

BARAKA AS BASIC CONCEPT OF MUSLIM POPULAR BELIEF

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In the following article we shall explain the concept of *baraka*, (which is usually employed indiscriminately or even explained away) as a wide ranging category covering Muslim popular belief, with evidence from the traditional Muslim dogmatics based on the Qur'ān. Thus we shall explain the unity of Islam as a system embracing both theory (in its ideal-type) and practice of belief marking a special position for any single element within the full context of this system. The material comes mainly from North Africa, where the phenomenon of *baraka* has been studied since French colonialism had established itself there. Many of the researches have included *baraka* among the conceptions of the "primitive people", believing strongly in evolutionist theories and thus also providing good reasons for colonialism to exploit the native people.

We know of the limitations due to our sources and we certainly do not claim that *baraka*, as conceived by the authors involved in colonial affairs (more or less) in North Africa, could pass as a universalism, at least universal for the Muslim world. We suggest further research elsewhere and confine ourselves here at indicating at least the weak points in what has been written on the subject so far. We are of the opinion that the concept of *baraka* is not just limited to popular belief but has its place in Islam proper. A wrong conception of *baraka* therefore means a wrong and distorted conception of Islam itself.

We shall refer to the "sphere of magic" later on and to "magical thinking", by which we simply wish to indicate that certain means are employed to achieve certain effects, directed to definite goals, which in general are to serve the common well-being. The stress is on the effects and little thought is given to causal link. This does not mean that the cause is not known, but it gains relevance through its effects, without that the full mechanism needs to be made aware. Thus we believe that magical thinking is not linked with certain evolution-conditioned stages of development but might appear and in fact does appear in highly developed societies.

We shall then first give a survey of the literature, from which we draw our material. In addition we shall criticize the only substantial etymological approach. We shall illustrate the position of *baraka* in popular religion and then discuss its place in the Qur'ān. Before analyzing *baraka* as a religious concept, we shall indicate its ambivalence in social context. We conclude by demonstrating the link that exists between popular belief and Islam proper, using the example of *Ḥajj*. The conception of *baraka* which we shall develop is based on the assumption that, being employed in the magical sense described above, *baraka* is important in its effects. Our conception therefore, explaining *baraka* as "nearness that allows prosperity", stresses the actual state or cause (i.e. nearness) together with its effects (i.e. allowing prosperity, not determining it though in any case!). Our etymology presented here would fit perfectly, but it is not meant as proof. We believe that things might change without their names changing respectively.¹

Sources

Wellhausen gives a hint on the existence of the phenomenon of *baraka* during Jāhiliya, i.e. in pre-Islamic Arabia. He says: "The power of holy men is transferred by contagium, usually as salutary effect. One touches them with a hand (*tamassuh*) or one infects oneself by still more direct and ardent means to obtain their blessings"². Furthermore, Wellhausen dedicated several pages to the subject of 'Holy persons' and mentions in connection with the above quotation *tabarrakān* and *taqarrabū* in a foot-note. Still the future relevance of *baraka* for Islam cannot be deduced from him. His examples to explain how *baraka* was transferred from one person to another (mainly by touching the person concerned) do not seem to be much older than Islam. Finally, the person of Muḥammad is described in a rather misrepresenting way. It would be difficult to press Muḥammad into one of those categories used by Wellhausen, namely, priest, *kāhin* and sorcerer.

Thus the value of Wellhausen's contribution towards the phenomenon of *baraka* in Islam is limited to the plain statement that the term *baraka* has existed already during the formative period of Islam. The translation of *baraka* as "blessing" is another problem to be dwelt upon later. Wellhausen explains that often the hope of recovering from disease and ill-health is lined up with this "blessing" and that the force of *baraka* may result without its bearer's intention, but both ideas are not attributed

to any particular historical period. We may therefore conclude that probably Wellhausen here inferred from a phenomenon still available a phenomenon buried in the past. This is what often happens and though the results might be convincing, the deductions have to be based on a sound methodological procedure which is lacking here, since none of the aspects of *bāraka* mentioned by Wellhausen is proved to have existed before Islam.³

