

Interpreting Friendship and Betrayal in QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis of *Bitānah* and *Min Dūnikum*

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Abstract

The diversity of interpretations surrounding the prohibitive figure in QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, reflected in the terms *bitānah* and *min dūnikum* as presented by various interpreters, carries the potential to foster exclusive behaviors within Muslim communities, especially in multi-religious regions. This study seeks to uncover the historical meaning intended in the verse to clarify the nature of this figure. Utilizing a qualitative approach, with the *ma'nā-cum-maghzā* method as an analytical tool, the research reveals that *bitānah* refers to a close confidant who is granted access to personal information. Interpretations commonly align on this understanding, which contrasts with the term *min dūnikum*. The latter term is deeply embedded in its immediate context, pointing to a figure who lacks the same level of discretion or shared vision within a friendship. The divergence in vision leads to a potential for betrayal, prompting the verse to issue a caution regarding relationships with such individuals. This caution stems from the character of those who, not sharing the same vision, may harbor ill intentions, both physically and spiritually. The study concludes that the significance of *min dūnikum* lies not in religious identity but in the nature of the friendship, where differing visions can lead to a propensity for betrayal, even among members of the same community.

Keyword: *Friendship, non-Muslim, Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā*

Abstrak

Keragaman bentuk pemaknaan terhadap sosok yang dilarang dalam QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 yang hadir melalui diksi *bitānah* dan *min dūnikum* yang berikan oleh para penafsir berpotensi untuk membentuk tindakan eksklusif pada komunitas muslim di wilayah yang multi-agama. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan makna historis yang dikehendaki terhadap ayat untuk menjelaskan detail tentang sosok tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan *ma'nā-cum-maghzā* sebagai perangkat analisisnya. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa diksi *bitānah* merujuk pada teman dekat yang diberikan akses terhadap informasi-informasi pribadi. Beragam tafsir cenderung memahami dengan intonasi yang sama yang berbeda dengan *min dūnikum*. Diksi ini terikat erat dengan konteks langsungnya yang mengarah pada sosok yang tidak memiliki kualitas yang sama dalam menjaga rahasia atau visi dalam hubungan pertemanan. Perbedaan visi memunculkan kecenderungan untuk berkhianat yang berdampak pada keburukan, sehingga



diperingatkan oleh ayat ini agar menjaga hubungan dengan sosok tersebut. Peringatan agar menjaga hubungan disebabkan karakter yang dimiliki oleh teman yang tidak memiliki visi yang sama cenderung memiliki niat buruk, baik dalam aspek fisik maupun spiritual. Hal demikian menunjukkan pemahaman terhadap *min dūnikum*, signifikansi historisnya bukan pada identitas keagamaan, tetapi pada visi persahabatan yang memungkinkan teman dalam satu komunitas yang sama memiliki kecenderungan untuk berkhianat dikarenakan tidak memiliki visi persahabatan yang sama.

Kata kunci: *Pertemanan, Non-Muslim, Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā*

Pendahuluan

The debate over the interpretation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, which advises Muslims against forming social ties with groups outside their own, highlights significant differences among interpreter. At-Ṭabarī interprets this verse as a prohibition against befriending Jews and non-Muslims,¹ while Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī extends this interpretation, attributing the prohibition to the perceived treacherous nature of these groups.² Socially, the classical interpretation of this verse, advocating the avoidance of interactions or friendships with non-Muslims, has shaped a tendency toward exclusivity within Muslim communities, particularly in multicultural and multireligious societies like Indonesia. Indonesia's core values emphasize equal rights for all religions, with interfaith harmony serving as a crucial principle of national life. In this context, engaging with non-Muslims is seen as vital for fostering peace, mutual respect, and conflict avoidance. Therefore, a historical examination of the verse's significance is necessary to guide its application in the context of a multicultural nation.

