābi Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī related that Muḥammad had proclaimed: “No one will enter paradise except a Muslim, and no naked man will perform the tawfīf, and no mushrik will approach the sacred mosque when this year is over. Whoever has been given a respite by the prophet, his respite (shall be fulfilled) to (the end of) his allotted period.”

However, the greater part of the traditions relate that the adhān as well as the barā’a were proclaimed not by Muḥammad himself, but rather by other persons who acted in his name. This was reportedly carried out already during an earlier pilgrimage, the one conducted by Abū Bakr in 9H/631. This dating of al-ḥajj al-akbar is secondary, but as far as the barā’a is concerned, it is more accurate, being closer in time to Muḥammad’s expedition to Tabūk. The following tradition about Abū Bakr’s ḥajj was recorded by al-Bukhārī: “...Abū Bakr terminated the treaties of the people in that year, and in the year of ḥajjat al-wāda’, during which the prophet made his pilgrimage, no mushrik performed the ḥajj.”

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70 The respite was counted from the 10th of Dhū l-ḥijja (= yawm al-nahr) till the 10th of Rabi‘ al-akhir. This period was said to be “sacred”, because fighting against the mushrikūn was then forbidden. The end of the proper sacred months was said to mark the end of a 50 days respite, allegedly allotted to the rest of the mushrikūn. See e.g., al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, X, 42 ff., 44, 56-57. According to al-Zuhrī, however, the barā’a had already been proclaimed before the “great hajj”, so that the respite of four months was to expire at the end of the proper sacred months, that is, the end of Muḥarram. See al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, X, 44-45; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 211.

71 See above, note 19.

72 al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 227.

Shi‘i traditions assign the proclamation of the *bard’a* to ‘Ali b. Abī Talib. He was reportedly ordered by Muhammad to follow Abū Bakr and his fellow pilgrims and perform the task himself. The following tradition was also recorded by al-Bukhari:74 Abū Hurayra is said to have related: “Abū Bakr sent me among heralds which he sent during that pilgrimage, on *yawm al-nahr*, to announce at Minā that no *mushrik* would perform the *hajj* after that year, and that no naked person would perform the *tawāf*. Meanwhile, the Prophet sent after us ‘Ali b. Abī Talib, having ordered him to announce the *bard’a*...”

In some further traditions ‘Ali’s proclamation is recorded in more detail. These versions preserve the original meaning of the *bard’a*, being a proclamation reducing all treaties of Muhammad’s allies to a respite of four months. One of these traditions was recorded by al-Tabari on the authority of al-Sha‘bī (d. 103H/721). It is traced back to Abū Hurayra who reportedly said: “I was with ‘Ali when the Prophet sent the *bard’a* with him to the people of Mecca. I was shouting till I lost my voice... We were ordered to announce that no one except a believer would enter paradise, and that whoever had a treaty with the Prophet, his respite would last for four months (*fa-ajaluhu ilā arba‘aitu ashhurin*), and when this period was completed, Allāh would be clear of the polytheists, and also His messenger...”75 Another version was recorded by al-Bayhaqi in his *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, on the authority of ‘Urwā b. al-Zubayr (d. 94H/713). This tradition runs as follows: “The messenger of Allāh sent Abū Bakr as leader of the *hajj* in the ninth year, and he wrote for him the laws of the pilgrimage. He sent ‘Alī with verses from the *bard’a* and ordered him to proclaim at Mecca, at Minā, at ‘Arafā and at all the stations that the protection of the Prophet was withdrawn from every *mushrik* who made the pilgrimage after that year, or made the *tawāf* naked, and that the respite allotted to those who had treaties was four months (*wa-ajaluhu man kāna baynahu wa-bayna rasūli ilāhī (s) ‘ahdun arba‘atu ashhurin*)”.76 A different version of quite a similar sense

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77 al-Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 210 (from al-Bayhaqī).
was recorded by al-Tirmidhi. It is traced back to Ibn `Abbās. ‘Alī reportedly declared that the protection of Allāh and His apostle was withdrawn from all polytheists, and “go about safely in the land for four months”, and that “no mushrik would perform the ḥajj after that year...”

Some traditions about ‘Alī’s proclamation have preserved also the names of the tribes to whom the barā‘a was given. A tradition of Mujāhid which is transmitted through Ibn Jurayj (d. 150H/767) runs as follows: “The barā‘a of Allāh and His messenger (was given) to the allies, Mudlij and the Arab allies. The Prophet returned from Tabuk after having finished (the raid on it), with the intention to perform the ḥajj. Thereupon he said: ‘the mushrikūn approach the House in performing the ṭawāf naked; I do not wish to make the ḥajj before this is stopped.’ Thereby he sent Abū Bakr and ‘Alī and they wandered among the people at Dhū l-majāz and at their places where they used to trade and perform the rites of the pilgrimage; they declared to the allies that they would be secure during four months — these were the following sacred months, from the tenth of Dhū l-ḥijja until the tenth of Rabi‘ al-ākhar — afterwards they would no longer have a treaty. They proclaimed war against the people as a whole unless they became believers. Thereupon, all the people became believers, and no one used the respite.”