Another author of Islamic times who mentions *baraka* as having existed during Jāhiliya, is Ibn Ishāq, biographer of the Prophet. Here another important aspect of *baraka* is introduced to us. According to the *Sīrah Rasūl Allah* some of the pre-Islamic nomads "had an image called Sa'd, a lofty rock in a desert plane in their country. They had a story that one of their tribesmen took some of his stock camels to the rock to stand by it so as to acquire its virtue⁴. By "virtue" the translator infact means *baraka*, as he indicates in his foot-note: "Literally it is 'blessng', *baraka*"⁵. Thus further light is shed on our field of inquiry. Not only persons but objects too could hold *baraka*. Furthermore, since the rock, being an image, stood for an idol, probably not only the rock but in the first place the symbolized idol has to be considered the origin of *baraka*.

More material on the transfer of *baraka* by means of objects can be found in Doutté. He describes *baraka* as "a holy and beneficial force impregnating, radiating, which transmits itself to anything that it touches and to anything that it surrounds"⁶. Doutté holds the view that *baraka* could be interpreted as the opposite of the 'evil eye', a suggestion which needs to be surveyed in detail. He also states that the transfer of *baraka* by touching the object or person concerned is the general rule. Thus even by covering one's head with a holy person's turban or hat one may acquire the person's *baraka*. This idea is naturally very popular among members of *Šūfī*-congregations, where often a well-accepted "*selselat el baraka*"⁷ can be traced.

Westermarck introduces his material on *baraka* by the following definition: "The Arabic word *baraka* means 'blessing'. In Morocco it is used to denote a mysterious wonder-working force which is looked upon as a blessing from God, a 'blessed virtue'. It may be conveniently translated into English by the word 'holiness'."⁸ Westermarck explains that a person holding an unusual measure of *baraka*, is considered to be a holy man. Muḥammad was the person that once held the highest measure of

baraka, which is now transferred through Fāṭima to the “Sharifs”. Still not all of those in the line can be considered holy. In addition to this group there are the *marabat*⁹, who hold *baraka*, which they might have acquired while being the servant of one of Muḥammad’s descendants.

What they hold of *baraka* may be inherited by their offsprings. Other means of transferring *baraka* are e.g. spitting in another person’s mouth¹⁰ ;i.e. by saliva, or sharing a meal with someone who holds *baraka*. The safest means of transfer is physical contact between the holder and the receiver of *baraka*. Finally, all methods of obtaining *baraka* can be used without the holder’s intention to share, i.e. *baraka* can be inherited, transferred and stolen. Westermarck’s materials may be summarized as follows:¹¹

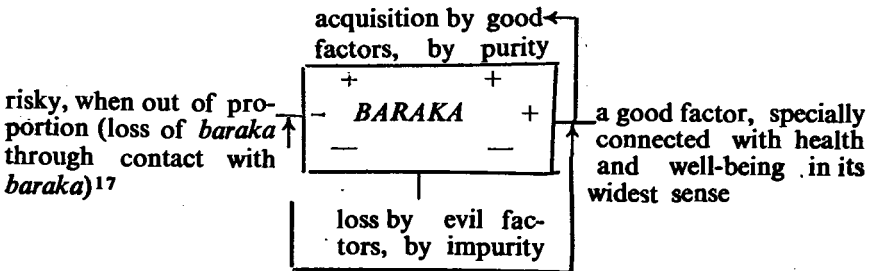
Holders of *baraka* are: } Muḥammad → the *sharif* → the *marabut*, the *mujāhidūn*; the *ascetics* and *pious* (men and women alike); their *relations* and their *graves*; the graves of fictive holy men, even little *children*, being sinless; older children, having read the Qur’ān; *mothers* of twin *boys*, going to be circumcised; *mentally* disordered (who may hold *baraka* though they disregard religious obligations); *places*, where holders of *baraka* rested;¹² *spirits* that reside at those places; *weapons*, specially cannons; *animals*, by contact with holders of *baraka*; animals, holding *baraka* as such (horse, sheep, dove, bee etc.); *animal products* (milk, honey); *plants* and *vegetable products* (cereals/bread, olives/oil, herbs/ cures etc.), the *soil*, on which plants and animals prosper; *rain* and *sunshine*, essential for prosperity; *periods* (feasts, Islamic calendar, Ramaḍān, lailatu’l-qadr etc., phases of vegetation); *actions*, considered basic or virtuous in Islam; *names* with special significance in Islamic history (Muḥammad, ‘Alī etc.); *numbers* mainly odd ones (one for Allāh’s *tauḥīd*, etc.) in addition all objects that may have acquired *baraka* from one of these sources.