Previous research on this topic has predominantly focused on the meanings derived from existing interpretations, often analyzing tafsir products without exploring the historical significance of these interpretations. There are three main tendencies in prior studies regarding the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as addressed in QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118. First is the ethics of interaction. Fina Nuriah's research, for instance, emphasizes the ethics of interaction drawn from the interpretation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118.³ Other studies also concentrate on identifying the ideal relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims by referencing ethical principles found in various Quranic verses.⁴ Second is the urgency of Muslim

¹ Muḥammad bin Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' Al-Bayān Fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'an*, vol. 3 (Bayrūt: Muassasah al-Risālah, 2000), 115.

² Fakr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ Al-Ghayb*, vol. 2 (Bairut: Dār Ihyā' at-Turās al-'Arābī, 1420), 215.

³ Fina Nuriah Rohimatil Umah, "Reinterpretasi Ayat Al-Qur'an Tentang Hubungan Muslim-Non Muslim (Aplikasi Pendekatan Ma'nā-Cum-Maghza Terhadap QS. Ali Imran [3]: 118-120)," *Mashahif: Journal of Qur'an and Hadits Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021).

⁴ Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, "Perbezaan Ahli Kitab Dengan Muslim: Surah Ali 'Imran (3: 113-120)," in *Program Budaya Al-Quran Mingguan* (Malaka: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 2021); Wildan Hidayat, "Kritik Nalar Islam Indonesia: Tinjauan Problematis Relevansi Teks Dan Konteks (Diskursus Kritisisme Penafsiran Ayat Non-Muslim Dalam Al-Qur'an)," *Al-Fath* 12, no. 2 (November 5, 2018): 125, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alfath.v12i2.3178>.

and non-Muslim relations in the context of nationality. This line of research highlights the importance of inclusiveness in Quranic interpretation,⁵ advocating for its application to foster tolerance between religious communities.⁶ However, these studies often overlook the critical examination of the terms *bitānah* and *min dūnikum*, which have the potential to contribute to the development of an exclusive Muslim society.

This research aims to address the gaps in previous studies by deepening the exploration of the historical meaning of the terms *bitānah* and *min dūnikum* within QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, incorporating other relevant diction in the verse. To achieve this, the research is structured into three key approaches. The first approach examines the tendencies in previous interpretations of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, analyzing various interpretative models to understand the dynamics of the debate over its meaning. The second approach focuses on uncovering the historical meaning by investigating the original meanings of the words and their customary usage at the time of revelation. The third approach seeks to determine the historical significance of the verse, with particular emphasis on the specific and general contexts surrounding the revelation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118.

This study is based on the argument that the diction used in various verses of the Qur'an is closely related to the understanding of its initial audience. The terms *bitānah* and *min dūnikum* are particularly linked to their usage within the Arab community and the historical context in which the verses were revealed. Sahiron suggests that tracing the original meaning and understanding its function involves analyzing how these words were understood by the Quran's first audience through a linguistic analysis.⁷ This analytical process requires considering the shifts in meaning from their original usage to their context in the Quran. It necessitates an emphasis on both synchronic and diachronic aspects of language development.⁸ Understanding these shifts in meaning serves as a gateway to grasping the verse's overall significance, ultimately aiding in determining the historical significance of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118.

⁵ Rabiah Muhammad Nasir and Danil Putra Arisandy, "Sikap Toleransi Beragama Perspektif Surah Al-Kafirun Mahasiswa Di Kota Langsa," *Al-Muhafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2022): 28-38, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v2i1.31>.

⁶ Rulyjanto Podungge, "Hubungan Muslim Dan Non-Muslim Dalam Kerangka Inklusivisme," *TEOSOFI: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2018): 509-33, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2018.8.2.479-503>; Setio Qadrian Perdana, "Interaksi Sosial Keagamaan Antara Siswa Muslim Dan Siswa Katolik (Studi Kasus SD Slamet Riyadi Kebon Kangkung, Kota Bandung)," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 2, no. 2 (August 30, 2018): 149-61, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v2i2.3104>; Moch Faizin Muflich and Binti Nurhayati, "Internalisasi Nilai Moderat Dalam Membangun Kerukunan Masyarakat Lamongan," *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 5, no. 3 (September 15, 2022): 427-39, <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v5i3.2698>.