The last clause in this tradition suggests that the proclamation of the barā‘a brought about the subsequent Islamization of Muhammad’s pagan allies. Since Mecca and its surroundings came under Muhammad’s full control, they had no other choice.

In a second version of Mujāhid’s tradition, as transmitted through Ibn Abī Najīḥ (d. 131H/748) it is stated that the barā‘a was given to Khuzā‘a, Mudlij and others.

V

The barā‘a deals with the alliances which Muhammad had made with various non-Muslim tribes. It announces the unilateral repudiation of these alliances. Some scholars of early Islam could not accept the idea that the Quran indeed contained a declaration of this total and extreme nature. The view of Muslim scholars was that tolerance towards inoffensive mushrikūn was always recommended, and that the Quranic verses to that effect

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78 *Wa-lam yasih ahdāḥun* — literally: “no one went about safely” (al-Ṭabarī, Ṭafsīr, X, 44).
79 According to al-Suddī, the mushrikūn, upon hearing ‘Alī’s proclamation, intended to declare war against Muhammad, but then said to each other: “what can we actually do, now that Quraysh have embraced Islam?” Thereupon they also embraced Islam. See al-Ṭabarī, Ṭafsīr, X, 47.
were never abrogated. Not only was it recommended to spare the lives of inoffensive women, children etc., but also to adhere to the treaties with non-believers, as long as the latter remained inoffensive. This view was based on a famous precedent in Muhammad's own career, namely the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya (6H/628). The fact that Muhammad made a treaty with Quraysh when they were still mushrikūn, led Muslim scholars to hold that it always remained lawful to make treaties with inoffensive mushrikūn, provided that they were to the benefit of the Muslims and concluded for only a specified period, as was the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya. In order to bear out this concept, the barā'a had to be supplied with a new, more adequate meaning, which would be applicable to the case of al-Ḥudaybiyya. In the following interpretation which is traced back to Qatāda, the barā'a is presented as though referring to this particular treaty, urging the Muslims to respect this treaty to its full extent. Qatāda reportedly said: “The Prophet made a treaty with the mushrikūn of Quraysh at the time of al-Ḥudaybiyya, and on yawm al-nahr (= the day of the great pilgrimage) there remained four months of their mudda. Allah commanded His prophet to respect their treaty until the (end of) their mudda... He repudiated the treaties of each of his allies, and ordered to fight them till they testified that there was no God except Allāh and that Muḥammad was His apostle. He would not agree to anything less than that.” In this interpretation, it is suggested that although the barā'a marked the end of the treaties of all Muhammad's non-Muslim allies, the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya was not repudiated. The respite of four months was in fact, the remaining portion of the original mudda of this truce.

Qatāda’s solution was not sufficient. The treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya had been signed before the conquest of Mecca, and when the barā'a was announced in 9H/631, Quraysh were already converted. Therefore it was necessary to find a more flexible meaning which would present the barā'a as though prescribing the full adherence to all other temporary treaties, not just to the one of al-Ḥudaybiyya. Eventually it was contended that the mudda of the mushrikūn, as mentioned in verse 4, represented the specified period of any treaty which was due to expire in either less or more than four months. Thus, a tradition traced back to Mujāhid and other unnamed authorities, which interprets verse 4, says that the Prophet made treaties

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81 See e.g., al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, XXVIII, 43 (on sūra XL/8); II, 110-111 (on II/190).
82 The treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya was signed for 10, 2, 3 or 4 years. See Ibn Hajar, Fath al-bāฏi, V, 251; al-Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, Beirut 1960, II, 54.
83 al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, X, 43, 55. The same interpretation is also traced back to Ibn 'Abbās. See al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 212.
84 See further Abū Ḥayyān, op. cit., V, 9.
with some people for a certain specified period, and he was ordered by Allah to be faithful to these treaties. This meaning of verse 4 seems to form the *ijmā‘* of Muslim exegetes, and in some commentaries this is the only interpretation given. Modern scholars also conceived the *mudda* in the same manner. Grimme translated: "...ihnen halten ihre Verträge bis zu ihren Frist," and explains that "Gott erklärt, nichtsdestoweniger allen andern Heiden ihre Verträge zu halten." Similarly, Bell translated: "Their covenant fulfill up to (the end of) its period." It seems that these scholars were unaware of the fact that if the *mudda* really denoted the time of the treaty itself (*'ahdahum*), the Quran would have rather had *ilā muddatihi* (to its period), not *ilā muddatihim*, as it actually has. Besides, as seen above, the treaties of Muhammad's pagan allies were not temporary ones, but rather unlimited in time.