Spheres of *baraka* : the *supernatural*, being the ultimate source the *natural*, being receiver and/or holder a) living beings
b) inanimate objects

- Acquisition of *baraka*: }
 a) *holding baraka per se*
 b) *descent*¹³
 c) *positive action* (piousness)
 d) *negative action* (theft)
- Loss of *baraka* }
 a) *contact* with ritually unclean (persons such as disbelievers, menstruating women etc., and objects)
 b) *unintentional transfer* (*baraka* being stolen)
 c) *contact* between *baraka* and *baraka* according to some opinions

Westermarck finally states that the boundaries between “the holy” and “the profane” often are not clear. We ought to discuss this statement and the use of these categories: “A beneficial power is *baraka* only if it is looked upon as more or less mysterious, wonder-working, ‘supernatural’, not if it appears as ordinary, common, ‘profane’.”¹⁴ Yet by explaining “the Moors even assert that every person is possessed of *baraka*, although it only in certain cases is sufficiently strong to be taken notice of”¹⁵, Westermarck corrects himself as well as Durkheim, who saw “sacred” and “profane” as absolutely heterogeneous¹⁶.

We may now propose the following diagram to illustrate the phenomenon of *baraka*:



relation possible through living beings, objects, periods, spheres, first and foremost through the supernatural, in Islam, Allah as the ultimate source

The phenomenological approach to *baraka* shall now be closed in order to investigate the roots, which Chelhod tried to describe in his article "La baraka chez les Arabes ou l'influence bienfaisante du sacré"¹⁸. He refers to Doutté and Westermarck as his main sources and adds another brief description: during the salutary ceremony in an Arab house in Syria, *baraka* is involved, expressed through the formular: "May *baraka* be on you" and the reply: "May *baraka* be on you as well"¹⁹. After that, coffee is served. "To refuse it, means to refuse the hospitality, to oppose the *baraka*, to behave as enemy"²⁰. Chelhod, agreeing with Westermarck, says that between the host and the guest there is a relation of *baraka*²¹. Thus by accepting an invitation, a partial transfer of *baraka* takes place. According to Chelhod, this transfer is a mutual one. Therefore the essential feature of *baraka*, as shown in this example, would be that *baraka* is connected with something which symbolizes surplus and prosperity (the coffee), which is a blessing from heaven. *Baraka* may increase or decrease. *Baraka* is without any effect if the house concerned suffers from bad luck (thus one does not offer coffee for forty days, when a member of the family has deceased). The source of *baraka* is that *force mystérieuse*, mysterious force, being the source of good and evil.²²

Thus Chelhod intends to firstly analyze this "force mystérieuse", and the sacred (*sacré*). As it presents itself to the *mentalite bedouine*, the beduin mentality, it may be measured by its effects, just as one measures electricity or the power of a stream of water. Sacred and profane according to Chelhod, are radically separated. Still the *pensée primitive*²³, as well as Arab nomads have a direct approach to the Sacred. "The Sacred presents itself socially under the form of the forbidden, the prohibited, *ḥarām*: wide field, where two forces of opposite sense meet, the origin and destination of which are just as mysterious: the pure, *fāhir*, and the impure, *najis*"²⁴. The Sacred operates through the nature of things. The *énergie mystérieuse* causes miracles, protection, and prosperity by means of living beings or inanimate objects. A being or an object that operates in such a way, is a holder of *baraka*. Provisionally Chelhod at this stage defines *baraka* as "benevolent influence of the Sacred by a medium of supernatural force"²⁵.

Now Chelhod wishes to grasp the etymological relations of *baraka*. In Arabic the root-word *baraka* has the meaning of "getting down on the knees", referring to camels, specially connected with Arab nomadism. In

other Semitic languages the meaning of *baraka* would be plainly "benediction". Chelhod intertwines the elements of prosperity and multiplicity of *baraka* with the Arabic word *bark*, standing for a herd of camels. Furthermore, the kneeling position of a camel could be observed, when it is mounted by a rider.