⁷ Sahiron Samsudin, "Pendekatan Dan Analisis Dalam Penelitian Teks Tafsir: Sebuah Overview," *SUHUF* 12, no. 1 (June 28, 2019): 131-49, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i1.409>.

⁸ Sahiron Syamsuddin, "The Qur'an on The Exclusivist Religious Truth Claim: A Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Approach and Its Application to Q 2: 111-113," in *Transformative Readings of Sacred Scriptures: Christians and Muslims in Dialogue*, ed. Simone Sinn, Dina El Omari, and Anne H. Grung (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2017), 100.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing literature studies and a descriptive analysis model that avoids scoring patterns. This method facilitates the organization of data in a schematic form, allowing for the identification of usage patterns during the period of revelation.⁹ The data sources for this research are divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary data sources include Arabic dictionaries such as *Lisān al-'Arab*, *Maqāyis al-Lughāh*, *I'rāb al-Qur'an*, and *Mufradāt fī Ghārīb al-Qur'ān*, as well as hadith collections like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Sunan at-Tirmiẓī*. These sources support the linguistic analysis required to understand the terms' usage at the time of revelation. Secondary sources consist of previous interpretations from classical, medieval, and modern tafsir works. The main analytical framework employed in this research is the *ma'nā-cum-maghzā* approach.

Result and Discussion

The Dynamics of Interpreting QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 from a Tafsir Perspective

The interpretations of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 by Muqātil bin Sulaimān, at-Tabarī, al-Māturīdī, and al-Khāzin all stress the need for Muslims to exercise caution in forming relationships with non-Muslims, particularly Jews, Christians, and hypocrites. Muqātil and At-Tabarī emphasize the prohibition of such friendships due to the potential for hidden falsehood, corruption, and animosity,¹⁰ while Al-Māturīdī and Al-Khāzin extend this prohibition to include concerns about maintaining the purity of faith and preventing the leakage of secrets that could endanger Islamic beliefs.¹¹ Together, these interpretations caution that close associations with non-Muslims can weaken faith and pose risks to the Islamic community.

The interpretations of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 by Ibn Kaṣīr, asy-Syaukānī, and Al-Alūsī underscore the importance of Muslims exercising caution in their interactions with non-Muslims, particularly Jews, Christians, and hypocrites. Ibn Kaṣīr highlights that hypocrites may disclose secrets and seek to harm believers,¹² while asy-Syaukānī notes that their concealed animosity is more significant than their open hostility.¹³ Al-Alūsī adds that although believers maintain good relations with non-Muslims in daily life, this prohibition was revealed by Allah to prevent fitnah and protect the faith of Muslims.¹⁴ Despite its specific historical context, the prohibition is viewed as a general principle for all Muslims.

⁹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994).

¹⁰ Muqātil bin Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turās, 1423), 297; Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' Al-Bayān Fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, 707.

¹¹ Muhammad bin Muḥammad Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl Al-Sunnah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutb al-'Ilmiyah, 2005), 463–65; 'Ali bin Muḥammad Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb Al-Ta'wīl Fī Ma'ānī Al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutb al-'Ilmiyah, 1415), 288.

¹² Ismā'il bin 'Umar bin Kaṣīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutb al-'Ilmiyah, 1419), 436.

¹³ Muḥammad bin 'Ali Asy-Syaukānī, *Fatḥ Al-Qadīr*, vol. 1 (Bairūt: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1414), 506–7.

¹⁴ Maḥmud Al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Bayān Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Aẓīm Wa Sab'i Al-Maṣāni*, vol. 2 (Bairūt: Dār al-Kutb al-'Ilmiyah, 2009), 253–54.