The view that verse 4 recommends the fulfillment of the treaties to their full extent, leaves unsolved the question to whom the four months mentioned in verse 2 were allotted. Muslim exegetes tried to answer it in various ways. According to Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150H/767) verses 1-2 deal with mushrikūn who had unlimited ('āmm) treaties with Muhammad, to whom a respite of four months was allotted. Verse 4 deals, according to Ibn Isḥāq, with mushrikūn who had limited (khāṣṣ) treaties, signed each for a specified period. Their treaties were all to be completely fulfilled.

This explanation of Ibn Isḥāq still suggests that the treaties of at least part of the allies were arbitrarily reduced to a respite of four months. Therefore, this interpretation could not survive. According to Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 146H/763), verses 1-2 refer only to those mushrikūn who had treaties signed for less than four months. Their treaties were extended to four months. As for the rest of the allies, each of their treaties was to be completed to its specified term (verse 4).

The final solution was arrived at by the division of the non-Muslim allies into two groups: offensive and inoffensive. The *baru‘a*, i.e., the respite, was said to have been given to the former, to the exclusion of the latter. In other words, the *baru‘a* was said to have repudiated only the treaties of those non-Muslims who had violated them, whereas the treaties of those who

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85 Ibid., 8: qāla Mujāhid wa-ghayruhu: hum qawmun kāna baynahum wa-bayna l-rasūlī (s) ʻahdun li-muddatīn fa-umira an yafiya lāhum.

86 E.g., al-Ṭabarī, op. cit., X, 14: "ilā muddatīhim": ay, ilā inqīdāʻī muddatīhim allatt waqā'ati l-mu'āhadatu baynakum ilayhā. And see also al-Baydāwī, Anwār al-tanzil wa-asrār al-ta'wil Cairo 1955, I, 192.

87 Grimme, op. cit., I30 in the footnote.

88 Bell, art. cit., 242.


were loyal, remained valid to their full extent. In this manner, the
exceptional sentence of verse 4 was detached from verse 3 (the
adham) and was con-
ected, instead, with verse 2. Al-Zajjaj (d. 311H/923) says: "This sentence
(i.e., verse 4) is related to the barada (verses 1-2), and the meaning is: barada
is given by Allah and His messenger to the allied mushrikun, except those
who have not violated their treaty."91 Explaining the term barada, al-Zajjaj
says: "This means that Allah and His apostle are exempt from the duty to
be faithful to the treaties (of the mushrikun), because the latter have
violated them."92 The distinction between inoffensive and offensive mush-
rikun underlies the following tradition which is recorded on the authority
of Ibn Sa'd, being traced back to Ibn 'Abbâs. It reads: "The period allotted
to those who had had treaties before the barada was revealed, consisted of
four months... if they violated their treaties and supported an enemy
(against Muhammad), there was to be no treaty for them (after the four
months). If they remained loyal to their treaty with the Prophet, and did
not support anyone against him, the Prophet was ordered to respect their
treaty and be loyal to it."93 Al-Tabari supports this view. He states that the
respite of four months was meant for those allied mushrikun who violated
their treaties, whereas the treaties of those who remained loyal were to be
fulfilled completely.94 This opinion was adopted also by later
commentators.95

Tribes like Damrâ and Mudlij fell, of course, under the sub-division of
inoffensive allies, due to the numerous reports about their special relations
with the Prophet (see above). But the view that the barada was confined
only to offensive allies entailed the exclusion of precisely these tribes from
the barada. Al-Farrâ' (d. 207H/822) says: "Allah excluded from His barada
and from the barada of Muhammad tribes of Kinâna and Damrâ; there
remained nine(!) months of their treaty, and Allah ordered to fulfill this
portion, because they did not support anyone against the believers and did
not violate the treaty of the Prophet."96 Similarly, a tradition traced back
to Ibn 'Abbâs relates that when 'Alî proclaimed the barada, he told Banû