"An insensitive glide has been effected from one action to another as one may witness from the evidence of the metathesis *baraka-rakiba*. A second glide not less shaded and just as evident as the first has taken place in the language in consequence of the use of the verb *rakiba* in its strong sense. Indeed, this also means to cover, to mate....finally the kneeling position beocmes the position of mating, of the sexual etc."²⁶. Referring to Cohen, Chelhod seeks support in his opinion that in the Semitic sphere, "the knee, often taken in the sense of the male organ, is in connection with the idea of begetting and force²⁷".

Now *baraka* means, as a "benediction of heaven", referred to a family, a high number of offsprings and an excelling virility of the father. And it is the father who puts his child on his knees to show his relation towards his offspring. Again "philology comes to aid ethnography"²⁸, for, if the area between abdomen and knees is "indeed sacred", the connection between *hijr*, lap and *juhr*, vulva, is evident: both are equally prohibited. Any intimate contact transfers a part of those "vital forces". However, as far as *baraka* is concerned, a change took place in contents (from virility to blessing of heaven) and related form: nowadays one shakes hand and does not touch each othe'rs lap, but, Chelhod insists: "Still, the hand, is it not a phallic symbol and the index-finger, *as-sabbāba* (that which invectives), does it not symbolize the male organ?"²⁹. Finally, the force behind the blessing or cursing hand is the very force which, according to "primitive beliefs", acts behind the "sexual world". Chelhod closes this paragraph with the following sentence: "Let us quickly assure that the introduction of a sexual element into *baraka* does not at all signify its belonging to the negative and impure pole of the Sacred. We ought to remember that holy prostitution was a means of communication, of communication with the deity and we ought to take guard against reasoning from our Judaeo-Christian conceptions of purity".

Just as Westermarck, Chelhod mentions that *baraka* may increase or decrease and that decrease is caused by "everything that results in malediction"³⁰. The respective Arabic term *la'na* means "the exclusion of

any good, the noun *mal'ana*. latrine, permits already to know one of the essential causes of malediction: impurity.³¹ Surprisingly here Chelhod now includes the "state of sexual impurity"³²! Last not least, Chelhod mentions the relevance of *baraka* in Islam. He quotes Gibb, who made out Allāh as the source of *baraka* in the Qur'ān. The *baraka*-opposing principle would be Iblīs, who distracts man from the *baraka* of Allāh.

Chelhod's effort to inquire into the etymology of *baraka* is noteworthy, though his presentation does not include other new aspects, but his theory cannot be accepted as such. Furthermore the point of Chelhod and Westermarck, both certainly drawing mainly from Durkheim, separating the "Sacred" and the "Profane", would need a correction.³³ Since Westermarck has already restricted his view, this correction would only have consequences for Chelhod's presentation. If Chelhod's view of the "Sacred" cannot be maintained, his explanations of *baraka* would be misleading. Moreover, his etymological approach is based on his apprehension of *baraka*. Thus his approach would be meaningless, once his apprehension of *baraka* is proved wrong. Again, it is a rather dubious method to back an etymological theory by a personal association, which operated in Chelhod's mind, when he observed or imagined to observe a rider mounting his camel! What are Chelhod's reasons to link *baraka* with *rakiba* solely, without considering the other possibility resulting from exchange of radicals, i.e. *karaba*?

Probably Chelhod could not see much sense in that, since the radicals *karaba* do in fact describe something that is essential for *baraka* out of its assumed sexual context, namely "being near, nearness" and thus the possibility for contact, or more restricted, for touching something³⁴. If one would wish to reply to Chelhod's etymological approach, one ought to ask why nearness or being near, of natural and supernatural, a relation definitely included in the phenomenon of *baraka*, should not be at the base of *baraka*. It is just being near that allows acquisition. Chelhod's theory and association can be true no doubt, but they are incomplete at least if not unsound because of methodological reasons. Seeking a causal relation between the possible combinations of the three radicals *bā*, *rā*, and *kāf* one has to take *all* possible combinations in account and one should clarify, why one of them is to be considered the base of the others. We agree that the combination of *bā*, *rā*, and *kāf* indicates a relation between things or

persons, but declaring this relation to be the sexual one, we leave to Chelhod³⁵.