The interpretation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 in the commentary by al-Marāghī and other scholars underscores the prohibition for believers to take disbelievers, particularly Jews and hypocrites, as close associates or advisors due to their detrimental characteristics. Ahmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, for instance, notes that these individuals are not only physically or religiously harmful but also harbor a greater level of animosity in their hearts than what is visible externally. However, al-Marāghī also recognizes historical exceptions, such as instances when certain Jewish and Christian groups allied with Muslims, like during the conquest of Spain. Wahbah az-Zuhailī further emphasizes the need for vigilance in dealing with non-Muslims who exhibit hostility, create obstacles for Muslims, and harbor deep-seated resentments that could jeopardize religious harmony.¹⁵ Ultimately, this interpretation highlights the necessity of maintaining balance and wisdom in relationships with non-Muslims, with a thorough understanding of the context and intentions behind such interactions.

Linguistic Analysis of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118

The statement of social exclusivity, reflected in the prohibition against befriending those outside the group, is articulated in QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118. This prohibition is elucidated through the use of the terms *bitānah* and *min dūnikum* as follows:

Ya ayyuhā al-lažīna amanū lā tattakhizū bi ṭānah min dūnikum lā ya'lūnakum khibālan waddū mā 'anittum qad badat al-baghidā' min afwāhihim wa mā tukhfī šudūruhum akbar, qad bayyannā lakum al-ayāti in kuntum ta'qilūn

O believers! Do not associate closely with others who would not miss a chance to harm you. Their only desire is to see you suffer. Their prejudice has become evident from what they say – and what their hearts hide is far worse. We have made Our revelations clear to you, if only you understood.

A range of specific diction serves as key terms to explore, examining the connection of their meanings through their syntactic aspects.

The prohibition against forming friendships with other groups in the verse begins with the vocative letter *nidā'* directed at the word *amanū*. This term signifies safety or peace. The root word *amana* has two noun forms: *al-amn*, which is the opposite of *al-khauf* (worry or fear), and *al-amānah*, which is the opposite of *al-khianah* (betrayal).¹⁶ In the Qur'an, this diction is used to convey peace of mind and the absence of fear.¹⁷ This usage aligns with its application during the Prophet's time, when the term *āmana* referred to the acceptance of Islam without fear.[3] As a vocative, *amanū* can be understood in conjunction with *tattakhidū* as an adverb.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ahmad bin Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr Al-Marāghī*, vol. 2 (Mesir: Muṣṭafā al-Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1946), 35–37.

¹⁶ Jamāl ad-Dīn Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1414), 140.

¹⁷ Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Qūṭ Al-Mughaṭī "alā Jāmi" Al-Tirmīzī*, vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: al-Maktabah at-Taghāwanī, 1424), 1032.

¹⁸ Muḥyī al-Dīn bin Ahmad Muṣṭafā Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1415), 36.

The word *tattakhidū* is derived from the root *akhaṣa-ya'kuṣu-akhaṣan*, which means to acquire or take possession, contrasting with giving.¹⁹ According to al-Asfahānī, this term denotes the acquisition and ownership of something.²⁰ The presence of *lā nāhī* at the beginning of *tattakhidū* indicates prohibition. Thus, the prohibition is highlighted through the term *biṭānah*, which functions as the object of *tattakhidū*.²¹

The word *biṭānatun* is a masdar form with a singular meaning but can also be used in a plural context.²² In Arabic, it refers to a close friend trusted with secrets and confidential matters.²³ Additionally, *biṭānatun* is used figuratively to describe the inner layer of clothing (*biṭānat al-ṣawb*) that protects the body.²⁴ This analogy is drawn because both the inner layer of clothing and a trusted friend share the property of safeguarding and concealing important matters.²⁵ The term *biṭānatun* is also translated as *al-rajul khalil*,²⁶ meaning a lover, close friend, or a very dependable companion. The Qur'an employs this word in various forms, with meanings closely tied to its syntactic context (see Table 2).