91 al-Râzî, op. cit., XV, 223. And see further Abû Ḥayyân, op. cit., V, 8.
92 al-Ṭabarî, op. cit., X, 8: qila l-Zajjaju: ma'nâhuh: qad barada ilâhu wa-rasâhu min
l'ja'îhim 'l-'uhdâ wa-l-wafâi lahum bihî, idh nakathâ. See also al-Zamakhshari, op. cit.,
II, 172; al-Khâzin, op. cit., II, 238; al-Baydawi, op. cit., I, 192.
93 See al-Ṭabarî, Tafsîr, X, 55. And see also al-Suyûṭî, Durr, III, 212, where only the second
part of this tradition is recorded.
94 al-Ṭabarî, Tafsîr, X, 45.
95 E.g., al-Zamakhshari, op. cit., II, 174, who explains the exception of verse 4 as follows:
...wa-l-istithnâ'u bi-ma'nâ l-istidrâki, ka-annahu qila ba'da an umirâ fi l-nâkithîna: wa-
lâkin alladhîna lam yankuthû, fa-atimmâ ilayhim ahdahum wa-lâ tujrühum mufâtahum
wa-lâ ta'ajlh l-wafsiyya ka-l-gâdiri.
96 al-Ṭabarî, op. cit., X, 13-14 (from al-Farrâ'). The same interpretation is also traced
Damra, Kināna and Sulaym that Allah excluded them. Likewise, the only interpretation quoted by al-Zamakhshari, al-Baydāwī, al-Rāzī and al-Ālusi concerning the barā'a is that Muhammad made treaties with the mushrikūn of Mecca and with others, and they all violated their treaties except Damra and Kināna. Therefore, Muhammad denounced the treaties of those who had violated them, and gave them a respite of four months. Thus, a meaning which is just the opposite of the original one has been adopted by most commentators.

The same process of re-interpretation of the barā'a may be detected in additional versions of the proclamation ascribed to ‘Alī. In some of these versions the respite of four months is isolated from the mudda of verse 4, which is taken to signify the original time of each treaty. In a tradition recorded by Ibn Ishāq on the authority of Muhammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Husayn it is stated that ‘Alī allotted to the people a respite of four months, except to those who had treaties signed for a specific period. The treaties of the latter were to be fulfilled to the end of their period. This tradition reflects the principle of distinction between unlimited (‘āmm) and limited (khāṣṣ) treaties (see above). The following version reflects the same solution. ‘Alī reportedly stated that whoever had a (treaty of) a specified time will have his time completed, and whoever did not have (a treaty of) a specified time, his time will be four months.

Other versions simply omit all reference to the respite of four months, and thus the Quranic mudda might be taken as though signifying just the original specified period of each treaty. According to a version quoted by al-Ṭabarî from several authorities, ‘Alī proclaimed: ‘whoever had a treaty with Muhammad, his treaty will last until the end of its mudda (“fa-‘ahduhu itil muddatihi”’). In the following version even the Quranic mudda is


97 Abū Hayyān, loc. cit.
103 al-Ṭabarṣī, op. cit., X, 10: wa-man kāna lahu muddatun fa-huwa ilā muddatihi, wa-man lam yakun lahu muddatun fa-muddatuhu arba‘atu ashhurin. In a similar version, ‘Alī is said to have proclaimed that whosoever had a treaty with Muhammad, his treaty should be fulfilled to its period, and he who did not have a treaty, his respite was four months. See al-Tirmidhī, op. cit., XI, 233-234; al-Ṭabarṣī, op. cit., X, 10; al-Khāzin, op. cit., II, 240; Ibn Hajar, Fath al-bārī, VII, 239; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, III, 210. The last clause in this version is somewhat awkward, as it suggests that the four months were allotted to those who did not have any treaty at all, which does not tally with the wording of verse 1.
104 al-Ṭabarî, Tafsīr, X, 45, 46, 47, 53; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, II, 331 said of this version: wa-hādhā aḥsanu t-aqwālī wa-aqwāhā.
completely missing. This version is traced back to the sahâbi Sa‘d b. Abî Waqqâs. According to this version, ‘Alî declared: “whoever made a treaty with Muḥammad, will continue to have his treaty” (“fa-huwa ilā ‘ahdîhi”). The following version is the most straightforward. ‘Alî was reportedly ordered to fulfill the treaties of all allies (“wa-an yutimma ilā kulli dhī ‘ahdîn ‘ahdahu”). This tradition is the one that was preferred by later exegetes, and in some commentaries this is the only tradition cited.

By thus re-interpreting the barâ’a and reshaping the proclamation of ‘Alî, Muslim tafsîr completed its task. Sûra IX was finally presented as prescribing the declaration of war against allied mushrikûn on two conditions only: a. when the allies violate their treaties, these treaties should be abrogated after a respite of four months; b. when the allies remain loyal to their treaties, war may be waged on them only when the original term of their treaty is over.

105 al-Suyûṭî, Durr, III, 209. The same version is traced back to Abû Hurayra as well (ibid., 209).

106 al-Ṭabarî, Tafsîr, X, 47.


108 Sometimes a third condition is added: declaration of war may abrogate treaties with mushrikûn, if it had been previously agreed that the treaty may be brought to an end through a special divine revelation. For the three conditions see e.g., at-Ṭabarî, op. cit., X, 8; al-Râzî, op. cit., XV, 218.