Baraka and Popular Religion

Our intention is to give few examples in order to illustrate the close connection between *baraka* and other elements of popular religion. First and foremost the relation between *baraka* and the system of holy persons needs to be stressed. Holy men, mystics or members of *ṭurūq*, brotherhoods hold *baraka*, which e.g. is especially available on the birthday of the person concerned:

“The visiting of his tomb, *ziyāra*, is an essential element for virtually all who attend. People crowd into a tiny room to circumambulate the shrine, pressing themselves against the outer brass railings, kissing it and rubbing their clothes and hands over it and then making a washing motion of the hands over their bodies to transfer the *baraka*. This is, par excellence, the propitious time at which to do so; in the popular phrase ‘*khudh al-baraka min al mūlid*’ (‘take the *baraka* from the *Moulid*)’³⁶.

Already Hujwīrī, author of one of the oldest complete texts on *Ṣūfism* in Persian language, attributes the power of performing miracles, *karāmāt*, to holy people³⁷. For our grasp of *baraka* it is rather noteworthy that the term *wali*, saint, “derived from its root-meaning of ‘nearness’, e.g. next of kin, patron, protector, friend”³⁸ reveals itself almost as the complementary of *baraka*, as we coined it: nearness that allows prosperity. Hence the *wali* is one of the possible holders of *baraka*, which itself stands for the effective process between holder and receiver. It is this relation between a saint, be he in the context of *Ṣūfism*, of a *ṭariqa* or of popular religion, and the phenomenon of *baraka* that Chelhod’s conception would not grasp either.

Baraka is also a leading element of charms and amulets of popular religion. The effectiveness of a charm or amulet increases by the amount of *baraka* put into it by its producer. In general, the well-known amulets derive their *baraka* from the Qur’ānic words inscribed on them. Yet the mentioning of the trem *baraka* itself on an amulet is not uncommon³⁹.

Finally, various methods and means of curative nature, embedded in popular religion provide numerous examples for the transfer and effect of *baraka*, out of which we shall quote few only.

It can be seen from the collections of *ḥadīth* already that *baraka* was attributed to Muḥammad's mantle and that water, used to wash the mantle, was given to the sick as a cure⁴⁰. Still today it is not unusual to write Qur'ānic words on a glass, fill it with water in order that the written word of God may dissolve and then drink the water as a treatment for various diseases.⁴¹ To pronounce certain verses on oil or ointments before applying it, seems to be another variant of this procedure to assure the *baraka* of the word of Allāh. Not only Qur'ānic words but also other letters and combinations of letters are used for that purpose⁴².

It is also possible to inhale smoke from paper or other material, on which such verses or letters have been written⁴³. The *baraka* of a Qur'ānic verse is "tied up" so to speak, in the following incident described by Robson: "For scurf of long standing take a thread and tie three knots in it, reciting each time you tie a knot, 'And the likeness of a bad word is as a bad tree, which is felled from above the earth and has no staying place' (Qur'ān 14:31). The thread should then be placed on the sufferer..."⁴⁴ and thus recovery is effected from the contact between patient and thread. It should be clear meanwhile that the 'evil eye' cannot be considered the plain opposite of *baraka*, as Douffé suggested⁴⁵. However this does not exclude *baraka* from being a phenomenon that opposes the effect of the evil eye: for example one may neutralize the envy or "evil eye" contained in one's inquiry after a person's health by opening the conversation with the formula: "Allāh ye zeed wa ye barik"⁴⁶. Finally the collections of *ḥadīth* mention another remedy against the 'evil eye' that involves *baraka*: water that has been brought in contact with a hair of Muḥammad, kept for that purpose"⁴⁷.

Baraka in the Qur'ān:

The root *baraka* and its derivations appear at 31 different places in the text of the Holy Qur'ān⁴⁸. These passages are usually translated "blessing, to bless"⁽⁴⁹⁾. They may be arranged in the following way:

1. Allāh is blessed, i.e. He is the source of *baraka* [7:54] "Blessed be God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!" (cf. 25:1; 10:61; 55:78; 67:1; 23:14; 40, 64; 43:85).
2. Earth (soil, country) is blessed or a source of blessing, 21:71. "We delivered him and Lūṭ to the land which we have blessed for the nations" (cf. 21:81; 34:17; 41:10; 7:137; 28:30).