No.	Surah [T.M./T.N.]: Verse [Category]	Verse Fragment	Meaning
1.	QS. Al-A'rāf [7/39]: 33 [Makkiyah]	<i>Qul innamā ḥarram rabbi al-fawāhīsyā mā ẓahar minhā wa mā baṭan</i>	secret
2.	QS. Ar-Rahmān [55/97]: 54 [Madaniyah]	<i>Muttakīn 'alā furusyin batyinuhā min istabraq</i>	[inner] lined
3.	QS. An-Nūr [24/102]: 45 [Madaniyah]	<i>Faminhum man yamsyī 'alā baṭnih</i>	bellies

The term *biṭānah* experienced shifts in meaning based on the context of its use. During the Prophet's time, *biṭānah* referred to a close friend, regardless of their character. This is illustrated in a Hadith narrated by Abī Sa'īd al-Khudrī, where the Prophet describes two types of companions for leaders: *biṭānah ta'muruḥ bi al-ma'rūf* (companions who encourage good) and *biṭānah ta'muruḥ bi as-sirr* (companions who promote evil).²⁷ In another Hadith, the Prophet associated *bi'sat al-biṭānah* (bad companions) with the trait of betrayal (*al-khiyānah*).²⁸

¹⁹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 36.

²⁰ Al-İsfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'an*, 67.

²¹ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

²² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 305.

²³ Ibn Manzūr, 304.

²⁴ Ibn Manzūr, 305.

²⁵ Al-İsfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'an*, 131.

²⁶ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 304.

²⁷ Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, vol. 9 (Damaskus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993), 210.

²⁸ Muḥammad bin Abd al-Hādī As-Sandī, *Kifāyah Al-Hājah Fī Syarḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 1 (Bairut: Dār al-Jail, n.d.).

The word *dūni*, which follows *bitānatun*, is a noun that includes the preposition *min* and is related to the preceding phrase *la tattakhidū*; it functions as an attribute of *bitānatun*.²⁹ The pronoun *kum* attached to *dūni* denotes plurality and refers back to *amanū*. According to Ibn Manzūr, *dūna* derives from the root *dawānā*, which is the opposite of *fawqa* (above).³⁰ The primary meaning of *dūna* is "below," used to indicate something that is situated beneath.³¹ Ibn Sīdah defines *dūna* as a low degree,³² a notion consistent with Al-Asfahānī's description of *dūna* as something low or inadequate. In the context of the verse *lā tattakhidū min dūnikum*, the prohibition of forming close friendships specifically targets individuals who are considered inferior compared to those who have attained the status of *amanū*. Occasionally, *dūna* is interpreted as *at-tadawwun* (perfect sufficiency), *ṣawbun dūnun* (poor clothing), and *rajulun dūnun* (despicable man).³³ When transformed into *ad-dūnum*, the term can imply contemptible and vile, as illustrated in the phrase *wa yaqna' bi ad-dūni man kāna dūnan* (and be content with inferiority by someone inferior).

The word *ya'lū* following *min dūnikum* conveys meanings such as to limit, reduce, neglect, or make negligent.³⁴ Ibn Manzūr notes that the root word *alā* from which *ya'lū* is derived has three connotations: negligence, capability, and abandonment.³⁵ According to al-Muṣṭafā, *alā* implies slowing down or underestimating tasks, which leads to negligence and delays in work. The phrase *lā ya'lūnakum* therefore emphasizes vigilance and avoiding negligence. This is further elucidated by the term *khabāla*, which denotes damage.³⁶ Al-Muṣṭafā equates *khabāla* and *khabl* with madness, loss of reason, and physical or mental impairment.³⁷ In the Qur'an, the term appears in various forms related to its syntactic structure. The phrase *lā ya'lūnakum khabālan*, in its specific form, clarifies the prohibition against forming close friendships³⁸ with those who may consistently cause disruption, damage, or harm, or display weakness and indifference. This interpretation is supported by the phrase *waddū mā 'anittum*, which suggests that such individuals have a propensity to create trouble for you.³⁹

The word *waddū*, derived from the root *wadda*, signifies *al-maḥabbah* (love),⁴⁰ something liked or desired, and something hoped for.⁴¹ In the verse, *waddū* appears

²⁹ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

³⁰ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 1460.

³¹ Muḥammad Ḥasan Jabal, *Mu'jam Al-Isytiqāq* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Adāb, n.d.).

³² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 1460.

³³ Al-'Alamah Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ullūm Al-Qur'ān* (Irān: Markaz aṣar al-'Alamah al-Muṣṭafā, n.d.), 307.

³⁴ Al-Muṣṭafā, 133.

³⁵ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 117.

³⁶ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

³⁷ Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ullūm Al-Qur'ān*, 20.

³⁸ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

³⁹ Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ullūm Al-Qur'ān*, 21-22.

⁴⁰ Aḥmad bin Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs Al-Lughah* (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 75.

⁴¹ Al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharib Al-Qur'ān*, 860.

as a verb with *wau jama'*, referring to the pronoun *dāmīr hum*, which points to *min dūnikum*.⁴² The object of *waddū* is introduced by *mā* in its nominal form, following the verb.⁴³ Unlike *hubb*, which generally denotes emotional attachment or inclination of the heart, *wudd* refers more to the character of a person.⁴⁴ Thus, *waddū* encompasses not just feelings of love but also enthusiasm and deep desire. The term '*anittum*', from the root '*anita*', denotes guilt and suffering.⁴⁵ Al-Asfahānī interprets it as related to suffering and similar states. In this verse, the phrase *waddū mā 'anittum* forms a *musta'nifah* construction, representing the third aspect of *biṭānah*.⁴⁶ It can be interpreted as indicating individuals who are eager to inflict suffering.

The explanation of *biṭānah* is followed by the phrase *qad badat al-baghdā' min afwāhīhim*.⁴⁷ The term *badat*, preceded by *qad* for emphasis, is derived from the root *badā* which means to appear or to become clear.⁴⁸ When used with *hamzah*, it becomes transitive, meaning to make clear.⁴⁹ The difference between *zuhūr* (appearance) and *badwu* (emergence) lies in intentionality: *zuhūr* implies intentional clarity, while *badwu* simply indicates the clarity of an event without intentional explanation, such as in the phrase *badā al-barqu* (the lightning was clear).⁵⁰ The term *baghdā'* is derived from *baghuda*, meaning hatred or disapproval, opposite of *hubb* (love or liking).⁵¹ *Baghdā'* conveys intense anger.⁵² According to al-Asfahānī, the Qur'an uses *bughd* and *baghdā'* to signify rejection or aversion, illustrating deep-seated hatred and discomfort.⁵³ In this verse, the phrase *qad badat al-baghdā' min afwāhīhim* serves as a *musta'nifah* construction, providing the fourth aspect of the explanation of *biṭānah*.⁵⁴ It clearly indicates that their anger or hatred is openly expressed through their speech.

The phrase *wa mā tukhfī* functions as an explanatory clause, preceded by the relative pronoun *mā* which acts as the *mubtada'* (subject). The root of the verb *tukhfī* is from *khafīya yakhfā*, meaning to be vague, covered, or unclear.⁵⁵ In its form *akhfā-yukhfī*, it means to conceal or to keep hidden.⁵⁶ The term *ṣudūruhum*, serving as the subject, is derived from the root *ṣadara-yaṣduru-ṣadran-wa-ṣudūran*, meaning to turn away, go home, or go out. The words *ṣadran* and *ṣudūr* refer to the

⁴² Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

⁴³ Darwīs, 36.

⁴⁴ Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, 68-69.