3. People (prophets) are blessed, 11:48; "O Noah! Come down with peace from us and blessings on thee and on some of the peoples from those with thee" (cf. 37:113; 7:96; 11:73; 19:3; 23:29).
4. The book (of revelation) is blessed and a source of blessing, 6:92. "This is a book which we have sent down bringing blessings ..." (cf. 6:155; 21:50; 28:29; 44:2).
5. Rain is a source of blessing, 50:9. "And we send down rain from the sky charged with blessing..."
6. The fire (seen by Moses) is a source of blessing, 27:8. "Blessed are those in the fire and those around..."
7. The tree (in *Āyatu' l-nūr*) is blessed: 24:35. "Lit from a blessed tree..."
8. Salutation is a source of blessing, 24:61. "Salute each other - a greeting of blessing and purity as from God"
9. The Baitu'llāh is blessed, 3:96. "The first house appointed for men was that at Bakka, full of blessing..." (Similarly, 17:1 for the *ḥaram* of al-Quds').

It can be easily seen from this arrangement that all those categories for transfer and effect of *baraka*, which we had derived mainly from Westermarck's materials, are already established in the Qur'an: Allāh being the ultimate source, thereafter living beings and inanimate objects, phenomenon in nature, periods of time and spaces. The question, how *baraka* is transferred, is not discussed directly in the Qur'an. However we may conclude from the *Sunna* that transfer of *baraka* in the early times of Qur'anic revelation still in operation was considered to work through contact and touching: "Abū-al-Ṭufail said, he observed the messenger of Allāh circumambulating the House and then touching the corner with a bent stick which he had and which he then kissed"⁵⁰.

Baraka and Integration of Society:

E.C. Hagopian in his "The status and role of the Marabout in Pre-Protectorate Morocco"⁵¹ states that Islam, though brought to Morocco in the eighth century, remained largely peripheral among Berbers apart from two main Islamic concepts: Jihād, on the base of the successful expansion of the great Berber empires in the eleventh and twelfth century and *baraka*, rendered by him as "a supernatural power facilitating bene-

ficient and miraculous acts".⁵² According to Hagopian, the concept of *baraka* was already familiar to the Berbers and, since it was a basic element of mysticism, the latter was readily accepted in Moroccan society. Mysticism itself was directed towards purifying the Muslim society⁵³, and, since in Morocco at least, the essence of mysticism was to be seen in the concept of *baraka*⁵⁴, a transformation took place that made maraboutism together with its mystical elements and *baraka* strengthen the traditional Berber institutions.

After our efforts presented here, this appears to be an oversimplified view. First and foremost we hold that Hagopian has neither defined *jihād* nor *baraka*. He just names them "basic Islamic concepts", but continues his arguments with the premises that Berber society was highly disintegrated anyway and that *baraka* was already familiar to them to such an extent that mysticism, linked with *baraka*, was readily accepted. It is hard to see how a study of acculturation could achieve useful results, unless it supplies proper tools. We therefore cannot just accept the obvious conclusion from Hagopian's views, namely that *baraka* is an integrating factor for a society disrupted by constant threat and anxiety, mainly caused by evil spirits⁵⁵. Nevertheless we do not deny that *baraka* may be a factor of integration in a certain social context. Van der Leeuw, in his "Phenomenology of Religion", introduces the Melanesian concept of mana, after explaining the relation between mana and God as a relation between man and "something entirely different", effective through its power that it develops. This power is empirically open to man.⁵⁶ Van der Leeuw does in fact hold a limited view of *baraka*, which, according to him, is a power linked with a special holder. The holder of *baraka* is said to be the graves of the saints, from where it may be acquired.

It is the notion of power that made us introduce this passage. As far as mana is concerned, Firth has given a summary of all sorts of approaches towards the problem of investigating this concept⁵⁷. He furthermore suggested to analyze mana in its social context and comes to the conclusion that to the Tikopia, where he undertook his field-studies, mana "has not the connotation of an isolatable principle, a force, a power or any other metaphysical abstraction—though it may be conceived of as a specific quality. The interpretation in terms of such abstraction can only be in the work of the anthropologist. The Tikopia is content with concrete description of the results of activity and does not pursue the intellectual problem as to the nature of that activity".⁵⁸

We do not intend to equate *mana* and *baraka*. Still we believe that *baraka* just as much should not be grasped as an intellectual category but rather in its context and through its effects. This is why we made a systematic summary of Westermarck's article and dwelt rather lengthily on the material. *Baraka*, we would propose rather abstractly now, is ambivalent in its social consequences. It may thus be an integrating or disintegrating factor and it derives either quality from the social context in which it operates. *Baraka*; e.g. in the oasis-setting, which results in an unusual high crop of dates may be integrating in as much as it enables to raise the population above subsistence-level, which again may result in disintegrating consequences, such as the appropriation of the valuable palm-trees by the more powerful members of the community.

Baraka as a Religious Phenomenon:

Religion in the sense of "re-binding", is the religious phenomenon *par excellence*. It reveals itself though merely as a thesis, confronted by a just as effective sphere of "anti-*baraka*". Both these phenomena are considered to be part of "extra-natural" efficacy: *baraka* may only be analyzed in this way, being part of a whole and being anti-thesis to another part of it. This has certainly been realized by Doutté and Westermarck, though their statements are mainly descriptive⁵⁹.

Baraka, as far as its origins and its employment are concerned, i.e. *baraka* as an institution and conception in society may be classified as originating from the sphere of magic. Some similar concepts have been included into the "Sacred" by Wach⁶⁰, whereas Hempel⁶¹ gives special testimony for the Semitic sphere. Hempel furthermore says that in connection with blessing and curse a number of practices are known, "all of them actions aimed at establishing a contact between subject and object"⁶². We have already explained these practices, so that we shall now concentrate on the investigation of the relation between subject and object within the sphere of magic. The effect of *baraka* supplies answers to the problem of human well-being in its widest sense. We know of surprising effects of magic cures on people who believe in it⁶³. This would mean for *baraka* that it gains existence through belief in it. *Baraka* is therefore, once it exists, just as much as similar phenomena, to be experienced rather than explained. Furthermore we need to have some knowledge of the world-view, connected with magic, expressed in certain

structures of thought and perception. No doubt that the magic sphere is the domain of the symbol. "The word symbol, from Greek *symballein*, means the spontaneous and lasting combination or unification of two parts, one concrete, physical part and the other reality of spiritual order. The latter is the "meaning-contents" of symbolical expression"⁶⁴. *Baraka* is such a symbol, and the relation between symbol and symbolized object was a living and dynamic relation⁶⁵. The idea of perception within the magical world-view is based on the system of relationships between things: "the subject intrudes into the object to be familiar with it"⁶⁶.

Since it is of the nature of the phenomenon of *baraka* to establish a relationship between subject and object, there is no doubt about the effort to cause an influence in terms of magic. This relation between holder and receiver of *baraka* comes to exist through being near, through contact. It means a mutual influence in as much as the *baraka*-potential of the receiver is increased by the holder and the potential of the holder is decreased by the transfer towards the receiver of *baraka*. The phenomenon of *baraka* thus came to exist through the experience of what *baraka* means as a symbol: nearness, that allows prosperity.

In other words, man's freedom from anxiety relates to his existence and well-being, the possibility to satisfy his instinct of self-preservation, depending on conditions that are out of man's immediate control, is behind the symbol of *baraka*; just what Muslim exegetes understand to form the root of the term Islam. Hempel in his above-quoted essay has indicated that curse results in sorrow, grief and fear, whereas blessing causes the opposite, namely, rest and peace. Thus the phenomenon of *baraka* is the basis of Muslim popular belief. At last the word *baraka* means the kneeling position of a camel, i.e. the position of resting and *bark* means the resting herd of camels, not of a herd of camel-riders or even mating camels.

Conclusion: Illustration of Findings

Let us indicate finally in which way *baraka* establishes a link between the Muslim popular belief and Islam as an ideal-type-system. From our quotation of the *Sunna* we may conclude already, that "the corner of the House" holds *baraka*. In this respect, the Qur'an says:"

"The first house of worship appointed for men was that at Bakka: full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings: in it are

signs manifest; the station of Abraham. Whoever enters it attains security': Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe God - those who can afford the journey...."(3:96-97).