⁴⁵ Al-Muṣṭafā, 284.

⁴⁶ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

⁴⁷ Darwīs, 36.

⁴⁸ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 234.

⁴⁹ Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, 255.

⁵⁰ Al-Muṣṭafā, 255.

⁵¹ Al-Muṣṭafā, 330.

⁵² Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 319.

⁵³ Al-İṣfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'an*, 136.

⁵⁴ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

⁵⁵ Al-Muṣṭafā, *Tahqīq Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, 106.

⁵⁶ Al-Muṣṭafā, 106.

chest or the innermost parts of a person.⁵⁷ The term *akbar* acts as the *khabar* (predicate) of the *mubtada' mā*.⁵⁸ As a form of *ism tafdīl*, *akbar* indicates something of greater magnitude. Therefore, the sentence *wa mā tukhfī šudūruhum akbar* serves as the fifth aspect of the explanation of *bitānah*, indicating that the concealed feelings within their hearts are of greater significance.⁵⁹

The phrase *qad bayyannā lakum al-ayah in in kuntum ta'qilūn* addresses the concealment of motives by this group. The term *bayyannā*, preceded by the definitive particle *qad* to emphasize certainty,⁶⁰ means to make clear or to reveal. In its nominal form *bayān*, it implies uncovering or disclosing something.⁶¹ This word is combined with *lakum*, referring to the believers (*amanū*), specifying to whom the information is directed.⁶² *Al-ayah* functions as the subject of *bayyannā*,⁶³ meaning a sign, address, or indication.⁶⁴ According to Al-Asfahānī, *al-ayah* indicates guidance or evidence. This interpretation aligns with its use in the context of revelation, as illustrated by the Hadith narrated by Abū Hurairah: *mā min al-anbiyā' nabiyun illa a'tā min al-āyāt mā mišluhu aumin au īmana alaih al-basyar* (There is no prophet except that he is given a sign by which he will be believed and people will believe in him).⁶⁵

Historical Context of the Revelation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118

The linguistic analysis suggests that the prohibition described in QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, using the term *bitānah*, pertains to the characteristics of close friends who encourage malevolent behavior. The verse explicitly outlines traits of such harmful friends who foster psychological and physical damage, exhibit enthusiasm for causing harm, create trouble, and spread hatred. This negative characterization is further supported by the presence of betrayal. Classical interpreters have highlighted these traits in their exegeses of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118. However, the meaning of *min dūnikum* remains less clear in linguistic terms. Understanding this term requires exploring its specific historical context to uncover the intended significance in relation to the verse.

The specific context of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 is tied to three key events. The first event involves a narration by Ibn 'Abbās and Mujahid, who reported that some Muslims maintained close relationships with certain Jews due to mutual alliances for assistance and protection.

Nazalat fi qaumin min al-mu'minīn kānū yuṣāffūna al-munāfiqīn, wa yuwaṣilūna rijālan min al-yahūd, limā kāna bainahum min al-qarābah wa aṣ-ṣadāqah wa al-jiwār

⁵⁷ Al-Muṣṭafā, 249.

⁵⁸ Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

⁵⁹ Darwīs, 36.

⁶⁰ Darwīs, 36.

⁶¹ Al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'an*, 157.

⁶² Darwīs, *I'rāb Al-Qur'ān Wa Bayānuh*, 36.

⁶³ Darwīs, 36.

⁶⁴ Al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'an*, 102.

⁶⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, 9:92.

*wa ar-rādā', fa anzala Allah ta'ālā hažīhi al-āyah yanhāhūm 'an mubāṭanahihim khauf al-fitnah minhūm 'alaihim.*⁶⁶

Ibn 'Abbās reported that some Muslims had maintained close ties with certain Jews due to their pre-Islamic alliances, which involved mutual aid and protection. In response, Allah revealed this verse to prohibit Muslims from making these Jews their close associates, as a precaution against potential temptation.

The second incident, according to Ibn 'Abbās as reported by Ibn Ishāq, describes the revelation of this verse due to the close kinship and friendships between some Muslims and Jews. The prohibition aimed to prevent fitnah (temptation or discord) between the two groups.⁶⁷ The third incident involves Muslims forming close kinship and tribal ties with hypocrites, highlighting the concerns addressed by the verse.⁶⁸

The context of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 is closely linked to the interactions between Muslims, Jews, and hypocrites. During the early period of Hijrah, the specific issues of Jews and hypocrites—along with their various characteristics—highlighted the need for caution and the avoidance of close friendships. This verse, revealed after the Hijrah, addresses the broader situation of the people of Medina at the beginning of Islam's spread. Ibn Ishāq reports that Jews were hostile toward the Prophet and engaged in deceitful tactics to undermine his mission.⁶⁹ Such deceitful behavior is also reflected in QS. al-Baqarah. The opposition from the Jews in Medina was compounded by hypocrites among the Anṣār, who pretended to be Muslims while harboring enmity to harm devout believers. Ibn Hishām identifies these hypocrites as belonging to the Banu al-Aus and Khazraj, underscoring the need for vigilance.⁷⁰

The context surrounding QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 reveals two groups with characteristics similar to those described in the verse, indicating that *min dūnikum* refers to groups with hidden intentions aimed at harming Muslims. This context implies that the verse addresses groups that, despite differences in religion, ethnicity, or sect, share a common trait of harboring malicious motives against Muslims. Understanding the historical context of this verse highlights its specific significance, guiding how its meaning should be applied to contemporary situations. Thus, while friendship with various groups is permissible, it must be approached with caution when there are signs of harmful intentions.

Conclusion

The interpretation of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118 by various scholars, which prohibits Muslims from forming close friendships (*biṭānah*) with non-Muslims,

⁶⁶ Ali bin Aḥmad Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Al-Qur'ān* (al-Dammām: Dār al-Īslāḥ, 1992), 124.

⁶⁷ Muḥammad Rasyīd bin 'Ali Riḍā, *Al-Mannār*, vol. 2 (Egypt: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitāb, 1990), 67.

⁶⁸ Muḥammad Izzah Darwazah, *Al-Tafsīr Wa Al-Ḥadīṣ*, vol. 7 (Kairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutb al-'Arabiyyah, 1383), 220.

⁶⁹ Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *As-Sīrah an-Nabawiyah* (Bairūt: Dār al-Kutb al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004).

⁷⁰ Abd al-Mālik bin Hishām, *Al-Sīrah Al-Nabawiyah Li Ibn Hisyām*, vol. 1 (Bairūt: Dār al-Jair, 1990).

differs significantly from the findings of this research. This study identifies that the historical meaning of *min dūnikum* does not exclusively refer to individuals based on their group identity, religion, or sect. Instead, it denotes a disparity in vision within friendships. Historically, this disparity was evident between Muslims and Jews or hypocrites during the transition of da'wah from Makkah to Medina. The prohibition aimed to prevent relationships lacking a shared vision, which could lead to destructive and treacherous interactions. While the term originally addressed Jews and hypocrites in Medina, its relevance extends to anyone with hidden animosity towards the Muslim community. Although rooted in historical context, this prohibition remains applicable today as a prudent measure to avoid harmful friendships and safeguard the unity and security of Muslims.

This research encounters limitations in uncovering the historical meaning and significance of QS. Ali 'Imrān [3]: 118, particularly in relation to classical interpretations that may not fully align with contemporary realities. These limitations include insufficient exploration of modern interpretative developments and challenges in integrating evolving social and political dynamics since the verse was revealed. Consequently, future research should focus on methodologies that bridge historical interpretations with current contexts and explore how the verse's understanding can be applied within diverse and contemporary societies. It is essential for future studies to consider interpretative adjustments that reflect the present social and political landscape, thereby offering a more comprehensive and relevant understanding.

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