This is one of the passages, where we find *baraka* mentioned in the Qur'an as *mubārakan*. Furthermore it is that *āya* that establishes the rites of Ḥajj for Islam, though they originate from pre-Islamic times, since the House of Allāh is connected with Abraham, a true believer. Thereby is the station of Abraham, *maqām Ibrāhīm*. Furthermore, and it does not need to be stressed any more, here to be near (to the House of Allāh, i.e. to be within the *ḥaram*-district) means safety, *āminan*, security. We know from other *āyāt* that in fact the *ḥaram*-area is an area of security and just as much the months of pilgrimage are sacred months.

Popular belief also links *baraka* with the House of Allāh. Touching the Black Stone results in the pilgrim's safety. It is said that the Black Stone shall give testimony on the Day of Judgement and shall name whosoever had touched it. Between the Black Stone and the door of the Ka'ba is the area called *multazam*. Whoever prays there obtains *baraka*. Even the traditional prayer of pilgrims during *ṭawāf* indicates this relation: "...*Allahumma qanni'bi bimā razaqtant wa bārik li fihi...*"

To pray under the *mizābul-raḥma* in the area of *hijr*, where the graves of Ismail and Hagar are situated, means to obtain *baraka*. *Maqām Ibrāhīm* is the place where Abraham prayed. Praying at that very spot means to gain *baraka* from it. The *baraka* of Zam-Zam-water is well-known. Water used to wash the Ka'ba contains *baraka* and amulets are made from the *kiswā*.

Whoever has seen the interior of the Ka'ba should keep silent on it. It is dangerous as well to look up in the sky right above the Ka'ba where one might have a glance into paradise and suffer from mental confusion thereafter. Here the danger imminent in too much of *baraka* is indicated. It is said of the doves that they never fly across the roof of the Ka'ba. Here we find all categories which we developed out of the materials collected and probably a good portion of them has been carried from here to the Islamic lands, while others might have travelled with pilgrims the other way round. According to the Qur'an quoted above, the House of Allāh and all that is connected with it, holds and transfers *baraka*. The

House of Allāh is the very place where all prophets and saints have rested, the place where at any time numerous pious men and women perform Ḥajj and 'Umra, and pioussness prepares the way for *baraka*. Never is the Ka'ba without pilgrims circumambulating. At times where no human beings are around, angels worship there, beings from the nearness of Allāh. Moreover the gate to heaven is above the Ka'ba. Never is a Muslim nearer to Allāh. In Mekka *baraka* intertwines popular belief and Islam in such a way that it can hardly be separated. *Baraka* is obtained by visiting the Ka'ba. This holds valid for popular belief and Islam alike. Thus *baraka* is the basis of Muslim popular belief.

NOTES

1. The author's aim, to use some of the methods and tools of anthropology and other social sciences in Islamic science, does not mean that he objects to etymology *per se*. Etymology is a good approach in some cases, but it is not the only possible approach, though it is of rather incredible importance for some of the more traditionally orientated orientalists, concentrating on the sector of language and (pre-) linguistics. In our case we need not refer to dubious etymologies, since we intend to explain the phenomenon under consideration through its social context.
2. Wellhausen: *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin 1927, p. 139.
3. Probably Wellhausen aimed at giving a survey on the remains of Arab religion from the period of Jāhiliya and therefore did not bother too much about exact documentation in this case, though he usually did. Regrettably here his fame is not of much use for us.
4. Guillaume, *The life of Muhammad*, Oxford 1955, p. 37.
5. *Ibid.*, n. 3.
6. Doutté: *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, Alger 1909, p. 439.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Westermarck, The Moorish Conception of Holiness (*baraka*), in: *Öfversigt af Finska Vetenskaps-Societens Förhandlingar*, Vol. LVIII, Helsingfors 1916, p. 6.
9. This is Westermarck's transliteration; I shall use marabūṭ.
10. Cf. the Shi'a-tale of Ḥusain, sucking Muḥammad's tongue.
11. Other writings by Westermarck such as—*Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (1926) and *Survivances paiennes dans la religion mahomé taine* (1935) do not include new materials.

